

REMEMBERING THE FORGOTTEN BEAUTY
OF YEATSIAN MYTHOLOGY: PERSONAE
AND THE PROBLEM OF UNITY IN
THE WIND AMONG THE REEDS

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The 1899 version of *The Wind Among the Reeds* was Yeats's most deliberately crafted volume to date. It is narrated by a series of Irish personae who have important mythological and occult connotations. Of particular interest are Aedh, Hanrahan, and Michael Robartes, whom Yeats identified as principles of the mind. These three figures "morph" into one another in significant ways that correspond to a major theme in Yeats's career: the constitution of a unified self amidst psychological, spiritual, and cultural turmoil.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- A *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats*. New York: Macmillan, 1965.
- H “The Active and Passive Principles in *The Wind Among the Reeds*.” By Carolyn Holdsworth. *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies*. Ed. Richard J. Finneran and Mary Fitzgerald. Vol 9. University of Michigan Press, 1991. 55-65.
- IGE *Ideas of Good and Evil*. By W. B. Yeats. Russell and Russell: New York, 1967.
- IY *The Identity of Yeats*. By Richard Ellmann. Oxford University Press: New York, 1964.
- MATM *Yeats: The Man and the Masks*. By Richard Ellmann. E.P. Dutton: New York, 1948.
- PK *Poetic Knowledge in the Early Yeats: A Study of ‘The Wind Among the Reeds.’* By Allen Grossman. University of Virginia Press: Charlottesville, 1969.
- RY *Reconstructing Yeats: ‘The Secret Rose’ and ‘The Wind Among the Reeds.’* By Steven Putzel. Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1986.
- SRV *The Secret Rose, Stories by W. B. Yeats: A Variorum Edition*. Edited by Phillip L. Marcus, Warwick Gould, and Michael J. Sidnell. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981.
- TWATR *The Wind Among the Reeds*. By W. B. Yeats. Elkin Mathews: London, 1899.
- TAM *W. B. Yeats: A Life — I: The Apprentice Mage 1865-1914*. By R.F. Foster. Oxford University Press: Oxford-New York, 1997.
- VP *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*. Edited by Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach. New York: Macmillan, 1957 (revised third printing, 1966).

I: INTRODUCTION

Most nonspecialist readers of W. B. Yeats's *The Wind Among the Reeds* know the volume only as it appears in extant versions of his *Collected Poems*. But the heavily revised version of the volume found in these collections differs greatly from the book that first emerged in 1899.¹ This earlier version of *The Wind Among the Reeds* was Yeats's most deliberately crafted volume to date: the culmination of his interest in Irish folklore, nationalism, the occult, and William Blake's system of thought. The 1899 volume is narrated by a series of Irish personae. Three of these figures — Aedh, Hanrahan, and Michael Robartes — have important mythological and occult connotations that help make the book part of the “new beauty” of Irish legends that Yeats hoped would “give the opening century its most memorable symbols” (IGE 295). The best specialist studies of the 1899 version of *The Wind Among the Reeds* are Allen Grossman's *Poetic Knowledge in the Early Yeats* (1969) and Stephen Putzel's *Reconstructing Yeats* (1986). But these works are not exhaustive, and much remains to say about Yeats's symbolism in *The Wind Among the Reeds*. One such consideration involves the question of how the personae who narrate the 1899 version of *The Wind Among the Reeds* relate to its concerns with selfhood. Of particular interest are Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes, who “morph” into one another in significant ways that relate to a major theme in Yeats's career: the constitution of a unified self amidst psychological, spiritual, and cultural turmoil.

¹ See Appendix for a full listing of the poems in the 1899 version of *The Wind*.

II: PRINCIPLES OF THE MIND

In a note to the 1899 version of *The Wind Among the Reeds*, Yeats describes Aedh, Hanrahan, and Michael Robartes in the following way:

I have used them in this book more as principles of the mind than as actual personages. It is probable that only students of the magical tradition will understand me when I say that ‘Michael Robartes’ is fire reflected in water, and that Hanrahan is fire blown by the wind, and that Aedh . . . is fire burning by itself (TWATR 73).

For years scholars have contrived to unpack the meaning of this infamous passage.

Despite its density, however, not all of Yeats’s description defies comprehension. For instance, it seems relatively clear that in the 1899 volume, Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes are not personages, but rather “principles of the mind”: archetypal characterizations of specific mental qualities. And although these principles of the mind represent distinct peculiarities, they are not without their commonalities. Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes are, after all, principles of the *same* mind, and are therefore parts of a greater whole.

Consequently, it is difficult to imagine that they would have no relationship to one another. It seems much more likely that Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes share some kind of innate connectedness. Yeats seems to confirm such a nexus when he talks about his personae’s elemental correspondences: he says that “Michael Robartes is fire reflected in water, and that Hanrahan is fire blown by the wind, and that Aedh . . . is fire burning by

itself” (TWATR 73). Since Yeats chooses to define Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes in elemental terms, one need only think about the conventional associations of fire, air, and water to get a basic understanding of what these principles of the mind might signify, and to what degree these figures relate to one another. Fire, for instance, is traditionally associated with passion, intensity, imagination, and love. Although all three figures appear to be a form of fire, Yeats specifically says that Aedh is “the Irish for fire,” and that he is “fire burning by itself” (TWATR 73). Therefore, fire’s conventional associations relate primarily to Aedh. Water and air, on the other hand, are what distinguish Robartes and Hanrahan from Aedh, and from each other. Robartes, whom Yeats describes as “fire reflected in water,” represents life, body, and nourishment, qualities traditionally associated with water. Likewise, Hanrahan, “fire blown by the wind,” typifies those things conventionally associated with wind and air such as breath, utterance, spirit, ghost. A preliminary description of Yeats’s personae might look something like this:

Aedh	Fire by itself. An imaginative force; passionate and intense.
Robartes	Water and fire. Submissive; in tune with the physical, the body.
Hanrahan	Air and fire. Reflective, dreamy, spiritual.

Although Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes manifest distinctive qualities, all three share fire as a common denominator, and the elemental imagery associated with each appears frequently in poems spoken by the others. For instance, one finds water and air imagery in ‘Aedh Tells of the Rose in His Heart,’ and in ‘Michael Robartes Asks

Forgiveness Because of His Many Moods,' "words [are] lighter than air" and "hopes . . . flicker" like a flame (TWATR 37). The way that water and air imagery penetrates Aedh's fire poems — while fire and air infiltrate Robartes's water poems, and fire and water appear in Hanrahan's air poems — suggests that these principles of the mind flow, dissolve, and "morph" into each other throughout the 1899 volume. According to Grossman, Yeats "designed [each of his personae] to symbolize Man at the center of his reality" and therefore none of them are "truly individuated" (PK 105). Rather, they are the "psychic components" of a complete self for whom "the capacity to feel emotion" is paramount (PK 105). The desire to experience emotion is the primary motivation behind Aedh's, Hanrahan's, and Robartes's propensity to dissolve into one another, and morph into one complete self. Each of these figures was specifically chosen by Yeats because its mythological and occult associations reflected Yeats's belief that myth, magic, and emotion had the power to unify men and cultures.

