

HISTORICIZING MODERNISM

**REFRAMING
YEATS**

GENRE, ALLUSION AND HISTORY

CHARLES I. ARMSTRONG

B L O O M S B U R Y

Reframing Yeats

Historicizing Modernism

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Series Editor's Preface

This book series is devoted to the analysis of late-nineteenth to twentieth-century literary Modernism within its historical context. *Historicizing Modernism* thus stresses empirical accuracy and the value of primary sources (such as letters, diaries, notes, drafts, marginalia or other archival deposits) in developing monographs, scholarly editions and edited collections on Modernist authors and their texts. This may take a number of forms, such as manuscript study and annotated volumes; archival editions and genetic criticism; as well as mappings of interrelated historical milieus or ideas. To date, no book series has laid claim to this interdisciplinary, source-based territory for modern literature. Correspondingly, one burgeoning sub-discipline of Modernism, Beckett Studies, features heavily here as a metonymy for the opportunities presented by manuscript research more widely. While an additional range of 'canonical' authors will be covered here, this series also highlights the centrality of supposedly 'minor' or occluded figures, not least in helping to establish broader intellectual genealogies of Modernist writing. Furthermore, while the series will be weighted towards the English-speaking world, studies of non-Anglophone Modernists whose writings are ripe for archivally based exploration shall also be included here.

A key aim of such historicizing is to reach beyond the familiar rhetoric of intellectual and artistic 'autonomy' employed by many Modernists and their critical commentators. Such rhetorical moves can and should themselves be historically situated and reintegrated into the complex continuum of individual literary practices. This emphasis upon the contested self-definitions of Modernist writers, thinkers and critics may, in turn, prompt various reconsiderations of the boundaries delimiting the concept 'Modernism' itself. Similarly, the very notion of 'historicizing' Modernism remains debatable, and this series by no means discourages more theoretically informed approaches. On the contrary, the editors believe that the historical specificity encouraged by *Historicizing Modernism* may inspire a range of fundamental critiques along the way.

Matthew Feldman
Erik Tønning

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List of Abbreviations

References to Yeats's published writings make, as far as possible, use of the multivolume collected edition, published by Scribner and Macmillan. References to his plays and poems are also accompanied by the page numbers of the relevant Variorum editions. References to the 1925 version of *A Vision* make use of the thirteenth volume of the collected works, while the revised 1937 version of the same work is referred to by way of Macmillan's 1962 edition.

- AVB *A Vision*. London: Macmillan, 1962 (1937).
- CL *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*.
- CL1 *Volume I, 1865–1895*, edited by John Kelly and Eric Domville. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.
- CL3 *Volume III, 1901–1904*, edited by John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- CL Intelix *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*, general editor John Kelly. Oxford University Press (Intelix Electronic Edition) 2002; letters cited by accession number.
- CW *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*.
- CW1 *Volume I: The Poems*, second edition, edited by Richard J. Finneran. New York: Scribner, 1997.
- CW2 *Volume II: The Plays*, edited by David R. Clark and Rosalind E. Clark. New York: Scribner, 2001.
- CW3 *Volume III: Autobiographies*, edited by William H. O'Donnell, Douglas N. Archibald, J. Fraser Cocks III, and Gretchen L. Schwenker. New York: Scribner, 1999.
- CW4 *Volume IV: Early Essays*, edited by Richard J. Finneran and George Bornstein. New York: Scribner, 2007.
- CW5 *Volume V: Later Essays*, edited by William H. O'Donnell with Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux. New York: Scribner, 1994.
- CW6 *Volume VI: Prefaces and Introductions*, edited by William H. O'Donnell. New York: Macmillan, 1989.
- CW8 *Volume VIII: The Irish Dramatic Movement*, edited by Mary FitzGerald and Richard J. Finneran. New York: Scribner, 2003.
- CW9 *Volume IX: Early Articles and Reviews*, edited by John P. Frayne and Madeleine Marchaterre. New York: Scribner, 2004.

