YEATS

AND

THE HUGH LANE CONTROVERSY

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By

DAVID CLARENCE NIMMO, B.A.

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PREFACE

To avoid confusion a note seems to be necessary here. The Tate Gallery of Modern British Art was founded in 1897. With funds donated by Sir Joseph Duveen a new wing was built in 1926 to include a gallery of Modern Foreign Art, with the Lane pictures being the core of the collection. The official title of that gallery is now the National Gallery, Millbank, though it is still popularly known as the Tate Gallery.

I am indebted to Dr. W. J. Keith for his kind but critical supervision of this thesis. The direction he gave to my reading saved many a fruitless journey down unexplored lanes. I would also like to thank Mrs. C. W. Murphy who allowed me to use her copy of a book that is none too easy to acquire, Thomas Bodkin's Hugh Lane and His Pictures. The opportunity to study the reproductions of the Lane pictures in that book gave fuller significance to Yeats's struggle to obtain those pictures for Ireland. Finally, I must thank the librarians of the Interlibrary Loan department of the Mills Memorial Library, McMaster University; their prompt, courteous service in acquiring copies of relevant documents was invaluable.

All errors, both of commission and omission, are of course my own.

D. C. N.

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INTRODUCTION

Although little was written by Yeats as a result of the Hugh Lane controversy, the issue had a great influence on his work, on both subject matter and style. As he himself said in 1914, only "three public controversies have stirred my imagination. The first was the Parnell controversy . . . . And another was the dispute over The Playboy . . . . The third prepared for the Corporation's refusal of a building for Sir Hugh Lane's famous collection of pictures."[1] All three controversies (a fourth being the later international controversy over Lane's codicil) concerned Yeats, for all involved ideas of education, culture and nationhood, at least indirectly. On one side was a narrow Irish provincialism to which Yeats and others opposed an ideal Irish Unity of Being. The difference between the two is similar to Arnold's distinction between "having culture" and "being cultured", the former being a conscious possession and hence less integrated with the individual. Irish provincialism and patriotism of the green shamrock type was sham culture to Yeats and as

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[1] W. B. Yeats, Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (London: Macmillan, 1963), p. 529. Henceforth referred to as C. P. Lady Gregory quotes Yeats as writing that these controversies stirred his "indignation". Hugh Lane's Life and Achievement (London: John Murray, 1921), p. 120.

repugnant to him as was the stage Irishman. The Irish nation could best be enhanced not by emphasizing its Irishness by such superficial, merely decorative ways, but simply by being better in its cultural endeavours than other nations. Ideally, such "cultural patriotism" would result in quality being synonymous with Ireland. Lane's proposed contribution of continental paintings to the Dublin Municipal Gallery would have given Ireland an outstanding modern gallery and, more important, would have given young Irish artists the opportunity to learn from the example of the masters so that Ireland, in time, could itself produce art of outstanding merit, an art unbounded by demands of nationalistic subject matter.

It is not surprising, then, that the Hugh Lane controversy had the effect it had on Yeats, for the lines of battle were for him clearly delineated. So deeply aroused by this question of culture was Yeats that the refusal of the Corporation of Dublin to provide a building to house the Lane pictures advanced him in his movement away from the romantic, faery poetry of his earlier stage to a poetry of "hard, cold style" concerned with, or often inspired by, contemporary events. But it is also significant that Yeats could be drawn into matters of public interest only so far - the determining limit being the degree to which culture was involved. Politics and even the First World War had little to interest him. Explicit evidence of his anti-political, or at least apolitical, attitude is his poem "On Being Asked for a War Poem" (C. P., 175),

and also "Leda and the Swan" (C. P., 241) which he composed after being asked to write a political poem. In his service as senator he spoke, and admitted that he spoke, as a man of letters, not as a politician. This reticence to participate in current political affairs is understandable for, as C. K. Stead has lucidly shown in The New Poetic, the poet must not pander to the public, but must desire "a relationship . . . [with his audience] which would give the poet a recognized position within a community, but a position of independence."[2] Participation could lead the poet to become a party mouthpiece, a versifier, not a true poet with an individual vision. Why, then, did Yeats not hesitate to choose sides in the Lane controversy? Yeats had earned a recognized position in Ireland with his poetry of Irish mythology and folklore, but he must often have felt uneasy at the thought that he was not speaking on current events to modern Ireland. When the actions of the Dublin Corporation threatened a significant advance in Irish culture, Yeats could no longer keep silent, for silence is, at certain times, equivalent to a lie. The narrow, anticultural patriotism of Dubliners like William Murphy and other journalists was not only a disappointment to Lady Gregory, Yeats's great friend, but an attack on the type of

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[2] C. K. Stead, The New Poetic: Yeats to Eliot (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 20.

culture Yeats had wished for Ireland, a culture typified by his phrase Unity of Being. A study of Yeats's contribution to the Lane controversy will reveal, I hope, not an impractical interest on the poet's part in matters of art, but an inspired interest in life as it can be aided by culture, or rather, in culture as a way of life.

The first chapter is intended to acquaint the reader with the life of Hugh Lane and with the main events of the Lane controversies. Chapters two to five present a chronological examination of Yeats's roles in the controversies, as friend and co-worker of Lane's, as poet, as international controversialist, and as senator. The last chapter of this thesis is an attempt to show how elements in Yeats's experience coalesced into the dominant symbols and informing concepts of his "middle" poetry. It also attempts to show how participation in public affairs such as the controversy over Lane's pictures did not hinder Yeats in writing poetry, though he feared it would, but stimulated him by arousing his imagination and indignation. One may learn much by reading Yeats's prose works about the concepts of joy, fear, labour and beauty but only by reading the poetry against the background of the events which gave rise to it can one start to realize what those concepts meant to Yeats. To paraphrase one of Yeats's metaphors, the difference is that between a map and a country.

I OUTLINE OF THE "LANE CONTROVERSY"

Before embarking on a study of Yeats's involvement in the Hugh Lane controversy, I feel it is necessary to provide the reader with a brief survey of the events which have come to be designated by that label. Anyone who has read criticism and biographies of Yeats knows that the Lane controversy is usually given only brief mention or is summarized in a page or two. For more detailed information one has to turn to Lady Gregory's biography of Lane, Hugh Lane's Life and Achievement. The prejudice of that work can be rectified by the reader's judgement, a judgement based upon the realization of the difficulty of being objective for an emotional woman writing about the endeavours and achievements of a beloved nephew. But a greater obstacle between the reader and an understanding of these events is Lady Gregory's annoying habit of omitting dates, and, even more infuriating, of making chronological "leaps" and "flashbacks" which make it difficult for the reader to ascertain the sequence of events. Needless to say, Lady Gregory need not be excused for these seeming lapses, for in her work they are not lapses. She was not, and did not pretend to be, an historian; she herself said that her own memory was "the nearest attainable document" and that her research consisted

of asking others for "recollection of a phrase, a movement, a moment of gaiety or anger, to help the portrait's shadows or its lights."[1]

A portion of Lady Gregory's Journals is concerned with the Lane pictures and the entries are dated, but unfortunately they begin in medias res , omitting all of the events before October 1916. The editor, Lennox Robinson, says of the Journals; "their first purpose seems to have been to record the complicated negotiations she undertook to achieve the return of the 'Lane Pictures'."[2] Hence, as with her other book, the Journals do not provide an adequate history of the events with which we are concerned. The only book that provides a fairly complete and orderly history of the controversy is Thomas Bodkin's Hugh Lane and His Pictures, published for the Arts Council of Dublin by the Stationery Office, but this book, which contains reproductions of Lane's "conditional gift" of thirty-nine continental pictures, is unfortunately not readily available for the majority of readers. Hence my feeling that this brief survey of the events

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1 Gregory, Lane's Life, pp. 272-3.

2 Lady Augusta Gregory, Lady Gregory's Journals 1916-1930, ed. Lennox Robinson (New York: Macmillan, 1947), p. 7.

of the Lane controversy , based largely on Bodkin's book, will not be totally unwelcome to the reader of Yeats. The third, revised edition of Bodkin's book was published in 1956, and so for events after that date I have gone to Elizabeth Coxhead's Lady Gregory: A Literary Portrait, published in 1961.

Hugh Lane, born in 1875 in County Cork, was the son of Lady Gregory's sister, Adelaide Persse and Rev. J. Lane. At the age of eighteen he was employed as an assistant to a London picture dealer at the salary of one pound per week, but, after travelling, made a fortune for himself in picture dealing. However he made more than just a fortune, for he made a fine reputation too. Yeats was fond of repeating Charles Ricketts's tribute to Lane - a man who had "joined to the profession of a picture dealer the magnanimity of the Medici."[3] Lane did not trade in pictures primarily for money, because he was above all interested in the masterpieces of art themselves. But he was wise enough to know that money could buy pictures he wanted, not for himself alone, but to share with others. While he was still in his mid-twenties he made two notable contributions to the cultural life of Ireland. Inspired by the works of Nathaniel Hone and J. B.

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[3] Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 59.

Yeats, the poet's father, at a joint exhibition in 1901, he bought some of Hone's pictures and also thought of commissioning J. B. Yeats to paint the portraits of eminent Irishmen. These Lane gave to Ireland and some of them are at present in the Dublin Municipal Gallery of Modern Art. In the following year he arranged the Loan Exhibition of works by the Old Masters with proceeds going to the Royal Hibernian Academy which was in financial straits. This exhibition brought together for the first time masterpieces which had remained in Irish homes and therefore had not been available for public viewing. Soon after this exhibition Lane conceived the idea of a gallery of modern art in Dublin, the result being the establishment of the Dublin Municipal Collection of Modern Art which was exhibited at the Irish National Museum in 1904. Lane, already appointed, at the age of twenty-nine, to be a Governor and Guardian of the National Gallery of Ireland, was Honorary Secretary of the committee which organized the exhibition. In the preface to the catalogue of the exhibition Lane wrote that many of the most valuable gifts, including his own collection, would be presented only if the Gallery were placed on a sound basis.

A donation of one thousand pounds by a wealthy Irishman, and gifts of pictures by Constable and Corot from the Prince of Wales, later King George V, and Princess Mary, brought Lane's dream of a Gallery closer to reality. Then,

in 1907, the pictures were moved into the temporary premises of Clonmell House, No. 17 Harcourt Street and on January 20, 1908 the opening ceremonies of the Dublin Municipal Gallery of Modern Art were held. In the preface to this catalogue Lane announced his gift to the Gallery of his drawings of the British School, a Rodin masterpiece, and the group of portraits of eminent Irishmen which he had commissioned J. B. Yeats, and later Sir William Orpen, to paint. And, more important for our purposes, he also told of his intention to present eventually most of his pictures by continental artists which he had already placed in the Gallery for viewing. He would present them when a permanent building, already promised, was built on a suitable site within the next few years. Among these pictures were paintings by Manet, Renoir, Mancini and others which, Lane claimed, he had "purchased to make this Gallery widely representative of the greatest painters of the nineteenth century."[4] For his contribution to the arts he was given the Freedom of the City of Dublin in 1908, and became a Knight the following year. But Lane was not one to rest on his laurels.

While he was busy helping establish the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art at Johannesburg, South Africa, which

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[4] Thomas Bodkin, Hugh Lane and His Pictures (3rd ed.; Dublin: The Stationery Office for the Arts Council, 1956), p. 22.

opened in 1910, Lane was constantly adding continental masterpieces to his conditional gift to the Dublin Gallery. In a letter to Thomas Bodkin, Lane wrote, "I find that one cannot buy for two galleries (not the same sort of thing) as I want all the bargains for Dublin!"[5] The number of paintings to be given to Dublin was now thirty-nine, many of which were already in the Gallery at No. 17 Harcourt Street. But Clonmell House was an old residence and fire was a very real danger to the building. A new building was needed to exhibit and safeguard the treasures Lane had collected. And thus "The Battle of the Sites" began. Where should the new Gallery be situated? No less than nine sites were discussed, but there were objections raised to them all. Lane had Sir Edwin Lutyens design a gallery to be built on one half acre of St. Stephen's Green, but Lord Ardilaun, who had donated the twenty-two acres of the Green to Dublin, felt such a building would spoil the natural beauty of the Green. Angered and disappointed by the squabbling, Lane notified the Town Clerk of Dublin that he would remove his continental pictures from the Dublin Gallery at the end of January, 1913 if no definite plans had been made by then for a new gallery suitable for the display and protection of the pictures. If such plans

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[5] Bodkin, p. 27.

were definitely made before the end of January, 1913, Lane would extend the period of the loan of the masterpieces until such time as a new gallery was built, when they would be given outright to Dublin.

Supporters of Lane formed a Citizens' Provisional Committee dedicated to the fulfillment of Lane's requirement. The Corporation of Dublin agreed on January 20, 1913, to give twenty-two thousand pounds towards the building of a new Municipal Art Gallery, provided the Citizens' Provisional Committee would provide the site for the Gallery and three thousand pounds to aid in the construction of the new building. The Committee busied itself raising funds by public subscription and also endorsed Lane's new ultimatum that if Sir Edwin Lutyens's proposed Bridge site were not adopted Lane would take his pictures from Dublin. Lutyens, invited to Dublin by Lane, had drawn up plans for a bridge to be built across the Liffey to replace the unsightly Metal Bridge. This bridge would have consisted of a closed corridor linking two galleries on either side of the river, with an open walk on top of the closed corridor. Besides its beauty and originality, the advantage of the site was that it would have cost nothing. But the building itself would have cost forty-five thousand pounds, and the Corporation had pledged only twenty-two thousand pounds. Hence the Committee decided to raise the remaining twenty-three thousand pounds by subscription,

and Lane promised to pay the difference if the cost exceeded Lutyens's estimate of forty-five thousand pounds. Unfortunately the Corporation members argued among themselves before coming to the decision on September 8, 1913 that the Corporation should be allowed to choose both the site and the architect. (Objections had been raised against Lutyens as architect, for he was English, not Irish, although, as Bodkin pointed out, his mother was Irish.). Lane would have none of the Corporation's demands, but instead removed his conditional gift of thirty-nine continental pictures and some British ones, the latter being lent to Belfast. The others were sent to London and over eleven thousand pounds were returned by the Citizens' Provisional Committee to the subscribers.

In the past Lane had thought of lending his thirty-nine continental pictures to the National Gallery of England or the Tate Gallery in order to make the Corporation of Dublin realize the worth of the pictures, and to persuade it to build a suitable gallery so it would not lose the pictures. Now, sometime in August, 1913, Lane made a formal offer of the loan of these masterpieces to the London National Gallery, which accepted the offer. Lane wrote a second will on October 11, 1913, leaving a few modern pictures (including those on loan to Belfast) to the Dublin Municipal Gallery of Modern Art. His thirty-nine continental pictures he bequeathed to establish a collection of Modern Continental Art in London.

All the rest of his property he left to the National Gallery of Ireland, writing: "I hope that this alteration from the Modern Gallery to the National Gallery will be remembered by the Dublin Municipality and others as an example of its want of public spirit in the year 1913, and for the folly of such bodies assuming to decide on questions of Art instead of relying on expert opinion."[6] This will would have been legally invalid had not Lane's sister, Mrs. Ruth Shine, to whom Lane dictated this will, reminded him that he had to have a witness. Even though he had written a previous will, he had forgotten about this important technicality. Such a slip complicated the interpretation of the validity of Lane's unwitnessed codicil to this will. But more about the codicil later.

Having arranged for an exhibition of the pictures which the London National Gallery had on loan to open on January 20, 1914, Lane left for America on a business trip shortly after Christmas of 1913. While Lane was gone, the trustees of the London National Gallery decided to exhibit only fifteen of the thirty-nine pictures, excluding such great works as Renoir's "Les Parapluies". They also refused to hang the fifteen they had chosen for exhibition unless Lane gave them to the Gallery now or bequeathed them to England. Needless to say, Lane was infuriated, and with just

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[6] Bodkin, p. 37.

cause. He answered in no uncertain terms that he would never allow trustees with no competence in matters of modern art to make a selection from his pictures, and also he refused to promise the Gallery the gift of the pictures since he did not want to act hastily. The trustees' answer was that of merely letting all thirty-nine pictures stay in their packing cases in the basement of the London National Gallery. And there they stayed until 1917, after Lane's death, when they were brought up to be exhibited.

Having been repelled by the action of the members of the Corporation of Dublin, and now by the trustees of the London National Gallery, Lane found refuge, or rather an outlet for his frustrated energy, in the National Gallery of Ireland. After technical complications caused by Lane's carelessness about legal procedure, he was elected Director of the Irish Gallery and went about buying and presenting paintings to the Gallery. He was busy in his new work when he reluctantly left for America to act as an expert witness in a law-suit. Always sickly, and now knowing full well the dangers of Atlantic travel during the World War, he had the party in America insure his life for fifty thousand pounds. And before he left he wrote, on February 3, 1915, a codicil to his second will, the fateful unwitnessed codicil leaving the thirty-nine pictures which he had lent to the London National Gallery, and which were now in the cellar of that Gallery, to the City of Dublin provided that a suitable

gallery were built within five years after his death. If this requirement was not fulfilled, then the pictures were to be sold with proceeds going to fulfill the purpose of his will. Lady Gregory was named as sole Trustee, and Thomas Bodkin was asked to help obtain the new building to house the pictures. It was the question of Lane's belief of the legality of this codicil that sparked what has come to be known as the international Lane controversy after Lane was drowned on May 7, 1915 when the Lusitania was torpedoed by the Germans just a few miles from Ireland - after having almost made a successful trans-Atlantic voyage from America.

