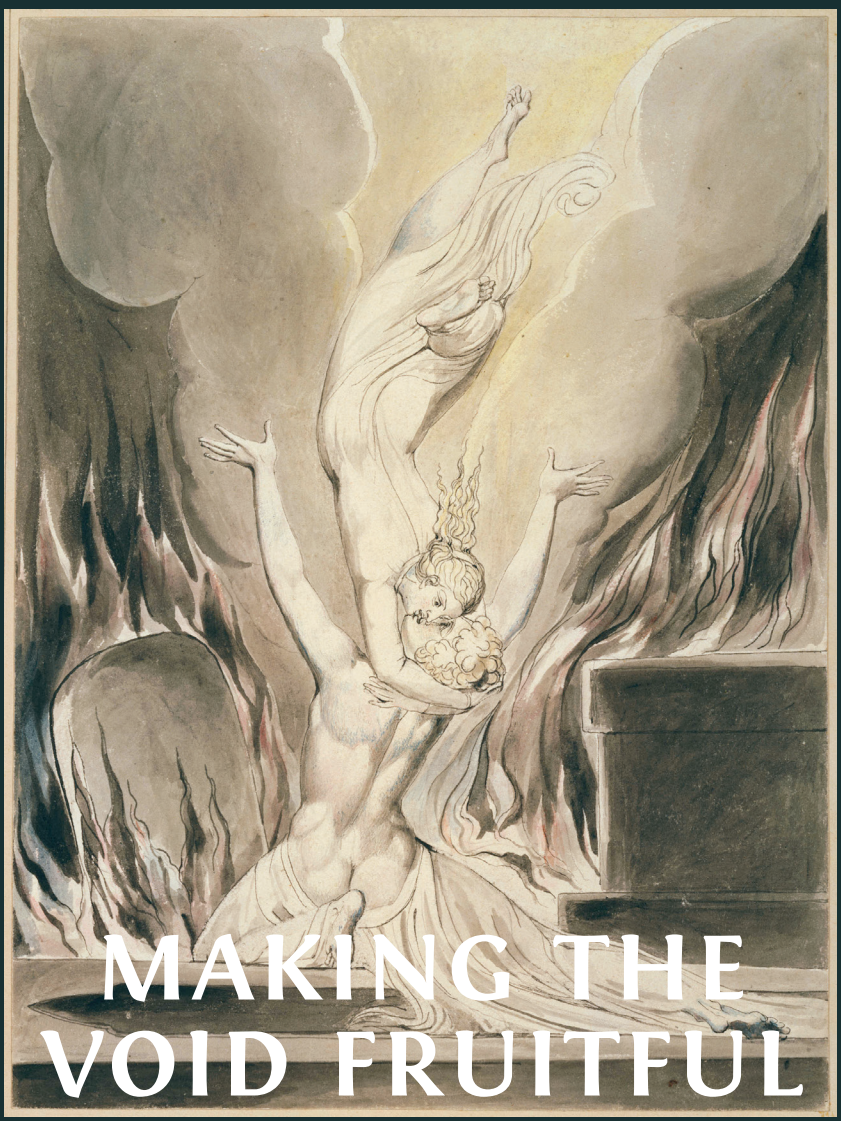
Patrick J. Keane



MAKING THE VOID FRUITFUL

Yeats as Spiritual Seeker and Petrarchan Lover

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3. The Seeker

Yeats was a lifelong Seeker. He was influenced, early on and powerfully, by Shelley's visionary quester in *Alastor*, and Tennyson's in 'Ulysses,' heroic solitaries who engage in idealist quests, unconstrained by conventional ties, and whose version of the archetypal *peregrinatio vitae* ends in death. The crucial lines Yeats puts in the mouth of his nameless death-foreseeing Irish airman—'A lonely impulse of delight/ Drove to this tumult in the clouds'—echo the lines (304–5), in which the narrator of *Alastor* epitomizes what impels Shelley's nameless Seeker, in quest of an ideal represented by an irresistible but inaccessible woman: 'A restless impulse urged him to embark/ And meet lone death on the drear ocean's waste.'[1]

'An Irish Airman Foresees his Death,' a concise fusion of solitary ecstasy, fate, and *gnosis* (the poem begins 'I know'), is deservedly one of Yeats's best-known short lyrics. In referring in my subtitle and throughout to Yeats as a Seeker, I am alluding to a very early, little-known 'dramatic poem in two scenes' with that title. Though Yeats later struck *The Seeker* from his canon, its theme—the perennial quest for secret knowledge, usually celebrated but always with an acute awareness of the attendant dangers of estrangement from 'mere' human life—initiates what might be fairly described as the basic and archetypal pattern of his life and work.

