W. B. YEATS AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF FAERY

by

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PREFACE

The objective of this study is to trace the development and decline of Yeats's interest in and use of fairies and fairy tales in his early literary career. The paper will deal primarily with the following areas: (1) Yeats comes into contact with fairy tales during childhood and adolescence; (2) nationalistic influences alter Yeats's literary career; (3) Yeats's anthologies reflect his new attitudes toward Irish literature; (4) Yeats's attitude toward and treatment of fairy tales is exemplified by Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry, Irish Fairy Tales, and The Celtic Twilight; and (5) fairies and fairy tales become of diminishing importance in Yeats's works.

The study will be concerned primarily with Yeats's interest in the fairy tales of Ireland and not with his interest in all the Celtic myths as a whole. For purposes of clarification, "fairy tale" in this study means only the stories about fairies, or sidhe, still current in the time of Yeats; "legend" refers to the tales of pre-Christian gods and heroes of ancient Ireland; and "folk tale" pertains to the stories of the Christian era which usually deal with some saintly person, such as the Countess Kathleen. Yeats was not concerned at one time only with fairy tales, and at another time only with legends, and at still another time only with folk tales. In general, he became interested in all of them at approximately the same time. However, legends and folk tales will not be discussed in any detail.

PART I: EARLY YEARS AND WRITINGS

The Yeats family's association with Ireland began toward the close of the seventeenth century when a successful linen merchant from Yorkshire, Jervis Yeats, immigrated to Ireland. His descendents were mostly merchants or they had taken orders in the Church of Ireland; it was supposed that the poet's father, J. B. Yeats, would become a clergyman also. J. B. entered Trinity College in 1857 with the idea of eventually taking orders in the Church of Ireland; but upon reading Butler's Analogy, he decided that he did not have religious belief. J. B. then prepared for the bar and took his degree in classics and won a prize in political economy. In 1867 J. B. decided not to practice law but to make painting his profession.

J. B. married Susan Pollexfen, the sister of his schoolfellow George Pollexfen, in 1862. Her father, William, was a seaman and a prosperous shipowner who had married into the Middleton family of millers and shipowners. J. B. was convinced that by his marriage into the Pollexfen family he had "'given a tongue to the sea cliffs'" because the Yeatses, he thought, had "'knowledge of the art of life and enjoyment,'" but the Pollexfens were "'full of the materials of poetic thought and feeling.'"[1]

The poet was born in June 1865 and, from the beginning, his disposition was sensitive and romantic. In "Reveries over Childhood and Youth" Yeats has written that he remembered "little of childhood but its pain,"[2]

and that he had found it hard to learn how to read because it was not as interesting as his own thoughts.[3] He was told that as a small child he had once seen a supernatural bird in a corner of a room, and once, too, he had a nightmare in which he saw the wreck of a steamer his grandfather was on; the wreck was confirmed the next day when his grandfather arrived home on a blind horse. "He had, as I remember the story, been asleep when the captain roused him to say they were going on the rocks."[4] Yeats has also recalled that he learned Latin "in the terror that alone could check my wandering mind."[5] As a young boy he had an attraction for the beauty of words: he bought American newspapers in order to read about a track hero described as the "bright particular star of American athletics." Yeats confessed that he would have had no interest in the athlete if he had been described as the "particular bright star of American athletics."[6]

Yeats has stated that when he was about seventeen he recognized the world of dream to be his natural element.[7] At this time, Yeats was not only alternately pretending to be sage, magician, or poet, but he was also finding his passions, loves, and despairs to be so beautiful that he had to be constantly alone with them in order to give them his whole attention. Yeats often sought the solitude that he craved in a cave above Howth where he kept food and slept on warm nights. Local gossip said that an evicted tenant named Macron had lived there a number of years. Yeats became discontented with the cave when he found lovers there one day; he returned only when he heard that the ghost of Macrom had been seen bending over his fire in the mouth of the cave. Yeats has related in "Reveries" that "what I saw when alone is more vivid in my memory than what I did or saw in company."[8]

Yeats has recollected that his mother left little impression on his childhood; however, it was because of her stories of Sligo and Rosses Point that W. B. retained his love of Ireland during the years when the family lived in England where J. B. pursued his art career (sporadically between 1868 and 1880).[9] Then, too, Mrs. Yeats added greatly to the sensitive child's reveries with her fairy tales. Yeats has remarked that his mother did not care for paintings and that she was not interested in her husband's intellectual and artistic friends. One of her few delights was to exchange fairy tales and stories "that Homer might have told" with servants and fishermen's wives. According to Yeats, "Village Ghosts" in The Celtic Twilight is but a record of the tales Mrs. Yeats exchanged with their servant one afternoon.[10]

Country stories and fairy tales told by his mother and her Middleton relatives and their neighbors deeply impressed the young boy. He believed some of his relatives were "psychic" because they had heard smugglers' raps at the window and often had seen fairies. One of his cousins had seen an old woman three or four feet tall looking in the window at her. His cousin could not explain why she thought the old woman was from another world; she just knew it. In the same way, she knew certain people who met her on the road and asked about members of her family were fairies.[11]

George Pollexfen's old servant, Mary Battle, especially confounded Yeats. Her daily speech was full of fairies and she had visions and dreams which later became reality. In one such vision she saw blood on a clean shirt she was about to bring George to wear one morning and gave him another to wear. That afternoon George fell and cut himself

and got blood on the shirt. In the evening, Mary Battle said that the shirt she had thought bloody in the morning was clean after all.[12]

On his frequent visits to his grandparents' home in Sligo, Yeats spent much time along the seacoast talking to fishing boys and sailors. In "Reveries" Yeats observed that he heard so many tales and stories from these people that he thought the world was full of monsters and marvels. For instance, one boy told a convincing story of a solid gold beetle that had been seen in Scotland. Yeats soon learned that perhaps the sailors were such fantastic tale-tellers because by nature they were superstitious. Whenever the poet's father crossed from Rosses Point to Sligo on a little steamboat, the sailors were certain there would be a storm, "for he was considered unlucky."[13]

Of the towns in which Yeats spent his early life, three especially influenced him: Sligo, Rosses Point, and Howth. All his life Yeats considered Sligo his home. Sligo was a small fishing village where everyone despised Catholics and Nationalists, and characteristically enough, disliked the English as well.[14] Sligo is full of history and legend, and the mountain overlooking the town, Ben Bulben, is associated with fairies and legend. Mount Knocknarea, located at Rosses Point and a short distance from Sligo, is the place where legend says Queen Maeve of fairyland is buried.[15] In the poet's late childhood the Yeatses lived in the old harbor town of Howth, near Dublin. The hills near the village are full of caverns associated with fairies and legend. It is said that Howth was a resort of the Druids, and that an ancient King of Ireland, Crimthann, is buried there. One of Yeats's earliest

poems, which he said he wrote when he was seventeen, "The Ballad of Moll Magee," was inspired by Howth.[16]

Yeats has recorded that when he was among the English in school at Hammersmith, England (c. 1875-1880) the memory of the mountains and lakes of Ireland kept him patriotic. Besides his memories of pleasant places and people in Ireland, Yeats recalled with pride his Irish heritage whenever he remembered the deprecating stories of the English he had heard in Ireland. The English were a foolish people: one Englishwoman did not like Dublin because the men's legs were too straight; an Englishman wanted to pull down Mount Knocknarea to put its dirt on the sand of the Sligo beaches to make it fertile enough for agriculture. In general Englishmen had no reserve; they kissed in railway depots and told strangers their affairs.[17]

During the summer of 1882 when Yeats was visiting his Middleton relatives, several inexplicable things occurred to convince him that his relatives had some contact with the dim world. One afternoon Yeats and a cousin were reading when they heard a sudden sound like that of peas shattering against the mirror in the room. His cousin had gone into the next room to rap on the wall to see if the sound had come from there, when Yeats heard a loud thump on the wall in a different part of the room. Later in the day, a servant told him she had heard loud footsteps in the empty house. That evening when Yeats and two of his cousins went for a walk, one of his cousins said that she saw a blaze of light under some trees, but Yeats saw nothing. Soon they entered an old village which had been destroyed during the wars of the seventeenth century, and from there they all saw a light moving across the rapids

in the river. Yeats supposed that perhaps someone was only walking in the river with a torch. But then they saw a light ascend Mount Knocknarea at such a swift rate that Yeats, who had climbed the mountain many times himself, knew that no human could carry a torch up the mountain so quickly.[18] No doubt these phenomena greatly impressed the young boy who never had been able to "walk in a wood without feeling that at any moment I might find before me someone or something I had long looked for without knowing what I looked for."[19]

Yeats said that from then on he wandered about raths and reported fairy hills questioning old people,

> . . . and, when I was tired out or unhappy, I began to long for some such end as True Thomas found. I did not believe with my intellect that you could be carried away body and soul, but I believed with my emotions and the country people made that easy.[20]

After investigating many fairy raths and talking to many old people, Yeats concluded that "one should believe whatever had been believed in all countries and periods, and only reject any part of it after much evidence, instead of starting all over afresh and only believing what one could prove." Yeats was self-conscious about this theory and he has stated that he was always ready to deny it when it was actually his secret fanaticism.[21]

The early contact with fairy tales deeply impressed Yeats; but the preferences of the poet's father were initially stronger than any

other influence. Indeed, the strong-willed J. B. Yeats recognized early his son's sensitivity and actively attempted to mold his life. In 1872, when the poet was seven, J. B. wrote to his wife that he was

> . . . very anxious about Willy. . . . I believe him to be intensely affectionate, but from shyness, sensitiveness and nervousness, difficult to win and yet he is worth winning. . . . Willy is sensitive, intellectual and emotional, very easily rebuffed and continually afraid of being rebuffed so that with him one must use sensitiveness. . . .[22]

To a great extent J. B. was successful in imposing his ideas on W. B. In 1909, when the poet was forty-four, he wrote his father that his "'philosophy of life has been inherited from you in all but its details and applications.'"[23]

When W. B. was only eight or nine, his father read him poetry and adventure novels such as Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome and Scott's Ivanhoe and the Lay of the Last Minstrel. The magic in these novels fired Yeats's imagination and for several years he yearned to be a magician. When the boy was ten or twelve, J. B. took him to see Hamlet, and Hamlet became for W. B. "an image of heroic self-possession."[24] In his middle teens, J. B. told his son of Blake, Rossetti, and William Morris and gave him their works to read, as well as those of Chaucer, Fenimore Cooper, Edmund Spenser, Balzac, and Thoreau. Thoreau especially influenced the youth; after reading Walden Yeats desired to imitate Thoreau by living

on Innisfree in search of wisdom.[25] Yeats has written that when he was about seventeen his father's influence was at its height. J. B. read W. B. passages from poems and plays, such as Shakespeare's Coriolanus and Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, at their most passionate moments. J. B. no longer read his son anything for story but for style;[26] and he taught W. B. that "the highest form of literature was dramatic poetry because the form most crammed with life and passion, and least tainted by beliefs."[27] At seventeen his favorite characters were the solitary and sad heroes of Shelley and Byron:

> . . . as I climbed along the narrow ledge I was now Manfred on his glacier, and now Prince Athanase with his solitary lamp, but I soon chose Alastor for my chief of men and longed to share his melancholy, and maybe at last to disappear from everybody's sight as he disappeared drifting in a boat along some slow-moving river between great trees.[28]

Yeats's early poetry clearly reflects the books he had read under his father's tutelage. The four plays Yeats wrote in 1884 show his indebtedness to Spenser and Byron for subject matter and Shelley for language. His first play "Time and the Witch Vivien,"[29] finished in January 1884, opens in an Arcadian garden where Vivien is admiring herself in the reflection of a pond. At the time he was writing this play, Yeats was still enraptured with the magic and magicians that inhabited

The Odyssey and Idylls of the King. The structure of the playlet is reasonably logical and uncomplicated. Time enters Vivien's garden dressed as a pedlar and carrying a scythe, an hour glass, and a black bag. He tries to sell Vivien either the contents of his black bag or his scythe; but Vivien wants to buy his glass. Time replies that he could not sell his glass, so Vivien convinces him to play a game of dice for it. Time wins for "They're loaded dice. Time always plays/ With loaded dice." Vivien begs for another chance to win his glass by a game of chess, but Time refuses to play for the glass again. Vivien compromises by saying that she will settle for "triumph in my many plots." Time replies, "Defeat is death." They play; Vivien loses the game and forfeits her life.

Yeats's next play of 1884, "Love and Death," was never published. The primary plot deals with the daughter of a king who falls in love with a god, and, to become worthy of him, kills her father in order to make herself queen. At last the god appears to her, but since no human can look on his glory and live, the queen is destroyed by her own love.[30]

His third play of 1884, Mosada,[31] shows an increasing maturity in his handling of dramatic themes. However, Yeats, still tied to the romantic remote, sets his melodrama in Spain and makes the heroine an enchantress. In the opening scene, Mosada is pining for her lost lover Gomez, whom she has not seen in three years. She calls the lame boy Cola to her and begins an incantation to a great enchantress. Cola is needed to see the visions for her because only the innocent can see them. In the midst of the incantation, officers of the Inquisition enter and

arrest Mosada; Cola had reported her because "They said I'd burn unless I told." In Scene II monks and inquisitors try to persuade the inquisition judge Ebremar to let the beautiful Mosada live, but Ebremar remains steadfast in his determination to execute her: "I will burn heresy from this mad earth." In Scene III Mosada takes poison rather than face execution. Ebremar enters and recognizes Mosada as his lost sweetheart, for he is really Gomez. He begs her not to die and promises her that together they will flee to her land. Mosada dies as monks and inquisitors enter. Gomez once again takes on the role of the stoical Ebremar as the play ends:

> Ebremar. I am not well.
> 'Twill pass. I'll see the other prisoners now,
> And importune their souls to penitence,
> So they escape from hell. But, pardon me,
> Your hood is threadbare--see that it be changed
> Before we take our seats above the crowd.