- CW10 *Volume X: Later Articles and Reviews: Uncollected Articles, Reviews, and Radio Broadcasts Written After 1900*, edited by Colton Johnson. New York: Scribner, 2000.
- CW12 *Volume XII: John Sherman and Dhoya*, edited by Richard J. Finneran. New York: Macmillan, 1991.
- CW13 *Volume XIII: A Vision (1925)*, edited by Catherine E. Paul and Margaret Mills Harper. New York: Scribner, 2008.
- Ex *Explorations*, selected by Mrs. W. B. Yeats. London: Macmillan, 1962.
- Mem *Memoirs: Autobiography – First Draft: Journal*, transcribed and edited by Denis Donoghue. London: Macmillan, 1972.
- MTPQ *The Making of ‘The Player Queen’*, edited by Curtis Bradford. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1977.
- Myth *Mythologies*. London: Macmillan, 1959.
- NPMM *New Poems: Manuscript Materials*, edited by J. C. C. Mays and Stephen Parrish. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000.
- RMM *The Resurrection: Manuscript Materials*, edited by Jared Curtis and Selina Guinness. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011.
- SS *The Senate Speeches of W. B. Yeats*, edited by Donald R. Pearce. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960.
- TMM *The Tower (1928): Manuscript Materials*, edited by Richard J. Finneran with Jared Curtis and Ann Saddlemeyer. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007.
- VP *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, edited by Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach. New York: Macmillan, 1966 (1957).
- VPI *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats*, edited by Russell K. Alspach, assisted by Catharine C. Alspach. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979 (1966).

Introduction: 'Ancient Salt'

In a polemical outburst late in his career, William Butler Yeats defended his use of traditional forms: 'If I wrote of personal love or sorrow in free verse, or in any rhythm that left it unchanged, amid all its accident, I would be full of self-contempt because of my egotism and indiscretion, and I foresee the boredom of my reader' (CW5 213). Some readers of poetry have been inclined to complain of the boredom they feel encountering forms that have been handed down through the centuries; for Yeats the situation is quite the reverse. Tradition is crucial: 'I must choose a traditional stanza, even what I alter must seem traditional' (CW5 213). A prodigiously strong investment in the past comes to view, even while Yeats admits that it can involve an element of subterfuge; at times when he actively intervenes in order to contribute something new, his writings just 'seem' traditional – that is, they just appear to be in line with time-sanctioned practice. There is thus a peculiar 'fusion of autonomy and obedience' in how Yeats relates to the forms and authors of the past,¹ and an important part of that engagement comes about through a concern with literary technique – as seen in the references to stanza forms and poetic rhythms.

This outburst stems from an introduction to a planned edition of Yeats's collected poetry (to which Chapter 2 of this study will return at greater length). A little later on in the same introduction, Yeats makes use of an interesting metaphor to further articulate his position: 'Talk to me of originality and I will turn on you with rage. I am a crowd, I am a lonely man, I am nothing. Ancient salt is best packing' (CW5 213). Why this particular image? The primary reference is to salt's preservative powers: without salt, foodstuffs deteriorate. This is made plain in a slightly earlier use of the same metaphor: 'all that is personal soon rots; it must be packed in ice or salt' (CW5 213). One might call this a strategic use of tradition: if Yeats keeps company with the best of what is thought and written, then his writings are more inclined to endure. More tacitly, the references to salt (which is bitter rather than sweet) and ice (which is cold rather than warm) may be taken as alluding to a sense of abstemiousness: the author must cultivate an austere position of aesthetic indifference, resisting the temptation of personal gratification. There is a slight echo of Yeats's poem 'The Fisherman', which contrasts the cultivation of contemporary popularity with the writing of poetry for an idealized (and fictional) reader; there Yeats expresses a wish to write a poem 'maybe

as cold / And passionate as the dawn' (VP 348; CW1 149). At yet another level the salt metaphor evokes the quotidian routine of travel and packing. A tourist may choose a modern suitcase, but Yeats the poet carries nourishing goods that need to be stowed in a meticulous and more timeless manner.