The Seeker of the title is an aged knight who has been made 'a coward in the field,' and been 'untouched by human joy or human love,' sacrificing 'all' in order to follow a beckoning voice. In his dying moments, he discovers that the alluring voice he has been pursuing all

1 The Irish airman was, of course, Robert Gregory, with Yeats himself supplying the dead pilot's supposed final words. The profound influence of *Alastor* on Yeats's thought and poetry is well known. George Mills Harper once told me that 'one of the controls in an unfinished notebook of *Vision* materials is named "Alastor".'

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his 'dream-led' life is that of a 'bearded witch,' who knows not what she is, though men call her 'Infamy.' That final turn looks back to Spenser's *Faery Queen* (I, ii), where the evil witch Duessa, outwardly 'faire,' is actually 'fowle,' and to Banquo describing the witches he and Macbeth encounter as 'bearded.' There are also hints of Keats's wasted and doomed knight-at-arms in 'La Belle Dame sans Merci.' In the final exchange, the bearded figure, bending triumphantly over the dying knight, sardonically whispers, 'What, lover, die before our lips have met?' With his last breath, the knight responds: 'Again, the voice! The Voice!' (VP, 681–85).[2]

Celtic mythology has thematic variations, often exacting a price. In the most famous modern version, Yeats's 1902 play *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, written for and starring Maud Gonne, the old hag is climactically transformed into a beautiful woman: 'a young girl with the walk of a queen,' Ireland herself, her regal beauty rejuvenated by blood-sacrifice. In that sense she is a devouring female, Ireland as Stephen Dedalus's 'old sow that eats her farrow,' a queen anticipating Wallace Stevens's devouring earth mother, whose male victim's 'grief' is that she 'should feed on him.' Resembling as well the 'bearded witch' of Yeats's *The Seeker*, 'Madame La Fleurie' is revealed in Stevens's final line as 'a bearded queen, wicked in her dead light.'[3]

The first of two points to be made concerns Yeats's ambivalence in such quests. What was sought, once achieved, turns out to be more, or less, than the Seeker bargained for. A variation on the theme occurs in a famous poem written a year after *The Seeker*. In 'The Stolen Child,' the naïve mortal is an abducted child rather than an active Seeker. He is seduced by the fairies into an Otherworld at once remote and localized in Sligo, a hauntingly beautiful natural world as ominous as it is enchanting. The fairies' italicized choral refrain, until the final iteration, is certainly enticing:

2 The grotesque ending in *The Seeker* also anticipates Rebecca du Maurier's 'Don't Look Now,' in which the father of a drowned daughter pursues and is slain by a serial-murdering dwarf he mistakes for that dead daughter: a short story turned by director Nicholas Roeg into a haunting film starring Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie.

3 On this lethal archetype, see my *Terrible Beauty: Yeats, Joyce, Ireland, and the Myth of the Devouring Female*.

Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.

The fairies themselves are childlike, immortal yet mischievous and not to be trusted. Despite the poem's beauty, signs of impending trouble abound. On 'a leafy island/ Where flapping herons wake/ The drowsy water-rats,' the fairies have 'hid our faery vats/ Full of berries/ And of reddest stolen cherries.' On the moonlit sands 'Far off by furthest Rosses,' where the souls of sleepers are said to have been stolen by fairies, they 'foot it all the night,/ Weaving olden dances,/ Mingling hands and mingling glances': conspiratorial, knowing looks to which the child is not privy. The fairies leap to and fro, chasing 'frothy bubbles,/ While the world is full of troubles/ And is anxious in its sleep.' In the penultimate and most beautiful stanza, set 'Where the wandering water gushes/ From the hills above Glen-Car' (the waterfall on the side of Ben Bulben, a little cataract particularly loved by Yeats), there are tiny 'pools among the rushes/ That scarce could bathe a star,' but large enough to contain fish. There the fairies

Seek for slumbering trout
And whispering in their ears,
Give them unquiet dreams;
Leaning softly out
From ferns that drop their tears
Over the young streams.

