

Trac'd upon vellum or wild Indian leaf  
 The shadows of melodious utterance,  
 But bare of laurel they live, dream, and die;  
 For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,  
 With the fine spell of words alone can save  
 Imagination from the sable charm  
 And dumb enchantment.

("The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream," 1-11)

Byron had little in common with Keats, but both came to share this view of the textual condition. The noble lord's version of Keats's idea comes in *Don Juan*, canto 8:

But then the fact's a fact—and 'tis the part  
 Of a true poet to escape from fiction.

(st. 86)

That's what happened to Henry James in *The Ambassadors*. He escaped from fiction.

#### NOTES

1. Jerome McGann, "An Error [Not] in *The Ambassadors*," *American Literature* 64 (March 1992): 95-110.
2. Robert E. Young, "An Error in *The Ambassadors*," *American Literature* 22 (November 1950): 245-53.
3. Yvor Winters, "Problems for the Modern Critic of Literature," *Hudson Review* 9 (Autumn 1956): 325-86.
4. Leon Edel, "A Further Note on 'An Error in *The Ambassadors*,'" *American Literature* 23 (March 1951): 128-30, and "The Text of *The Ambassadors*," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 14 (1960): 453-60.
5. Brian Birch, "Henry James: Some Bibliographical and Textual Matters," *The Library* (1965): 111-23.

*Palimpsest: Editorial Theory in the  
 Humanities* eds Geo Bornstein & Ralph G. Williams.  
 Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 1993

## What Is the Text of a Poem by Yeats?

George Bornstein

Having served as both poet and editor, W. B. Yeats keenly appreciated the link between the two activities. The editions he produced throughout his long career display persistent attention to the poetics of editing—to the effect of selection, arrangement, layout, design, production, and even annotation. Yeats's favorite author to edit was, of course, himself, and he did so continually, but he also found time to edit poets (ranging from Spenser and Blake to William Allingham and Katharine Tynan), Irish folk tales and short stories, Synge's poems and translations, *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, and *The Ten Principal Upanishads* among other works. Correspondingly, the fecund diction of Yeats's verse often refers to the editor's trade—not only by frequent references to *book* and *text*, but also on occasion by words like *manuscript*, *parchment*, *edit*, or *annotate*. Indeed, editors may ponder many of the phrases about books and texts as addressed unintentionally to themselves. Some passages from the poems seem merely descriptive:

"With open book you ask me what I do" (VP, 554), or  
 "And asked about the pictures or the text" (VP, 466), or even  
 "Of all the uncounted books that I have read" (VP, 467).<sup>1</sup>

Other passages suggest the pride of an editor:

"But here's a haughtier text" (VP, 259), or  
 "I turn the pages of my holy book" (VP, 555).

A few instances hint at a darker side to editing, not just the notorious apostrophe to "Old, learned, respectable bald heads / [Who] Edit and annotate the lines" (VP, 337), but also:

"That first unnatural interest in my books" (VP, 468), or

"he seeks in book or manuscript / What he shall never find"

(VP, 373), or, my own favorite:

"Because you . . . never wrote a book, your thought is clear" (VP, 376).

Clearly, Yeats's poetic sense never left him as editor, just as his editorial sense sometimes invaded his phrasing and continually attended his poetic activity from initial revision through final publication. Yet the paradoxical result was not fixity but fluidity in the state of his own texts. Partly because of his own continual editorial intervention, the texts that comprise Yeats's poems and the book that should contain them remain remarkably unstable. In becoming his own first editor, he produced not a fixed text reflecting, say, final authorial intention, but a series of versions with competing claims to authority. That situation has led Yeats's distinguished contemporary editor, Richard J. Finneran, to entitle the prologomenon to his rationale for his own procedures "The Myth of 'The Definitive Edition'" and to conclude that "for Yeats's poems a truly 'Definitive Edition'—in the common sense of the term—will always remain elusive."<sup>2</sup> Yeats's original editions thus act like all editions: they create not definitive texts but rather opportunities for further editions.

The instability of both the texts that comprise Yeats's poems and of the book that should contain them provides a prime testing ground for the newer directions in editorial theory over the past decade. Traditional Anglo-American editing of the postwar school of W. W. Greg as elaborated by Fredson Bowers and others sought to produce a fixed, "definitive" text, increasingly grounded in a rationale of authorial intention. Such a text was frankly "critical" in that it involved judgments by the editor, and eclectic in that it joined previously disparate elements (often involving Greg's now-contested distinction between substantives and accidentals) to create a new text never seen before on sea or land. This tradition has been challenged in many ways by contemporary theorists, including several present in this volume (as by Jerome McGann on problems of authorial intention and his own notion of the text as a social product, by Hans Gabler or Gary Taylor on the concept of copy-text, or by Peter Shillingsburg in his model of four different editorial orientations and his recent effort to redefine the term *text*).<sup>3</sup> As a result, the postwar consensus seems on the defensive theoretically even as it continues to dominate the production of editions practically, particularly those associated with the Center for Scholarly Editions, albeit with the proviso that it no longer aims at definitive texts but only at definitive

apparatuses. Its most articulate and flexible defender and developer—G. Thomas Tanselle—seems increasingly driven to accommodate new trends where possible.<sup>4</sup>

Despite apparent diametrical differences over the pertinence of "intention," the New Bibliography represented eventually in America by the Bowers school consorted covertly with the New Critical interpretive methodology that was its chronological counterpart, as David Greethan has been perhaps the most zealous to point out.<sup>5</sup> Just as the New Criticism postulated the artwork as a transhistorical, well-wrought urn possessing unity, integrity, and harmony, so did textual criticism postulate a correspondingly unified and stable text, purified from the corruptions of history rather than constituted by them. In contrast, contemporary editorial theory tends to accord better with poststructuralism rather than with New Criticism, particularly in its emphasis on multiple texts or versions, on text itself as more a process than a product, in a more complex view of both authorial intention and the artwork as divided against themselves rather than harmoniously unified, and in history as providing grounding rather than corruption. Yet the greater self-consciousness of contemporary textual scholarship about its relation to the dominant critical theories of its own time may lead to a rapprochement between the two fields rather than the rift that once obtained. It is symptomatic of the development of modern literary study that we tend to think of literary theory and editorial theory as separate activities, whereas earlier ages saw them as one. The nascent rapprochement has so far been conducted principally by editorial theorists also interested in contemporary critical theory, but their burgeoning recent output and the response of the critical community to work surrounding Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Joyce's *Ulysses* in particular suggests that the traffic may soon become more two-way.<sup>6</sup>

