

Introduction to W. B. Yeats, *Where There is Nothing and The Unicorn from the Stars: Manuscript Materials* (Cornell Yeats Series)

by Wim Van Mierlo

I

Yeats's summer in 1901 was, as usual, a busy one. Having returned from seeing F. R. Benson's production of *Richard III* in Stratford-upon-Avon in April, he lectured on "Magic" on May 4 to the Fellowship of the Three Kings, the society he had cofounded for the study of mysticism, at 8 Adelphi Terrace in London. He formally engaged A. P. Watt as his agent, visited George Moore in Dublin from May 9 to 20, and repaired to Coole to complete work on his long poem, "Baile and Aillinn," over the summer. His business with Moore was to discuss plans for the Irish Literary Theatre, but while Yeats was staying at 4 Ely Place, he and Moore turned their attention back to *Diarmuid and Grania*, which Benson's company had finally agreed to stage, and made some "great improvements" to the second act (CL 3, 70). His struggles with Moore over the writing of the play were for the time being over. Moore, who had just traded London for Dublin to join the Irish Renaissance movement, mustered an unimpeded enthusiasm for anything to do with the nationalist project, and the two men got on unusually amicably.

In this mood, Moore wrote to Yeats on July 3 with an idea for a new play that they could develop together (NLI 8777[1]). Yeats responded positively, for he wrote to his father: "I have also plans for a new play with Moore, a religious Don Quixote, which may or may not be carried out" (CL 3, 87). In this play, a young idealist university lecturer meets a tinker who is breaking into the university building and has a revelation. Dressed in tinker's clothes, he delivers an impassioned lecture on the "scientific barbarism" of civilization rather than his usual class, before throwing over his university post and moving abroad. Years later he returns, a poet and "founder of religions," to his family. At first his behavior is wild, and he offers free drink to his followers, but then to everyone's surprise he settles down. The outline next continues through a number of repetitive and rather peculiar situations: he decides to give up his property and marry the "dirtiest girl in the village"; he runs away again and joins the circus, after which, having grown afraid of his wife, he offers her to a tinker, who marries her. The young man becomes a hermit in a ruined monastery, but the monks quickly become suspicious of him; wary of his knowledge of the ancient Irish religions, they incite the people against him. Before the violence comes to a head, however, there is final scene in which the tinker returns asking why he left his wife; then the villagers cart him away in a wheelbarrow and kill him. The Scenario is rudimentary and rather disjointed, but nonetheless original in scope and content. The hero is perhaps too much a Moorean character, rebellious but also unlikable, to resemble any of the great anti-heroes of the Irish theatre, such as Christy Mahon in *The Playboy of the Western World* or the Ragged Man in Lady Gregory's *The Rising of the Moon*. One of the distinguishing features of the Scenario is that the sacrifice of the young man, which Yeats and Lady Gregory were to turn into a tragic act in the *Where There Is Nothing*, may be rather a moral indictment than a vindication of a rebellious nature inspired by intellect and passion. For Moore, idealism and unconventionality did not go hand in hand.

Moore, apparently fired up by the Scenario, followed his first letter a few days later with another one, of which only a segment survives, to elaborate on the original idea: "[The Fifth] Act will be the Monastery. The monks turn him out and he would starts [*sic*] a hermitage outside the Monastery as in the sketch which I sent you" (NLI 8777[1]). Even from this tiny fragment, we can see how Moore viewed the way forward with the play. His suggestion to have the nameless protagonist banished from the Monastery, whither he had fled from the world, further emphasizes his recalcitrant non-conformism, which in the original sketch was noted by the modern ways within the Monastery. In the final version of *Where There Is Nothing* Paul's stubborn

resistance towards organized society gets him in trouble with the Superior; and, when he is sent away, even his followers grow unhappy: the little hermit community he has created wants to bring some regularity to their haphazard life of begging for alms.

Yeats's interests appear to have been piqued by Moore's Scenario. That he saw in it scope for a "religious Don Quixote" indicates, however, how much more he was interested in exploiting the main character's spiritual unorthodoxy than his rebellion against social convention. Looking ahead to the published version of *Where There Is Nothing*, this makes sense, for Paul's climactic speech in Act IV on the rejection of material existence—"where there is nothing, there is god" (*VPI* 1140)—reprises the title of Yeats's story from *The Secret Rose* (1897), which was itself a celebration of the hermit life, and how the renunciation of the world can lead to a very non-Christian (and non-Catholic) spiritual enlightenment that is (via Blake, Boehme, Swedenborg, and the world of spiritual imagination) an inversion of religious orthodoxy: the discovery of "the nothing that is God."¹

The hermit theme had an unlikely source in the figure of the eccentric Dublin poet and mystic Philip Francis Little, a member of the Theosophical Society and a good friend of AE. One of Little's outlandish propositions was that he and AE live in an overturned truck on Kingstown Pier and "teach the people." The plan was never realized. AE later admitted he felt discomfort in the face of Little's old-fashioned piety and "freakish conduct." In AE's opinion, Little spoke too much of the God of religion, while he himself sought to merge the spirit of the self with the spirit of nature. Little's rather lonesome existence was exacerbated, as AE reported, by the decision of his relatives to pay him an annuity of a hundred and fifty pounds to live away from them, but his peculiar habits and behavior left him with few friends. At one time, Little "entered an assembly of the very godly and denounced them for the immorality of their costumes."² The parallel with the figure of Paul Ruttledge in *Where There Is Nothing* seems, therefore, compelling, and it is no coincidence that the story began doing the rounds that Little had used the phrase "*Where There Is Nothing*, there is God." Nothing, however, points in the direction that Little had thought of it before Yeats published his story in 1896.³

The Scenario for *Where There Is Nothing*—and indeed the play itself—have also another origin in Joseph Glanvill's story, "The Gypsy Scholar," which Yeats retells in his essay on "Magic." Glanvill's fable from *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661) represents an apparent defense of the imagination against materialism or science. This defense is exemplified by the Gypsy Scholar who was forced to abandon his studies at Oxford because of poverty. He joined a band of gypsies, who, he learned, "had a traditional kind of learning among them and could do wonders by the power of imagination" (quoted in *CW* 4, 33). Having learned and perfected their art, he demonstrates the power of imagination when he happens across a group of his former acquaintances by influencing their thoughts so that they will not betray him. What Yeats found confirmed in Glanvill's fable was the reality of spirits and their ability to traverse into the natural world, though *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* as a whole maps out a philosophy of reasoned scepticism

¹ W. B. Yeats, *Mythologies*, ed. Warwick Gould and Deirdre Toomey (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 125. Yeats's story, as Warwick Gould and Marjorie Reeves have argued, may derive from Tolstoy's story "Where Love Is, God is Also" from *Ivan Ilych, and Other Stories* (1889), in *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 272.

² AE, *The Living Torch*, ed. Monk Gibbon (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), 154–155; and Peter Kuch, ed., "'The Sunset of Fantasy' by AE," *Yeats Annual* 10 (1993), 97.

³ According to Adrian Frazier, the idea to write about Little was AE's, who wanted to write a comedy about him, but George Moore realized the potential of the stories about this "Zarathustra of the Dublin suburbs," *George Moore, 1852–1933* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 314–315. Foster mentions another possible influence in a staging of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's *Beyond Human Power* in November 1901, a play about a "religious genius" with supernatural power who struggles to keep the middle ground between miracle and faith (Foster 1, 267; *CL* 3, 120–121).

rather than celebrating the boundless power of imagination.⁴ Yeats felt that organized religion in particular unjustly dismissed magic. Writing to Lionel Johnson, he called an idealism or spiritualist philosophy “which denies magic, and evil spirits even” no more than “an academical imposture.” But, as he also put it, he had more respect for the Catholic Church in this matter than for the Protestant, for while Catholics had denounced the “Ars Magica,” they had never rejected its existence (*CL* 1, 355–356). In *Where There Is Nothing* this opposition between spiritualism and dogma is brought to the fore in the clash between Paul Ruttledge’s vision of Paradise and Brother Jerome’s view. The good Friar is visibly disturbed, somewhat frightened even, by Paul’s “wild thoughts” about the “continual clashing of swords” that is resounding from Heaven and about the “music of Paradise” that sets people dancing rather than praying (*VPI*, 1098). In *The Unicorn from the Stars*, too, the disagreements between Martin’s “Pagan vision” (see p. 173 below) and Father John’s efforts to make him see sense drive the plot. But in the urversion that Moore prepared, the opposition is already there in essence, when the monks incite the people against the main protagonist for possessing knowledge of Druid lore and for having copies of the Books of Lir, Angus, Mananaan, and Dana in his cell.⁵

All of this might suggest that the creative impulse behind the Scenario belongs more to Yeats than it does to Moore, and that Moore was not coming up with an idea for a new play at all, but was enthusiastically following through on conversations the two men had had while Yeats was passing through Dublin. Yeats himself was certainly in no doubt that the idea for the play originated with him. In “Dramatis Personae” he stated unequivocally that, with a view of getting new plays for the Irish Literary Theatre, “I had told Moore a fantastic plot for a play, suggested collaboration, and for twenty minutes or half an hour walked up and down a path in his garden discussing it” (*Au*, 333). Given how fraught their collaboration on *Diarmuid and Grania* had been, it seemed peculiar that Yeats would even entertain the idea of working with Moore again unless he clearly had some personal investment in it. Moreover, the composition of his essay on “Magic”—begun in October 1900, delivered as a lecture on May 4, 1901, and completed by the end of June 1901, when he submitted it to *The Monthly Review*—overlaps with the time he was discussing the idea for the new play with Moore. The retelling of Granvill’s fable apart, the essay, in its celebration of visions and trances, of “commandments and revelations” (*E&I*, 44), influenced with obvious intensity the way in which Yeats was to develop Moore’s sketch in *Where There Is Nothing* and even more poignantly in *The Unicorn from the Stars*. The mysticism at the center of either play, based as he later said on the stories in *The Secret Rose* (*CL Archive*, 783), derives from his belief in the common existence of magical revelation: “Almost every one who has ever busied himself with such matters has come, in trance or dream, upon some new and strange symbol or event, which he has afterwards found in some work he had never read or

⁴ William E. Burns, “Glanvill, Joseph (1636–1680),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), January 2008 [<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.urls.lon.ac.uk/view/article/10790>, accessed December 14, 2010]. Yeats’s selective reading of Glanvill appears to follow Matthew Arnold’s, whose poem “The Scholar-Gypsy” similarly takes the fable as an illustration of Glanvill’s philosophy; see David Moldstad, “The Imagination in *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* and ‘The Scholar-Gypsy’; Arnold’s Reversal of Glanvill,” *Victorian Poetry* 25 (1987): 159–172.

⁵ Angus, Mananaan and Dana are a trinity in the pantheon of Celtic gods that emanated from Lir, “being one in the Infinite Lir,” at a great feast. Lir is the boundless one, in whom everything is infinite or—as AE put it in “Celtic Cosmogony”—“in whom were all things past and to be” (*The Candle of Vision* [London: Macmillan, 1918], 153). As a being without substance but of pure spiritual form, his first emanation was Mananaan, the god of “divine imagination” and the spirit from which the “root of existence” sprang (155). Second to come forth was Dana, the female principle and mother of nature, and also the first to take on material form. Finally, Angus the Young was the third deity, embodying divine beauty and representing the principle of eternal youth, joy, and desire. For AE, as presumably for the protagonist of Moore’s Scenario, the “spiritual architecture” of the Celtic cosmogony made his “visions of other planes” of existence, at first “disconnected,” more “intelligible” (164).

heard of” (*E&I*, 46). The connection with Martin Hearne “seeing the hidden things of God” is obvious.