Therefore, a brief description of the folkloric and occult associations of these three figures may be helpful. In Irish mythology, Aedh is a god of death whose harp playing means doom for those within earshot. Many critics believe that in Yeats's book, Aedh is indeed a god of death, but one "in the form of a poet obsessed with cataclysm" (PK 111). Based loosely on the eighteenth-century Gaelic poet Owen O'Sullivan the Red, Hanrahan's mythological significance comes from his being descended from a long line of Gaelic poets who date back to around 600 A.D., and who, according to Yeats's note to his early story 'The Devil's Book' (1892), "were often thought to have a . . . Fairy-mistress" (SRV 197). More, perhaps, than Aedh and Hanrahan, Michael Robartes is a

purely Yeatsian invention whom Grossman says is the vehicle through which Yeats transforms “the concept of Celtic tradition” into occult terms (PK 115). Yeats’s decision to narrate the 1899 version of *The Wind Among the Reeds* through these personae effects, then, a distinctly mythological Irishness. According to Putzel, the world Yeats creates in *The Wind Among the Reeds* has its origins in a twelfth-century text called *The Book of Invasions*. This work gives an account of the “first Celtic assault” on the Tuatha De Danann, otherwise known as the Sidhe (RY 3).² As in Yeats’s book, the highly subjective world of *Invasions* contains “each of the four elements,” and “the fire of inspiration” blesses and torments “earth-heavy humans” (RY 3). Putzel argues that by using themes and symbols similar to those found in *Invasions*, Yeats attempts to order mythological Ireland and unite it with his own symbolic and occult interests. The tale of *The Book of Invasions* would have been available to Yeats in books by Standish O’Grady, Eugene O’Curry, and Douglas Hyde, to name a few. In his notes to *The Wind Among the Reeds* Yeats specifically cites O’Grady’s *History of Ireland* as a source. Putzel acknowledges the significance of O’Grady’s volume, but also suggests that Yeats’s conception of Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes can be traced to “Mac Coise’s Tale of the ‘Plunder of the Castle of Maelmilsothach’” found in Eugene O’Curry’s *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish* (RY 30). Yeats would have read O’Curry’s exegesis of this story about a triumvirate of Irish heroes (one even goes by the name of Aedh) who “assault the castle inhabited by

² In Irish mythology, the Tuatha De Danann, or the Sidhe, are the “godly rulers” of the “land of Eire” (RY 1). Putzel talks at length about the “chief poet” Amorgen and his band of Celtic invaders whose confrontation with the Sidhe is not so much “an act of war as an act of poetic recreation” (RY 1).

‘the beautiful nymph Poetry,’” and probably had them in mind when he made Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes protagonists in *The Wind Among the Reeds* (RY 30).

Yeats believed that every race derives “its first unity from a mythology,” and that ancient Ireland’s “imaginative stories,” if re-discovered by the “educated classes,” could unify Ireland (A 131). The folkloric correspondences of Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes in the 1899 volume help create the “bundle of related images” that Yeats believed could unify “nations, races, and individual men” (A 132). But the volume’s images do not have a diachronic relationship. That is to say, Yeats’s unifying imagery does not evolve over time, and the search for unity in *The Wind Among the Reeds* is not a matter of linear development. Things do not begin broken and end up fixed in *The Wind Among the Reeds*. Instead, the world that the book depicts is always in chaos. The volume, its images, and its personae are constantly in motion, ceaselessly appearing, dissolving, and reforming, and yet there is little doubt that the volume’s components are somehow related to one another, fragments of a larger whole. This is particularly true of Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes, who as principles of the mind are discrete versions of the same ‘fire.’ Yeats’s unifying images tend toward instability because they reflect an unstable world. Likewise, the principles of the mind are portions of a whole, each reflecting the poet’s fragmented self. In Yeats, spiritual and psychological unrest seem to be intrinsically related to cultural turmoil and vice versa, and, in a basic sense, the 1899 volume is about the struggle to make these tumult-heavy aspects cohere. One approach Yeats uses to try to accomplish the goal of unity is to fuse his mythological interests with his occult ones. When this happens, the behavior of Yeats’s personae is evocative of his interest in alchemy and

magic. Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes resemble the alchemists of old who sought the “universal transmutation” of all things into one “imperishable substance” (SRV 126). The alchemical coming together of Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes establishes a correlation between Yeats’s mysticism and Irish mythology that directly relates to the volume’s concerns about psychological, spiritual, and cultural unification.

Yeats’s interest in mysticism pervades his early work, and his notes to *The Wind Among the Reeds* admit that “only those students of the magical tradition will understand” what he means by suggesting that Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes are respectively fire in fire, fire in air, and fire in water (TWATR 73). The elemental correspondences of the principles of the mind have much to do with Yeats’s early mysticism. Materials that explain the mystic codifications of the elements would have been available to Yeats because of his eleven-year association (1890-1901) with the London occult society, the Golden Dawn.³ Most critics agree that Yeats’s occult interests played a major role in the development of his early symbols. Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes are no exception, and their elemental equivalents make them appropriate poetic spokesmen in the 1899 volume because Yeats chose to describe the events in *The Wind Among the Reeds* in elemental terms. For instance, in ‘The Everlasting Voices’ Yeats writes:

Flame under flame, till Time be no more;
Have you not heard that our hearts are old,
That you call in birds, in wind on the hill,

³ For a detailed account of the relationship between Yeats’s occultism and Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes, see Grossman’s *Poetic Knowledge*, pages 103 through 123.

In shaken boughs, in tide on the shore? (TWATR 3)

The allusions to fire, air, and water in this passage are indicative of the kinds of elemental descriptions that appear in nearly every poem in the 1899 volume. Richard Ellmann stresses that for Yeats, elements are important symbols because they have many “likely correspondences,” and when used symbolically create a multiplicity of meaning (IY 30). According to Ellmann, Yeats immersed his mind in all things likely to correspond with elemental symbols, and found that he could produce multiple mental connections to fire and fire (Aedh), air and fire (Hanrahan), and water and fire (Robartes). Many of these correlations were occult. One reason for this, according to Grossman, is that Yeats found in the occult a way to express “emotion through direct self-representation” (PK 103). Despite his father’s claim that “personal utterance [is] only egotism,” Yeats wanted to create art that embodied “a passionate moment of life” and “tried to write out [his own] emotions exactly as they came to [him]” (A 68). The occult provided Yeats with a language through which he could express emotion partly because its “themes and motifs [were] linked to the imagery of classical and folk myths” (TAM 106). Yeats’s Irish personae, then, insofar as he associated them with mysticism, are “occult in the sense in which the profoundly personal is occult” (PK 104). Yeats’s principles of the mind represent his creative self, and for that reason are an affirmation of Yeats’s predilection for self-expression. Aedh’s, Hanrahan’s, and Robartes’s proclivity toward unification is one example of how Yeats’s longing to express emotion manifested itself. When apart, these principles of the mind represent artistic and personal fragmentation. But when they morph together in an alchemical union, Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes symbolize the moment in

which “one can believe enough in what one feels . . . to know what the feeling is” (A 69).

Tantamount to Yeats’s fondness for self-expression was his desire to create intellectual symbols that evoked “ideas mingled with emotions” (IGE 250). For Yeats, emotion and intellect were very much related to one another. He believed that symbols “that evoke emotions alone” were “alluring and hateful things” (IGE 249). Likewise, Yeats thought that symbols “associated with ideas alone” were “the playthings of the allegorist or the pedant, and soon pass away” (IGE 250). But those symbols that have both emotional and intellectual appeal — intellectual symbols — are the source of an “indefinable wisdom” (IGE 250). Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes are such symbols: these principles of the mind provide the reader with an immanent passage into the mythical world of *The Wind Among the Reeds* that is satisfying in both emotional and intellectual ways. In his essay ‘The Symbolism of Poetry’ (1900), Yeats explains the import of such an experience:

It is the intellect that decides where the reader shall ponder over the procession of the symbols, and if the symbols are merely emotional, he gazes from amid the accidents and destinies of the world; but if the symbols are intellectual too, he becomes himself a part of pure intellect, and he is himself mingled with the procession (IGE 251).

Intellectual symbols, then, simultaneously evoke ideas and emotions, and therefore allow the perceiver a richer experience. Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes have an intellectually symbolic function in *The Wind Among the Reeds* because they evoke Yeats’s occult and mythological interests, and because they represent his creative self. They are also

principles of the mind that embody specific mental characteristics. When Yeats shifts between the masks represented by these personae, he becomes a symbol ‘mingled in the procession’ of other symbols. As these symbols merge, the principles of the mind behave according to the doctrines of the magical tradition. In his essay called “Magic,” Yeats describes it thus:

“ . . . the borders of our minds are ever shifting, and . . . many minds can flow into one another . . . and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy” (IGE 29).

By distinguishing personages from principles of the mind, Yeats added to the complexity of his early symbolic system and increased the number of possible correspondences with all of his symbols. When Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes dissolve into one another, they create a new intellectual symbol that, because its appeal is both intellectual and emotional, unifies the poetic-self amidst cultural, spiritual, and psychological turmoil. The unified speaker that the principles of the mind dissolve into reflects the relationship between *The Wind Among the Reeds* and Yeats’s career-long interest in the establishment of a consonant self. Yeats’s principles of the mind are the manifestation of his desire for a self-referent art, and their existence in the 1899 volume symbolizes, in part, Yeats’s quest for unity.

