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0521650895 - The Cambridge Companion to W. B. Yeats
Edited by Marjorie Howes and John Kelly
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The Cambridge Companion to W. B. Yeats

This accessible and thought-provoking Companion is designed to help students experience the pleasures and challenges offered by one of the twentieth century's greatest poets. A team of international contributors examines Yeats's poetry, drama, and prose in their historical and national contexts. The essays explain and synthesize major aspects and themes of his life and work: his lifelong engagement with Ireland; his complicated relationship to the English literary tradition; his literary, social, and political criticism; and the evolution of his complex spiritual and religious sense. First-time readers of Yeats as well as more advanced scholars will welcome this comprehensive account of his career with its useful chronological outline and survey of the most important current trends in Yeats scholarship. Taken as a whole, this Companion is an essential introduction for students and teachers of Yeats.

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THE CAMBRIDGE
COMPANION TO
W. B. YEATS

EDITED BY
MARJORIE HOWES
Boston College

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Jonathan Allison is Associate Professor of English at the University of Kentucky and Director of the Yeats International Summer School. His publications include *Yeats's Political Identities* (1996), *Patrick Kavanagh: A Reference Guide* (1996), and *Poetry and Contemporary Culture* (ed. with A. M. Roberts, 2002). He is currently completing a history of modern Irish poetry and editing selected letters of Louis MacNeice.

George Bornstein, C. A. Patrides Professor of Literature at the University of Michigan, is the author of several books of literary criticism, including *Yeats and Shelley* (1970) and, most recently, *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (2001). He has edited the two volumes of Yeats's early poetic manuscripts for the Cornell Yeats Series as well as the book *Letters to the New Island* for the *Collected Edition of the Works of W. B. Yeats*. He is currently finishing co-editing the *Early Essays* volume for the same series and working on a critical study entitled *The Colors of Zion: Blacks, Jews, and Irish a Century Ago*.

Elizabeth Butler Cullingford is Jane and Roland Blumberg Centennial Professor in English Literature and University Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University of Texas at Austin. Her publications include *Ireland's Others: Ethnicity and Gender in Irish Literature and Popular Culture* (2001; American Conference for Irish Studies Robert Rhodes Prize), *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry* (1993; a Choice Outstanding Academic Book), and *Yeats, Ireland and Fascism* (1981). She is currently studying conflicting representations of nuns in Irish literature and popular culture, and working

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on a feminist cultural studies project that examines literary representations of the only child in the contexts provided by folklore, history, demography, and sociology.

Margaret Mills Harper is the author of *The Aristocracy of Art: Joyce and Woolf* (1990) and a forthcoming study of the occult and literary collaboration between Yeats and George Yeats. She is the co-editor of two volumes of *Yeats's "Vision" Papers* (1992 and 2001) and Professor of English at Georgia State University.

Marjorie Howes is Associate Professor of English and Co-director of the Irish Studies program at Boston College. She is the author of *Yeats's Nations: Gender, Class, and Irishness* (1996), the co-editor of *Semicolonial Joyce* (2000), and a contributor to *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, Volume 4: Women's Writing and Traditions* (2002).

John Kelly is a Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford. He is the author of a number of scholarly publications, and is the general editor for *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*, of which three volumes have been published to date.

Declan Kiberd is Professor of Anglo-Irish Literature and Drama at University College Dublin. He is the author of numerous scholarly books, including *Synge and the Irish Language* (1979), *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (1995), and *Irish Classics* (2000). His work has won a number of awards, including the *Irish Times* Literature Prize for Non-Fiction, the Truman Capote Prize for Best Work of Literary Criticism in the English-Speaking World, and the Oscar Wilde Award for Literary Achievement.

Bernard O'Donoghue grew up in County Cork but since 1965 he has lived in Oxford, where he teaches medieval English and modern Irish literature at Wadham College. He has written on medieval love poetry, and is the author of *Seamus Heaney and the Language of Poetry* (1994). He was Director of the Yeats Summer School in Sligo in 2001 and 2002. He has published five volumes of poetry: *Poaching Rights* (1987), *The Weakness* (1991), *Gunpowder* (1995), *Here nor There* (1999), and *Outliving* (2003).