Yeats's fourth play of 1884, "The Island of Statues,"[32] is even more ambitious than Mosada. Yeats, again under the influence of Shelley and Spenser, returns to Arcady. The play has two acts and six main characters: Naschina (a shepherdess), Colin and Thernot (shepherds who both love Naschina), Almintor (a hunter who loves, and is loved by, Naschina), Antonio (his page), and the Enchantress of the island of goblin flowers (a Circelike creature who turns men to stone). In the play, Naschina challenges Almintor to prove his love for her by going on

a courageous quest--to fight a dragon or struggle with an enchanter. Almintor goes to the Enchanted Island to find for Naschina the one mysterious flower that grows there among thousands of commonplace ones:

> I'll bring that flower to her, and so may earn
> Her love: to her that wears that bloom comes truth,
> And elvish wisdom, and long years of youth
> Beyond a mortal's years.

All who fail to guess which is the mysterious flower are turned to stone by the Enchantress. Almintor fails, too. Naschina, disguised as a shepherd, goes to rescue Almintor, which she accomplishes by outwitting the Enchantress (who dies) and at the expense of the lives of Colin and Thernot and of her own soul.

These early plays, especially "The Island of Statues," illustrate Yeats's preoccupation with "proud and lonely things." He was convinced that "certainly if wisdom existed anywhere in the world it must be in some lonely mind admitting no duty to us, communing with God only, conceding nothing from fear or favour."[33] Yeats's indebtedness to Shelley's lonely Alastor and Athanase is apparent.

Mosada was published in the Dublin University Review in June 1886, and Yeats's father, who thought that it showed more promise than his previous works, had it reprinted in book form and issued by subscription. Coincident with the publication of his first book, Yeats was writing poetry that no longer was in agreement with his father's views on dramatic poetry and which reflected the poet's new thoughts and interests. Two

of these poems appeared in the Dublin University Review in October and December 1886: "From the Book of Kauri the Indian. Section V, On the Nature of God,"[34] and "An Indian Song."[35]

Yeats had begun to break away from his father's intellectual influence around 1884 when he began to study psychical research and mystical philosophy.[36] Perhaps the study of the occult was an attempt by Yeats to give his life a spiritual significance that he keenly felt it lacked. J. B. was an agnostic and his skepticism had puzzled W. B. even as a small child. Yeats has recalled that at about the age of eight he had begun to think "about the evidences of religion and I weighed the matter perpetually with great anxiety, for I did not think I could live without religion."[37] Once when no one would tell him how a calf was born, he thought he had discovered proof of God's existence. He convinced himself that God had brought the calf out of a blaze of light from a cloud and that no human had ever dared to watch Him come. Calves "were a gift of God, that much was certain."[38]

As Yeats grew older he tried to believe as his father did. He decided that religion could be replaced by science. When at the High School he announced to his classmates that he was a follower of Darwin, Huxley, and Haeckel and argued in refutation of Adam, Noah, and the Seven Days. He even developed an interest in natural science and at one time planned to write a scientific book about the yearly changes of some creatures that lived in a hole in a rock near Howth. When Yeats was about fifteen or sixteen, he tried to convince a pious geologist that man inhabited the earth much earlier than the Bible indicated:

> 'You know,' I would say, 'that such and such human remains cannot be less, because of the strata they were found in, than fifty thousand years old.' 'Oh!' he would answer, 'they are an isolated instance.' And once when I pressed hard my case against Ussher's chronology, he begged me not to speak of the subject again.[39]

As Yeats entered adolescence, he drifted away from science. He refused to allow his dreams of the ideal and supernatural to be explained away by Victorian science and eighteenth-century reason. He had never been predisposed to believe only "what one could prove." At this receptive stage of the poet's development, he met George Russell (A.E.) at the Art School in Kildare Street in May 1884. Russell shared Yeats's interest in mysticism and had seen strange visions that he tried to reproduce in his paintings.[40] In April 1885 Yeats heard A. P. Sinnett's Esoteric Buddhism discussed at Edward Dowden's house. He and a friend from the High School, Charlie Johnston, had already become interested in Sinnett's Occult World and Baron Reichenbach's book on Odic force and used to spend a lot of time in the Kildare Street Museum pretending to feel the Odic force coming from large crystals on exhibition there. Together, Johnston and Yeats read Esoteric Buddhism, and Johnston, who had planned to be a missionary, became an enthusiastic convert. In June 1885 Johnston, Yeats, Russell, and four other young men formed the Dublin Hermetic Society. An article by Johnston in the Dublin University Review in July stated that the Society was formed to

promote the study of Oriental religions and theosophy. Yeats gave an address at the first meeting on the objects of the Society which was called "hermetic" because it would deal with a philosophy which until recently had been kept secret or only revealed in symbolism.[41]

A Brahmin from Bengal, Babu Mohini Chatterjee, was invited to Dublin to lecture to the new Society. Yeats, who was greatly impressed by the Brahmin, recorded that he had taught them

> . . . by what seemed an invincible logic that those who die, in so far as they have imagined beauty or justice, are made part of that beauty or justice, and move through the minds of living men, as Shelley believed; and that mind over-shadows mind even among the living, and by pathways that lie beyond the senses; and that he measured labour by his measure and put the hermit above all other labourers, because, being the most silent and the most hidden, he lived nearer to the Eternal Powers, and showed their mastery of the world. . . .[42]

A note by the poet shows how directly related the poem "Kanva on Himself" is to the Brahmin's teachings:

> Somebody asked him [Mohini Chatterjee] if we should pray, but even prayer was too full of hope, of desire, of life, to have any part in that acquiescence that was his beginning of wisdom, and he answered that one should say, before

> sleeping: 'I have lived many lives, I have been a slave and a prince. Many a beloved has sat upon my knees, and I have sat upon the knees of many a beloved. Everything that has been shall be again.' Beautiful words that I once spoiled by turning them into clumsy verse.[43]

The verse Yeats wrote was:

> Hast thou not sat of yore upon the knees
> Of myriads of beloveds, and on thine
> Have not a myriad swayed below strange trees
> In other lives? Hast thou not quaffed old wine
> By tables that were fallen into dust
> Ere yonder palm commenced his thousand years?[44]

In May 1887 Yeats moved with his family to London and soon after joined Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society. In 1888 Yeats was admitted to the Esoteric Section of the Society, which promised that all the powerful impulses of the soul, good and bad alike, would rise to the surface; in this way the evil could be expelled and the soul would be "'elevated and rendered capable of grasping and making use of the higher knowledge.'"[45] Madame Blavatsky reluctantly allowed Yeats to introduce the study of experiments with magic into the Esoteric Section. Yeats, not content with just the study of magic, soon persuaded her to allow him to conduct a few of the actual magic experiments with the Section. Even though he thought that he had achieved

some measure of success with the experiments, Madame Blavatsky, who had repeatedly warned her followers of the dangers associated with the practice of magic, finally reached the limit of her patience and Yeats was asked to resign in August 1890. Yeats, in turn, had become increasingly discontented with the conservative wisdom-of-the-East emphasis of the Theosophists and was more than ready to comply with the request. His interest in the Esoteric Section had been waning for some time, especially since March 1890 when he had joined the Hermetic Students of the Golden Dawn--a group that encouraged its members to demonstrate their power over the material universe by adhering to the European tradition of Kabbalistic magic.[46] From the Esoteric Section, however, Yeats had been able to derive a system of arcane symbols and correspondences that established for him the interrelationships between parts of the body, the seasons, colors, elements, and the universe.[47] These arcane symbols and correspondences were to become the basis for his literary symbolism.

PART II: LITERARY NATIONALISM

By 1885 Yeats had not only become involved in the occult, he had also become a nationalist and had made the decision to make himself an Irish poet.

Yeats's first personal contact with active politicians and nationalists was probably through Charles Hubert Oldham, the leader of a group of nationalists at Trinity College. Oldham had founded the Dublin University Review early in 1885 and had published several of Yeats's first poems, including Mosada and "The Island of Statues." Late in 1885 Oldham organized a discussion group called the Contemporary Club, where young men practiced public speaking. Yeats said that he eagerly joined the group because he thought that public speaking would give him the heroic self-possession he imagined Hamlet had. The club was apolitical, but the climate of the times--bombings, political murders, Home Rule agitation--slanted the discussions and debates toward politics. Through the Contemporary Club Yeats came to realize that in Ireland politics was not the realm of politicians only.

The greatest influence on him at this time was John O'Leary, whom he met at the Contemporary Club. O'Leary had returned in 1885 from five years of imprisonment in England and thirteen years of exile in France. He had been convicted of treason by an English court for his part in an armed rising against the British in 1867. When he returned

to Dublin his dignity, honesty, distinguished appearance, and unpolitical maxims attracted many young nationalists and writers, including Yeats, Katharine Tynan, Douglas Hyde, and John F. Taylor, the red-haired orator.

O'Leary's nationalism was basically optimistic and idealistic, but he was doubtful if Parnell could secure Home Rule for Ireland through Parliamentary action. He believed independence was not near at hand, but that the Irish should prepare for the inevitability by working toward Irish unity. After O'Leary's return to Ireland from his long imprisonment and exile, he concerned himself with broader issues of nationalism, such as building up the Irish morale and trying to teach Irishmen how to be more effectively Irish. Besides recommending the study of classics, O'Leary urged his countrymen to learn English history, Irish history, literature, geography and, remarkably, Irish folklore.[48] Yeats has recalled in "The Trembling of the Veil" that O'Leary "cared nothing for his country's glory, its individuality alone seemed important in his eye."[49]

O'Leary had a great interest in Irish literature. Before his imprisonment he had been an editor of a Fenian newspaper, in which he had always tried to maintain a high standard of literary excellence. He hated the literary inferiority often displayed in the poetry of many well-intentioned patriots. "'We protest against the right of patriots to perpetrate bad verses,'" he proclaimed.[50]

O'Leary had been prompted, initially, to take an active part in politics by the writings of Davis, Callanan, Mangan, and other Young Ireland poets, even though he was critical of their literary taste. The Young Ireland Party, an offshoot of O'Connell's Repeal Party, had been organized in 1842 by Charles Gavin Duffy, Thomas Davis, and John

Blake Dillon. Duffy edited the Party organ the Nation, and in this newspaper Thomas Davis inaugurated a program of nationalist poetry. Outstanding among the patriotic poets and essayists who contributed to the paper were John Mitchel, Samuel Ferguson, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, Denis F. McCarthy, Clarence Mangan, and Thomas Davis, the leading Young Ireland poet.[51] Together, Davis and Duffy "'united literature to their politics and civil morality to literature.'"[52] The resultant political school of poetry succeeded in raising Irish patriotism to an idealistic level where any criticism of Ireland was equated with a denial of national values. The Young Ireland Party, whose aim was national independence, encouraged and published in the Nation the poetry of all classes and creeds of Irish men and women; inevitably, the largest part of the poetry dreamed of an ideal Ireland or wailed of present tribulations. Even though the Nation lacked aesthetic qualities, it succeeded in bringing patriotism's emphasis from local and provincial concerns to national ones.[53] The Party and its newspaper died in 1848 when extreme members of the group, including Duffy, were transported for staging a revolt in Munster against English policy toward famine-ridden Ireland.[54] O'Leary lent Yeats the Young Ireland poetry that had made him a patriot; and Yeats was impressed that the mediocre poetry could have had such an effect on the old Fenian.

O'Leary was president of a Young Ireland Society in Dublin in 1885, and Yeats frequented its meetings and was active in many political debates there also. Yeats's reminiscences of the Young Ireland discussions clearly show how sincere the young man was in becoming an Irish nationalist:

> We had no Gaelic but paid great honour to the Irish poets who wrote in English, and quoted them in our speeches. I could have told you at that time the dates of the birth and death, and quoted the chief poems, of men whose names you have not heard, and perhaps of some whose names I have forgotten. I knew in my heart that most of them wrote badly, and yet such romance clung about them, such a desire for Irish poetry was in all our minds, that I kept on saying, not only to others but to myself, that most of them wrote well, or all but well.[55]

For a while Yeats desired to write for a popular audience in imitation of the Young Irelanders: "I thought that one must write without care, for that was of the coteries, but with a gusty energy that would put all straight if it came out of the right heart."[56] The debates in the Young Ireland Society, O'Leary's conversation, and the patriotic books he read at this time are exalted in "Reveries" as the source of "all I have set my hand to since."[57]

With O'Leary's help Yeats slowly began to formulate ideas about a national literature, and had even begun to think of founding a new national literary movement similar to that of Thomas Davis and the Young Irelanders. However, the literature that would come out of the new movement would not sacrifice quality to quantity and would be unconcerned with practical politics, an area in which Yeats had very little, and only passing, interest.

