

“What then?”: Poststructuralism,
Authorial Intention and W.B. Yeats

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go and open the door.

*at least
there'll be
a draught.*

(Miroslav Holub, 'The Door')

ABSTRACT

Using aspects Yeats's life and work (poems, philosophy, publishing episodes) as a lens, and focusing on the question of authorial intention, this paper explores certain conflicts and interrelations between traditional and poststructuralist theories of both textual and literary criticism. It will seek to show how Yeats himself embodies and mirrors this conflict in his work, both textually and thematically, and how the most important aspect of this conflict, for Yeats and for literature in general, is that it remains unresolved. Contrasting the ideas of E.D. Hirsch with those of Jerome McGann on the textual side and with those of Stanley Fish on the theoretical side, the paper seeks to highlight some limitations of the poststructuralist position, and also to show how these two apparently disparate schools of thought, traditionalist and poststructuralist, can occasionally exhibit some surprising affinities. The paper is indebted to George Bornstein's textual work on Yeats in its argument.

The central argument in textual criticism for the past two decades has revolved around the question of authorial intention. Can it be established? How is it to be defined? What precisely is the role it should play in our understanding of literary works? The primacy of authorial intention is the conservative fortress being defended mainly by G. Thomas Tanselle (in the wake of W. W. Greg and Fredson Bowers), while the revolutionary forces without, lining up behind Jerome J. McGann, stress the variety of factors –social, authorial, institutional, historical– that irrefragably attach themselves to any text that makes its way from the author to the wide world beyond. This school of thought insists on seeing such factors, not as corruptions, as does the traditional school, but as intrinsic to any published text and hence to be taken into account in any editorial task designed to bring a work before the public in as comprehensive a form as possible. This particular battle, as D.C. Greetham (1989) has pointed out, mirrors the larger war being waged contemporaneously in the field of literary criticism between, on the one hand, traditional author-based and New Critical text-based theories, which might broadly be characterised as belief in, and quest for, certainty, stability and authority, and on the other, poststructuralist, reader-based theories which tend to eschew all notions of certainty, stability and authority, revelling instead in the free play of “language as a condition rather than a reflection of experience” (Currie, 1996: 545), and in the ambiguous status of the author (along with the author’s intentions) as simply another element in the experience of reading a text. W. B. Yeats seems a particularly apt lens through which to view these conflicting theories, both textual and literary. On the one hand, his work exhibits a yearning for unchanging permanence, for “the artifice of eternity”, and a belief in “monuments of unageing intellect” (‘Sailing to Byzantium’ III, 8 and I, 8), while on the other, there is a pull towards a joyous acceptance of everything that impermanent, ever-changing life has to offer: “We are blest by everything, / Everything we look upon is blest” (‘A Dialogue of Self and Soul’ II, 31-2). This essay will seek to demonstrate that, just as in Yeats, the conflict between the traditionalists’ desire for unity and certainty and the poststructuralists’ preferred openness and freedom is one that, for the sake of literature, must finally remain unresolved. Along the way, I hope to show also that these two schools of thought are not always so disparate as is often thought.

There are two sides to the concept of authorial intention: one, what did the author mean to write? and two, what did the author mean by what he or she wrote? (these have been defined by Peter L. Shillingsburg as “intention to do” and “intention to mean” respectively [1986: 34]). The first of these has traditionally been the field of textual, and the second, of literary criticism. Textual scholars from both conservative and revolutionary camps have deplored this separation of the two fields. “[L]iterary study”, McGann says, “surrendered some of its most powerful interpretive tools when it allowed textual criticism and bibliography to be regarded as ‘preliminary’ rather than integral to the study of literary work” (1985: 182). McGann’s stance arises directly from his belief in the necessity of widening the focus of attention, in the matter of reconstructing and presenting literary works to the public, from authorial intention alone to one that includes the historical, sociological and institutional forces involved in the production and transmission of texts.