In the final stanza, the focus shifts (as it does, though more subtly, in the 'Byzantium' poems) to the world left behind, to be heard and seen 'no more.' We have a backward glance, not to a world of felt but incomprehensible adult weeping, but to the warm, pre-Disneyesque images of a home now irretrievably lost to the deceived child taken away by the sinister fairies:

Away with us he's going,
The solemn-eyed;
He'll hear no more the lowing
Of the calves on the warm hillside
Or the kettle on the hob
Sing peace into his breast,

Or see the brown mice bob
Round and round the oatmeal chest.
For he comes, the human child,
To the waters and the wild
With a faery hand in hand,
From a world more full of weeping than he can understand.

As Yeats acknowledged two years later in a letter to his friend Katharine Tynan, his early poetry 'is almost all a flight into fairy land from the real world,' a theme 'summed up,' he says, by the 'chorus' to 'The Stolen Child.' That is 'not,' he continued, 'the poetry of insight but of longing and complaint—the cry of the heart against necessity. I hope some day to alter that and write a poetry of insight and knowledge' (L, 63). But of course, as in 'What Then?'—a poem written half a century later, and again pitting the song of the supernatural against the pleasures of this world—'The Stolen Child' consists of more than its refrain. As the title suggests and the poem gradually reveals, culminating in the perspective-altering final 'chorus,' the child is now in the power of the fairies. As Emerson tells us, 'nothing is got for nothing'; longing and susceptibility to the siren song of the fairies has led to 'solemn-eyed' buyer's remorse, a palpable sense of terror at having lost forever a world full not only of weeping but of familiar things to be cherished on this warm earth. Even as early as 'The Stolen Child' (1886), Yeats was already writing a poetry of ambivalence, and thus of 'insight and knowledge.'[4]

The second point to be emphasized is that it was precisely such 'insight and knowledge' Yeats was seeking. Whether poetic or Hermetic, it was knowledge aligned with the quest for an intuitive knowledge of spiritual truth. On the other hand, Yeats wanted, as he told 'Vestigia,' to participate in a spiritual tradition that 'would leave my imagination free to create as it chose.' The imaginative power and passionate intensity of much of his best poetry derive from Yeats's

4 Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894) equates this seduction by the fairies with death, as in Goethe's famous ballad, often set to music, *Der Erlkönig*. The elf-king tries to seduce a child, being carried on horseback by his father, with promises of a blissful world where the demonic king's daughters will 'dance thee and rock thee and sing thee to sleep.' The child is aware of the danger, but the father remains oblivious, until it is too late. When he arrives home, the child is dead in his arms: '*In seinem Armen das Kind in war tot.*'

commitment to the paradox that the 'sacred,' unquestionably valid, was to be found through the 'profane' and in the here and now, in the tangible things of this earth.

A profound point was made precisely eight decades ago by a perceptive student of Yeats's life and work, Peter Allt, later the editor of the indispensable *Variorum Edition* of the poems. Allt argued persuasively that Yeats's 'mature religious *Anschauung*' consists of 'religious belief without any religious faith, notional assent to the reality of the supernatural' combined with 'an emotional dissent from its actuality.'[5] As a student of secret wisdom, Yeats responded, not to the orthodox Christian emphasis on *pistis* (God's gift of faith), but to *gnosis*, derived from individual intuition of divine revelation. What Allt refers to as emotional dissent illuminates Yeats's resistance to Christianity, and his occasional need to 'mock Plotinus' thought/ And cry in Plato's teeth,' as he does in the final section of 'The Tower' in the very act of preparing his 'peace' and making his 'soul'. But emotional dissent and the making of one's own soul in an act of self-redemption are hardly alien to the concept of individual *gnosis*.

