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# MEETING WITHOUT KNOWING IT

KIPLING AND YEATS AT  
THE FIN DE SIÈCLE



*Alexander Bubb*

OXFORD ENGLISH MONOGRAPHS

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*Kipling and Yeats at the Fin de Siècle*

ALEXANDER BUBB

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

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For my family, near and far



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## Note on Citations

Citations from Yeats and Kipling's works are given in the text, with the following acronyms.

### WORKS BY RUDYARD KIPLING

- AF *Abaft the Funnel* (New York: B. W. Dodge & Co., 1909).  
BW *A Book of Words* (London: Macmillan, 1928).  
CE Thomas Pinney (ed.), *The Cambridge Edition of the Poems of Rudyard Kipling*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).  
DW *The Day's Work* (London: Macmillan, 1916).  
FSI *From Sea to Sea and Other Sketches: Letters of Travel*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1904), i.  
FSII *From Sea to Sea and Other Sketches: Letters of Travel*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1904), ii.  
JB *The Jungle Books*, ed. W. W. Robson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).  
K *Kim*, ed. Edward W. Said (London: Penguin, 2000).  
LF *The Light That Failed* (London: Macmillan, 1922).  
LH *Life's Handicap* (London: Macmillan, 1923).  
LoT *Letters of Travel, 1892–1913* (London: Macmillan, 1920).  
MI *Many Inventions* (London: Macmillan, 1913).  
PP *Puck of Pook's Hill* (London: Macmillan, 1906).  
RF *Rewards and Fairies* (London: Macmillan, 1910).  
SC *Stalky & Co.* (London: Macmillan, 1899).  
SM *Something of Myself* (London: Macmillan, 1937).  
ST *Soldiers Three and Other Stories* (London: Macmillan, 1915).  
TD *Traffics and Discoveries* (London: Macmillan, 1916).  
WW *Writings on Writing*, ed. Sandra Kemp and Lisa Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

### WORKS BY W. B. YEATS

- Au *Autobiographies*, ed. William H. O'Donnell and Douglas N. Archibald (New York: Scribner, 1999).  
AV *A Vision* (London: Macmillan, 1962).  
CT *The Celtic Twilight* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1893).  
E&I *Essays and Introductions* (New York: Collier, 1986).  
JS *John Sherman and Dhoya*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Macmillan, 1991).  
LNI *Letters to the New Island*, ed. George Bornstein and Hugh Witemeyer (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989).

- Me* *Memoirs: Autobiography—First Draft; Journal*, ed. Denis Donoghue (London: Macmillan, 1972).
- Myth* *Mythologies* (New York: Collier, 1969).
- OBMW* *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, ed. W. B. Yeats (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936).
- SB* *The Speckled Bird: An Autobiographical Novel, with Variant Versions*, ed. William M. Murphy (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
- UPI* *Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats*, 2 vols. ed. John P. Frayne and Colton Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970–1975), i.
- UPII* *Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats*, 2 vols. ed. John P. Frayne and Colton Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970–1975), ii.
- VP* *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (London: Macmillan, 1957).
- VPI* *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Russell K. Alspach and Catharine C. Alspach (London: Macmillan, 1966).

References to Kipling's letters are, unless otherwise stated, to *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling* (ed. Thomas Pinney, 6 vols., Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990–2004). Likewise, Yeats references are to *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats* (ed. John Kelly et al., 4 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986–). The volumes are abbreviated as follows:

#### LETTERS BY RUDYARD KIPLING

- KI* Kipling, *Letters*, vol. i (1872–1889)
- KII* Kipling, *Letters*, vol. ii (1890–1899)
- KIII* Kipling, *Letters*, vol. iii (1900–1910)
- KIV* Kipling, *Letters*, vol. iv (1911–1919)
- KV* Kipling, *Letters*, vol. v (1920–1930)
- KVI* Kipling, *Letters*, vol. vi (1931–1936)

#### LETTERS BY W. B. YEATS

- YI* Yeats, *Letters*, vol. i (1865–1895)
- YII* Yeats, *Letters*, vol. ii (1896–1900)
- YIII* Yeats, *Letters*, vol. iii (1901–1904)
- YIV* Yeats, *Letters*, vol. iv (1905–1907)

Since the publication of this series is still underway, citations of Yeats's letters after 1907 give the date and recipient in the footnote. Quotations are taken from the Past Masters database.