Textual and bibliographical studies, he says, “are the only disciplines than can elucidate the complex network of people, material and events that have produced and that continue to produce the literary works that history delivers into our hands” (1985: 191). The endeavour of merging these two traditionally separate fields of textual and literary studies (as seen from the revolutionary side of the fence) has a distinctly poststructuralist flavour to it in the way that it advocates a diffusion of the focus of authority from the figure of the author (which McGann sees as originating in the Romantic ideology of a sole, solitary genius) onto a much wider, less tangible and less definable network of forces: collaborators (another highly problematic term), editors, publishing practices, reception histories, revisions, censorship (both self and official), textual codes, social and historical factors and exigencies. Traditionally, all such factors were viewed by textual scholars as corruptions to be located and erased in a quest for the original purity of the text that most nearly embodied the author’s intentions. Philosophically, such a quest reflected the widely-held belief in the autonomy of the self, the view of the individual as a fundamental psychic entity, and it is precisely this view of the self that poststructuralism attacks.

The relevance of such abstract philosophical ideas to the realm of textual studies will perhaps become clearer if we look at an example. George Bornstein, in his essay, “What Is the Text of a Poem by Yeats?” provides an illuminating instance of just how problematic the concept of authorial intention –and ‘final’ authorial intentions in particular – can be. Traditionally, editors (and, following them, critics) have dealt with the problem by assuming that when an author revises a work, it is for the simple and straightforward reason that he or she wishes to improve it, and the solution therefore is to locate his or her final intention by referring to the latest such revision made in the author’s lifetime. But this view of the matter entirely leaves out the matter of context. As James McLaverty puts it, “there is no reason why the intention or conception common to a series of versions should have a special relation to the final version” (1984: 130). It will clearly have some relation, but to what degree can depend on a wide variety of factors, some to do with the author’s own fluctuating powers and changing opinions, some to do with events in the outer world that impact on the author’s consciousness and artistic imperatives. Yeats’s poem, “The Dedication to a Book of Stories selected from the Irish Novelists”, first appeared in 1891 as the epigraph of a book entitled *Representative Irish Tales*. The poem was reprinted twenty-three times in Yeats’s lifetime, undergoing major revision in 1924. As Bornstein details it, these revisions can be largely accounted for by the drastically changed circumstances that pertained in Ireland in 1924 as compared to 1891. The latter year is often seen as the beginning of the cultural revival in which the poet played such a major role. As Yeats himself put it in his Nobel acceptance speech, “The modern literature of Ireland, and indeed all that stir of thought which prepared for the Anglo-Irish war, began when Parnell fell from power in 1891” (1980: 195). This was the beginning of Yeats’s attempt to forge a national identity through culture and, in particular, through invocations of ancient Gaelic legends and myths. The revised version, on the other hand, “chang[es] it from a sentimental invocation of Irish patriotism to an embittered cry of pain at Irish realities during and after the ‘Troubles’” (Bornstein, 1993: 175). For the most part,

editorial decisions on this question reflect the conservative belief that the latest version of the poem –the 1924 version – constitutes the author’s final intention, and this is the one they invariably print.¹ Bornstein, however, takes the view that the “text” of the poem consists, not just of its latest version, but of its entire publication history, including all of its versions and all factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic, pertaining to these changing versions: “[T]he poem’s effect and interest multiply if we have its various incarnations in mind rather than any one of them” (1993: 176). The poem’s full meaning, in effect, cannot be realised until it is seen in its entire context, which includes a comparison of the later version with the original (and, ideally, with all changing states in between).

To look at a work in this manner is to take a spatial view of time, to view time imaginatively, to step outside its linear dimension and see a poem as a whole, in the way that one might look at a life, seeing value and connections in all stages of that life and not just in its final form. It is to fundamentally reject the value, even the idea, of permanence. To look at a poem such as Yeats’s “Dedication” in this way, given its inextricable links to changing historical and cultural circumstances, is to realise the force of Bornstein’s arguments for regarding such changes as being fundamentally implicated in any discussion of ‘intentions.’ And Bornstein broadens the scope of his idea when he talks about McGann’s notions of linguistic and bibliographical codes. Linguistic codes are the words, phrases and general semantic and syntactic rules that go to make up the text on the page, and their importance is self-evident. But bibliographical codes –how a work is presented, the format, the layout of the words on the page, the typeface, the cover, the location of a particular text (in a book, magazine, newspaper)– can also heavily influence the way in which a work is received.² In the aforementioned essay, Bornstein makes a compelling case for the ways in which the shifting locations of two other poems by Yeats, “The Wanderings of Oisín” and “The Song of the Happy Shepherd”, within various editions of his books can change the reader’s overall perceptions of the poet and can significantly alter, in fact, the reader’s view of the author’s overall intentions.

