

'The Secret Rose' and Yeats's Dialogue with History

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IT WILL help at the outset to indicate Yeats's development in handling different kinds of prose narrative in the years leading up to the completion of *The Secret Rose*. In 1888 his short novel, *John Sherman*, appeared together with the mythological story, *Dhoya*. In the same year he published his first collection of folk tales, *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*. In 1889 he brought out *Representative Irish Tales*, a selection from the fiction of Edgeworth, the Banims, Carleton, Lover, Maginn, Croker, Griffin, Lever, Kickham, and Rosa Mulholland. In 1893 he published *The Celtic Twilight*, a volume of folk tales and anecdotes which he collected in Galway and Sligo — with the exception of his sketch of the Dublin street singer, Zozimus, which he lifted and paraphrased without acknowledgement from a booklet published by M'Glashan and Gill, Dublin, 1871.¹ In 1897 he published his large collection of original short stories, *The Secret Rose*. In 1897 he published privately in a booklet, 'The Tables of the Law' and 'The Adoration of the Magi' which had been meant for inclusion in *The Secret Rose* but which, as Yeats later explained in his 'Note' to *Mythologies*, were held over by the publisher because he 'took a distate to them' of which he later repented. The revised versions of *Stories of Red Hanrahan* appeared in 1905.

So between the years of 1888 and 1897 Yeats put seven books of prose narrative through his hands. Eight years later, we find him revising one suite of tales — those of Hanrahan — in order to give them 'the emotion of folklore'. His progress, after his relatively false start with *John Sherman* can be indicated as follows: from editor of others' fiction to collector and transcriber of oral

¹ *Zozimus* by Gulielmus Dubliniensis Humoriensis, Dublin, 1871.

tales, to adapter of legendary tales (the first stories of *The Secret Rose*) to original short story writer and creator of Red Hanrahan.

The progression yields two important emphases. In the first place, as he asserts in that whimsical but important preface to the first edition of *The Celtic Twilight*,¹ he is trying to 'show in a vision something of the face of Ireland to any of my people who care for things of the kind', and in calling to life the 'dhouls and fairies' he is invoking 'Hope and Memory' whose daughter is 'Art'. Here the emphasis is clearly consonant with the poetry and drama he is writing at the time — specifically with *The Countess Kathleen* volume of 1892 with its stress on the folk ballad and its recurrent dream of fairyland. The second emphasis is allied to the first, and appears when in the same preface he insists that he has made no attempt 'to separate my own beliefs from those of the peasantry'. They become an exercise in racial identification. By garnering these tales — in *The Celtic Twilight* — out of the folk memory Yeats at once underwrites his investment in the unseen world of fairy existence which is available to Art out of Memory; and by mingling his beliefs with those of the peasantry, the inheritors of the Celtic wisdom which he was currently fostering, he can dramatize his alliance with the 'hidden Ireland', to use a phrase taken from the title of Daniel Corkery's influential book on the Gaelic poetry of eighteenth-century Ireland, published in 1925. In *The Freeman's Journal* some thirty years later Yeats was to write that

there are two kinds of patriotism in Ireland . . . the patriotism of Catholic Ireland, which is inherited, and to which a man holds because he will not change. Then there is the patriotism of those brought up in the Church of Ireland, and that has its own special meaning — but in it there is always a choice.²

The Celtic Twilight helps to sponsor that choice: in it can be seen the advance of two allied drives in Yeats's psyche during this complicated period of his development, his adherence to fairy faith as living witness to the arcane wisdom which to his mind had been lost beneath the 'grey truth' of nineteenth-century materialism, and his deliberate identification with Gaelic Ireland which he conceived in terms of superstitious Catholicism, wild

¹ London, 1893.