Be that as it may, Yeats did not take the idea for the as yet unnamed play forward until a year later. He was obviously prevaricating, telling John Butler Yeats that he “may or may not” work on the play (*CL* 3, 87). But he had other projects going. Possibly on the same day he wrote to his father, Yeats sent Maud Gonne the outline of a play he was working on with Douglas Hyde; on August 1 he told William Fay that he was helping Hyde with a short play in the Irish language. Commentators have taken this to be *An Naomh ar Iarraid* (The Lost Saint), which, as the story of Angus Culdee, a saint and poet who decides to live the life of a poor man in the country, has ingredients reminiscent of “Where there is nothing, there is God.” The parallel, however, is fairly thin, also in respect of our Scenario, but the timing of its composition may be significant. Hyde worked his play through August 25, 1902 at Coole, when he completed it in three or four hours. It was published in the October 1902 issue of *Sambain* and first staged by Inghinidhe na hÉriann on January 19, 1903, and again on the 30th.⁶ In other words, it was written practically in tandem with *Where There Is Nothing*.

Preoccupied with writing *On Baile’s Strand* and revising *The Celtic Twilight* between 1901 and 1902, and coming back to *Diarmuid and Grania* as well, Yeats was too busy to work on anything new. His arrival at 4 Ely Place on June 21, 1902, did not change this. En route to Coole Park for another summer of creative seclusion, he stayed with Moore for only three days, during which time he went to Tara with his host and Douglas Hyde to visit the illegal excavations there. When leaving Dublin on the 25th, he felt slightly miffed because Moore had insisted on ceremony and had made him attend a dinner he had organized in Yeats’s honour; for this reason he had been unable to meet with Frank J. Fay to discuss progress on his experiments with the psaltery. Nonetheless, the two writers were still on good terms when they parted. Presumably the conversation had also turned to their earlier Scenario.

Very soon after, however, the relationship between Yeats and Moore broke down again, this time for good. The story of their acrimonious fight over the right to write *Where There Is Nothing* is well known (see Foster 1, 267–268; *Quinn*, 1–2; *CL* 3, 228n; *Au*, 333–335).⁷ Over the summer, Yeats decided that the Scenario was too heavily invested with his mythology and he reneged on his offer to collaborate on the play on the grounds that Moore was no longer a part of the theater movement. He informed Moore of this when he saw him again at the Feis in Galway on August 31 (*Au*, 333; see also *CL* 3, 228n). Moore, wanting to keep the Scenario for himself, responded with verve that he was already writing up the plot for a story or novel and threatened to sue if Yeats used it. Yeats, who claimed that the original idea came from him, felt that the story was his by right and called Moore’s bluff. With Lady Gregory, and some help from Douglas Hyde, he put the play on paper in about two weeks and arranged for it to be published in the *United Irishman*, where it appeared on November 1, 1902.⁸ The choice of paper was

⁶ The identification is made by the editors of the *Collected Letters*, who offer no further evidence however (*CL* 3, 224n). See also Janet Egleson Dunleavy and Gareth W. Dunleavy, *Douglas Hyde: A Maker of Modern Ireland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 223; Gregory republished the play in her *Poets and Dreamers: Studies and Translations from the Irish* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis; London: John Murray, 1903), 236–243. For details of performance, see Nelson O’Ceallaigh Ritschel, *Productions of the Irish Theatre Movement, 1899–1916: A Checklist* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 2001), 15. Gregory also mentions a performance in Ballaghaderreen in 1903, but this staging is not independently confirmed (199).

⁷ See also Katharine Worth’s introduction to *Where There is Nothing, by W. B. Yeats [and] The Unicorn from the Stars*, by W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, ed. Katharine Worth (Washington: Catholic University of America Press; Gerrards Cross, Bucks: Colin Smythe, 1987), 4–7. Worth’s edition also contains a good general account of the composition and publications history of the two plays, see particularly pp. 4–12 and 36–45.

⁸ Yeats’s handwritten note on a copy of the *United Irishman* at the National Library of Ireland suggests that the issue was in circulation on October 30, a fact which is confirmed in Wade’s *Bibliography* (NLI

deliberate, for Yeats knew that Moore would never risk taking out an injunction against a nationalist organ for fear of repercussions (Wade, 58). The ploy worked. Moore took no action, but sneered that Yeats could write his “play and be hanged” (*CL* 3, 238).

If there were any deeper causes to the dispute, they are not clear. Yeats’s dissatisfaction over the lack of progress on *Diarmuid and Grania*, the last bit of work dating from April when Yeats dictated a new second act to Moore, may have contributed to his decision to write up *Where There Is Nothing* alone, having come to the conclusion that collaboration with Moore was hopeless.⁹ In “*Dramatis Personae*,” Yeats lets on to have been unimpressed by Moore’s threat, but in actuality he talked the matter over with several of his friends. AE was found ready to testify that the idea was Yeats’s, and also Lady Gregory believed that Moore’s claims had no footing (Foster 1, 584). He also sought the advice of John Quinn, who was on the first of his annual visits to Ireland at the time. Quinn first tried reconciliation, but when that did not work (it is not clear whether any meeting took place) he suggested Yeats write and publish the play as quickly as possible.

While Yeats set to work, Quinn wrote to John Lane on October 24 telling him about the play, and assuring him (though his account seems somewhat biased) that the play was genuinely Yeats’s (Foster 1, 583–584). Three days later, now writing from New York and having properly embraced his new role as Yeats’s agent in the United States, he instructed Yeats on securing his copyright in that jurisdiction and updated him on the prospects of American publication. He also explained why a week before he had mailed him his old copy of Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Nietzsche’s “exultation of brutality”—though he finds the philosophy “utterly abhorrent”—reminded him in its “epigrammatic style” of certain passages in “the dialogue of your play.” He was aware, though, that Nietzsche would not be of much use anymore, since Lady Gregory had told him that the play was already finished. But he had, more importantly he said, another reason for sending the book, as he recalled seeing a copy of a French edition on Moore’s table in Dublin: “If he is writing a novel on the subject, he may be reading *Zarathustra* with the plan of the novel in his mind” (*Quinn*, 40).¹⁰ Though Quinn stressed that this was “only a supposition,” it shows the degree of paranoia that he added to the conflict between Yeats and Moore.

Quinn went on to say he doubted Moore would push for “an open rupture” and take the matter to court. The difficulty in making it stick, he thought, would be too great, as it was merely a matter of Moore’s word against Yeats’s, and he advised Yeats to bring out the play: “If you go ahead without any apprehension concerning his threats he may not go any farther” (*Quinn*, 40–41). AE initially found the imbroglio amusing, but in due course chose sides in favor of Yeats.¹¹ First trying reasonable mediation, he suggested to Moore that each should write their version of the story. Yeats, however, insisted on a full retraction, and pressured by AE, Moore capitulated, accusing Yeats of bullying (*CL* 3, 232). On October 22 Yeats reported to Quinn (his letter crossing with Quinn’s of the 27th) that Moore had begrudgingly accepted defeat (*CL* 3, 238).

Yeats was now ready to go public with the play. He applied for a license from the Lord Chancellor’s Office in London for a public copyright reading (the license was granted on October 13

30,303; Wade, 58). Because Moore had threatened legal action, Hyde has asked Yeats not to mention his name “for fear of consequences”; for the same reason, he did not credit Gregory either (*CL Archive* 783).

⁹ Mays attributes the aborting of *Diarmuid and Grania* directly to the quarrel over *Where There Is Nothing*, dating it in July 1902, but it is likely that the events unfolded more gradually, *Diarmuid and Grania: Manuscript Materials*, ed. J. C. C. Mays (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), xxix. Foster speculates that Yeats and Moore may have discussed *Where There Is Nothing* when they met in April or during Yeats’s visit in June, but Foster erroneously dates the Scenario to July 3, 1902 (Foster 1, 267).

¹⁰ For further details and a critical appreciation of Nietzsche’s presence in *Where There Is Nothing*, see Worth, 20–23.

¹¹ Frazier, 321. AE came to regret the whole unhappy affair, and on top of it, found the play rather vacuous and disappointing when it appeared in *The United Irishmen*; mocking the title, he retorted: “Where there is neither love nor wisdom there is nothing,” quoted in Frazier, 322.

and the reading, directed by Florence Farr, took place at the Victoria Hall in Bayswater on the 20th; *CL* 3, 330; *NLI* 30,445). Meanwhile he made arrangements for the play to be printed in the *United Irishman*. It appeared as a supplement to the paper on October 31. The issue also carried an article, “The Freedom of the Theatre,” meant to preempt any criticism of the play’s apparent attacks on law, church, and sobriety, in a postscript to which Yeats, in a complacent tone, explained the history of the play’s gestation and his collaboration with Moore while also unequivocally claiming ownership over it:

Where There Is Nothing is founded upon a subject which I suggested to George Moore when there seemed to be a sudden need of a play for the Irish Literary Theatre; we talked of collaboration, but this did not go beyond some rambling talks. Then the need went past, and I gradually put so much of myself into the fable that I felt I must write on it alone, and took it back into my own hands with his consent. Should he publish a story upon it some day, I shall rejoice that the excellent old custom of two writers taking the one fable has been revived in a new form. If he does I cannot think that my play and his story will resemble each other. I have used nothing of his, and if he uses anything of mine he will have so changed it, doubtless, as to have made it his own. (*CW* 10, 94)

II

Where There Is Nothing of course was not completely Yeats’s “own,” given Lady Gregory’s rather important role in the composition. Yeats and Gregory, with the occasional assistance of Douglas Hyde, completed the play in two weeks and a day (*CL* 3, 239). That means that, if the September 19 date on the Dedication is anything to go by, the authors began work on or about the 4th (see p. 679 below).¹² The collaboration was, to all intents and purposes, a happy one. (As Hyde’s part in the composition is not attested in the archival record, we must assume that his role was only minor.)¹³ Although Lady Gregory had little experience as a playwright in her own right—her *The Jackdaw* and *Twenty-Five* had been written, but not yet performed—she was a natural choice for Yeats as a collaborator. Her congenial talent for writing natural Irish drama led to her involvement with the writing of Yeats’s plays. Prior to *Where There Is Nothing*, she had already helped Yeats with some of the phraseology and dialect for *The Pot of Broth* and *Diarmuid and Grania*. But contrary to how her contribution has been rated—as “Kiltartanising” Yeats’s plays—she was more than an inventor of local color.¹⁴ During the early days of the Irish Literary Theatre, the directors had a sense that they must do it alone; Yeats and Gregory realized that if they wanted at all to nurture the new national drama, while their search for new talent was going on, they must write and produce their own full measure of plays on Irish subjects. It was not at all unusual, therefore, that Gregory was writing plays herself, and that her share in the writing of Yeats’s plays, as their collaboration on *Where There Is Nothing* and *Cathleen ni Houliban* indicates, was growing.¹⁵

¹² On September 7, Yeats and Gregory were also putting the finishing touches on *The Pot of Broth*, see *CL* 3, 222.

¹³ According to Vivian Mercier, Hyde supplied the name of the tinker, Charlie Ward, possibly the same Charlie Ward who threatened to sue Yeats for damages for ruining his daughter’s reputation; see “Douglas Hyde’s ‘Share’ in *The Unicorn from the Stars*,” *Modern Drama*, 7 (1965): 464; and *CL* 3, 648–649.

¹⁴ See James Pethica, “Patronage and Creative Exchange: Yeats, Lady Gregory and the Economy of Indebtedness,” *Yeats Annual* 9 (1992): 72.