Because Lane's codicil had not been witnessed, it was not legally operative. Therefore Lane's last official bequest was that of his second will, leaving his continental pictures to the London National Gallery. The Irish, led by Lady Gregory, Lane's aunt, and W. B. Yeats, claimed that morally, if not legally, the pictures belonged to Dublin. Sir Robert Witt and Dr. D. S. MacColl gave voice to the English view that legally the Lane pictures were the property of the London National Gallery. Both sides had many supporters who gave evidence for their respective allegiances, but the Irish claim seems to have been sounder. Lady Gregory, in an appendix to her Hugh Lane's Life and Achievement (1921) included three statutory declarations stating that Lane, before leaving for the United States, had orally expressed his desire that his pictures should go to Dublin. These

declarations were made by Lane's sister, Mrs. Ruth Shine, a friend, Alexander Martin, who would have preferred to have seen the pictures in London, and Ellen Duncan, the Curator of the Dublin Municipal Gallery of Modern Art. Against these declarations stood the claim of Mr. Aitken, keeper of the Tate Gallery, that Lane had told him in March, 1915 (after the codicil had been written) that the final destiny of the pictures was dependent on the "treatment he received from the authorities of London and Dublin respectively."[7] If Lane had said this, the English claimed, he must have known that the codicil was not legal. Many Irish petitions were drawn up to the trustees of the London National Gallery and one to Lloyd George, Prime Minister of England, claiming that Lane thought the codicil was legal. In 1918 the Corporation of Dublin re-affirmed its promise to build a Gallery if it got the pictures, and in 1924 the Civic Commissioners of Dublin said they would provide a gallery for the pictures within five years of the passing of an Act of Parliament making possible the return of the pictures to Dublin. If the building could not, for some reason, be constructed, the pictures should go to the National Gallery of Ireland. This last desire seems strangely out of tune with Lane's wish in his codicil that in such a case the pictures should be sold

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[7] Bodkin, p. 47.

to fulfill the purposes of his will. But the Irish were desperate, and they felt that at all costs they had to withstand yet another affront from the English. Public meetings in support of the return of the Lane pictures to Dublin filled halls to capacity. There seems to be good evidence for Bodkin to say: "Never before, and probably never again, in the history of Ireland will our people be found in such absolute unanimity on any question."[8]

Under pressure by the Government of Saorstat Éirean, the Undersecretary of the Colonies (!) formed a committee to ascertain whether Lane, when he wrote his codicil, thought it was legal, and if so, should an Act of Parliament be passed to make the codicil legal. By January 28, 1925 the committee came to a decision: two of the three members (all of them English) believed that Lane thought that his codicil would be valid in the event of his death. But then the committee recommended that the Government do nothing about legalizing the codicil, because this would be a breach of faith with Sir Joseph Duveen, who had financed the building of an addition to the English National Gallery at Millbank (then the Tate Gallery) on the assurance that it would house the thirty-nine Lane pictures. Just who made the assurance the committee did not say. Instead it said that "it is inequitable so to

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[8] Bodkin, p. 50.

redress a moral wrong as to impair a legal right. It has been represented to us that, even though it should be conceded that the Dublin Corporation has a moral claim to the pictures, denied to them by a legal flaw, yet now to make good that flaw would amount to inflicting upon the London National Gallery an injury comparable with that which it is sought to alleviate."[9] The pictures should be lent to Dublin from time to time, the committee advised. They felt that had Lane lived he would have wanted the pictures in the new gallery at Millbank. The Irish charged that the committee had gone outside its term of reference in making this recommendation, and surely it had. The controversy in the newspapers throughout this time was heated and often none too courteous. But the pictures remained in the London National Gallery despite the efforts of Yeats and Lady Gregory.

Dublin now decided to provide a Gallery of Modern Art, despite the fact it had neither a legal claim to, nor actual possession of, the thirty-nine pictures. What it did have, Dubliners felt, was a moral right to the pictures. Additions were made to Charlemont House, which was converted from an eighteenth century mansion situated on Parnell Square, and on June 19, 1933 the new home of the Dublin Municipal Gallery

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[9] Sir Hugh Lane's Pictures, Cmd. 2684 (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1926), p. 5.

of Modern Art was opened by President de Valera. A gallery room for Lane's pictures was left empty - a visible, or rather invisible, reminder of Ireland's claim and of Hugh Lane's last wish. The Irish also kept up the battle on the political front. Between 1948 and 1954 there were debates in the House of Commons and the House of Lords in the British Parliament, many of them concerning The National Gallery and Tate Gallery Bill, which, in 1954, split Lane's collection of thirty-nine pictures between the two English galleries and rejected the Irish claim to the pictures. By now the younger generation of Ireland was fully acquainted with the Lane controversy, which had started long before they had been born. Twenty-two of the Irish National Students' Council planned a "kidnapping" of one of the Lane pictures from the Tate Gallery, and on April 12, 1956, Paul Hogan, a twenty-five year old student, and Bill Fogarty "borrowed" Berthe Morisot's "Jour d'Eté". For four days the missing picture drew news headlines before it was returned on April 16. Punch ridiculed the Tate in a cartoon depicting an Irishman strolling, and without attracting attention, out of the English Gallery with the Tate Director tucked under his arm. Finally, on November 12, 1959, the House of Commons and the Dail announced that a compromise solution had been reached between England and Ireland. The Lane collection was divided into two groups of approximately equal value, half to be

displayed in Dublin, half in the National Gallery in London, but all the pictures still belong to the London National Gallery. Every five years for twenty years the galleries switch pictures. This is to go on until 1979, and then the arrangement is to be reviewed. The Irish Prime Minister considered the agreement an honourable one, and so a controversy which had raged for the better part of half a century came to a close, but not before engaging the intellects and emotions of many, not least among whom was W. B. Yeats.

II YEATS FOR THE DEFENCE

The first meeting of William Butler Yeats and Hugh Lane was an inauspicious one. The thirty-six year old poet and the twenty-six year old "gentleman dealer" thought little of each other when they met at Coole Park, the residence of Lane's aunt, Lady Gregory, in 1901. Afterwards Lane told Thomas Bodkin that Yeats appeared "aloof and pretentious",[1] while Yeats confessed at length to Lady Gregory that he disliked her nephew because "his ambitions seemed worldly. I think that he spoke of taking some country house and becoming a country gentleman, as though he would forget as quickly as possible how he had made his money."[2] This statement seems to remind one of nobody more than Yeats himself, the middle class man trying hard to be of the aristocracy. Perhaps the ill feeling between the two men was based on that dislike which an individual often feels for elements of another person's character which are similar to his own. At this time Lane was still ignorant of contemporary art and literature, being interested only in the works of deceased artists. This reticence to recognize the genius of the present annoyed

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[1] Bodkin, p. 4.

[2] Gregory, Lane's Life, pp. 32-3.

Yeats, and he thought that Lane's knowledge of the old masters was a "mere trade knowledge, and no true expression of the intellect." He recounts how once he was unable to hide his hostility; when Yeats was "trying against [his] own better judgment" to admire some sketches, Lane commented that they would not fetch much at a sale at Christie's.[3] Here the two men were in agreement about the artistic worth of the pictures, but they irritated each other because they expressed themselves in different terms - Yeats being diplomatic (some would prefer "insincere"), Lane being forthright but using the language of the businessman.

Only a few months later Yeats's opinion of Lane had changed because the younger man had ceased making the social circuit and had dedicated himself to the cause of Ireland. Lane now seemed to be "less anxious to please, less agreeable; [he] raged against every obstacle to his purpose, saying often what was harsh or unkind where that purpose was involved."[4] Yet Yeats liked Lane better now, for he had taken up Yeats's own goal. And Yeats, too, was often harsh and unkind as he and Lane set themselves to achieve their common purpose. In "Under Ben Bulben", which Yeats placed last in his Collected Poems, he tries to inspire others to be as

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[3] Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 32.

[4] Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 33.

determined in their efforts to improve Ireland through culture:

> Poet and sculptor, do the work,
> Nor let the modish painter shirk
> What his great forefathers did,
> Bring the soul of man to God,
> Make him fill the cradles right. (C. P., 399)

Though never what one could call "great friends", Yeats and Lane got along together after their initial but shallow enmity. Lane made Yeats his confidant in the one "shady" business deal into which he was drawn unsuspectingly when still young.[5] This anecdote was divulged after Yeats had done Lane's horoscope, predicting the date on which his first great financial success in picture dealing would, and did, occur. Lane was shocked and pleased, while the astrologer in Yeats was amused because Lane's horoscope signified "inexplicable convictions one cannot reason over", and that was exactly how Lane bought pictures; he knew they were masterpieces, though authorities disagreed with him, but he could not state his reasons for thinking so.[6] But it was more down-to-earth affairs, such as a common interest in the Royal Hibernian Academy, which strengthened the bond between poet and dealer. The work of two R. H. A. veterans, Nathaniel

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[5] Gregory, Lane's Life, pp. 22-4.

[6] Gregory, Lane's Life, pp. 21-2, 73.

Hone and J. B. Yeats, made Lane realize that he could make an important contribution to Ireland by supporting such native artists.[7] Among the portraits of eminent Irishmen which Lane commissioned J. B. Yeats to paint for Ireland was that of the artist's son, W. B. Yeats. Yeats did his share in aiding the Royal Hibernian Academy by proposing at the London Irish Literary Society that the Society ask the government to investigate the discrepancy in government grants to the Scottish Academy (fifteen hundred pounds a year) and the Hibernian Academy (five hundred pounds a year). Yeats expressed hope that "we may be able to get up something like a vigorous agitation for the redress of intellectual grievances."[8] This motion was carried by the Society, but it was obvious that the usual governmental "red tape" would prevent the R. H. A. from getting immediate satisfaction, if at all. Hence Lane decided he could help the Academy by organizing a Winter Exhibition of Old Masters (1902-03) with proceeds going to the R. H. A. Lane had borrowed these masterpieces from the great country houses of Ireland, and certain Irishmen, unable to believe in such altruism, charged Lane with

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[7] Joseph Hone, in his W. B. Yeats, 1865-1939 (London: Macmillan, 1965), p. 182, gives Lane the credit for organizing the 1901 Hone & Yeats exhibition. Both Bodkin (p. 4) and Lady Gregory (Lane's Life, p. 33) say Sarah Purser arranged it and Lane merely chanced to see it and was impressed.

[8] Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 42.

organizing the exhibition solely to find out the locations of good pictures so that he could buy them fairly cheaply and trade them to England. At first Yeats, still remembering his first meeting with Lane, did not know whether to believe such rumours. Later he knew these charges were ill-based, for he had seen Lane's unselfish, sincere attitude towards Ireland and the R. H. A. in particular. Over the years these accusations became for Yeats a source of "almost hourly exasperation."[9] Several times he felt moved to defend Lane.

One of these occasions was in 1905 when Lane was organizing the Staats Forbes loan exhibition to be held in the R. H. A. This collection of continental impressionist paintings, belonging to the estate of Mr. J. Staats Forbes, was for sale, and Lane's plan was to interest the Irish in buying at least some of them to give to the Dublin Municipal Collection of Modern Art, which he had established the year before. Several Academicians and a newspaper made an innuendo that Lane, having made a profit out of the 1904 Guildhall Exhibition (he claimed he had lost one thousand pounds), was now going to receive a secret commission on all Staats Forbes pictures sold in Ireland. Yeats went personally to the newspaper editor's office and there had what he considered "the most substantial row of my lifetime, and acquired an animosity

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[9] Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 44.

that will last to my death."[10] His argument that "it is a custom of gentlemanly life to presume that a man's motives are good until they are proved the contrary" was rejected by the editor as being impractical during those times in Ireland. And certainly there seems to have been much second-guessing. When Yeats asked Lane's permission to "reply to a stupid little paragraph" about him in the newspapers, Lane, who was doing so much for Ireland, had to refuse because he feared that an association with Nationalists like Yeats would harm his connections with moneyed people.[11] So Yeats left argumentation behind and instead tried to help Lane's cause in a more concrete manner. He arranged a committee among Dublin art students to raise funds to buy pictures from the Staats Forbes collection for Dublin; Lady Gregory and Countess Markievicz arranged similar committees among writers and the Women's Picture League respectively. The most notable contributor was President Theodore Roosevelt.

Despite his zeal and sincerity in working for Ireland, Lane had the ability to make enemies, or at least the inability to make friends. But then trying to make friends of everyone in Ireland would be an unenviable task because of its impossibility. In 1907 Lane was asked to apply for the

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[10] Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 59.

[11] Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 61.

Curatorship of the Dublin National Museum, and Lane expressed a desire to make it one of the great museums, but Colonel Horace Plunkett was chosen for the position. This injustice enraged Yeats, who considered it, according to Lady Gregory, "one of the worst of crimes, that neglect to use the best man, the man of genius, in place of the timid, obedient ['safe'] official. That use of the best had been practised in the great days of the Renaissance."[12] Yeats believed that the Government had felt the time was ripe to appoint a Catholic to the post as a sop to the Irish Roman Catholics, and so bypassed Lane. To cool his anger, Yeats took a walk in Coole Park, saw a squirrel, and composed a poem above which he wrote, "On the Appointment of Count Plunkett to the Curatorship of Dublin Museum, by Mr. T. W. Russell and Mr. Birrel [sic], Hugh Lane being a candidate."[13] As Hone says, the poem was "Yeats's first on a political occasion since Parnell's death" in 1891, at which time Yeats had contributed "Mourn - and then Onward" to United Ireland.[14] Lane was pleased but

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12 Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 85.

13 Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 85. "An Appointment" (C. P., 141) was first published as "On a Recent Government Appointment in Ireland", in English Review (February, 1909).

14 Hone, p. 225, 90. Lady Gregory (Lane's Life, p. 85) is wrong in saying that "An Appointment" was the first poem Yeats had ever written on any public event, as are George

puzzled by the poem, for why was the squirrel the source of inspiration for an occasional poem about a government appointment? The answer, though it may sound silly, could be that in the squirrel Yeats recognized a similar "intense restless nervous energy" and industry which he said were what characterized Lane.[15]

Yeats's admiration for Lane could only have increased earlier that year during the Playboy riots of January, 1907. In the face of great popular opposition and agitation, Yeats, manager of the Abbey Theatre, insisted on carrying on with the performances of The Playboy of the Western World, and on giving spirited lectures on the merits of that play. Just as he was shortly to see genius maltreated in the case of the appointment of a curator for the Dublin National Museum, so now narrow-minded Dubliners, shocked by the word "shift", were failing to recognize the dramatic genius of John Synge. Lane was one of the volunteers who were brave enough to go

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Brandon Saul and T. R. Henn when they say the poem was written on the occasion of Lane being refused the post as head of the Dublin National Gallery. / Saul, Prolegomena to the Study of Yeats's Poems (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), p. 100; Henn, The Lonely Tower (London: University Paperbacks, 1965), p. 38./ There is also disagreement about the date of composition, Hone (p. 225) suggesting the summer of 1908, Richard Ellmann offering 1907 / The Identity of Yeats (London: Macmillan, 1954), p. 289./, which seems to be in agreement with what Lady Gregory says (p. 85).

[15] Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 74.

into the audience and eject unruly members. Sir William Orpen drew a pen-and-ink drawing of the well-dressed, slightly-built Lane, leading two drunken ruffians out of the theatre, and entitled it "The Amateur Chucker-Out."[16]

This favour by Lane was returned a year later when, in preparing for the January 20, 1908 opening of the Dublin Municipal Gallery in Clonmell House, Lane asked Yeats to get people to write up the opening. Yeats, in a letter to William Rothenstein, realized the importance of publicity for the gallery opening; he knew he had to help the Corporation members "believe in Lane; if they do, they will leave him free, and if they don't, they will sooner or later annoy him in the interest of some bad patriotic painter. He has so many enemies in Dublin that all help we can get from outside is necessary. He ought to be over here [London] himself, but cannot come as he is busy hanging the pictures."[17] It is especially clear in this letter that, as in the Museum appointment affair, and the Playboy riots, Yeats was motivated by what, in the introduction, I consider to be "cultural patriotism" as opposed to sham culture nurtured by a maudlin patriotism. That Lane had enemies in Dublin, Yeats knew

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16 Bodkin, p. 4.

17 W. B. Yeats, The Letters of W. B. Yeats, ed. Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), pp. 501-2.

full well, because when Lane announced his "conditional gift" of continental masterpieces, some people claimed Lane was making a fortune out of Ireland. Yeats, a committee member of the Dublin Municipal Collection, again defended Lane, pointing out that he had just offered to give to Dublin pictures worth seventy thousand pounds, but his listener could not believe that anyone would be so charitable as to give so much.[18] Still, optimism ran high at the banquet for the opening of the Dublin Municipal Gallery, at which Sara Allgood, one of the Abbey Theatre actresses, recited to Lane lines from Yeats's Cathleen ni Houlihan, replacing "they" with "he":

> He shall be remembered for ever,
> He shall be alive for ever,
> The people shall hear him for ever![19]

The time Yeats spent in helping Lane was not time wasted as far as his writing was concerned, for his interest in Lane's affairs proved an inspiration for his essay Discoveries. In a letter to his father on July 17 [1909] he wrote:

> Side by side with my play [The Player Queen] I am writing a second series of Discoveries. I find that my philosophical tendency spoils my playwriting

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[18] Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 44.

[19] Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 264.

> if I have not a separate channel for it. There is a dramatic contrast in the play which can be philosophically stated. I am putting the philosophical statement into a stream of rambling thoughts suggested by impressionist pictures and a certain Italian book and Lane's gallery in general, and the pictures I pass on the stairs at Coole.[20]

The Italian book Yeats mentions is, in all probability, Castiglione's The Courtier, for that Renaissance book became one of his "sacred" ones even before a visit to Italy with Lady Gregory in 1907, and later was a key element in the composition of a poem concerning Lane, "To a Wealthy Man". It is significant that Yeats associated the enlightened ideal of the courtier with Lane, for the poet considered Lane to be in the tradition of the generous, aristocratic patron whose contributions were marked by cortesie.[21]

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[20] Yeats, Letters, p. 533.

[21] It is interesting to note that Lane bequeathed to the National Gallery of Ireland Titian's painting of Baldassare Castiglione.