Travel is here a spatial trope for survival in time.² The poet, one might say, is an expert on time travel. That is not all, however; the activity of packing also brings with it associations of manual labour. In the poem 'Adam's Curse', Yeats claims a poet's work is harder than that of someone who must 'go down upon your marrow-bones / And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones / Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather' (VP 204–5; CW1 78). Implicitly, then, both of these passages suggest that poetry can bear comparison to hard, physical labour. One might hazard that it is the technical challenge of the poem that provides a craftsman-like parallel to such labour. And indeed the notion of packing might suggest a physical container – like a crate, or packing-paper – that safeguards the transported object. Yeats's metaphor thus implies that the historical act of transfer involves a distinction between an inner content and a framing external form, tradition being linked to the latter. The implicit paradox here is of course that the very ingredient that ensures longevity is itself transparent or almost invisible – it plays a predominantly supplementary role and is (in the case of ice) susceptible to disappear. Perhaps one should not push the metaphor too far in this direction: after all, most metaphors involve secondary associations that are not significantly related to the intended meaning. Yet the link between literary permanence and historical change is a complex one, and more often than not scrupulous analysis will uncover that the connection between the two involves such paradoxes.

This book aims to provide a new sense of the formal and historical specificity of a selection of W. B. Yeats's writings over a wide range of genres. The issue of genre itself is the most important frame to be addressed, but it is not the only one. As already suggested by the explication of Yeats's 'ancient salt' metaphor, another important mode of 'reframing' in this study will be a close analysis of Yeatsian negotiations with history through literary form; if the framing container, or preservative ingredient, of Yeats's content is tradition itself (or at least a combination of tradition and its forgeries), then an in-depth understanding of his writings must address how his writings relate to earlier traditions.

Both 'tradition' and 'genre' can be described as instances of 'transtextuality'. The French theorist Gérard Genette has used this term to refer to everything that brings a text 'into relation (manifest or hidden) with other texts'.³ He distinguishes five different forms of transtextuality.⁴ *Intertextuality* involves the co-presence of one text within another, for instance through quotation, allusion or plagiarism. *Paratextuality* refers to those devices that mediate between a text and its reader (including prefaces, dedications, titles and so on). Genette also includes manuscript materials left behind by an author – materials which he categorizes as 'pre-texts' – under this concept.⁵ *Metatextuality* concerns how one text can function as a commentary to another. *Hypertextuality* involves relations of superimposition of one text upon another, such as parody and pastiche. Finally, *architextuality* denotes the relationship between a text and the type of discourse that it exemplifies. Genre is an instance of architextuality, and will provide the main example of transtextuality discussed in this study. But

other forms, too, will be addressed: paratextuality, for instance, will be evident in the attention given to Yeats's introductory texts (to *A Vision* and a planned edition of his collected works) and framing songs (in *The Resurrection*). The way paratextuality interrogates and implies a context – Genette goes so far as to say that 'in principle, every context serves as a paratext' – will also be a recurring theme.⁶ Jonathan Culler has referred to 'the framing of signs' as the way in which signs are 'constituted (framed) by various discursive practices, institutional arrangements, systems of value, semiotic mechanisms,'⁷ and his understanding of this operation will be explicitly drawn upon later in this study.

Both Genette and Culler refer to Jacques Derrida's ambitious work on the frame. The latter's analysis of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Judgement*, in *The Truth of Painting*, draws attention to how the frame (or the closely related 'parergon') – which constitutes the border between the interior and exterior of a work of art – becomes a challenge to interpretation. As Derrida points out, the existence of such a border is a premise for the strictly aesthetic approach of Kant and his many followers: 'Aesthetic judgment *must* properly bear upon intrinsic beauty, not on finery and surrounds. Hence one must know [. . .] how to determine the intrinsic – what is framed – and know what one is excluding as frame *and* outside-the-frame.'⁸ According to Derrida, traditional criticism chooses either the inside of the frame or the outside of it, and as a result cannot truly face up to the intricate connection between the terms included in classical conceptual pairs such as text/context and form/content.