² *The Freeman's Journal*, 1924.

and passionate imagination and an instinctual mystical patriotism. Owen Hanrahan is, of course, the chief embodiment of this complex vision:

O heavy swollen waters, brim the Fall of the Oak trees,
 For the Grey Winds are blowing up, out of the clinging seas!
 Like heavy swollen waters are our bodies and our blood:
 But purer than a tall candle before the Blessed Rood
 Is Kathleen the Daughter of Hoolihan.¹

But to appreciate fully the position which Hanrahan comes to take up in Yeats's search for unity, it is necessary to confront the phenomenon that the *Secret Rose* volume constitutes. For too long has it been considered merely as a document for the study of Yeats's thought as ultimately issuing in his poetry. Judged in its own right as a body of prose fiction it is a considerable achievement, comparable in style, vision and coherence with anything later accomplished in the Irish short story — not excluding *Dubliners*. I propose, therefore, very briefly, to glance at the book as a whole as it was conceived by Yeats in its first edition; that is before the publisher excluded 'The Tables of the Law' and 'The Adoration of the Magi', and before the author separated out the stories of Red Hanrahan and revised them for the edition of 1905.

The commanding symbol of the book is the mystical rose, and the dominant theme concerns those lonely men who directly or indirectly spend themselves in its service, through love, battle, excess, mystical patriotism, the search for transnatural wisdom. Yeats had been a member of the Order of the Golden Dawn since 1890 and its central symbol, its focus of meditation, was the mystical rose. The Rosy Cross dramatizing the struggle between beauty and death, time and eternity served perfectly his theme which, in the Dedication, he described as 'the war of the spiritual with the natural order'.

This struggle is joined in the first two stories which enact a similar dramatic pattern. 'The Binding of the Hair' opens with a young Irish princess — who sits 'straight and still like a white candle' — and her bard Aodh, being surprised in their banqueting by enemies, the People of the Bag. Beauty and its celebrant, poetry, are threatened by the profane world of rampage and

¹ 'Kathleen the Daughter of Houlihan and Hanrahan the Red', *The Secret Rose*, Dublin, 1905, p. 162.

violence. Unmoved the young princess asks the bard to 'sing the song out before morning, whether we overcome them or they overcome us'. He replies that there are two verses in his heart that he will 'pour out before morning for the Rose of my Desire, the Lily of my Peace'. He goes out and is slain, but when the young princess finds his severed head on a bush it chants the lyric which begins 'Fasten your hair with a golden pin'.

Love and poetry have made their stand against the world, and have gained a symbolic victory over it, have at least held death at arm's length until their promises have been kept, their demands recognized.

In the second story, which seems to have been conceived as a companion piece, a prince is born with the feathers of a hawk in his hair. The blemish bars him from the throne of Ireland, but because of his wisdom his courtiers conspire to persuade his whole kingdom to keep the secret of his blemish from him so that they may have good laws and just rule. But through love for a princess who rejects the gift of his wisdom — which comes, not from the mundane world, but from the hosts of the air to whom he belongs — his predicament is revealed. Before taking his departure from the earth he chides his courtiers for having made him betray his own hawklike nature — rather as the hawklike man Cuchulain, in *On Baile's Strand*, had betrayed his nature in submitting his passionate will to the rule of law — with the words:

'Men of verse, why did you make me sin against the secrecy of wisdom, for the law was made by men for the welfare of man, but wisdom the gods have made, and no man shall live by its light, for it and the hail and the rain and the thunder follow a way that is deadly to mortal things. Men of law and men of verse, live according to your kind, and call Eocha of the Plain of Towers to reign over you, for I set out to find my kindred.'

Again time has collided uneasily with eternity, the questing, adventurer of the intellect with the settled, imperfect world of law and custom. In a world where the poets compound a compromise with the men of law there is no place for the hero.