James Pethica teaches Irish and Modern British literature at Williams College, Massachusetts, and is currently at work on the authorized biography of Lady Augusta Gregory and a critical book on her creative partnership with Yeats. His publications include *Lady Gregory's Diaries 1892–1902* (1996), an edition of the drafts of *Yeats's Last Poems* (1997), and *Yeats's Poetry, Drama and Prose: A Norton Critical Edition* (2000).

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Helen Vendler is the Porter University Professor at Harvard University. She is the author of books on Yeats, Stevens, Keats, Herbert, Shakespeare, and Heaney. Her new book, *Poets Thinking*, was published by Harvard University Press in 2004.

George Watson is Professor of Irish Literature in English at the University of Aberdeen. His publications include *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival: Yeats, Joyce, Synge and O'Casey* (1995, second edition; first edition 1979), *Drama* (1983), and *W. B. Yeats: Short Fiction* (1995). He has written many essays on Irish literature and cultural politics, and has lectured and taught extensively in Europe and the USA. He is on the editorial board of the *James Joyce Quarterly*, and was a founding member and later Vice Chairman of the British Association of Irish Studies (1990–5). He was Director of the W. B. Yeats International Summer School in Sligo, 1998–2000. He was Mellon Fellow of the National Humanities Center in North Carolina in 2000–1, and is currently working on a monograph on *The Ideology of Celticism in Scotland and Ireland 1760–1900*.

CHRONOLOGY OF YEATS'S LIFE

- 1865 13 June William Butler Yeats born in Sandymount, Dublin.
- 1867 John B. Yeats gives up law and moves to London to study art.
- 1871 Jack Butler Yeats born.
- 1872 July Family moves to Sligo.
- 1874 October Family moves back to London.
- 1877 Enters Godolphin School.
- 1881 Family moves to Dublin; Yeats enters Erasmus Smith High School.
- 1883 Hears Oscar Wilde lecture in Dublin.
- 1884 Attends Metropolitan School of Art; meets George W. Russell (AE).
- 1885 First meeting of the Dublin Hermetic Society.
 First poems and *Mosada* published in *Dublin University Review*.
 Meets Katharine Tynan and John O'Leary.
- 1886 Meets William Morris.
 First Home Rule bill defeated.
- 1887 Family moves to London.
 Meets Madame Blavatsky.
- 1888 Meets G. B. Shaw and Lady Wilde.
Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry
 Joins Esoteric Section of Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society.
- 1889 *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems*
 30 January Meets Maud Gonne.
- 1890 Helps found Rhymers' Club.
 7 March Joins the Order of the Golden Dawn.
 Asked to resign from the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society.
- 1891 *John Sherman and Dhoya*
Representative Irish Tales
 First marriage proposal to Maud Gonne.
- 1892 *The Countess Kathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics*
Irish Fairy Tales

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CHRONOLOGY OF YEATS'S LIFE

- 1893 *The Celtic Twilight*
The Works of William Blake, co-edited with Edwin Ellis
 Gaelic League founded by Douglas Hyde.
 Second Home Rule bill defeated.
- 1894 *March–April The Land of Heart's Desire* produced in London.
 Sees Villiers de l'Isle Adams's *Axël* in Paris.
- 1895 Edits *A Book of Irish Verse*.
Poems
- 1896 Meets Lady Gregory.
 Affair with Olivia Shakespear.
Rosa Alchemica
 Summer Visits Aran Islands.
 December Meets J. M. Synge in Paris.
- 1897 *The Tables of the Law* and *The Adoration of the Magi*
The Secret Rose
 End of affair with Olivia Shakespear.
 July–November At Coole Park with Lady Gregory.
- 1899 *The Wind Among the Reeds*
The Countess Kathleen produced at Antient Concert Rooms in
 Dublin; opening of Irish Literary Theatre.
- 1900 *The Shadowy Waters*
- 1901 *October Diarmuid and Grania* produced in Dublin.
- 1902 Meets James Joyce.
 2 April *Cathleen ni Houlihan* produced in Dublin.
Where There is Nothing
 Dun Emer (later Cuala) Press established.
- 1903 21 February Maud Gonne marries Major John MacBride.
Ideas of Good and Evil
In the Seven Woods
The Hour-Glass
 American lecture tour.
- 1904 14 January *The Shadowy Waters* produced in Dublin.
 26–9 June *Where There Is Nothing* produced in London.
The King's Threshold
 27 December *On Baile's Strand* produced at opening of the Abbey
 Theatre.
- 1905 Maud Gonne granted a separation from John MacBride.
 November Abbey company on tour in England.
Stories of Red Hanrahan
- 1906 *Poems 1899–1905*
 Edits *The Poems of Spenser*.