In stark contrast to the complex analyses of Yeats’s early symbology that Grossman, Putzel, and also Ellmann conducted, readings of the later, revised versions of *The Wind Among the Reeds* tend to gloss over the thematic congruence of the 1899 version’s personae poems. For instance, Harold Bloom’s reading of the revised version of *The Wind Among the Reeds* celebrates its absence of “Irish Mythological baggage” (Y

122). Bloom's strictly biographical approach to poems like 'The Lover Mourns for the Loss of Love' (in 1899 'Aedh Laments the Loss of Love') attributes "the image of lost love" to Yeats's strained relations with Olivia Shakespear and Maud Gonne, but says nothing about the symbology connected to the poem's speaker (Y 127). In another post-revision reading, Carolyn Holdsworth suggests that the "Yeatsian male narrator in [revised versions of] *The Wind Among the Reeds* [is] passive and contemplative" (H 55). This exemplifies how the volume's emotional complexity can be overly simplified when the principles of the mind at work in the original volume are not acknowledged. Holdsworth's definition, insofar as it relates to Michael Robartes, correctly identifies his basic emotional identity in *The Wind Among the Reeds*; however, it fails to account for the narrators of the volume's more animated lyrics. While Holdsworth's and Bloom's readings validate themselves by referring only to revised editions of *The Wind Among the Reeds*, their views of the volume's emotional characteristics tend to neglect the Yeatsian mythology that is part of the volume's textual history, and that allows its principles of the mind to interact with and morph into one another.

III: A CASKET OF GOLD

Critics generally agree that the beloved, the “white woman that passion has worn” from ‘A Poet To His Beloved,’ is a unifying image in Yeats’s symbolic system in *The Wind Among the Reeds*. According to Grossman, the 1899 volume’s symbols “cluster about and define” her (PK 20). He associates the white woman historically with the “wisdom” figure of the Gnostic tradition: “the first female principle emanating from the Highest God” (PK 211). Many lyrics in *The Wind Among the Reeds* allude to the “pale brows, still hands and dim hair” of a “beautiful friend,” and these ghostly qualities support Grossman’s belief that “she is dead, [and] immortal” (PK 20).⁴ Putzel calls the white woman “the thematic and symbolic center” of *The Wind Among the Reeds*, and says that Yeats guides the reader away from biographical readings of her by “attributing the lyrics to personae from Irish Mythology” (RY 182).⁵ But neither critic explores the important ways in which the beloved’s embodiment of a discrete vision of artistic truth relates to the 1899 volume’s concerns with self-unity.

The beloved represents perfection in art, and her idealized loveliness is central to the volume’s symbolic system. The volume’s poetic self longs to join with her because a

⁴ Grossman’s claim is basically accurate. But a big part of the 1899 volume’s tension comes from the fact that sometimes one just can’t be sure if the beloved is or is not a spirit. This ambiguity, and the tension it creates, is derivative of the volume’s environment, where the distinction between timelessness and time, between the supernatural and the physical, is anything but crystal clear.

⁵ Some of the volume’s poems were originally addressed to Olivia Shakespear and Maud Gonne.

union with the divine beloved would effect the attainment of artistic truth. But before it can unite with the beloved, the volume's poetic self must bring its fragmented internal constituents together: as long as the self remains internally divided and imperfect it cannot hope to forge a perfect union with anything outside of itself. In other words, Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes have to die; they have to give way to a new being — a *principle* of the mind — whose purpose is fixed, perfect, pure: to become one with the white woman.

At various moments in *The Wind Among the Reeds*, Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes flow into one another and present themselves to the divine beloved. A major obstacle that prevents them from entering the elaborate mystical world in which the beloved exists is the Sidhe. In a note to the 1899 volume, Yeats says that Sidhe means wind in Gaelic, and that “certainly the Sidhe have much to do with the wind” (TWATR 65). Richard Ellmann describes the Sidhe as mischievous “trespassers” who journey “from this world to that, that world to this” (IY xvii). Ellmann says that the Sidhe possess the ability to cross over the boundary between their world and ours, and that they want to possess us, catch us in nets and dreams, to tempt us, to remind us of what we lack and they have, and sometimes they succeed (IY xvii).

The Sidhe inhabit the supernatural world of the beloved, and these lines from ‘Michael Robartes Remembers Forgotten Beauty’ suggests that she is a great goddess among them:

But flame on flame, deep under deep,
 Throne over throne, where in half sleep
 Their swords upon their iron knees

Brood her high lonely mysteries. (TWATR 28)

Like tamed courtiers, the Sidhe brood before the white woman with their “swords upon their iron knees.” Here, the Sidhe’s adoration of the beloved resembles that of the volume’s personae. Doubtless in *The Wind Among the Reeds* the Sidhe remind Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes of what they desire: passage into eternal beauty, a fusion with the divine beloved. The principles of the mind wish to dissolve into the beloved, like salt in water, and achieve “the supreme dream of the alchemist, the transmutation of the weary heart into the weariless spirit” (SRV 128). Although such a union would signify the death of the poetic self, it would also imply the birth, or generation, of an “immortal passion” (TWATR 52). Were the principles of the mind to fuse with the beloved, they would adopt a new form, a new spiritualized life inside the beloved’s world. According to Ellmann, there is something about this kind of generative process that saddens the Sidhe (IY xvii). He says that “the separation of worlds [is] difficult for them” and “[causes] them suffering” (IY xvii). Likewise the principles of the mind agonize about ceasing to exist in the spiritual realm. But Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes have the option to leave the material world and join with a spiritual force. The Sidhe don’t have any such option; they can torment, haunt, and manipulate the living, but they can not experience mortal life. It follows, then, that the Sidhe detest the struggle of Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes to give up their mortality and join with the beloved in a spiritual union. Such a crossing over of worlds in order to take on a new form — a new life — is beyond their capacities.

Ironically, it is the Sidhe’s own mischief that brings about the personae’s longing for the beloved. In ‘The Hosting of the Sidhe,’ Niamh, a figure whom Yeats explains in his

notes “was a beautiful woman of the Tribes of Danu,” warns that

. . . if any gaze on our rushing band,

We come between him and the deed of his hand,

We come between him and the hope of his heart.(TWATR 1)

Later, in line thirteen, the poem’s narrator describes the host “rushing ‘twixt night and day.” As the narrator fixates on them, the Sidhe subsequently make good on their promise. When the narrator asks in line fourteen “where is there hope or deed as fair?” he sets in motion the volume’s chief preoccupation and becomes obsessed with the Sidhe’s cruel joke: the “white woman.” Niamh’s pale cheeks, unbound hair, and parted lips characterize the idealized beloved; she is a deified symbol of erotic love situated beyond the temporal, far away from the narrator who laments his unrequited adoration of her. As the volume continues, Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes are invoked and adopt this preliminary dirge. Aedh, the volume’s first identifiable principle of the mind, initiates the personae’s quest for self-unity and artistic purification in ‘Aedh Tells of the Rose in His Heart.’

Aedh narrates ten of the volume’s thirty-seven poems, and according to Putzel, he is the “most important unifying personae in the entire volume” (RY 171). In his first appearance, ‘Aedh Tells of the Rose in His Heart,’ he says that

All things uncomely and broken, all things worn out and old,

The cry of a child by the roadway, the creak of a lumbering cart,

The heavy steps of the ploughman, splashing the wintry mould,

Are wronging [the beloved’s] image that blossoms a rose in the deeps of

[his] heart. (TWATR 5)

The “uncomely and broken” outside world disgusts Aedh. For him, the crying child, the creaking cart, and the heavy steps of the ploughman represent a world that “drops in decay” (TWATR 4). Aedh’s mind cannot indifferently reflect the images of the corroded outside world like a mirror, and his perception of the world instills in him great despair. One possible reason for this is that the decrepit world that Aedh describes reflects his own uncomely and broken existence. The interior chaos that Aedh is a part of parallels the “unshapely” mortal world. Like the fragmented and broken exterior realm, the volume’s poetic psyche is unstable. In order to normalize the poet’s interior disorder, Aedh strives to meld together with the other principles of the mind. Aedh wants to transcend the “worn out and old” outside world and pass into the ideal world of the beloved, a place where the poetic imagination can thrive. Thus Aedh champions the spiritual world over the mortal one, and suggests that the creation of pure art cannot occur so long as exterior forces continue to destabilize the poet’s interior cosmos. Aedh says that the outside world “wrongs” his “image” of the beloved. It seems, then, that the “image” that blossoms in Aedh’s heart is not the same as the divine beloved that actually exists among the Sidhe. The possibility exists that the beloved’s “image” is an internal manifestation of the beloved that represents Aedh’s desire to “build a perfect world out of art” (RY 172). But as long as poetic imagination remains vulnerable to external corruption, the beloved’s “image” will be wronged because artistic truth can not be attained in a world bound by time’s decaying power.