III MATTER FOR POETRY

Yeats personally was a recipient of the benificence of Lane, who had been knighted in 1909. In a letter to his father in the summer of 1911, Yeats wrote, "Every afternoon I go to Hugh Lane's, he has a wonderful old house in Chelsea, full, of course, of pictures. Lady Gregory is staying there, and we do there our theatre business."[1] The aristocratic peacefulness of such an idyllic existence in England was soon disrupted, however, by the bitterness of the battle, in which Yeats was one of the chief combatants, staged in Dublin over the site of the new Municipal Gallery. On November 5, 1912, after much haggling over the site for the permanent gallery to replace the temporary one at Clonmell House, Lane gave notice to the Corporation of Dublin that he would withdraw his "conditional gift" of thirty-nine continental pictures by the end of January, 1913, if Dublin had not by then made definite plans for a permanent, suitable gallery. Besides the indecisiveness of the Corporation concerning a site, several wealthy people were reluctant to carry the major burden of the public subscription, necessitating a drive for funds in America by Lady Gregory, who was there on

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[1] Yeats, Letters, p. 559.

theatre business. Yeats's reaction to this hesitation to donate money to a worthy cause is recorded in a fine poem with an explanatory title: "To a Wealthy Man who Promised a Second Subscription to the Dublin Municipal Gallery if it were Proved the People Wanted Pictures" (C. P., 119). The circumstances of the composition of the poem are perhaps best related by reference to two letters by Yeats. The first one, written on January 1, 1913, included the poem "The Gift" (later entitled "To a Wealthy Man"); in the letter Yeats asked Lane if the poem were politic:

> If it is politic I will try and see Hone to see if fitting publication and comment could be made in the Irish Times. I have tried to meet the argument in Lady Ardilaun's letter to somebody, her objection to giving because of Home Rule and Lloyd George, and still more to meet the general argument of people like Ardilaun that they should not give unless there is a public demand. I shall quite understand if you think it would be unwise to draw attention to the possible slightness of 'Paudeen's' (little Patrick) desire for any kind of art . . . . The 'correspondent' to whom the poem is addressed is of course an imaginary person.[2]

This letter seems to indicate that Yeats himself was not too sure the poem was "politic", and his reminder in a postscript that the addressee is imaginary seems to be an attempt to re-assure himself, or to assure Lane, that he was not attacking any one person. An indication of how bitter Lane felt about Dubliners was his reaction to the poem. As Yeats

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[2] Yeats, Letters, p. 573.

reported in a letter to Lady Gregory,

> [Lane] is pleased with the poem which Hone has now. Hone was excited with doing a leader elaborating the thought of the poem. I am not very hopeful. The Corporation has voted about two thousand pounds a year and I told Lane I thought he should consider that as the country's support and not make the action of half a dozen people - who alone have money enough to subscribe twenty thousand pounds - the deciding thing. He replied that he hated Dublin. I said so do we. He then said that unless the gallery were built at once it would be a long time before he would have the pleasure of hanging the pictures. I urged him to buy the site himself, if need [be] by selling some of the pictures for the purpose. He said he could buy it without selling any of the pictures but thought it would be a mistake to do so unless twenty thousand pounds was subscribed, so we were back again at the half dozen people. He took all I said in good part and has asked me to invite myself to dinner when I liked.[3]

If both Yeats and Lane thought the poem was politic, at least one person did not. That was William Martin Murphy, owner of two Dublin newspapers, the Evening Herald and the Irish Independent, a natural enemy of Yeats since he had been an anti-Parnellite, and was on the side of the middle class employers against the lower class employees. Murphy thought "To a Wealthy Man" was addressed to him, whereas Yeats, writing in 1914, said, "I was thinking of a very different wealthy man."[4] So despite his statement to Lane that he had been addressing "an imaginary person", it seems

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[3] Yeats, Letters, pp. 573-4.

[4] Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 121. Saul (p. 91) writes that the "wealthy man" is Murphy.

he had, after all, been thinking of a specific person, probably Lord Ardilaun. But if Yeats was not politic in referring to Dubliners as "Paudeens" and "Biddies", neither was Murphy politic in printing that "there were no greater humbugs in the world than art critics and so-called experts" who had made an "exotic fashion" and "aesthetic craze" of Manets and Corots. Nor was Murphy exactly tactful in devoting space in his newspapers to the objections of some people to "supplying Sir Hugh Lane with a monument at the City's expense." This was not at all fair to Lane, who, when hearing the Dublin Gallery referred to as the Lane Gallery, always checked that person and insisted that the Gallery be called by its proper name. And one of the stated reasons for opposition, the primary need of aid for the lower classes, stood in contrast to the support of Labour, headed by James Larkin, and slum workers for the new gallery. Yeats, in a note to Responsibilities, assumed that "the purpose of the opposition was not exclusively charitable", hinting that Murphy, despite his stated consideration of the poor, was aligning himself with the anti-Gallery faction because Labour was pro-Gallery.

A further indication of the intrigue and second-guessing of Irish politics is Hone's comment that "it may be surmised that Yeats was not actuated solely by humanitarian zeal when he intervened with a word for the workers during

the great strike led by Larkin which paralysed the life of Dublin at the time of the bridge site controversy."[5] Murphy was on this occasion the leader of the employers against the strike. Yeats's support of the workers took the form of an impassioned article, "Dublin Fanaticism", which appeared in the Irish Worker, edited by Larkin, alongside articles by Maud Gonne and Madame Markieviez [sic], and one by Thomas Johnston who equated "Capitalism - Murphyism - Greed - Class-Dominance!"[6] Evidence of how bewildering Irish politics could be is the fact that in his article Yeats attacked Unionist papers, whereas Joseph Hone feels that Yeats earlier gave offence by publishing his poem, "To a Wealthy Man" ("The Gift") in a Unionist paper, the Irish Times.[7] Drawing the wrath of Nationalists on the one hand, and of the Unionists on the other was the cost for Yeats of opposing the middle class, and especially that "bitter-tongued man", Murphy, as Philistines who preferred to "play at pitch and toss" rather than to give "the right twigs for an eagle's nest!"

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[5] Hone, p. 268. Bodkin (p. 65) notes that in 1928 Larkin was one of the representatives of the Dublin Corporation at a meeting to decide whether or not a new gallery would be built to house the Lane pictures.

[6] Irish Worker (November 1, 1913), p. 2.

[7] Hone, p. 266.

Lane's obstinacy (or desire for only the best) complicated matters still further. On January 20, 1913 the Corporation of Dublin finally agreed to donate twenty-two thousand pounds for a new gallery if the Citizens' Provisional Committee would donate a site and three thousand pounds, which it promised to do. But then Lane demanded Lutyens's proposed Bridge design, or he would withdraw his pictures from Dublin. Yeats seems to have been more practical than Lane on this point. In a letter to Lady Gregory he wrote:

> I saw Lane last night. I think all is right for the Gallery largely through your success in America, I believe. [Lady Gregory had raised a substantial amount of money for the new gallery during her visit to America with the Abbey Theatre group.] I wrote at his dictation a long wire to Dublin stating the conditions on which he will hand over the pictures. He insists on the river site . . . . I, knowing we had not enough for this site, tried to get him to accept a site opposite the New University but he is unshakable on the Bridge site. [Lane felt the University buildings would be too ugly to merit such an architectural neighbour as the Dublin Municipal Gallery.][8]

When Yeats realized that Lane had set his heart on the Bridge site, he knew he could do nothing but throw his support behind Lane and Lutyens, for Lane was a determined man and the choice had become one between the Bridge Gallery with Lane's thirty-nine continental paintings and the temporary gallery at Clonmell House without those masterpieces. There could be little hesitation on Yeats's part, for he, too, liked

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[8] Quoted by Gregory, Lane's Life, pp. 117-8.

the idea of the Bridge Gallery better than any other; in his own words, Lutyens's design was "beautiful. Two buildings joined by a row of columns, it is meant to show the sunset through columns, there are to be statues on the top."[9] But Yeats felt there would be much opposition to the site, some of it even genuine, for he saw how members of the Arts Club differed on the question. However, Lane took the attitude that those who opposed the Bridge site were really anti-galleryites and would have opposed a new gallery no matter what site was chosen.

On March 17, 1913 a letter by Yeats, defending the Bridge site, appeared in the Irish Times, just after a committee had recommended to the Corporation of Dublin that the Bridge site be chosen for the Municipal Gallery. Yeats explained how he had favoured the site adjacent to the New University because this location would allow students to visit the Gallery between lectures, but he now realized that if the students really wanted to be educated they would gladly make the twenty minutes' walk to the beautiful Bridge Gallery. The Bridge Gallery would be more convenient to the common people [and even to business people!] such as "an old man who was painting a friend's bathroom" and who spoke of appreciating the painting of Mancini. A mellow tone of

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[9] Quoted by Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 111.

"sweetness and light", unusual for Yeats during this controversy, is prominent in this letter as he speaks of the view of the Liffey: "It is a fine scene, especially when a little disguised by evening light; but it lacks the look of being valued; it lacks somewhere some touch of ornament, of conscious pleasure and affection." And again, as in "To a Wealthy Man" where he exhorted Irishmen to

> Look up in the sun's eye and give
> What the exultant heart calls good
> That some new day may breed the best (C. P., 120),

he returns to the theme of the aristocratic patron's influence on the cultural life of the nation's children of the future:

> We have in Sir Hugh Lane a great connoisseur, and let us, while we still have him - for great connoisseurs are as rare as any other kind of creator - use him to the full, knowing that, if we do, our children's children will love their town the better, and have a better chance of that intellectual happiness which sets the soul free from the vicissitudes of fortune.[10]

Such a gentle tone could only emanate from a feeling of assurance that the Bridge Gallery was a distinct probability, and certainly Yeats's confidence seems to have been justified when, two days after this letter was published, the Corporation of Dublin passed the committee's choice of the Bridge site. But even Yeats found that the following "vicissitudes of fortune" interfered with "intellectual happiness". Objections were raised to Lutyens as architect, for he was

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[10] Yeats, Letters, pp. 579-80.

English, not Irish, and the Corporation started to waver - it had approved the Bridge site, but not Lane's choice (and demand) of Lutyens as architect. Yeats soon became bitter and indignant, and a speech he made on July 13, 1913 later formed the basis for his poem, "September 1913". He wrote to Lady Gregory:

> I made a good speech on Monday. Lane was anxious about some vote coming on in Dublin that day, but I know nothing, of course, of what has happened. I spoke with him quite as much as the possible subscriber in mind. I described Ireland, if the present intellectual movement failed, as 'a little huxtering nation groping for halfpence in a greasy till' but did not add, except in thought, 'by the light of a holy candle'.[11]

This speech seems to be very similar to one Yeats had delivered in 1904, and which caused him some embarrassment ten years later. In 1913, Vale, the third volume of George Moore's Hail and Farewell, was published, in which Moore recorded his response to the 1904 speech:

> We . . . could hardly believe our ears when, instead of talking to us as he used to do about the old stories come down from generation to generation, he began to thunder like Ben Tillett himself against the Middle Classes, stamping his feet, working himself into a great passion, and all because the middle classes did not dip their hands into their pockets and give Lane the money he wanted for his exhibition. It is impossible to imagine the hatred which came into his voice when he spoke the words 'the middle classes'. And we looked round asking each other with our eyes where on earth our Willie Yeats had picked up such extraordinary ideas. [He could hardly have gathered in the United States] Yeats had just

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[11] Quoted by Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 128.

> returned from America_/ the ridiculous idea that none but titled and carriage folk can appreciate pictures. /One naturally thinks of Yeats's admiration for the old labourer who spoke of Mancini./. And we asked ourselves why Willie Yeats should feel himself called upon to denounce the class to which he himself belonged essentially: one side excellent mercantile millers and shipowners, and on the other a portrait painter of rare talent. With so admirable a parentage it did not seem to us necessary that a man should look back for an ancestry.[12]

Jeffares says that, after reading this, Yeats wrote in his Diary that "he had not referred to the middle classes in the speech Moore described, but had appealed to the Irish aristocracy to support the Lane Gallery. Moore had turned this into an attack on the middle classes and confused it with another speech made at the National Literary Society where Yeats had used the word bourgeois in Ben Jonson's sense, 'cit', a word of artistic usage."[13] If Yeats did not refer explicitly

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12 George Moore, Vale; quoted by A. N. Jeffares, W. B. Yeats: Man and Poet (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 179. Jeffares says this passage is from Ave; it is from Vale (London: Heinemann, 1947), pp. 113-4. See p. 92ff. for Moore's fascinating reminiscences of Lane, his acquaintance with Monet, Manet, Degas, Renoir and other impressionist painters, and of Yeats.

Corinna Salvadori, who wrongly dates the speech as being delivered in 1912 or 1913, claims that Yeats got his aristocratic attitude from reading Castiglione (which he did, in 1903) and from actually visiting Urbino, the location of the gracious, Renaissance court. Yeats did not visit Italy until 1907, three years after this speech. The visit to Italy did influence Yeats; on his return he delivered another speech in which he spoke disdainfully of the Irish bourgeoisie. Corinna Salvadori, Yeats and Castiglione: Poet and Courtier (Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1965), p. 61.

13 Jeffares, Man and Poet, p. 179.

to the "middle classes" in his earlier speech, he certainly implied them by his use of the word "till" in his 1913 speech. But the major significance of Moore's commentary is his observation of the transformation in Yeats's personality - from the romantic poet singing the praises of the old Ireland of mythology, to the bitter, passionate man of the world, sick of the discrepancy between a past ideal and a sordid present, and worried about the future of his country. A man can be proud of his ancestry and heritage only if he himself is doing something to assure a similar pride in his children and their children. Constant revitalization of tradition is necessary, and Yeats realized that too many Dubliners were content to rest easy and safe in the mould of Ireland handed down to them instead of riding the waves of the Celtic Renaissance with himself, Lane, Lady Gregory and Synge. And ironically, it was Yeats and Lady Gregory who had devoted much of their abilities to the glorification of that old Ireland. Now Yeats knew that while the tradition of the Ireland of old was, ideally, still precious, it no longer had anything but sentimental value for most of his countrymen. The threat of the frustration by certain Dubliners of Lane's offer of aid to Irish cultural life infuriated and disappointed him , for here was stark evidence that

> Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
> It's with O'Leary in the grave. (C. P., 121)

On July 14, 1913, the day after Yeats's speech, his

name appeared at the foot of a note to an announcement of the private performance of Bernard Shaw's The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet at the Court Theatre, London. The play, first acted in Dublin in 1909 when Yeats was manager of the Abbey Theatre, was probably revived because, with its history of English censorship controversies, it was sure to draw well, and proceeds were to go to the Dublin Municipal Gallery of Modern Art. Although Yeats for some time after this had little constructive to say or do, his irritation and despondency gave his poetry that "hard, masculine" style which he desired and which he had attained in an earlier poem whose source of inspiration was also, paradoxically, frustration - "The Fascination of What's Difficult". (C. P., 104). A short look at Yeats's perceptive, analytic comments on the Dublin scene at this time will provide a context for an understanding of the four Lane poems written in September, 1913, which, along with "To a Wealthy Man", were published by the Cuala Press as Poems Written in Discouragement, a small pamphlet for private circulation.

Yeats's discouragement paralleled Lane's, for in August Lane offered to the London National Gallery the loan of his thirty-nine great paintings, despite the fact he had not yet given up the fight for a gallery in Dublin. If the outcome of that fight proved to be disastrous for his plans, he would have an alternative gallery for his pictures in England. During August Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory:

> I have just seen a paragraph in the Morning Post in which the Lord Mayor states that he believes the Gallery project is at an end, as the Corporation will not accept an English architect. It is lamentable, but I would sooner it failed because of this than anything else. If it had been Lane's insistence on a bridge site it would have put him in a bad light. I think if the bad news is true, and if nothing can be done - if it is quite certain the thing is over - we must insist on the principle of a great connoisseur being free to choose where he will. I do not want to say anything now because, of course, I would sooner have the pictures in a barn than not at all, but if it is finished we must make as good a statement as we can for the sake of the future. Ireland, like an hysterical woman, is principle mad and is ready to give up reality for a phantom like the dog in the fable.[14]

Again, Yeats's attitude is a very practical one - he stresses several times that only if the gallery project is definitely finished should the Lane supporters insist on the freedom of choice for "a great connoisseur". On the subject of employing an Irish architect, whose work would be inferior to Lutyens's, he was adamant in refusal: "I will not feed my country's stomach at the expense of its brains."[15] Lady

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[14] Quoted by Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 128.

[15] Quoted by Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 125. In 1924 Yeats delivered a senate speech calling for the employment of an "independent expert" to assess the safety of the treasures in the National Museum. His own choice was Lutyens, of whom he said: "There is no one connected with architecture in the world who is a higher authority or whose word or opinion would be more universally accepted." W. B. Yeats, The Senate Speeches of W. B. Yeats, ed. Donald R. Pearce (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), pp. 85-6.

Gregory was well aware of the significance of the loss of the proposed Bridge Gallery. In discussing the Johannesburg art gallery, designed by Lutyens, she wrote of the South Africans:

> Their country gained more than this [a beautiful building] by their brave humility in looking outside their own borders for a skill and knowledge greater than was to be found within them. For largely through that action South Africa of today has her own architect to take pride in, and the noble design for the great Cape Town University has been made by one of her own sons, who, still young, might even now be struggling towards the mastery he has attained to were it not for the help and friendship of those two "outlanders" brought to Johannesburg, Hugh Lane and Edward Lutyens.

The loss of the Bridge Gallery she blamed, not on the aldermen of the Corporation, but on the "system that puts our precious things into the hands of a democracy",[16] or, as Yeats wrote, into those hands that

> . . . fumble in a greasy till
> And add the halfpence to the pence (C. P., 120).

But it was not only democracy that was to blame. So too were politics and religion; Yeats felt that the reason behind the opposition to the Gallery was a "fear of culture", for many Irishmen considered culture the "enemy of faith and morals. All the Irish orthodoxies - political and religious - are at this moment in fear of a dissolvent."[17] An adherence

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16 Gregory, Lane's Life, pp. 145, 132.