His ideas concerning a new type of Irish literature are evident in his writings of this time. The subject of his poetry changed from Indian to Irish; and he went from the Dublin University Review to the Catholic and nationalistic periodicals the Irish Monthly and the Irish Fireside. He launched his critical career in his next to last contribution to the Dublin University Review (November 1886) in an article entitled, "The Poetry of Sir Samuel Ferguson." Yeats's position was clearly nationalistic: he attacked the cosmopolitan Professor Edward Dowden, and Trinity College in general, for a lack of nationalist sentiment. He stated that if "Ireland has produced no great poet, it is not that her poetic impulse has run dry, but because her critics have failed her." He suggested that Professor Dowden could have done more to enhance the reputation of both his country and himself by writing on an Irish subject, such as Ferguson, rather than the "much be-written George Eliot." Yeats concluded the article by asserting that Ferguson, because he wrote about things other than politics, was closer to literary perfection than the inferior poets who receive much attention from the nationalists.[58]

In the March 1887 issue of the Irish Fireside he published an article praising Clarence Mangan, also. However, about this time Yeats was beginning to realize that Ireland needed an Irish style that was not tangled with politics. In the essay, "What Is 'Popular Poetry'?" (1901), he has recalled that

> Then with a deliberateness that still surprises me, for in my heart of hearts I have never been quite

certain that one should be more than an artist,
that even patriotism is more than an impure desire
in an artist, I set to work to find a style and
things to write about that the ballad-writers
might be the better.[59]

While Yeats was formulating his opinions as to what the poetry of Ireland should consist of, he read a badly-written verse in the newspaper that deeply moved him. He learned that the verse was written by a man who had returned to Ireland from America just a few days before he died. Yeats concluded that he had been moved because the verse expressed the thoughts of a man at a passionate moment in life.[60] The verse's effect upon him reinforced his evolving theory that great and lasting poetry was usually rooted in personal experience and emotion. And so came the coup de grâce to the mainly derivative and romantic plays based on conventional themes that he had been writing until recently; poems and plays with Arcadian scenery lacked the personal ties he needed and, therefore, lacked emotional impact. He even revised some of his earlier work to make it more Irish. In 1886 some lines in Mosada had read:

He brings to mind
That song I've made-- [t]is of a Russian tale
Of Holy Peter of the Burning Gate:
A saint of Russia in a vision saw
A stranger new arisen wait
By the door of Peter's gate. . .

By 1889 the lines had been revised so that a "Russian tale" became "an Irish tale," and "A saint of Russia" is "A saint of Munster."[60]

When his new poetry began to appear, it was personal in that he wrote about Irish places he knew and loved; and, now that the fairy tales he had heard all his young life had been endorsed by O'Leary, he was free to people his poems with them, too. This change is well-illustrated by "The Stolen Child," published in the Irish Monthly in December 1886:

> Where the wave of moonlight glosses
> The dim grey sands with light,
> Far off by furthest Rosses
> We foot it all the night,
> Weaving olden dances,
> Mingling hands and mingling glances
> Till the moon has taken flight;
> To and fro we leap
> And chase the frothy bubbles,
> While the world is full of troubles
> And is anxious in its sleep.
> Come away, O human child!
> To the waters and the wild
> With a faery, hand in hand,
> For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.[62]

When Yeats moved with his family to London in 1887, John O'Leary arranged for him to write reviews of the Irish arts to two American

newspapers, the Boston Pilot and the Providence Sunday Journal, in the form of correspondence. In a letter to Lady Gregory (1901) Yeats has admitted that he had always felt "'that my mission in Ireland is to serve taste rather than any definite propaganda.'"[63] This self-imposed mission is reflected over and over in the articles to the American journals, and the paucity of his remarks on political activity indicates that his nationalism from the beginning was literary. The didactic tone of the articles clearly shows that Yeats was trying to right the low state to which Irish literature had fallen. First, Yeats wanted to separate literature from the political propaganda to which it had been tied for so long. After literature and politics had been separated, he hoped that Irish literature would draw from Irish or personal themes and, hence, would become imaginative and substantial. Only then could literature and nationalism hope to serve each other:

> Can we not unite literature to the great passion of patriotism and ennoble both thereby? . . . Amid the clash of party against party we have tried to put forward a nationality that is above party, and amid the oncoming roar of a general election we have tried to assert those everlasting principles of love of truth and love of country.[64]

The overall theme of the correspondence seems to be that "there is no great literature without nationality, no great nationality without literature."[65] He had little patience with an Irish writer, such

as Allingham, who having "strayed away from Irish themes and Irish feeling, in almost all cases . . . has done no more than make alms for oblivion."[66] Of two other Irish writers, who are "elaborate, ornate and literary, and show a strong influence from English writers," he has written that "they have left behind them the simple national ballad manner, without proving strong enough to reach that more ample and subtle style the greatest writers learn."[67] In order to be a national writer, Yeats was convinced that Irishmen should not only write seriously of Irish life, but out of personal emotions also; "'it is the presence of a personal element alone that can give it nationality in a fine sense.'"[68] Yeats seems to have understood that national literature was "'the work of writers, who are moulded by influences that are moulding their country, and who write out of so deep a life that they are accepted there in the end.'"[69]

Then, too, Yeats was determined that the

> . . . first thing needful if an Irish literature more elaborate and intense than our fine but primitive ballads and novels is to come into being is that readers and writers alike should really know the imaginative periods of Irish history.[70]

He warned that the importance of legend and history not be underrated, "for in them the Irish poets of the future will in all likelihood find a good portion of their subject matter."[71] "Celtic tradition and Celtic passion [are] crying for singers to give them voice."[72]

Expounding upon the virtues of writing national literature was one thing, but writing a poem or a play with the express purpose of being nationalistic was not Yeats's bent. Whatever he wrote, he wrote from personal experience and emotion, and he hoped that the poem or play, if sincerely written, would be nationalistic in spirit:

> 'I am a Nationalist. . . . But if some external necessity had forced me to write nothing but drama with obviously patriotic intention, instead of letting my work shape itself under the casual impulses of dreams and early thoughts, I would have lost, in a short time, the power to write movingly upon any theme.'[73]

By 1889 Yeats was immersed in writing; he had written and published The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems, not to mention the numerous critical essays he had contributed to various periodicals and newspapers. His involvement with active politics was definitely flagging when he met and became infatuated with the beautiful revolutionary Maud Gonne. Chiefly because of her encouragement, Yeats began organizational work; however, his interest this time was in literary groups with nationalistic objectives rather than the political clubs he had joined in the mid-eighties. In 1891 Yeats and T. W. Rolleston founded the Irish Literary Society of London; in May 1892 he formed with John O'Leary the National Literary Society in Dublin; in late 1892 he conceived an ill-fated scheme to publish a cheap series of books on Irish themes by contemporary Irish writers; from 1894 to 1898 he

prepared with the Irish Republican Brotherhood for the Wolfe Tone centennial celebration of 1898 of which he was chairman.

In the midst of all this organizational activity with its dull meetings and speeches, Yeats continued to produce plays, poetry, and anthologies--all written with an eye to the high literary standards he had set for himself as an Irish writer and servant of public taste.

PART III: THE ANTHOLOGIES

Yeats knew that his literary efforts alone would not be enough to purge contemporary Irish literature of its common, sentimental, and often cloying subject matter. The articles he wrote for the American journals made it clear that he and his friends were attempting to find for the Irish writers a new subject matter that would be far-reaching enough to be universal, and at the same time, remain inherently Irish. This they thought they had found in the relatively untouched store of Irish fairy and folk legends.

Yeats's attempt to introduce these fairy and folk legends into the literature of Ireland was more difficult than it might seem in retrospect. First, Yeats had to contend with Ireland's self-consciousness. During the period under discussion (c. 1888-1893), Ireland was preoccupied with proving to the world that she could handle her domestic affairs independently of England. Ireland hoped her literature not only reinforced her political stance; but also hoped it illustrated that Home Rule was the panacea for all Irish trouble. With these ends in mind, many of the Irish writers were still following the recipe of the Young Ireland poets in belaboring the ignoble themes of Irish sufferings and grievances under English misrule. The folk and fairy tales that Yeats thought would make an appropriate and respectable subject matter would hardly begin to satisfy Ireland's literary duty to cry out against oppression.

Second, few Irish writers used fairy and folk legends simply because they did not know them. The most prominent Irish writers of this time were of the Protestant Ascendancy; they mostly lived in cities and had little personal contact with the Catholic peasants of the country, who had somehow managed to sustain a belief in things supernatural. This ignorance of Irish legend was compounded by a reluctance on the part of the "enlightened" writers to expose themselves to ridicule for having treated seriously of the amusement of the lower social classes. Many other writers not concerned with the social implications of the tales thought that these stories could do little to enhance Irish literature, but much to confirm the foreign critics' charges that Ireland was still a backward nation. Then, too, both churchman and scientist frowned upon this pagan side of peasant life. Therefore, Yeats not only had to popularize the tales, but to make them respectable as well. Between 1888 and 1893 Yeats compiled anthologies and wrote essays with these goals in mind.

The preparation of the anthologies took Yeats through magazines, newspapers, books, unpublished manuscripts--often 100 years old--in order to find tales and legends which he believed were representative folk and fairy beliefs of Celtic and Christian Ireland. The results of his labors were compiled into four books: Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry (1888), Stories from Carleton (1889) Representative Irish Tales (1891) and Irish Fairy Tales (1893).[74]

About the time Yeats was preparing Stories from Carleton and Representative Irish Tales, he wrote a review for the Providence Sunday Journal (July 1889) that shows how seriously he regarded his research:

"I have collected fairy tales . . . and have lately given some months to reading all written Irish folklore, so far as I could find it, whether in books or old newspapers and magazines."[75] Yeats's letters of 1888 also attest to the sincerity of his effort. They are full of references to the amount of research he was doing for Fairy and Folk Tales. For instance, in July 1888 Yeats wrote Father Matthew Russell, editor of the Irish Fireside, that:

> D. R. McNally's [sic] book is not in the museum catalogue. Do you know when it came out? Is it an original collection or a compilation? Do you know anyone who has a copy they could lend for a week or two? I have many stories about the fairies but am hard up for Banshee and Pooka stories and also for stories of the 'headless coach' type. . . . I am anxious to have a section on Irish Saint stories and wish to give the prophesies of St. Columkille. . . .
>
> I have yet to look through the Dublin Penny Journal and other Dublin magazines and Barrington's Recollections for Banshee tales. . . .
>
> In my search for matter I have come on much strange literature--notably a Dublin magazine of 1809 devoted to ghost stories and such like. I have looked through several histories of magic.[76]

Many of Yeats's other reviews and letters to the Providence Sunday Journal and the Boston Pilot between 1888 and 1892 mention that he had

read Standish O'Grady's History of Ireland: The Heroic Period, Lady Ferguson's Ireland Before the Conquest, Mrs. Bryant's Celtic Ireland, John Todhunter's The Banshee, a collection of stories by Douglas Hyde, and many other works of less importance.

In the Introduction to Representative Irish Tales, Yeats made it very clear that the intention of his anthologies was not only to make the books truly representative of Irish folk beliefs, but also to typify the many ways in which the Irish character was viewed:

> I have made the selection [of tales] in such a way as to illustrate as far as possible the kind of witness they bear to Irish character. In this introduction I intend to explain the fashion I read them in, the class limitations I allow for, the personal bias that seems to me to have directed this novelist or that other. These limitations themselves, this bias even, will show themselves to be moods characteristic of the country.[77]

In the discussion of the authors included in Representative Irish Tales, Yeats has revealed that the "class limitations" he allowed for are synonymous with the "personal bias that . . . directed this novelist or that other." Social class was the criterion Yeats used to evaluate an author's contribution to Irish literature.

Generally, Yeats has ascertained that the upperclass writers did not portray the real character of the Irish peasant because they found "the serious passions and convictions of the true peasant troublesome" and

rebellious.[78] Therefore, this class of writers wrote humorous anecdotes about the peasants which were very popular with foreigners and others not acquainted with the peasantry. These anecdotes gradually grew into what Yeats and his contemporaries considered the scourge of Irish literature: the stage Irishman.[79]

Yeats confined Samuel Lover (1797-1868) to the traditions of the gentry because his stories described the "buffoon Irishman with the greatest vigor and humor."[80] He accused Crofton Croker (1798-1854) of having taken the peasants and their fairies too lightly, for "under his hand the great kingdom of the sidhe lost its nobility and splendor. 'The gods of the earth' dwindled to dancing mannikins--buffoons of the darkness."[81] Charles Lever (1806-1872) differed from Lover and Croker in that his humor was written for his own aristocratic class. Because his books came to be more popular abroad than those of any other Irish writer, the Irishmen he depicted have "come to stand for the entire nation."[82] After Yeats has attacked the gentry for having misrepresented the Irish peasant character, he excused them on the grounds that they were ignorant; they wrote what they knew of the peasant, but, unfortunately, they knew very little:

> What they did was not wholly false; they merely magnified an irresponsible type, found oftenest among boatmen, carmen, and gentlemen's servants, into the type of a whole nation, and created the stage Irishman.[83]

Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849) has been ranked by Yeats among the best of the upperclass novelists. However, her social position hindered her

also from seeing the peasant as he really was. Far from making the peasant a buffoon, she has written of him too tenderly, making him glow with faithfulness and innocence. In her writings, the peasant "stands in the charming twilight of illusion and half-knowledge."[84]

According to Yeats, the gentry writings will always have a place in Irish literature, but "the deep earth song of the peasants' laughter" is missing from them. "In matters where irresponsibleness is a hindrance the Irish gentry have done little. They have never had a poet. Poetry needs a God, a cause, or a country."[85]

From the suffering of the Great Famine of the 1840's emerged the writers of '48 (Young Irelanders) who proved that the buffoon Irishman was more of an oddity than a typical Irishman. The writers since 1848 were generally more accurate in their descriptions of peasants and fairies. Yeats was not concerned that Irish writers--irrespective of class--have not meticulously listed and itemized their sources, because they were, appropriately, concerned with literature and with capturing "the very voice of the people, the very pulse of life." They were not scientists who tell of the "primitive religion of mankind, or whatever else the folk-lorists are on the gad after."[86]

With the advent of William Carleton's (1798-1869) novels, Yeats believed that the true peasant voice was finally heard. Carleton's literary style was awkward and sometimes tinged with bitterness, but, nevertheless, he spoke with the "deep and mournful accent of the people."[87] Yeats thought that Carleton's peasant birth enabled him to write powerfully, seriously, and accurately of the Irish.