¹⁵ Of *Cathleen ni Houliban*, an early draft sketch exists that is entirely in her hand, with indications of what she wrote by herself (“All this mine alone”) and what together with Yeats, see *Collaborative One-Act*

The earliest extant document is a typescript (NYPL 1), typed by Gregory herself and with numerous corrections in her hand. It was without doubt intended as a final copy: the typing is largely clean and it has relatively few typos. Before it reached this apparent state of finality, however, the document was heavily worked over. Several leaves consist of partial sheets that were taped together, which means that entire sections were revised and then retyped at different stages. Other segments survive as separate slips, including a few autograph ones in the hand of Lady Gregory, that were attached to canceled sections of the script. As both original and copy are extant, they allow us better to assess the kind of revision taking place (see, e.g., pp. 28–29 below). On the whole, the changes appear structural, though without altering the play in any radical way. They appear rather to slow down the pace of the action and provide psychological motivation. Besides these revisions, there are numerous other changes that alter vocabulary and the inflection of the characters' speeches. While no other hands are present in the typescript, this does not rule out that the revisions were the result of intense conversations between Lady Gregory and Yeats. They were certainly more than adding a veneer of dialect.

NYPL 1 is followed by a second typescript, NYPL 2, also prepared by Lady Gregory, which incorporates all revisions made on the previous document. Apart from numerous small corrections—of typing errors but mainly of punctuation—also by Gregory, this text is the version that Yeats sent to John Quinn for publication.¹⁶ Although the Dedication is still dated September 19th, 1902, the typescript was probably made and posted about a week or two weeks later, not long after receiving Quinn's letter of September 27 in which he offered to arrange for the copyrighting and publishing of the play in the United States. Although Yeats would not respond directly to Quinn's letter until October 25, Lady Gregory and Quinn further corresponded about the play, and an agreement was made that it should be published simultaneously in Ireland and the United States, but giving the *United Irishman* a few days' advantage. On the 22nd Yeats telegraphed the *United Irishman* that publication could be announced for the 30th. Quinn meanwhile had been given the go-ahead as well. To secure Yeats's copyright in the United States, fifteen copies were privately printed by John Lane. The book was entered for copyright in the Library of Congress on the 24th, with two copies being received on the 30th. Three days later Quinn wrote to Gregory, offering to pay for the printing of an additional 500 copies "from the existing plates," if John Lane would not offer reasonable terms. Nothing came of the plan, but an additional thirty copies were issued privately, presumably some time in November, in a large paper edition, set from the same type but with some errors corrected (see Wade, 58–59).

The text that appeared in the *United Irishman* on October 30, 1902, was in fact a later version than the one printed by John Lane; it incorporated several revisions made on a typescript that is no longer extant. On October 22, the day Yeats gave the instruction to print, he wrote to Quinn saying he had "enlarged and enriched" the play "in the last couple of weeks"—an indication that Quinn had had NYPL 2 in hand for some while already—and that he had in mind to "make a few more alterations before it comes in its final form here" (CL 3, 239). The differences between the typescript he had sent to Quinn and the text of the *United Irishman* are, again, not substantial, yet they are numerous; and they are of the same order as the changes Lady Gregory entered on the first typescript (NYPL 1). They continue to flesh out some of the speeches, refining the psychological depth and motivations of the characters. The fact that Yeats kept making alterations to the play—and was to continue to do so for a while—is a tell-tale sign that the speed with which *Where There Is Nothing* had initially been created was showing its effects. In any

Plays, 1901–1903: Cathleen ni Houliban, The Pot of Broth, The Country of the Young, Heads or Harps, ed. James Pethica (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), xxxii–xxxiii, 4–55.

¹⁶ As most of Gregory's emendations were not carried through in the Lane proofs (NLI 40,567/83), it is likely that they were entered on the top copy only after a duplicate copy was sent to the printers in New York; this top copy with corrections was subsequently posted to Quinn, who transferred them to the proofs.

case, he was “making Paul a more lovable character, and lightening any part that seemed heavy with his fantasy” (CL 3, 245).

Yeats promised to send “the play in its perfect form in a day or two,” but quickly added, “we are still at it” (CL 3, 245). Whether he did so is not certain.¹⁷ On November 1, however, he dispatched a copy of the *United Irishman* to John Lane, inquiring also whether the plates for the American edition had been stereotyped, for he wanted to make numerous additions: “It is important, in view of the English edition, which I want to be perfect” (CL 3, 241). The *United Irishman* was keeping its type standing too, just in case. This might imply that Yeats was thinking about Lane as his English publisher, rather than A. H. Bullen, as well as his American publisher. Lane told him that the book had not been stereotyped, so changes were possible.

When Yeats finally received Quinn’s corrected proofs on November 11, almost two weeks after the private edition had appeared, he replied with certain aplomb: “I hoped to send you today but it is impossible, a copy of the play in what is I think its final form. I had persuaded myself it was finished when we went to Press. I am always persuading myself that my things are finished” (CL 3, 247). By now the text had undergone so much alteration that in certain places the play had migrated way beyond either the American edition or the *United Irishman*. From the proofs Yeats could at least see firsthand the work that Quinn had done. Yeats thought that the printing was much better than that of the Dublin newspaper and decided that the British edition should be set from the American text.¹⁸ He subsequently informed Lane that he would hear from his agent Watt. Referring not to the printing but to the contents, he asked Lane not to judge the play from the American proofs, for that version was “little more than a hasty sketch”; he promised “a properly revised copy” by Monday (CL 3, 249).¹⁹

The story of how *Where There Is Nothing* was further revised following initial publication is contained in two typescripts, NYPL 2(a) and NYPL 3, that have their origin in the text as published in the *United Irishman*. The first of these, prepared on Lady Gregory’s typewriter, is in the main a cleanly typed, expanded version with only a very small number of corrections in her hand. While the typescript is undated, it was copied from at least one or more versions, whether typed or handwritten, that came before it. The second typescript, done on the same typewriter, is a cleanly-typed copy of the first with all changes included. The reasons for further expanding the play were already obvious by November 8 when Yeats and Gregory (the letter was typed by her) told Quinn from the Nassau Hotel in Dublin that “*he* has been working over the play” and introduced “a good many changes.” They included “an entirely new beginning to the fourth act,” a change that “greatly increase[d]” the strength of the play, and a general toning down of Paul’s fantasies (CL 3, 243–245, my italics). The revisions were the result of another week of fairly intense labor. Gregory’s use of the male pronoun, though, seems peculiar. Did it mean that this time it was all Yeats’s work. Or was it simply an act of deference? On the 11th, a day or so before he returned to London, Yeats once more wrote to Quinn to say that the play was “really done now”; he had managed to make “the opening of the first act light and livelier, and the tinkers better individualized and altogether more poetical people,” and reiterated that Paul was

¹⁷ The phrase “we are still at it” in this letter dictated to Gregory reveals that these revisions were done in collaboration.

¹⁸ Up till then Yeats was considering using the later version of the play that had appeared in the *United Irishman*; the paper appears to have kept the type standing for that purpose (CL 3, 244). It was common practice for newspaper type to be reset and adapted for a quarto format. As the transformation was not a simple one, the process would require a skilled typesetter, but it would be faster than setting the type from scratch. See Clare Hutton, “Reading The Love Songs of Connacht: Douglas Hyde and the Exigencies of Publication,” *The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 7th series, 2 (2001): 378–379.

¹⁹ As it turned out, Bullen rather than Lane published *Where There Is Nothing* in May 1903 in Britain and Macmillan in the United States. On accepting the book, Lane had insisted on an option to publish Yeats’s next book of poetry as well, but Yeats had already promised it to his sisters’ Dun Emer Press.

now a “more loveable” character and the fourth act, its sketchiness removed, was “now the strongest in the play” (CL 3, 247). Another three days afterwards he repeated to John Lane what he had written to Quinn, adding that he had eliminated many of the “dull patches” (CL 3, 248). By the middle of the month, he was still tinkering with the play; he had already read it to Arthur Symons and Bullen, but wanted the opinion of a few more people before putting in the final touches. Bullen had expressed his regret that Paul’s part had not been written in verse, but he particularly found the Sermon too impersonal (CL 3, 257). Yeats read the play for a final time on the 26th at Woburn Buildings to an audience consisting of Laurence Binyon, T. Sturge Moore, Ernest Rhys and “a lot of ladies” (CL 3, 264). The sermon he had decided to leave practically unchanged: “The only difference is that the last candles put out symbolise hope memory thought and the world and that man is bid do this when drunk with the wine which comes from pitchers that are in Heaven” (CL 3, 264). While the response to the latest iteration was positive, he brushed aside criticism that the Monastery scene in Act V was “in a different key from the others” (CL 3, 264).

Despite that last reading on November 26, Yeats could not leave the play alone. The next morning he wrote to Lady Gregory that he probably wanted to write a new version of the sermon at some point, but for the time being he was happy with it in its present form. Later in the day, however, he added to his letter, with obvious enthusiasm: “I have thought of a very fantastic opening—a comedy opening for Act 4 which will bring it into key with the rest. It is very wild” (CL 3, 264–265). On December 4, he wrote her again to say he was thinking of even further changes that would balance comedy in the play with a more serious intent in one of the early acts. His announced intentions irked Gregory, who replied the very next day that the play was “splendid as it is,” that it was not “true it is out of key” and that he should leave it alone: “What frightens me is your joy of creation, you are like Puppy after a chicken, when you see a new idea cross the path, tho’ it may but end in a mouth full of feathers after all—” (quoted in CL 3, 268n6). Her objections did not sway him; on the 12th he told her he had done new openings for Acts III and IV and a new version of the sermon, together with some small changes at the beginning of Act V. He believed he had managed “the dialect pretty well,” but hoped she would go through the text once again—a clear indication that for the most part the changes he had been introducing since early November—when he and Gregory had gone to Dublin, and after his return to London by the middle of the month—were his alone.

On December 13, Yeats again said he had “added a great deal here & there” and repeated this on the 26th; in particular the sermon was now “as simple as it was & no longer an impersonal but altogether [*sic*] a personal dream & it has a latin text” (CL 3, 278, 284). With arrangements with A. H. Bullen, who would publish *Where There Is Nothing* as volume one in *Plays for an Irish Theatre*, also being finalized, the play apparently was at last complete.²⁰ Bullen was anxious to receive a final text—but Yeats was still not ready to commit it to the press (CL 3, 780n1). On the 31st, after sending the play to Watt in what he “thought its final shape” (CL 3, 290), he continued to include small changes that had occurred to him, and they continued until Lady Gregory came to London around January 21, 1903 when one of the biggest revisions of all took place; with her help, he completely reshaped “what had been the meagre last act” (CL 3, 312). On February 6, he summed up for Quinn the work of the past three months:

I think when you read it you will find that we have made a new man of Paul. In the old version he did rather ram his ideas down people’s throats and was not I think a very lovable person. Your suggestions were I could see intended to put this right, and I think it was a

²⁰ After a series of informal discussions, Yeats had at least a gentleman’s agreement with Bullen. By December 13 he had decided that *Where There Is Nothing* should appear as the first volume of *Plays for an Irish Theatre*; on January 8 he had reached an agreement for the first two volumes—with the second to contain *A Pot of Broth*, *Cathleen-ni-Houlihan* and some other of the shorter plays—to be published at a price of 3/6. A formal contract was not drawn up until February 11, 1903 (see CL 3, 317–318).

suggestion of yours that suggested to me the proposal one of the friars makes to him in the last act, to gather the tinkers and outcasts and march upon the world. I was afraid however to give him any new opinions, but I was anxious to get him for a little while away from opinions that I might make him more emotional, more merely passionate. I think you will be struck by the fourth act as it now stands, it is I think the most changed of all. In it and indeed throughout, I have tried to show Paul's magnetic quality, his power of making people love him and of carrying them away. I don't think he himself would have been in the ordinary sense sympathetic. I think he was a man like William Morris who was too absorbed and busy to give much of himself to persons. [...] People love Paul because they find in him a certain strength, a certain abundance. This abundance comes from him the first three acts with a kind of hard passion, but his five years in the monastery as I understand him fill him with dreams and reverie, and detaches him from the things about which men are passionate" (CL 3, 312)

Readers may judge for themselves whether these sentiments and convictions are actually Paul's in the play or whether Yeats had simply lived too long with the play.