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CHRONOLOGY OF YEATS'S LIFE

- 1907 *January* Riots over Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*.
 John B. Yeats moves to USA.
Deirdre
 21 *November* *The Unicorn from the Stars* produced at the Abbey.
- 1908 *Collected Works in Verse and Prose*, eight volumes.
 Affair with Mabel Dickinson.
- 1909 24 *March* Synge dies.
- 1910 Granted Civil List pension (150 pounds per year).
The Green Helmet and Other Poems
 The Abbey Theatre continues production after death of King Edward VII.
- 1911 *September–October* With Abbey Players on American tour.
 Meets Ezra Pound.
Synge and the Ireland of His Time
Plays for an Irish Theatre
- 1912 Meets Rabindranath Tagore.
The Cutting of an Agate
- 1913 *Poems Written in Discouragement*
November–January At Stone Cottage in Sussex with Ezra Pound.
- 1914 *January–April* American lecture tour.
 4 *August* United Kingdom declares war on Germany.
Responsibilities: Poems and a Play
- 1915 *May* Hugh Lane killed on the *Lusitania*.
December Refuses a knighthood.
- 1916 *Reveries over Childhood and Youth*
 4 *April* *At the Hawk's Well* performed.
 24 *April* Easter Rising begins in Dublin.
 3–12 *May* Leaders, including Major John MacBride, executed.
July–August Final marriage proposal to Maud Gonne, in Normandy.
- 1917 *March* Purchases Norman tower house outside Gort, Co. Galway; names it Thoor Ballylee.
August Marriage proposal to Iseult Gonne rejected.
 20 *October* Marriage to Bertha Georgie Hyde Lees.
 George Yeats begins automatic writing that becomes basis for *A Vision*.
The Wild Swans at Coole
- 1918 *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*
 Moves to Oxford.
 Robert Gregory killed in action in Italy.

CHRONOLOGY OF YEATS'S LIFE

- Thoor Ballylee restored.
 11 November End of First World War.
- 1919 January Irish War of Independence begins.
Two Plays for Dancers
 26 February Birth of Anne Yeats.
The Player Queen produced in London.
- 1920 January–May American lecture tour.
- 1921 *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*
 22 August Birth of Michael Yeats.
Four Plays for Dancers
Four Years
 6 December Anglo-Irish treaty signed in London.
- 1922 3 February John B. Yeats dies in New York.
 Becomes Senator in the Irish Free State.
 June Civil War begins.
The Trembling of the Veil
Later Poems
Plays in Prose and Verse
 Joyce's *Ulysses* published.
- 1923 May Civil War ends.
 November Awarded Nobel Prize for Literature.
Plays and Controversies
- 1924 *Essays*
The Cat and the Moon and Certain Poems
- 1925 January–February Travels to Sicily and Rome.
The Bounty of Sweden
Early Poems and Stories
A Vision published privately.
- 1926 15 January *A Vision* delivered to subscribers.
Estrangement
Autobiographies
- 1927 October *Blast*
 November Visits Algeciras, Seville, and Cannes.
- 1928 *The Tower*
Sophocles' King Oedipus
The Death of Synge
 Resigns from the Senate.
 Winters in Rapallo.
- 1929 *A Packet for Ezra Pound*
The Winding Stair
 December–early 1930 Suffers Malta fever in Rapallo.