It can be seen immediately that what lies at the root of these revolutionary ways of looking at works of art is a fundamental shift in the location of the term ‘intention’. It is traditionally understood that an author, or a text, can only mean one thing at a time.³ So when the focus was firmly on the author’s (or even the text’s) intentions, then the natural tendency was to fix on some one utterance (the author’s latest version, the ‘authorised’ version of a text) as embodying the whole of the work in question. But to open time up and see it spatially is to shift the emphasis onto the reader. Only the reader can step outside time and see an author, or the history of a work, as a whole. The author cannot do it because he/she has not yet lived it, and the text is at the mercy of both author and reader. If then, the reader, by virtue of poststructuralist ideas of eternal flux (of texts, of authors, of readers, of selves), has taken over as king of this particular castle, we can recognise the limitations of attempting to extract from an on-going welter of versions, changing textual codes and external influences, a fixed and final object that can be pinned down and forever labelled as ‘the text’ of any given work. Such an endeavour appears akin to compiling a dossier on a person based on the thoughts, feelings and actions of their last day on earth,

and then presenting the results as a complete picture, a 'final text' of that person.

Yeats himself seems to have anticipated these questions in two quatrains that he included in different volumes of his *Collected Works* edition of 1908. The first, which appeared in Volume Eight, appears to reject the foregoing argument:

Accursed who brings to light of day
 The writings I have cast away!
 But blessed he that stirs them not
 And lets the kind worm take the lot!⁴ (Allt and Alspach 778)

The second, which appeared earlier, in Volume Two of the same edition, offered a justification for his on-going revisions:

The friends that have it I do wrong
 When ever I remake a song,
 Should know what issue is at stake:
 It is myself that I remake. (Allt and Alspach 779)

Looking at these two quatrains in some depth throws more light both on the intentionality debate and on the poststructuralist nature of much of Yeats's thinking. The second quatrain here cited (although the first to appear in print) invokes the well-known Yeatsian concept of the mask, his life-long project of remaking himself anew. This must be understood as something deeper and more serious than the mere adoption of new images, in the manner of a modern pop star. "The intellect of man is forced to choose / Perfection of the life, or of the work", he wrote in "The Choice". (Allt and Alspach 495) Yeats chose the latter (although, from the public point of view, he made a fairly good fist of the life as well). For the reader, of course, the work *is* the life. The flesh and blood human being, the "bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast", remains, and is refracted to us in the pages of biographies, but the real self, the poet, is "reborn as an idea, something intended, complete". He is "more type than man, more passion than type" (Yeats, *Essays and Introductions* 509). This is the ideal, of course, and, given human imperfection, ideals are rarely if ever fully realised. Some of that "bundle of accident and incoherence" will inevitably worm its way into the work, making the question of intention even thornier than it already is. ("But even a given author at a given moment often displays not a monolithic singularity of purpose or desire, but rather a multiplicity of them embodied in a multiplicity of intentions" –Bornstein, 1991: 8.) But the reader has only the work to go on, and only by tracing the changing faces of these selves (not only through different poems, but through different versions of the same poem) can he gain the fullest possible comprehension of the work. The reader, in effect, must become the work. Georges Poulet has said that "books only take on their full existence in the reader [and although] it is true they consist of ideas thought out by someone else, [...] in reading the reader becomes the subject that does the thinking" (Iser, 1988: 225). And Paul Ricoeur talks of the reader being "broadened in his

capacity to project himself by receiving a new mode of being from the text itself [...] [I]t is the text, with its universal power of unveiling, which gives a self to the ego" (Seldon, 1988: 214).

The 'self' that the ego receives in such reading is, ideally, the 'self' that is "reborn as an idea, something intended, complete", the "passion" of which Yeats speaks. But, as Yeats admits in his second quatrain, this is forever changing. And how can the reader fully appreciate any one such incarnation if he/she is not aware of them all, given that they evolve one from the other? Ideally, the reader must be able to evolve *with* Yeats.