The revisions that Yeats had been outlining in his letters are all reflected in typescripts NYPL 2(a) and (3), which makes it possible for us to date them to January 1903 at the earliest. Apart from hundreds of small, verbal changes, one section early in Act 1 (6r to 8r, see pp. 83–84 below) contains substantial changes that give the play a different momentum. Yeats added a touch of humor that helps to lighten and enliven the beginning of the play. But in contrast to this, Paul's treatment of his relatives and Father Jerome shows a more acerbic wit. Furthermore, in a move that forebodes the fantastic themes of the play—in particular those in its later emanation as *The Unicorn of the Stars*—Yeats has his characters allude to the return of Paul's "old visions" (p. 83) and suggest that they are the cause of his apparent restlessness. This detail marks the first time that Paul's visionary abilities have entered in the genesis of the play, adding a much darker tone and a new symbolism. Paul, for instance, calls Father Jerome an "armorial beast" (though interestingly, the reference to the Flemish mystic Jan van Ruysbroeck is removed, as if Yeats wanted to eliminate any allusion to specific sources; see pp. 84 and 92 below). Most prominently, some detail about what Paul might have seen in his dream is worked in and is neatly segued to an early expression of his apocalyptic desire when Paul asks: "[W]ould it not be fine to uproot [. . .] the building of the world?" (p. 84). Though this passage is modified slightly in the text printed by Bullen, Yeats introduced changes crucially important for the play's philosophy. The dialogue is sharper, but Paul's fantasies seem far from being toned down. (One may wonder if Yeats had not come to this point under Nietzsche's spell, as we know he had begun reading *Zarathustra* in late December 1902 [see CL 3, 284].)

Numerous changes throughout Act II, with the most substantial revisions towards the later part (24r–26r; see pp. 106–109 below), were again done to add energy to the play, but apart from adding a bit of lore about the crows flying home, the act is not substantially altered. The same goes for Act III, which sees the first confrontation between the tinkers and the relatives, and which sets the tinkers down more sharply. Yeats also added the lyric "Down by the Sally Garden my love and I did stand" (p. 121).²¹ The second scene of Act IV saw the introduction of a major change (38r–39r; see pp. 124–128 below), with Paul lying in a trance on the altar at the monastery while the friars are ritualistically dancing around him.²² The scene forms an eerie climax that was intended to create a powerful visual effect on the stage, but it also worked to contrast with the clash of wills between Paul and the Superior, who demands his submission. Towards the end of the Act, Paul, after delivering his sermon, is cast out from the community

²¹ The version in the NYPL 2(a) typescript differs from that in *Poems* (1895) and from the poem's possible source quoted by A. Norman Jeffares, *A New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 13–14.

²² One may suppose that when Yeats referred to the opening of Act IV in his letter, he meant the opening of Act IV, Scene 2.

for his blaspheming rebelliousness, but though he yields to the Superior and departs with his band of followers, Paul has a final opportunity to preach the destruction of “form and law and number,” while one by one he puts out the candles: “the Christian’s business is not reformation but revelation” (NYPL 2, 44r, pp. 134–135). In the later typescript, the scene is heavily changed and amplified (42r–45r; see pp. 132–136 below) and put under the auspices of “the drunkenness of Eternity” (p. 132) intended in its apocalyptic overtones to cause a rise in tension and a real sense of foreboding; more specifically, Paul opens his sermon with the words from Psalm 22, “Ex Calex inebraeum quam preclarus est,” introduced for the first time in this version of the play and repeated a number of times in this scene. Act V, finally, was revised almost in its entirety (46r–48r; see pp. 137–139 below), but the gist of it has not changed overmuch: though it has grown somewhat longer, it still remains a relatively short act. The main difference is that some long speeches have been spread among several speakers; the overall effect of the changes is a deepening of the psychology of the tinkers and the Brothers, who in particular seem to have grown a little weary of the austere life they are leading after Paul renounced all material comforts in life and religion. The final moments of the play, showing Paul’s capture by the mob and his death, are virtually untouched.

In all likelihood, Lady Gregory took the play back to Coole Park at the end of her January visit, where she typed it up, adding some corrections and further, last-minute additions in ink before preparing a clean typescript incorporating these new corrections and revisions.²³ Yeats almost certainly sent both NYPL 2(a) and NYPL 3 to Quinn on February 6; a copy must also have gone to Bullen, though there are minor textual differences between the text as printed and the text in the typescripts. Some of these differences can be attributed to revisions that happened at proof stage; some, however, show that the text from which the Bullen edition was set did not include some of Lady Gregory’s autograph revisions in NYPL 2(a). A proof copy of that edition was used for the American edition, published simultaneously by Macmillan in New York (Wade 60–61).²⁴ Noting a number of misprints and inconsistencies in the English edition, Quinn prepared a set of “Suggestions as to printer’s proofs” (NYPL 4) that are keyed to the Bullen edition and sent them on April 3 to Yeats, who accepted some of them for the American edition. However, while he had already corrected one error in both the English and American edition, it was too late to incorporate Quinn’s corrections in the English edition, for on the 6th he replied that the edition was to be “bound up in a day or two” (CL 3, 343).²⁵

²³ There seems little doubt that the two typescripts postdate all the revisions Yeats describes in his correspondence. On November 27 informed Gregory that, after talking through some sketches Pamela Colman Smith and Edith Craig had done for possible stage designs, he had hit upon the idea of making the rather drab settings of the garden and croquet lawn at the opening of Act 1 more “fantastic” by adding “bushes shaped Dutch fashion into cocks and hens, ducks, peacocks &c.” and on December 26 he told her he had added a “latin text” [sic], referring to the quotations from Psalm 22 (see CL 3, 267 and 284). The change in the stage directions were not effected until they were added by hand on NYPL 2(a), 4r (see p. 80 below).

²⁴ Two copies in the Library of Congress are date stamped May 13, 1903.

²⁵ With his letter of May 6, Yeats sends Quinn a corrected copy of the Bullen edition, saying he had accepted all Quinn’s suggestion (which might be true, though not all of them made it into the American edition), but that he had found another “bad mistake” on p. 81 that had gone unnoticed (CL 3, 360). This mistake was the seemingly extraneous line spoken by the Second Friar: “What are they going to do now, are they going to dance?” (see p. 125 below). This correction, which Quinn passed on to the editor at Macmillan, along with the change of “Third Friar” to “Second Friar” in the following line and the change of “the truth for itself” to “the truth for himself” a few lines above, did not make it into the Macmillan text either. Yeats entered these corrections by hand in the copy he presented to Annie Horniman.

III

Some weeks after the play was published, a few reviews appeared in the newspapers. *The Academy* found fault with the execution of Paul's character: his intended "iconoclastic genius" too quickly falls apart in mere "eccentricities."²⁶ A. B. Walkley, who reviewed the book for the *Times Literary Supplement* on June 26 thought it too loosely constructed; he described it as "amorphous" and lacking in stage craft: he felt that "[a]ll ordinary artifice of stage arrangement" was "blithely ignored" and that the dialogue was "flat, even to foolishness." Yet he enjoyed the play for its atmosphere and spirit; being "extraordinarily fresh and out of the common," it instills curiosity.²⁷ Yeats responded in a private letter with some equivocation. He now had a plan, he said, to pull "it a little more together" before the play's first production—an intention variously repeated but never carried out—and to change the end of Act I so that it would be less anti-climactic. But adding that this prose play was a departure from his "proper work, which is verse plays," he argued that he had experimented with trying to make the construction as loose as possible without doing it any damage from a dramatic point of view; a tighter construction would have hampered Paul's "freedom and spontaneity": "I thought I would try if a play would keep its unity upon the stage with no other device than one always dominant person about whom the world was always drifting away" (CL 3, 391). It was a bold idea, too poetic in its intention perhaps, to have dramatic effect rely entirely on the unfettered psychology and raptures of the main character.

Harley Granville Barker produced *Where There Is Nothing* for the Stage Society in 1904. The play ran for three nights from June 26 to 28 at the Royal Court Theatre in Sloane Square, Chelsea.²⁸ Contrary to early worries that it might not break even financially, the play attracted considerable audiences. The response of theatergoers, though, was again lukewarm. The artist Charles Ricketts, who attended the opening night sitting in a box just behind Thomas Hardy, recorded in his diary: "Yeats' play failed to strike the audience, though it seemed to me to be written for effect, with striking episodes which should tell over the footlights. It is much too long and showed halts in construction, but it could be cut down to a telling thing."²⁹ Yeats felt himself agreeing again with the critics—and that was that for *Where There Is Nothing*. The play's dramatic faults made Yeats decide not to revive or republish it ever.³⁰ Nonetheless, it was the play's ambitious idea that eventually prompted him to rewrite it as *The Unicorn from the Stars*. Writing to Quinn about a week after the performances, he had become convinced that he had "brought in too many things": "I have now thought out a new and perfectly simple scenario" (CL 3, 614–615). But another three years would pass before he would bring his "simple scenario" to life.

The Unicorn from the Stars became much more constrained in construction than the old version. If the almost obsessive revisions of *Where There Is Nothing* extended over several months were

²⁶ "A Drama of Revolt," *The Academy and Literature*, July 4, 1903, quoted from A. N. Jeffares, ed., W. B. Yeats: *The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1977), 139.

²⁷ [A. B. Walkley], "The Drama 'Where There Is Nothing,'" *Times Literary Supplement*, June 26, 1903, 201–202.

²⁸ A playscript was submitted to the Lord Chancellor for licensing, but the document in question, once archived with the Lord Chancellor's Papers at BL, is now missing from the collection.

²⁹ *Self-Portrait, taken from the Letters and Journals of Charles Ricketts*, R. A., collected and compiled by T. Sturge Moore, ed. Cecil Lewis (London: Peter Davies, 1939), 109. A day later, on July 1, 1904, Ricketts noted in his diary he had discussed the performance with Yeats: "We spoke about the failure of his play. He showed himself critical and shrewd," *Self-Portrait*, 109.

³⁰ Yeats stuck for a long time to his intention further to revise *Where There Is Nothing*; in May 1905 and July 1906 the prospect of including it in the projected *Collected Works in Verse and Prose* was still very much real (CL 4, 103 and 448; see also 461). By June 1908, however, the earlier play was obviously no longer being considered. John Quinn's plea to include *Where There Is Nothing* in the edition alongside *The Unicorn from the Stars* was to no avail (Quinn, 120). Yeats told Bullen, who had apparently asked the same question, in no uncertain terms on February 12, 1908 that the play was not to be included (CL Archive 783).

intended to add poetic color and symbolism to the play, *The Unicorn from the Stars* was purged of any sense of Moorean social criticism from the start: Martin Hearne becomes more of a mystic than a social and theological reformer (“My business is not reformation but revelation” [VPI 704]). Changing the relatives from upper middle class judges into artisanal coachbuilders who have built up their shop and earned their riches through hard work makes them at once more sympathetic, but also more susceptible to Martin’s influence. The value of *Where There Is Nothing* lay for Yeats—as indeed it did when working with Moore on the ur-Scenario—lay in Paul, a main character who possessed the “capricious power of the artist,” a man who “above all” (as he explained some of the thoughts behind *Where There Is Nothing* in the *United Irishman* on October 17, 1903) enjoys “fine things for their own sake” and who seeks “precise knowledge for its own sake, and not for its momentary use” (CL 3, 448–449). Everything else from the original play was by now incidental.