In 'Where there is Nothing there is God' and 'The Crucifixion of the Outcast', which follow immediately, Yeats presents two approaches to sanctity. In the former, monks give hospitality to a humble man who describes himself as 'the poorest of God's

poor', and in time discover that he is a great saint. In the latter they offer the harshest reception to a gleeman, a wandering poet and satirist, and end by putting him to death by crucifixion. This is one of the more powerful stories in the book, rising as it does to a painful and desolate climax at the end where the dying poet cries out to the birds and the wolves — 'Outcasts . . . have you also turned against the outcast?'

The figure of the gleeman is one of Yeats's most memorable portrayals of the Romantic poet or artist, the man who pits himself against society, who suffers and dies in loyalty to his vision and his calling. It is especially significant that Yeats takes the original Goliardic tale and shapes it to his own particular purpose. The original is *Aisling Meic Conglinne*, a medieval Irish tale which was available in translation by Kuno Meyer.¹ In its original form the tale ends with the triumph of the gleeman over the Abbot and the monks. Yeats insists on imposing his own concept of the Romantic artist on the material. In his tale the gleeman is made to suffer upon the cross of time; made a martyr to the implacable forces of settled society. The Abbot, for instance, describes the gleeman as one of 'an evil race, ever cursing and stirring up the people . . . immoderate in all things, heathen in their hearts, always longing after the Son of Lir, and Angus, . . . and railing against Christ and the blessed saints'. The gleeman therefore prefigures the subjective, passionate, antithetical man of Yeats's later historico-aesthetic doctrine. He is the medieval counterpart of Red Hanrahan who adopts a similar stance in the face of eighteenth-century Irish society. He is the antithesis of the Saint in the previous story, yet is curiously similar to him: the gleeman also describes himself as 'the poorest' of the poor: And I have been more alone upon the roads and by the sea, because I heard in my heart the rustling of the rose-bordered dress of her who is more subtle than Angus, the Subtle-Hearted, and more full of the beauty of laughter than the Conan the Bald, more full of wisdom of tears than White-Breasted Deirdre, and more lovely than a bursting dawn to them that are lost in darkness

¹ For Yeats's review of Meyer's translation in *The Bookman*, February 1893, see *Uncollected Prose of W. B. Yeats*, ed. John P. Frayne, 1970, pp. 261-3. For Yeats the interest of the tale derives 'from the fierce attack upon the monks, and upon the very symbols of religion itself, in which the author avenges the sufferings of his persecuted tribe'.

He too is a saint of poetry, a follower of the rose, a martyr of transcendent beauty crucified upon the rood of time.

In another of the more successful stories, 'Out of the Rose', the hero is an old knight whose helmet is adorned with a small rose made of rubies. He has the face of those 'who have come but seldom into the world, and always for its trouble, and to bind the hearts of men within a leash of mystery — the dreamers who must do what they dream, the doers who must dream what they do'. Again he is a Romantic figure, a lonely, questing adventurer, spent in the service of his vision. He looks towards the west and prays: 'O Divine Rose of Intellectual Flame, let the Gates of thy peace be opened to me at last!'. He takes up the cause of peasants whose pigs have been stolen by wood-thieves, is wounded and forsaken by the peasants he has aided. As he dies he tells his story to a boy who is with him at the end: he has been a Knight of Saint John, devoted to the service of the Most High. Then a certain Knight of Palestine had come with a new mission for him. His account of this mission is crucial:

He had seen a great Rose of Fire, and a Voice out of the Rose had told him how men would turn from the light of their own hearts, and bow before external order and outer fixity, and that then the light would cease, and none escape the curse except the foolish good man who could not and the passionate wicked man who would not, think. Already, the Voice told him, the wayward light of the heart was shining out upon the world to keep it alive, with a less clear lustre, and that, as it paled, a strange infection was touching the stars and the hills and the grass and the trees with corruption, and that one of those who had seen clearly the truth of the ancient way, could enter into the Kingdom of God, which is in the Heart of the Rose, if they stayed on willingly in the infected world. So they must prove their anger against the Powers of Corruption by dying in the service of the Rose of God.