The concept of versions has emerged as central both to contemporary editorial theory and to possible forms for future editions. As long ago as 1965 James Thorpe had written in his often reprinted essay "The Aesthetics of Textual Criticism" that a major "problem is the existence of the work of art in multiple versions, each created by the author. . . . The basic proposition which I submit about works created by authorial revision is that each version is, either potentially or actually, another work of art."<sup>7</sup> And to the notion that the last version published in the author's lifetime had authoritative claims, Thorpe responded: "It is a bit puzzling to know why this dictum should for so long have passed unchallenged. For it is

much like saying that an author's last poem (or novel, or play) is, as a general rule, his best one; it may be, and it may not be." In revising his own essay for inclusion in *Principles of Textual Criticism*, Thorpe elaborated: "When several different works—or several versions of the same work—were written by the same author and communicated to his usual public, each is 'authoritative.' It is idle to [argue] about which one is 'the most authoritative.'"<sup>8</sup> Thorpe's notions found an analogue in Germany, where a few years later Hans Zeller adopted a structuralist position in elucidating the direction in which the most interesting German editorial theory would go. Zeller saw that "the application of the Greg-Bowers copy-text theory requires the interchangeability of variants from different versions. This requirement, as far as I can see, rests on the assumption that the alterations made by the author are isolated improvements within a concept which remains constant, unless the opposite can be proved."<sup>9</sup> In contrast, Zeller maintained that specific alterations normally signaled at least a slight change in overall concept, and that in extreme cases even one variant would constitute a version. More recently, Hans Gabler has suggested that "the new paradigm . . . suggested by the *King Lear* case for Shakespearean textual studies is 'the version,' to replace (or, realistically, to stand beside) the model of the archetype, or of the foul-papers 'Urtext.'"<sup>10</sup> In Gabler's view versions may be distinguished by the revisions that transform them one into another, and variants are not corruptive but rather constitutive of the text. That German line of thought fits well with recent American theories advanced by Donald Reiman, Stephen Parrish, and Jack Stillinger. In his essay on "Versioning," for example, Reiman observes that "Tom Tanselle and I have been moving toward similar ideas of ultimate indeterminacy in recent years" and advocates "'versioning,' as distinguished from 'editing'" as more useful on many occasions.<sup>11</sup> Not surprisingly for a general editor of both the Cornell Wordsworth and Cornell Yeats projects, Stephen Parrish likens the insistence on final authorial intention to the Whig notion of history as important chiefly as it anticipates the privileged present. "I return to my beginning by reasserting my dissent from Whig interpretations of a literary text, with their notions of an inner logic of inexorable growth toward what could have been foreseen from the start as the author's final intention," he writes. "Against these notions I would plead the autonomy and the validity of each steady state of the text as it changes in confused, unpredictable ways, through patterns which the author may never have foreseen, let alone 'intended.'"<sup>12</sup> And most recently, Jack Stillinger has

extended the debate by moving from cases of single to joint authorship. In Stillinger's view, "Until fairly recently, all editorial theories without exception were based on a concept of single authorship and the ideal of 'realizing' the author's intentions in a critical edition."<sup>13</sup> Giving examples of John Keats's *Isabella*, John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography*, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, Stillinger concludes that multiple authorship fits better with theories of versions and stages than with more traditional approaches aimed at producing a "best text."

With the exception of the Shakespearians, version theory has been developed largely by scholars working on nineteenth- and twentieth-century materials, where the plethora of printed and manuscript versions carrying authority from the author creates special conditions and problems. Unlike scholars of earlier periods whose goal is often to ascend back through corrupt transmissions to an originary and pure source, those in later fields tend instead to descend downwards from originary documents through their printed transmission. Their methodology thus belongs to the continuing effort to throw off or at least modify an editorial practice derived from solving problems in earlier epochs and instead to derive one appropriate to the often different problems in editing literature of the last two centuries. Yet even here discussion depends usually upon different versions of published texts, often including authors' manuscripts of works that were eventually published; almost never do they center on manuscripts of works not published in any form. Equally rarely do contemporary scholars (with the notable exception of McGann) consider the changing physical layout, embodiment, and context of successive versions as part of the system of variances. For the rest of this paper I would like to consider the instability of the text of Yeats's poems first as he successively revised them, then in their corresponding physical embodiments, and finally in the problematics of texts that were never published in any form during Yeats's own lifetime but only posthumously by the intervention of his editors, in this case the present one. You can see already that I am distinguishing between the poem or work and the various versions that might be said to comprise it. For some kinds of discussion, one normally distinguishes analogously between version and text, with *text* being used to encompass the various documents that together make it possible to define a *version* of a work, but for my purposes I shall use text and version synonymously unless a particular context makes it necessary to distinguish them.<sup>14</sup>

One of the great revisers, Yeats himself continually meditated on the

implications of his poetry existing in so many different versions, particularly the poetry contained in his best-known and best-selling volume in his lifetime, *Poems* (1895) and its fifteen printings and revisions.<sup>15</sup> The successive prefaces to that volume reveal something of his outlook, which normally resisted closure in favor of ongoing composition and thus made his poems seem more like processes of evolution than products of an evolution. Even for the first edition of *Poems* he had rewritten much of his earlier verse: “[The author] has revised, and to a large extent re-written, *The Wanderings of Usheen* and the lyrics and ballads from the same volume. . . . He has, however, been compelled to leave unchanged many lines he would have gladly re-written, because his present skill is not great enough to separate them from thoughts and expressions which seem to him worth preserving” (VP, 845). For the next edition four years later, Yeats reminded the reader of the revisions already made in the first edition and added that he had “still further revised these and other poems for the present edition. Other revisions are necessary, and [the author] hopes to make them when he is further from the mood in which the poems were written, and has more leisure” (VP, 846). And as late as the 1927 edition Yeats would still confess, “This volume contains what is, I hope, the final text of the poems of my youth; and yet it may not be, seeing that in it are not only the revisions from my ‘Early Poems and Stories,’ published last year, but quite new revisions on which my heart is greatly set” (VP, 848).

Yeats thus persistently revised his poems but equally persistently reminded the reader that there were earlier versions by calling attention to the revisions. At times he maintained that the revisions merely expressed the original conception better, as when he remarked that “whatever changes I have made are but an attempt to express better what I thought and felt when I was a very young man” (VP, 842). More often, though, he worried about maintaining the integrity of his earlier productions. For the 1912 edition of *Poems* he announced, “I have not again retouched the lyric poems of my youth, fearing some stupidity in my middle years, but have changed two or three pages that I always knew to be wrong in ‘The Wanderings of Usheen’” (VP, 848). The effect of all this was to make his poems seem less like products than like processes, forever evolving and often taking their meaning in part from the earlier versions that Yeats called attention to even as he replaced. The process involved self-revision as well as poetic revision. As he announced in a

famous quatrain included in the second volume of his *Collected Works* of 1908:

*The friends that have it I do wrong  
When ever I remake a song,  
Should know what issue is at stake:  
It is myself that I remake.*

(VP, 778)

Less remarked is another quatrain that he published in the eighth volume of the same edition, and that might give modern editors pause:

*Accursed who brings to light of day  
The writings I have cast away!  
But blessed he that stirs them not  
And lets the kind worm take the lot!*

(VP, 779)

And yet the second quatrain was not as definitive as it might seem. It appeared in the “Bibliography of the Writings of W. B. Yeats” with which Yeats had not only cooperated but which he had blessed by composing the quatrain as a special poem for that bibliography (the only place in which the quatrain was printed during Yeats’s own lifetime). The quatrain thus stands in the characteristic Yeatsian gesture of calling attention to that which it claims to repudiate, and it is embedded in a project that enables the recovery of the very texts that the new edition claims to replace.

The lyric now known as “The Dedication to a Book of Stories selected from the Irish Novelists” may stand as example of the changing texts of the early poems and ongoing (re)constructions of the early self. After the first publication in 1891, Yeats reprinted the poem twenty-three times in collections of his verse published in his lifetime, including *Poems* (1895) and its successors. The major set of revisions came in 1924, accompanied by a short note on the revision and for that printing only entitled “An Old Poem Re-Written,” again calling attention to its precedent form. Here is the text as it first appeared in *Representative Irish Tales* (1891), with revisions from the final version of the 1920s added in italics above the line:



*Ulysses*, and *The Tower* among other major works. Yeats's revisions transform his early lyric from an exercise in facile nineteenth-century rhetoric to at least a fitful embodiment of literary modernism.