In order for Aedh to transcend the imperfect mortal world, he, Hanrahan, and Robartes, must first dissolve into one self-referent being. Although this unified poetic-self

cannot “burn time,” it can build a “casket of gold”:

The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong too great to be told;
 I hunger to build them anew and sit on a green knoll apart,
 With the earth and the sky and the water, remade, like a casket of gold
 (TWATR 6).

The “unshapely things” that Aedh speaks about represent the fragments of the unstable mortal world, and the disconnected poetic-self. The mortal realm repulses Aedh; his perception of it reminds him of his own incompleteness. The decaying real world also has a negative effect on the “image” of the beloved that exists in his heart. Aedh wants to reshape the poet’s interior cosmos so that it no longer reflects the chaos of the exterior world: he wishes to escape from the real and pass into the supernatural realm. There the beloved ceases to be a vulnerable “image” — she belongs to the ethereal world, and a union with her would effect sexual, spiritual, and artistic perfection. To accomplish this, Aedh has “to build [the self] anew” and sit on a “green knoll apart.” Accompanying Aedh are the “earth and the sky and the water,” remade “like a casket of gold.” The word “green” in part evokes Ireland, and Aedh’s evocation of Hanrahan (sky) and Robartes (water) intensifies the poem’s correlations with Irish folklore and mysticism. Yeats associates Aedh with pure fire, Hanrahan with air and fire, and Robartes with water and fire. Once remade like a “casket of gold,” Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes marry Yeats’s occult aspirations with his mythological ones. Their alchemical union represents a “highly-wrought art,” an imperishable substance, whose single ambition is to dissolve into the divine beloved in the spiritual world (RY 172).

Once made, Aedh's "casket of gold" would facilitate the "withdrawal of the [poetic] mind from the real world" (PK 98). It would also effect a union with the divine beloved. Seated on "a green knoll apart," the unified Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes would be protected from time's decaying power. Removed from the exterior realm, "which in its imperfection is the conventional crucifixion of the aesthete," the poetic imagination could flourish, and unification with the beloved could occur (PK 98). From the outset, then, Aedh privileges the otherworldly over the material, and views the rewards of the spiritual world worthy of self sacrifice. But the moment that Aedh dreams of — the passage from the material into the supernatural realm — is not unusual in Yeats's poetry: nothing in Yeats's writing is favored without some anxiety. For instance, in 'To the Rose upon the Rood of Time' (1893), the narrator seems prepared to die in order to find "eternal beauty":

*Come near, that no more blinded by man's fate,
I find under the boughs of love and hate,
In all poor foolish things that live a day,
Eternal beauty wandering on her way* (VP 101).

Like Aedh, the narrator of 'To the Rose' says that he doesn't fear the death of his mortal self because to "live a day" is to watch "eternal beauty wandering on her way." The narrator has had enough of the mortal world, and he longs to sing the "high and lonely melody" of "eternal beauty." But, when confronted with the moment of apocalypse, the narrator hesitates:

Come near, come near, come near — Ah, leave me still

A little space for the rose-breath to fill!
Lest I no more hear common things that crave;
The weak worm hiding down in its small cave;
The field-mouse running by me in the grass,
And heavy mortal hopes that toil and pass;
But seek alone to hear the strange things said
By God to the bright hearts of those long dead,
And learn to chaunt a tongue men do not know (V 101).

The enjambment of “still” at the end of line thirteen evokes in part a vision of death that gives the narrator pause. The phrase “leave me still,” read to mean motionless, dead, seems to suggest that the narrator has not erased from his mind the possibility that his physical death would not necessitate a spiritual birth. The narrator’s request for “a little space for the rose-breath to fill” implies a lapse in belief, a moment of doubt in which he celebrates the “common things” of the real world. The narrator is not yet ready to relinquish his mortality and to “seek alone . . . the strange things said” by God. The narrator’s back-pedaling anticipates Aedh’s anxiety about embracing the apocalypse. In ‘Aedh Tells of the Rose in His Heart,’ two carefully chosen words, “earth” and “casket,” suggest that Aedh, too, has doubts about passing into the supernal realm.

In ‘Aedh Tells,’ Aedh says that he wants to remake the elements like a “casket of gold.” Although fire corresponds to Aedh, and sky and water basically represent Hanrahan and Robartes, earth, the remaining element, does not invoke a principle of the mind. Instead, earth corresponds to the poet’s body. In another poem in the volume, ‘Michael

Robartes bids His Beloved be at Peace,' the "Horses of Disaster plunge in the heavy clay" (TWATR 25). Grossman relates the "heavy clay" to the body by suggesting that the "Horses of Disaster" are a symbol of the "violent inwardness" that arouses the poet's "virility" (PK 177-78). Ellmann says that Yeats associated earth with decay, and hence mortality, and that earth is easily recognized in early Yeats as "clay" or "woods" (IY 26, 30). In 'Aedh Tells,' earth appears in the same line with "casket." The juxtaposition of these words suggests some foreboding on the part of Aedh. On the one hand, the "casket of gold" is the result of the alchemical union of Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes, but, on other hand, it is a *casket* and therefore corresponds to death and decay. The words "earth" and "casket" subtly corrupt Aedh's sublime desire for a supreme art because they symbolize the physical death that is consequent on one's passage into the spiritual world. These words evoke the burial of the dead, but, ironically, they unearth Aedh's anxieties about the supernatural world that are buried within the poem. Aedh's anxious contemplation of the always imminent apocalyptic moment appears to manifest itself to a greater degree in the poems of his counterpart, Michael Robartes. The pronounced manner in which Robartes seems to express his fear of the spiritual world is significant because it shows that, although two or more principles of the mind might share an emotion, they don't necessarily convey it in the same way.

The first of the 1899 volume's Robartes poems, 'Michael Robartes Bids His Beloved Be at Peace' best exemplifies Robartes's heightened sense of fear and relates to the volume's concerns about self unity because the "long manes" and tumult-heavy hoofs of the "Shadowy Horses" announce to Robartes the "lonely hour" of the apocalypse

(TWATR 24-25). Robartes's image of the Shadowy Horses suggests that more than one version of the beloved's world — and by extension, more than one kind of beloved — exists within the poetic consciousness that Yeats's personae make up: Aedh's image of the beloved blossoms a rose in his heart, but puts the "Horses of Disaster" in the heart of Robartes (TWATR 25). In a note to the 1899 volume, Yeats says that the Irish people associate "the powers of death, and dismay, and cold, and darkness" with the "horse-shaped Pucas" (TWATR 89). These "mischievous spirits," says Yeats, have "some connection with the horses of Mannannan, who reigned over the country of the dead" (TWATR 89). In 'Michael Robartes Bids His Beloved Be at Peace,' Yeats links the Pucas and the horses of Mannannan with the Shadowy Horses whose tumultuous gallop announces the coming apocalypse: the sexual and spiritual union of the poetic-self and the divine beloved. Basically, the Shadowy Horses are associated with death. They herald "the final tumult," the passage of the poetic-self into the beloved's ethereal realm (RY 182). Unlike the subtle anxiousness buried in the language of 'Aedh Tells of the Rose in His Heart,' Robartes's apprehensions about passing into the spiritual world are readily apparent. Like the narrator of 'To the Rose Upon the Rood of Time,' Robartes wishes the beloved to "come near," but to "leave [him] still / A little space for the rose-breath to fill." Robartes's apprehension betrays his desire to enter the beloved's world, and there is evidence in 'Michael Robartes Bids' to suggest that Robartes, rather than sit on a "green knoll apart," would prefer that the beloved adopt a human form, and join him, Aedh, and Hanrahan in the mortal realm.