The overhauling of the play was so completely total that one can barely call *The Unicorn from the Stars* a new version of *Where There Is Nothing* at all. The revision mostly began ex nihilo with a series of outlines, ideas, and rough notes done straight onto the typewriter with Lady Gregory’s help over a number of days at Coole Park (Berg 3). The roughness of the typing—which even for her usual struggle with a rather temperamental machine is extremely sloppy, with a very high number of typos, missing, misaligned, or transposed letters, and serrated margins—suggests the great speed with which the ideas were put to paper: it seems likely that they were taken down from dictation.

The writing seems to have started rather abruptly, and hurriedly, just days after Yeats’s arrival in Gort on July 3, 1907. But this surge was obviously prompted by the rekindling of the *Collected Works* project that followed on Annie Horniman’s generous offer to underwrite the edition (CL 4, 693n5), which A. H. Bullen was to publish under his Shakespeare Head imprint. Just a day after composition had begun, Yeats informed Bullen that the writing was “going quickly” and that he was “all but through a very full scenario” (CL 4, 686). This new Scenario (compiled between July 3 and 8) and the extensive notes, sketches, and rough ideas that follow it begin to build up a new profile of the characters in the play and the relationships between them. Initially, he continued to see the new play as the revision of the old play he had postponed for so long; as the writing got under way, however, he soon recognized that it was proving to be “a new play on the old theme” (CL 4, 693). While all other characters were renamed, the main protagonist was still called Paul, and the play had retained its original title. As the days progressed and new material was being invented—Lady Gregory carefully recorded on the typescript the date of each “campaign” in its composition—Yeats felt himself in an obvious state of excitement: he wrote to Bullen again on the 8th saying he “was making a powerful play of it” (CL 4, 693). In his eagerness, and putting the pressure on himself to get a revised version to Bullen, he reckoned he needed about three weeks to finish the makeover. Composition was unmistakably quick and understandably betrays indecisiveness (e.g., “Scene may end in either of two ways,” Berg 1, 6r; see p. 160 below). Soon, however, the writing appears to lose momentum: the sections dictated on 6, 7 and 8 July are much shorter, and the notes are less structured, more inchoate, too, as they become a series of ideas rather than formative, directive outlines; in certain places they also seem to hark back more to *Where There Is Nothing*. Yet at times the development also clearly turned towards working out psychological motivations and thinking through of the play’s thematic armature.³¹

The typescript (Berg 2) that follows the Scenario builds on the early outlines and notes, expanding them into a number of substantive stretches of dialogue that were being fleshed out. The play was obviously developing beyond the point where Yeats and Lady Gregory were doing

³¹ For a detailed comparison of this scenario, and the typescript that follows it (Berg 2), with *Where There Is Nothing*, see James Pethica, *A Dialogue of Self and Service: Lady Gregory’s Emergence as an Irish Writer and Partnership with W. B. Yeats*, PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 1987, 223–227.

more than simply adding detail to the outlines. For various reasons, however, the place this typescript occupies in the genesis of *The Unicorn from the Stars* is rather unclear. On the one hand, each of the scenes has its own logic and coherence that, together with the advanced state of the dialogue, suggest some careful prior deliberation and possibly even drafting after the Scenario was typed. On the other hand, the scenes also give the impression of trial writing, during which the authors are not exactly working to a plan. This is apparent because the typescript comprises clearly discernible campaigns of writing, some of which are separately dated, as the Scenario and Notes were, and which include initial sections that were subsequently rewritten and expanded. The dates given—July 12 and August 14—may indicate all but a break in the composition; around August 4 he informed Bullen that he was “still stuck in ‘Where there is Nothing’ ” [CL 4, 704]. Around the 18th, he told Florence Farr, for the first time using the new title, that *The Unicorn from the Stars* was almost finished: it consisted of “three acts & thrown back in time a little over a hundred years & tamed enough to be possible in Dublin” (CL Archive 645).

The first of the sections in the typescript contains three or four short scenes describing Paul’s awakening from his trance to his meeting with the tinkers. It exists in three states covering the same plot sequence but each developed differently: the first emphasizes Paul’s trance and the mystical roots of his vision (1r–10r, see pp. 176–183 below); the second adds a good bit of realistic detail and fleshes out some of the antagonism between Paul and his relatives (11r–17r, see pp. 183–188 below); and the third section continues in this manner, but adds the building of the coach and plots the longest sequence of Paul’s encounter with the tinkers (18r–34r see pp. 189–200 below). The first section is followed by a second, headed “Act II,” seemingly without interruption, showing Paul after he has joined the tinkers (36r–43r, see pp. 202–207 below); though the writing appears uninterrupted, the scene begins with a false start (35r, see p. 201 below) which was quickly rectified. The third section (44r–49r, see pp. 207–211 below), with the relatives interrupting the tinkers’ drinking party and cockfighting, survives only in part; the first six folios are missing, but it may be an early iteration of the third act. However, the fourth section, designated Act III, plots the scene subsequent to the invasion of the shed, with the tinkers sitting by the roadside watching over Paul who has slipped into another trance.

Coming after this early typescript are three school copybooks entirely in Lady Gregory’s hand that contain extensive, but extremely convoluted draft materials.³² In the notes to *Plays in Prose and Verse* (1922), Yeats recalled the reasons for handing over the writing to Lady Gregory: finding himself “stopped with an old difficulty, that my words flow freely alone when my people speak in verse,” he explained, he abandoned his “attempt to work alone” and “gave my scheme to her” (VPL, 712). Regardless of how one wants to understand Yeats’s use of the word “alone,” what is clear is that he gave her greater control over the development of the play. It is significant to note, in this context, that the preceding typescript bears on the whole little textual resemblance to the drafted materials in the copybooks, while at the same time it follows more closely the earlier typed notes. Where there are clear indications of transmission, the copybooks seem to contain the later version. That said, it is not entirely improbable—or illogical—to rule out overlap.³³ One can easily imagine Yeats dictating in the morning, while Lady Gregory filled her copybooks in the afternoon.

³² The attempt to indicate the sequence in the transcriptions in the main part of this edition must necessarily remain an approximation, as on the one hand several parts of the copybooks are missing, while on the other some sections were added in later.

³³ Compare, for instance, Berg 2, 50r, ll. 2–3 with Berg 3(b), 42v, ll. 1–6, where the text in the copybook is later. A counter-example, however, is found in Berg 3(a), 6r and following, which is the earlier version of the section at Berg 2, 24r. is copied. The name change of the main character from Paul to Martin may offer additional evidence that parts of the copybooks were produced simultaneously with the preceding typescripts. In Berg 1, the name Martin is first used in the section dated July 8 (26r); Paul is still used after this, but probably only by way of mistake. Berg 2 reverts to Paul, but from 20r onwards the name appears as Martin (with a few instances before this where Paul is corrected by hand to Martin),

The interplay notwithstanding, the typescript provided a foundation which Lady Gregory was at liberty to expand by herself. The process, though apparently quick, was not a simple one. She put down fragments of dialogue swiftly, working in her characteristic local dialect, but swiftness was not matched by organization. Gregory proves herself to be a *Papierschreiber*, someone who works her way through the play not to some precise plan but by letting the dialogue develop itself more or less extemporaneously; the notes and drafts that she had typed provided a solid foundation, but not a road map. The result is a drafting process that is highly non-sequential, and that requires numerous revisions and redraftings of what had already been written. Several sections in the copybooks exist in an early and a revised state, although their actual number is relatively small. More regularly, revised segments were replaced with their revisions on separate leaves. In the simplest form of this process, discarded passages are simply crossed through and copied in their new state; in the more complex type, the discarded passages are physically removed from the copybook and replaced with new pages, either typed or handwritten, that are tipped in. *The Unicorn* copybooks, therefore, are not so much palimpsests as composite documents, consisting of several types of manuscript and typescript pages assembled over time during the course of creation.

While the composition process in *The Unicorn* copybooks is far from linear and unified, it is important to understand the nature of this disunity not as failure or a struggle, but as writing that happens in stages or in sections. Lady Gregory's composition methods at heart preserve spontaneity and animation. Avoiding the urge to create a unity in theme, characterization, dialogue, and plot, she put the fewest possible constraints on the writing, but concentrated on creating a rich body of material that retained a high degree of looseness and flexibility. Guided by the typed notes and early typed drafts, which already contained some very detailed ideas, as well as the original version of the play, she built up the dynamics of the new plot and then began fleshing out the interaction between the characters. That *Where There Is Nothing* was still on her mind is evident from the elements she borrowed from the earlier version, even recycling some of its phraseology. In one important instance, though, she added an entirely new political sub-plot by connecting Martin's apocalyptic vision with the rebellious fervor of the Irish land agitation and the 1798 uprising, particularly through the figure of the outlaw Johnny Gibbons.³⁴

The materials she compiled were unstructured, though not without coherence or logic, and in the end the three copybooks together did not constitute a complete version of the play. Although there were obviously materials that are no longer extant, the amount of writing that was done actually exceeded requirements. Some of it was ultimately of no use, and did not end up in the play at all. But what is there, in inchoate form, was to serve as a catalyst for a different type of creation: from these rough materials, a more complete version of the play could be assembled.

The process of that redaction can, however, no longer be traced in detail, since no archival records of the revision exist except the page proofs of the American edition, published by Macmillan and held at Emory University. Not even the date when the play was finished is absolutely clear.³⁵ That the process was not without difficulty, we can ascertain from an unpublished letter

albeit with a good number of slips back to Paul. In Berg 3(a) Paul and Martin are used interchangeably, although Martin appears more frequently (48 times) than Paul (only 25 times). In Berg 3(b) Paul appears only 5 times. In Berg 3(c) only Martin occurs. This consistency in the naming in Berg 3(b) and 3(c) shows that at least these are later, where Berg 3(a) might overlap with Berg 2.

³⁴ See Pethica, *Dialogue of Self and Service*, 231.