What, then, is the text of "Dedication to a Book of Stories"? My own view is that the text of that poem includes at least *all* published versions of it, and that the poem's effect and interest multiply if we have its various incarnations in mind rather than any one of them. I deliberately quoted the revised text as given in *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats* instead of, say, *The Poems* (revised; edited by Richard J. Finneran) because the *Variorum* alone claims to acknowledge and enable the reconstruction of all earlier published versions of the poem, and hence to match my sense of the text of the poem. Yet such is not the case. The reason is that except for a small group of editors, virtually no one in our profession (let alone in the educated reading public) can understand editorial apparatus and so can use the information that the *Variorum* encodes. I myself know numerous distinguished scholars, some of them even well-known editors, who confess their sheer inability to grasp the apparatus of the *Variorum*, and anybody who has ever taught a graduate seminar knows how carefully one has to walk even the most advanced students through its mysteries. Those mysteries are, in truth, not very complicated as textual apparatus goes, and their difficulty to almost all students and professors derives principally from the disappearance of textual competence among most members of the modern academy. But my point is less to excoriate the current state of the profession than to call attention to what the *Variorum* actually does. In my view, the practical effect of the *Variorum* is to enshrine the latest authorized version of the poem as the authoritative one, with all the information on variants encoded at the bottom of the page being perceived by most readers as irrelevant debris. Paradoxically, then, the effect of the one edition most dedicated to showing Yeats's poems as an evolving process is to reinforce the sense of the last text as the telos toward which all the others move—in short, inadvertently to reinstate a Whig view of literature. To avoid that, we must either change the way we educate students or else change the way that we construct such editions.

So far, my discussion of the poem hinges on what Jerome J. McGann in a recent article has proposed calling a "linguistic code."<sup>17</sup> To some extent putting traditional insights of descriptive and analytical bibliography into contemporary diction, McGann advocates there that we distinguish linguistic from bibliographical components of the text, or,

loosely speaking, the language from its physical embodiment and context. "Both linguistic and bibliographical texts are symbolic and signifying mechanisms," he writes. "Each generates meaning, and while the bibliographical text typically functions in a subordinate relation to the linguistic text, 'meaning' in literary works results from the interactive agency of these two semiotic mechanisms operating together." McGann aptly points out that copy-text, in modern editorial theory, almost always refers to the linguistic text, and that bibliographic signifiers tend to be elided. Bibliographic signifiers can, of course, include linguistic elements like titles, running heads, or layout, as well as more purely bibliographic components like binding, typeface, and cover design.

Restoring the original bibliographic code of Yeats's lyric both enlarges meaning and actually changes the meaning of the linguistic code in a crucial respect. To begin with, the poem appeared as dedication not just to "a" book of selected stories as implied by the revised title but rather to one explicitly selected, introduced, and even annotated by Yeats himself. Indeed, the 1891 title page read: "Representative / Irish Tales / Compiled, with an Introduction and Notes / by / W. B. Yeats / First Series / New York and London / G. P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press," first with the red medallion of the "Knickerbocker Nuggets" series and its usual top gilt pages (a more expensive enterprise than the "World's Classics" series of the same firm) and then in a slightly later issue without the Knickerbocker Nuggets identification (fig. 1). The volume thus aimed at a reasonably upscale and affluent market, though not a luxurious one. Its nationalist aims would have been particularly clear in 1891, the year of Parnell's fall and death, when Yeats and many other nationalists transferred much of their energy from politics to literature; Putnam's Sons even produced a slightly later issue with nationalist green spine and corners. That bibliographic context directly influences interpretation of the poem's linguistic code. Readers encountering the lyric within the context of a volume of Yeats's own poetry appropriately take its references to the "bell-branch" torn from the boughs of Eire by the author as referring to his own poems, which of course surround this example. In contrast, for readers encountering the lyric in the Knickerbocker volume of Irish stories selected, introduced, and annotated by W. B. Yeats, the "bell-branch" clearly refers to the stories by the Irish writers Maria Edgeworth, John and Michael Banim, and William Carleton that immediately follow in *Representative Irish Tales*. Changing the bibliographic context changes interpretation of the linguistic code

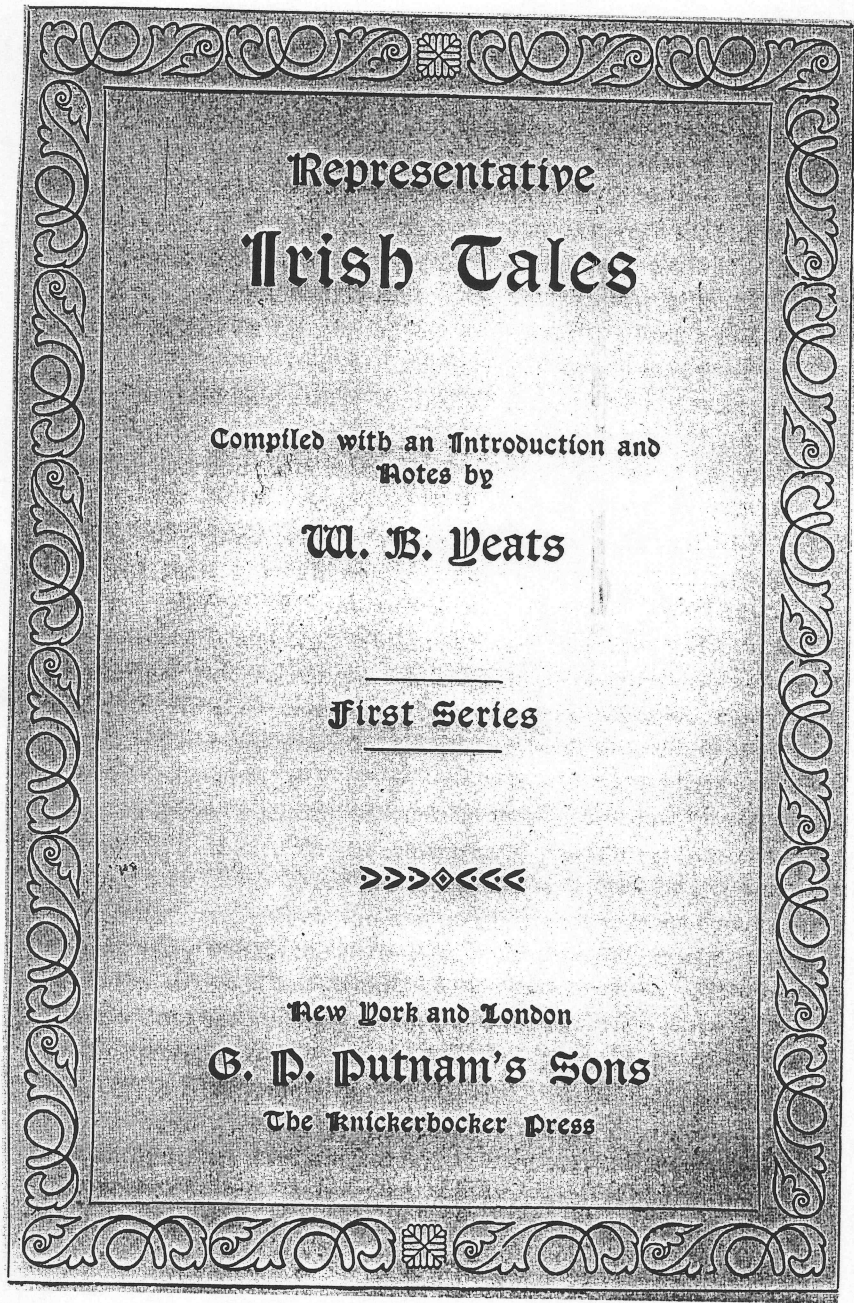


Fig. 1. Title page of Yeats's *Representative Irish Tales* (1891)

even if the words remain the same. Further, for Yeats's texts, changing the original bibliographical context often means suppressing an additional level of Irish national meaning and instead assimilating the poems to international modernism. Both the original and the successor bibliographic codes belong to the full text of the poem.