17 Gregory, Lane's Life, pp. 127-8.

to narrow doctrines could only restrict experience, and consequently retard the growth of a man's personality, thus preventing that Unity of Being which was Yeats's ideal for the cultured person. His note to Responsibilities, published in 1914 and containing the Lane poems, is well worth quoting at length:

> These controversies, political, literary, and artistic, [Parnell, Synge, Lane] have showed that neither religion nor politics can of itself create minds with enough receptivity to become wise, or just and generous enough to make a nation. Other cities have been as stupid - Samuel Butler laughs at shocked Montreal for hiding the Discobolus in a lumber-room - but Dublin is the capital of a nation, and an ancient race has nowhere else to look for an education. Goethe in Wilhelm Meister describes a saintly and naturally gracious woman, who, getting into a quarrel over some trumpery detail of religious observance, grows - she and all her little religious community - angry and vindictive. In Ireland I am constantly reminded of that fable of the futility of all discipline that is not of the whole being. Religious Ireland - and the pious Protestants of my childhood were signal examples - thinks of divine things as a round of duties separated from life and not as an element that may be discovered in all circumstance and emotion, while political Ireland sees the good citizen but as a man who holds to certain opinions and not as a man of good will. Against all this we have but a few educated men and the remnants of an old traditional culture among the poor. Both were stronger forty years ago, before the rise of our new middle class which made its first public display during the nine years of the Parnellite split, showing how base at moments of excitement are minds without culture. (C. P., 530)

Such base minds figure prominently, as do their opposites, minds of good will and culture, in the poems written in September 1913. Several of these poems have lengthy titles, for Yeats, in speaking to particular people,

tried to keep the circumstances necessary for an understanding of the poetry out of the poems themselves. (Three of the Lane poems are addressed to a particular "you"; that is, each time the pronoun "you" refers to some one actual living person.) Stripped of externalities, the essential passion flashes forth vibrantly. "September 1913" was published in the Irish Times for September 8 with the subtitles, "On reading much of the correspondence against the Art Gallery", "Romance in Ireland". In this poem Yeats exalted past heroes who were of "a different kind" than the present, "safe" money-grabbers of Dublin who placed religion and nationalism before a Unity of Being which could be made possible by the provision of a new gallery to house Lane's pictures. Sample evidence of the mentality Yeats was up against is Maud Gonne's interpretation of the lines

> Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
> It's with O'Leary in the grave. (C. P., 121);

to her these lines meant that Yeats "had lost contact with those who were working for Ireland's freedom".[18] Yeats had a different definition of "freedom" altogether - not that mere, external political freedom which Nationalists like Maud Gonne desired, but that internal freedom of the soul from "vicissitudes of fortune" which accompanies "intellectual

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[18] Maud Gonne; quoted in S. L. Gwynn, ed. Scattering Branches (New York: Macmillan, 1940), p. 31.

happiness". It was the poet who was truly working for "Ireland's freedom", and, if he was outnumbered by people of Maud Gonne's ilk, at least some realized what he was fighting for. George Moore wrote in 1913 that:

> the portrait of [Manet's] Mademoiselle Gonzales is what Dublin needs. Salvation comes like a thief in the night, and it may be that Mademoiselle Gonzales will be purchased; if so, it will perhaps help to bring about the crisis we are longing for - that spiritual crisis when men shall begin to think out life for themselves, when men shall return to Nature naked and unashamed.[19]

On the very day that "September 1913" was printed, the Corporation of Dublin announced its insistence on being free to choose both the site and the architect for the new gallery. Of this poem, Yeats wrote; "It is not so appropriate now, as the Corporation are appealing to a hysterical patriotism to escape, I suppose, from a position Murphy has made difficult. I had not thought I could feel so bitterly over any public event."[20] The decision of the Corporation was

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[19] Moore, Vale, p. 105. The painting entitled "Mademoiselle Eva Gonzales" was lent by Lane to the Dublin Municipal Gallery from 1908 to 1913, when it was removed and sent to the London National Gallery. In the Manchester City Art Gallery there is a painting by Sir William Orpen entitled "Homage to Manet" which depicts George Moore, D. S. MacColl, and Hugh Lane, among others, sitting at a table. Behind them hangs Manet's portrait of Mademoiselle Gonzales. This picture of Orpen's is reproduced on the dustjacket of Bodkin's Hugh Lane and His Pictures.

[20] Quoted by Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 129.

motivated by a narrow provincialism which negated the attempts of Yeats, Lane and Lady Gregory for a "cultural patriotism". Yeats paid tribute to Lady Gregory for her relentless energy and devotion to the Gallery cause in the poem "To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing" in which he castigates Murphy, presumably, as a "brazen throat". (C. P., 122). Lady Gregory, "being honour bred", thought the poem was addressed to her nephew, Hugh Lane. The poet suggests that, though defeated, she can still exult, for she is

> Bred to a harder thing
> Than Triumph

and that thing is personal integrity, which often results in public defeat. The same paradox of defeat (at the hands of the Dublin middle class) and exultation is also the theme of "Paudeen", written in mid-September (C. P., 122). In the last of the Lane controversy poems, "To a Shade", Yeats addresses the ghost of Parnell.[21] (C. P., 123). Both Parnell and Lane had been mistreated by the Irish, even though, Yeats believed, they could have aided Ireland immensely. But now it seemed to be too late. On September 27, 1913, two days before this poem was written, Lane took his continental

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[21] Henn (p. 92) says the poem was intended for Lady Gregory, but "Glasnevin" (l. 19) is a reference to Parnell's burial place. Besides, the reference to the monument and the "sorrow before death" would be meaningless in a poem to Lady Gregory, and Yeats would hardly have urged her to return to the tomb!

pictures from Clonmell House. On the same day he wrote to Lady Gregory, "I am always anxious to get out of Ireland. My early romantic notion of it was got in my childhood in Galway, and I am now so completely disillusioned that I don't want to be reminded of those early happy days."[22] Lane, like Yeats, had awakened from a dream of an ideal Ireland, and on October 11, 1913 the connoisseur wrote his will leaving his impressionist masterpieces to the London National Gallery. His treatment at the hands of the English was to be as bad, if not worse, than that he had received from the Dubliners.

The next few months was a critical period for all those who desired to see Lane's continental pictures belong to Dublin. Lane had already changed his mind once about the destination of the paintings - there was no reason to think that he would not do so again. If his interest in Ireland could be revived, Dublin might yet possess an outstanding Gallery of Modern Art. More than anyone else, it was Yeats who kept up a personal contact with Lane during this time; often he was the "go-between" for Lady Gregory and her nephew. On November 5, 1913 Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory, reporting that Lane had turned down her suggestion that a National Memorial be started in an attempt to meet Lane's conditions. Lane felt that the whole issue should

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[22] Quoted by Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 133.

be dropped for awhile, and that another effort at the Gallery project would be made "after the change in the Irish Government."[23] He spoke of starting a new collection for Dublin, and of his intention to take the Directorship of the Dublin National Gallery. On the other hand, Yeats had to reveal the bad news to Lady Gregory that Lane had re-made his will, favouring the London National Gallery rather than Dublin. Still, things looked fairly bright when, in February, 1914 Lane was elected Director of the Irish Gallery by ten votes to five - he had by no means deserted Ireland, for which Yeats was thankful: "I am greatly cheered by the news of Lane's appointment, it will improve the whole position in Ireland."[24] Yeats later visited Lane at the Dublin National Gallery and noted that Lane was happy in his work for Ireland. Perhaps Yeats's letter of January 20, 1915 to Ernest Boyd, an Irish author preparing Ireland's Literary Renaissance, reflects his admiration for Lane's quality of compromise for the sake of his country:

> The difference between the Dublin talkers and any real workers is that the talkers value anything which they call a principle more than any possible achievement. All achievements are won by compromise and these men, wherever they find themselves, expel

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23 Quoted by Gregory, Lane's Life, pp. 219-20.

24 Quoted by Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 202.

> from their own minds - by their minds' rigidity - the flowing and existing world.
>
> The Sinn Fein party in order to affirm the abstract principle that an Irish building should have an Irish architect supported Dr. Murphy in defeating Hugh Lane's municipal gallery project.
>
> He offered seventy thousand pounds worth of pictures, and a man believed by many to be the greatest of living architects - but they preferred their abstract principle. It was nothing to them that we have no Irish architect whom anybody suspects of remarkable talent. They preferred their mouthful of east wind.
>
> This rigidity of the 'intellectual' helps the dishonest time-servers for it enables them to claim that they are the only practical people.[25]

As so often was the case with Yeats, this letter seems to have been a preliminary prose statement of subsequent lines of poetry. In "Easter 1916" Yeats divides people into two types, those who participate fully in the fluid, organic life of nature, and those whose personalities are petrified by subordinating themselves to an abstract principle:

> Hearts with one purpose alone
> Through summer and winter seem
> Enchanted to a stone
> To trouble the living stream,

for

> Too long a sacrifice
> Can make a stone of the heart. (C. P., 204)

The ideal for Yeats was Unity of Being which he defined as being "plastic . . . to [one's] will. The man plastic to his own will is always powerful. The opposite kind of man is like a mechanical toy, lift him from the floor and he

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[25] Yeats, Letters, p. 591.

can but buzz."[26] Lane would seem to have been a person "plastic to his own will" - determined to achieve his purpose of building a fine Dublin gallery, and yet willing to compromise to achieve that purpose. Certainly Lane was one of the "real workers" for Ireland, and a great loss to that country when, in May of 1915, he went down with the Lusitania. To Lady Gregory J. B. Yeats wrote words which must have been very similar to those thought by his son: "I don't think there is anything so fine in life as a man sufficient unto himself, or so rare. It is what is called a 'personality'. Hugh Lane was a man sufficient unto himself."[27] Although W. B. Yeats was strangely silent about Lane's death, other people used his words to pay tribute to Lane, and indirectly by that use, to Yeats as a poet. Looking back five years later Lady Gregory applied to her nephew a line from a Cuchulain play: "his life [was] as a bird's flight from tree to tree". The artist Wilson Steer quoted from another of Yeats's plays:

> the laughing lip
> That shall not turn from laughing whatever rise or fall,
> The heart that knows no bitterness although betrayed by all,

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[26] Yeats, Letters, p. 814.

[27] Quoted by Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 217.

> The hand that loves to scatter, the life like a gambler's throw.[28]

But perhaps, for the occasion, Yeats's silence was the most expressive and appropriate of all. It was not till years later that he paid honour to Lane in two poems, "Coole Park, 1929" and "The Municipal Gallery Revisited". Meanwhile he dedicated himself to the fulfillment of Lane's last wishes.

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[28] Gregory, Lane's Life, p. 241. The plays are, respectively, On Baile's Strand and The Green Helmet.

IV YEATS AS INTERNATIONAL CONTROVERSIALIST

Yeats wasted no time in reorganizing the supporters of the late Lane, but his despair is evident in a letter of June 24, 1915 to John Quinn. After speaking of the unwitnessed codicil which Lane had written in February of that year, he goes on to say:

> We are now trying to get a competent successor to Lane appointed by the Governors of the Irish National Gallery. I daresay we shall fail and have to submit to some local job, for with exceptions they are local nobodies. Today I saw Laurence Binyon and suggested his going in for it, but I doubt if he will. . . . It is wonderful the amount of toil and intrigue one goes through to accomplish anything in Ireland. Intelligence has no organization whilst stupidity always has. I suppose because it is the world itself. I have often thought that all ages are the equal of one another in talent, and that we call an age great merely because it knew how to employ talent. [1]

Yeats had seen Ireland waste the talents of Lane and Lutyens, and his despair was later to contribute to the apocalyptic vision of "The Second Coming":

> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity. (C. P., 210)

But Ireland was no longer to be the main source of grievance to Yeats, for the Lane controversy had grown to international

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[1] Yeats, Letters, p. 595.

proportions because of Lane's unwitnessed codicil. The Irish felt that Dublin should receive the continental masterpieces in accordance with Lane's codicil, even though that codicil was not legally valid; on the other hand, the Trustees of the London National Gallery saw no reason to give up the pictures which had been lent to them in 1913 and which Lane had bequeathed to them in his will. (The pictures were stored in the basement of the English Gallery.) Once again the Irish and the English found themselves at loggerheads. Lady Gregory, named sole Trustee in Lane's codicil, sent memorials to the Trustees of the London National Gallery asking for the return of the thirty-nine pictures, and among the many signatures were those of W. B. Yeats, Jack B. Yeats, G. B. Shaw, and "A. E.". In November, 1916 she restated the Irish claim to the pictures and, in the event that this plea might be published, had it signed by Shaw, Yeats and William Orpen, the Irish artist. Later Yeats and Lady Gregory went to the House of Commons to solicit the aid of two politicians, Messrs. Redmond and Carson. They, too, signed the petition, and Yeats and Lady Gregory were promised the signatures of all Dublin members.

All this activity was relatively quiet, "behind-the-scenes" work, but starting late in 1916 Yeats's talents were put to better use. The occasion was an altercation in various newspapers concerning the ownership of Lane's valuable continental collection. Yeats stated the Irish viewpoint

more often and more forcefully than anyone else. While Members of Parliament were discussing the problem of the Lane pictures in the House of Commons, the supporters of Lane carried the discussion into all British homes by their letters to the editors of leading newspapers. Lady Gregory started off with a letter in The Times in which she tried to flatter the Trustees of the London National Gallery by reference to their worthy tradition and to shame them by pointing out their present action of retaining the Lane pictures by "insisting on their legal rights."[2] She also brought to witness John Quinn of the Metropolitan Museum of New York, to whom Yeats had earlier given information about Lane's codicil. Quinn claimed that when Lane was in America he had said that if Dublin could provide a gallery, not necessarily the Bridge site, when the World War was over and when Home Rule was an accomplished fact, he would give Ireland his continental pictures. That same week there appeared in the Observer interviews with Lady Gregory and Yeats.[3] Lady Gregory, by way of contrasting the past maltreatment of Lane by both Dublin and London with the present desire by both cities for the

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[2] Lady Gregory, "Sir Hugh Lane's Pictures", The Times (December 6, 1916), p. 12.

[3] "Dispute about a Picture Gallery", Observer (December 10, 1916).

pictures, quoted the couplet,

> Seven Grecian cities fought for Homer dead,
> Through which the living Homer begged his bread.

Like Yeats, she used historical and mythological allusions to place in stark, heightened outline the happenings and personages of the always-confusing present. Much of what Yeats said was largely irrelevant, though it had emotional force. After reviewing certain forceful arguments to prove that Lane had thought his codicil was legal, he made a thrust at the English:

> It would seem, indeed, that the Trustees of the London National Gallery want to benefit by a German act of 'frightfulness', for if Sir Hugh Lane had not been one of the victims of the torpedoing of the Lusitania, he would have come home and found that it [his codicil] was not legal and would have taken steps, there can be no doubt, to make it legal.

After this tactless pairing off of England with the enemy, he went on to say that the codicil as it was would have been legal in Scotland and in the trenches. But this was England, and Lane had died at sea! These irrelevancies aside, Yeats revealed penetrating insight in his definition of an Irish patriot. Having explained that Lane, "a man of extraordinary vehemence", had bequeathed his pictures to London in a "moment of indignation", he went on to discuss patriotism:

> Sir Hugh Lane had a passionate devotion to Ireland. He had that strange Irish patriotism which no Englishman can quite understand. An Englishman is patriotic when his country is in danger. An Irishman, if he is patriotic at all, has that passion always. He

> may quarrel with his country and say more angry things about her than anybody else, but he will always come back to her service. It is a passion like that a man has for a woman, and there are as many quarrels in the course of it.

One had to listen to Yeats when he spoke of patriotism, for few were better qualified in that sphere. In the same issue of the Observer was a letter entitled "A Chance for the National Gallery - Ireland and Sir Hugh Lane", signed by "Y." Allan Wade believes that this plea for the return of the pictures to Dublin was written by Yeats. Why the poet would not have given his own influential name is a mystery, and it is merely conjecture to say that perhaps Yeats wanted the reader to think out the implications for himself: "Now, is this letter written by Yeats?", that is, "what does Yeats stand for?" On the other hand, the signature may possibly be editorial, because of the interview with Yeats in the same issue.

If Yeats was sometimes irrelevant in his arguments, he could also detect irrelevancies in the opposition's statements. He brushed aside Mr. Charles Aitken's suggestion that had Lane lived he would have given the continental paintings to London. Yeats reminded Aitken, the keeper of the Tate Gallery, that "we are only concerned with what he [Lane] planned before his death."[4] Seen objectively, the controversy

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[4] W. B. Yeats, "Sir Hugh Lane's Pictures", Morning Post (December 19, 1916), p. 5.

did not inspire any very logical debate. One person wrote: "if Hugh Lane had wished to complete the codicil he could have done so at once, and that, not having done so, he evidently intended to leave the matter open."[5] Such a speculation just ignored Yeats's very convincing argument that Lane had thought his codicil was legal since he had, after all, signed it very carefully three times (even placing his initials beside the corrected date), sealed it in an envelope addressed to his sister, Mrs. Ruth Shine, and placed it in his desk at the Dublin National Gallery. Yeats provided further "proof" of his point by revealing that Lane had had his life insured for fifty thousand pounds before he sailed for America, and that the codicil was written just before he intended to take the voyage. (The codicil was dated February 3, 1915; Lane left for America on April 8, 1915.). Evidently Lane had intended both the insurance policy and the codicil to become effective in the case of his death on the dangerous journey. His estimate of the danger of the voyage proved to be accurate, but he still made the return trip from America despite a warning by the Germans that the Lusitania would be torpedoed. Yeats seems to have been on solid ground when he wrote, "I cannot imagine a document with a stronger moral claim, and we invite the Parliamentary action that will make that claim

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[5] "Sir Hugh Lane's Pictures: The London and Dublin Galleries", The Times (December 11, 1916), p. 5.

legal."