³⁵ The letter of c. August 18, 1907, to Florence Farr cited above might provide a *terminus ad quem*, if it were not for Yeats's "almost finished" (*CL Archive* 645, my italics). Moreover, about four days prior, on August 14, the typescript (Berg 2) had only reached f. 18, less than halfway through. The play is mentioned twice more in the correspondence, first c. August 25, 1907 when he mentioned the new title to Annie Horniman and second c. September 27, when he talks to Horniman about the writing of the play (*CL Archive* 646 and 663). By October 4, the text had definitely reached a contingent state of completion:

Lady Gregory sent to John Quinn on August 17, 1907, in which she complained about her disagreements with Yeats on what seem quite crucial elements of the play: “He doesn’t like the magistrates and I don’t like the tinkers, and we neither of us like the Sermon on the Mount. . . . So, you see, there is a great upset.”³⁶ Nevertheless, given the composite nature of the Gregory copybooks, we can see the marks of Yeats’s returning involvement. His hand is not present in the manuscript, but one can detect him steering the development of the symbolical and esoteric content beneath the surface of the writing. In copybook Berg3(a) there is a cluster of inserted passages that noticeably contain Yeats’s orchestrations. A holograph passage (Berg 3(a) 40vbis, 3r) is poignantly inserted just before the scene in which Martin relates his vision of the “Monoceros de astris” (Berg 3(a), 41v; see p. 348 below). The addition climactically stages Martin heeding the command given in the vision to begin destroying civilization. Preceding that is another insertion, this time a typed passage (Berg3(a), 40vbis, 1r; see p. 344 below), which contains Father John’s philosophical ruminations on the mind in its “ordinary state” as being “bound in” by its limited knowledge as he watches over Martin unconscious in his trance. The passage is not strictly speaking a new addition, but a revised segment from the earliest typescript (see Berg 2, 2r), but its relocation itself is an indication of how the esoteric symbolism of the play was being made more consonant. While Martin’s body is in a state of suspended animation, his soul may grasp things the waking mind will never see:

It is only when that knowledge and that mind is made quiet that the soul spreads itself out and raises itself up till the body and the mind can no more contain it and grow so great that it fills all things and remembers all and foresees all. That man who is sleeping [. . .] may be [. . .] one with God, or [. . .] is with some mocking all knowing spirit leading him into strange ways from some strange end of its own. [Berg 3(a), 40v, 1r]

The passage finds its inspiration in the importance Jacob Boehme attaches to visions as a means of attaining truth—his so-called “glimpse into the center”—and his belief that mystical experiences were caused by the God within oneself.³⁷ Whatever the source of Father John’s thoughts, it is evident that the style and discourse are Yeats’s. (In the final version of the play, the passage was reconfigured to tell the anecdote of Boehme, who fell into a trance induced by the flickering of the sunlight reflecting on a pewter vessel. During his trance he had a vision which led to his great work, the *Aurora* [1623]). That the passage was revised and inserted here is a clear indication that Yeats was directing the writing.³⁸

work on the play had obviously stopped, and Yeats, as he told Bullen, wanted it staged so that he could see what further alterations might be necessary (*CL Archive* 670). It was performed at the Abbey from November 21–23, 1907 (O’Ceallaigh Ritschel, 38). Revisions he may have introduced after that were probably minor, for he did not comment on them, and on December 18 he had sent the play to Macmillan in New York for publication (see *Archive* 732).

³⁶ Quoted in Pethica, *Dialogue of Self and Service*, 229.

³⁷ See Cyril O’Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse: Jacob Boehme’s Haunted Narrative* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 28. Boehme wrote: “Not I, the I that I am, knows these things, but God knows them in me,” *The Signature of All Things* (London: J. M. Dent; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1934), viii.

³⁸ The same probably applies for the appearance of “Monoceros de Astris” in the copybook (Berg 3(a), 41v), which is a correction of the mangled “Monocheors de Astras” that heads the typescript (Berg 2, 1r). The phrase (from Greek *monoceros*, “unicorn” and Latin *astris*, “from the stars”) signifies a unicorn leaping from a star-filled sky (as in T. Sturge Moore’s frontispiece for the Cuala edition of *Reveries of Childhood and Youth*) that symbolized “the descent of spirit.” Yeats had adopted it as his motto for his membership in the Order of the Golden Dawn (*CL* 4 343n; Reeves and Gould, 279).

IV

This returns us to the all-important question of co-authorship. The precise nature of the creative dynamic between Yeats and Gregory remains for the most part elusive. For *Where There Is Nothing* and *The Unicorn from the Stars* no documentary evidence exists that complements the anecdotal accounts such as we have for the early draft of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* in which Lady Gregory indicated what she had written by herself and what together with Yeats (see p. xxv, n. 13 above). Whatever documents survive, though, may be mined for clues.

Yeats in the Dedication which prefaced the first edition of *Where There Is Nothing* described the play as “in part your own”; it was begun because “[y]ou said I might dictate to you.” So they worked together, mainly writing in the mornings: “I never did anything that went so easily and quickly, for when I hesitated, you had the right thought ready, and it was almost always you who gave the right turn to the phrase and gave it the ring of daily life” (see p. 679 below). According to her own account, Lady Gregory began by writing bits of dialogue, before handing the play back to Yeats, who further shaped the play as he built the dramatic scaffolding around the rough materials. After this was done, he would pass the text back to Lady Gregory, who then, as she put it in *Our Irish Theatre*, “helped to fill in the spaces.”³⁹ In the broadest possible terms, the process was the same for *The Unicorn from the Stars*.

Scholars have found that Yeats rather belittled Lady Gregory’s role as co-author despite his frequent acknowledgements of her involvement—and judging from her autobiography one sees that even she was complicit in this. James Pethica has convincingly demonstrated how Yeats’s statements about his collaboration with Lady Gregory are consistently shaded in a manner to make his readership feel that the creative impulse was always exclusively his; at no point does he recognize that she may have fundamentally changed or augmented any of the work that passed through her hands. In the face of this, she certainly felt increasingly “exasperated” by his apparent insistence that “she had ‘no style outside dialect’.”⁴⁰ In July 1907, Annie Horniman, too, insisted that Yeats properly credit Lady Gregory for her contribution to *The Unicorn from the Stars* in the *Collected Works*—ostensibly for “certain help in peasant dialogue,” but also, as she pointed out to him, for the fact that “she considers she has a certain claim on your disposal of your work” (*LTWBY* I, 185). This clearly means Lady Gregory saw herself as a co-author rather than an assistant. Although Gregory had asked her to keep what she had told her a secret, Horniman had now as she told Yeats also mentioned it to Bullen.

Yeats had already named Lady Gregory on the title page of the 1908 Macmillan edition (published May 13) and credited her in the Preface with the lion’s share of the writing. As for “a good deal of the general plan,” together with “a single character and bits of another,” he felt that was wholly his, for it expressed an idea that so far he had only been able to express in criticism about the “bringing together of the rough life of the road and the frenzy that poets have found in their ancient cellar,—a prophecy, as it were, of the time when it will be once again possible for a Dickens and a Shelley to be born in the one body” (*VPI* 1296). Several months before, on February 12, 1908, he had said as much to Bullen, too, when he insisted, “it has far more of my spirit in it.” He explained, “There is certainly much more of my actual writing in *Where there is*

³⁹ Lady Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre: A Chapter of Autobiography* (London: G. P. Putnam’s; New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1913), 80.

⁴⁰ Pethica, “Patronage,” 73. Pethica quotes from an unpublished letter from Gregory to Yeats of February 3, 1917, in the Berg Collection. George Moore certainly believed that Gregory’s was not an original talent: “It must be remembered that it was Yeats that sowed the seed; that it was he who tended the plants and pruned them. [. . .] [I]t was Yeats who taught Lady Gregory. She had not written anything at all until she met Yeats,” George Moore to Ernest Boyd, August 17, 1914, *George Moore on Parnassus: Letters (1900–1933) to Secretaries, Publishers, Printers, Agents, Literati, Friends, and Acquaintances*, ed. Helmut E. Berger and O. M. Brack (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1988), 291.

Nothing, but I feel that this new play belongs to my world.” It carried within it, he felt, the realization of a “central idea” of his stories in *The Secret Rose* (see also *CL Archive* 783). More so than the earlier play, *The Unicorn from the Stars* was based on an idea of “overthrow[ing] the modern organisation of life” (was the Nietzschean idea getting a stronger hold?), which is encapsulated in the main protagonist’s apocalyptic vision. For Yeats it expressed a desire that society might “return to the more spontaneous life of ancient times, when the supernatural life was nearer than it is to-day.” He believed, however, that these ideas would remain “vague and shadowy unless [they] were embedded in the circumstance of real life”; therefore, he had asked Lady Gregory—whose own work had been the “study of the actual life of Ireland”—to co-write the play with him (see p. 682 below).⁴¹

As with the ur-Scenario and the argument with Moore over who owned it, Yeats’s notion of authorship was quite broad. Generating the “idea” was enough to be named the author of a work. Where Lady Gregory’s involvement in *Where There Is Nothing* was limited to the time of the original speed drafting in September 1902 and of Gregory’s visit to London in January 1903, we can only take at face value Yeats’s claim that “most of the actual writing” was his, though it is certainly true that he spent a long time tinkering with the text in the intervening months. With *The Unicorn from the Stars*, the balance shifted. The writing of dialogue was an extensive undertaking, and though the resulting text was fragmentary—or was not always used or used in any recognizable form in the final version—Gregory’s creative mind is more prominently present. Despite its inchoate form, the composition had a definite sense of purpose. Yet Yeats, almost disingenuously, only credited her with giving “expression” to the play, as if writing itself was practically incidental.

Privately, Lady Gregory felt dissatisfied with the little recognition she received from Yeats. Perhaps it is no coincidence, then, that *The Unicorn from the Stars* was the last play they wrote together. Reflecting in June 1909 on the past five years of her life, Lady Gregory remembered in her diary the summer she spent working with Yeats on *The Unicorn*: “—to please him but against my will.”⁴² The candid expression of dismissal and disappointment speaks volumes. Yet it is also clear that their collaboration on *The Unicorn from the Stars* was intense and that creatively they complemented each other in a way that goes much further than she herself may have realized. Their working methods, whereby they first spent considerable time outlining the plot and then assembling and revising the materials that one of them had created out the preparatory sketches, do not belie just how much of the invention belonged to Lady Gregory. Anyone willing to study closely the copybooks and other materials reproduced in this volume will come to understand that they provide a different view of the creative confluence between the two playwrights. Lady Gregory was neither filling in the gaps nor supplying local color, nor was she organizing the play as a whole, but she was mediating through her own style and idiom, the ideas and feelings of her co-writer. If Lady Gregory had any burden to bear, it was that she understood Yeats’s mind too well.

V

In the end, *The Unicorn from the Stars* turned out a neat little play, one that appears to be largely neglected by readers and critics, but, all considered, a play that assumes an essential position in Yeats’s canon. The play embodies Yeats’s preoccupation with “passionate living” through the actions of the main character, Martin Hearne, whose rejection of the material world is an occasion for Yeats to construct a play around esoteric material, something he had not exactly

⁴¹ Also quoted in Liam Miller, *The Noble Drama of W. B. Yeats* (Dublin: The Dolmen Press; Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1977), 136–137.

⁴² Lady Gregory’s *Diaries, 1892–1902*, ed. James Pethica (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1996), 315.

done to date.⁴³ Employing the unicorn, which as he later explained in a letter to his sister Lolly was “a private symbol from my mystical order” (*CL Archive*, 3787), he created a play with a mystical force that did not completely relinquish the dramatic realism of its predecessor, *Where There Is Nothing*, almost as if he deliberately wanted to avoid alienating his audience with impenetrable lore. As he put it in the same letter, he did not expect people to know where that force comes from, but added with utter conciseness: “It is the soul.” Still, even if he shrouded the play’s symbolism in secrecy, its effect would not be lost on the audience. What he sought to retain from the earlier version was precisely its simplicity.

To recap the composition history of *Where There Is Nothing* and *The Unicorn from the Stars*, the earlier emanation of the play was a rather diffuse five-act affair that was executed with the help of friends in record time and rushed into print after an altercation with George Moore over who owned the story line. Even so, despite its rudimentary form, *Where There Is Nothing* contained in it a central idea about the spiritual nonconformism of a Quixotic dreamer that absorbed Yeats’s imagination. After initial publication in *The United Irishman* and in a private edition arranged by John Lane in November 1902, Yeats devoted a good deal of time and energy over the next months obsessing over the play’s development and making frequent improvements that altered the play’s motivational structures and retuned some of the rough spots. The genesis of these revisions is not wholly apparent from the archive, but the typescripts that survive from the period are indicative of these changes when compared to the oldest typescript and the versions that were published in Dublin and New York to secure *droit moral* and copyright over the text. The result, Yeats felt, was an altogether more even play when it appeared again in book form, published simultaneously by A. H. Bullen in England and Macmillan in New York as the first volume of *Plays for an Irish Theatre* in the spring of 1903; some of the hurriedness had been removed and the symbolism enhanced. Even if some of his friends thought that the act in the Monastery was in a different key from the others, he was not sure whether this was a real defect or not (*CL* 3, 263). It was a line of argument he repeated in response to A. B. Walkley’s review in the *Times Literary Supplement*.