Placement of a poem within a collection occupies a middle ground between its linguistic and bibliographical codes. On the one hand, such a contextual code is bibliographic in that it pertains to the physical constitution of the volume; on the other, the contextual code is linguistic in that it is made up of words. We can see the importance of the contextual code in tracing the fortunes of the two poems that Yeats most favored for opening or closing his collected volumes—"The Wanderings of Oisín" and "The Song of the Happy Shepherd." The title poem of his first volume of verse, "The Wanderings of Oisín," is a three-book quest romance presenting adventures of the ancient Fenian warrior-poet Oisín. It opened both the 1889 collection and the more popular and often reprinted *Poems* (1895). For the 1899 revision of that book, however, Yeats moved the poem to the equally significant position of closing work, where it remained throughout the various reprintings and revisions that terminated in 1929, having been restored to its opening position only for *Early Poems and Stories* in 1925 and the *Selected Poems* of 1929. In contrast, "Song of the Happy Shepherd" is a briefer pastoral lyric beginning "The woods of Arcady are dead, / And over is their antique joy" (VP, 64). It followed a more circuitous route towards its eventual placement. Originally published separately as "Epilogue to 'The Island of Statues' and 'The Seeker'" in *Dublin University Review* for October of 1885 and then under the title "Song of the Last Arcadian" as the tenth poem of *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems* volume in 1889, the poem assumed its current place as the opening lyric of the "Crossways" section for *Poems* (1895). But in that volume, as in its successors down through 1929, "Crossways" was the last section (rather than the current first one), so that although the poem opened "Crossways," it did not open the volume as a whole. Yeats experimented with putting "Song of the Happy Shepherd" first (except for the dedicatory "To Some I Have Talked With By the Fire") in the *Poetical Works* of 1906 but did not return to that plan until the *Collected Poems* of 1933, where that lyric opened both "Crossways" and the volume as a whole, while "The Wanderings of Oisín" appeared as the first poem of the "Narrative and Dramatic" section that followed the opening "Lyrical" one.

The two poems make radically different openings or closings for Yeats's work. As opening poem, "The Wanderings of Oisín" establishes him as an explicitly Irish quest poet from the start, recuperating Celtic materials and dichotomies like pagan/Christian or male/female for his lifelong work. In contrast, "Song of the Happy Shepherd" establishes Yeats as primarily a lyric poet coming late in a European pastoral tradition and devoted to a different set of antinomies, like word/deed or poetry/science, and not reaching specifically Irish subject matter until the ninth poem of the book.<sup>18</sup> Conversely, the linguistic context of the other poems invites us to read these two slightly differently according to their position. When it comes first, each poem invites special comparison of its protagonist—the shepherd or Oisín—to Yeats's own poetic persona, and of its dualities to all those elsewhere in Yeats's work. Placing "The Wanderings of Oisín" last rather than first assigned it much the same function in the reprints and revisions of *Poems* from 1899 onwards, though it then operated retrospectively rather than proleptically within the volume.

The instability of the beginning to Yeats's collected poems haunts textual criticism of him to this day. For the 1933 *Collected Poems*, Yeats accepted his publisher's suggestion of dividing the volume into two parts and even supplied the names of each—an opening "Lyrical" section that began with "Song of the Happy Shepherd," and a following "Narrative and Dramatic" one that began with "Wanderings of Oisín." That ordering, the last major one published during Yeats's lifetime and with which he professed himself "delighted," became the basis in turn first of the posthumous *Collected Poems* and then of the two successive editions of *Poems* edited by Richard Finneran in 1983 and 1989. The Finneran ordering agreed with both *Collected Poems* and a never-published deluxe American edition planned by Scribner beginning in 1935, but it conflicted with an "Edition de Luxe" that Yeats's English publisher Macmillan had planned even earlier in the 1930s and that, like the Scribner, got as far as being set in proof. It was planned to be only half as large a print run as the Scribner would later aim at (375 as opposed to 750 copies), and of course far less than that of the widely distributed *Collected Poems*. In the "divergence" from the later order that Macmillan strove to maintain to help sell the projected Edition de Luxe, the 1931–32 proofs of that ordering mixed Yeats's longer "narrative and dramatic" poems in among the collections of his shorter lyrics in quasi-chronological arrangement. That order, in turn, became the basis of the posthumous two-volume *Poems* of 1949, of *The Variorum Edition of the Poems* in 1957 and

following, and of such contemporary British editions as those edited by A. Norman Jeffares or Daniel Albright in connection with expiration of United Kingdom copyright on 1 January 1990.<sup>19</sup> Some argument thus supports either arrangement, though in my opinion rather more favors the ordering of *Collected Poems* (1933) and of Finneran than of *Poems* (1949), *The Variorum*, and of Jeffares.<sup>20</sup> The key point here, however, is precisely the division in justifiable arrangements, both of which were after all favored by Yeats during the closing years of his career. The instability in the contextual code for both "Song of the Happy Shepherd" and "The Wanderings of Oisín" belongs to the broader instability in the text of those or any other poems of Yeats. *Both* orderings are part of the full text of those poems, just as are the various revisions in the published form of each particular poem. To see that, we need to abandon the Greg-Bowers paradigm of the ideal, eclectic text, of which an ideal and hegemonic order of lyrics would be a subcategory, and instead embrace a theory of versions and of the text as process.