In the Spectator Yeats published what, in his own words, he considered to be "a somewhat more detailed account of the circumstances than has yet been published."[6] In this lengthy letter he amassed many salient arguments for the return of the Lane pictures to Dublin. He brought forward as evidence the statements of Mrs. Ellen Duncan, Curator of the Dublin Municipal Gallery, John Quinn , a governor of the Metropolitan Museum of New York, and Alexander Martin, a friend of Lane's who wished to see the pictures in London, all of whom claimed that Lane, just shortly before his death, had said that he wished the impressionist paintings to go to Dublin. He quoted Dr. Hayden [sic] Brown to whom Lane had said that his removal of the pictures from Clonmell House to the London National Gallery had been "a retaliation and inducement for the future", not a final decision. Yeats also reported what Lane had said about the impressionist paintings being "complementary to the collection already there" [at Dublin]. He made clear a point hitherto overlooked, that "Sir Hugh Lane's proposal to set the gallery upon a bridge over the Liffey was the only question at issue between him and the Dublin Corporation, and the moment he abandoned it all difficulty was at an end." Finally, he

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[6] W. B. Yeats, "Sir Hugh Lane's Pictures", Spectator (December 23, 1916), p. 802.

related how, twelve months earlier, he himself had given evidence before what he believed to have been the Finance Committee of the Dublin Corporation, and at that time the Lord Mayor had "renewed the promise already on the books of the Corporation of a suitable building." The letter ends thus: "There are no politics in the matter. Both the Irish parties are at one upon it, and the only danger is that in the press of war Parliament may not find the time or the thought for a concession in accordance with its own great traditions." But this impressive plea on behalf of Ireland was marred by two flaws. A minor, but no less unfortunate, mistake was Yeats's relation of how Lane, after the Trustees of the London National Gallery had tried to force him into giving them the pictures by their refusal to exhibit all of them, "spoke of the London Trustees with a bitterness I have never heard in any speech about his Dublin enemies." This statement amounts to the clumsy and embarrassing argument that Lane disliked the Irish less than he did the English. But the major flaw was caused by a lapse of memory, and the English side was not slow to pounce upon a deviation from the truth. In discussing Lane's removal of the pictures from Dublin, Yeats wrote:

> I saw him at the time, and he made to me a promise, which his aunt and close friend, Lady Gregory, to whom I wrote, must have somewhere among her papers. After a lapse of time he would once more offer to Dublin the same or better pictures, but he wished his decision for the present, for diplomatic reasons,

> to seem final. I remember one sentence with, I believe, verbal accuracy: "You may be quite certain I will not leave the present Dublin Municipal Gallery to represent me; it is not good enough."

Of the three major advocates for the English retention of the Lane pictures, D. S. MacColl was the most vocal. It was he who, in February, 1917, was to take Yeats to task for his faulty reminiscence reproduced above. In December, 1916 R. C. Witt, Charles Aitken, and MacColl wrote to The Times, the Morning Post, and the Observer claiming that Lane had made a conditional promise, or half promise, to give his pictures to London. Yeats, as well as Lady Gregory and Alec Martin disputed this claim in the Observer.[7] Yeats admitted that he had suggested to Lady Gregory that she choose MacColl to write Lane's biography since "his style fitted him to deal firmly with Sir Hugh Lane's Dublin enemies." In her letter Lady Gregory said she had chosen MacColl because she "wanted ignorant dispraise of the offered group of French pictures put an end to by the impartial judgment of so brilliant a critic." She went on to say:

> And such is the irony of Fate, this has been done apart from the writing of the book, for the biographer, joining with those who would keep the pictures in London for the yet unbuilt Tate extension, gives his opinion that "without Lane's pictures this most important national project would be crippled at its start."

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[7] W. B. Yeats, "The Hugh Lane Pictures", Observer (December 24, 1916).

Yeats took exception to MacColl's claim that he had "special knowledge" and was "more impartial than other men." He wasted no space setting matters right: "Mr. MacColl is no more impartial than I am." Certainly the poet's choice of comparison to illustrate partiality is a striking one! He charged that MacColl et al. were deceiving themselves in thinking that Lane had even made a half promise to give London the pictures, for Lane would not have made such a compact

> behind the back of friends and fellow-workers and nearest kin and behind the back of the Dublin Corporation, which was to lose the pictures if it did not observe a condition it did not know; and to make this compact with three critics who were so little in his confidence that he told them neither of the will he had made in favour of the National Gallery nor of the codicil revoking it.

To clinch his argument Yeats revealed that, since the interview with him in the Observer of December 10, he had discovered "two new facts which make the moral claim of the codicil even stronger." One has already been mentioned - the matter of Lane's life insurance (see above, p. 60). The second fact was that Lane had originally intended to leave for America three or four weeks before he actually did. That is, the writing of the codicil on February 3, 1915 and the original departure date for the voyage which necessitated the insurance policy to cover the risk of the trip were much closer in time than at first thought. Yeats concluded that Lane had written the codicil with "the thought of death in his mind."

This may seem a truism; what Yeats meant was that Lane was thinking of imminent death - a matter of weeks. Finally, Yeats refused to accept MacColl's suggestion that Dublin borrow some of the pictures from London; instead the Irish were going to attempt to have the Parliament declare the codicil legal. Yeats reiterated this refusal in The Times, pointing out that Lane had wanted his continental pictures to be exhibited with the pictures in Dublin since they were "complementary", and how Lane had refused to submit his pictures to selection for exhibition by the Trustees of the London National Gallery. He also quoted Lane's retort to someone who had urged him to give the pictures to the English: "London is quite rich enough to buy its own pictures."[8]

The most important effect of Yeats's letter of December 24, 1916 to the Observer was to destroy the MacColl-created illusion that he, MacColl, was impartial and should therefore be listened to above all others. Yeats had forced MacColl irretrievably into a partisan position, but it was the Irish, and Yeats in particular, who were to suffer from this event. Yeats's next letter, published in the Observer of January 21, 1917, provided MacColl with ammunition. The letter, in effect a long essay which summarizes the past events concerning the Lane pictures, is the only letter of

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[8] W. B. Yeats, "Sir Hugh Lane's Pictures", The Times (December 28, 1916), p. 11.

the international Lane controversy which Allan Wade published in his edition of Yeats's letters.[9] It was a wise choice for Wade's purpose, because Yeats, though allowing an opening for MacColl's attack, was very thorough in his summary, to the extent of repeating many of his previous arguments. The main concern of Yeats in this letter was again to disprove MacColl's claim that Lane had made some kind of half promise to London. He called "vague" and noncommittal MacColl's statement that Lane had said he would "decide the ultimate destination of the pictures, 'according to the action of the authorities in London and Dublin respectively.'" Even if Lane had made a conditional promise to the English, Yeats claimed, that condition was not fulfilled. He said there was "clearly nothing in the nature of a compact" in Lane's statement that he would give his pictures to "whichever city seemed first ready to show some appreciation", for Lane had reserved for himself the interpretation of the phrase "some appreciation." All these oral statements were made before Lane's statements to Ellen Duncan, Alec Martin and John Quinn and did not carry the weight of the signed document, unwitnessed though it might have been. Yeats also asked a pertinent question, which shows real knowledge of the kind of man Lane was:

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[9] Yeats, Letters, pp. 616-24.

> Was it not more natural to wish to leave behind him a small perfect thing with the pattern of his own mind [Dublin Municipal Gallery] than to be half remembered for a bequest soon lost in the growing richness of a London gallery? More than all the rest, he was Irish and of a family that had already in their passion and in their thought given great gifts to the people.

One might quarrel with Yeats's suggestion that Lane was first of all Irish, but not with the idea that he would have liked to have endowed a gallery with all the best paintings he could lay his hands on. Having already given many pictures to Dublin, that city was the natural location of any further gifts of paintings if he were to fulfil his dream. Being a bachelor, Lane was relatively alone in the world, and poured all his energy into his only love, an outstanding gallery; he had spoken of wanting to consider the Dublin Municipal Gallery as his "adopted child." Seen in this light, Lane, who to some may appear to have been high-handed and irascible, was perhaps more than anything else a pathetic egoist, and entirely understandable. One wonders whether Yeats did not realize this, but was forced by the rough-and-tumble ways of public controversy to depict Lane as a generous patriot with the sole interest of Ireland in mind. This is not to take away anything from Lane, who had given much to Ireland, for who knows what is the motivation of any person whom others consider to be a patriot. Besides, Yeats had shown that an Irish patriot is not the same as his English counterpart.

Yeats could only annoy the opposition with his

reasserted claim that he could not "believe that a great English institution would wish to benefit by a German act of war." And he unwittingly did more harm than good by quoting verbatim a letter he had written to Lady Gregory relating what Lane had said to him shortly after he had written his will in October, 1913. At that time Yeats had asked Lane to reconsider his action of lending the pictures to London, and to offer them again to Ireland. He quoted Lane's reply as he had reported it in his letter of November, 1913 to Lady Gregory: "'All should be allowed to rest for the present;' he wanted 'time to recover his enthusiasms. . . but you may be very sure,' he said, 'I have no desire to leave the present Dublin collection to represent me.'" MacColl eagerly compared this letter to what Yeats had written in the Spectator of December 23, 1916: "At that time Mr. Yeats had not found the 'document' he now quotes, and gives an account of it from which we may test his recollection generally."[10] MacColl then quoted Yeats's reminiscence of what he had called Lane's promise to "once more offer Dublin the same or better pictures, but he wished his decision for the present, for diplomatic reasons, to seem final." MacColl's italics indicate what he considered to be "highly coloured" by Yeats's imagination.

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[10] D. S. MacColl, "The National Gallery Bill, and Sir Hugh Lane's Bequest", The Nineteenth Century and After (February, 1917), pp. 383-98.

MacColl pointed out with evident pleasure that this earlier reminiscence by Yeats of his own letter had, when the actual 'document' was before him, "boiled down" to the less convincing report of Lane's reply which the poet had reproduced in the Observer. MacColl also printed part of Lane's letter of November 12, 1913 to Lady Gregory:

> You give me too much credit for my intentions towards Dublin: I hate the place, the people, and the 'gallery.' But I am simply ashamed to have my name associated with a bad collection [Dublin] and would like to make it really good of a kind. I don't think that I will ever bring back these same pictures, as I could best work up a fresh interest (to myself and Dublin) by making a fresh collection.

Here MacColl's italics indicate what he believed to have been really in Lane's mind. MacColl had proved that Yeats's memory was faulty by using a letter which had been entrusted to him by Lady Gregory to aid him in writing Lane's Life. Lady Gregory must have again wondered about the "irony of Fate." If MacColl had made Yeats look foolish, he himself did not make any great gains; his claim that Lane did not want to give his pictures to Dublin was based, and not very solidly, on his own reminiscences of talks with Lane, and on statements Lane had made when in despair about Dublin, before he wrote his codicil. Thomas Bodkin's assessment of the altercation seems fair:

> The controversy tended to become acrimonious though it was, at times, amusing. Like most newspaper controversies, it proved inconclusive. Dr. Yeats scored several points. Some of his sallies, however, served rather to enrage than to persuade his opponents.

> When they urged that in the Tate Gallery they had a suitable home for the pictures, which Dublin lacked, he replied that the argument was one which might have come from Ali Baba claiming that the possession of a cave justified retention of the proceeds of a robbery. . . . Dr. MacColl, though less entertaining, proved a doughty foeman.[11]

Yeats was silent about the Lane pictures for a year after MacColl had shown him to have had a poor memory, and therefore considered him to be generally unreliable. The occasion of his letter in the Observer of February 3, 1918 was "an influential meeting" in Dublin to invite the Government to declare Lane's codicil legal so that his pictures could be returned to Dublin. Perhaps with tongue in cheek, Yeats wrote, "You permitted me some twelve months ago to state the case to your readers, but by this time it may be getting somewhat dim in their memories."[12] Once again Yeats repeated the testimonies of Duncan, Martin and Quinnn, but added another from Right Hon. W. F. Bailey to the same effect, that just before he had left Ireland Lane had said he would give the pictures to Dublin. Yeats made a good point when he said that "no one, however, I think, believes that Sir Hugh Lane would have given these pictures to England if circumstance [such as death] made it impossible for him to

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[11] Bodkin, p. 45.

[12] W. B. Yeats, "Dublin and the Hugh Lane Pictures", Observer (February 3, 1918).

gather another collection for Ireland." But his ever-present irrelevancies crept in again when he added France to the list of places in which the codicil would have been considered legal. Except for a letter in 1921, this was the last time Yeats wrote about the Lane controversy in a newspaper until 1926.

Lady Gregory felt that "Yeats seemed to have lost his interest."[13] Her feeling was based on an incident which occurred in November, 1918. An Irish organization, the Lane Picture Committee, was going to propose to the London National Gallery Trustees to have arbitration by Mr. Asquith, Mr. Balfour and Lord Grey. Lady Gregory was shocked, fearing that if the arbitration went against the Irish, they could never again ask for the Lane pictures - they would be lost to Ireland permanently. She wrote to Yeats to try to have him prevent such arbitration; Yeats told the Lane Picture Committee to write to Sir Edward Carson for advice. This suggestion by Yeats upset Lady Gregory even more, for she feared Carson might advise the Committee to have arbitration simply because, she thought, Carson was tired of the protracted controversy over pictures he did not care about, and he would be glad not to have to support a Bill to have the pictures returned to Dublin. Luckily, Sir Edward Carson

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[13] Gregory, Journals, p. 292.

put off the Committee members by referring them to other M. P.'s. In February of 1919 Lady Gregory went herself to see Sir James Craig, to whom Carson had referred her; she did not defend Yeats when Craig said that he had had "several interviews with your amiable friends, (Ruth, Shine [sic] and Yeats) but none of them had made any effort to do anything." Lady Gregory answered, "You have not met me before, and I am not amiable."[14] She then reviewed the efforts of the Irish to get the pictures back, but did not specifically clear Yeats of the charge of doing nothing to help. It is understandable if Lady Gregory seemed impatient and irascible with Yeats. She had lost her son, Major Robert Gregory, in January, 1918, and her involvement in the battle for the Lane pictures was a way to spend her grief. She must have been aware that she had to hurry the attempts to have her nephew's last wishes fulfilled, for she was growing older. As Thomas Bodkin says, "Lady Gregory worked almost alone. Yeats was occasionally called into consultation, but not always accepted as an ally." Bodkin calls her charge that Yeats seemed to have lost interest, "an injustice, for his interest never disappeared. He had probably been pushed aside and overshadowed by her for a while. She was not an easy person to

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[14] Gregory, Journals, p. 294.

collaborate with. Her instincts were dictatorial."[15] Previously Yeats had been the leader of the Irish side; now Lady Gregory took charge. In encouraging G. B. Shaw to accompany her to a Lane Picture Committee meeting, she said, in her typical mythopoeic manner, "Yeats is already coming, and if you do you will be like Aaron and Hur holding up the hands of Moses, and indeed I want that support."[16]

Events of subsequent years also revealed Lady Gregory to have "dictatorial instincts", although to Yeats she probably seemed to be an aristocratic patron and patriot. Early in 1921 her biography of Hugh Lane was published, and it was greeted by an extremely sympathetic and enthusiastic book review in the Times Literary Supplement. It ends with a gracious sentiment: "We with our wealth in pictures, cannot wish to take advantage of a legal technicality against Dublin with her poverty. Our desire must be to carry out the wishes of Lane. . . . Lady Gregory puts the case of Dublin as strongly as she can, and it cannot be met with silence."[17] The following week someone wrote a letter signed "X."

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[15] Bodkin, pp. 80-1.

[16] Gregory, Journals, p. 293.

[17] "Hugh Lane", T. L. S. (March 10, 1921), p. 156.

to T. L. S. claiming that:

> Lane was bound by promises to Mr. D. S. MacColl, Mr. Charles Aitken, and other friends in England to give the pictures to London if a Modern Foreign Gallery could be founded there. This promise was embodied in his will. He also knew of and approved to the last the discussions with Sir Joseph Duveen, which resulted in the foundation by that generous donor of the Modern Foreign Gallery upon which Lane had set his heart. . . . The Modern Foreign Gallery at Millbank would ere now have been completed but for the existing difficulties about building.[18]

Lady Gregory wrote in her Journals that this letter was an "audacious untruth", probably written by Robert Witt, a trustee of the London National Gallery. She felt she could not write to object to it because it might appear that she was merely trying to advertise her biography of Lane. Therefore she made notes for letters to T. L. S. - "we must have two letters - one quoting from the old letters of Aitken and McColl [sic] from Yeats, and a fiery one of moral indignation from 'A. E.'."[19] Along with the notes to form the basis of a letter, she sent to Yeats parts of MacColl's article in The Nineteenth Century and After which Lennox Robinson had copied in the National Library.

It is not surprising that, on March 31, 1921 letters

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[18] "X.", "Sir Hugh Lane and the National Gallery", T. L. S. (March 17, 1921), pp. 178-9.

[19] Gregory, Journals, pp. 299-300.

by Yeats and "A. E." appeared in T. L. S.[20] In the first two sentences of his letter Yeats managed to charge "X." with a "dim memory of the controversy over the Lane pictures in 1916-17" and to get in a legitimate advertisement of Lady Gregory's Life of Hugh Lane. He called "amazing" the claim that Lane was "bound by promises" to the English and said that such a claim "goes far beyond that made by those named." He then quoted MacColl's and Aitken's earlier arguments that Lane was prepared to give certain pictures "to whichever city seemed first ready to show some appreciation." Finally, he related how both the Lane Picture Committee and the representatives of the London National Gallery had presented their claims to the then Chief Secretary for Ireland, the Right Honourable Ian Macpherson. Yeats said that Macpherson, a lawyer, decided that "Hugh Lane had 'intended the codicil to be carried out at the time he wrote it, and at the time of his death,' and prepared the Bill to legalize that codicil which we are confident will eventually become law." Yeats, provided with the basis of his letter by Lady Gregory, did not this time make any tactless statements to annoy the opposition. Not so "A. E.", from whom Lady Gregory wanted a "fiery" letter of "moral indignation".

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[20] W. B. Yeats, George W. Russell ("A. E."), "Sir Hugh Lane and the National Gallery", T. L. S. (March 31, 1921), p. 211.

His letter for the most part is calm and reasonable enough, but erupts at the close:

> If Lane had intended his pictures to go to London they should go to London. If he intended them for Dublin, then Dublin should have them. If the intention is clear, there can be no compromise. If the auxiliary forces dismissed by General Crozier for looting the poultry-yards had asked the owners to dinner to partake of their own chicken with the robbers, it would be comparable to the suggestion that the dispute might be compromised if Dublin was occasionally allowed to see the pictures.

That is worthy of Yeats, who had previously compared the English to German accomplices in a War crime. Now Yeats was becoming a "sixty-year-old smiling public man" (C. P., 243), and such vigorous assaults had to be exchanged for the diplomatic, dignified speech of an Irish senator. But even the senatorial mask could not hide the man, especially during the debates about the Lane pictures, when he spoke with his customary incisive wit. In his address to the Irish Senate on July 14, 1926 about the Lane pictures, he said: "You will forgive me if I forget that I am occasionally a politician and remember that I am always a man of letters, and speak less diplomatically and with less respect for institutions and great names than is, perhaps, usual in public life."[21]

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[21] Yeats, Senate Speeches, p. 119.