Paramount to understanding Yeats as man and poet is a recognition of the tension between the two worlds, between the *primary* and the *antithetical*, the never fully resolved debate between the Soul and the Self (or Heart). That tension plays out from his earliest poems to the masterpieces of his maturity. Though foreshadowed by the uncanonical *The Seeker*, the theme is publicly established with 'The Stolen Child,' in which the human child, torn between realms, is 'taken,' irretrievably absorbed into the Celtic Otherworld. Three years later, the tension is developed at length in *The Wanderings of Oisin* (1889), Yeats's quest-poem anchored by another debate between paganism and Christianity, here embodied by the Celtic warrior Oisin and St. Patrick. The theme continues with his pivotal Rosicrucian poem, 'To the Rose upon the Rood of Time' (1892), and culminates in the great debate-poems of his maturity: 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul' (1927) and the career-synopsizing debate between 'Soul' and 'Heart' in section VII of the sequence revealingly titled 'Vacillation,' which appeared in 1933, forty years after 'To the Rose upon the Rood of Time.'

5 Peter Allt, "W. B. Yeats," *Theology* 42 (1941), 81–99.

The eighth and final section of 'Vacillation' ends with the poet blessing—gently and gaily, if somewhat patronizingly—yet rejecting the Saint, here represented by the Catholic theologian Baron von Hügel, who had, in his 1908 book *The Mystical Element of Religion*, stressed 'the costingness of regeneration.' In the last of his *Four Quartets*, T. S. Eliot aligns himself with von Hügel by endorsing, in the conclusion of 'Little Gidding' (lines 293–94), 'A condition of complete simplicity/ (Costing not less than everything).' In section II, in the Dantesque ghost-encounter (seventy of the finest lines he ever wrote and, by his own admission, the ones that had cost him the most effort, Eliot respectfully but definitively differentiated himself from the recently deceased Yeats. In that nocturnal encounter with a largely Yeatsian 'familiar compound ghost,' Eliot echoes in order to alter Yeats's poem 'Vacillation,' and the refusal of 'The Heart' to be 'struck dumb in the simplicity of fire!' In the present context, the contrast between Eliot and Yeats is illuminating; and Eliot is right to perceive as his mighty opposite in spiritual terms the man he pronounced in his 1940 memorial address, 'the greatest poet of our time—certainly the greatest in this language, and so far as I am able to judge, in any language,' but who was also, from Eliot's Christian perspective, an occultist and a pagan.[6]

The charges were hardly far-fetched. In the final section of 'Vacillation' the poet wonders if he really must 'part' with von Hügel, since both 'honor sanctity' and 'Accept the miracles of the saints'—the report, for example, that the dead 'body of St. Teresa' of Avila was discovered 'undecayed in tomb,/ Bathed in miraculous oil' and exuding 'sweet odours.' Yeats was not being casual about Teresa's supposedly uncorrupted corpse. He had alluded to the same phenomenon five years earlier, in 'Oil and Blood,' and once asked a skeptic how he accounted for 'the fact that when the tomb of St. Teresa was opened her body exuded miraculous oil?' (LTSM, 122)

6 Though Eliot later removed that phrase, perhaps judging it too fulsome, his final tribute to Yeats is registered more powerfully at the end of this ghost-encounter in 'Little Gidding.' Fusing the pivotal 'unless' of 'Sailing to Byzantium' with the 'agony of flame' in which blood-begotten spirits are depicted 'Dying into a dance' in 'Byzantium,' Eliot has the ghost conclude on what amounts to a rapprochement: 'From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit/ Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire/ Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.'

Yet he *must* part with von Hügel. His heart 'might find relief/ Did I become a Christian man and choose for my belief/ What seems most welcome in the tomb,' but he is fated to

> play a predestined part.
> Homer is my example and his unchristened heart.
> The lion and the honeycomb, what has Scripture said?
> So get you gone, von Hugel, though with blessings on your head.

In sending the poem to Olivia Shakespear, his first lover and most intimate lifetime correspondent, Yeats, having just re-read all his lyric poetry, cited that line, and observed: 'The swordsman throughout repudiates the saint, but not without vacillation. Is that perhaps the sole theme—Usheen and Patrick—"so get you gone Von Hugel though with blessings on your head?"' (L, 798). Having, in the preceding line, cited scripture (Samson's riddle in Judges 14) to insist that sweetness comes out of strength, Yeats ends by blessing the Catholic mystic even as he asserts as his own exemplar pagan Homer and 'his unchristened heart.' As we will see in the next chapter, Yeats adopted Nietzsche's *agon* of Homer and paganism versus Plato and Christ. The choice of a Nietzschean 'Homer and his unchristened heart' is doubly exemplary, since this is the central line of the stanza Yeats himself chose to represent his life's work in his *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, published three years after 'Vacillation.'