Just as modern collections of Yeats's early poetry suppress alternate orderings and (except for the *Variorum*) earlier versions and intermediate revisions, so do they suppress the original strictly bibliographic codes of those poems. "Song of the Happy Shepherd" provides almost as good an example of that as did "Dedication to a Book of Stories." The poem originally appeared in *Dublin University Review* for October of 1885. The cover of that magazine (fig. 2) provides an elaborate bibliographic code placing the poem within complex cultural and political structures. Most strikingly, the cover features a heavily Celtic design that identifies the magazine both with ancient Irish tradition and with its more nationalist resurgence in the early stages of the modern Irish cultural renaissance. The design may recall as well the Victorian adaptation of medieval motifs characteristic of Yeats's onetime mentor William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement. The largest word on the page is "University," allying the journal with that institutional authority, and the device of Trinity College at the upper left specifically identifies it with that Protestant Ascendancy institution (rather than the Catholic and more recently founded University College, Dublin), as does the information that the *Review* was "printed at the university press." By embedding the titles within the elaborate Irish design, the contents list suggests the Irish context of their initial reception. The titles themselves stress Irishness: five of the eight main entries involve specifically Irish subjects—the banshee, Irish municipal government, Irish elementary schools, Irish folk



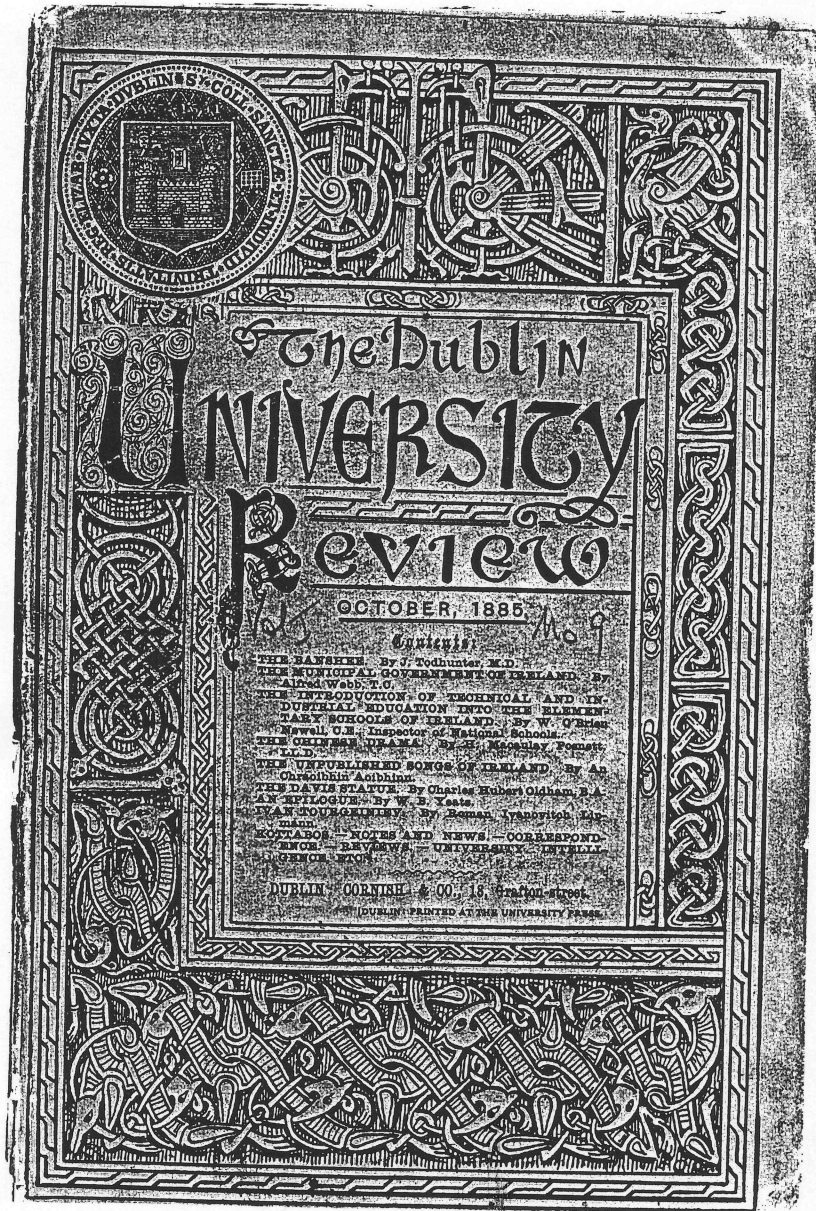


Fig. 2. Cover of *Dublin University Review* for October 1885

songs, and a statue of Thomas Davis. Yeats's Arcadian "Epilogue" (as it was titled here) thus first appears within a strongly Irish context that identifies it as a production of an Irish writer and places it within the mild cultural nationalism of the modern Irish cultural renaissance and within the Protestant power structure that contributed so much to that recuperation. The context thus suggests the alliance between ancient Greek modes and later Irish ones that Yeats would explore intermittently throughout his career, and it marks him as a more Irish writer than the poem does when severed from its initial bibliographic code.

The Irishness supplied by the initial bibliographic code gradually weakens as "Song of the Happy Shepherd" goes through successive incarnations in various books by Yeats, yet does not vanish until the poem is anthologized. As "Song of the Last Arcadian" it next appeared in *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems* (1889), where the book title lent an Irish frame in diminished echo of the original bibliographic code, as did the poem's placement immediately before the Irish legend "King Goll." By *Poems* (1895) the poem reached its final title ("Song of the Happy Shepherd") and placement as the first poem of "Crossways," a section that recapitulated Yeats's biographical progression from Arcadian or cosmopolitan to Irish settings and themes. Yeats exercised more control over the bibliographic codes of that edition than he had been able to with earlier volumes, first nominating H. G. Fell to do the cover and then, displeased with Fell's design, persuading Unwin to commission a replacement from Yeats's young protégé Althea Gyles.<sup>21</sup> Fell's static 1895 cover design (fig. 3) of a knight victorious over a serpent tended to reinforce the international European aspect of the poem, as did Yeats's introductory note contrasting the "Crossways" poems as those in which he "tried many pathways" with the "Rose" lyrics in which he found "the only pathway." The more dynamic, revised cover of 1899 by Gyles (fig. 4) emphasized rose and cross and thus accentuated the contrast between "Crossways" poems like "Song of the Happy Shepherd" and the "Rose" poems that Yeats elaborately associated with Ireland, as in the closing "To Ireland in the Coming Times." The early bibliographic codes provided by the covers of *Dublin University Review* and *Poems* disappear from modern collected editions, of course, yet the quasi-bibliographic contextual codes of the surrounding poems and arrangements survive. But even those contextual codes disappear when the poem is placed in anthologies like *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*.<sup>22</sup> There the poem appears with a cover assimilating it to international modernism