In Yeats's opinion, the tales of an old Dublin bookseller, Patrick Kennedy (1801-1873), came next in truthfulness to those of Carleton. Kennedy's literary faculty was not very good, but his seemingly genuine belief in fairies often enabled him to relate many good tales in the very words in which he heard them.[88]

John (1798-1842) and Michael (1796-1874) Banim, shopkeepers' sons, were two more gifted Irish writers who had the true Irish accent. However, their works were marred because they wrote what they thought people wanted to hear: "Neither had culture enough to tell them to leave the conventionalities alone and follow their own honest natures."[89]

In the competent novels of Gerald Griffin (1803-1840) and Charles Kickham (1825-1882) Yeats thought that he was hearing a new accent--the accent of the middleclass. This "new accent" was from the "people who have not the recklessness of the landowning class, nor the violent passions of the peasantry, nor the good frankness of either." The stories and novels of Griffin and Kickham were more polished than those of Carleton and John Banim, but they and other middleclass writers have tended to "cloak all unpleasant matters" and "moralize with ease." In spite of such niceties, Yeats has assessed the middleclass writings as sincere and has prophesied that the degree of order and comeliness they possess "may some time give Ireland a new literature." These middleclass writers had many things at work to help them, especially the newspapers which were under their control. "Their main hindrances are a limited and diluted piety, a dread of nature and her abundance, a distrust of sophisticated life."[90]

Of the current Irish books Lady Wilde's (1820-1896) Ancient Legends (1887) has been appraised by Yeats as the best since those of Croker. However, her aristocratic birth has barred her also from seeing the true Irish peasant:

> The humour has all given way to pathos and tenderness. We have here the innermost heart of the Celt in the moments he has grown to love through years of persecution, when cushioning himself about with dreams, and hearing fairy songs in the twilight, he ponders on the soul and on the dead. Here is the Celt, only it is the Celt dreaming.[91]

Dr. Douglas Hyde (1862-1949), a scholar who had published nothing as of 1887, received Yeats's unconditional praise. Of all the fairy tale collectors, Yeats endorsed Hyde as the one to be most trusted because he thoroughly knew the people about whom he wrote. (At this time, Hyde was working on his first volume of folktales.) "Others see a phase of Irish life; he understands all its elements. His work is neither humorous nor mournful; it is simply life."[92] In a letter to the Boston Pilot, September 1889, Yeats wrote that the three translations Hyde contributed to Fairy and Folk Tales have ranked him as a master of the dialect. "He is surely the most imaginative of all Irish scholars, and I believe these wild and sombre stories of his will make some noise in the world."[93]

Even though Yeats did not include in his anthologies any of D. R. McAnally's selections from Irish Wonders (1888),[94] he listed him in the bibliography of Fairy and Folk Tales as an Irish folklore authority. In a review of Irish Wonders for the Providence Sunday Journal (July 1889), Yeats had accused McAnally of treating his material with insufficient respect and of steeping "everything in a kind of stage Irish he has invented." Yeats considered Irish Wonders a disappointment even though there was not a dull chapter in the whole book, for it related a "foreigner's idea of Ireland."[95] According to Yeats, not only was McAnally's dialect inaccurate and his folklore false, but he had entirely mistranslated several words from the Gaelic. In spite of its imperfections, though, McAnally's book did have a saving grace--it had not rationalized the Irish legends.[96]

Yeats derived most of the material for his own collection of fairy tales, The Celtic Twilight (1893), from personal experience, conversations with peasants, books, and his friends.

Between 1891 and 1893, the years in which The Celtic Twilight was compiled, Yeats was not concerned with reporting verbatim the tales he heard or with accurately crediting his sources. His intent was to preserve and popularize the tales of Ireland, and he desired,

> . . . like every artist, to create a little world out of the beautiful, pleasant, and significant things of this marred and clumsy world, and to show in a vision some- of the face of Ireland to any of my own people who would look where I bid them.[97]

By 1902, however, he knew Lady Gregory's method of collecting stories and he became aware that a systematic reporting method was important. In the enlarged edition of The Celtic Twilight (1902), Yeats half-apologetically promised that he would "publish in a little while a big book about the commonwealth of faery, and shall try to make it systematical and learned enough to buy pardon for this handful of dreams."[98] Yeats's purpose in not quoting many of his sources was noble; he was protecting the Irish storytellers who had confided to him the very tales they believed to be bad luck to tell. Fairies had been known to wreak vengeance on those who spoke of them.[99] Yeats also had another good reason for protecting his sources. In the Preface to the enlarged edition of The Celtic Twilight, he wrote that he had "invented nothing but my comments and one or two deceitful sentences that may keep some poor storyteller's commerce with the devil and his angels, or the like, from being known among his neighbours."[100]

Yeats said that many of the stories in The Celtic Twilight were told to him by the late Paddy Flynn, "a little bright-eyed old man, who lived in a leaky and one-roomed cabin in the village of Ballisodare." A friend of Yeats's had given Paddy a large bottle of whisky,

> . . . and though a sober man at most times, the sight of so much liquor filled him with a great enthusiasm, and he lived upon it for some days and then died. His body, worn out with old age and hard times, could not bear the drink as in his young days.[101]

Yeats seems to have protected his sources only when they were living; he has quoted several sources by name and locality when the source was dead. For instance, "There was old Martin Roland, who lived near a bog a little out of Gort. . . . He told me a few months before his death that 'they' would not let him sleep at night. . . " (p. 113).

For the most part, The Celtic Twilight is full of phrases designed to obscure the identity of the source. Many storytellers are cited as "one woman," "an old man," "one John Madden," and the like. Yeats was generally just as vague about where he heard his tales as from whom he heard them: "My ghosts inhabit the village of H_____, in Leinster" (p. 40); "There is a farmer at H_____, Paddy B_____ by name--a man of great strength, and a teetotaller" (p. 41); ". . . I used to go wandering in certain roomy woods, and there I would often meet an old countryman, and talk to him. . ." (p. 73).

One can find some specific sources for The Celtic Twilight in Yeats's Autobiography and Letters. In "Reveries" he has recorded that his mother "read no books, but she and the fisherman's wife would tell each other stories that Homer might have told. . . . There is an essay called 'Village Ghosts' in my Celtic Twilight which is but a record of one such afternoon. . . ."[103] His Uncle George Pollexfen's servant Mary Battle has also been cited in "Reveries" as an important source of the tales: "She could neither read nor write and her mind . . . was rammed with every sort of old history and strange belief. Much of my Celtic Twilight is but her daily speech."[104]

In a letter to Edward Garnett (October 1892), Yeats reported success in an invocation of the fairies. He wrote that his uncle and

cousin went into trances and heard strange music and voices and saw queer figures.[105] This incident has been recorded in much more detail in "Regina, Regina Pigmeorum, Veni" (pp. 68-70). However, in the tale Yeats did not identify those taking part in the invocation as his relatives, but as a middle-aged man and a young girl, "a relation of his." In the tale Yeats said that he, too, fell into a trance and saw and spoke with the tall queen of fairyland; the letter only mentioned that his cousin and uncle were in a trance.

Another tale, "The Sorcerers" (pp. 56-58), was based on another actual experience of Yeats's. The seance described in this tale has also been recollected, with several changes, in "Reveries." In both versions Yeats has written that he struggled to keep from falling into a trance; in the tale, though, he was more successful than in the autobiographical account.

"A Knight of the Sheep" (pp. 51-53) is a tale about a tax gatherer and a farmer infamous for his vile language. The farmer and the tax gatherer argue over not only the assessment of taxes, but also over the value of their dead sons. Yeats, without acknowledging it, has adapted this story from Gerald Griffin's tale in Representative Irish Tales, "The Knight of the Sheep."[107]

A storyteller in The Celtic Twilight Yeats has credited almost as often as Paddy Flynn was a "little old woman in a white cap, who sings to herself in Gaelic, and moves from one foot to the other as though she remembered the dancing of her youth" (p. 82). This seems to be the same old woman Yeats told about in the Introduction to Irish Fairy Tales: old Biddy Hart who lived on the slope of Ben Bulben.[108] Most of the

series of tales in "Kidnappers" (pp. 80-84) were told to Yeats by Biddy Hart. One of her stories concerned men who attempted to drain Heart Lake, a favorite haunt of the fairies. However, the project was soon abandoned when each man thought he saw his own house in flames. "They hurried home to find it was but fairy glamour. To this hour on the border of the lake is shown a half-dug trench--the signet of their impiety."

The same "white-capped friend" has been credited with a story of a bride stolen by fairies, and a tale of a young woman who was stolen by the fairies and then returned after seven years with no toes: "She had danced them off." Yeats did not cite his source for the latter tale in The Celtic Twilight, but he mentioned the story again in the Introduction to Irish Fairy Tales and said that Biddy Hart told it to him.[109]

In The Celtic Twilight Yeats has cited Paddy Flynn as the source of the tale of a widow's dun cow that fell into a river and was stolen by the fairies (p. 84). Only after much difficulty, including a trip to the world of the dead, did the widow's son finally retrieve the cow. This seems to be the same tale, told in a half page, as "Lough-leagh (Lake of Healing)" that Yeats included in Fairy and Folk Tales and credited to an old edition of the Dublin and London Magazine (1825).[110] It is unlikely that Yeats forgot that the tale came from the magazine; however, he may have thought that his readers would find the tale more interesting if attributed to the old man characterized so well in the first selection of The Celtic Twilight, "A Teller of Tales."

The Celtic Twilight seems primarily to be an attempt by Yeats to contribute to the Irish national literature that he thought should exist. True to the dictums of his critical articles, Yeats had written seriously of Irish life in The Celtic Twilight; he had infused the whole work with a personal element in order to give it "nationality in a fine sense;" and he had given voice to the Celtic tradition and Celtic passion that had been crying for singers. In the end, then, the sources of the tales seem to have been of little consequence to Yeats in comparison with the truthfulness of presentation. Yeats had never intended The Celtic Twilight to be a factual study, only a representation of what he considered respectable Irish literature.

PART IV: IRISH FAIRIES DEFINED

Along with Yeats's campaign to sell Irish subjects to Irish writers went an insistence, then, that the Irish themes of peasant life and peasant belief be recorded truthfully and sincerely. Yeats's criterion in selecting the tales to be included in his anthologies had been the veracity with which the author depicted fairies and represented the true Irish peasant. The Celtic Twilight, Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry, and Irish Fairy Tales are especially illustrative of Yeats's concern with fairies; they show that he wanted his readers to have as true a picture of them as of the peasants. He was meticulous in attributing individual traits to each fairy group. Not only was dress an important item in recognizing the distinct fairy groups, but also standards of behavior. Yeats even goes so far as to include in Irish Fairy Tales an appendix that lists and describes the various fairy groups.

The Celtic Twilight, however, only generalizes about the characteristics of fairies as a whole, and makes no attempt to categorize the different fairy types. The generalizations of The Celtic Twilight may be partly explained by the fact that Yeats composed them as individual essays over a period of years and probably had not thought at the time of composition that he would publish them as a collection. All in all, the book is about the peasantry and their belief in fairies, rather than about fairies themselves.

A. Yeats's Fairies

Yeats has divided the fairies into two distinct groups: Sociable fairies and Solitary fairies. Two other classes of dim world spirits included in Yeats's anthologies and The Celtic Twilight are ghosts and witches. As will be shown below, these nonfairy denizens are too closely related to fairies not to be included in any discussion of them.

The Sociable fairies have much in common with humans: they travel in troops, make love, and quarrel much the same as humans do. There are far fewer Sociable than Solitary fairies. In fact, the land fairies (Sheoques) and the water fairies (Merrows) are the only kinds of Sociable fairies

On the whole, Sheoques, or changelings, are good fairies. They live in the raths, which in ancient times were forts. They have a fondness for human companionship, and have been known to entice humans into their fairy world--usually a new baby or a new bride. When a new baby is stolen, the fairies often leave in its place a withered-up old fairy or log of wood "so bewitched that it seems to be a mortal pining away, and dying, and being buried."[111] There are several formulas used to find out if a child is really a changeling; the surest is to lay the child on a fire and repreat, "Burn, burn, burn--if of the devil, burn; but if of God and the saints, be safe from harm." If the child is a changeling, "it will rush up the chimney with a cry;" but, if it is a mortal child, it will be safe from harm.[112] Those they steal are generally happy in the land of the Sheoques, for they have a good life, music, and much mirth there. However, some accounts say that the

kidnapped are sad and continually long for their earthly friends. Oisin was such a victim. The music of the Sheoques casts a magical spell on those who hear it. Many who hear it become great peasant seers, fairy doctors, or musicians; or they die in a year and a day to live forever among the Sheoques.[113]

On the wilder coasts of Ireland Merrows, or water fairies, are common. The appearance of a Merrow generally forecasts bad weather. The male Merrows have green teeth, green hair, pig's eyes, and red noses. The female Merrows "are beautiful, for all their fish tails and the little duck-like scale between their fingers. Sometimes they prefer, small blame to them, good-looking fishermen to their sea lovers." Merrows have been known to come out of the sea and roam the land in the shape of small harmless cows. Merrows wear little, red feather-covered caps. If this cap is stolen or lost, the Merrow cannot return to the sea.[114]

There are many kinds of Solitary fairies, "nearly all gloomy and terrible in some way."[115] However, some have much in common with the light-hearted and brave-attired Sociable fairies.

The Lepricaun[116] is the child of an evil spirit and a debased fairy. He wears "a red coat with seven buttons in each row, and a cocked-hat, on the point of which he sometimes spins like a top. In Donegal he goes clad in a great frieze coat." This fairy is usually seen sitting under a hedge mending a single shoe. Anyone who catches him can make him yield up his crocks of gold, for the Lepricaun is a great miser. However, if you take your eyes off him for a second, he disappears.[117]

"Cluricaun" is considered by many to be another name for the Lepricaun, applied when he has put aside his shoemaking and gone on a drunken spree. The Cluricaun is infamous for robbing gentlemen's wine cellars and riding to exhaustion sheep and shepherds' dogs for a whole night.[118]

The Gonconer, or love talker, is similar to the Lepricaun also, only he is a great idler. He wanders the long valleys, with a pipe in his mouth, making love to shepherdesses and milkmaids.[119]

The Pooka (he-goat) is of the nightmare family. He especially likes to plague a drunkard's sleep. The Pooka never appears in human form; he usually appears as a horse, bull, goat, eagle, or ass. In one sense he resembles the Cluricaun: he loves to race all night over ditches and open country with a rider on his back, only to shake him loose as dawn approaches. Sometimes he appears in unexpected forms:

> The one that haunts the Dun of Coch-na-Phuca in Kilkearny takes the form of a fleece of wool, and at night rolls out into the surrounding fields, making a buzzing noise that so terrifies the cattle that unbroken colts will run to the nearest man and lay their heads upon his shoulder for protection.[120]

The Black Dog is perhaps a form of the Pooka. He haunts ships on the Sligo quays and often goes to sea with them. He announces his presence "by a sound like the flinging of all 'the tin porringers in the world' down into the hold."