Even though Yeats had deliberately intended to keep the construction of the play as loose as possible, he still was not completely happy with what he had achieved. Clearly he was strengthened in his opinion by the Stage Society production in June 1904 in London. The plan to make further revisions remained at the back of his mind for at least three years, and when he finally set to work in the summer of 1907 with the help of Lady Gregory, the play was rebuilt—appropriately—from nothing.

The title of the play, initially at least, was not changed, an indication of how Yeats in revising *Where There Is Nothing* stayed close to the original conception. After arriving at Coole Park for the summer, he sat down with Lady Gregory for a brainstorming session that in its intensity must have resembled the original frantic composition of *Where There Is Nothing*. In the span of five or six days, he dictated a series of notes, ideas, and outlines to her, which she hastily took down on the typewriter. The notes in terms of characterization largely retained the *dramatis personae* of the earlier play, though most are for the time being nameless, except for Paul. Their psychological motivation, however, their environment, and the situations in which they find themselves, undergo considerable modification. Even though the notes do not yet amount to anything coherent, it is apparent that Yeats was trying to resolve the issue of looseness in construction by creating a more stylized, and thus more highly symbolical play, with characters that are more clearly defined and delineated. The main difference between the earlier play and notes for reworking it is the relationship between the main character and his uncles, who are now no longer bourgeois authoritarians, but workmen running a local coach-building business. Where Paul Rutledge in the early version was a rebellious leader, the new protagonist is more of a

⁴³ W. B. Yeats, *Memoirs: Autobiography—First Draft, Journal*, ed. Denis Donoghue (London: Macmillan, 1972), 225.

dreamer whose “unwilled” trances plunge him into a strange sequence of events that lead him to advocate “riot and drunkenness” as a means to happiness in forgetfulness: “Life is worth nothing except in its extatic [sic] moment” (see p. 204 below).⁴⁴ It has been said that the new style in *The Unicorn from the Stars*, a style for which Lady Gregory was responsible, also required a change in milieu.⁴⁵ Yet it is clear from the manuscripts that the new milieu came first, worked out together between Yeats and Lady Gregory before the drafting proper had begun.

After the play was put down in a preliminary typed draft, which sees the ideas from the notes solidified and the name of the main protagonist changed from Paul to Martin, Yeats handed over the task of fleshing out the meat of the drama to Lady Gregory, who proceeded to fill three copybooks with dialogue and plot. This happened on or shortly before August 18, 1907, the moment also when Yeats revealed the play’s new title, *The Unicorn from the Stars*. Somehow from all this inchoate material a play was distilled. The reality of composition was therefore more complex than Yeats let on, saying he had handed his “scheme” to Lady Gregory for her to complete it. The surviving record, however, is not entirely transparent. It seems possible that Lady Gregory was already working independently on the dialogue for the new version when she and Yeats were still producing the first typescript. That typescript does not constitute a complete draft either but contains different revised versions, some rougher than others, of the three acts. The final stage in the composition history and the completion of the play remain hidden from us, for no documents survive that were produced in the weeks after Lady Gregory completed her drafting in the copybooks. We do not even know precisely when the writing was finished. All that is certain is that *The Unicorn from the Stars* was performed at the Abbey on November 23, 1907, and that it was published by Macmillan in New York in May and in England with the Shakespeare Head Press *Collected Works* in Stratford in October 1908.

As soon as the *The Unicorn from the Stars* had begun to take some shape, Yeats made a firm resolution never to republish *Where There Is Nothing* again, effectively banning it from his oeuvre. Given the importance that Yeats attached to his “permanent self” and its symbolic existence in the creative work, *Where There Is Nothing* was at most a necessary moment in the creative process. As a play—just like each successive version before the last of *The Countess Cathleen*—it was superseded by *The Unicorn from the Stars*. This definitive version immediately took a central place in Yeats’s work, appearing as the third play, after *The Countess Cathleen* and *The Land of Heart’s Desire*, in volume three of *The Collected Works of William Butler Yeats*. Its inclusion was warranted to make the *Collected Works* as up-to-date as possible but resulted in the rather unusual circumstance that *The Unicorn from the Stars* was never published as a separate volume in England. *The Unicorn from the Stars* resonates well with the other two plays in the volume about idealists and dreamers, even if the final arrangement was as much guided by practical decisions—keeping the length of the three dramatic volumes more or less equal—as by possible connections between the plays.⁴⁶ But as a prose play, *The Unicorn* stands out from the rest. Given its unusual gestation, the play manages to hold the balance between reality and idealism, between realism and supernatural revelation. This was clearly part of a new intent. One only has to point to the Preface of the American edition, where Yeats talks about the prophecy contained in the play of a “time when it will be once again possible for a Dickens and a Shelley to be born in the one body” (VPI/1296). The way the Victorian novelist relates to the Romantic poet is quite similar to the way the more realistic psychological interests of *Where There Is Nothing* relate to the visionary impetus in *The Unicorn from the Stars*. As he put it in the Notes to the play for *The Collected Works*,

Ever since I began to write I have awaited with impatience a linking all Europe over of the hereditary knowledge of the country-side, now becoming known to us through the work of

⁴⁴ The description of Martin’s trances as “unwilled” is Katharine Worth’s, p. 38.

⁴⁵ Worth, p. 39.

⁴⁶ In the American edition of *The Unicorn from the Stars and Other Plays* (Macmillan, 1908), *The Unicorn* was published with *Cathleen ni Houlihan* and *The Hour Glass*.

wanderers and men of learning, with our old lyricism so full of ancient frenzies and hereditary wisdom; a yoking of antiquities; a Marriage of Heaven and Hell. (*VPI* 713–714; see also, p. 686 below.)

In tone and intent, therefore, *The Unicorn from the Stars* is a central moment in Yeats's work and in its expression constitutes a crucial contribution to his aesthetic and political concerns in the Irish theater and in his writings as a whole. The surviving manuscripts no doubt serve to demonstrate how essential these ideas were to the transformation of *Where There Is Nothing* into *The Unicorn from the Stars*. If nothing else, the documents provide the much-needed background from which the nature of the two plays and the relationship between them can be better understood.

Census of Manuscripts

Measurements are given as width by height in centimeters. Measurement is taken at the center of edges that are irregularly trimmed. A difference of one centimeter in paper from the same manufacturer may reflect the difficulty of measuring exactly, but differences of more than one centimeter may indicate a different batch.

AFH Presentation copy of *Where There is Nothing* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1903) inscribed by Yeats to Annie Horniman, with two autograph corrections probably in the author's hand (sold at auction, Sotheby's English literature sale, Bond Street [London], December 7, 2006). Private Collection.

Berg 1 Two typescripts for *The Unicorn from the Stars*, comprising a "Scenario Where there is Nothing" and "Notes" for the revised, but as yet not retitled play, prepared on Lady Gregory's typewriter on paper with watermark (landscape) "John McDonnell & Co. Ltd | Swift Brook", measuring 22.2 by 26.5 cm. Pages were folded in half and show pin hole in top left corner. Ten and eighteen folios, respectively; page numbering is irregular. All cancelations, corrections and holograph revisions are in black ink or pencil in Lady Gregory's hand. "Scenario" is dated "JULY 3 1907" (1r); "Notes" are variously dated "JULY 6" (14r), "July 7" (15r), "July 8" (24r); *c.* early July 1907. Berg Collection, New York Public Library

Berg 2 Typescript for *The Unicorn from the Stars* prepared on Lady Gregory's typewriter on paper with watermark John McDonnell & Co. Ltd | Swift Brook, measuring 22.2 by 26.5 cm (same stock as for Berg 1); folios 19r, 20r, 43r, and 44r are partial leaves and fragments of varying sizes, but use the same stock. Pages were folded in half and many have pin hole in top left corner. 67 folios; page numbering is irregular and some sections are separately dated, thus indicating more than one campaign of typing and revision. All cancelations, corrections and holograph revisions are in pencil in Lady Gregory's hand, but at least one marginal annotation, on 21r, is ink in Yeats's hand. Dated variously "July 8" (6v), "July 12" (11r) and "Aug 14" (18r); *c.* July–August 1907. Berg Collection, New York Public Library

Berg 3(a) First of three copybooks with Lady Gregory's autograph draft in black ink for *The Unicorn from the Stars*. A ruled copybook, measuring 16.2 by 20.4 cm, with ornamental flower and leaves design and the printed captions "Exercise Book | Name of Writer | School" on a dark yellow or brown cover. Lady Gregory's inscriptions in black ink read "Unicorn" on the line provided for "Name of Writer" and "AG" on the line for "School." The pages are unnumbered and may have been removed from the copybook before conservation. Undated, but *c.* July–August 1907. Inserted in the copybook between folios 19v and 20r are three fragments and one full typed leaf, typed on Lady Gregory's typewriter and with revisions in Lady Gregory's hand in pencil and black ink, measuring 20.2 by *c.* 19 cm, with watermark (landscape) John McDonnell &

Co Ltd | Swift Brook; c. 19.3 by 5.3 cm, with no visible watermark, numbered “3”; 20.2 by 26.5, with same watermark, numbered “4”; and 20.2 by c. 15.6 cm, with same watermark, numbered “5”. Folios 20r to 35r are taken from a different ruled copybook (with blue rules and rounded edges), with autograph draft in black ink in Lady Gregory’s hand, measuring c. 20.3 by 16.2 cm; these leaves are preserved as bifolia after they were removed from the copybook, with the exception of folios 31r to 35r, which retain no more than a stub for the right-hand part of the bifolium, which was cut away. Inserted between 40v and 41v are two additional typed fragments, measuring c. 19.4 by 15.1 cm, with watermark (landscape) John McDonnell & Co Ltd | Swift Brook and cancelations in black ink and pencil, and 20.2 by 7.2 cm, with no visible watermark; as well as a leaf from another ruled copybook, with autograph draft in black ink in Lady Gregory’s hand, measuring 17.8 by 22.8 cm. All watermarked stock (and presumably the unmarked fragments) is the same as that for Berg 1. Berg Collection, New York Public Library

Berg 3(b) Second of three copybooks with Lady Gregory’s autograph draft in black ink for *The Unicorn from the Stars*. A ruled copybook, measuring 16.2 by 20.5 cm, with ornamental border (printed in light green) and printed captions “THE | * GALWAY * | EXERCISE BOOK | [ornamental rule] | NAME OF WRITER:— | BOOK COMMENCED, | BOOK FINISHED,” on a dark yellow or brown cover. Lady Gregory’s inscription in black ink reads “Martin | [?] J | 2 – | 2nd. version | July 4 – ” The bifolium pages are (mostly) unnumbered and may have been removed from the copybook before conservation; folios 41 to 46 are single leaves with the same dimensions as the rest of the copybook. Canceled date July 4; but c. July–August 1907. Inserted between 14v and 15r is a single leaf taken from a different ruled copybook (with blue rules and rounded edges), with autograph draft in black ink in Lady Gregory’s hand, measuring c. 15.5 by 19.8 cm. Inserted between 23v and 24r is a single leaf measuring c. 16.2 by 20.2 cm. Folios 45 and 46 are taken from a different ruled copybook (with blue rules and rounded edges), as above. Berg Collection, New York Public Library

Berg 3(c) Third of three copybooks with Lady Gregory’s autograph draft in black ink for *The Unicorn from the Stars*. A ruled copybook, measuring 16.3 by 20.4 cm, with ornamental design in top left corner and printed captions “The – – | Russet | Series, – – | No. 604” on a brown-orange cover, which is stamped at bottom “W. Curwen & Co. | STATIONERY CONTRACTORS | 8. NASSAU ST., DUBLIN.” Lady Gregory’s inscription in black ink reads “Unicorn | Act II”. Four leaves appear to be cut from the back of the copybook. The pages are (mostly) unnumbered. Undated, but c. July–August 1907. Inserted between 16v and 17r and four loose leaves, with autograph draft in black ink in Lady Gregory’s hand, 3 of which (numbered “1” to “3”) come from this copybook and one (numbered “4–”, measuring 17.5 by 20.8 cm, from a larger-sized ruled copybook. Berg Collection, New York Public Library

Berg 4 Typescript (incomplete) with Dedication for *Where There is Nothing* prepared on Lady Gregory’s typewriter on paper measuring 20.1 by 26.3 cm. All cancelations and revisions in black ink are in Yeats’s hand; all cancelations and revisions in pencil are in Lady Gregory’s hand. One folio; unnumbered. Undated, but c. August–September 1902.