Major archival collections belonging to the National Library of Ireland and Sussex University (held at The Keep, Brighton) are denoted first by their full names, and thereafter by 'NLI' and (SxMs) respectively. When not obvious from the title, and unless specified otherwise, the place of

publication of newspapers and periodicals may be taken to be London. Exceptions are the two newspapers with which Kipling was associated in India: the *Pioneer* of Allahabad (and its supplement the *Pioneer Mail*) and the *Civil & Military Gazette* of Lahore.

Excerpts from Yeats's *Essays and Introductions* and *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling* have been reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

Multiple page references in chapter footnotes refer to the order in which the material is quoted in the chapter text.





# Introduction

In 1903 an American interviewer noted ‘an unexpected hesitancy’ in W. B. Yeats upon asking him a question that was, at that time, among those most frequently put to savants on the transatlantic lecture circuit.<sup>1</sup> Would he care to comment on the works of a well-known figure, whom their mutual friend W. E. Henley had once nicknamed ‘the Kipperling’? ‘I shall say nothing what ever about Kipling if you please’,<sup>2</sup> came the reply. ‘I will say nothing about any living poet. If he would have the goodness to die I would have plenty to say.’ Or so Yeats recollected, in a placatory letter to his collaborator Augusta Gregory. Up to that point, when the clever reporter caught him off guard, he explained, he had diligently curbed all remarks of an ‘Irish’ nature (*YIII* 467). In the pages of the New York *Sun*, however, the expansive poet appears quite in control of the exchange:

Kipling? Oh, Kipling had a soul to sell, and he sold it to the devil . . . Undoubtedly Kipling is a man of great genius. He has done a work of great beauty and of a new kind. But latterly he has turned himself into a kind of imperialist journalist in prose and verse, and with all that I have no sympathy. Ten years ago Kipling mattered greatly to men of letters—today he matters much to journalists.<sup>3</sup>

A casual reading might put Yeats’s barb down to an ongoing contest between strident British imperialism and resistant Irish nationalism, or at least to long-standing personal enmity. In fact, Rudyard Kipling had only recently joined the lengthy Yeats enemies list. ‘Latterly’, as Yeats remarks, he had been editing a government newspaper in South Africa, setting him at variance with those who opposed the Boer War and Irish enlistment for it. Yet before 1899 Yeats had shown little objection to the

<sup>1</sup> Edwin Arnold (1891), Arthur Conan Doyle (1894), and Sidney Lee (1903) had all been asked the same question on their respective American tours. See Philip Waller, *Writers, Readers, and Reputations: Literary Life in Britain 1870–1918* (Oxford, 2006), 582–9. Henley’s use of this nickname is described in Harry Ricketts, *The Unforgiving Minute: A Life of Rudyard Kipling* (London, 1999), 161.

<sup>2</sup> The spelling ‘what ever’ is correct. Yeats’s misspellings are so frequent that I have chosen, like his biographers, not to mark them ‘[sic]’.

<sup>3</sup> ‘A Poet’s Views of the Drama’, *Sun* (New York) (15 Nov. 1903).

man from India, even praising his renderings of 'the colour and spectacle of barbarous life' (*UPII* 42). If the war had provoked the imperialist in Kipling and the nationalist in Yeats to part ways, what had transpired to bring about their prior convergence?

Much of the rich literary texture that connects these two authors has slipped into a critical lacuna. They are not the only casualties of a fragmented view of the past. But it is singular that the nexus of aesthetic and political debates that drew together the first two anglophone Nobel laureates, as well as their sage-like manner of issuing responses to public upheaval and warfare, and even their living and working, at times, within minutes of each other—crossing myriad paths from Hardy's parlour to the Savile Club billiards room, and yet it seems, poignantly, never physically meeting—should today go almost unremarked. Rather, both poets have often been deprived of the justice of their context, and unquestioned generic assumptions have been made a priori. 'Yeats's career overlaps with those of both Kipling and Forster', Stephen Regan observes, 'and yet the three hardly overlapped in their lives or in their work.'<sup>4</sup> Frequently these two almost exact contemporaries, who spent equal portions of their lives either side of 1900, have been canonically assigned to different centuries.