So, while the mass of mankind bows down before the corruption of 'external order and outer fixity', the followers of the Rose fight for individuality and personal vision. Their heroism may take many shapes: it may consist in the condition of private, mystical transcendence like the Saint of 'Where there is Nothing there is God', or in the defiant, irreverent energy of the Gleeman. It will be later seen in the Faustian valour of Michael Robartes or in the dissolute rebelliousness of Hanrahan. In the early tragedies the struggle is being enacted by Cuchulain who fights against the

demands for 'external order and outer fixity' of Conchubar and his bloodless children in *On Baile's Strand*, or by Seanchan against Guaire in *The King's Threshold*. In the latter case the language and imagery of the dying Knight are actually echoed, as the starving poet confronts the king in his dying speech:

O, look upon the moon that's standing there
 In the blue daylight take note of its complexion,
 Because it is the white of leprosy
 And the contagion that afflicts mankind
 Falls from the moon. When I and these are dead
 We should be carried to some windy hill
 To lie there with uncovered face awhile
 That mankind and that leper there may know
 Dead faces laugh.

King! King! Dead faces laugh.

Like the old Knight, Seanchan dies 'filled with a great joy': he has found his eternity. Similarly the old mystic in 'The Heart of Spring' is granted his eternal youth, ironically, in the act of dying among roses and lilies an hour after dawn, and in the intensity of spring.

I have been dwelling on what clearly is the central emphasis of these stories, 'the war of the spiritual with the natural order'. In this struggle the spiritual is clearly represented by the rebel figures, the artist figures, whether they be saints or reprobates. The Rose and the Rood provide him with the perfect symbol for this struggle, in that they image the moment of collision between time and eternity.

But other things are happening in the stories. There is an imaginative conquest of Irish history being enacted. His monks and his gleemen take him into the landscape of the Irish middle ages. His story of the Puritan troopers who profane the Catholic mysteries in 'The Curse of the Fires and the Shadows' and who go to their death over Lugnagall dramatizes the consciousness of Ireland in the seventeenth century. His story of 'Proud Costello, MacDermot's Daughter, and the Bitter Tongue', based on the seventeenth-century legend of Una Bhan adds another dimension to the same quest. The entire suite of stories centred on Red Hanrahan give imaginative access to the Gaelic aspect of Ireland in the eighteenth century, and of this a good deal more must be said. Similarly such a story as 'The Adoration of the Magi',

notwithstanding its apocalyptic resonance, is a clear attempt to draw together the folk tradition of late nineteenth-century Ireland and Yeats's own experience of the occult and the symbolist in contemporary Paris. It is also clear that in his two other 'apocalyptic' stories 'The Tables of the Law' and 'Rosa Alchemica' he is reaching consciously back through the history of European Catholicism and gathering it into his mind as he moves towards the formulation of his final system of history which is to be expressed in *A Vision*. It is within this multi-dimensional framework that we must examine the stories of Red Hanrahan and the struggle for historical identity which, I would argue, they represent.

As already shown, when Hanrahan was taking shape in Yeats's imagination the latter was eagerly excogitating a theory of 'national' literature, reading O'Grady's historical fiction and editing Carleton. The terms in which he judges Carleton are curiously relevant to our discussion. He puts him side by side with O'Grady as 'a great Irish historian'.¹ He declares him the 'great novelist of Ireland, by right of the most Celtic eyes that ever gazed from under the brows of story teller'. Even more insistently Yeats sees Carleton as spokesman for the peasant nation: 'The true peasant was at last speaking, stammeringly, illogically, bitterly, but none the less with the deep and mournful accent of the people.'² Yeats pursued this theme through the Introduction with remarkable pertinacity. If Carleton's manner is awkward here and there it is because 'the true peasant has been admitted to the drawing room of the big house and asked to tell a story . . . and he could not quite talk as he would by his own fireside'. He represents a phenomenon which Yeats is trying hard to penetrate: 'The peasant stands at the roadside, cap in hand, his mouth full of "your honours" and "my ladies", his whole voice softened by the courtesy of the powerless, but men like Carleton show the thing that is in his heart. He is not appeased because the foot that passes over him is shod with laughter'. The creation of Red Hanrahan is clearly a further attempt to pluck out the heart of the peasant's mystery, 'the thing that is in his heart'. Yeats's description of Carleton himself is very close to that of Red Han-

¹ Preface to Yeats's *Stories from Carleton*, p. xvi.