CHRONOLOGY OF YEATS'S LIFE

- 1930 Meets Virginia Woolf and Walter de la Mare.
 17 November *The Words upon the Window Pane* produced at the Abbey.
- 1931 Receives honorary degree from Oxford.
 Arranges an Edition de Luxe with Macmillan, London.
- 1932 *Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends*
 22 May Death of Lady Gregory.
 Moves to Rathfarnham, Dublin.
Words for Music Perhaps
 October–January American lecture tour.
- 1933 *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*
The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats
- 1934 *Letters to the New Island*
 April Undergoes Steinach operation in London.
Wheels and Butterflies
The Collected Plays of W. B. Yeats
The King of the Great Clock Tower
- 1935 17 July Death of George Russell (AE).
A Full Moon in March
Dramatis Personae
 Arranges for the Dublin Edition with Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.
- 1936 January Illness in Majorca.
 Edits *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*.
- 1937 Revised edition of *A Vision*.
Essays, 1931–1936
 Writes Introductions for Scribner Edition.
 29 December New constitution for Éire comes into effect.
- 1938 *The Herne's Egg*
New Poems
 10 August *Purgatory* produced at the Abbey Theatre.
 Death of Olivia Shakespear.
- 1939 28 January Dies and is buried at Roquebrune, France.
Last Poems and Two Plays
On the Boiler
- 1940 *Last Poems and Plays*
- 1941 17 September Body reinterred in Drumcliffe churchyard, Co. Sligo.

ABBREVIATIONS

- A* *Autobiographies*. Ed. William H. O'Donnell and Douglas N. Archibald. New York: Scribner, 1999.
- CL*_I *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats: Volume One, 1865–1895*. Ed. John Kelly. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- CL*_{II} *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats: Volume Two, 1896–1900*. Ed. Warwick Gould, John Kelly, and Deirdre Toomey. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- CL*_{III} *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats: Volume Three, 1901–1904*. Ed. John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- CT* *The Celtic Twilight*. London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1893.
- E&I* *Essays and Introductions*. London and New York: Macmillan, 1961.
- Ex* *Explorations*. Selected by Mrs. W. B. Yeats. London: Macmillan, 1962; New York: Macmillan, 1963.
- GY* *The Donne–Yeats Letters 1893–1938*. Ed. Anna MacBride White and A. Norman Jeffares. New York: Norton, 1993.
- L* *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*. Ed. Allan Wade. London: Rupert Hart-David, 1954; New York: Macmillan, 1955.
- LAR* *Later Articles and Reviews*. Ed. Colton Johnson. New York: Scribner, 2000.
- LE* *Later Essays*. Ed. William H. O'Donnell. New York: Scribner, 1994.
- LNI* *Letters to the New Island*. Ed. George Bornstein and Hugh Witemeyer. London and New York: Macmillan, 1989.
- Mem* *Memoirs*. Transcribed and ed. Denis Donoghue. New York: Macmillan, 1972.
- Myth* *Mythologies*. London and New York: Macmillan, 1959.
- OTB* *On the Boiler*. Dublin: Cuala, 1939.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- P&I* *Prefaces and Introductions*. Ed. William H. O'Donnell. London and New York: Macmillan 1989.
- SF* *W. B. Yeats: Short Fiction*. Ed. G. J. Watson. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995.
- SS* *The Senate Speeches of W. B. Yeats*. Ed. Donald R. Pearce. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960.
- UPI* *Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats*. Vol. I. Ed. John P. Frayne. London: Macmillan; New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.
- UPII* *Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats*. Vol. II. Ed. John P. Frayne and Colton Johnson. London: Macmillan, 1975; New York: Columbia University Press, 1976.
- VA* *A Critical Edition of Yeats's "A Vision" (1925)*. Ed. George Mills Harper and Walter Kelly Hood. London: Macmillan, 1978.
- VB* *A Vision*. London: Macmillan, 1962 [1937].
- VP* *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*. Ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach. New York: Macmillan, 1957.
- VPI* *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats*. Ed. Russell K. Alspach. London and New York: Macmillan, 1966.