A large part of this stems from a difficulty in overcoming the inscrutable 'WBY' and 'RK', and getting to the man behind the monogram. Engineered by both detractors and hero-worshippers, the two-dimensional figures with which we are often confronted have largely been cut to political patterns. When Auden granted Kipling the racist and Yeats the fascist Time's premature absolution, he failed to perceive that these avatars had already set about erasing Kipling the lyricist and Yeats the occultist, Kipling the modernist and Yeats the Victorian, from the canonical memory.<sup>5</sup> Reacquaintance with these personalities necessitates the peeling away of reputations and appreciating how their literary legacies were originally formed. It is also important to resist and decode the authoritative voices of the authors themselves. 'Ten years ago Kipling mattered greatly'—Yeats's statement in 1903 implies that a man at the peak of his career, and just six months younger than himself, already belongs in the past tense. Indeed, Yeats was presciently anticipating Kipling's critical decline over the following decade, but he was also displaying what his biographer R. F. Foster has called 'a protean ability to shift his ground,

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Regan, 'Poetry and Nation: W. B. Yeats', in Richard Allen and Harish Trivedi (eds.), *Literature and Nation: Britain and India 1800–1990* (Abingdon, 2000), 79.

<sup>5</sup> In the original version of his elegy 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats', Edward Mendelson (ed.), *The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings* (London, 1977), 242.

repossess the advantage, and lay a claim to authority'.<sup>6</sup> If Yeats excluded his peer from the vanguard, it begs the question of how they first came to be associated. That among Yeats's contemporaries, perhaps only Kipling can rival him in the determination to seek poetic authority, is the first clue to restoring their shared intellectual background.

The answers are to be found chiefly in that mutually formative period before the Boer War—an era from which, Yeats was later to claim, Kipling had never mentally departed.<sup>7</sup> Chronologically, we will follow their early development in the 1870s and 1880s, their interconnections during the 1890s, and, lastly, the events in the early twentieth century that initiated their estrangement within the historical record. As one contemporary is set alongside another, the latter-day reader can assess each in critical relief, viewing them in the round instead of as a flattened portrait in Yeats's municipal gallery. In turn, heterodox comparison can open up closed routes into a deeper and richer knowledge of the period.

## REAPPRAISING THE LATE VICTORIAN LITERARY FIELD

There are already precedents for reacquainting each of these authors with their peers and re-emphasizing them as figures of their own historical moment. Graham Hough pointed out in the 1960s that Yeats's Rhymers' Club milieu can be used to place him with greater historical and aesthetic accuracy at the foundation of his career.<sup>8</sup> More recently, Louis Menand, chasing up some remarks of Harold Bloom, has elegantly argued that Kipling should be recognized as a member of the same Aesthetic tradition which unites Pater and Wilde.<sup>9</sup> Comparative criticism is now helping to restore his engagement with the key literary trends of the time and Peter Childs, exploiting a comparison with Hardy, re-places him at the heart of early twentieth-century artistic and public life. For poets initiating their

<sup>6</sup> R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1997–2003), i, xxxi.

<sup>7</sup> Given the opportunity to edit literary history, Yeats acknowledged Kipling's prominence at the turn of the century, but not his relevance. 'Victorianism had been defeated', he reminisced in the introduction to a major anthology, 'though two writers dominated the movement who had never heard of that defeat or did not believe in it: Rudyard Kipling and William Watson' (*OBMW* xii).

<sup>8</sup> Graham Hough, *The Last Romantics: Ruskin to Yeats* (London, 1961), 192–4, 215.