V YEATS IN THE SENATE, AND AFTER

In December, 1921, the Irish Free State came into being under the leadership of Arthur Griffith. Yeats was disturbed by the opposition to Eamon de Valera and, as Hone points out, "Yeats could never forgive Griffith for the strictures upon Synge and Hugh Lane or think of him as other than a fanatic."[1] Perhaps the fact that Griffith became President is the answer to Lennox Robinson's puzzlement:

> It is strange that in the negotiations which led up to the establishment of the Free State in December 1921, Lady Gregory did not press for a condition of the settlement being a return of the Lane pictures; in the Treaty of Versailles, works of art were returned by Germany to Belgium. But during the Black-and-Tan war her mind was so occupied with its terrors that the pictures rather faded out of her diaries.[2]

Possibly Yeats and Lady Gregory knew such an attempt would be futile as long as Griffith was President. But civil war followed in June, 1922, and Griffith died in August of that

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[1] Hone, p. 344.

[2] Lennox Robinson, ed. Lady Gregory's Journals, p. 308. Robinson is wrong in thinking the situation was the same as at the Treaty of Versailles. The Belgian pictures were war spoils. However unfairly, the Lane pictures were legally the Tate's.

year. W. T. Cosgrave, "whom Yeats had known as a friendly member of the Corporation at the time of the controversy about the Lane pictures," succeeded Griffith as President.[3] Then, on December 11, 1922, Yeats was appointed to the Seanad [Senate] of the Irish Free State. When, in 1923, he went to London to present Dublin's claim to the Lane pictures before the London National Gallery Trustees, he wrote to Thomas Bodkin: "I have only one object in public life at present and this is to give what help I can to certain learned bodies. Nothing else would have justified me in taking time from my artistic work."[4]

During these years Yeats worked both in and out of the Senate for the Irish claim to the Lane paintings. He moved, on May 9, 1923, "that the Seanad ask the Government to press upon the British Government the return to Dublin of the pictures mentioned in the unwitnessed codicil to Sir Hugh Lane's will." Yeats was rather optimistic in this speech, for he said: "I have some reason for saying that the opposition against the return of these pictures is dying away. I think the justice of our case has been generally admitted. It is simply a question of the inertia of Govern-

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[3] Hone, p. 349.

[4] Hone, p. 354.

ment and of giving them the necessary impulse towards arriving at some definite decision."[5] He once again reviewed the history of the international Lane controversy for the benefit of the other senators, and read to them Ruth Shine's affidavit claiming that Lane had thought the codicil legal. He said the only reason Macpherson's Bill to legalize the codicil had been neglected was "the pressure of Parliamentary business."[6] He pointed out for the practical-minded that the pictures were worth about seventy-five thousand pounds in 1911, and their value had probably increased. And the advantages of having the pictures in Dublin could not be disputed: "With those pictures there, we should have in the Municipal Gallery a possession which in future generations would draw people to Dublin, and help in enriching the city and the whole population by bringing those pilgrims." Yeats's motion was put and agreed to, but it was Senator Yeats who

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5 Yeats, Senate Speeches, pp. 46-9. The reader should ignore editor Pearce's advice prefixed to this speech: "For a full description of this protracted and tangled controversy consult Our Irish Theatre by Lady Gregory." The Lane controversy is not mentioned in that book.

6 One wonders whether the Irish really wanted the codicil legalized. Dublin had not provided a new gallery within the required five years after Lane's death. Were the codicil legalized and adhered to, the Lane pictures would have been put up for sale. Probably they would have gone not to Ireland or England, but to some wealthy American gallery.

was left to do any "pressing" upon Government officials in an effort to acquire the paintings.

Work went ahead very slowly, and Yeats was not always taken very seriously. In June, 1923, he wrote to His Excellency the Governor-General about the Lane pictures. Tim Healy's answer must have been "off-putting" to Yeats, who was trying to be a man of action: "My dear boy, come and see me whenever you like in 'the bee-loud glade'."[7] In August of that year Yeats was quite sure that the pictures would be returned to Dublin shortly, but nothing came of this hope. Meanwhile, Yeats had a way of keeping the problem of the Lane pictures before the Senate, even when that problem was not being discussed. He often referred to Lane when speaking on other cultural matters. On January 15, 1924, he made a speech regarding the possibility of the representation of the Irish Free State at the British Empire Exhibition. Yeats was concerned with the chance that Irish pictures were going to be grouped with other Empire pictures under the head of "British Artists." He recalled how "about sixteen years ago Sir Hugh Lane gave an exhibition of Irish Art in London and it was discovered that some of the most famous artists were Irish. If our artists had not the opportunity of exhibiting separately they would be driven back in the public estima-

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[7] Quoted by Gregory, Journals, p. 300.

tion."[8] Then, on April 3, 1924, he spoke in favour of the Museum, the National Gallery and the School of Art having been placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. But it was discovered that the Government could transfer these institutions "to any particular ministry it likes." Yeats wanted the Government to set up a Ministry of Culture if it was going to omit these institutions from the power of the Ministry of Education:

> The Arts in Ireland have suffered for several generations from being under the Department of Agriculture. The Department of Agriculture had no policy in connection with them except a deadly one. When Sir Hugh Lane, for instance, was rejected when he applied for the position of head of the Museum in Dublin - the one great connoisseur we had - he was rejected on grounds which had nothing whatever to do with the Arts, but which were simply matters of policy of that Department. When the Department was remonstrated with, an official used this argument: "The time has not come to encourage the Arts in Ireland." If you place these particular institutions under any ministry except the Ministry of Education or under a ministry of their own, you will find that the time has not come to encourage the Arts in Ireland.[9]

Throughout the rest of 1924 Yeats and Lady Gregory were constantly seeing Government officials and going to meetings about the Lane pictures. Little did they know that they would have to start their fight for the paintings over again because of the report of the British Parliament Committee in early 1925. In July the two friends prepared a full

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[8] Yeats, Senate Speeches, pp. 59-60.

[9] Yeats, Senate Speeches, pp. 63-5.

statement of the Irish claim for President Cosgrave. Then they visited Governor-General Healy who suggested that Counsel be employed. To assure that this could be done, the value of the pictures had to be determined so that Cosgrave could defend the expenditure for Counsel's expenses. Yeats wrote to Charles Ricketts, who estimated the paintings to be worth "well over one hundred thousand pounds."[10] Yeats and Lady Gregory were not content to work with the Irish Government only. They also met with members of the Dublin Corporation and the British Government. On September 4, 1924, Lady Gregory, Mrs. Ruth Shine, and Yeats reviewed Ireland's case with a Mr. Doyle of the Corporation. Then on the following day all three went to the Colonial Office to be interviewed by the British Parliament Committee headed by J. W. Wilson. Lady Gregory wrote in her Journals that "as Ruth [Shine] and Yeats were coming out there was a burst of laughter, Yeats having said that if it would make it easier to get back the pictures, 'I dare say we could raise a riot.'"[11]

Yeats never did "raise a riot" but at times he employed his power of ferocious, sarcastic attack which he

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10 Quoted by Gregory, Journals, p. 302.

11 Quoted by Gregory, Journals, p. 304.

had used, not always to advantage, in earlier days. In late October Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory, saying that there was a possibility that the pictures could be given to Dublin on "perpetual loan", since to pass a Bill legalizing Lane's codicil would be difficult. Yeats asked President Cosgrave to consult law officers about this transaction, and Cosgrave agreed to do so. He wanted to make sure that once the Irish got the pictures, they could keep them: "If the loan is accepted we must see to it that the loan is truly perpetual."[12] Both Lady Gregory and Yeats approved of the preparation of the London Irish in April, 1925, to march on the Tate Gallery with placards, "Give us back the stolen pictures." They felt such "spirited action was much more heartening than Cosgrave's and Tim Healy's lukewarmness."[13] They still were waiting for the report of the British Parliament Committee; though completed on January 28, 1925, it was not made public until June and not published as a twopenny pamphlet until a year later, June 1926. Yet somehow Yeats seemed to know that all was futile. On April 27, 1925, he wrote to Olivia Shakespear: "I go to London tonight to try and see politicians in preparation for a question about Lane pictures. . . in the

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[12] Quoted by Gregory, Journals, p. 304.

[13] Gregory, Journals, p. 305.

House. . . . I am not quite certain that George has not conspired with Lady Gregory - she was at Coole on Friday - to send me on this wild-goose chase for the good of my health. I have been doing too much philosophy and writing too much verse."[14]

All Irish efforts to have the Lane pictures returned to Dublin seemed nothing more than a wild-goose chase when news of the report was received.[15] But Yeats and Lady Gregory did not give up the fight; after all, Yeats was constantly motivated by the desire to do of all things "not impossible", that which is "most difficult", "because only the greatest obstacle that can be contemplated without despair rouses the will to full intensity."[16] And Lady Gregory believed that "it is better to fight than to sit still."[17] They agreed that the members of the Committee had gone outside the terms of reference for the report. Yeats wrote a letter to Lady

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[14] Yeats, Letters, p. 708.

[15] The report itself has been discussed. See above, pp. 17-8.

[16] W. B. Yeats, Autobiographies (London: Macmillan, 1955), p. 195.

[17] Gregory, Journals, p. 307.

Gregory to show Lord Glenavy, the Chairman of the Senate, in which he wrote that the English claim to the pictures, based on the acquisition of the new Millbank gallery, "seems to me exactly as if the Forty Thieves were to say they had a right to their treasure because they had been to the trouble of digging a cavern to contain it."[18] But again, Yeats's help was often rejected by Lady Gregory - witness Yeats's letter of April 15, 1926, to Olivia Shakespear in which he said he was going to ask her to put him up because he thought Lady Gregory might want him "for her final struggle over the Lane pictures, but in the end she preferred to work alone."[19] However, that was for the best, because Yeats's health and spirits were not good at this time. Still, he did what he could. Now in his second triennial period as a senator, Yeats delivered one of his best speeches on July 14, 1926, and not long after that he and Lady Gregory again combined their efforts to fight in another newspaper altercation.

The occasion of Yeats's speech was "a motion requesting the Government to pass a resolution designed to bring the Lane pictures back to Ireland." The essence of his speech was that the British Parliament Committee's recommendation

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[18] Quoted by Gregory, Journals, p. 306. See above (p. 70) for Bodkin's version of this statement.

[19] Yeats, Letters, p. 713.

of the English retention of the Lane pictures threatened the concept of the Irish Free State in two ways. He said that "the property involved, though great in monetary value, is more than property, for it means the possession of the implements of national culture." One way, then, in which the Irish Free State was to suffer was in the quality of its cultural life. Another way was in national status as a political entity. Yeats pointed out that either "clarification or modification of the relations between the Crown and the Dominions" was needed because of an incident to do with the Lane pictures. The King, before the Report had yet been made public, and "when the whole matter was sub-judice between the nations, had opened the new wing of the Tate Gallery at Millbank, "that is to say, the building which, it is claimed, was built to contain these pictures by Sir Joseph Duveen, and of which they are the principal ornament. As he made his speech,or as he passed through the gallery to deliver it, his eyes must constantly have looked upon the words, 'Lane Bequest.'" Yeats felt that the King, who was the King of Ireland as well as of England, should have been advised in this action which "seriously compromised the claim" of Ireland, by his Irish as well as his English Ministers. He pointed out that Ireland had "fought a civil war that we might be governed by a king rather than a president." He also feared that "a day may come when the action of the King

may prejudice some claim involving the most fundamental rights."[20] Three years later Yeats was to write "Cracked Mary's Vision", an unpublished poem with the refrain "May the Devil take King George", which, as Hone says, was "probably provoked by the King's opening of the new wing of the Tate Gallery, in which were the 'stolen' Lane pictures. The British monarch is contrasted unfavourably with a Tuatha de Danaan king. Yeats did not think the poem good enough to include in his Collected Works, but he tried to get AE to print the incendiary lines in the Irish Statesman."[21]

Yeats had managed to show how the problem of the Lane pictures was tangential, but still intrinsically important, to problems of international significance: "Important as our claim for the Lane pictures is, this question [of Crown-Dominion relations] seems to me to raise an issue of far greater importance, one vitally affecting the constitutional position not only of this country but of every Dominion."[22]

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[20] Yeats, Senate Speeches, pp. 118-24.

[21] Hone, p. 401n. Richard J. Loftus is wrong in saying the opening of the new Tate Gallery wing was in 1929. This poem was written in 1929, three years after the opening. Nationalism in Modern Anglo-Irish Poetry (Madison and Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), p. 43.

"Cracked Mary's Vision", absent from the Variorum edition of Yeats's poems, is printed in Richard Ellmann, The Identity of Yeats (Faber & Faber, 1964), pp. 101-2.

[22] Yeats, Senate Speeches, p. 120.

The other senators must have seen the specific problem of the Lane pictures in a new light when Yeats again directed their attention to it. Given his premises, his argumentation appeared masterful, probably the best he had yet displayed, as he placed one of the London National Gallery Trustees in a very compromising position, and yet did so with grace, dignity and complete assurance that the Trustee in question was "an honourable man." The Chairman of the Board, Lord Curzon, had throughout 1915-16 repeatedly assured Lady Gregory that no action had yet been taken about the Lane pictures simply because of time-consuming formalities. On October 10, 1916 he told her that he could not tell her anything new because the Trustees "are waiting to be advised by their legal advisers, and in the interim it would not be right for any individual trustee to intervene." But, Yeats said, the Trustees now claimed that on June 9, 1916, "'Sir Joseph Duveen, being on the point of returning to America, saw Lord D'Abernon [a Gallery Trustee] about the project.' Lord D'Abernon thereupon promised the pictures if Sir Joseph Duveen built the gallery." Yeats said that because Lord Curzon had assured the Irish that no individual Trustee of the London Gallery would interfere with matters pertaining to the Lane pictures, they had not organized meetings, petitions or protests, for "it was entirely impossible that a man of Lord Curzon's position and training would have deliberately deceived us.

Unless minutes of the National Gallery recording the promise were laid before the Commission, I have a right to affirm that such a promise was never given. . . . If no such minute can be discovered then the Commission has been grossly misled; if it is discovered, we have."[23] Actually, as D. S. MacColl later pointed out in a letter to The Times, Yeats had misquoted the Trustees' claim from the Burlington Magazine for 1924:

> Mr. Yeats's incurable carelessness in dealing with texts is responsible for a mare's nest with which the Irish Press is much engaged. A note in the Burlington Magazine ran: 'June 9, 1916 - Sir Joseph Duveen being on the point of returning from America, Mr. MacColl saw Lord D'Abernon about the project, and the latter secured a definite promise from Sir Joseph Duveen, which turned on the possession of the Lane pictures as a nucleus.' This has become to Mr. Yeats's excited eye . . . the absurdly garbled version [on which he] founds the charge of an unjustified 'promise' to Sir Joseph Duveen, and clamours for the production of National Gallery minutes. The 'promise' was from Sir Joseph, he on his side relying not only on the assurances Lane had given to me and to Mr. Aitken, but on a legal possession of the pictures which not even the complaisance of an English Government was likely to upset.[24]

At first glance it looks as if Yeats's faulty memory or self-deception had again spoiled his argument, but MacColl's answer really did not change the validity of Yeats's charges very much. Yeats had thought that a London Gallery Trustee

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[23] Yeats, Senate Speeches, p. 123.

[24] D. S. MacColl, "The Hugh Lane Pictures", The Times (July 30, 1926), p. 10.

had promised the Lane pictures provided that Duveen built a new gallery; in reality, Duveen made a promise to a Trustee of a new gallery if the London National Gallery would provide the Lane pictures. The fact still remains that Duveen would not have provided the Millbank gallery had not a Trustee assured him that the Lane pictures would be housed in it. And it was at a later date than that of this assurance that Lord Curzon had told Lady Gregory that no Trustee would intervene; such intervention had already taken place! Surely Yeats was right in claiming that either the Irish or the British Parliament Commission had been deceived, even though that deception was not recorded.

Yeats was also right in refuting the Commission's claim that "validation by Act of Parliament of Lane's imperfect codicil would, we are advised, constitute a legal precedent of first importance."[25] He quoted a newspaper's example that an Act of Parliament had modified the will of Cecil Rhodes. The will had been designed to enable German students to study at English universities, but during the war the English Parliament "abrogated that request not merely for the time of the war, but for ever." Finally, the eloquence of Yeats's peroration once again carried the motion and the Irish Senate renewed its resolution of 1923 to bring the Lane

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[25] Sir Hugh Lane's Pictures, Cmd. 2684. (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1926), p.5.

pictures back to Ireland:

> It seems to me what they did by Act of Parliament to modify the will of Cecil Rhodes under the influence of national hatred they might well be asked to do - to modify the will of Sir Hugh Lane under the influence of national honour. Now what are we to do? No compromise. We ask and we must continue to ask our right - to hold 39 pictures, and for ever. Let the Dublin Commissioners build that long-promised gallery. We have already, in Harcourt Street, great treasures that will make it one of the richest galleries in the world. Let them build that gallery and let them see there is ample space for these 39 pictures. Let them write the names of the pictures on the wall, in spaces reserved for them, and let the codicil be displayed in some conspicuous place and watch the public opinion of these countries. I do not believe that the public opinion of these countries will permit the London Gallery to retain pictures which it was not the intention of the donor to leave it.[26]

Referring to Yeats and the Irish, D. S. MacColl charged that "the very small body which still maintains this ten years grievance [over the Lane pictures] is unjustified in its attempts to prevent a friendly accommodation [through an English loan of some of the pictures to Ireland] by an appeal to political passions."[27] This was unfair to Yeats, for it was he who believed that a man of good will was preferable to a man who merely holds to certain political opinions. One person even said that "several of [Lane's] relations

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[26] Yeats, Senate Speeches, p. 124.