In contemporary Yeats scholarship, the bifurcation noted by Derrida is paralleled in a fairly consistent division between approaches that privilege form and close reading, on the one hand, and more historical and biographical approaches on the other. This study will seek to mediate between these opposing methodologies, according to one of the trajectories Marjorie Levinson has described as characteristic of New Formalism in literary studies. Levinson distinguishes between two different strains of New Formalism. There is, she claims,

a practical division between (a) those who want to restore to today's reductive reinscription of the historical reading its original focus on form (traced by these critics to sources foundational for materialist critique – e.g., Hegel, Marx, Freud, Adorno, Althusser, Jameson) and (b) those who campaign to bring back a sharp demarcation between history and art, discourse and literature, with form (regarded as the condition of aesthetic experience as traced to Kant – i.e., disinterested, autotelic, playful, pleasurable, consensus-generating, and therefore both individually liberating and conducive to affective social cohesion) the prerogative of art. In short, we have a new formalism that makes a continuum with new historicism and a backlash new formalism.⁹

Although the particular theorists mentioned by Levinson will not feature centrally in this study, it will utilize other theoretical figures – such as Michel de Certeau, Hayden White, Jacques Rancière and Jonathan Culler – to articulate a position that hopefully will not deserve the tag 'backlash new formalism'. The way in which Helen Vendler's recent study *Our Secret Discipline: Yeats and Lyric Form* (2007) provides an in-depth

analysis of several crucial lyric genres in Yeats will provide a formalist inspiration, but only to a certain point; arguably, Vendler's meticulous readings are not overly concerned with the historical development of the genres she addresses.¹⁰ Where Vendler's formalism seems somewhat oblivious of historicism, another outstanding representative of contemporary Yeats scholarship, R. F. Foster, presents something akin to the opposite case: Foster's outstanding two-volume tome on the life of Yeats is a consummate achievement of historically oriented biography, but contains readings of Yeats's texts that only to a limited extent take into account those texts' status as literary works of art. These criticisms of Foster and Vendler will be fleshed out in Chapters 3–4 and 10, respectively – chapters with special emphasis on what Genette would call metatextual aspects of Yeats's *oeuvre*.

The relationship between form and content is important for the understanding of genre. Can genres be purely formal, or exclusively based on content? Amy J. Devitt has written off the former alternative, but in a way that also seems to imply that the latter, content-oriented approach is problematical:

Although the classifications named by genre labels would seem to be based on common formal patterns, form alone cannot define genres. Theoretically, equating genre with form is tenable only within a container model of meaning, for it requires a separation of generic form from a particular text's context.¹¹

Since many genres (especially of a non-literary kind) involve interaction not only between form and content, but also for instance with typical contexts and modes of reception, it is indeed tempting to define genres as *necessarily* involving a wider range of factors. Yet the fact remains that many literary forms are exclusively formal (or almost exclusively so) – even if one may believe that the form in question has a more significant role to play than that of being a mere container. Should the sonnet not be considered a genre, merely because it embraces a wide range of themes (far beyond the love and politics characteristic of sonnetic subgenres)? To be sure, the sonnet neither comes supplied with a ready-made context, nor asks its readers for a prescribed form of action. Yet despite its limited range of characteristics, it seems impractical from the view of poetry criticism to deny the sonnet the status of a genre. It seems more sensible to accept the idea of more or less purely formal genres. Further, the role of the reader, and historical audiences more generally, may be important for the establishment and development of genres, but this is not something that can always be defined or identified within narrow limits.