<sup>9</sup> Louis Menand, 'Kipling and the History of Forms', in Maria DiBattista and Lucy McDiarmid (eds.), *High and Low Moderns: Literature and Culture 1889–1939* (Oxford, 1996), 149–51.

careers at this stage, he writes, 'Kipling is the genius of contemporary literature and provides the benchmark against which their work is judged.'<sup>10</sup> One has to search widely for criticism specifically relating Kipling to Yeats, but the suggestive power of what exists often outweighs its brevity. 'Mention of Yeats and Kipling in the same sentence', speculates an American textbook, 'suggests a different way of defining the Victorian era.'<sup>11</sup>

Once re-established in the literary field, Kipling and Yeats can be seen in engagement across it. For this purpose, I have made use of specific linking figures (notably Wilde, Henley, and Lionel Johnson) to demonstrate how common themes run through their early critical reception, and how their canonical division was determined as much by their shared milieu as by their own intentions. As benchmarks for aspiring poets, London's professional bookmen often made use of Kipling to critique Yeats and vice versa, championing one man against the other as the voice who would best speak to the forthcoming century. Thus the aesthetic debates and concerns which intimately linked them can be illuminated by re-exploring the comparative arguments that their peers often drew between the two. The analysis of reviews, awards, parodies, and other indicators of literary standing can not only show how reputations were formed and authority levered, but also how individual works (and excerpts) floated freely within the reading culture of their times. Contemporary readerships did not always draw the political line between their *oeuvres* that would be required in the post-imperial era. American and European readers frequently viewed Kipling and Yeats side by side as the two major representatives of British poetry. When the young Robert Frost was in London in 1913, he wrote of literary history in the making: 'How slowly but surely Yeats has eclipsed Kipling. I have seen it all happen with my own eyes.'<sup>12</sup> As such, the mutual 'placing' of these two poets is an exercise in recovering not only their individual careers, but in reanimating what Lawrence Rainey calls the 'density of the social space' wherein poets and artists of this era interacted with each other through multiple social networks and mediums of publishing, performance, and broadcast.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Peter Childs, *The Twentieth Century in Poetry: A Critical Survey* (London, 1999), 20.

<sup>11</sup> William Flesch, *The Facts on File Companion to British Poetry: 19th Century* (New York, 2010), 417.

<sup>12</sup> *The Letters of Robert Frost: Volume 1, 1886–1920*, ed. Donald Sheehy et al. (Cambridge, Mass., 2014), 103.

<sup>13</sup> Lawrence Rainey, 'The Cultural Economy of Modernism', in Michael H. Levenson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge, 2005), 34–5.

## CONFRONTING THEIR UNCANNY ECHOES

Adding textual thickness to this social density is a murmur of telling mutual echoes, both in Yeats and Kipling's creative output and political statements. Juxtaposing these echoes can help us to redraw the links which connected them within aesthetic, technical, and ideological fields, as well as to reanimate the cultural nexus through which their paths crossed. But more significantly, it may also uncover a narrative of intimacy and entanglement hitherto not anticipated. The point at which they become unfamiliar to the reader is potentially where, within the literary field, they may become recognizable to one another. Kipling and Yeats were not in regular dialogue and do not appear to have substantially read each other's work. As such there are few obvious patterns of exchange or influence. What is present is a sensation of *déjà vu* when examining the broader themes, aesthetic concerns, political positioning, and instinct for form that govern their writing. These intersections typically share a common origin in their contemporary Victorian upbringing, or else are tied to authorial anxieties that *necessarily* and *characteristically* beset them as men of their generation and historical moment.

The methodological paradigm this implies is one of parallel development within the broader evolution of literary trends, but by no means in mutual, hermetic isolation. Clearly each is aware of the other's presence, and when Yeats makes a satiric allusion to the jingoistic Kipling, or the latter indulges in some tirade against velveteen aesthetes and jumped-up Irish poetasters, they are 'placing' themselves aesthetically and politically in contradistinction to the other. While this may not be a case of what is conventionally understood as 'influence', it is a profitable area for the application of a 'counter-influential' model. As opposed to 'positive influence' (borrowing, imitation, adaptation, etc.), Elias Canetti has highlighted the importance of patterns of 'negative influence' or 'counter-influences'. In the case of Kipling and Yeats, one might even make a case for what A. L. Bem has called 'influence by repulsion'.<sup>14</sup> Certainly each poet articulated his own persona, both poetic and political, in part by defining himself against what the other was seen to represent, and this was a fissure pursued, deepened, and indeed perhaps originated by journalists and literary critics. Though it may therefore appear ironic that, in spite of this antagonism, Kipling and Yeats at times appear to be echoing one another's thoughts or pursuing their goals through allied strategies,

<sup>14</sup> Both quoted in S. S. Prawer, *Comparative Literary Studies: An Introduction* (London, 1973), 66.