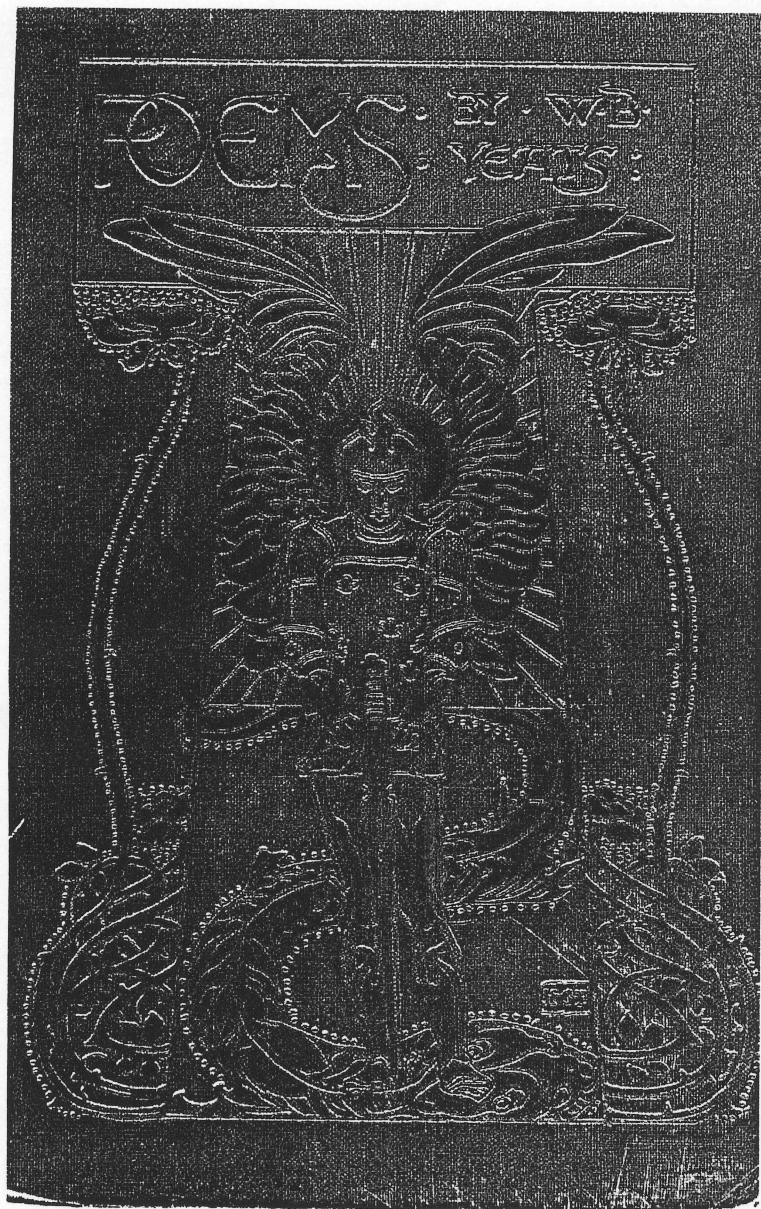


Fig. 3. H. G. Fell's cover design for Yeats's *Poems* (1895)

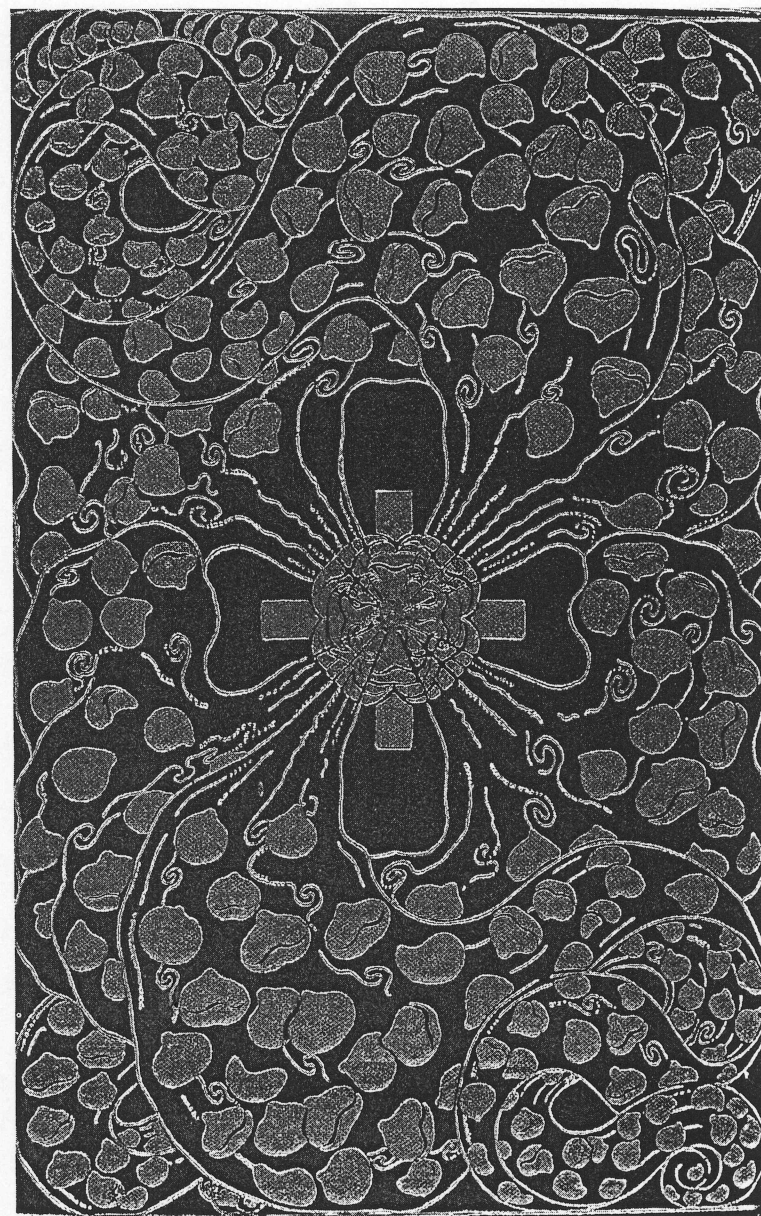


Fig. 4. Althea Gyles's cover design for Yeats's *Poems* (1899)

rather than the Irish renaissance, an assimilation strengthened by the appearance of the entire Yeats section between poems by the English A. E. Housman and the American Edgar Lee Masters. Similarly, the cover of the volume derives authority from an American publishing house (Norton) and from a distinguished American editor (Richard Ellmann, who finished his career at Oxford) rather than from Irish institutions or editors. Further, the *Norton* reflects the confusion in the dating of Yeats's texts common to anthologized versions. An introductory note proclaims that "as a general rule, we have given the latest published version of a poem over which the author could have exercised editorial control." Fine, but that is not the version of "Song of the Happy Shepherd" printed in the anthology. The *Norton* text instead belongs to the "certain exceptions" that the editors tell us "have been made," though they don't say which or why. The anthology dates the poem 1889, so perhaps that is the version used? No again. Neither the final nor the 1889 version, the text in the *Norton* apparently derives from one of the intermediate revisions of the *Poems* (1895) volume,<sup>23</sup> though the *Norton* copyright acknowledgments cite the *Variorum*. The result is that anthologizing Yeats's text has dehistoricized it: the *Norton* provides neither the bibliographic codes that would enable us to recuperate the poem's original cultural moment and significance, nor even the linguistic codes that would enable us to place it as an historical document in the evolution of Yeats's style. Instead, within the pages of the *Norton* the poem sits as a well-wrought but bizarrely edited urn, silently interring its own historical ashes.

At the opposite end of the spectrum that ends in decontextualized anthologizing is the poem's original site of inscription in the poet's own manuscripts. There the poem appears in full contingency as it constitutes itself on the page. Yet the theoretical implications of manuscript constitution have been little studied by modern editors, particularly for manuscripts of works that the author chose never to publish in machine reproductions. Rather, attention has focused on the relation of earlier manuscripts to eventually published forms of the work. I would like instead to conclude this essay by raising some theoretical points concerning manuscripts of unpublished works, using Yeats's 1891 lyric "To a Sister of the Cross & the Rose" as an example. The questions it raises include the distinction between published and unpublished works, the interplay between authorial and editorial intention, the claims of competing versions, and above all the relation of linguistic to bibliographic

codes and the extent to which bibliographic codes may be said to be part of the "text" of the work.