² Introduction to *Representative Irish Tales*, New York and London, 1891, p. 8.

rahan: 'His great body, that could leap twenty-one feet on a level, was full of violent emotions and brooding melancholy.' Indeed it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the character of Hanrahan owes far more to Carleton — whom his creator had absorbed directly — than to the eighteenth-century Gaelic poet, Eoghan Rua O Suilleabhain who was his original prototype, and whom Yeats could only have known at second hand.¹

In *Stories from Carleton* Yeats chose two of Carleton's tales which dealt with the position of learning among the peasantry, the phenomenon of the poor scholar and the hedge school as institutions of the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century; these are the first story in the selection, 'The Poor Scholar' and the last, 'The Hedge School'. In the latter story Carleton gives an analysis of the hedge schoolmaster that would clearly have appealed to Yeats with his emerging concept of the rebellious, the amoral, the imaginative, the 'antithetical' man:

The opinion, I know, which has been long entertained of the hedge schoolmasters was, and still is, unfavourable; but the character of these worthy and eccentric persons has been misunderstood, for the stigma attached to their want of knowledge should have rather been applied to their want of morals, because on this latter point only were they indefensible. The fact is, that hedge schoolmasters were a class of men from whom morality was not expected by the peasantry; for, strange to say, one of the strongest recommendations to the good opinion of the people, as far as their literary talents and qualifications were concerned, was an inordinate love of whisky and if to this could be added a slight touch of derangement, the character was complete.²

This could almost be a blue-print for the character of Owen Hanrahan, Yeats's 'Old lecher with a love on every wind' whom he drove 'drunk or sober through the dawn'.

¹ As far as I know the genesis of Red Hanrahan has not been formally set out: He first appears in the title of a poem called 'The Curse of O'Sullivan the Red upon Old Age' in *The National Observer*, 29 September 1894. His next metamorphic appearance is in the *Savoy*, July 1896, in 'O'Sullivan the Red to Mary Lavell'. Next he emerges as Hanrahan the Red in the first edition of *The Secret Rose* (1897), where a sort of anachronism puts his provenance beyond doubt. In a story called 'The Twisting of the Rope' he says: 'My name is Hanrahan the Red, and men call me "the Red" that I may be known from that ignorant rhymer whom they have named "the Gaelic".' The reference is clearly to the other *O'Sullivan* who lived with Eoghan Rua (Eoghan the Red) in the eighteenth century. He was Tadhg Gaelach O Suilleabhain (Timothy O'Sullivan the Gaelic). Yeats removes the anachronism when he revises the stories for the 1905 edition of the *Stories of Red Hanrahan*, where the character achieves his definitive christening. In progressively eliding the name of the historic prototype Yeats obviously wished to universalize his hero.

² *Stories from Carleton*, 1889, p. 240.

Here is how Hanrahan makes his first appearance in the pages of *The Secret Rose*:

Somewhere in the middle of the last century a man, with a frieze coat and great mass of red hair, strode down a narrow street in the Town of the Grey Lough, and with a slightly unsteady step. The little ink-bottle hanging by a chain from his neck, and his pale vehement face, contradicted his rough weather-beaten hands, and showed him for a hedge schoolmaster before all eyes familiar with the villages.¹