In *Kinds of Literature*, Alastair Fowler argues for an inclusive definition of genre: for him, there is no necessary combination of both 'internal and external characteristics'.¹² Fowler insists that 'all genres are continuously undergoing metamorphosis' – and adds that this, 'indeed, is the principal way in which literature itself changes'.¹³ One form of change that he devotes particular attention to is generic modulation, whereby a specific genre evolves into a more abstract, general and inclusive term. Thus the genre of tragedy becomes 'the tragic' and comedy becomes 'the comic'. In this process, a noun is replaced by an adjective, and there is a shedding of formal (or what Fowler calls 'external') aspects: 'modal terms never imply a complete external form. Modes have

always an incomplete repertoire, a selection only of the corresponding kind's features, and one from which overall external structure is absent.¹⁴ Such modulation – which inevitably leads to the modular adjective being linked up with new generic nouns – is relevant with regard to Yeats's development of his ideal of tragic poetry, which will be addressed in Chapter 7 of this study, as well as a 'sonnetic' grouping of poems that will be discussed in Chapter 10.

Both tragedy and the sonnet are genres that may sometimes slip out fashion, but nevertheless have an outstanding historical resilience. Longevity is certainly an overt ideal for Yeats: in 'The Circus Animals' Desertion', he expresses a desire to present 'Character isolated by a deed / To engross the present and dominate memory' (VP 630; CW1 356). One reason why Yeats is such a compelling author is his head-on engagement with our cultural heritage. From the stand-off between Christianity and paganism in *The Wanderings of Oisín* to the *Supernatural Songs* late in his career, he never shuns central questions of civilization and belief. He also engages with major spiritual and literary figures: in *Eminent Domain*, Richard Ellmann charts Yeats's interaction with some of his most distinguished contemporaries, claiming that the 'best writers expropriate best, they disdain petty debts in favour of grand, authoritative larcenies'.¹⁵ Even if Yeats does not always give a fair account of his most influential forerunners – as in his caricatures of Keats, for instance – his acts of literary appropriation nevertheless always involve fascinating subtexts of self-reflection and renunciation. This book will return to 'grand, authoritative' engagements with writers such as Shakespeare and Plato, as well as his engagement with major cultural institutions such as Greek tragedy and the Bible. Ellmann's study anticipates Harold Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence by claiming that writers 'move upon other writers not as genial successors but as violent expropriators, knocking down established boundaries to seize by the force of youth, or of age, what they require. They do not borrow, they override'.¹⁶ Ellmann also insists upon a noticeably muscular description of literary interaction when he claims that an author may not have 'sufficient strength' to expropriate the work of a particularly eminent precursor.¹⁷ On Bloom's reading of (chiefly Romantic) influence in Yeats, the poet could only acknowledge these debts by obfuscating them: 'Yeats is perhaps the most eloquent misrepresenter in the language. Wherever Yeats's debts were largest, he learned subtly to find fault'.¹⁸ Both Bloom's downplaying of Yeats's debts to Victorian predecessors and his more general theory have later been criticized widely.¹⁹

Yeats's relationship to Romanticism and his tendency to be rather free with his own influences will be recurring motifs in the chapters that follow. At the same time, however, I will also make a plea for both more detailed and more exploratory accounts of literary influence. Yeats may have disdained owning up to what Ellmann calls 'petty debts', but sometimes exchanges taking place in less eminent domains are what make the whole process of literary influence and composition add up. Here the Genettian categories of intertextuality and metatextuality tend to be imbricated in Yeats's oeuvre: his metatextual comments on his own work can at times come across as more or less manipulative attempts to establish authorial control, by steering the intertextuality of allusion away from undesired or unflattering company over to grander or more appropriate affinities. Thankfully, some Yeats criticism has lately followed a revisionary tack here, unearthing surprising or unacknowledged sources for his work; thus, for

instance, the case has recently been made for the theatrical influence of figures such as Ibsen, Maeterlinck and Kokoscha on Yeats.²⁰ In this study, the main arguments for allusions unendorsed by the author himself will be made on behalf of Oliver Wendell Holmes (in Chapter 2) and W. S. Gilbert (in Chapter 8).