In the opening lines of the poem, Robartes hears the approach of the bedeviled

Shadowy Horses:

I hear the Shadowy Horses, their long manes a-shake,

Their hoofs heavy with tumult, their eyes glimmering white (TWATR 25).

Like the “host riding from Knocknarea,” the Sidhe, the Shadowy Horses are mischievous Irish spirits who have much to do with the supernatural domain (TWATR 1). Robartes’s description of the “long manes” and “glimmering eyes” of the “Shadowy Horses” recalls the following passage from ‘The Hosting of the Sidhe’ in which Niamh cries:

Our cheeks are pale, our hair is unbound,

Our breasts are heaving, are eyes are a-gleam (TWATR 1).

Niamh’s description highlights the same kinds of animalistic, yet ghostly, qualities that characterize the Shadowy Horses. The flowing hair and heaving breasts of the Sidhe connote wildness, ferocity; the Sidhe’s gleaming eyes resemble the “glimmering white” eyes of the Shadowy Horses. The eyes of the Shadowy Horses also call to mind the divine beloved whose “cloud-pale eyelids [fall] on [her] dream-dimmed eyes” (TWATR 40). The Shadowy Horses correspond with the beloved because they represent the world in which she exists. They, like the Sidhe, are the “supernatural machinery” Yeats uses to show “that there is a conceivable life” beyond mortal existence (IY xviii).⁶ The spiritual world that Yeats upholds can not be experienced by the living, and is therefore accessible only through death or the imagination. Consequently, there is an element of danger associated

⁶ In *The Identity of Yeats*, Richard Ellmann writes: “[Yeats] needs [supernatural] machinery because of his conviction . . . that there is a conceivable life which is better than human life in that it is complete, undiminished, unimpaired. Let us call this the daimonic world” (xviii).

with the ethereal realm. The Shadowy Horses symbolize that danger. Despite Ellmann's claim that 'Michael Robartes Bids' is crafted "so as to leave undefined the danger which Robartes cannot help but express," the possibility exists that the source of Robartes's fear is more precise: it is the sound of imminent death brought on by the Shadowy Horses (TMTM 146).

Although Robartes expresses anxiety about crossing over into the spiritual world, he seems nevertheless committed to the idea of joining in a sexual and spiritual union with the beloved. The first thing Robartes does after hearing the tumult-heavy hoofs of the Shadowy Horses is build his own casket of gold. He does this by summoning up the cardinal points, North, East, West, and South, which, as Yeats points out in a journal he kept while a member of the Theosophical Society, correspond respectively to earth, fire, water, and air:

The North unfolds above them clinging, creeping night

The East her hidden joy before the morning break,

The West weeps in pale dew and sighs passing away,

The South is pouring down roses of crimson fire (TWATR 24).⁷

Three of the elemental associations that Robartes invokes correspond with the principles of the mind:

⁷ Yeats was a member of the Theosophical Society from 1887 to 1890. The society was mainly concerned with "correspondences between the natural and spiritual worlds," which they believed were parallel to one another (IY 26). The journal Yeats kept while a member of the society explains the associations of the elements like this:

Fire	Air	Water	Earth
East	South	West	North (IY 26).

Fire — East	Aedh
Water — West	Michael Robartes
Air — South	Hanrahan

Robartes's personification of West makes his association with it unmistakable, while East and South correlate to Aedh and Hanrahan more subtly. But the "creeping night" of North suggests an ominous darkness that recognizably relates to those things that Yeats associated with the earth: darkness and decay. Like Aedh, Robartes rounds out the elemental components of his casket of gold with earth, the element that signifies the body, and time's decaying powers.

After Robartes builds his casket of gold, he hears "the Horses of Disaster plunge in the heavy clay" (TWATR 25). The "heavy clay" corresponds to the poet's body, the vessel in which Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes exist. The Horses of Disaster, who also exist in the poet's interior, are not the same as the Shadowy Horses, yet both relate to one another in terms of Robartes's perception of them. The Shadowy Horses are representatives of the supernatural world who announce the coming apocalypse. The Horses of Disaster, on the other hand, are the internal manifestation of the Shadowy Horses. In other words, the Horses of Disaster represent Robartes's fear of the "final tumult" foretold by the Shadowy Horses (RY 182). The Horses of Disaster "plunge in the heavy clay" of the poet's body, and like the beloved's "image," dwell in the deeps of the poet's heart. Both the beloved's "image" and the Horses of Disaster seem to be associated with the imagination because they invoke the supernatural world which cannot be experienced by the living; barring death, the beloved's world can be imagined only. But

the Horses of Disaster elicit a different kind of response to the imagination than does the beloved's "image." In 'Aedh Tells of the Rose in His Heart,' the beloved's "image" symbolizes poetic imagination and the desire of the poetic-self to become one with artistic purity. The Horses of Disaster, on the other hand, seem to represent the imagination's dangers, and their presence in 'Michael Robartes Bids His Beloved Be at Peace' suggests that there is much about passing into the spiritual world that Robartes fears. In the poem's final lines, Robartes seems to be looking for a way to join with the beloved that would not require him to cross over the boundary line between the material and the supernatural.

In lines nine through twelve of 'Michael Robartes Bids,' Robartes pleads with the divine beloved to rescue him from the Horses of Disaster and to join him in the mortal world:

Beloved, let your eyes half close, and your heart beat
 Over my heart, and your hair fall over my breast,
 Drowning love's lonely hour in the deep twilight of rest,
 And hiding their tossing manes and their tumultuous feet. (TWATR 25)

Given the degree to which Robartes fears passing into the beloved's domain, the possibility exists that his request for her to "let her eyes half close," let her "heart beat" over his heart, and let her "hair fall over [his] breast" is meant to persuade the beloved to join him in the mortal world. A mortal manifestation of the beloved seems to be Robartes's desire, his dream. Were the beloved to grant Robartes his wish, her encircling body would hide the "tossing manes" and "tumultuous feet" of the Horses of Disaster. The beloved's transformation into a mortal body would cause the abatement of Robartes's

fears because he would no longer have any reason to cross over into the spiritual world.

But the poem ends with Robartes's appeal to the beloved; if and how she responds to his request is unknown. Although nothing in the poem indicates, conclusively, whether or not the beloved enters the material world, it seems likely that if she were to permanently abdicate her position amidst the Sidhe that she would cease to embody artistic truth. The volume's preoccupation with ideal beauty is such that, given the amount of attention the beloved's otherworldliness receives, a correlation seems to exist between her idealness and her ghostliness. It appears unlikely, then, that a mortal version of the beloved could equal perfection in art in the same idealized and spiritualized sense. Without the 'white woman' — idealized beauty — as its center, it is hard to imagine the volume carrying on. The longing of the poetic-self to become one with artistic purity is one of the most important thematic components of *The Wind Among the Reeds*. In the most basic sense, the volume is about desire, and the ultimate unattainableness of the beloved perpetuates that desire by motivating the volume's narrators to keep longing for her. But whether or not to sacrifice themselves — to pass into the spiritual world — is a divisive issue amongst the principles of the mind that hinders the effectiveness of the morphed version of themselves that they do, from time to time, manage to create. For instance, Michael Robartes hopes to avoid passing into the spiritual realm, and he adds tension to the volume because he fears the death that Aedh basically welcomes. Elsewhere in the book, Hanrahan seems less resistant to the death that Aedh proposes, in part because he reacts unfavorably to Robartes' dream about joining with a mortal version of the beloved.

In ‘Hanrahan Reproves the Curlew,’ the poem that follows ‘Michael Robartes Bids’ and the first of the volume’s Hanrahan poems, the curlew’s cry seems to “bring to [Hanrahan’s] mind” the mortal beloved that Robartes envisions (TWATR 26). But unlike Robartes, Hanrahan wishes the vision away, and compares it to the “evil in the crying wind” (TWATR 26).

According to Grossman, in the early Yeats “he who listens to the cry of the birds listens to the cry of his own inwardness” (PK 122). Apropos of ‘Hanrahan Reproves the Curlew,’ Grossman’s observation could not be more applicable. In this poem, Hanrahan demands that the curlew

. . . cry no more in the air,
 Or only to the waters in the West;
 Because [its] crying brings to [his] mind
 Passion-dimmed eyes and long heavy hair
 That was shaken out over [his] breast:
 There is enough evil in the crying wind. (TWATR 26)

In his notes, Yeats says that Hanrahan is fire blown by the wind, and most critics agree that the volume’s “wind, air, [and] flight imagery” correspond to him (IY 301).