Although at first one might think that the editor takes responsibility for publishing a previously unpublished work, the entire distinction between published and unpublished can be problematic. The word *publish*, from Latin *publicare*, can mean both to make public and specifically to make public by printed means. But at what point has a work been made public? Certainly, a working draft seen only by the author is not public. But what if the author shows it to a consultant or confidant, as Yeats often did? What if the author makes a fair copy and shows that to even more people? What if the author incorporates the poem into a sequence in an elaborate manuscript book, which he then presents to another person? In short, at what point does manuscript circulation of a work constitute publication? Yeats on occasion did all of the above things with his manuscripts, including that of "To a Sister of the Cross & the Rose." Such works may thus remain "unpublished" in the sense of "unprinted" but not of "unknown," "unread," or even "undistributed." Yet even the distinction between printed and unprinted becomes problematic for manuscripts of many authors, particularly those of the modernist period. For example, in collecting unpublished manuscripts of the early poetry for my forthcoming volume in the Cornell Yeats series, I planned at one point to include a poem known variously as "Lug-na-Gall" and "The Protestants' Leap," only to have John Kelly of Oxford discover a printed text of that poem among the only known surviving fragments of an ephemeral Irish magazine called *The Gael*.<sup>24</sup> The manuscript had thus gone from being an "unpublished" to a "published" poem, even though the manuscript remained the same (and indeed Yeats complained that the published version contained numerous errors). Further, Yeats published other, now-lost work in *The Gael*, which presumably will turn up if a full run of that magazine ever comes to light, and which may include either other poems currently thought to be unpublished or even wholly unrecorded ones that we now know nothing about. The case is generalizable for most modern poets, whose exploitation of the huge range of ephemeral publications open to them means that they may well have published many works now unknown to us in printed form, and who at the same time often circulated their works in manuscript. As a result, the absolute distinction between published and unpublished poems becomes unstable, yielding to a more relativist discrimination

between those known and not known to have been published by mechanical means.<sup>25</sup>

Such considerations form only part of the complexity of determining the text of a previously “unpublished” poem like “To a Sister of the Cross & the Rose,” which exists in three different fair or near-fair copies with minor differences between the first two but elaborate ones between those two and the third version. Further, the leaves containing those copies are not loose but rather bound into three different manuscript notebooks of Yeats, two with very careful arrangement of contents. The surrounding lyrics thus become part of the determiners of the meaning of this text, as do the elaborate bibliographic codes of the first two manuscript volumes. Even the title is problematic, for it appears on only one of the three surviving copies, with the text untitled on the other two. Here is the text as it appeared without title in probably the earliest of the three inscriptions, as the opening poem in the elaborate manuscript notebook *The Flame of the Spirit*:

I

No daughter of the Iron Times,  
The Holy Future summons you;  
Its voice is in the falling dew,  
In quiet star light, in these rhymes,  
In this sad heart consuming slow:  
Cast all good common hopes away  
For I have seen the enchanted day  
And heard the morning bugles blow.

Dublin  
August  
1891<sup>26</sup>

*The Flame of the Spirit* is the gilt-edged, full vellum notebook that Yeats presented to his beloved Maud Gonne on 20 October 1891 with a dedicatory inscription, just after Parnell’s funeral and just before they both returned to London for her initiation into the hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. In the book Yeats copied seven lyrics in ink, from the opening one just quoted to the concluding untitled version of “When You Are Old,” with a further eleven titles whose texts were never supplied added in pencil on later pages. Like “To a Sister,” the other six inscribed lyrics are all love poems to Gonne, and both the context and the dedication strengthen the direct biographical aspect of the poem’s meaning, with the “daughter” as Gonne, “these rhymes” as Yeats’s poetry, “this

sad heart” as Yeats’s own, and perhaps “the enchanted day” with its attendant bugles as his vision of their union. In *The Flame of the Spirit*, then, the poem appears primarily as a love poem. The bibliographic code supports that, being an elaborate manuscript volume presented to a beloved in tribute and hope of persuasion. The poem’s Rosicrucian and Romantic aspects would both become more prominent in its successive versions, though the esoteric, the erotic, and the literary always tended to blend for Yeats, with the difference at any given time more one of relative emphasis than absolute exclusivity.

Almost simultaneously with *The Flame of the Spirit*, Yeats prepared another manuscript ordering of six poems that again included “To a Sister.” “*The Rosy Cross.*” *Lyrics*<sup>27</sup> [sic] is an album covered in yellow cloth with black stitching, with the title in black crayon on the cover. Although the middle four poems had also appeared in different order in *The Flame of the Spirit*, the addition of the opening poem eventually known as “A Song of the Rosy Cross” and the closing one later known as “A Dream of Death” strengthened the Rosicrucian aspect of the poem we are tracing, as did the addition of the title “To a Sister of the Cross & the Rose” for this volume only. And even on the biographical level, between completion of *Flame of the Spirit* and *The Rosy Cross* Gonne had joined the Order of the Golden Dawn and literally become a mystic *soror* or sister. This time the bibliographic code emphasizes the same hermetic aspect reinforced by the other elements: *The Rosy Cross* is less an erotic than a mystic volume, whose status as an elaborate manuscript volume reinforces its appeal to an audience of initiates. The “enchanted day” and “morning bugles” (endearingly misspelled as “buggles”) this time suggest mystic illumination more than amorous vision.

The manuscript adventures of the poem did not end with *The Rosy Cross*, however, for it appeared once more in a manuscript collection of Yeats’s, this time in the white, bound volume with embroidered slip-on cover that he kept for roughly two and a half years beginning in August of 1893.<sup>28</sup> Less carefully ordered than the other two collections, this notebook appears to have been constructed more by chronology than by design, with Yeats copying into it fair copies of work in progress and sometimes revising or composing as he went along. In this much-revised version of “To a Sister” the occult meaning assumes the greatest prominence of all, with explicit reference to a “mystic morning,” “Kabbalistic stars,” and God winding “his lonely horn”: here the dawn is explicitly mystic and only minimally erotic. Unlike in the other versions, the lyric

lacks here either a number as in *Flame of the Spirit* or a title as in *The Rosy Cross*, and the draft itself while later than the others is also less clean.

What, then, is the text of "To a Sister of the Cross & the Rose," and what is an editor to do if he wishes to publish the text of this previously unpublished poem? Not all editors will have the luxury of publishing the poem twice, in two different formats, as I have. The first time I published the only titled text, that of *The Rosy Cross* in the specialized volume *Yeats Annual No. 7* in 1990, together with a note that both indicated circumstances of composition and made it possible to reconstruct the bibliographic and linguistic codes surrounding the poem as far as mere verbal description could. The second time, in my forthcoming *W. B. Yeats: The Early Poetry, Volume II*, I was able to print all three texts of the poem rather than just one, and to give more elaborate descriptions of the bibliographic codes together with reprints elsewhere in the volume of the texts of the other poems in the first two manuscript volumes (except for those eventually published after 1895). For *The Early Poetry, Volume II*, readers will thus have all three manuscript versions, if by versions we mean only the eight lines of the lyric itself, together with material to reconstruct most of the remaining aspects of the versions, if by versions we include the bibliographic and contextual codes.