The Dullahan is a gruesome fairy. He either has no head or carries it under his arm. He often drives a black coach drawn by six headless horses. It is an omen that death will visit any house at which it stops. If one opens the door, a basin of blood is thrown in his face.[121] Some say Dullahans originated in Norway when the practice of severing heads from corpses to make their spirits feeble was in use there. Others say that they are descended from "that Irish giant who swam across the Channel with his head in his teeth."[122]

The Far Darrig, or red man, for he wears a red cap and coat, is the practical, and often gruesome, joker of the dim kingdom. He resembles the Pooka in that he too presides over evil dreams.[123] Many accounts link the Far Darrig to the Lepricaun and the Cluricaun. No one is certain if these three are one and the same, or truly three distinct phantoms. At any rate, all three are withered, old, and solitary. They are generally very "sluttish, slouching, jeering, mischievous phantoms."[124]

The Leanhaun Shee, or fairy mistress, seeks the love of mortal men. If a mortal man consents to be her lover, he is her slave; if he refuses, she is his slave. The only way her lover can escape her power is to find another to take his place. Because the Leanhaun Shee inspires poets, she is known as the Gaelic muse. The Gaelic poets who receive inspiration from her all die young, for the muse lives on their lives; when she grows restless she takes them with her to the dim kingdom.[125] The greatest Irish poets, from Oisin through the eighteenth century, have belonged to her.[126]

The Far Gorta, the man of hunger, is an emaciated, ugly phantom who begs his way through Ireland in famine time. This good-natured fairy brings good luck to the giver.[127]

Another fairy with a good disposition who is grouped with the Solitary fairies is the Banshee, or fairy woman. Some say she is not really a Solitary fairy at all, "but a Sociable fairy grown solitary through much sorrow."[128] A Banshee is usually attached by affection to some old Irish family, and wails whenever a member of the family dies; however, if she is an enemy of the family, she screams in triumph. It is thought that the peasants' keen for the dead is an imitation of the Banshee's cry.[129] If more than one Banshee cries over a death, the dead person was usually very brave or holy. The coach-a-bower--a large black coach carrying a coffin and drawn by six headless horses, and driven by a Dullahan--often accompanies a Banshee. It is not uncommon for a Banshee to follow a family to a foreign country.[130]

The Augh-ishka, waterhorse, was a creature reported to have been common at one time in Ireland. Several accounts of the Augh-ishka tell how they used to come out of the water to run on the shore only to be captured and bridled by humans. Augh-ishka made excellent riding horses as long as they were kept away from water; on sight of water, however, they would plunge in and tear their riders to pieces at the bottom.[131]

Besides the above, which are described to some extent in both Fairy and Folk Tales and Irish Fairy Tales, Yeats has listed other unworldly creatures that he suspected belong in the realm of the

Solitary fairies. He tells us that there is too little known to give them each separate mention.[132] However, he does mention House Spirits; the Water Sherie, brother to the English Jack-o'-Lantern; the Sowlth, "a formless luminous creature;" the Pastha, a lake monster and guardian of buried treasure; and vicious inhabitants of the County Down marshes called Bo men, whom Yeats suspects of being Scottish imports because they destroy unwary persons who stumble onto them. Bo men can only be driven off with a certain kind of seaweed.[133]

B. Friends of the Fairies

A mortal closely associated with the Sociable fairies is the fairy doctor. The fairy doctor receives his power from the fairies, and "a something--a temperament--that is born with him or her."[134] Fairy doctors, especially the successful ones, are mortals that Sheoques loved and carried off to fairyland only to return them after seven years. During a mortal's sojourn in the dim world, he learns from the fairies their great knowledge of herbs and spells. The doctors may be consulted when a cow will not give milk or when butter will not come on the milk. The doctors also give advice when a changeling is suspected, and will prescribe for the fairy blast. "(When the fairy strikes any one a tumor rises, or they become paralyzed. This is called a 'fairy blast' or a 'fairy stroke'.)"[135]

The Solitary fairies have a mortal closely associated with them also, the witch. The witch receives her power from evil spirits and "her own malignant will" and is always feared and hated.[136] Witches' spells "smell of the grave. One of the most powerful is the charm of the dead hand. With a hand cut from a corpse they, muttering words of

power, will stir a well and skim from its surface a neighbor's butter."[137] Witches are adept at making infallible love potions by mixing dry, ground liver of black cat with tea. The tea must be poured from a black pot. Unfortunately, the spell will be broken unless renewed periodically, "or all the love may turn into hate."[138] For all her sorcery, a witch's main claim to infamy is the ability to change herself into some animal form, usually that of a cat, hare, or wolf. Centuries ago Giraldus Cambrensis was of the opinion that the wolf form that a witch assumes is nothing but an illusion. A similar story of more recent times, told by Patrick Kennedy, seems to uphold Cambrensis' opinion. It seems that a magician performing at a fair had deluded all the spectators--except a young girl--into thinking that they saw a rooster carrying a wooden beam in his beak. The girl was holding a four-leafed clover mixed with the sod she was carrying. A four-leafed clover is protection against magic. The girl saw only a rooster carrying a straw in his beak, until the magician talked her into giving him the sod for his horse. Immediately, she cried out that the rooster would drop the beam. Yeats has concluded that "this, then, is to be remembered--the form of an enchanted thing is a fiction and a caprice."[139]

The Celtic mind also likes to dwell on the activities of ghosts. Ghosts are not fairies but are mortals who have died and who "live in a state intermediary between this life and the next. They are held there by some earthly longing or affection, or some duty unfulfilled, or anger against the living." Lady Wilde has recorded, however, that ghosts are those unfortunates who are too bad for heaven and too good for hell.[140]

The Celtic Twilight, Fairy and Folk Tales, and Irish Fairy Tales show that the antics of ghosts are, in large part, determined by the people who believe in them. The ghostly state varies from tale to tale. Even Yeats seems to have difficulty distinguishing between ghosts, evil spirits, and fairies. The Celtic Twilight notes that ghosts are numerous in Ireland and that they take many strange forms, notably headless women, men in armor, shadow hares, fire-tongued hounds, and whistling seals.[141] Yet it is demons, not ghosts, who transform themselves into white cats or black dogs.[142] And in a note to Douglas Hyde's "Teige O'Kane (Tadgh O Cathan) and the Corpse" in Fairy and Folk Tales, Yeats has written that he had difficulty placing the story in the correct tale category. There was much evidence that the story belonged in the tale grouping with the ghost stories. The story was finally placed with the fairy tales because, according to Yeats, the ghosts and ghostly bodies of the story were in reality not ghosts at all, but pishogues (fairy spells), a common phenomenon in Ireland.[143]

The confusion surrounding the nature of ghosts[144] is probably caused by the fact that the personalities of ghosts differ from area to area. The east Ireland ghosts are gloomy and matter-of-fact: "They come to announce a death, to fulfil some obligation, to revenge a wrong, to pay their bills . . . and then hasten to their rest." In the west Ireland tales, ghostly doings have a "whimsical grace."[145] For instance, one western tale concerns an unbeliever who slept in a haunted house. After he fell asleep, ghosts threw him out the window and flung his bed behind him. Another western story tells of a dead man, reincarnated

as a rabbit, who stole cabbages from his own garden. In a third tale, a wicked sea captain in the form of a snipe was entombed for years in the plaster of a cottage wall and was freed only when the wall was broken down.[146] When the man died, his soul could not rest because he had found some money and had not returned it to the owner.[147]

Most ghosts are house ghosts; they are harmless and well-intentioned spirits, who are tolerated as long as possible. It is said that they bring good luck to those who live with them.[148] One story of a house ghost concerns the strange opening and closing of doors that attended the death of a child. The child's mother had forgotten to leave a window or door open for the departure of the soul. The opening and closing of the doors were reminders from the spirits who attend the dying.[149] This story seems to be a contradiction of the custom of "sprinkling the doorstep with the blood of a chicken on the death of a very young child, thus (as the belief is) drawing into the blood the evil spirits from the too weak soul. Blood is a great gatherer of evil spirits."[150] Again, in Fairy and Folk Tales Yeats distinguishes between fairies and ghosts in the section entitled "Ghosts,"[151] but at the same time he alludes to "evil spirits" as if the term were synonymous with "ghosts." He says:

> When the soul has left the body, it is drawn away, sometimes, by the fairies. . . . Such souls are considered lost. If a soul eludes the fairies, it may be snapped up by evil spirits. The weak souls of young children are in especial danger.[152]

Haunting ghosts usually have an anger with some living person. The threat, "I will haunt you," is a serious matter because the peasant actually believes he will be haunted by someone he has wronged. The peasant also believes that a dead man's soul cannot rest if anyone is sorrowing greatly over his death.[153] It is thought that those who die suddenly are likely to become haunting ghosts; they must roam the earth until they have completed a duty or fulfilled an obligation. A butterfly fluttering around a corpse is a sign that the dead man has achieved immortal happiness. A butterfly is the soul. Haunting ghosts are energetic; "they go about moving the furniture, and in every way trying to attract attention."[154] On November Eve the dead roam the earth and dance with the fairies.

Ghosts are compelled to obey the living. One story tells about a stable boy who met his master, who had been dead two days, making the rounds of the farm. The stable boy ordered the ghost to go away and haunt a desolate lighthouse. According to the story, the ghost went to haunt the lighthouse and is there to this day.[155]

The fetch is believed in by most peasants. It is said that "if you see the double, or fetch, of a friend in the morning, no ill follows; if at night, he is about to die."[156]

C. The Origin and Destiny of Fairies

There are various accounts of the origin of fairies. Irish antiquarians say that the fairies are the gods of pagan Ireland, the Tuatha De Danān. As proof, they point out that the names of the fairy chiefs are the same as those of the old Danān heroes, and that the favorite gathering places of the fairies are the old Danān burial

grounds. The antiquarians' most convincing "proof" is that the Tuatha De Danān were once called the slooa-shee, or sheagh sidhe, the fairy host; or Marca shee, the fairy cavalcade.[157] As Christianity progressed in Ireland, the Danān gods received less and less worship, until they became so small in the popular imagination that they turned into the fairies who are only a few feet high.[158]

The peasantry say that fairies are fallen angels "who were not good enough to be saved, nor bad enough to be lost."[159] This theory has the most evidence; for example, these creatures have capricious natures and they are good to the good and evil to the evil. Fairies can be very charming, but they lack conscience and consistency. Yeats grants that the popular belief of the peasants tells us most about the fairies, particularly about "how they fell, and yet were not lost, because their evil was wholly without malice."[160] This peasant belief in the origin of fairies is so prevalent that even the well-traveled sceptic of a western village will say that there are no such things as ghosts or the fire of hell,

> . . . but the gentry, they stand to reason; for the devil, when he fell out of heaven, took the weak-minded ones with him, and they were put in the waste places. And that's what the gentry are.[161]

A popular variation of this belief was told to Yeats by an old Galway man "who can see nothing but wickedness." This old man sees faunlike feet on the gentry and uses this as proof that they are the

children of the devil. He says, "Fallen angels they are, and after the fall God said, 'Let there be Hell,' and there it was in a moment." Yeats disagrees with the old man's "faunlike-feet proof;" he says that such feet only prove that fairies are indeed the children of Pan.[162]

No matter who advocates the above theories of the origin of fairies--be it antiquarian, historian, or peasant--Yeats has decided that fairies are the "gods of the earth." Yeats did not explain what he meant by the term "gods," and his discussion of it precludes the conventional definition. In Fairy and Folk Tales he has written:

> Many poets, and all mystics and occult writers, in all ages and countries, have declared that behind the visible are chains on chains of conscious beings, who are not of heaven but of earth, who have no inherent form but change according to their whim, or the mind that sees them. You cannot lift your hand without influencing and being influenced by hoards. The visible world is merely their skin. In dreams we go among them, and play with them, and combat with them. They are, perhaps, human souls in the crucible--these creatures of whim.[163]

The line stating that the "chains on chains of conscious beings . . . who have no inherent form but change according to . . . the mind that sees them" seems to reveal Yeats's idea of fairies and seems to explain the often contradictory statements he has made about the

fairies. He may be saying that fairies are in the mind of the beholder. For instance, he tells us that fairies are not always little: "They seem to take what size or shape pleases them."[164] And again, even though the majority of the peasants say that fairies are fallen angels, Yeats has credited the fairy belief of other peasants, like his old Mayo friend:

> Her thoughts and her sights of the people of faery are pleasant and beautiful too, and I have never heard her call them Fallen Angles. They are people like ourselves, only better looking. . . .[165]

Yeats has stated that this same old lady thinks that "it is something in our eyes that makes them seem big or little."[166] Here the emphasis is again on individual perception of a fairy.