[27] D. S. MacColl, "Sir Hugh Lane's Pictures: The Case for London", The Times (July 23, 1926), p. 10.

and friends were keen Separatists."[28] Set beside Yeats's senate speech of July 14, this charge also proves to be quite unfair, for Yeats had spoken of the King of England being also the King of Ireland. And, as Lord Aberdeen pointed out, the Irish Times, which had supported Yeats and the Irish in the international controversy, was "the chief exponent of Unionist feeling in Ireland."[29] The battle for Yeats was not one of politics, but of culture; also, he wished to aid a friend fulfil her nephew's last wishes. In The Times of July 29, 1926, a joint letter by Yeats and Lady Gregory was published, the last one Yeats wrote to a newspaper about the Lane controversy.[30] The letter listed five affidavits claiming Lane had intended to give the pictures to Dublin. But to those who knew nothing of "cultural patriotism" the Irish desire for the pictures appeared to be nothing more than bad-tempered politics. This particular newspaper altercation ended on August 3 with a brief but pointed letter:

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[28] 'Justice', "The Hugh Lane Pictures", The Times (July 29, 1926), p. 8.

[29] Lord Aberdeen, "The Hugh Lane Pictures", The Times (July 21, 1926), p. 10.

[30] A. Gregory, and W. B. Yeats, "The Hugh Lane Pictures: Dublin's Chance", The Times (July 29, 1926), p. 8.

"Blessed above committees is the Hugh Lane Committee. It has satisfied everyone. England has the pictures, which she values highly; Ireland has the grievance, which she values still more highly."[31] To many that must have seemed a fair evaluation, for the great wave of public opinion which Yeats had expected to sweep both countries did not materialize. The Many had once more defeated the Few.

To the end of his life Yeats worked in various ways for the return of the Lane pictures. In September 1926 he wrote to Olivia Shakespear that he was "deep in revising and seeing through the press" Lady Gregory's Talbot Press pamphlet, Case for the Return of Sir Hugh Lane's Pictures to Dublin. Part of one of Yeats's senate speeches on the topic was reprinted in an appendix.[32] He also spoke to a Trinity College dinner on the Lane pictures and Irish tradition during which he said: "Berkeley was the first to say the world is a vision; Burke was the first to say a nation is a tree. And those two sayings are a foundation of modern thought."[33] Evidently to Yeats Lane's efforts ranked with

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[31] 'G. A. F.', "The Hugh Lane Pictures", The Times (August 3, 1926), p. 15.

[32] Yeats, Letters, p. 718.

[33] Quoted by Gregory, Journals, p. 265.

those of the greatest eighteenth century Irishmen. The Lane pictures could have helped the individual towards a vision of the world, so that the individual could assume the same organic relationship with Ireland as that of a living leaf with the tree. Personal Unity of Being could lead to Unity of Culture. If Yeats seemed to be dealing in intangibles here, he also had a sense of the concrete. He had suggested to Lady Gregory that Dublin could build the utilitarian part of the gallery which it had pledged "and leave the rest to national pride. The more practical we are the greater will our influence be."[34] But the Dublin Municipal Gallery was to occupy Charlemont House, and the visitors at the opening on June 19, 1933 could see that one of Yeats's ideas had been adopted: a special room was left vacant for the display of Lane's thirty-nine pictures. This was no idle gesture, for four years later Yeats was still trying to get the Lane pictures for that room. On January 15, 1937, he wrote to Eamon de Valera, President of the Executive Council, urging him to have the Irish Government negotiate with the British Government for the pictures.[35] Not until twenty years after Yeats's death was Ireland able to come to terms with

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[34] Yeats, Letters, p. 739.

[35] Yeats, Letters, p. 877.

England about the Lane pictures.

This period of Yeats's life was mainly a time for reminiscences. He had left the Senate in December, 1928; in 1932 he wrote:

> My six years in the Irish Senate taught me that no London Parliament could have found the time or the knowledge for that transformation [of Ireland since the inception of the Irish Free State]. But I am less grateful to the Government for what it has done than because its mere existence delivered us from obsession. . . . Freedom from obsession brought me a transformation akin to a religious conversion. I had thought much of my fellow-workers - Synge, Lady Gregory, Lane - but had seen nothing in Protestant Ireland as a whole but its faults, had carried through my projects in face of its opposition or its indifference, had fed my imagination upon the legends of the Catholic villages or upon Irish mediaeval poetry; but now my affection turned to my own people, to my own ancestors, to the books they had read.[36]

He of course expressed his affection in poetry, and in "Coole Park, 1929" told how, at Lady Gregory's residence, "impetuous men", Shawe-Taylor and Hugh Lane, among the Few,

> Found pride established in humility,
> A scene well set and excellent company. (C. P., 274)

And in a later poem, "The Municipal Gallery Revisited", he paid the greatest tribute possible to the benefactor of the Dublin Municipal Gallery:

> You that would judge me, do not judge alone
> This book or that, come to this hallowed place
> Where my friends' portraits hang and look thereon;

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[36] W. B. Yeats, "Ireland, 1921-1931", Spectator (January 30, 1932), pp. 137-8.

> Ireland's history in their lineaments trace;
> Think where man's glory most begins and ends,
> And say my glory was I had such friends. (C. P., 370)

The man who had made possible such an invitation was

> Hugh Lane, 'onlie begetter' of all these. (C. P., 368)

VI SYMBOLS AND CONCEPTS IN THE "MIDDLE POETRY"

In 1906 Yeats wrote to Stephen Gwynn: "what Dublin wants is some man who knows his own mind and has an intolerable tongue and a delight in enemies."[1] The following years provided Yeats with the opportunity of donning the mask of just such a man. Even prior to 1906 he was becoming more of a man of action, for he had been involved in a dispute about his play The Countess Cathleen, and had been prominent in Dublin theatre circles. Later the controversy (in 1907) over Synge's Playboy of the Western World and the first Lane controversy contributed to Yeats's retreat from the Celtic twilight and helped transform his poetic style. Yet at times Yeats felt that participation in affairs of the world was ruinous to his poetry; he set his curse on

> plays
> That have to be set up in fifty ways,
> On the day's war with every knave and dolt,
> Theatre business, management of men. (C. P.,104)

The call of social responsiblity drew the poet into a pragmatical world in which there existed objective problems to be solved. Life in such a world can interfere with the pro-

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[1] Yeats, Letters, p. 474.

fession of the poet, which is dependent on subjective vision, for, as Yeats wrote,

> All things can tempt me from this craft of verse:
> One time it was a woman's face, or worse -
> The seeming needs of my fool-driven land. (C. P., 109)

As always, Yeats vacillated - should he think only of what would result in the best poetry, or should he dedicate himself to trying to budge the bourgeoisie of his "fool-driven land"? C. K. Stead, quoting from Yeats's essay "Discoveries", writes that

> the problem now presents itself to him as 'the choice of choices - the way of the bird until common eyes have lost us, or to the market carts.' It had not occurred to him so forcibly as a choice before, and it is partly out of this new tension that the stronger poetry of Responsibilities (1914) is written.[2]

The problem is stated explicitly in "At the Abbey Theatre", in which Yeats addressed "Dear Craoibhin Aoibhin", Dr. Douglas Hyde:

> When we are high and airy hundreds say
> That if we hold that flight they'll leave the place,
> While those same hundreds mock another day
> Because we have made our art of common things,
> So bitterly, you'd dream they longed to look
> All their lives through into some drift of wings.
> (C. P., 107)

In a way the poetry of Responsibilities is a compromise - he managed to write on contemporary events of interest to many, satirizing his enemies while presenting an ideal for the Few. The tension between the ideal and the real gave vitality to

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[2] Stead, p. 22.

his poetry, a vitality earned by apprenticeship in every day concerns of Dublin. The ideal, of course, was Unity of Being and Unity of Culture. A study of Yeats's "middle poetry"[3] will reveal how the poet expressed, by his use of the sun symbol, both his displeasure at having to participate in mundane affairs inimical to his earlier habits and his enthusiasm for the ideal which could reform the world which he had decided to enter. Time and time again in these volumes Yeats used the symbol of the sun; by considering the contexts in which it occurs, we may gain a better understanding of the poems of the Lane controversy, and just what that controversy meant to Yeats the poet.

In "Lines Written in Dejection" (1915) the subjective mythologizing of the young poet is found to be no longer possible for the man of experience and responsibilities who is stripped of his coat of mythologies:

> The holy centaurs of the hills are vanished;
> I have nothing but the embittered sun;
> Banished heroic mother moon and vanished,
> And now that I have come to fifty years
> I must endure the timid sun. (C. P., 164)

Life under the "heroic mother moon", like that in a "dragon-guarded land", is exchanged for life under the "embittered" and "timid" sun, the adjectives being descriptive of Yeats's

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[3] The Green Helmet and Other Poems (1910), Responsibilities (1914) and The Wild Swans at Coole (1919).

feelings. Life in such a common, objective, realistic world (Ireland) is made endurable only by art, or more specifically, mythology:

> Hope that you may understand!
> What can books of men that wive
> In a dragon-guarded land,
> Paintings of the dolphin-drawn
> Sea-nymphs in their pearly wagons
> Do, but awake a hope to live
> That had gone
> With the dragons? (C. P., 135)

Modern Ireland was not a "dragon-guarded land", and so Yeats had to look to the past for books which would awaken his desire to live by providing him with a mythology. (No wonder he admired Cosimo for patronizing

> Michelozzo's latest plan
> For the San Marco Library.) (C. P., 120)

As Austin Warren points out, "To speak of the need for myth, in the case of an imaginative writer, is a sign of his felt need for communion with his society, for a recognized status as artist functioning within society. Yeats . . . felt the need of a union with Ireland."[4] It is typical of Yeats's "cultural patriotism" that he felt free to go outside the borders of his own country to find the material he needed to form new myths. He turned to Castiglione's The Courtier, which to him presented in Urbino an example of an ideal Unity of Culture. Such a culture he also recognized in Coole Park,

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[4] René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1956), p. 192.

which Corinna Salvadori calls an "Irish Urbino."[5] Yeats wrote that in Coole Park he had found

> what I had been seeking always, a life of order, and of labour, where all outward things were the image of an inward life. . . . Here many generations, and no uncultured generations, had left the images of their service in furniture, in statues, in pictures and in the outline of wood and field.[6]

As usual, Yeats's mythopoeic habit associated elements of his own experience with the great myths of the past. Though in "To a Wealthy Man" he makes use of information gleaned from the editions of The Courtier to set up an ideal for the wealthy man, Lord Ardilaun, to emulate, he himself was probably thinking more of Coole Park where Lady Gregory presided over a gracious society typified by her own patronage of Yeats and her nephew's support of art in Ireland. Reference to contemporary Irish figures such as Lady Gregory might very well have been dangerous to Yeats's cause, for she was an opinionated, powerful woman who must have had enemies. Nor does Yeats refer explicitly to Hugh Lane, although perhaps he went out of his way to make a rather poor pun on Lane's name at the end of line three of "To a Wealthy Man."

For Yeats Coole Park was the closest present-day

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[5] Salvadori, p. 22.

[6] W. B. Yeats, Unpublished autobiographical manuscript; quoted by A. Norman Jeffares, in The Poetry of W. B. Yeats (Great Neck, N. Y.: Barron's Educational Series, 1961), p. 20.

equivalent to the culture of the Italian Renaissance. He realized that the interest in a Dublin art gallery of Lady Gregory of Coole Park, and her nephew, Hugh Lane, revealed their sense of responsibility to society. His admiration for them and what they were trying to do for the cultural life of Ireland meant that he had to take a different view of such responsibility. What had to be expressed was not the difficulty and unpleasantness of responsibility (enduring the "timid sun"), but the nobility and magnificence of dedicating oneself to the cause of a hoped-for Unity of Culture. Yeats communicated his myth (that which ought to be) of Unity of Culture by combining the symbol of the eagle with that of the sun:

> Look up in the sun's eye and give
> What the exultant heart calls good
> That some new day may breed the best
> Because you gave, not what they would,
> But the right twigs for an eagle's nest! (C. P., 120)

In "Upon a House Shaken by the Land Agitation" these symbols had been used to evoke Coole Park, its aristocratic tradition, and the influence of its generosity:

> How should the world be luckier if this house,
> Where passion and precision have been one
> Time out of mind, became too ruinous
> To breed the lidless eye that loves the sun?
> And the sweet laughing eagle thoughts that grow
> Where wings have memory of wings, and all
> That comes of the best knit to the best? (C. P., 106)

Both the sun and the eagle are Blakean symbols[7] and perhaps

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[7] For examples of the Blakean imagery which Yeats echoes here see Jeffares, Man and Poet, p. 317.

in stanza one of "To a Wealthy Man" Yeats was referring to another symbol of Blake's. Blake spoke of unimaginative people seeing only a bright spot the size of a guinea when they looked at the sun; they interpreted the world with a lower reason, or "ratio". An imaginative person would look at the sun and see a host of angels singing; his was a higher reason, or "vision". In "To a Wealthy Man" the Philistine wants "some sort of evidence" before he will grudgingly give guineas - his unimaginative mind is on money matters, not the sun, as are the minds of the Paudeens who "play at pitch and toss." The truly generous person will give with an "exultant heart"; his donation, essentially a giving of himself, will be marked by sprezzatura, for he is looking into the "sun's eye." As Yeats wrote in the poem which prefaces Responsibilities,

'Only the wasteful virtues earn the sun'. (C. P., 113)

In contrast to the sun and eagle symbols and what they represent are the Dublin Philistines who are described as being "blind"; they "fumble in a greasy till" because of greed and, presumably, poor eyesight resulting from poring over accounts, and are associated not with the heights of the sun and eagle, "Urbino's windy hill" and aristocracy, but with the common levelness of the town, the market-place, and democracy.

Implicit in the middle poetry is a belief in a chain of being where accepted responsibility and joyful dedication to an ideal (symbolized by the sun, eagle, and height generally)

is superior to a selfish, parasitic existence in a mean society based on the modern myth of the equality of man - a pernicious myth opposed to the chain of being itself, and hence an agent of rootless chaos as opposed to traditional order. Yeats imagined the disruption of this chain of being in terms of what would happen in the future to the society which Coole Park represented:

> Although
> Mean roof-trees were the sturdier for its fall,
> How should their luck run high enough to reach
> The gifts that govern men, and after these
> To gradual Time's last gift, a written speech
> Wrought of high laughter, loveliness and ease? (C. P., 106)

Because of the generosity of the aristocracy, men would be better off if the selfish middle class did not become all-powerful. When Lady Gregory was ill in 1909 Yeats expressed his anxiety in cosmic terms:

> These are the clouds about the fallen sun,
> The majesty that shuts his burning eye:
> The weak lay hand on what the strong has done,
> Till that be tumbled that was lifted high
> And discord follow upon unison,
> And all things at one common level lie.[8] (C. P., 107)

Unison was based on an adherence to traditional order. Yeats as poet was well aware of his debt to tradition (to Castiglione and Blake, for instance) and one of his objections to the

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8 In Macbeth Shakespeare used bird imagery to express a similar upset in the chain of being. Nature mirrored the unnaturalness of Duncan's murder:

> A falcon, towering in her pride of place,
> Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd. (II, iv, 12-3)

bourgeoisie was their neglect of tradition for the sake of making money in the present, pragmatical world:

> Works of art are always begotten by previous works of art, and every masterpiece becomes the Abraham of a chosen people. When we delight in a spring day there mixes, perhaps, with our personal emotion an emotion Chaucer found in Guillaume de Lorris, who had it from the poetry of Provence; we celebrate our draughty May with an enthusiasm made ripe by more meridian suns; and all our art has its image in the Mass that would lack authority were it not descended from savage ceremonies taught amid what perils and by what spirits to naked savages. The old images, the old emotions, awakened again to overwhelming life, like the gods Heine tells of, by the belief and passion of some new soul, are the only masterpieces. The resolution to stand alone, to owe nothing to the past, when it is not mere sense of property, the greed and pride of the counting-house, is the result of that individualism of the Renaissance which had done its work when it gave us personal freedom. The soul which may not obscure or change its form can yet receive those passions and symbols of antiquity, certain they are too old to be bullies, too well-mannered to respect the rights of others.
>
> Nor had we better warrant to separate one art from another, for there has been no age before our own wherein the arts have been other than a single authority, a Holy Church of Romance, the might of all lying behind all, a circle of cliffs, a wilderness where every cry has its echoes.[9]

This passage from "Art and Ideas", inspired, ironically, by a visit to the Tate Gallery, was written in 1913, an important year in the Lane controversy, and in part expresses Yeats's willingness to devote his own art of poetry to aid the art of painting, both of which could aid the art of living. He knew that "the literary element in painting, the moral element

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[9] W. B. Yeats, "Art and Ideas", Essays and Introductions (London: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 352-3.

in poetry, are the means whereby the two arts are accepted into the social order and become a part of life, and not things of the study and exhibition."[10]

Yeats was able to increase the significance of his symbols by using those symbols to describe various elements in his own experience. A good example of this personalization of symbols and myths is his poetry about Maud Gonne. Calling her Helen of Troy is a means by which he can express his own feelings about her beauty and yet communicate his experience to a wider audience on a more universal level. He also used the sun, and that bird so closely associated with the sun, the phoenix, to describe Maud Gonne. Two poems from The Wild Swans at Coole, "The People" and "His Phoenix", add autobiographical significance to the sun symbol and the symbol of "Urbino's windy hill" in "To a Wealthy Man." "The People", written in 1915, reveals Yeats's discontent during his activities in the public life of Dublin, among which was his participation in the Lane controversy. Discouraged, as Lane had been, by

> The daily spite of this unmannerly town,
> Where who has served the most is most defamed,
> The reputation of his lifetime lost
> Between the night and morning

the poet realizes that he need not have committed himself to

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[10] W. B. Yeats; quoted by Frank Kermode, Romantic Image (New York: Vintage, 1964), p. 162.

any public cause. He might have lived

> Where every day my footfall should have lit
> In the green shadow of Ferrara wall;
> Or climbed among the images of the past -
> The unperturbed and courtly images -
> Evening and morning, the steep street of Urbino.
> (C. P., 169)

In such a place he would have been provided with patronage and an intelligent, understanding audience for his poetry. But his beloved, the phoenix who, like the eagle, is marked by

> that proud look as though she had gazed into the burning sun (C. P., 172)

never complains of the abuse she receives at the hands of what she calls "the people", but what is to Yeats "that barbarous crowd." (C. P., 172) "His Phoenix" ends in mourning because, as Yeats was to write in 1919,

> Have I not seen the loveliest woman born
> Out of the mouth of Plenty's horn,
> Because of her opinionated mind
> Barter that horn and every good
> By quiet natures understood
> For an old bellows full of angry wind? (C. P., 213)

That one word "barter", taken from the commercial world of the bourgeoisie, the Ireland symbolized by

> that raving slut
> Who keeps the till (C. P., 392)

shows that Maud Gonne, the phoenix, had gone the way of the "barbarous crowd", not only by her marriage in 1903 to John MacBride, but also by her insistence on a narrow, political provincialism. Yeats's emotions aroused by the loss of Maud Gonne, as those aroused by his love of Coole Park, were

strands in the fabric of those symbols connoting the graciousness of aristocracy and the meanness of the middle class.