This idea of the reader 'becoming' the poem, the text giving "a self to the ego", calls to mind Yeats's declared belief, in an essay on magic, in the following principle: "That the borders of our minds are ever shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy" (1980: 80). From this it is a short step to Barthesian notions of the death of the author. When Yeats says, "it is myself that I remake", he is speaking of his poetic self, not his ordinary, everyday "bundle of accident and incoherence". But in so far as this remade self is successful (i.e., in so far as it evokes a "passion" in the reader), then it no longer belongs to that entity known as W. B. Yeats, whatever the stage of its on-going reincarnations. He has, from the reader's point of view, become an "author-function" (this idea has certain limitations which I shall address later). The 'he' who makes the injunction laid out in the first quatrain here cited, is the "bundle of accident and incoherence" (despite the invocation being in verse), and as such exercises no rights over the "passion" that is the created work (the created work here being understood as the reader's response to the text on the page).

These reflections effectively deal with any sense of ethical responsibility an editor might feel towards complying with the stated wishes of an author. A remade self, in the event that a work is revised, entails, necessarily, an altered intention. James McLaverty would have it that "each version the author decides to publish should be regarded as a separate utterance, embodying a new intention" (1984: 130). One particularly interesting aspect of the ethical objections to poststructuralist freedoms, however (especially as voiced by E.D. Hirsch), is the way in which they can be seen to be not nearly so diametrically opposed to some of these freedoms as they would appear at first sight. Hirsch considers it a "fundamental ethical maxim for interpretation" that "*unless there is a powerful overriding value in disregarding an author's intention (ie, original meaning), we who interpret as a vocation should not disregard it*" (qtd. in Seldon, 1988: 204). These ethical reservations, Hirsch says, "claim no privileged sanction from metaphysics or analysis, but only from general ethical tenets, generally shared" (qtd. in Seldon, 1988: 205). "General ethical tenets, generally shared", is as slippery a phrase as one could hope to find, and one whose content cannot but change over time. In fact –and this is something Hirsch might well be horrified by– the phrase sounds an uncanny echo of that arch-poststructuralist Stanley Fish's idea of interpretive communities: "Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions" (Fish, 1988: 327). (In Fish's universe, readers become writers, an idea that finds affinities with Poulet's and

Ricoeur's notions of the reader becoming the subject (Poulet), and of the reader "receiving a new mode of being from the text" (Ricoeur), and also with Yeats's belief in minds blending into one another, as noted earlier.) The idea of interpretive communities, understood in a broad social sense, could be said to account for the existence and acceptance in a society of certain moral codes, "general ethical tenets, generally shared", just as in the field of textual and literary studies it accounts for a long-held belief in the primacy of authorial intent (if not quite how it could best be established, then certainly the fact that it *should* be established). The two areas of life, social and literary, are not mutually exclusive, of course, and it is surely no coincidence that the decade of huge social and cultural change in the Western world –the sixties– also saw the flowering of revolutionary impulses in the field of literary studies, as the rough beast of theory slouched onto the stage and squatted there. Hirsch's "general ethical tenets" became a lot less general, just as Fish's "interpretive communities" became considerably less monolithic than before, on both the textual and the literary sides of the field. As Yeats himself might put it, it is in the nature of things to fall apart, for centres not to hold, so it seems fitting that despite his wish for the "kind worm" to devour his pre-final versions, the overall effect of his life's work, when these versions are given their proper status, is that "his poems seem more like processes of evolution than products of an evolution" (Bornstein, 1993: 172), and correspondingly fitting that editorial work on him should be of the contemporary variety which

tends to accord better with poststructuralism than with New Criticism, [...] in its emphasis on multiple texts or versions, on text itself as more a process than a product, in a more complex view of both authorial intention and the artwork as divided against themselves rather than harmoniously unified, and in history as providing grounding rather than corruption. (1993: 169)

Stanley Fish is not the only poststructuralist with whom the author-based E.D. Hirsch can be seen to have some surprising affinities. On the textual side of the field, there is Jerome McGann. In *Validity in Interpretation* Hirsch writes:

To verify a text is simply to establish that the author probably meant what we construe his text to mean. The interpreter's primary task is to reproduce in himself the author's 'logic', his attitudes, his cultural givens, in short, his world. Even though the process of verification is highly complex and difficult, the ultimate verificative principle is very simple –the imaginative reconstruction of the speaking subject. (1976: 242)