I would argue that the repulsion suggested by Yeats's indiscretion in New York was in fact prompted by their underlying mutuality.

The thoughts of mortality that accompany the ordering of a poet's canon afford us one parallel. When A. H. Bullen assembled Yeats's first collected edition in 1908, the publisher's address in Stratford-upon-Avon seems to have suggested a gentle remonstrance to literary historians.

*Accursed who brings to light of day  
The writings I have cast away!  
But blessed he that stirs them not  
And lets the kind worm take the lot!* (VP 779)

Kipling gave instructions that a similar 'Appeal' be posthumously appended to his complete verse, the allusion to Shakespeare's epitaph ('curst be he yt moves my bones') emphasized by forbidding capitals.

*IF I HAVE GIVEN YOU DELIGHT  
BY AUGHT THAT I HAVE DONE,  
LET ME LIE QUIET IN THAT NIGHT  
WHICH SHALL BE YOURS ANON.* (CE 1461)

The warning to 'question' nothing but '*THE BOOKS I LEAVE BEHIND*' has given pause to scholars ever since. Intensely private, Kipling could not possibly countenance Yeats's credo that a poet's existence is a public experiment in living (the latter's own concern is merely for embarrassing juvenilia). The poems remind us of this difference of opinion, but point simultaneously to the proximity of two writers plagued by traducers, who were determined to author—and edit—their posterity, and to leave behind a *corpus* of work that they go so far as to equate with their literal bodies.

These echoes often speak less of sympathy, then, than of tensions, ambiguities, and contradictions embedded in their literary character. I seek to identify and map them, therefore, not only against synchronicities or meeting-places on their authors' biographic trajectories, but against points of schism and discontinuity. Such moments might be said to epitomize the lives of men who may each be considered as what the anthropologist Victor Turner called a 'threshold figure'—a personality whose cultural role is to transit geographical, temporal, and social borderlands.<sup>15</sup> Although each may superficially appear to serve a very different muse, as late Victorians Kipling and Yeats both needed to negotiate an artistic transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. A comparative

<sup>15</sup> See Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, 1974), 258–9.

critique must be used to place them dynamically within their changing context, not merely reassigning their 'place' in chronological sequence, but endowing them with historical motion.

Their progress through time is matched by parallel journeys through space—migrations from the countries of their birth and inspiration to London and America, where, by translating themselves for the consumption of a metropolitan audience, they attained fame and influence. This interlocking of place with time is crucial to an understanding of these artists who were by necessity retrospective. Glancing over their shoulders at the departing nineteenth century, their transmutation of *temps perdu* into autobiographical elegy is formed within that internalized place of origin—the *Memory Harbour* of Jack Butler Yeats, or Kipling's 'Mother of Cities'.<sup>16</sup> Their temporal unease was not unique. Housman too had his 'land of lost content', but his melancholy was displaced onto an emblematic Shropshire that he had scarcely visited, whereas the bond which linked Kipling and Yeats to the dependencies of their genius was far more evocative and conflicting.<sup>17</sup> Like Hardy, they were time-torn, but it is their place-torn character which ensures their contribution to modernist writing. Both seek to address the fragmentation of metropolitan culture by importing imaginative intensity from the colonial margins.

This transitional narrative, then, is crucial for situating Yeats and Kipling's textual entanglements, but to see these patterns of echoing in their full intricacy, we must avoid seeing their literary period as an unfolding story. European history, wrote Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), has usually been construed as single units of evidence arranged in a 'series'—a tendency that led theorists like Weber or Lévi-Strauss to propose overarching mentalities or *zeitgeists* driving events. In a countervailing trend, exponents of the history of ideas (including literary critics) expose the discontinuity and non-linearity of series, which refuse to remain discrete but intersect unexpectedly with each other. In place of the historical 'series', Foucault proposes the 'discursive formation' as a conceptual framework comfortable with the dispersedness and contradiction inherent in the development of an idea or ideology.<sup>18</sup>

Foucault's description of 'constellations' of discourses supplies the conceptual clarity for this project, which vague notions of *zeitgeist* cannot. Conceiving a period not as a coherent narrative but as a complex web of

<sup>16</sup> From 'Dedication: To the City of Bombay' (CE 318).