Throughout the Lane poems are two major concepts, joy and timidity or fear. The symbols already discussed, sun and eagle, are symbols of a kind of joy resulting from Unity of Being and sprezzatura. All of the Lane poems except "To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing" feature birds symbolic of these qualities - the eagle of "To a Wealthy Man", the wild geese of "September 1913", the curlews of "Paudeen" and the grey gulls of "To a Shade."[11] In a similar manner wind suggests these qualities in the same four poems respectively - "Urbino's windy hill", names "have gone about the world like wind", the curlews cry "in the luminous wind", the "thin Shade" drinks "of that salt breath out of the sea." Birds and wind are natural symbols for the wholeness and freedom of the self since both suggest easy movement. Contrasted to this wholeness which is self-sufficient and which glories in beauty is the lack of sprezzatura of the timid, fearful Paudeens who prostitute themselves for some external aim - business or religion. Yeats uses uncomplimentary synecdoche to describe these half living people. In "September 1913" the Dubliners scrimp and save and pray until they "have dried

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[11] The "wild geese" also have historical significance. The phrase refers to those Roman Catholics who, under fear of strict penal laws, left Ireland to join the armies of France, Austria and Spain after the Battle of the Boyne (1690).

the marrow from the bone." (C. P., 121) Years later Yeats himself was to pray that he never would be only intellectually "alive":

> God guard me from those thoughts men think
> In the mind alone;
> He that sings a lasting song
> Thinks in a marrow-bone. (C. P., 326)

Yeats, influenced by Donne's poem about Elizabeth Drury, desired that the body itself should think. Opposed to the dead, dry marrow of the careful middle class who do not really know how to live is the violent shedding of blood of Fitzgerald, Emmet and Tone, and the "life"-giving gift of Hugh Lane,

> A man
> Of your own passionate serving kind who had brought
> In his full hands what, had they only known,
> Had given their children's children loftier thought,
> Sweeter emotion, working in their veins
> Like gentle blood. (C. P., 123)

In "September 1913" Yeats places in the mouths of the Dubliners the disparaging synecdoche

> 'Some woman's yellow hair
> Has maddened every mother's son!. (C. P., 121)

Yeats himself employs a similar use of a part for the whole in his attack on journalists like William Martin Murphy, who is called a "brazen throat" (C. P., 122) and "an old foul mouth." (C. P., 123) The implication is, of course, that these people are not living fully, that they do not even approach Unity of Being and that consequently they can know no joy or beauty as can aristocrats, countrymen and poets:

> Three types of men have made all beautiful things, Aristocracies have made beautiful manners, because their place in the world puts them above the fear of life, and the countrymen have made beautiful stories and beliefs, because they have nothing to lose and so do not fear, and the artists have made all the rest, because Providence has filled them with recklessness. All these look backward to a long tradition, for, being without fear, they have held to whatever pleased them. The others, being always anxious, have come to possess little that is good in itself, and are always changing from thing to thing, for whatever they do or have must be a means to something else, and they have so little belief that anything can be an end in itself that they can not understand you if you say, 'All the most valuable things are useless.' They prefer the stalk to the flower, and believe that painting and poetry exist that there may be instruction, and love that there may be children, and theatres that busy men may rest, and holidays that busy men may go on being busy. At all times they fear and even hate the things that have worth in themselves, for that worth may suddenly, as it were a fire, consume their Book of Life, where the world is represented by ciphers and symbols; and before all else, they fear irreverent joy and unserviceable sorrow. It seems to them that those who have been freed by position, by poverty, or by the traditions of art, have something terrible about them, a light that is unendurable to eyesight. They complain much of that commandment that we can do almost what we will, if we do it gaily, and think that freedom is but a trifling with the world.[12]

Yeats then goes on to say that Duke Guidobaldo, one of the patrons in "To a Wealthy Man", was one of those subjective people who knew the joy of life, who could endure the light which the fearful ones could not.

F. A. C. Wilson provides a useful definition of Yeats's "subjective man":

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[12] Yeats, "Poetry and Tradition", Essays and Introductions, pp. 251-2.

> The subjective . . . is by nature aware that he carries God always within him and that his own personality is boundless, infinitely resourceful and in fact divine; he seeks for salvation by cultivating his own Self or higher personality; and, having no need to abase himself before an external victim-saviour, tends always to worship God through joy.[13]

In "September 1913" Yeats scorns the middle class for its abasement before an external God - the bourgeoisie consider religion in the same light as economics - the more prayers added to fearful, "shivering" prayers the better, just as halfpence are added to pence. The reference to adding prayers suggests the counting of rosary beads and seems to be directed against the Catholic middle class, but Yeats made sure he included the Protestants under his stricture. His note to the Lane poems (quoted more fully above, p. 46) states in prose what he suggests in poetry:

> Religious Ireland - and the pious Protestants of my childhood were signal examples - thinks of divine things as a round of duties separated from life and not as an element that may be discovered in all circumstance and emotion. (C. P., 530)

The irony in the line

For men were born to pray and save (C. P., 121)

is an obvious attack on religion as a "round of duties". To pray and save souls was the intended Christian ideal, but the practice of the middle class was to fearfully pray and

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[13] F. A. C. Wilson, Yeats's Iconography (London: Gollanz, 1960), p. 42.

save - money, not souls. Holding to the moral code of Christianity, they know nothing of its spirit. There is nothing but contempt for the "sense" the Paudeens have come to - they possess a joyless security which has destroyed the essence of life within them until they are the living "dead", a shameful death compared to those who were brave enough to die for "Romantic Ireland". This smug security leads to a meanness at which Yeats directs a sure and deft satiric thrust, compacted into one line in parentheses:

> If you have revisited the town, thin Shade,
> Whether to look upon your monument
> (I wonder if the builder has been paid). . . (C. P., 123)

Such meanness at the expense of culture could lead to a viciousness of attack which Yeats compares to setting a pack upon Lane. Jeffares points out how closely linked in Yeats's mind were the Parnell and Lane controversies. Yeats, in his Autobiographies, had remembered how "during the quarrel over Parnell's grave a quotation from Goethe ran through the papers, describing our Irish jealousy: 'The Irish seem to me like a pack of hounds, always dragging down some noble stag.'"[14] The image is suitable - the many against the one. There could be no doubt which side Yeats supported, for he always admired the individual above the multitude whose only bond was fear.

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[14] Yeats, Autobiographies; quoted by Jeffares, Man and Poet, p. 321.

Aristocracies, countrymen and artists - these three Yeats saw as companions in joy. Along with two other artists, John Synge and Augusta Gregory, he had brought

> Everything down to that sole test again,
> Dream of the noble and the beggar-man. (C. P., 369)

Nobles and beggar-men play a large part in Responsibilities and if, as Edward Engelberg says, the word "dream", so prominent in Yeats's early poetry, "disappears almost entirely from Responsibilities",[15] we must remember that one of the epigraphs for the volume is "In dreams begins responsibility." (C. P., 112) We may interpret "dreams" here as meaning "ideals" - man must hold himself responsible for trying to achieve the ideals he fashions himself. The joy resulting from the attempt to attain Unity of Being and Unity of Culture, that joy residing in aristocracies, countrymen and artists, was Yeats's main dream in Responsibilities. The Lane poems are usually considered to be poems of indignation; they are that, but not in any negative sense. The indignation stems from annoyance at that which interferes with fulfilment of Yeats's positive dreams.

One such dream was that of the ideal reader,

> A man who does not exist,
> A man who is but a dream.

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[15] Edward Engelberg, "'He Too Was in Arcadia': Yeats and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall", in In Excited Reverie, ed. A. Norman Jeffares and K. G. W. Cross (London: Macmillan, 1965), p. 86.

Yeats wishes that

> Before I am old
> I shall have written him one
> Poem maybe as cold
> And passionate as the dawn.

He sets this solitary "wise and simple man" against

> The clever man who cries
> The catch-cries of the clown,
> The beating down of the wise
> And great Art beaten down. (C. P., 167)

These lines may refer to Lane's defeat at the hands of Murphy and the middle class,[16] people "full of passionate intensity". (C. P., 211) But passion needs control. The poem Yeats hopes to write for the fisherman is to be "cold" and "passionate". As Corinna Salvadori suggests,

> The juxtaposition of cold and passionate seems incongrous; it is not. Cold here implies perfect control, mastery of a passion as deep as the love that was ever present in the minds of the courtiers of Urbino. The poem will not be a product of the brain only but also of the heart; it will spring from the "thinking of the body", as Yeats entitled the essay where he discusses this. The fisherman for whom the poet writes is also "cold" and "passionate" because he is the poet's ideal man, the man who is like the lords and ladies of Urbino who had courtesy and self-possession and were always in love.[17]

Such "perfect control, mastery of a passion" does not come easily. In fact, in positing a prelapsarian paradise of joy and Unity of Being where such sprezzatura was the natural

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[16] See Saul, p. 107.

[17] Salvadori, p. 91.

thing, Yeats stresses the curse on fallen man:

> It's certain there is no fine thing
> Since Adam's fall but needs much labouring.

This is especially true of the poet's craft:

> A line will take us hours maybe;
> Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought
> Our stitching and unstitching has been naught. (C. P., 88)

Such reworking of a poem is not merely an objective concern for technical perfection but is a revaluation of the poet's personality itself:

> The friends that have it I do wrong
> Whenever I remake a song,
> Should know what issue is at stake:
> It is myself that I remake.[18]

Yeats sees the seeming spontaneity of expression as being analogous to the courtesy of the courtier; in both cases passion has had to be controlled to give the effect of nonchalance. Thus we can see that the bond between poet and aristocratic patron is not, to Yeats, a social relationship of convenience providing security for the poet, while feeding the egotism of the patron; rather it is a meeting of like souls. As Yeats wrote, "in life courtesy and self-possession, and in the arts style, are the sensible impressions of the free mind, for both arise out of a deliberate shaping of all things, and from never being swept away, whatever the emotion,

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[18] W. B. Yeats, "Untitled Poem", in The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York: Macmillan, 1957), p. 778.

into confusion or dullness."[19] Both poet and patron contributed to the "passion and precision" of Coole Park. (C. P., 106)

Labour, then, is the means by which one can come to lead "the highest life [which] unites, as in one fire, the greatest passion and the greatest courtesy."[20] Even beauty must be earned:

> To be born woman is to know -
> Although they do not talk of it at school -
> That we must labour to be beautiful. (C. P., 89)

Yet one should be glad that the possession of "fine things" requires effort, and cannot simply be inherited. In praying that his daughter

> May be granted beauty and yet not
> Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught,
> Or hers before a looking glass

Yeats writes:

> In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned;
> Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned
> By those that are not entirely beautiful.

A conscious effort to attain "courtesy" is implied by the word "learned". Those who are given too much beauty without sufficient labour

> Consider beauty a sufficient end,

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[19] Yeats, "Poetry and Tradition", Essays and Introductions, p. 253.

[20] W. B. Yeats; quoted by David Daiches, "The Earlier Poetry: Some Themes and Patterns", in In Excited Reverie, p. 63.

> Lose natural kindness and maybe
> The heart-revealing intimacy
> That chooses right, and never find a friend.
> (C. P., 212)

There is no joy for such people, as there is for those who are free to labour, for though labour may be "Adam's curse", it is also, in a way, a blessing. Its paradoxical nature, which might also be described as "cold and passionate", is an experience of "tragic joy" - tragic because complete beauty, which Yeats called Unity of Being, or "complete subjectivity", cannot be attained permanently by man. There is no human life at phase fifteen where "effort and attainment are indistinguishable."[21] Here effort (labour) becomes one with attainment (beauty):

> Labour is blossoming or dancing where
> The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,
> Nor beauty born out of its own despair,
> Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.
> O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,
> Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
> O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
> How can we know the dancer from the dance? (C. P.,244)

Similarly, the poet's "laborious pen" cannot capture for good those "separate, perfect and immovable / Images." (C. P.,186) In discussing the image of the Dancer Frank Kermode points out that "the Image is always likely to be withdrawn. . . . When poetry is Image, life must, as Yeats said, be tragic."[22]

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[21] W. B. Yeats, A Vision (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 135.

[22] Kermode, pp. 90-1.

But Yeats also said that "we begin to live when we have conceived life as tragedy."[23] Tragic joy in labour can sustain one in defeat. Yeats's advice to Lady Gregory, whose work in the Lane controversy had come to nothing, was:

> Bred to a harder thing
> Than Triumph, turn away
> And like a laughing string
> Whereon mad fingers play
> Amid a place of stone,
> Be secret and exult,
> Because of all things known
> That is most difficult. (C. P., 122)

As Alex Zwerdling points out, "it is only in defeat that the man of action shows his true spirit and greatness. Joy and exultation are of course possible to the ordinary man under conditions of victory, but they are possible only to the heroic man in defeat."[24] In Mythologies Yeats had written, "the poet finds and makes his mask in disappointment, the hero in defeat. The desire that is satisfied is not a great desire, nor has the shoulder used all its might that an unbreakable gate has never strained."[25] Yeats's desire, or dream, of an ideal

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[23] Yeats, Autobiographies, p. 189.

[24] Alex Zwerdling, Yeats and the Heroic Ideal (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 115.

[25] W. B. Yeats, Mythologies (New York: Macmillan, 1959), p. 337.

Unity of Being and Unity of Culture was a great desire - an impossibility, as he realized in 1922: "the dream of my early manhood, that a modern nation can return to Unity of Culture, is false; though it may be we can achieve it for some small circle of men and women."[26] But not all was lost. Being engaged in public controversies such as that concerning Lane's pictures, and seeing his desires disappointed, helped Yeats's growth both as poet and man; as early as 1909 he realized that "personality - deliberately adopted and therefore a mask - is the only escape from the hot-faced bargainers and the money-changers."[27] That is how he chose to view most Dubliners. But those "masterful images", such as the sun and eagle, which "grew in pure mind" began out of reaction to everyday Dublin middle class life,

> that raving slut
> Who keeps the till. (C. P., 392)

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[26] Yeats, Autobiographies, p. 295.

[27] Yeats, Autobiographies, p. 461.

CONCLUSION

If literature may be said to have various "functions", one of the most important would have to be the process of coming to self-knowledge - both for the reader who studies literature, and for the author who tries to write it. Self-awareness is necessary for writing truthfully, and intelligent reading is mainly an awareness of the significance of one's personal responses. Ideally, self-knowledge should lead to empathy, and that in turn to sympathy and tolerance. From the labyrinth of the self should grow the bonds of community. The sense of community having been achieved, tolerance and comraderie should be self-perpetuating until a nation has been born, a nation of good will. Yeats's "cultural patriotism" always took this direction - from the feeling individual to the spirited nation. Alex Zwerdling writes that, "for Yeats the true purpose of nationalism is to create independent spirits first, a country only second." He believes that Yeats "would surely have agreed" with John Eglinton's statement that "the real nation is where its soul is, and the soul of a nation is the men in it who have attained unto themselves. Wherever a man has found himself, the purpose of

nationality is fulfilled in him."[1] It is significant that Yeats chose an organic metaphor for the state; he agreed with "haughtier-headed Burke that proved the State a tree" (C. P., 268) - that the nation should be rooted in the individual. The image of the tree calls up similar images - the "great-rooted blossomer" of "Among School Children", the "spreading laurel" of "A Prayer for My Daughter". These are symbols of the ideal which Yeats strived for and which could only be even approximated in a select society such as that at Coole Park. But what of Ireland as a whole?

In 1922, his first year in the Senate, Yeats wrote:

> Nations, races, and individual men are unified by an image, or bundle of related images, symbolical or evocative of the state of mind, which is of all states of mind not impossible, the most difficult to that man, race or nation; because only the greatest obstacle that can be contemplated without despair rouses the will to full intensity.[2]

Yeats, in his last year as senator, 1928, had to ask:

> Is every modern nation like the tower,
> Half dead at the top? (C. P., 269)

His answer must have been affirmative, but he never surrendered to despair. "Under Ben Bulben", which he desired to have placed last in his collected poems, reveals how Yeats never

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[1] Zwerdling, p. 115. Eglinton's statement is quoted from his Some Essays and Passages, ed. W. B. Yeats (Dundrum, 1905), p. 7.

[2] Yeats, Autobiographies, pp. 194-5.

lost his faith in the supremacy of the arts as a agent of patriotism:

> Irish poets, learn your trade,
> Sing whatever is well made . . .
> .....
> Cast your mind on other days
> That we in coming days may be
> Still the indomitable Irishry. (C. P., 400)

Yeats himself had often cast his mind on other days, the days of Cuchulain and Oisin. But he also looked at present day Ireland, perhaps nowhere more perceptively than in the Lane poems. Yeats realized that what was at stake in the Lane controversy was not merely the possession of some "art objects", but the means by which at least some Irishmen could be allowed to live a life of joy, free from obsession and fear.

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The Bibliography of the Lane Controversy is intended mainly to be a guide to letters and articles concerning the controversy which appeared in newspapers and journals. Included are the few books devoted wholly or in part to the controversy. The order of the entries is alphabetical by author, but letters and articles by the same author are arranged in chronological order. Such important books as The Senate Speeches of W. B. Yeats and The Letters of W. B. Yeats, essential to this thesis, are included with the works of Yeats in the General Bibliography.

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