§

Marked by tension between the material and spiritual worlds, the Seeker theme, at once Gnostic and high Romantic, illuminates, along with several of Yeats's most beautiful early quest-lyrics, two explicitly Rosicrucian poems: 'To the Rose upon the Rood of Time' and, a poem I will get to in due course, 'The Secret Rose.'

'To the Rose upon the Rood of Time,' the italicized poem opening the group known after 1895 as *The Rose*, establishes, far more powerfully than *The Seeker*, this poet's lifelong pattern of dialectical vacillation, of being pulled between the temporal and spiritual worlds. In his 1907 essay 'Poetry and Tradition,' Yeats would fuse Romanticism (Blake's dialectical Contraries without which there can be 'no progression') with Rosicrucianism. 'The nobleness of the Arts,' Yeats writes, 'is in

the mingling of contraries, the extremity of sorrow, the extremity of joy, perfection of personality, the perfection of its surrender; and the red rose opens at the meeting of the two beams of the cross, and at the trysting place of mortal and immortal, time and eternity' (Myth, 255). In 'To the Rose upon the Rood of Time,' the symbolist poet seeks to '*find*' the immortal within the mortal; yet there is an inevitable tension between '*all poor foolish things that live a day*' and '*Eternal Beauty wandering on her way*.' That mingling, or contrast, concludes the first of the poem's two 12-line movements. The second part begins by invoking the Rose to '*Come near, come near, come near*—,' only to have the poet suddenly recoil from total absorption in the eternal symbol. He may be recalling Keats, who, at the turning point of the 'Ode to a Nightingale,' suddenly realizes that if he were to emulate the nightingale's 'pouring forth thy soul abroad/ In such an ecstasy,' by dying, he would, far from entering into unity with the 'immortal Bird,' be divorced from it, and everything else, forever: 'Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—/ To thy high requiem become a sod.'

Yeats's recoil is no less abrupt, and thematically identical: '*Come near, come near, come near—Ah, leave me still/ A little space for the rose-breath to fill!*' Marked by a rare exclamation point, this seems a frightened defense against the very beauty he remains in quest of. A hesitant Yeats is afraid that he will be totally absorbed, engulfed, in the spiritual realm symbolized by the rose. Along with Keats at the turning point of the 'Ode to a Nightingale,' another parallel, with St. Augustine, may be illuminating. The Latin Epigraph to *The Rose*—'*Sero te amavi, Pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova! Sero te amavi*' [Too late I have loved you, Beauty so old and so new! Too late I have loved you]—is from *The Confessions*, a passage (X, 27) in which Augustine longs to be kindled with a desire that God approach him. Yeats would later, in 1901, quote these same Latin lines to illustrate that the religious life and the life of the artist share a common goal (E&I, 207). But the plea in the poem for 'a little space' may remind us of a more famous remark by Augustine, also addressed to God, but having to do with profane rather than sacred love. A sinful man, still smitten with his mistress, he would, Augustine tells us, pray: '"*O Lord, give me chastity and continency, but not yet!*" For I was afraid, lest you should hear me soon, and soon deliver me from the

disease of concupiscence, which I desired to have satisfied rather than extinguished' (*Confessions* XIII, 7:7; italics in original).

In pleading with his Rose-Muse to '*leave me still/ A little space for the rose-breath to fill*,' Yeats also fears a too precipitous deliverance from the temporal world. Augustine is 'afraid, lest you [God] should hear me too soon.' Yeats is afraid '*Lest I no more hear common things that crave*.' Becoming deaf to the transient world with its '*heavy mortal hopes that toil and pass*,' he worries that he will '*seek alone to hear the strange things said/ By God to* [...] *those long dead*,' and thus '*learn to chaunt a tongue men do not know*.' The hidden wisdom and eternal beauty symbolized by the rose is much to be desired. But this quester is also a poet; and a poet, as Wordsworth rightly said in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, is above all, 'a man speaking to other men.' Early and late, Yeats, thinking of the warning example of the eccentric MacGregor Mathers, head of the Golden Dawn, was aware that 'meditations upon unknown thought/ Make human intercourse grow less and less' ('All Soul's Night,' 74–75). The '*rose-breath*' is the crucial breathing / speaking '*space*' between the two worlds. Here, as always, self-divided Yeats is pulled in two antithetical directions. Hence the debates, implicit and often explicit, embodied in so many of his poems, over thirty in all.