According to Genette, as we have seen, allusions of this sort belong to the category of intertextuality and as such they are to be fundamentally distinguished from issues concerning generic belonging, which are categorized under architextuality. Although such a distinction is valid for analytical purposes, and in many cases can be used without much trouble, it does sometimes break down.²¹ As John Frow has pointed out, 'reference to a text implicitly invokes reference to a full set of potential meanings stored in the codes of the genre.'²² Although it doubtless had strategic uses early on, the critical vogue of Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality – often used blandly as a catch-all for transtextual relationships per se, even neglecting Kristeva's own avant-garde critique of subjectivity – has arguably caused a neglect of such distinctions.²³ Just as a use of a particular genre often can evoke a particular author, so the allusion to an author is frequently accompanied by a tacit reference to the specific contribution that author made to a relevant genre: the individual and the collective intertwine. In addition, closer scrutiny often reveals that the individual pole of this relation is actually more articulated than it might seem at first sight. Here Wayne K. Chapman's work on Yeats's use of Renaissance sources and modes includes a significant insight. Stressing that the Irishman's relation to this period always involved 'the transformation and synthesis of one's materials',²⁴ he argues that the relationship is better described as adaptation than imitation in a narrow sense:

Interwoven by association and perpetuated by mental habits which alter over time, lines of influence converge in individual works, cluster at various stages of Yeats's career, and run their course in the canon. The English Renaissance exerted a *powerful* influence on him, yet its authors were often interpreted in relation to the great Romantics (and vice versa).²⁵

The term 'adaptive complex' is used by Chapman to cover the multiplicity of such relations. He also points out that influences often come in pairs, and launches the concept of 'dyad' to refer to 'any two recurrently linked sources of content and/or form in an adaptive complex'.²⁶ In general, any allusion to an author (or several authors) and reference to (or use of) a genre frequently fuse in a complex act of transtextuality.

Literary and historical eras are located at a level of generality between individual authors and literary genres. Though concepts such as Romanticism, Victorianism and the Renaissance (or Early Modern period) are historical constructs, and thus inevitably subject to revision, they help bring into focus historical forces that critics neglect at their own peril. Hans-Georg Gadamer best articulates how historical placement impacts all interpretation, in that each interpretative act is bound by a certain 'horizon of understanding' that both limits and enables:

Every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of tension between the text and the present. The

hermeneutic task consists not in covering up this tension by attempting a naïve assimilation of the two but in consciously bringing it out. This is why it is part of the hermeneutic project to project a historical horizon that is different from the horizon of the present. Historical consciousness is aware of its own otherness and hence foregrounds the horizon of the past from its own.²⁷

Gadamer uses the term *Wirkungsgeschichte* (sometimes translated as 'history of effect') to articulate how one's framing of the past is not something suddenly constructed ex nihilo, but rather bases itself on an accumulated tradition of previous interpretations. Such a perspective will prove particularly relevant when this study examines how Yeats responds to authors and texts located in a relatively distant past; his interpretations of Shakespeare, ancient Greek philosophy and the Bible do not involve simple one-on-one encounters, but rather interact with a larger 'adaptive complex' (to use Chapman's term) that features Romantic, Victorian and other intermediate links.

Yeats's complex investments in earlier time periods lie at the heart of his vexed relationship with literary Modernism. Early constructions of the latter stressed links with nineteenth-century Symbolism. Thus Edmund Wilson, in *Axel's Castle* (1931), claimed that the work of Yeats, James Joyce, T. Eliot and Gertrude Stein 'has been largely a continuance or extension of Symbolism'.²⁸ Later, a more particularized historical approach brought a more exclusive focus on Ezra Pound and writers intimately associated with Imagism and Vorticism: Symbolism was now sidelined as precisely part of the Victorian heritage resisted by the modernists, and as such Yeats's link with Modernism became problematic, too. Michael Levenson's *A Genealogy of Modernism* (1984) is a preeminent example of this tendency, and one can see many critics still being successfully tempted to follow suit; for how could an author so respectful of tradition truly be part of a movement that is all about innovation and experiment? It is no accident that Yeats frequently had harsh words concerning not only free verse, but also the poetry of T. S. Eliot and the writings of many other modernists whom he felt were replacing time-honoured sanctities with passing fads. Yet, as Daniel Albright has pointed out, Yeats's position is complex: 'Yeats fights Modernism as hard as he can, only to find himself acknowledging that he is Modernist to the marrow of his bones'.²⁹