Yeats's theory that perhaps fairies are human souls in the crucible may have been derived from his supposed interview with a queen of the fairies, which he recorded in "Regina, Regina Pigmeorum, Veni." According to the story in The Celtic Twilight, the fairy queen told Yeats that some fairies are born into mortal life later, and that he knew some people who were fairies before they were born.[167] During the time that the three books under discussion were prepared, Yeats was involved in the Theosophical Society. This organization had not only incorporated ghosts and fairies into their system, but also conceived of history as cyclical with a divine reincarnation occuring at the beginning of each cycle.[168] Concepts held by the Theosophists are evident in Yeats's discussion of the nature of a fairy. For example,

the Theosophists believed that the soul must pass through about 800 incarnations, each incarnation having differing degrees of matter and spirit. Earth alone has matter and spirit in equal quantities.[169] Theosophists also believed that dreams and symbols were supernatural manifestations.[170] In 1890 Yeats, in accordance with Theosophical doctrine, defined fairies as "'the lesser spiritual moods of that universal mind, wherein every mood is a soul and every thought a body.'"[171]

The end or death of fairies is no more certain than their origin. The sceptic who believed fairies were fallen angels told Yeats that fairies are "getting scarce now, because their time's over . . . and they're going back."[172] "Going back" to where or what the sceptic did not say; but since he did not believe in the "fire of hell," he may mean they are going back to heaven. In "The Remonstrance with the Scotsmen" Yeats has remarked that the priests have decided that since fairies have no souls, they will "dry up like so much bright vapour at the last day."[173] Yeats discredits both these solutions to the end of a fairy when he stated in Fairy and Folk Tales, "Do they [fairies] die? Blake saw a fairy's funeral; but in Ireland we say they are immortal."[174]

D. Fairyland

Fairies dwell in a country called Tir-na-n-Og, which means the country of the young. There is no old age or death in this land, nor tears or loud laughter. It is popularly called the dim kingdom, referring to the "dim powers," as the fairies are often called. Fairies are not the dark powers (evil) or the bright powers (good). They are

the intermediary, or dim, powers, which rule the spiritual realm between heaven and hell.

> In the dim kingdom there is a great abundance of all excellent things. There is more love there than upon the earth; there is more dancing there than upon the earth; and there is more treasure there than upon the earth.[175]

In spite of such a seemingly blissful state, fairies are not completely happy. It is said that fairies steal humans in order to bring sorrow to Tir-na-n-Og, for there can be no real happiness without sorrow. The fairies also know that they are "doomed to melt out at the last judgment like bright vapour, for the soul cannot live without sorrow."[176]

There are many entrances to Tir-na-n-Og from the earth. The most famous door to fairyland is a small white limestone square on the southern side of Ben Bulben, which is a little north of the town of Sligo. No human has ever touched this square nor do animals graze near it. It is said to be the most inaccessible place on earth. Every night the door opens and fairies come out and swarm over the land until dawn.[177]

Another entrance to fairyland is Heart Lake, so called because of its shape, located about five miles south of Sligo. Heart Lake is actually a gloomy pond surrounded by trees and filled with all kinds of waterfowl. "Out of this lake, as from the white square stone in Ben Bulben, issues an unearthly troop."[178]

Drumcliff and Rosses, perhaps because of their close proximity to Ben Bulben, are the most "gentle" places in the world. Drumcliff is a

broad, fertile valley at the foot of Ben Bulben. "Rosses is a little sea-dividing, sandy plain, covered with short grass, like a green tablecloth, and lying in the foam midway between the round cairn-headed Knocknarea and 'Ben Bulben, famous for hawks.'"[179] On the northern end of Rosses is a little promontory covered with sand, grass, and rock. Under its low cliff is a long cave, now concealed from sight by sand. Any peasant who falls asleep here may "wake 'silly,' the 'good people' having carried off his soul."[180] This cave, reportedly "'full of gold and silver, and the most beautiful parlours and drawing-rooms'" is another entrance to fairyland. There is a story about a dog who strayed in one day and was heard yelping far inland beneath a fort. Undoubtedly, this cave was connected by underground passages to many, if not all, of the forts in Ireland. Forts, or raths, were dug all over Ireland hundreds of years ago and were used by the populace to defend the land from invaders. The fairies have since taken them over and have made most into entrances to fairyland. Most forts have underground beehive chambers in the middle of them.

The particular fort where the dog was last heard yelping is an especially active entrance to fairyland, for many bad things have happened to peasants who have roamed near it. One night a farmer's young son saw a bright light coming from the fort. When he ran toward it, the "glamour" fell on him and he jumped upon a fence and began to beat it with a stick. He was still beating the fence, which he imagined was a horse, when dawn broke. He was carried home and remained a simpleton for three years. Later, a farmer tried to level the fort; his cows and horses died and he had all kinds of trouble.

Finally, he had to be carried home where he remained useless until the day he died.[181]

E. Activities and Attitudes of the Gentry

Other than the occupations listed above, most of which involve behavior toward men, the fairies' chief activities are fighting, feasting making love, and playing beautiful music. Three days of the year that the gentry specially celebrate are May Eve, Midsummer Eve, and November Eve.

Every seventh year on May Eve the fairies fight over the harvest, "for the best ears of grain belong to them." Some of the peasants have seen them fight; one fight was so violent that they tore the thatch off a house. To an untrained observer, it would have appeared that a great wind had blown the roof off. The peasants take off their hats whenever a great wind is blowing everything into the air and say, "God bless them."[182]

On Midsummer Eve the fairies are at their gayest. They sing and dance around the bonfires lighted on every hill in honor of St. James. Sometimes they steal away beautiful mortals on this night to be their brides.[183]

November Eve is the first night of winter, according to the old Gaelic reckoning. On this night the fairies are at their gloomiest. They dance with the ghosts; the witches make their spells; the Pooka is roaming the country spoiling the blackberries; and young girls set a table with food in the name of the devil with the hope that the fetch of their future lover will come in the window and eat the food.[184]

The peasants generally regard fairies as the best of neighbors. If men are good to the fairies, the fairies are good to them. Fairies do get impatient about a few things though, especially when someone walks or builds on their path. Fairies are quickly offended so one must not speak often or much about them, and then they must be called the "gentry" or daoine maithe, which means "good people." They are easily pleased also. If one leaves a bowl of milk for them on the window sill overnight, the gentry will do all they can to keep harm and misfortune away.[185] One thing is certain: the fairies are always good to the poor.

Fairies, like ghosts, are intolerant of doubters. There is a story of a Donegal doubter who spent the night in a haunted house. The man took his boots off and wandered about the house. Soon the boots came alive and kicked the doubter out of the house.

F. The Peasantry

The Irish peasants take fairies and ghosts seriously. As was mentioned above, the gentry do not like to be discussed; and the peasants will not discuss them unless they are your friends or have knowledge of your family. In Fairy and Folk Tales Yeats has observed that the only way a stranger can learn stories is to make friends with the children and old men and "with those who have not felt the pressure of mere daylight existence, and those with whom it is growing less." The old women usually will not discuss fairies because some who have were "nearly pinched into their graves or numbed with fairy blasts."[186] An old woman, upon being questioned, is likely to answer, as she did to Yeats, "They always mind their own affairs and I always mind mine."[187]

The Celtic peasants are always aware of the mystery surrounding them. Even though the peasants believe in the goodness of God, they believe just as strongly in the dim powers. Yeats theorized that

> God is all the nearer, because the pagan powers are not far: because northward in Ben Bulben . . . the white square door swings open at sundown, and those wild unchristian riders rush forth upon the fields, while southward the White Lady, who is doubtless Maive herself, wanders under the broad cloud nightcap of Knocknarea.[188]

The peasants never doubt that these things happen; there are too many eye-witnesses to the antics of fairies.

According to an essay in The Celtic Twilight, much of man's fascination with fairies stems from the fact that fairies have no mixed emotions--one of man's greatest troubles in life. Man always likes something in his enemy, and dislikes something in his sweetheart, and it is

> . . . this entanglement of moods which makes us old, and puckers our brows and deepens the furrows above our eyes. If we could love and hate with as good heart as the faeries do, we might grow to be long-lived like them. . . . Love with them never grows weary, nor can the circles of the stars tire out their dancing feet.[189]

The attitude of the Celtic peasants toward the fairies is best seen, perhaps, in The Celtic Twilight essay, "A Remonstrance with Scotsmen for Having Soured the Disposition of Their Ghosts and Fairies." In this little essay, Yeats has demonstrated how the two different ways--Scottish and Irish--of regarding the fairies have influenced in each country the behavior of the dim world creatures. For instance, Scotsmen fear fairies and want to destroy them; whereas, an Irishman would come to terms with the spirit, for the Irish and the spirits hold each other in timid affection--"each admits the other side to have feelings." "They only ill-treat each other in reason." Irishmen would never be cruel to the fairies as Scotsmen are known to be. There is a story of a Scotsman quieting a Kelpie by driving an awl into her; and another tale tells of Scotsmen cutting off the hand of a fairy who had befriended a small child.

After Yeats accused the Scottish of being too strictly religious to see the humor and grace of the little pagans, he told how some mortals have gone among the fairies and helped them in time of war. In return, fairies do favors for men, such as teaching them their skill with herbs and allowing certain mortals to hear their songs. Carolan was a great musician because the fairies allowed him to hear their songs. In Ireland the priests do not denounce fairies from the pulpit; but in sorrow they have decreed that fairies have no souls and will, therefore, evaporate at the last day. "The Catholic religion likes to keep on good terms with its neighbors."

Because the Irish have treated their spirits well, the activities of the Irish gentry are gay and graceful--not terrible as in Scotland.

The seemingly terrible deeds done by Irish fairies are not worried about, for everyone knows the result will be all right:

> When a peasant strays into an enchanted hovel, and is made to turn a corpse all night on a spit before the fire, we do not feel anxious; we know he will wake in the midst of a green field, the dew on his old coat.

There are water-goblins and water-monsters in Ireland as well as in Scotland. But in Ireland the peasantry humorize the tales about them because the Irish peasantry and the dim kingdom exchange civilities.[190]

The people who delighted in fairy tales were generally the victims of circumstance; that is, they were born poor, and of necessity lived in the most natural simplicity, and were hard-driven to earn a livelihood. The majority were tenant farmers who lived in constant fear of crop failures, a tragedy which sometimes meant that an angry landlord who had not received his rent could deprive them of living on and farming a small plot of land. Peasants paid their rent from the proceeds of the sale of crops. A crop failure often meant the difference between a subsistence-level life--which the peasants were glad to have--and extreme poverty, which could mean emigration, immigration, or death from starvation or exposure. The peasantry not only had poor living conditions but they were uneducated and were generally nonreaders; conditions that made them not only politically impotent, but also susceptible to all kinds of disease. Yeats has asserted that "we too, if we

were so weak and poor that everything threatened us with misfortune, would remember . . . every old dream that has been strong enough to fling the weight of the world from its shoulders."[191] Their lives, even the long ones, held few major events, and these could be recounted in a single evening's sitting. According to Yeats, folk tales, and presumably fairy tales, were the

> . . . literature of a class for whom every incident in the old rut of birth, love, pain, and death has cropped up unchanged for centuries: who have steeped everything in the heart: to whom everything is a symbol. They have the spade over which man has leant from the beginning.[192]

In spite of their circumstances, the peasants were basically cheerful; because of their circumstances, this cheerfulness was mixed with the "visionary melancholy of purely instinctive natures and of all animals."[193] The people of the cities had become too involved in the complicated incidents of life to let anything, let alone fairy tales, gather much meaning. But again, the more fortunate and educated Celt is innately a visionary; even a newspaper man will believe in phantoms if he is enticed into a graveyard at night.[194]

The tales the peasants told were, no doubt, influenced by a natural setting, consisting of "the most wild and beautiful scenery, under a sky ever loaded and fantastic with flying clouds."[195] Perhaps the absence from their lives of major events and the presence of a natural setting, complete with all its mysteries, have caused the

peasant to be more imaginative than his brothers in the city. For instance, old Paddy Flynn, one of the greatest tellers of tales, "knew how to empty heaven, hell, and purgatory, faeryland and earth, to people his stories. He did not live in a shrunken world, but knew of no less ample circumstance than did Homer himself."[196] In other words, Paddy Flynn and others like him have coupled with their simplicity an amplitude of imagination that explains the mysteries of life and nature as well as giving it significance.

According to Yeats, the peasant's simplicity and imagination make him an asset to a complex and reasonable world. Yeats has approvingly stated that the simple beliefs and emotions of the peasant make him many years nearer to the old Greek world "that set beauty beside the fountain of things" than are any of the sophisticated men of learning.[197] Yeats hopefully suggested that if the Gaelic people cultivate imagination and the simplicity of emotion that the peasants possess, the Irish would soon have a literature that would rival that of the ancient Greeks.

G. A Note on Yeats's Folklore

Even though Yeats did not possess the high degree of scientific accuracy that present-day folklorists encourage, his descriptions and classifications of fairies in the three books under discussion are amazingly accurate and complete. Professor Stith Thompson's Motif Index of Folk-Literature[198] abounds with thousands of fairy motifs gleaned from hundreds of Celtic fairy tales; and Tom Peete Cross, thinking that Thompson's Celtic research was not exhaustive enough, has compiled a lengthy list of additional Celtic fairy motifs to

supplement it, Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature.[199] Of course, Yeats did not begin to mention all these motifs in his three books; but he was able to include a remarkable number. The most prominent motifs listed by the Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend[200] are, not surprisingly, the same motifs over which Yeats's anthologies linger. They are (1) fairies assist mortals; (2) fairies harm mortals; (3) fairies abduct mortals for special purposes; (4) changelings; (5) mortal visits to fairyland; and (6) fairy mistress or lover.

Neither Professor Thompson nor Cross has mentioned fairies by such individual categories as Dullahan, Cluricaun, or Leanhaun Shee. They have grouped the fairies together as "the fairies" or "the sidhe." The most prominent fairies--Banshees, Pookas, Lepricauns--are occasionally referred to by name. The more obscure group names--Dullahan, Cluricaun, Merrow, Sheoque, and the like--can be found in folklore dictionaries, but spelling variations exist from dictionary to dictionary. The Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend states the following:

> Fairies may be divided into two large groups: 1) Those belonging to the fairy "race" or "nation" living in fairyland in an organized society of their own. Such groups are the people of the side, i. e. people of the hills, in Ireland. 2) The individual fairies associated with a place, or occupation, or household, such as the leprechaun.[201]

Generally, twentieth-century folklorists emphasize the fairy "race" or "nation" at the expense of the "individual fairies."[202] Yeats, of course, has treated mostly the "individual fairies," which he has subdivided into the two categories of Sociable and Unsociable fairies. His remarks about the fairy "nation" are interspersed throughout his books, especially The Celtic Twilight.