And in *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory*, McGann has written such sentences as these: "Every work of art is the product of an interaction between the artist, on the one hand, and a variety of social determinants on the other" (119); "Poems are artistic works produced, and maintained, under specific socialized conditions" (120); and "A work of poetry is not a thing or an object, nor should criticism conceive it as such; it is the result of an interactive network of productive people

and forces” (343). Set beside Hirsch’s declaration, these statements seem not so much a diametrically opposed view, as a subtly different slant on the problem. Hirsch says it is an interpreter’s task to reproduce in himself his author’s “attitudes, his cultural givens [and] his world”, but how can this be achieved without taking into account the “variety of social determinants” and the “specific socialized conditions” which, for McGann, are an integral part of that world, and hence an integral part of that author and all his works. Hirsch seeks “the imaginative reconstruction of the speaking subject”. McGann would seem to agree, only insisting perhaps on a broader view of what constituted the speaking subject.

Two prosaic incidents from Yeats’s publishing career might clarify the matter. As mentioned earlier, McGann has written elsewhere of the impact of bibliographical codes, of the format, the make-up and the presentation of texts to the public. In preparation for a proposed de Luxe edition of his collected works in 1931, Yeats wrote to his publishers to enquire about the length of each volume in the extant collected edition: “As soon as I get these numbers of pages I will send you a suggested list for the contents of the different volumes in the edition de luxe of my work which you are bringing out” (Finneran, 1990: 8). Clearly, publishers’ requirements and economic restraints would play a part in what constituted any one volume, thereby becoming an integral part of the author’s ‘intentions,’ when he put it together. (It is, of course, a moot point as to whether critics such as Hirsch would agree that bibliographical matters were of any significance at all, but it seems indisputable that they constituted an integral part of the author’s “world”.) The second instance is more telling. In 1933, while sending Yeats proofs of his *Collected Poems*, Macmillan suggested publishing *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* as a separate volume –until then it had appeared only as a limited American edition by Yeats’s own Cuala Press– and postponing the *Collected Poems*, of which *The Winding Stair* was to form part, until later. Yeats readily agreed. Richard Finneran notes the interesting fact: “What many readers consider one of the two finest volumes in the canon owed its origin to a publisher’s eye for the market”, and ponders the significance: “It is interesting to consider how we should have viewed the shape of Yeats’s later career if *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* had never been a separate volume, in which case a substantial number of its lyrics would have been first published in the *Collected Poems*” (1990: 27). In what sense can such factors be extricated from ‘author’s intentions’? Under such pressure, the concept does not so much appear problematic as about to dissolve. It is little wonder that scholars of all hues have begun to frown on the word ‘definitive’: “Since every verbal work must be reconstructed, no text of any such work is ever definitive” (Tanselle, 1989: 74); “The word *definitive* should be banished from editorial discussion” (Shillingsburg, 1986: 93).

This pointing up of some affinities, however tentative, between author-based theories and poststructuralism brings us to a closer look at the limitations of the latter, as mentioned earlier in this essay. Barthes has written:

The author is a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as [...] it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, the ‘human person’. It is thus logical that in literature it should be this positivism, the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology,

which has attached the greatest importance to the 'person' of the author. (1990: 229)

Barthes is telling us here *how* the present concentration on the figure of the author came about; but the fact remains that it *has* come about, and it *is* (despite the batterings of modern theory) largely the way in which we view literature. Poststructuralism would argue, with Barthes, that this cult of the author restricts and delimits our ability to appreciate literature (Barthes, 1990: 231), and this is one of the strongest arguments for relegating the ultimate authority of the author figure. But relegating is not abandoning. McGann has been at pains to make clear that his socialising of texts sees authorial intention as an element in textual criticism, just not the dominant element (1991: 62). And much poststructuralist thinking, following on from its roots in phenomenology, contends that perception is reality. As Stanley Fish would put it, the reader finds in literature what he/she puts there to begin with, as a consequence of his/her 'self' being "constituted by its own interpretive strategies" (1988: 325). A significant element of such "interpretive strategies" is the figure of the author. To put this in terms of McGann's textual codes, we might fairly say that a major factor in a reader's experience of any given text is the name on the cover of the book. This is especially so in the case of a name with the resonance of a W. B. Yeats, and it becomes more so the more deeply affected is the reader by what he/she experiences under the rubric of 'W. B. Yeats'. Genius (if such a distressingly pre-structuralist term may be employed), while it may be the genius of something much larger than an individual, can only find its expression through an individual, and it has been our condition since the rise of capitalism (to agree with Barthes) to perceive genius in this fashion. The situation may be deplored, but it cannot be gainsaid until our culture undergoes a major unforeseen shift. It means that the role of the author, the significance of that individual writing force, can never be quite vanquished in the way that poststructuralists have tried to theoretically 'magic' him out of existence.