Even while close attention to Yeats's texts reveals a complex relationship to the foremost literary movement of his age, Modernism itself has increasingly had to submit to a process of revaluation and restructuring in recent decades. Levenson acknowledges as much:

What once seemed the exclusive affair of 'modern masters', the 'men of 1914' (as Wyndham Lewis called them), now stands revealed as a complex of inventive gestures, daring performances, enacted also by many who were left out of account in the early histories of the epoch, histories offered first by the actors themselves and later produced within an academic discourse, willingly guided by the precedents of the eminent artists.³⁰

Much of this revisionism has concerned figures and issues that have been marginalized on grounds related to gender, class and race. In this respect, it is perhaps inevitable that

Yeats – as a white male with strong sympathies with the Protestant Ascendancy and right-wing movements of the 1930s – is not a privileged recipient of renewed centrality. Nevertheless, more inclusive accounts of Modernism have also, on occasion, led to a more nuanced understanding of Yeats's place in the modernist narrative. The work of James Longenbach can be taken as an outstanding exemplar of this: Longenbach has stressed the radicality of Yeats's turn, in a movement that began during the first decade of the twentieth century, to a 'more expansive and aggressive music'.³¹ As a result, the early Yeats now already appears to be almost a fully fledged modernist, and as such is in less need of the outside help of Ezra Pound in order to obtain – or borrow – a modernist idiom in his key volumes in the 1920s. Further, Longenbach has also presented a close reading of the three winters Pound and Yeats spent working intensely together at Stone Cottage in Sussex. The upshot is a reversal of the traditional story; while 'Pound has so often been credited with producing the Yeats of *Responsibilities*', Longenbach concludes that a 'more careful reading of their relationship shows that Yeats was far more influential in producing the Pound of *Lustra*'.³²

Such a reversal of received wisdom is striking enough in itself, but also susceptible to contestation. Longenbach's revisionary account of Modernism may be accused of being unfair to Pound – he for instance claims that Eliot, too, was a larger influence on Pound than vice versa – and no doubt his understanding of these relationships will be more readily accepted and digested among Yeatsians than other scholars of modernist literature. More generally digestible, perhaps, is Longenbach's suggestion that Modernism itself is a construct that changes according to which criteria we use to define it: 'At large, modernism is divided against itself, impossible to oppose neatly to Romanticism or Postmodernism, difficult to associate cleanly with any particular aesthetic practice or ideological position'.³³ Modernism, in other words, is not a monolithic entity but changes according to whatever horizons of understanding we deploy in interpreting it. If one defines the movement as a pure cult of literary autonomy or formalist aesthetics, then Yeats will not figure at the centre of it – although his formative influence on Pound and the later Eliot might assure him a honourable mention. On the other hand, a reading of Modernism on the basis of genre will necessarily lead to the construction of a very different kind of entity – as will be suggested in my final chapter. According to Steven Matthews, Yeats's relation to contextual frameworks actually makes his work in some respects more ambivalent and polysemic – more modernist, if such characteristics are to remain defining features of the movement – than that of other, key figures of Modernism: 'The unresolved, open-ended nature of his own historical location opens his work to reappropriation within a greater variety of contexts, perhaps, than that of his modernist successors Pound and Eliot'.³⁴

Yeats's relationship to Modernism is one of several recurring concerns in this book. The three first chapters address the borderline between Yeats's literary work and different conceptions of life. As an overture, Yeats's differentiation between the poet and the man who sits down to breakfast (in the 1938 introduction to a planned Scribner's edition of his collected works) will be subjected to a close reading in Chapter 2. Using theories of everyday life (stemming from Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau and others), Yeats's pronouncement will be linked with the contemporary connotations