Assuming that Yeats did not base his descriptions of fairies and fairyland on some categorical list then in existence, but that he compiled his own descriptions from an actual reading of the Irish tales and from his oral collecting, one must conclude that Yeats's books are landmarks in Irish folklore. In fact, an American scholar, Dr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, who has degrees in English, social anthropology, and comparative religion from Stanford, Oxford, and University of Rennes, dedicated his first book Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries (1911 and 1966)[203] to A. E. and "William Butler Yeats, who brought to me at my own alma mater in California the first message from fairyland, and who afterwards in his own country led me through the haunts of fairy kings and queens." Dr. Evans-Wentz's treatment of the fairies is much the same as Yeats's. Fairy-Faith is arranged in four sections: (1) living testimony for fairies; (2) the recorded tradition of Celtic literature and mythology; (3) different theories of fairies and the religious aspects of these theories; and (4) a rational case for the reality of fairy life. In the fourth section Evans-Wentz has stated that we could "postulate scientifically, on the showing of the data of psychical research, the existence of such invisible intelligences as gods, genii, daemons, all kinds of true fairies, and disembodied men."

K. M. Briggs has acknowledged Fairy-Faith in her book The Fairies in Tradition and Literature (1967) as a "truly valuable piece of investigation,"[204] and Leslie Shepard, who wrote the Foreward to last edition (1966) of Fairy-Faith, has called it a "key" book and says that it is "the most scholarly work on fairies ever published." Shepard suggests that Yeats's "wonderful anthology Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry (1889) . . . may have been the book that excited the interest of Dr. Evans-Wentz in the first place." Mr. Shepard has found Dr. Evans-Wentz unique because, being "a distinguished scholar, [he] did not hesitate to face up to the question of belief, and admit quite firmly that he recognized a case for the reality of fairy life. But Dr. Evans-Wentz was a very unusual and courageous man." One might say the same for Yeats; twenty-three years earlier he had attempted to place the fairies in his very real world of the occult, and had published his theory that fairies are, perhaps, "human souls in the crucible."

PART V: THE SIDHE DWINDLE

One cannot say that in 1894 Yeats suddenly decided that he no longer would be a collector, editor, critic, and poet of fairy tales, but a bibliography of his writings makes it obvious that about this time the fairies began to disappear from his works.

It was natural that Yeats had turned to fairy tales for a subject matter when he first decided to make himself an Irish writer. He had heard fairy tales being exchanged by his mother, relatives, servants, and country people from the time he was a child. Then, too, it was relatively easy for him to question peasants about fairies while on his frequent walks through the country. Partly, then, because the fairy tales were familiar to him, and partly because he needed an Irish subject matter quickly, Yeats turned to fairy tales for the source of his first creative and critical Irish works.

The seven years between 1886 and 1893 were the years in which Yeats was building a subject matter for himself, and in his nationalistic zeal, for other Irish writers. Not only was he collecting fairy tales and reading all written folklore so far as he could find it, he was also urging other writers to look to the mythology and fairy tales of Ireland for their subject matter. These, he emphasized, were the main sources at which Irish imagination might strengthen itself. He was convinced that Irish writers were obligated to "re-awaken imaginative

tradition by making old songs live again, or by gathering old stories into books."[205]

In these same seven years, Yeats practiced what he preached. In fact, almost all of the work he was ever to do with the fairy tales was done during this period; for instance, "The Stolen Child" (1886), "The Fairy Doctor" (1887), "The Man Who Dreamed of Fairyland" (1891), "A Fairy Song" (1891), and "The Host" (1893). The fairy tale anthologies he annotated and edited--Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry (1888), Stories from Carleton (1891), Representative Irish Tales (1891), and Irish Fairy Tales (1892)--belong to this period as does his own collection of fairy tales, The Celtic Twilight (1893).

Various pursuits and circumstances reinforce the likelihood that Yeats did not intentionally disregard fairy tales after 1893. In the last years of the nineteenth century he was immersed in the political activity surrounding the Wolfe Tone Centennial Celebration of '98 of which he was chairman; he was preoccupied with Maud Gonne, the occult, critical work, Olivia Shakespeare, plays, theater plans, and his health was collapsing. In fact, if Yeats's health had not been so bad at this time, his enlarged edition of The Celtic Twilight (1902) may never have been published. About 1897 when Yeats had begun to spend much of his time at Coole Park with Lady Gregory, his health was bad enough that he often found the demands of creative work too strenuous. More for exercise and fresh air than for the stories, Yeats had gone with Lady Gregory to collect fairy tales from the peasants surrounding her estate. Of the large numer of stories they must have gathered, Yeats included only fourteen--which he had published first in magazines--in

the new edition of The Celtic Twilight. In the Preface to this enlarged edition, Yeats implied that he planned to continue his work with fairy tales and he promised to publish "in a little while a big book about the commonwealth of faery."[206] For all his good intentions, Yeats never wrote his "big book." It remained for Lady Gregory to use many of the stories they had collected together in her Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland (1920).

Involvement with the theater, the occult, politics, health, and other affairs are plausible reasons why Yeats gave only perfunctory nods to the fairies after 1893. Yeats would have found time to write more about fairies if the tales had been able to fit his particular literary requirements. In the early 1890's Yeats began to use symbolism in order to express, and perhaps cloak, his thoughts about things not exclusively Irish. At this time he was, no doubt, greatly influenced in the use of symbolism by the Rhymers Club, a group of poets he had helped organize in London in 1891, and his four-year study of Blake while preparing with Edwin Ellis the three-volume Works of William Blake (1893). As we have seen, fairies are too capricious and unstable to be good subjects for symbolic literature; but perhaps their biggest drawback is that they are not human and, therefore, are incapable of sorrow, age, death, or any of the other afflictions of man. The peasant ballads and what Yeats called his "miracle plays," such as The Countess Kathleen, were equally unable to carry the burden symbolism imposes.

As far as the fairy tales themselves are concerned, it is doubtful that Yeats ever considered them for long as major, lasting subjects for his own works. One of Yeats's main objectives in promulgating fairy

tales had been to stimulate Irish imagination because, as he believed, "imagination has some way of lighting on the truth that the reason has not."[207] As early as 1888 Yeats had stated in his Preface to Fairy and Folk Tales that it was more important to capture "the very voice of the people" than it was to make a study of the "primitive religion of mankind."[208] Again, the essays of The Celtic Twilight, more a testimonial to the peasantry than the fairies, suggest that Yeats was more impressed with the peasant life and imagination than he was with their tales. In late life when Yeats recalled his tale-collecting experiences with Lady Gregory, he admitted that they

> '. . . had little scientific curiosity, but sought wisdom, peace, and a communion with the people. . . . Dr. Hyde and his [Gaelic] League . . . sought the peasants . . . but we sought the peasant's imagination.'[209]

It does not mean that Yeats had wasted his time learning about fairies and fairy tales just because he was primarily seeking to understand the peasant's imagination. On the contrary, they were, along with the legends, folk tales, and political history of Ireland, an important source from which Yeats drew whenever and whatever he needed for his writings.

Aside from the imaginative aspects of the tales, Yeats was interested in fairies as part of the incarnative system of life that the Theosophical Society and the Order of the Golden Dawn endorsed. Yeats had come to prefer the theory that fairies are "human souls in the crucible,"

"the lesser spiritual moods of [the] universal mind" over that of fairies as myths on which a national literature might be built.

In view of his gradually evolving conception of fairies, then, it is not surprising that between 1885, the date of Yeats's first published works, and 1899, publication of The Wind Among the Reeds, his poetry had progressed from local descriptive legends, ballads, and fairy poems (e.g., "The Meditation of the Old Fisherman," 1886, "The Ballad of Moll Magee," 1887, "The Fairy Doctor," 1887) to the wider field of Irish nationalism that contained a few symbols (e.g., "The Wanderings of Oisin," 1889); and back again to the localized descriptive poetry of "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" (1890), "Father Gilligan" (1890), and "The Man Who Dreamed of Fairyland" (1891); then forward again to the broader Irish themes, but this time with an increasing dependence on European symbols: "To the Rose Upon the Rood of Time" (1892), "The Peace of the Rose" (1892), and "The two Trees" (1892).[210] The Wind Among the Reeds (1899)[211] contains a number of poems in which Yeats has used the Irish names "Robartes," "Hanrahan," and "Aedh" to symbolize, respectively, fire reflected in water, fire blown by wind, and fire burning by itself. Yeats's progress from local to national to universal poetry was not accidental. In a letter to the Providence Sunday Journal (1888) he had made it clear that:

> To the greater poets everything they see has its relation to the national life, and through that to the universal and divine life. . . . But to this universalism . . . you can only attain through what is near you, your nation, or,

> if you be no traveller, your village and the cobwebs on your walls. . . . One can only reach out to the universe with a gloved hand--that glove is one's nation. . . .[212]

In effect, the progress of Yeats's poetry from local to universal parallels the change in his conception of fairies as local sidhe to that of universal spirits.

In 1902 Lady Gregory's translation of Cuchulain of Muirthemne opened up for Yeats the whole legendary world of Ireland. Unlike the fairy tales, legends of the ancient heroes had been handed down from generation to generation with only slight variations. For many years prior to the publication of Cuchulain, Yeats had been aware of the poetic and dramatic potential legendary characters offered; but aside from "The Wanderings of Oisin," which was started in 1886, Yeats had done very little with them. Yeats was able to find other accounts of the legends, but most of them had been translated from the Irish by scholars in a dry and often ambiguous manner. In late life Yeats wrote that O'Curry's "unarranged and uninterpreted history" defeated his boyish indolence,[213] and that he had not been impressed by the style of Standish O'Grady's interpretation, for it was "shaped by Carlyle."[214] On the other hand, Lady Gregory had written her book in the rhythmic language of the peasant that, toward the beginning of the century, Yeats was beginning to regard as ideal for Irish drama. Then, too, Lady Gregory had made her account of the legends logical by choosing to include only the best of perhaps several variations of one story.

The Preface Yeats wrote for Cuchulain shows his enthusiasm and forecasts his dependence on it:

> I think this book is the best that has come out of Ireland in my time. Perhaps I should say that it is the best book that has ever come out of Ireland; for the stories which it tells are a chief part of Ireland's gift to the imagination of the world--and it tells them perfectly for the first time. . . . I cannot believe that anybody, except now and then for a scientific purpose, will need another text than this. . . .[215]

Characters from this book--Finn, Conchubar, Deirdre, Cuchulain, Emer--were soon to become important dramatis personae in Yeats's drama. He drew on Cuchulain of Muirthemne for On Baile's Strand (begun 1901, completed 1903), Deirdre (begun 1904, completed 1907), The Golden Helmet (1908), The Green Helmet (1910), At the Hawk's Well (1915), The Only Jealousy of Emer (1916), and The Death of Cuchulain (1938). Cuchulain and the other legendary characters offered Yeats the opportunity to express the human emotion and heroic tragedy that were impossible to embody in characters drawn from the Country of the Young. Along with fairy tales, plays like The Countess Kathleen and Cathleen Ni Houlihan were incapable of containing earthly passion or tragic theme. In addition, these folk dramas had been written partly to portray the sacrificing and revolutionary spirit of Maud Gonne. After her marriage

early in 1903, Yeats confessed that he needed a new subject matter and he found

> Nothing to make a song about but kings,
> Helmets, and swords, and half-forgotten things. . . .[216]

Also, after 1900 Yeats was a theater manager and he knew that many plays had to be written for the Abbey players. Of the relatively few Irish plays then in existence, Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory did not consider most appropriate for a national theater. Synge and Lady Gregory busied themselves writing plays based on peasant life; the Irish legends provided Yeats with material for his most important contributions.

Yeats did not forget the fairies altogether, though. As late as 1920 he wrote authoritative and lengthy notes for Lady Gregory's collection of fairy tales, Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland.[217] Most of the notes deal with spirits in general rather than with Irish fairies. However, he did give a brief account of what Irish fairies are, but even then his main interest was with such questions as whether fairies have souls, if they die, if they are reincarnated, if they are the "shades of men" or spirits of evil; Yeats also concerned himself in the notes about their modes of transformation, their physical substance, trances, spirit evocation, spirit possession, and dualism of body and soul.

In conclusion, the two most important factors in the decline of Yeats's use of fairies and fairy tales are (1) that the other-worldly

and unstable nature of fairies made them unsuitable subjects for Yeats's symbolic and always personal poetry and drama; and (2) that as the Irish fairies became assimilated into the universal spirits of Yeats's occult belief, they became less important as literary figures. Just as the Tuatha De Danān had dwindled centuries before in the imagination of the Irish until they became the fairies, so the fairies appear to have dwindled in Yeats's imagination until they became only a small segment of that great body who roam the universe in varying degrees of spirit and matter.

NOTES

[1]Joseph Hone, W. B. Yeats: 1865-1939 (London, 1962), pp. 16-17.

[2]W. B. Yeats, "Reveries over Childhood and Youth" in The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats (Garden City, N. Y., 1958), p. 5. (Future references will be cited as "Reveries.")

[3]Ibid., p. 14.

[4]Ibid., p. 6.

[5]Ibid., p. 37.

[6]Ibid., p. 24.

[7]Richard Ellmann, Yeats: The Man and the Masks (New York, 1948), p. 53.

[8]Yeats, "Reveries," p. 41.

[9]Ibid., p. 19.

[10]Ibid., p. 40.

[11]Ibid., p. 50.

[12]Ibid., p. 46.