<sup>17</sup> See A. E. Housman, *A Shropshire Lad* (London, 1986), 64.

<sup>18</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London, 1972), 6–9.



intersecting and parting discourses, Foucault describes what the historian needs to take into account:

Different *oeuvres*, dispersed books, that whole mass of texts that belong to a single discursive formation—and so many authors who know or do not know one another, criticize one another, invalidate one another, pillage one another, meet without knowing it, and obstinately intersect their unique discourses in a web of which they are not the masters, of which they cannot see the whole.<sup>19</sup>

Ledger and Luckhurst have already proposed the application of Foucault's model to a period characterized by an 'extra-ordinary sense of cross-fertilization between forms of knowledge'. Their hope is that enunciating 'the constellated discourses of the *Fin de Siècle*' may 'open up the interconnections of these structures again', restoring some of the motion and fluidity to a period rendered static by preconceptions.<sup>20</sup> If Kipling and Yeats are to be re-endowed with cultural and political agency within this period, they must also be seen in negotiation with the discourses that they encounter. These are, indeed, the crowded chambers in which they 'meet without knowing it'.

While the biographic chronology therefore forms this book's backbone, it cannot entirely dictate its structure. Each chapter also views Kipling and Yeats paradigmatically, through shared themes, modes, words, and images. The principal discourses which will be examined include 'decadence', nationality, 'dreaming', and romance and the Romantic—the latter two forming an allusive field which connects many of Yeats and Kipling's political as well as artistic statements. Romanticism is one of those 'ready-made syntheses' against which *The Archaeology of Knowledge* militates and, following Foucault, I aim to treat it less as a continuous tradition or genealogy of influence than as a discontinuous and multifaceted discursive formation. As a family of critical terms it is, significantly, a discourse that takes shape during Yeats and Kipling's poetic apprenticeship. The usage of 'romance' ranges from Robert Louis Stevenson's generic advocacy of the short romance as successor to the defunct three-decker novel, to Andrew Lang's more holistic conception of 'romance' as a locus for cultural revival and renewal. Furthermore, from the *fin de siècle* onwards the tradition of High Romanticism becomes an invocable heritage, and both Kipling and Yeats do repeatedly invoke it.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>20</sup> Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst (eds.), *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History c.1880–1900* (Oxford, 2000), xx–xxii.

<sup>21</sup> Both invoke it in such phrases as 'We were the last romantics', 'Romantic Ireland's dead and gone', or 'To the True Romance' (VP 492, VP 122, and CE 387).

The Romanticism or romance they or their contemporaries invoke is never the same thing.<sup>22</sup> Romanticism is a legacy, then, but one whose disjointed articulations must be referred always to the unique concerns of their individual speaker. I would, however, like to connect Kipling and Yeats through two meandering but discernible strands in this wider discourse. Landscape and belonging is a theme that concerns us from childhood, which Chapter 3 treats in depth. The drive for public authority, which reaches back to the 'unacknowledged legislators' of Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*, becomes an increasingly prominent theme in the chapters thereafter. Lastly, it is important to compare Yeats and Kipling's sense of themselves as 'last romantics'. If there is a sense of revival in *fin de siècle* invocations of 'Romantic' and 'romance', then it is a last-ditch revival or one that is already too late. Poets are peddling a draught already viscid in the bottle, and—to borrow the discourse of decadence—the rejuvenation it will bring to culture will prove to be only a final, dying efflorescence. Israel Zangwill merely brought this pessimistic subtext to the surface when, in 1916, he attacked Romanticism as false art which had led European society blindly into the Great War.<sup>23</sup> Several of my key secondary texts were published or reissued immediately after the next war, with Hough's *The Last Romantics* and Le Gallienne's *The Romantic '90s* both dwelling nostalgically on that droll and eccentric decade while at the same time—implicitly—seeking the first harbingers of disaster. But this dilemma of attraction and repulsion, destiny and doom, had fretted at the word from at least the 1880s. 'Romantic' is a promise to recover fresh purity and innocence, and yet it is also something already tainted.