Hanrahan’s associations with wind and air are such that, in this poem, he seems to address his own psyche when he tells the curlew to “cry no more in the air.” The cries that Hanrahan hears seem to come from inside of him: he is the air within which the wailing curlew exists. The curlew, then, appears to represent some interior turmoil, the source of which becomes clearer in line two when Hanrahan suggests that the bird cry “only to the

waters of the West.” As was noted earlier, both water and west correspond to Michael Robartes who, in ‘Michael Robartes Bids His Beloved Be at Peace,’ asks his beloved to adopt a mortal form. Hanrahan says that the curlew should cry only to Robartes because the image that its cawing brings to his mind is that of the beloved made mortal. Hanrahan, then, seems to experience Robartes’s dream about the mortal beloved as if it were his own. This makes sense in terms of these figures’s relationship to one another: Hanrahan and Robartes (along with Aedh) are principles of the mind who constitute a single consciousness, which suggests that they share one another’s thoughts and experiences. Hanrahan dreams Robartes’s dream of the beloved, but the “passion-dimmed eyes and long heavy hair” that he sees “shaken out over [his] breast” cause him pain, and he reacts with contempt. He says that the curlew should “cry no more in the air” because there is “enough evil in the crying wind.” Hanrahan, therefore, implicitly states that the curlew’s cry — and the mortal version of the beloved that he associates with it — has wicked connotations. The possibility exists that Hanrahan views Robartes’s image of the beloved with antipathy because his own version of her reflects his elemental association with air and wind. Yeats associates Robartes with water, which connotes, among other things, the body. It seems logical, then, that Robartes would entertain the idea of a mortal beloved. Hanrahan, on the other hand, is associated with spirituality, and consequently seems to favor a spiritual union with the divine beloved. The way that Hanrahan’s and Robartes’s associations conflict with one another’s wishes in ‘Hanrahan Reproves the Curlew’ is significant because the same kind of thing happens throughout the 1899 volume. Although Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes make up a single consciousness, they embody separate

qualities that resist coalescence and therefore make difficult these personae's task of becoming a unified entity. 'Hanrahan Reproves the Curlew' is situated in such a way in the volume that it sets up a sequence of poems in which the differences between Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes suggest that complete unification may be impossible. The first of these poems is 'Michael Robartes Remembers Forgotten Beauty.'

In the opening lines of 'Michael Robartes Remembers Forgotten Beauty,' Robartes says that when "[his] arms wrap [the beloved] round" he presses

[His] heart upon the loveliness

That has long faded from the world (TWATR 27).

At first glance, these lines might suggest that Robartes and the beloved are locked in an embrace. But Robartes doesn't actually say that he embraces the beloved. Rather, he says that his "arms wrap [her] round," which effects a different kind of image than would an embrace initiated by Robartes himself. The poem's word play is such that, if Robartes does in some way embrace the beloved (and it's not entirely clear that he does), his *arms* assume the responsibility of the embrace; they seem to act independently of him. One possible reason for this is that Robartes, who on the one hand fears passing into the spiritual realm, is also weary of a mortal manifestation of the beloved, as if he somehow knows that an accessible, mortal version of her comes at the cost of artistic purity. Robartes's body doesn't seem too worried about paying such a price; his arms appear ready and willing to wrap round the beloved. But his mind is not so forthright. This may be because Robartes fears the possible loss of ideal beauty as much as he fears sacrificing himself for beauty's (and art's) sake. Robartes's actions are in keeping with his fears: he is

cautious not to lend agency to any deed that might effect the beloved's idealized state. Although Robartes says that when his arms wrap the beloved round he presses his heart upon "loveliness" — which seems to represent the beloved — it is a "loveliness" that has "long faded from the world." Therefore, it would seem that Robartes presses his heart upon something (or someone) that "has long faded from the world," something that no longer exists — at least not in the physical world. Consequently, Robartes's disclosure does little to establish the beloved's physical presence, but rather succeeds in making it even more difficult to determine whether or not an exchange between him and the beloved actually occurs.

Later in the poem Robartes says that the beloved's

. . . pale breast and lingering hand

Come from a more dream-heavy land,

A more dream-heavy hour than this,

which suggests that she continues to reside in a far off, ethereal place (TWATR 28). Just as in 'Michael Robartes Bids,' no evidence exists in 'Forgotten Beauty' to prove that the beloved adopts a mortal form in order to save Robartes from having to sacrifice himself to join with her. Most of the poem's images — the jeweled crowns of kings, the roses of old time, the lily-bearing ladies who walk the gods' sacred corridors — seem to describe the beloved's mythological world.⁸ The gods who "brood" in the poem's final line suggest that she not only exists in, but also rules the world of 'Forgotten Beauty.' Meanwhile,

⁸ See Table I (located at the end Section III) for a print out of 'Michael Robartes's Remembers Forgotten Beauty' in its entirety.

Michael Robartes hardly seems part of the action at all, his role being that of an observer rather than a participant. Robartes revels in the poem's imagery, as if overwhelmed by forgotten beauty, and seems mainly concerned with recalling the loveliness that "has long faded from the world." 'Forgotten Beauty' shows how in Robartes's case, such musing can lead to listlessness. Robartes's disinclination toward agency grows as the poem becomes more densely packed with images: after his initial appearance, fifteen lines go by before Robartes again refers to himself. His fears about passing into the beloved's world have rendered him powerless, and he is caught between making the fatal leap into oblivion and bidding the beloved join him in the mortal world where in all likelihood mortality would impinge upon her perfection. On the heels of Robartes's dream-heavy poem comes 'A Poet To His Beloved,' in which the poem's narrator reacts to Robartes's stagnation by bringing the beloved his "passionate rhyme."

'A Poet to His Beloved' re-invokes a major concern in the volume: the constitution of a unified self. This happens by way of the poem's speaker — the poet — who appears here, at the middle of the volume, amid countless mythological and folkloric allusions, and builds a simple rhyme that at once pays homage to the beloved and unifies, at least symbolically, the principles of the mind. The poet reacts to Robartes's listlessness in 'Forgotten Beauty' by beginning and ending his poem with a clear decisive act: he brings the beloved his rhymes.

I bring you with reverent hands
 The books of my numberless dreams;
 White woman that passion has worn

As the tide wears the dove-gray sands,
 And with heart more old than the horn
 That is brimmed from the pale fire of time:
 White woman with numberless dreams
 I bring you my passionate rhyme. (TWATR 29).

In these lines, the poet makes an offering to the beloved that is unlike anything we see in 'Forgotten Beauty.' While Robartes seems mesmerized by his dreams in 'Forgotten Beauty,' the poet transforms his own "numberless dreams" into "passionate rhyme," a purified poetry that he brings to the beloved. Putzel calls the poet's offering "the most important ritual of the volume" because it shows that the poet has "distilled [poetry] from the chaos of dream" (RY 185). Putzel's assessment of the offering has particular validity when one considers the way that 'A Poet to His Beloved' interacts with 'Forgotten Beauty.' Basically, when Robartes recollects forgotten beauty he experiences "the chaos of dream": Robartes's poem is a mythological tour de force that describes the "dream heavy land" of "white Beauty" whose "high and lonely mysteries" survive the hour "when all must fade like dew." The poet, on the other hand, builds eight succinctly crafted lines that venerate the divine beloved and make a poetic offering to her.

The transformation of "numberless dreams" into "passionate rhyme" also helps to re-assert the project of the volume's poetic self, to join with the divine beloved, and to become one with pure art. In order to prepare his rhymes for the beloved, the poem's narrator zeroes in on some of the volume's major thematic components, such as the relationship between poet, principles of the mind, and the beloved. The poet who narrates

'To His Beloved' is the vessel within which Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes exist, and his intervention suggests, in part, that he has some concern about Robartes's (and to a smaller degree Aedh's) anxieties about passing into the spiritual world. The poet's little lyric ranks among the volume's most lucid moments: the narrator's objective — to bring the beloved his "passionate rhyme" — couldn't be clearer. The poet — the creator — has entered his own self-referential work to create a poetry "distilled from the chaos of dream," and to bring together the fragmented principles of the mind. Without the cooperation of Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes, the poet cannot become one with ideal beauty. One reason for this is that, although he can bring the divine beloved his rhymes, only a unified poetic self can give itself over fully and pass into the spiritual world, to die for perfection in art.