[13]Ibid., p. 33.

[14]Yeats, "Reveries," p. 21.

[15]Hone, p. 15.

[16]Ibid., p. 36.

[17]Yeats, "Reveries," p. 21.

[18]Ibid., p. 51.

[19]W. B. Yeats, The Celtic Twilight (New York, 1962), p. 75.

[20]Yeats, "Reveries," p. 51. (True Thomas was a mortal reported to have been taken underground to fairyland from a place in the Eildon Hills in the north of England.)

[21]Ibid., p. 52. (Cf. fn. 96.)

[22]Hone, p. 17.

[23]Ellmann, Masks, p. 13.

[24]Yeats, "Reveries," pp. 29-30.

[25]Ibid., p. 47.

[26]Ibid., pp. 42-43.

[27]Ellmann, Masks, p. 27.

[28]Yeats, "Reveries," p. 42.

[29]W. B. Yeats, "Time and the Witch Vivien," The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems (London, 1889), pp. 53-57.

[30]Ellmann, Masks, p. 35.

[31]W. B. Yeats, "Mosada," The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems (London, 1889), pp. 98-112.

[32]W. B. Yeats, "The Island of Statues," Dublin University Review, I (April-July 1885), 56-58, 82-84, 110-112, 136-139.

[33]W. B. Yeats, "Four Years: 1887-1891" in The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats (Garden City, N. Y., 1958), p. 117.

[34]Retitled "The Indian Upon God" in Poems, 1895.

[35]Retitled "The Indian to His Love" in Poems, 1895.

[36]Yeats, "Reveries," p. 59.

[37]Ibid., p. 15.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid., p. 39.

[40]Ibid., p. 53.

[41]A. Norman Jeffares, W. B. Yeats: Man and Poet (London, 1962), p. 31.

[42]W. B. Yeats, The Collected Works in Verse and Prose of William Butler Yeats (Stratford-On-Avon, 1908), VIII, 196.

[43]Ibid., 193.

[44]W. B. Yeats, "Kanva on Himself," The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems (London, 1889), p. 68.

[45]Ellmann, Masks, p. 64.

[46]Ibid., p. 86.

[47]Ibid., p. 64.

[48]Ibid., pp. 45-46.

[49]W. B. Yeats, "Ireland after Parnell" in The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats (Garden City, N. Y., 1958), p. 144.

[50]Ellmann, Masks, p. 45.

[51]Kathleen Hoagland, ed., 1000 Years of Irish Poetry (New York, 1962), p. xlvii.

[52]Ann Saddlemyer, "'The Noble and the Beggar-Man': Yeats and Literary Nationalism," The World of W. B. Yeats: Essays in Perspective, eds. Robin Skelton and Ann Saddlemyer (Dublin, 1965), p. 27.

[53]Ibid., pp. 27-28.

[54]Edmund Curtis, A History of Ireland (London, 1961), p. 369.

[55]W. B. Yeats, Essays and Introductions (New York, 1961), p. 3.

[56]Ibid., pp. 4-5.

[57]Yeats, "Reveries," p. 67.

[58]Ellmann, Masks, pp. 47-48.

[59]Yeats, Essays, p. 4.

[60]Jeffares, p. 38.

[61]Richard Ellmann, The Identity of Yeats (New York, 1964), p. 15.

[62]W. B. Yeats, "The Stolen Child," The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (New York, 1963), pp. 18-19.

[63]Saddlemyer, p. 22.

[64]W. B. Yeats, Letters to the New Island, ed. Horace Reynolds (Cambridge, Mass., 1934), pp. 156-157.

[65]Ibid., pp. 103-104.

[66]Ibid., p. 103.

[67]Ibid., pp. 127-128.

[68]Saddlemyer, p. 39.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Yeats, Letters to the New Island, p. 107.

[71]Ibid., p. 158.

[72]Ibid., p. 148.

[73]Saddlemyer, p. 22.

[74]Yeats included selections from the following writers in (1) Fairy and Folk Tales: William Allingham, *William Carleton, *T. Crofton Croker, Samuel Ferguson, Douglas Hyde, J. J. Callanan, *Samuel Lover, Letitia Maclintock, Edward Walsh, W. B. Yeats, Patrick Kennedy, John Todhunter, Clarence Mangan, Ellen O'Leary, Lady Wilde, Alfred P. Graves, Mrs. Crow, Dublin University Review (1839), Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, Dublin and London Magazine (1825), *Gerald Griffin, Giraldus Cambrensis, Hibernian Tales (chapbook), Abraham McCoy (trans. N. O'Kearney); (2) Representative Irish Tales: Maria Edgeworth, John and Michael Banim, William Carleton, Samuel Lover, William Maginn, T. Crofton Croker, Gerald Griffin, Charles Lever, Charles Kickham, Rosa Mulholland, Hibernian Tales, Dublin Penny Journal; and (3) Irish Fairy Tales: William Carleton, T. Crofton Croker, Michael Hart (recorded by W. B. Yeats), Samuel Lover, P. W. Joyce, Douglas Hyde, Lady Wilde, Gerald Griffin, Standish O'Grady.

*Selections from these four writers included in all anthologies.

[75]Yeats, Letters to the New Island, p. 194.

[76]W. B. Yeats, The Letters of W. B. Yeats, ed. Allan Wade (London, 1954), pp. 78-79.

[77]Representative Irish Tales, ed. W. B. Yeats (New York, n. d. [1891]), pp. 1-2.

[78]Ibid., p. 3.

[79]Ibid.

[80]Representative Irish Tales, p. 4.

[81]Ibid., p. 5.

[82]Ibid.

[83]Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry, ed. W. B. Yeats (London, 1888), p. xv.

[84]Representative Irish Tales, p. 7.

[85]Ibid., p. 6.

[86]Fairy and Folk Tales, p. xiv.

[87]Representative Irish Tales, p. 8.

[88]Fairy and Folk Tales, p. xv.

[89]Representative Irish Tales, p. 12.

[90]Ibid., pp. 13-14.

[91]Fairy and Folk Tales, p. xv.

[92]Ibid., p. xvi.

[93]Yeats, Letters to the New Island, p. 79.

[94]D. R. McAnally, Jr., Irish Wonders (Boston, 1888), 218 pp.

[95]Yeats, Letters to the New Island, pp. 192-193.

[96]Yeats had made it a point in Fairy and Folk Tales (pp. xvi-xvii) not to rationalize the fairies:

> The reader will perhaps wonder that in all my notes I have not rationalized a single hobgoblin. I seek for shelter to the words of Socrates. . . . 'Socrates. The wise are doubtful, and I should not be singular if, like them, I also doubted. . . . Now, I have certainly not time for such inquiries. . . . I must first know myself . . . to be curious about that which is not my business, while I am still in ignorance of my own self, would be ridiculous. And, therefore, I say . . . the common opinion is enough for men.'

[97]Celtic Twilight, p. 31.

[98]Ibid., p. 32.

[99]Irish Fairy Tales, ed. W. B. Yeats (London, 1892), p. 3:

> She [Biddy Hart] did not forget . . . to remind me to say after we had finished [speaking of fairies], 'God bless them, Thursday (that being the day), and so ward off their displeasure, in case they were angry at our notice, for they love to live and dance unknown of men.

[100]Celtic Twilight, p. 32.

[101]Ibid., pp. 32-33.

[102]When Yeats wrote the Introduction to Fairy and Folk Tales (1888), p. xii, Paddy Flynn was still living and Yeats identified him by name

but not by locality: " . . . Paddy Flynn, a little, bright-eyed, old man, living in a leaky one-roomed cottage of the village of B____."

[103]Yeats, "Reveries," p. 40.

[104]Ibid., p. 46.

[105]Yeats, Letters, p. 214.

[106]Yeats, "Reveries," pp. 69-70.

[107]Gerald Griffin, "The Knight of the Sheep," Representative Irish Tales, ed. W. B. Yeats (New York, n. d. [1891]), pp. 167-193.

[108]Irish Fairy Tales, p. 2.

[109]Ibid., p. 3.

[110]Fairy and Folk Tales, p. 206.

[111]Ibid., p. 47.

[112]Ibid.

[113]Irish Fairy Tales, p. 224.

[114]Fairy and Folk Tales, p. 61.

[115]Irish Fairy Tales, p. 226.

[116]"Lepricaun" in Irish Fairy Tales, "Lepracaun" in Fairy and Folk Tales, "Leprechaun" in modern English.

[117]Irish Fairy Tales, p. 227.

[118]Ibid.

[119]Ibid., p. 228.

[120]Ibid., pp. 228-229.

[121]Ibid., p. 229.

[122]Fairy and Folk Tales, p. 108.

[123]Irish Fairy Tales, p. 228.

[124]Fairy and Folk Tales, p. 80.

[125]Irish Fairy Tales, p. 230.

[126]Fairy and Folk Tales, p. 146.

[127]Irish Fairy Tales, p. 230.

[128]Ibid.

[129]Fairy and Folk Tales, p. 108.

[130]Ibid.

[131]Ibid., p. 94.

[132]Irish Fairy Tales, p. 233.

[133]Ibid., p. 94.

[134]Fairy and Folk Tales, p. 146.

[135]Ibid.

[136]Ibid.

[137]Ibid., p. 148.

[138]Ibid.

[139]Ibid.

[140]Ibid., p. 129.

[141]Celtic Twilight, p. 96.

[142]Ibid., p. 44.

[143]Fairy and Folk Tales, p. 16.

[144]K. M. Briggs in The Fairies in Tradition and Literature (London, 1967), states that the confusion existing around the natures of ghosts, devils, and fairies "calls for investigation on an international level" (p. 107). Her investigation has shown also that there might seem to be "little connection between these ghosts, ancient gods or devils and the fairies, and yet . . . the distinction between the fairies and the dead is vague and shifting." "Domestic spirits are often thought of as ghosts. The connection between the Trooping Fairies and the dead is . . . strong in Ireland. . . (pp. 51-52).

[145]Celtic Twilight, p. 44.

[146]Celtic Twilight, p. 44.

[147]Ibid., p. 96.

[148]Ibid., p. 44.

[149]Ibid., p. 43.

[150]Ibid., p. 96.

[151]Fairy and Folk Tales, pp. 128-129.

[152]Ibid., p. 128.

[153]Ibid.

[154]Ibid.

[155]Ibid.

[156]Ibid., p. 129.

[157]Ibid., p. 1.

[158]Ibid., p. 260.

[159]Ibid., p. 1.

[160]Ibid., p. 2.

[161]Ibid., p. xiv.

[162]Celtic Twilight, pp. 61-62.

[163]*Fairy and Folk Tales*, p. 2.

[164]Ibid.

[165]*Celtic Twilight*, p. 60.

[166]Ibid., p. 69.

[167]Ibid., pp. 68-70.

[168]Ellmann, *Masks*, p. 68.

[169]Ibid., p. 59.

[170]Ibid., p. 67.

[171]Ibid.

[172]*Fairy and Folk Tales*, p. xiv.

[173]*Celtic Twilight*, p. 106.

[174]*Fairy and Folk Tales*, p. 3.

[175]*Celtic Twilight*, p. 91.

[176]Ibid., p. 80.

[177]Ibid.

[178]Ibid., p. 82.

[179]Ibid., p. 93.

[180]Celtic Twilight, p. 93.

[181]Ibid., pp. 93-94.

[182]Fairy and Folk Tales, p. 2.

[183]Ibid.

[184]Ibid., p. 3.

[185]Ibid., pp. 1-2.

[186]Ibid., p. xi.

[187]Celtic Twilight, p. 97.

[188]Ibid., p. 94.

[189]Ibid., p. 85.

[190]Ibid., pp. 105-107.

[191]Ibid., p. 119.

[192]Fairy and Folk Tales, p. xii.

[193]Ibid., p. xiii.

[194]Ibid., p. x.

[195]Celtic Twilight, p. 44.

[196]Ibid., p. 33.

[197]Celtic Twilight, p. 40.

[198]Stith Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk Literature, 6 vols (Bloomington, 1955).

[199]Tom Peete Cross, Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature (Bloomington, 1952).

[200]Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend, ed. Maria Leach (New York, 1949).

[201]Ibid., p. 364.

[202]For an exception see K. M. Briggs, "Appendix I: Fairy Types and Individuals" in The Fairies in Tradition and Literature (London, 1967), pp. 213-231.

[203]Walter Y. Evans-Wentz, Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries (London, 1966).

[204]Briggs, p. 141.

[205]Celtic Twilight, p. 129.

[206]Ibid., p. 32.

[207]Yeats, Essays, p. 65.

[208]Fairy and Folk Tales, p. xiv.

[209]Saddlemyer, p. 31.

[210]See Jeffares, pp. 79-80, for a more complete account of the changes in Yeats's early poetry.

[211]The title of the collection "The Wind Among the Reeds" may have been suggested to Yeats by Nora Hopper's poem "The Wind Among the Reeds," included in the anthology Lyra Celtica (1896), eds. E. A. Sharp and J. Matthay. Miss Hopper's poem is a lament for the departing fairies:

> Dance in your rings again: the yellow weeds
> You used to ride so far, mount as of old--
> Play hide-and-seek with the wind among the reeds,
> And pay your scores again with fairy gold.
>
> (Quoted by Briggs, p. 171)

If the title of Yeats's collection was indeed suggested by Miss Hopper's lament, then perhaps Yeats deliberately used the title to signal that the fairies had departed from his poetry.

[212]Yeats, Letters to the New Island, p. 174.

[213]Yeats, Essays, p. 511.

[214]Ibid., p. 513.

[215]W. B. Yeats, Preface to Cuchulain of Muirthemne: The Story of the Men of the Red Branch of Ulster by Lady Gregory (London, 1902), pp. vii-viii.

[216]W. B. Yeats, "Reconciliation," The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (New York, 1963), p. 89.

[217]Augusta, Lady Gregory, Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland, 2 vols (New York, 1920).

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