As personalities in transition, Yeats and Kipling's engagements with their nineteenth-century inheritance are self-consciously ambivalent. Although they consciously shrugged off the baggage of John Lockwood Kipling's Pre-Raphaelite idealism and John Butler Yeats's (henceforth JBY) positivist rationalism, their discomfort with the contemporary world often led them to confront it within a Victorian idiom. The apocalyptic resonances of 'The Second Coming' for example, as John Rosenberg has suggested, reflect in fact a youth steeped in Tennyson's *Idylls* and Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night* (one of Kipling's personal favourites).<sup>24</sup> Their identification with the bardic arts, as Ronald Schuchard has explored in respect to Yeats, is on the one hand a strategy for corralling an enlarged, newly literate reading

<sup>22</sup> For the word's contested meanings, see Michael O'Neill, *The All-Sustaining Air: Romantic Legacies and Renewals in British, American, and Irish Poetry since 1900* (Oxford, 2007) and Peter Howarth, *British Poetry in the Age of Modernism* (Cambridge, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> Israel Zangwill, *The War for the World* (London, 1916), 93–4.

<sup>24</sup> John Rosenberg, *The Fall of Camelot: A Study of Tennyson's 'Idylls of the King'* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), 36.

public into a national (or imperial) community. Yet it simultaneously retains a distinctly Morris-esque, anti-modern, dissatisfied, and contrarian tone.<sup>25</sup> The literary modernists Filippo Marinetti and T. E. Hulme may have fulminated in lecture and editorial against worn-out English 'Romanticism', but the notion of the artist in isolation—legislating for his times from a place of alienation—was part of the Romantic legacy bequeathed to them by Yeats and Kipling.

Both writers' experiments with a variety of forms and tropes, in the context of *fin de siècle* London, will be the subject of Chapters 4 and 5. Chapters 1 and 2, instead, will detail their inheritance of Romantic doctrine and aesthetics during their childhood and adolescence. This includes the theme of childhood itself, and the atavistic, mythic imagination attributed to children in late Victorian culture. During the course of Yeats and Kipling's careers, infancy would become a disputed territory at the origin of both artistic insight and national belonging. Hatred of England, where they were schooled, and suspicion of modernity in general, are also explored in these chapters, as is their psychically divided nature—manifested, in both cases, by hallucinatory episodes often exacerbated by chemical stimulant. Usurping the English poetic lineage (and Romantic inheritance) from a position not central to metropolitan literary culture, but lateral to it, they enter London clutching the imaginative opiates of the imperial margins. As such they are in the vanguard of the modern quest for alternative spirituality, inclining to the secret conclave offered by Freemasonry and Theosophy, and rejecting conventional religion in preference for Islam, Buddhism, or a composite occultism. It is an impetus that drew both poets imaginatively towards the East.

Political ideologies and enmities, and the means of engaging with them poetically, were major discourses for both poets. They aspired to be Shelleyan legislators but were charged with unscrupulous rabble-rousing, using their Victorian 'training' to conflate the subjective, private world with the political, public world. They both employed novel means to summon a community of readers, through newspapers, popular magazines, recruiting speeches, lectures, and psaltery recitations. Yeats never attained Kipling's vast and lucrative bourgeois readership—indeed, he scorned such ubiquity. Yet his activities also necessarily embraced populism, and his public mask bears telling comparison with that of a laureate whose fame and wealth enabled him, ironically, to become ever more cloistered, meticulous, and disdainful of moralistic and didactic writing. Both men were, by turns, trailblazers for younger writers and undignified

<sup>25</sup> Ronald Schuchard, *The Last Minstrels: Yeats and the Revival of the Bardic Arts* (Oxford, 2008), xxix–xxv.

counter-examples for 'high[er] moderns', and this pursuit of public authority is the subject of Chapter 6. In the years beyond this book's range, when they grew further apart socially and stylistically, Yeats and Kipling's political dispute increasingly drew the cultural realm into its rhetorical cohorts. As such they are key figures for understanding how art intersected with politics at what Lionel Trilling called 'the dark and bloody crossroads' of the modernist period. Quoting Trilling, Sara Blair comments that 'in the moment of modernism, "culture" itself—what constitutes it, whose property it is, how it identifies or informs national or racial bodies—is a deeply political issue'.<sup>26</sup> Yeats and Kipling's work must be at the heart of any explanation of this modernist *kulturkampf*. Their linguistic convergence demonstrates how notions of the romantic or heroic can be invoked simultaneously within both imperialist and nationalist discourses.