A memorable paragraph in his most beautiful prose work, *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, begins, 'We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry' (Myth, 331). Almost forty years after he wrote 'To the Rose upon the Rood of Time,' Yeats presented, in section VII of 'Vacillation,' a stichomythic debate between 'The Soul' and 'The Heart,' already cited as the second of my epigraphs to Part One. Once again, and more dramatically, the more Yeatsian of the interlocutors resists the option of chanting in '*a tongue men do not know*.' The Soul offers 'Isaiah's coal,' adding, in an imperious rhetorical question, 'what more can man desire?' But the Heart, 'a singer born,' refuses to be 'struck dumb in the simplicity of fire,' his tongue purified but cauterized by the spiritual fire of that live coal the angel took from God's altar and brought to the prophet's lips in Isaiah 6:6–7. Having refused to 'seek out' spiritual 'reality,' the Heart goes on, after indignantly rejecting Isaiah's coal and 'the simplicity of fire,' to adamantly spurn Soul's final promise and threat: 'Look on that fire, salvation walks within.'

The Heart anachronistically but dramatically responds, 'What theme had Homer but original sin?' Though it firmly stands its *antithetical* ground, the Heart does not deny the lot-darkening concept of original sin, and accepts the notional distinction (Platonic and Neoplatonic, Hindu and Christian) between spiritual 'reality' and material 'things that [merely] seem.' But since it is these things of the world that fuel an artist's fire and provide a resinous theme, the Heart emotionally dissents. I am here alluding to the final Dionysian lines of the curtain-closing song (written the year before 'Vacillation,' VII) for Yeats's play, *The Resurrection*: 'Whatever flames upon the night/ Man's own resinous heart has fed.' In this second of 'Two Songs from a Play,' Yeats echoes and alters Virgil's Fourth, so-called Messianic, Eclogue. In the song as in the play, ambivalent Yeats remains torn between the world of spirit and more human images. As a reader of Nietzsche, who celebrated Dionysus rather than 'the Crucified,' Yeats is recalling that torches of resinous pine were carried by the Bacchantes: the devotees of Dionysus, whose heart was torn out of his side in the opening song. With that marvelous adjective 'resinous,' Yeats ends by emphasizing Dionysus as much as Jesus, even in a play focused on Christ's Resurrection. The tension between interdependent contraries, the divine and the human, and the titular vacillation, persists—as does the desire to merge the antinomies at some 'trysting place,' Yeats's heart-language characteristically 'mingling' the spiritual and the erotic.

But we have jumped ahead four decades. Before turning to 'The Secret Rose,' which appeared in Yeats's next volume, three other poems from *The Rose* merit comment. The first of these, 'The Rose of the World,' is also the first to suggest a connection linking Celtic and Greek mythology with Maud Gonne, her beauty resembling that of Deirdre and of Helen, for whose red lips, 'Troy passed away in one high funeral gleam.' The other two—'Who Goes with Fergus?' (later added to *The Rose*) and, immediately following, 'The Man who Dreamed of Faeryland'—are both beautiful, and both embody the tension between the two worlds. The first suggests that the peace promised by an alluring Otherworld is more tumultuous than it appears; the second, like *The Seeker* and 'The Stolen Child,' stresses the human cost of seduction by Otherworldly dreams. I will return to 'The Man who Dreamed of Faeryland' later in this volume, juxtaposing it with 'What Then?,' a poem written almost

a half-century later, and which, I believe, amounts to a point-by-point refutation of the earlier poem—except, crucially, for the refrain.

The 'Faeryland' poem is a catalog of might-have-beens. The 'tenderness' of love; the 'prudent years' that might have freed him from 'money cares and fears'; the 'fine angry mood' leading to 'vengeance' upon mockers; and, finally, 'unhaunted sleep in the grave': all have been lost, spoiled by the repeated 'singing' of 'an unnecessary cruel voice' that 'shook the man out of his new ease,' paralyzing him so that he dies without ever having lived.[7] The voice—a variation on the siren call of the fairies in 'The Stolen Child' ('*Come away, O human child!*') and on the 'voice' that beckons and deceives the victim of *The Seeker*—emanates, ultimately, from the Otherworld, in this case from a Celtic 'woven world-forgotten isle,' where

> There dwelt a gay, exulting, gentle race
> Under the golden or the silver skies;
> That if a dancer stayed his hungry foot
> It seemed the sun and moon were in the fruit;
> And at that singing he was no more wise.