The poet also takes the volume's many allusions to the beloved's pale, ghostly appearance and fashions them for the first time into the term "white woman." He says that passion has worn the white woman "as the tide wears the dove-gray sands": the poet identifies her with the moon and with water, and thus with "the cycle of life and time so important to [Yeats's] greatest poetry" (RY 185). In the 'Symbolism of Poetry,' Yeats says that when moon, wave, whiteness, and time are used together symbolically, they "evoke an emotion which cannot be evoked by any other arrangement of colours and sounds and forms" (IGE 241-42). Here, at the volume's center, the beloved's symbolic power is fully realized as the poet submissively offers his rhymes to the moon goddess — the white woman — a symbol of tremendous emotional power. In lines five and six, the beloved's heart is compared to a quarter (or horned) moon filled with the "pale fire of time." Fire is the universal symbol of the principles of the mind: it is the one element that

they all have in common. As the “pale fire of time” brims the horned moon, so do, symbolically, Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes fill the heart of the white woman. This symbolic union of the principles of the mind and the beloved manifests itself in the poet’s “passionate rhyme” because in it he offers the beloved his vision — his dream — of their spiritual union. The poet’s accomplishment is not, however, an end in itself, but rather a means to one. Although he has brought the beloved his rhymes, it remains for Aedh to give them to her in the very next poem, ‘Aedh Gives His Beloved Certain Rhymes’:

Fasten your hair with a golden pin,
 And bind up every wandering tress;
 I bade my heart build these poor rhymes:
 It worked at them, day out, day in,
 Building a sorrowful loveliness
 Out of the battles of old times.

You need but lift a pearl-pale hand,
 And bind up your long hair and sigh;
 And all men’s hearts must burn and beat;
 And candle-like foam on the dim sand,
 And stars climbing the dew-dropping sky,
 Live but to light your passing feet. (TWATR 30)

A significant correspondence exists between ‘A Poet to His Beloved’ and ‘Aedh Gives His Beloved Certain Rhymes’: the former ends with an offering to the white

woman; the latter begins with one. Throughout ‘A Poet to His Beloved,’ the narrator pays homage to the white woman; he offers her with “reverent hands” his “numberless dreams,” and humbly brings her his “passionate rhyme.” At the moment of interface between the two poems, Aedh takes over the poet’s offering and gives the rhymes to the white woman. Like his casket of gold, Aedh’s passionate rhyme symbolizes a unified version of the volume’s poetic self, and when Aedh gives his rhyme to the beloved, he symbolically sacrifices himself (and Hanrahan and Robartes) for her sake. In ‘Aedh Gives His Beloved Certain Rhymes,’ Aedh presents his rhyme to the beloved, and simultaneously invokes his counterparts Hanrahan and Robartes so that all three principles of the mind can dissolve into one self, and die for white beauty’s sake. Hanrahan and Robartes, then, play an important part in ‘Aedh Gives,’ and their presence in the poem is evidenced by the appearance of themes and images associated with each of these personae. In particular, the environment depicted in ‘Aedh Gives’ strikingly resembles the phantasmal world that Michael Robartes describes in ‘Forgotten Beauty.’

In lines three through six of ‘Aedh Gives,’ Aedh says that his heart

. . . worked at [his rhymes], day out, day in,

Building a sorrowful loveliness

Out of the battles of old times. (TWATR 30)

Here, Aedh echoes the first few lines of Robartes’s ‘Forgotten Beauty,’ in which Robartes associates “loveliness” with fleeing armies and ancient kings. Robartes says that he presses

[his] heart upon the loveliness

That has long faded from the world;

The jewelled crowns that kings have hurled

In shadowy pools, when armies fled;

and suggests that he also speaks of “loveliness” in conjunction with ‘the battles of old times’ (TWATR 27). The correspondences between these two poems continue in the second stanza of ‘Aedh Gives’ where Aedh describes the effect of the white woman’s divine beauty on her admirers:

You need but lift a pearl-pale hand,

And bind up your long hair and sigh;

And all men’s hearts burn and beat;

And candle-like foam on the dim sand,

And stars climbing the dew-dropping sky,

Live but to light your passing feet. (TWATR 30)

Likewise in ‘Forgotten Beauty’ Robartes says that the

. . . pale breast and lingering hand [of the beloved]

Come from a more dream-heavy land,

and that the beloved’s admirers

Brood her high lonely mysteries. (TWATR 28)

The “pearl-pale hand” that Aedh describes echoes the “pale breast and lingering hand” that Robartes speaks of, and when Aedh says that the beloved need only “sigh” for “all men’s hearts to burn and beat,” he recalls Robartes’s “sighing” beloved whose “mysteries” her worshipers “brood.”

One way to explain the apparent overlap between ‘Aedh Gives’ and ‘Forgotten

Beauty' would be to view these poems as two different descriptions of the same basic thing. Although Putzel says that Aedh's "sorrowful loveliness" asserts "the power of art as a re-creator of worlds" it might be that, rather than re-creating the world Robartes describes in 'Forgotten Beauty,' Aedh creates the same world simultaneously (RY 184). It is possible, then, to read 'Aedh Gives' as another version of 'Forgotten Beauty,' and that the impetus behind both poems — the desire to join with the white woman — is the same. Robartes's version seems "unshapely" and chaotic; it reflects his submissiveness and his doubts about passing into the spiritual realm. Aedh's version, on the other hand, is passionate and intense, and distills the chaos of Robartes's dream world into a "sorrowful loveliness" that represents in part Aedh's desire to build anew the volume's fragmented poetic self, and to join with the divine beloved. One important distinction that exists between 'Aedh Gives' and 'Forgotten Beauty' is the way that Aedh seems to pursue the divine beloved while Robartes basically flees from her. Generally speaking, Robartes is preoccupied with unities of nature; for him, the benefits of a physical union with a mortal beloved supercede the spiritual oneness that Aedh sees as the key to artistic purification. Contrastingly, Aedh's pursuit of the white woman implies that he seeks unity of mind: he wants to turn the principles of the mind toward *his* vision of artistic truth, which ultimately involves the surrender of the purified self to the cosmic multitudes. Aedh accomplishes unity of mind in 'Aedh Gives' because the poem's images correspond to Robartes and Hanrahan, and conjures them up. Michael Robartes strengthens his presence in the poem when he shows up as "candle-like foam" in line ten, and Hanrahan appears in line eleven

when the “stars” climb the “dew-dropping sky”.⁹ The presence of all three principles of the mind in ‘Aedh Gives’ suggests that a unified version of these personae exists in the poem. ‘Aedh Gives,’ then, symbolically offers the principles of the mind to the divine beloved and therefore seems to reflect the passionate rhyme brought forth by the poet in ‘A Poet to His Beloved.’ When the poet shifts into Aedh’s mask of passionate intensity and gives his passionate rhyme to the beloved, the poem ‘Aedh Gives His Beloved Certain Rhymes’ itself becomes a “sorrowful loveliness” that recreates and unifies the poet’s interior world.

But as Yeats himself wrote of his own life, the unity of mind that Aedh seems to achieve in ‘Aedh Gives’ is apparently “a preparation for something that never happens” (A 71). The whole reason that Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes flow into one another is to allow the volume’s poetic self to join with white beauty. For this to happen, the principles of the mind have to die and make way for a new distilled self. But the last line of ‘Aedh Gives His Beloved Certain Rhymes’ seems to suggest just the opposite: Aedh says that Robartes (candle-like foam) and Hanrahan (stars climbing the dew-dropping sky) “*Live but to light [the beloved’s] passing feet*” (my italics). By this Aedh seems to be saying that although the volume’s personae may have flowed into one another and given the beloved their passionate rhyme, they have not, after all, died for her. One major reason why Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes do not die in ‘Aedh Gives’ is that the notion of oneness that draws them together does not account for the differences between them: their correspondences are numerous and complex, and because not all of Hanrahan’s and

⁹ Stars are derivative of fire; they reside in the air and correspond to Yeats’s elemental representation of Hanrahan (fire blown by the wind).