In his conversation with the village shopkeeper it is swiftly revealed that Hanrahan has lost his school 'because of the women', and his 'inordinate love for whisky' is further emphasized when he is told 'though you are a great poet and know Latin, I will not trust you for another noggin'. The 'slight touch of derangement' is already present in many indications — for instance his deliberate campaign to convince priest and people that he is in league with the devil — and it is confirmed when the fairy woman, Cleena of the Wave, pronounces her curse on him. It may, therefore, be reasonably argued that Yeats found the outlines of Red Hanrahan in his reading of Carleton, who had in so many other ways given him a bridgehead on that 'terra incognita' which was the world of Gaelic, Catholic, peasant Ireland. Certainly it was written at a time when Yeats was strenuously pressing his claims to that inheritance.

Already Yeats is forging his links with the eighteenth-century world of the Anglo-Irish intellect — the world to which he ultimately gives his intellectual allegiance. In 'Rosa Alchemica', for instance, the narrator lives in a house of eighteenth-century design, 'a house my ancestors had made almost famous through their part in the politics of the city and their friendships with famous men of their generations': and as he admits the Faustian Robartes the presences of these intellectual forbears is insisted upon: '... I led the way up the wide staircase, where Swift had passed joking and railing, and Curran telling stories in Greek, in simpler days, before men's minds, subtilized and complicated by the romantic movement in art and literature, began to tremble on the verge of some unimagined revelation'. Normally we think of Yeats's concern with Georgian Ireland as something that

¹ *The Secret Rose*, Dublin, 1905, p. 125. This is a reprint of the original 1897 edition. My discussion of these stories is based on these earlier versions except where otherwise indicated.

came late in his career. Professor Torchiana, for instance, in his excellent book, *W. B. Yeats and Georgian Ireland* (1966), concentrates his study on the last twenty years of the poet's life. But the seeds of this concern are already sprouting while these stories are being composed. We recall, for instance, Aherne's remark in 'The Tables of the Law', that 'Jonathan Swift made a soul for the gentlemen of this city by hating his neighbour as himself'. And in his essay, 'Poetry and Tradition', written in 1907, Yeats recalls how in the 'nineties, Lionel Johnson, Katherine Tynan and himself began to reform Irish poetry . . . to keep unbroken the thread running up to Grattan.¹ But while the intellectual tradition represented by Georgian Ireland was Yeats's naturally by family background and education, the world of eighteenth-century Gaelic Ireland was far less accessible. The Red Hanrahan stories are, among other things, his stepping-stones to that unknown world. It was not enough that Yeats should transcribe tales, anthologize stories, read translations, edit Carleton,² he had to lay creative, engendering hold on this mysterious entity of the 'hidden Ireland'. Hanrahan begins, perhaps, by being a principle in Yeats's mind, like Aherne and Robartes; but as the stories succeed one another he seems to take on autonomous life, this wild, haunted, ragged man who is made to *stand* for so much, yet who becomes in his own right one of Yeats's most vivid and memorable human characterizations.

The reasons for this vividness are several, and understandable. Hanrahan is a Gaelic poet and therefore a last representative of the druidic wisdom which Yeats wanted to see re-embodied in the poetic ministry. In his essay on 'Magic' Yeats writes: 'Have not poetry and music arisen, as it seems, out of the sounds of the enchanters made to help their imagination to enchant, to charm, to bind with a spell themselves and the passers by? These very words, a chief part of all praises of music or poetry, still cry to their origin.'³ Hanrahan, therefore, outcast, dissolute bard and descendant of the druids, provides a link with that origin; he lays curses on his enemies, on unhospitable householders and on

¹ *Essays and Introductions*, pp. 247-8.

² Though Carleton wrote in the nineteenth century he was born in 1894, and his hedge-school education made him a link with the peasant culture of the previous century.

³ *Essays and Introductions*, 1961, p. 43.

writer can establish a historic, national identity. Without him Yeats's sense of Irishness would have been without a vital dimension, the dimension of Corkery's 'hidden Ireland' of the eighteenth century. Through Hanrahan Yeats has grappled with old men who want to marry young girls; he buys a book of the Great Dhoul and calls down a woman of the Shee: he is poet, singer and magician, he fulfils every condition of Yeats's 'enchanter'.