The poem ends, 'The man has found no comfort in the grave.' But that closing line is immediately preceded by a rather cryptic couplet: 'Why should those lovers that no lovers miss/ Dream, until God burn Nature with a kiss?' In Fairyland, where the boughs are 'changeless' and the waves 'dreamless,' all dreams are presumably fulfilled, as are the desires of those perfect lovers. There is no need for further dreaming, 'until God burn Nature with a kiss.' The poems of early Yeats have their apocalypses, the most dramatic the windblown Blakean conflagration in 'The Secret Rose.' But the apocalypse in the 'Fairyland' poem is unexpected—unless one knows Yeats's Celtic Twilight tale, 'The Untiring Ones,' where fairies dance on and on, 'until God shall burn up the world with a kiss' (Myth, 78).

We also have a supposedly perfect world, with the 'deep wood's woven shade' and lovers who 'dance upon the level shore,' in 'Who Goes with Fergus?' Originally a song in the earliest version (1892) of Yeats's

7 In his jauntily bleak 'Miniver Cheevy' (1910), American poet Edward Arlington Robinson gave us another frustrated Romantic dreamer (as chivalry-intoxicated as Don Quixote) who, wasting his life, 'sighed for what was not,/ And dreamed, and rested from his labors.'

play *The Countess Kathleen*, it was a favorite among the early Yeats poems memorized by James Joyce—the song he sang in lieu of the requested prayer at his mother's deathbed and whose words haunt his alter ego, Stephen Dedalus, throughout Bloomsday. The King of Ulster who put aside his crown to be 'no more a king,/ But learn the dreaming wisdom' of the Druids, now lives in the deep woods. He invites, or tempts, others, specifically a pair of troubled lovers, to join him (is he lonely?) in his ostensibly perfect and peaceful paradise:

> Who will go drive with Fergus now,
> And pierce the deep wood's woven shade,
> And dance upon the level shore?
> Young man, lift up your russet brow,
> And lift your tender eyelids, maid,
> And brood on hopes and fear no more.
>
> And no more turn aside and brood
> Upon love's bitter mystery;
> For Fergus rules the brazen cars,
> And rules the shadows of the wood,
> And the white breast of the dim sea
> And all disheveled wandering stars.

As indicated by the chiasmus linking the last line of the first stanza with the first line of the second, these two 6-line stanzas partially mirror each other. But while the wood and the sea of the second sestet parallel 'the deep wood's woven shade' and the 'level shore' of the first, the final and most striking line of the poem, elevating and expanding our gaze to those 'disheveled wandering stars,' has no precursor. As such, it requires particular attention. Fergus's otherworld seems peaceful and untroubled, but there are echoes of the false paradise offered by Milton's Satan; and the final three lines (anticipating the turbulent final lines of 'Byzantium') amount to a disturbance of the peace. For despite the emotional respite promised by Fergus, the poem's culminating imagery—'shadows' of the wood, the 'white breast' of the dim sea, above all those 'disheveled' wandering stars—extends to the forest, the sea, and the heavens themselves, all the erotic tumult of 'love's bitter mystery,' albeit naturalized and sublimated.

This sublimated erotic tumult is not unprepared for; it is foreshadowed in retrospect by the displaced sexuality of Fergus's poem-opening verbs,

'drive' and 'pierce.' But the enchanting and disturbing final line suggests, by allusion, other erotic connections. 'All disheveled wandering stars' fuse the 'golden tresses' Eve 'wore/ Disheveled' and in 'wanton ringlets' in *Paradise Lost* (IV. 305–6) with Pope's echo in *The Rape of the Lock*, which ends with Belinda's shorn tresses consecrated 'midst the Stars': 'Not Berenice's Locks first rose so bright,/ The Heavens bespangling with disheveled Light.' Those sexual undercurrents are also present in 'Who Goes with Fergus?'

In the next chapter, we will move from quest to reincarnation, from Fairyland to Byzantium, and, via the final 'Rose' poem, the violent but benignly apocalyptic 'The Secret Rose,' to the far better-known and bestial apocalypse of 'The Second Coming.'