Robartes's associations are in keeping with Aedh's, they make moot his symbolic offering to the divine beloved. While Aedh embodies the pure fire of imagination, Hanrahan and Robartes consist of fire mixed with air, and fire mixed with water. Consequently, Hanrahan and Robartes complicate Aedh's desire to meld with the white woman because their elemental associations differ from his. Aedh corresponds to passion and intensity, but he constitutes only part of the poet's consciousness, and therefore his fiery intensity does not suppress the associations that Hanrahan and Robartes elicit. Rather, the unified version of Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes that appears in 'Aedh Gives' brings together all extant correspondences to fire of fire, water of fire, and air of fire into one complex poetic symbol. So, when Aedh conjures up Robartes, he calls forth everything associated with water and fire, including things like life and body which resist Aedh's preoccupation with the beloved's intangible world. The same goes for Hanrahan, whose association with the wind is especially troublesome because the Irish for wind is Sidhe. Although Hanrahan's ethereal correspondences complement Aedh's spiritual quest, his association with the meddling Sidhe makes a permanent union with Aedh and Robartes impossible: the Sidhe will not abide the poet's desire to unite with their queen. Consequently, the unified version of the principles of the mind that briefly appears in 'Aedh Gives' finds itself once again fragmented by the poem's end. It would seem, then, that the volume's personae survive the moment of apocalypse in 'Aedh Gives' and live on in veneration of the divine beloved.

It is possible that the continued existence of Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes at the end of 'Aedh Gives' suggests that life and art share the position of privilege in the poem.

In other Aedh poems, such as ‘Aedh Tells of the Rose in His Heart,’ the more traditional correspondence between death and imagination — where death facilitates imaginative reverie — figures prominently . But in ‘Aedh Gives,’ the personae’s failure to unify means that they live on, they remain fragmented, and that they have yet to meld with the white woman. Therefore, the poem seems to celebrate art and imagination in a manner unfamiliar to Aedh’s other poems. When Aedh says that Robartes and Hanrahan live to light the beloved’s passing feet, he seems to suggest that the principles of the mind will continue to worship her forever. Aedh does not equate imaginative fulfillment with the finality of death in ‘Aedh Gives,’ but rather champions the illimitable capacity of the volume’s poetic self to rejuvenate after attempts at unification have failed. This suggests a reading of ‘Aedh Gives’ that is in keeping with conventional conceptions of the volume as a cyclical, non-linear system of poems.¹⁰ The events of ‘Aedh Gives’ make abundantly evident the inability of the poet’s internal principles to join together long enough to forge a perfect union: a purified self. But it also seems clear that they will go on trying to unite “until God burn time” (TWATR 42). Consequently, the placement of ‘Aedh Gives’ at the center of the 1899 volume takes on added significance because it suggests that the “disorganizing power of the many within the self” that figures so prominently in ‘Aedh Gives’ radiates outward and affects every poem in the volume (PK 12). The frequent appearance of fire, air, and water imagery in poems placed before and after ‘Aedh Gives’ make it possible to imagine the chaotic world that the volume depicts endlessly swirling

¹⁰ According to Putzel, “Yeats creates a pattern or sequence [in *The Wind*], drawing on thematic and imagistic parallelism, opposition and repetition . . . [and] moves from poem to poem, not in a linear narrative” but in “concentric circles” (RY 166).

around a central symbol of personal complexity and fragmentation that attempts without end to purify itself and blend into artistic perfection, which is beyond life and time.

TABLE I

Michael Robartes Remembers Forgotten Beauty

When my arms wrap you round I press
My heart upon the loveliness
That has long faded from the world;
The jewelled crowns that kings have hurled
In shadowy pools, when armies fled;
The love-tales wove with silken thread
By dreaming ladies upon cloth
That has made fat the murderous moth;
The roses that of old time were
Woven by ladies in their hair,
The dew-cold lilies ladies bore
Through many a sacred corridor
Where such gray clouds of incense rose
That only the gods' eyes did not close:
For that pale breast and lingering hand
Come from a more dream-heavy land,
A more dream-heavy hour than this;
And when you sigh from kiss to kiss
I hear white Beauty sighing, too,
For hours when all must fade like dew
But flame on flame, deep under deep,
Throne over throne, where in half sleep
Their swords upon their iron knees
Brood her high lonely mysteries. (TWATR 27-28)

IV: UNITY OF BEING

Although Yeats's obsession with unity continued throughout his career, his interest in faery tales and folklore began to subside somewhat as he approached middle age. Consequently, much of Yeats's early work, and especially *The Wind Among the Reeds*, underwent scrupulous revision. After the turn of the century, Yeats began to abandon his early poetic style. He did this partly because he wanted to create a purely Yeatsian poetic oeuvre: a body of work still distinctly Irish, but not so heavily grounded in folklore and mysticism. While preparing *The Wind Among the Reeds* for inclusion in an American edition of *The Poetical Works* (1906), Yeats removed Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes in favor of "he," "the lover," and "the poet." When he made these changes, Yeats replaced his personae and their mythical allusions with "a new distilled being . . . clearly identified with [himself]" (IY 129). One ostensible effect of this revision is that it created a universal speaker — a unified "I"— who, in the context of Yeats's collected poems, links *The Wind Among the Reeds* and other early works to the rest of his canon.

When in the 1903 volume *In the Seven Woods* Yeats declares that he has "put away / The unavailing outcries . . . / That empty the heart," he initiates, in part, a new conception of the self in which the poet casts off the elemental complexities and old mythologies of the principles of the mind and seeks instead to possess unity of being by "turning intellect toward the images of his own vision" (V 198 / A 167). Yeats's decision, then, to remove his personae from *The Wind Among the Reeds* seems consequent to his acceptance of his own mind as a powerful source of poetic power. Therefore, part of the

reason that Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes are so important to Yeats's career is that they reflect the manner in which "growth and stability keep constant watch on one another in Yeats's poetry" (IY 247). Yeats's removal of Aedh, Hanrahan, and Robartes symbolizes, at least in part, his movement away from traditional Irish images and themes toward a purely self referent art. But that is not to say that revised versions of *The Wind Among the Reeds* make earlier versions obsolete, or that the original volume's concerns about self unification must necessarily be overshadowed by the revisions of the slightly older poet on the verge of his greatest accomplishments. To be sure, the narrator of *Collected Poems* conjures up all sorts of new interpretive complexities, and it is not the case that by removing his personae Yeats somehow made *The Wind Among the Reeds* easier to understand. Rather, Yeats's revisions reflect the maturation of his art, and the voice that narrates revised versions of *The Wind Among the Reeds* does not replace the principles of the mind so much as develop the conception of self unification that these figures represent in the 1899 volume. The tendency of the principles of the mind to dissolve into one purified self reflects outward, then, on Yeats's entire career because, in the most basic sense, their search for unity anticipates the manner in which all Yeats's works ultimately form one unified entity.

APPENDIX

The order of the poems in the 1899 version of *The Wind Among the Reeds* is as follows:

The Hosting of the Sidhe
The Everlasting Voices
The Moods
Aedh Tells of the Rose in His Heart
The Host in the Air
Breasal the Fisherman
A Cradle Song
Into the Twilight
The Song of Wandering Aengus
The Song of the Old Mother
The Fiddler of Dooney
The Heart of the Woman
Aedh Laments the Loss of Love
Mongan Laments the Change That Has Come Upon Him and His Beloved
Michael Robartes Bids His Beloved be at Peace
Hanrahan Reproves the Curlew
Michael Robartes Remembers Forgotten Beauty
A Poet to His Beloved
Aedh Gives His Beloved Certain Rhymes
To My Heart, Bidding It Have No Fear
The Cap and Bells
The Valley of the Black Pig
Michael Robartes Asks Forgiveness because of His Many Moods
Aedh Tells of a Valley Full of Lovers
Aedh Tells of the Perfect Beauty
Aedh Hears the Cry of the Sedge
Aedh Thinks of Those Who Have Spoken Evil of His Beloved
The Blessed
The Secret Rose
Hanrahan Laments because of His Wanderings
The Travail of Passion
The Poet Pleads with His Friend for Old Friends
Hanrahan Speaks to the Lovers of His Songs in Coming Days
Aedh Pleads with the Elemental Powers
Aedh Wishes His Beloved Were Dead
Aedh Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven
Mongan Thinks of His Past Greatness

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