## COMPARATIVE BIOGRAPHY

The historical focus of this book is not, and should not be, of uniform intensity. Large stretches of time are sometimes passed over rapidly, so that specific moments of convergence—or conflict—can be treated in depth. A parallel timeline is provided (see Appendix), to assist in locating these key moments amidst the broader lifespan. When deployed correctly, as the New Historicists found, the eloquence of anecdotes contradicts retrospective assumptions. The historian and anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that historiography should consist of unmuffling the 'bundles of silence' that lie in unexplained gaps pasted over and excluded by dominant readings.<sup>27</sup> In this respect, echoes and intersections between Kipling and Yeats might serve to detect critical silences overwritten by nationalist, imperial, or postcolonial narratives. At the same time, discretion and caution are required against the banalities of coincidence. Parallels of chronology can on occasion throw up strange and striking affinities which, when probed, dissolve like ghosts. To be seduced by them is to succumb to a determinist reading.

Likewise, it is imprudent to perceive Kipling and Yeats as companion-ate. I have found no record of them speaking with one another, or even directly corresponding. But it is possible to think of these consciously

<sup>26</sup> Sara Blair, 'Modernism and the Politics of Culture', in Levenson (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, 157–8.

<sup>27</sup> See Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, 1995).

self-divided men as *familiar* in a different, more uncanny fashion. Julia Kristeva wrote in *Strangers to Ourselves* about the shift which arrived, perhaps with Freud's concept of *das Unheimliche* after the First World War, when 'the foreigner is acknowledged to be within and not a hostile presence outside the self'. 'We are our own foreigners', she writes, 'we are divided . . . and when we flee from or struggle against the foreigner, we are fighting our unconscious.'<sup>28</sup> Something of this model, which Angela Smith applies in her study of Mansfield and Woolf, might be used for the more estranged but oddly proximate Yeats and Kipling. In his youth, each man conducted an ongoing *agon* with their nineteenth-century precursors—Kipling with Browning, Yeats with Shelley and Tennyson.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, both partook of a London milieu which was preoccupied with throwing off the encrusted tropes of Victorian poetry. In time, this quarrel with the past fed into their quarrel with each other, so that by doing battle, they inadvertently echoed one another. Peter Childs has written, for example, of the dampening effect the masculine discourse of Kipling and Newbolt had on the 'personal' school in English literature.<sup>30</sup> This was something which Yeats had to overcome, but ironically his attempt to ground a rhetorical fraternity in the quest for a personal Ireland finds its counterpart in Kipling's attempt to voice, in the fantasy of renouncing one's self to the Indian Other, his own underlying strain of solitude and alienation:

Know that I would accounted be  
True brother of a company.  
    'To Ireland in the Coming Times', *VP* 137

To learn and discern of his brother the clod,  
Of his brother the brute, and his brother the God,  
He has gone from the council and put on the shroud.  
    'A Song of Kabir', *CE* 684

What Foster calls Yeats's 'alchemical capacity' to transmute experience into art was a skill shared by Kipling, and as such the events of their lives are vital to my enquiry.<sup>31</sup> Letters and archival sources are cited frequently—none undiscovered, though many hitherto unquoted—and references to memoirs and correspondence of the *fin de siècle* represent an effort to register Yeats and Kipling's passage across the whole corpus of learned opinion. But it is principally in the discussion of interlinked themes and authorial concerns, in a speculative view of 1890s politics in

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Angela Smith, *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A Public of Two* (Oxford, 1999), 2–3.

<sup>29</sup> See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford, 1997), 11–12.

<sup>30</sup> Childs, *Twentieth Century*, 58. <sup>31</sup> Foster, *W. B. Yeats*, i, xxvi.