Hanrahan, as already mentioned, can be seen as a supreme exemplar of the Romantic poet in his relation to society. So much so that it seems to me extraordinary that Harold Bloom in his massive and persuasive book *Yeats* (Oxford, 1970) on Yeats and the Romantic tradition leaves him out of his argument. Indeed if we take Edmund Wilson's interesting and valid distinction between Romantic and Symbolist sensibility — that the Romantic hero is at war with society,¹ while the Symbolist hero is in flight from the world — we may see this unruly outcast, warring with priests, in rebellion against the settled community, 'playing hell on decent girls',² taking up his abode with fallen women and opposing to society 'his own turbulent and insubordinate soul',³ as Yeats's type for the Romantic artist. Just as Michael Robartes represents the more esoteric, mysterious and cosmic rebels that we associate with the Symbolist sensibility.⁴

So in Hanrahan we can see one of the larger tributaries to that complex unity of being towards which the poet was striving; larger because Hanrahan embodies far greater complexity — historic, aesthetic, esoteric, religious — even than Robartes. This is probably why he is so powerfully realized, so vivid and credible as a character in fiction. He looks back to Carleton and forward to Corkery as a fictional creation through which the and identified imaginatively the reality that prowled round the

¹ *Axel's Castle*, Fontana Library edition, p. 10: '... they vindicate the rights of the individual against the claims of society as a whole — against government, morals, conventions, academy or church. The Romantic is nearly always a rebel.'

² See Synge's poem 'Danny', *Collected Works*, 1, 56, whose heroes have many affinities with Hanrahan.

³ *Axel's Castle*, p. 11.

⁴ Commenting on the death of Axel and Sara, Edmund Wilson writes 'It will be easily seen that this super-dreamer of Villiers's is the type of all the heroes of the Symbolists, of our day as well as his', and goes on to claim Yeats's Robartes and Aherne as of the same company (*Axel's Castle*, p. 210-11).

ramparts of his walled Georgian city. Through Hanrahan Yeats has brought that mysterious world to light, or at least to half light. It has been an arduous and strenuous task, but easier, for such a bad linguist, than learning Irish.

Yeats was especially pleased with his creation as can be seen in his later poetry where Hanrahan is again evoked side by side with Crazy Jane to register and dramatize the vivid primitive and the racial memory. One notices the proud proprietary tone in which he recalls him to mind in 'The Tower':

And I myself created Hanrahan
 And drove him drunk or sober through the dawn
 From somewhere in the neighbouring cottages.
 Caught by an old man's juggleries
 He stumbled, tumbled fumbled too and fro
 And had but broken knees for hire
 And horrible splendour of desire
 I thought it all up twenty years ago:

Hanrahan's relevance to himself increases rather than fades with the years, especially as he confronts angrily the assault of old age. We recall that Hanrahan himself had railed against it in 'The Curse of Hanrahan the Red' when a young girl had drawn attention to his grey hairs:

Did all old men and women, rich and poor
 Who trod upon these rocks or passed this door,
 Either in public or in secret rage
 As I do now against old age?
 But I have found an answer in those eyes
 That are impatient to be gone;
 Go therefore — but leave Hanrahan,
 For I need all his mighty memories.

Hanrahan had served Yeats well; the exertion that went into his creation had been copiously repaid. The physical and historic landscape which 'The Tower' calls up as the poet locates himself commandingly in time and space requires the fictional poet as importunately as it requires Mrs French, the cross-gartered men-at-arms, Raftery and Mary Hynes. His 'mighty memories' are part of a grand historic vision half created, half perceived but marvellously imagined. And of course it was Yeats's final triumph to weave himself into that fabric of vision while at the same time transcending it.