What this means for textual scholars is that, despite the leanings of contemporary theorists such as McGann and Bornstein towards poststructuralist methods of editing and theories of intention, there must always, as long as the culture sees things in this fashion, be a place for the individual author. And it has further implications in so far as intention is concerned. If, as a society, we are subject to the cult of the individual author, so too are all authors writing out of this culture. We may never be able to gauge with any accuracy the extent to which the longing for fame distorts (or creates) the works of these authors, but we can hardly doubt that it is there. Asked by a friend to explain the connections that must exist among his great works, Goethe told the story of how as a boy he had once smashed an entire set of his mother's crockery because an admiring crowd of older boys kept yelling, after each explosion, "More, more!" (O'Hara, 1981: 1). (In addition to being an eloquent comment on the need for approval, the anecdote hints also at deep, unconscious connections between the artist and society.) This is not an aspect of writing that need bother editors overmuch but if, as McGann has claimed, textual and literary studies can only benefit by being thoroughly fused with each other, then there is no aspect of writing which can be ignored entirely, just as there are no theories of literature, textual or interpretive,

which are right entirely. Any claim that poststructuralist theories (and by extension, textual theories and practices aligned with them), have on our attention must ultimately rest on their effect on our responses to literature: do they enhance or degrade them? There is as little consensus on this question as on any other in literary studies but, as this essay has tried to argue, such theories offer an exhilarating openness and freedom, a freedom eloquently caught in this quotation from Stanley Fish, when he talks of how “coming to the point” is not the point:

Coming to the point is the goal of a criticism that believes in content, in extractable meaning, in the utterance as a repository. Coming to the point fulfils a need that most literature deliberately frustrates (if we open ourselves to it), the need to simplify and close. Coming to the point should be resisted, and in its small way, this method will help you to resist. (1980: 52)

After all, Yeats himself, when faced with the prospect of completed perfection – “The work is done [...] / Something to perfection brought” – could only ask, “*What then?*” (‘What Then?’ 16,19,20).

Notes

1. The latest edition available for consultation, Richard J. Finneran’s 2nd revised edition of *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (2000), follows this method, only mentioning in the notes that the poem has been revised (and likewise for other heavily revised poems). Finneran, however, informs his readers in his introduction that an electronic edition is currently in preparation, which will include versions and manuscript materials from which they derive (2000: xxii). The only exception to the general rule in print form (known to this writer) is the Timothy Webb edition of 1991, *Selected Poetry*, which in this instance prints the full 1891 version immediately following the 1924 poem. Webb’s thinking seems in tune with contemporary ideas on the value of versions: “To acknowledge [Yeats’s final intentions] should not prevent us from recognising that this final version of Yeats was possible only because of the existence of its many predecessors” (1991: xxi).

2. An interesting correlation to this argument can be found in Luke Gibbon’s introduction to his *Transformations in Irish Culture*, where he makes the point that “symbolic structures” [stories, songs, myths, etc] “themselves are constitutive elements [of history], exerting a profound influence on the logic of social action” (1996: 10).

3. A disputable point, as much Irish thinking and literature has attested through the centuries. Richard Kearney, in *The Irish Mind*, traces a creative vein of Irish thought stretching from the ninth century mystic, John Scottus Eriugena, through Berkeley, Swift and on to Beckett, a chief feature of which was the ability, as Joyce put it in *Finnegans Wake*, to have “two thinks at a time” (Kearney, 1985: 27).

4. Daniel Albright points out the paradox here: “But since this curse on editors was itself consigned to the worm, it can be invoked only by an editor willing to flout it” (1994: lxiii). And George Bornstein has made the point that, since the quatrain appeared in the *Bibliography of the Writings of W. B. Yeats*, which Yeats had blessed, it “thus stands in the characteristic Yeatsian

gesture of calling attention to that which it claims to repudiate and it is embedded in a project that enables the recovery of the very texts that the new edition claims to replace" (Bornstein and Williams, 1993: 173).

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