Yet even such effort at archival publication changes the bibliographic and contextual codes, and hence one sense of the "text" of the poem, drastically. It is not just that the absent original bibliographic code can only be described, but that a new bibliographic code comes into being. In this new code, Yeats's original manuscript text becomes a printed monument, enshrined either in the specialized scholarly volume *Yeats Annual* or in the elaborate Cornell Yeats series. Both modern bibliographic codes proclaim Yeats's work of sufficient importance to deserve the preservation, display, and study that we assign to major monuments of our culture. Lost is the contingent, esoteric, personal significance of the earlier codes, whose very existence gestures toward a traditional, aristocratic, preindustrial mode of being as an alternative to what Yeats once called "our scientific, democratic, fact-accumulating, heterogenous civilization" and which he hoped that another coming would restore. One could imagine a third kind of publication, an elaborate facsimile of the original manuscript orderings, and yet even that would bear a different bibliographic code, as do the publicly disseminated modern facsimiles of Blake's illuminated books. And yet I do not think that Yeats

would have minded the textual history of his poems, parallel as it is to the larger history that surrounded it. Such change is inevitable. I like to think instead that he would have seen all his texts, in their successive incarnations and hence changes, as making possible the experience he poignantly described in an 1892 lyric appropriately titled "Where My Books Go":

All the words that I gather,  
And all the words that I write,  
Must spread out their wings untiring,  
And never rest in their flight,  
Till they come where your sad, sad heart is,  
And sing to you in the night,  
Beyond where the waters are moving,  
Storm darkened or starry bright.

(VP 739)

#### NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from Yeats's poetry in my essay are taken from *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach, corrected 3d printing (New York: Macmillan, 1966), and will be identified by VP followed by page number within parentheses in the text.
2. Richard J. Finneran, *Editing Yeats's Poems: A Reconsideration* (Macmillan: London, 1990), p. 1.
3. I am thinking here particularly of Jerome J. McGann's pathbreaking *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Hans Gabler's innovative synoptic edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, 3 vols. (New York: Garland, 1986) and Gary Taylor's various works on Shakespeare, including *The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986); and Peter Shillingsburg's recent articles like "Text as Matter, Concept, and Action," *Studies in Bibliography* 44 (1991): 31-82.
4. That progression seems evident in Tanselle's evolving stance in the articles collected in G. Thomas Tanselle, *Textual Criticism Since Greg: A Chronicle 1950-1985* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987).
5. See, for example, David Greetham, "Textual and Literary Theory: Redrawing the Matrix," *Studies in Bibliography* 42 (1989): 1-24, and "Politics and Ideology in Current Anglo-American Textual Scholarship," *Editio* 4 (1990): 1-20.
6. See, for example, the essays by various hands in Gary Taylor and Michael

Warren, eds., *The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's Two Versions of "King Lear"* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), and in George Bornstein, ed., *Representing Modernist Texts: Editing as Interpretation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

7. James Thorpe, "The Aesthetics of Textual Criticism," *PMLA* 80 (1965): 465–82, reprinted in O. M. Brack, Jr., and Warner Barnes, eds., *Bibliography and Textual Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 102–38. My quotation comes from Brack and Barnes, pp. 126–29.

8. Brack and Barnes, *Bibliography and Textual Criticism*, p. 136; James Thorpe, *Principles of Textual Criticism* (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1972), p. 47.

9. Hans Zeller, "A New Approach to the Critical Constitution of Literary Texts," *Studies in Bibliography* 28 (1975): 231–64. The quotation comes from p. 241.

10. Hans Gabler, "Textual Studies and Criticism," *The Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin* 20 (1990): 151–65. The quotation comes from p. 154.

11. Donald H. Reiman, *Romantic Texts and Contexts* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987), p. 169.

12. S. M. Parrish, "The Whig Interpretation of Literature," *Text* 4 (1988): 349.

13. Jack Stillinger, "Multiple Authorship and the Question of Authority," *Text* 5 (1991): 287–88.

14. Three recent efforts to distinguish *text* from *version* or *work* include Jerome J. McGann, "Theory of Texts," *London Review of Books*, 18 February 1988, pp. 20–21; Peter Shillingsburg's elaborate "Text as Matter, Concept, and Action," cited in n. 3; and G. Thomas Tanselle's *A Rationale of Textual Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989). Tanselle had fun with some fashionable literary theorists' textual naïveté in "Textual Criticism and Deconstruction," *Studies in Bibliography* 43 (1990): 1–33, which David Greetham viewed as a deconstruction of deconstruction in his "[Textual] Criticism and Deconstruction" in *Studies in Bibliography* 44 (1991): 1–30.

15. Bibliographic details may be found in Allan Wade, *A Bibliography of the Writings of W. B. Yeats*, 3d ed. revised by Russell K. Alspach (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968).

16. W. B. Yeats, ed., *Representative Irish Tales*, first series (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1891), pp. iii–iv.

17. Jerome J. McGann, "What Is Critical Editing," *Text* 5 (1991): 15–29. The following quotation is from p. 27.

18. I have discussed the different thematic implications at greater length in "Remaking Himself: Yeats's Revisions of his Early Canon," *Text* 5 (1991): 341–58, and in the "Introduction" to *W. B. Yeats: The Early Poetry, Volume II*, forthcoming from Cornell University Press, 1993.

19. Technically, *Poems* (1949) and its derivatives may be described as hybrid editions in that they offer post-1932 revisions mixed together with the Edition de Luxe texts.

20. For a summary of the argument at the time of writing see Finneran, *Editing Yeats's Poems*, chapters 1 and 7; Warwick Gould, "Appendix Six: The Definitive Edition," in *Yeats's Poems*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares (London: Macmillan, 1989); and Richard J. Finneran, "Text and Interpretation in the Poems of W. B. Yeats," in Bornstein, *Representing Modernist Texts*.

21. See *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. John Kelly (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 1:462 and passim; Joan Coldwell, "Images That Yet Fresh Images Beget: A Note on Book-Covers," in *The World of W. B. Yeats*, rev. edition, ed. Robin Skelton and Ann Saddlemeyer (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), pp. 134–39; and appendix 3 ("Revision of Cover Design to *Poems* [1895]") to my *W. B. Yeats: The Early Poetry, Volume II*.

22. *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, ed. Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair (New York: Norton, 1973).

23. In his interesting paper "Yeats in the Light of Day: The Text and Some Editions," in *Editing British and American Literature, 1880–1920*, ed. Eric W. Domville (New York: Garland, 1976), Michael Sidnell does not consider this particular poem but does identify *Poems* (1901) as the editors' favored text for early versions.

24. John Kelly, "Aesthete Among the Athletes: Yeats's Contributions to *The Gael*," in *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 2:75–143.

25. Works printed in tiny, limited editions allowing for circulation only slightly larger than that of manuscripts provide an interesting intermediate case. See, for example, the discussion of the accessible canon of H.D.'s work in her own lifetime by Lawrence Rainey, "Canon, Gender, and Text: The Case of H.D.," in Bornstein, *Representing Modernist Texts*, especially pp. 104–7.

26. W. B. Yeats, MS of *The Flame of the Spirit*. This MS was purchased at a Sotheby's sale on 23–24 July 1987 by a Mr. Cohen, perhaps as agent for a private collector, and is now in an unknown location. For more information see George Bornstein and Warwick Gould, "'To a Sister of the Cross & the Rose': An Unpublished Early Poem," *Yeats Annual No. 7*, ed. Warwick Gould (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 179–83.

27. The album is catalogued as manuscript 30318 in the National Library of Ireland; for transcription see my forthcoming Cornell volume (cited in n. 18).

28. At present, the notebook is in the collection of Senator Michael B. Yeats, where it is catalogued as MBY 548.