Berg 5 Typescript of Preface to *The Unicorn from the Stars* prepared on Lady Gregory’s typewriter on paper with watermark (landscape) “John McDonnell & Co Ltd | Swift Brook”, measuring 21.1 by 26.7 cm. One folio; unnumbered. All corrections in pencil are in Lady Gregory’s hand; all cancelations, corrections and revisions in black ink are in Yeats’s hand. Undated; c. February 1, 1908. Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

BL 55,888 Miscellaneous set of proofs for vol. 4 of the Macmillan Edition de Luxe (“Coole Edition”). Among these is marked proof of gathering T (pp. 273–288), which includes the head-note to *The Unicorn from the Stars* (pp. 277–278) and the music for “The Airy Bachelor’s,” “Johnnie Gibbons,” and “The Lion Shall Love his Strength,” reprinted from *Plays in Prose and*

Verse (1922). Annotations are presumably in Thomas Mark's hand. Undated. The Macmillan Archive, The British Library.

BL 55,879 First Proof for *The Collected Plays of W. B. Yeats* (1934), designated "Author's marked proof", but holograph corrections in black ink are by Thomas Mark. Date stamped "R. & R. CLARK, LTD | 3 AUG 1934 | EDINBURGH" and "R. & R. CLARK, LTD | 7 AUG 1934 | EDINBURGH". Contains typed insert (one folio, carbon copy, no watermark, measuring 20.3 by 25.5 cm, folded in half) with variants queried by Thomas Mark. The Macmillan Archive, The British Library.

BL 55,883 Proofs for the Macmillan Edition de Luxe ("Coole Edition"), with cover annotated in various hands, including that of Yeats and Thomas Mark: "This is to be Vol IV Plays II"; "Unicorn | Green Helmet | Shadowy Waters | Hour Glass (verse) | Hawk's Well | Only Jealousy | Dreaming of Bones | Calvary | Player Queen | Note Music" (in Yeats's hand); "Text for press Revise of Note and Music to Mr Mark" (in Thomas Mark's hand); "There must be a revise of this somewhere" and "Marked by Mrs Y" (in Thomas Mark's hand). Stamped "PRESS | R. & R. C." Undated. The Macmillan Archive, The British Library.

Emory Proof copy (second proofs) for *The Unicorn from the Stars* (New York: Macmillan, 1908), 132 pp., issued in January 1908 in a small print run in blue paper wrappers (Wade 72a). This copy is from Gregory's collections, with autograph corrections in black ink in Yeats's and Gregory's hand and including a sheet tipped in after p. 108 bearing a typed revision and autograph instruction in Yeats's hand, no watermark, measuring 20.3 by 25.3 cm. Date stamped "J. S. CUSHING CO | PRINTERS | JAN 13 1908 | NORWOOD PRESS | NORWOOD, MASS". On title page are the inscriptions (presumably made by the printer) "Revise" and "2 proofs | Greene". See Wade 73. Woodruff Library, Emory University.

LCP Playscript of *Where There Is Nothing* submitted for licensing for performance at the Royal Court Theatre in June 1904. Recorded among Lord Chancellor's Papers but now missing, The British Library.

Lilly Proof copy for *The Unicorn from the Stars* (New York: Macmillan, 1908), 132 pp., in blue paper wrappers, inscribed on half-title page "Proofs sent from America to WBY & given by him to AG" in black ink in Yeats's hand, which contains autograph correction in pencil in Yeats's hand in pp. 64–65. See Wade 73. Lilly Library, Indiana University.

NLI 8777(1) Scenario for *Where There Is Nothing* in ALS from George Moore to Yeats, 3 leaves of heavy stationary, with printed address "4 UPPER ELY PLACE, | DUBLIN.", with the Swiftbrook Paper Mills watermark "Ancient | Irish | Vellum", "Made in Saggart | Co Dublin", showing image of a round tower and Irish wolfhound on one side and ornamental crest with Irish harp on the other; measuring 11.5 by 18.2 cm (when folded). 2 leaves folded in half, with text written on 4 sides; 1 half leaf, with text written on recto only. Dated July 3 [1901]. Addition to Scenario in TLS from George Moore to Yeats (incomplete), carbon copy, signed by Moore in black ink, with watermark "John MDonnel & Co Ltd | Swift Brook", measuring 20.7 by 26.8 cm. National Library of Ireland.

NLI 13,571 Typescript for notes on the plays for *Plays in Prose and Verse* (London: Macmillan, 1922; Wade 136), with corrections in black ink in Yeats's hand, on paper without watermark, measuring 20.3 by 25.3 cm, with pin hole in top left corner and containing corrections in black ink in Yeats's hand and in pencil in Gregory's hand. 26 folios; folios 1–3, 8, 10, 16 consist of slips of printed text cut from *Plays for an Irish Theatre* (London and Stratford-upon-Avon: A. H. Bullen, 1913) (Wade 92) and pasted onto ruled notepaper, which is in turn pasted on larger sheets; these contain some typewritten revisions. The "Note" for *The Unicorn from the Stars* is on folios 13–15. Undated; after May 1, 1922. National Library of Ireland.

NLI 29,557 Abbey Theatre playscript with Johnny and Bidy’s parts for *The Unicorn from the Stars*. 16 folios held between cardboard covers held together with black cloth tape, inscribed in black in by unknown hand “J. A. O’Rourke | UNICORN FROM THE [STARS],⁴⁷ with pencil annotations in an unidentified hand; folios 1–7 are a (black) carbon copy typescript on paper with watermark John McDonnell & Co. Ltd | Swift Brook, measuring 20.7 by 26.2 cm, with pin hole in top left corner; folios 8–16 are a (blue) carbon copy typescript on paper without watermark measuring 20.2 by 25.4 cm. Also includes a compliment slip on heavy paper (measuring 12.6 by 7 cm) with printed text “With Compliments | The National Theatre Society Limited | Abbey Theatre 26 Lr. Abbey Street Dublin 1. Phone 7487412” and Abbey Theatre logo on recto and inscription in blue ink in unidentified hand “The Unicorn From The Stars | By | W.B. Yeats” on recto. Undated, probably autumn 1907. National Library of Ireland.

NLI 30,006 Page proofs for volume three of the Macmillan Edition de Luxe of *The Unicorn from the Stars*, stamped “first proof” and “Marked Proof” written at top, with corrections in black ink by Yeats and Thomas Mark. Gatherings Y and Z are date stamped “R. & R. CLARK, LTD | 13 NOV 1931 | EDINBURGH” (gatherings Y and Z) and gatherings 2A and 2B are date stamped “R. & R. CLARK, LTD | 19 NOV 1931 | EDINBURGH”. National Library of Ireland.

NLI 30,445 Play program for production of *Where There Is Nothing* by the Stage Society on June 26–28, 1904 at Royal Court Theatre (London). National Library of Ireland.

NLI 30,482 Set of autograph draft notes to the plays in *Plays in Prose and Verse* (1922), written in black ink in Yeats’s hand. Eighteen folios of various sizes; the draft for *The Unicorn from the Stars* appear on folios 13–16, which are numbered 8 to 11 by hand; folio 13 is a single leaf taken from a ruled copybook measuring 16.1 by 20.0 cm; folios 14–16 are three single leaves taken from a ruled copybook measuring *c.* 15.38 by 20.3 cm. Signed and dated on folio 13, “WB Yeats | Thoor Ballylee | May 1”; *c.* May 1, 1922. National Library of Ireland.

NLI 30,595 Notification and receipt regarding license for performance of *Where There Is Nothing* (Victoria Hall, Bayswater) issued by Lord Chamberlain’s Office; printed pro forma, with details completed in black ink; signed G. A. Bredford and dated “13 Oct. 02”. National Library of Ireland.

NLI 40,567/83 (O’Shea 2439) Proof copy of *Where There Is Nothing* (New York: John Lane, 1902), corrected proof copy. Annotation on cover reads “Corrected Copy — 1st proofs. | Please indicate | any further | changes or | corrections on | this copy”. All corrections in red crayon. Previous owner’s inscription (“Robert Morley”) on p. 100. National Library of Ireland.

NYPL 1 Typescript (mostly carbon copy) for *Where There Is Nothing* on miscellaneous types of paper, comprising both whole sheets and slips pasted together. Paper types found in this typescript:

Type 1: no watermark, measuring 20.1 by 26.3 cm

Type 2: watermark “Silver Linen”, measuring 20.4 by 25.5 cm

Type 3: watermark (portrait) “John McDonnell & Co Ltd. | Swift Brook”, measuring 20.5 by 26.3 cm

Type 4: no watermark, measuring 20.4 by 26.6 cm

Type 5: no watermark, measuring 20.1 by 26.2 cm

Type 6: folio from ruled notebook, measuring 17.6 cm in width.

There are seventy-two numbered folios; each act numbered separately. Stage directions and characters’ names are underlined in red ink. All corrections and revisions in black ink in Greg-

⁴⁷ The word “STARS” has completely faded through apparent water damage.

ory's hand. Includes "Dedication", which is dated "Sept 19th 1902". Quinn Collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, New York Public Library.

NYPL 2 Typescript (top copy) for *Where There Is Nothing* on paper with watermark "VALLEY PAPER CO HOLYOKE MASS U.S.A. 1901", measuring 20.2 by 33 cm. Fifty-three numbered folios, folded in half, with pin hole in top left corner; each act numbered separately. Stage directions and characters' names (inconsistently) underlined in red ink. All corrections, in black ink, red ink and pencil, in Gregory's hand. "Dedication" is dated "Sept 19th 1902". Quinn Collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, New York Public Library.

NYPL 2(a) Typescript (top copy) for *Where There Is Nothing* on paper (no watermark) measuring *c.* 17 by 20 cm, tied together with green ribbon through pin hole in top left corner. One hundred and two numbered folios. Characters' names are underlined in red. Occasional corrections and revisions in black in the handwriting of Gregory and Yeats. Undated. Quinn Collection, Rare Books and Manuscript Department, New York Public Library.

NYPL 3 Typescript (top copy) for *Where There Is Nothing* on paper with watermark "Valley | Paper | Co." (portrait), measuring 20.1 by 26.6 cm, with two binder punch holes in left margin. 102 folios, mostly numbered; each act numbered separately. Occasional corrections in black and red ink in unidentified hand. Also contains two cover sheets with watermark "Scotch Ledger", measuring 21.5 by 26.6 cm. Undated. Quinn Collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, New York Public Library.

NYPL 4 Typescript (carbon copy [of NYPL 2, 2(a), or 3?]) with suggestions as to printers' proof of *Where There Is Nothing* (A. H. Bullen, 1903) on paper with watermark "VALLEY PAPER CO HOLYOKE MASS", measuring 20.1 by 33 cm. One folio; unnumbered. Corrections in red ink. Undated; *c.* February 1903. Quinn Collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, New York Public Library.