

William Butler Yeats:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Yeats, William Butler, 1865-1939.
Title:	William Butler Yeats Collection
Dates:	1872-1970
Extent:	11 boxes (4.62 linear feet) and 1 galley folder
Abstract:	Typescripts and page proofs of works and letters from the author make up the bulk of the William Butler Yeats Collection.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-04619
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchases, 1950-1980
Processed by:	Chelsea Dinsmore, 2002
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) was born in Dublin, Ireland, the eldest of four children born to Susan Pollexfen and John Butler Yeats. While the family lived primarily in Dublin and London, time spent with relatives in County Sligo influenced Yeats' dreams and aspirations. In Sligo he learned the folk lore, myths, and legends which provided the structure and background for so much of his poetry.

An uninspired student, Yeats spent five years at the Godolphin Day School while his father studied painting in London. Upon the family's return to Ireland in 1880 he attended Erasmus High School before being sent to the Metropolitan Art School. His artistic talent proved to be as indifferent as his scholarship, but he came away from the experience with a lifelong friend in his fellow student George William Russell. Russell may have provided impetus to what became Yeats' lifelong interest in mysticism and the occult.

Yeats' first published poems appeared in *The Dublin University Review* in 1885. By 1889 Yeats was able to publish an entire volume of poems, *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems*. When Maud Gonne, an actress and Irish nationalist, sought an introduction to Yeats to praise *Oisín*, Yeats fell immediately in love with her and she became a fixture in his imagination and poetry. She refused his many offers of marriage; however, she encouraged his involvement in the Irish Nationalist movement, thereby adding another dimension to his work.

The 1890s were busy and pivotal for Yeats. His family had returned to London where he co-founded and participated in the Rhymers club with Ernest Rhys, Richard Le Gallienne, Arthur Symons, and Oscar Wilde, among others. He founded the Irish Literary Society in London and in Dublin the National Literary Society, which spread throughout Ireland. During the same period, Yeats began to envision an Irish National Theatre, partly as a vehicle for his first effort at play writing, *The Countess Cathleen*, but also because he had begun to develop an idea of transforming and uplifting the Irish notion of culture through theatre and literature. In 1896, shortly after returning to live permanently in Ireland, he met Lady Gregory who sought to help the habitually impoverished and frequently ill Yeats. She provided him with summers in the country and it was largely through her efforts that the Irish Literary Theatre, later the Abbey Theater, came into being.

An American lawyer, John Quinn, first met Yeats in 1902 and proposed an American lecture tour. Yeats agreed and in 1903-4 he traveled to America appearing at most of the major American colleges and universities, clubs, and societies. He made an excellent impression and returned for similar tours in 1912 (with the Abbey Theatre troupe), 1914, and 1920.

In 1912, Yeats took up fencing at the suggestion and under the direction of his new secretary, Ezra Pound. Pound also introduced Yeats to Japanese Noh drama, which became a strong influence on his later theatrical works. In 1917, Yeats bought Thoor Ballyle, a stone tower near Coole Park. In the same year, the 52-year-old Yeats married Georgie Hyde-Lee, who was 26. The marriage was a happy one and the couple had two

children, Anne Butler (1919) and William Michael (1921).

The year 1922 saw the start of the Irish Civil War, during which Yeats supported the pro-treaty governments, and the death of his father in New York. In 1923 Yeats received the Nobel Prize for Literature. Over the next decade Yeats' health slowly declined; however he continued to write and take an active part in the new politics of Ireland. He worked on a committee to advise the government on a new coinage and in 1928 he served a term in the Irish Senate. By 1936 he was suffering from serious heart problems and nephritis and in January 1939 he died in France. He was originally buried in Roqueverne, France, but in 1948 his remains were reinterred in Drumcliff, County Sligo.

Sources:

Dictionary of Literary Biography -- Volume 19: British Poets, 1880-1914. Donald E. Stanford, ed. Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1983.

Scope and Contents

Typescripts and page proofs of works and letters from the author make up the bulk of the W. B. Yeats Collection, 1872-1970. The collection is organized into four series: Series I. Works, 1887-1939 (4.5 boxes); Series II. Correspondence, 1891-1938 (4.5 boxes); Series III. Yeats Family, 1872-1970 (1 box); and Series IV. Third-Party Works and Correspondence, 1905-1970 (1 box). This collection was previously accessible through a card catalog, but has been re-cataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project. Titles of all works and names of all correspondents are indexed at the end of this guide.

The works series contains page proofs from many of Yeats' volumes of poetry and plays including *The Countess Cathleen*, *The Wanderings of Oisín*, and *Wild Swans at Coole*, *Other Verses* and *A Play in Verse*. In addition is a draft for a proposed eleven volume series of Yeats' work. These volumes are represented by proofs pages from previous publications, rearranged with notes and insertions. A number of individual holograph and typescript poems are also present.

The correspondence series overwhelmingly is made up of letters from Yeats to friends and publishers. Of particular note among his correspondents are Mabel Beardsley, Edmund Dulac, Joseph M. Hone, William Horton, George Russell, and Fisher Unwin. Letters to Yeats are grouped together in a single folder and a lively correspondence between Yeats and Thomas Sturge Moore carried out between 1901 and 1936, is present at the end of the series.

Series III is made up of works and correspondence from members of the Yeats family, including Elizabeth Corbet, Georgie Lees, Jack Butler, John Butler, and Lily. Of particular interest in this series is a set of W. B. Yeats' hand prints on two sheets of paper.

Series IV contains works and letters by and between friends and associates of the Yeats' family. Edmund Dulac's musical score for *At the Hawk's Well*, Pamela Hickson's "The Fair Youth of Yeats," and James P. O'Reilly's "W.B. Yeats and Undergraduate Oxford," are present, as is correspondence from Russell Alspach to his co-editor R. L. Dewilton, and James F. Drake, Inc.'s letters to Elizabeth and Jack Butler Yeats.

Elsewhere in the Ransom Center are 40 photographs of Yeats, his family, and people and places associated with him, located in the Literary Files of the Photography Collection. Also present are 17 vertical files containing newspaper clippings covering the publication and criticism of Yeats' work, as well as biographical and printed material. Portraits and drawings of Yeats appear in about a dozen collections in the Art Collection, as well as a group of materials from Yeats' personal art collection. Other materials related to W. B. Yeats may be found in the following manuscript collections at the Ransom Center:

- Armstrong, Terence Ian Eytton
- Bax, Clifford
- Blunden, Edmund Charles
- Casey, Sean
- Church, Richard
- Clarke, Austin
- Coppard, Alfred Edgar
- Craig, Edward Gordon
- Cunard, Nancy
- Dulac, Edmund
- Ervine, St. John Greer
- Flint, Frank Stewart
- Garnett, Edward
- Garvin, James Louis
- Gogarty, Oliver St. John
- Granville-Barker, Harley Granville
- Johnston, Edward
- Low, Joseph Farnsworth
- MacNamara, Brinsley
- MacNeice, Louis
- Marsh, Edward Howard

- Masefield, John
- Moore, George
- Morrell, Ottoline Violet Anne
- Cavendish Bentinck, Lady
- Morrison, George E.
- Palmer, Herbert Edward
- Payne, Leonidas Warren
- PEN
- Pound, Ezra Loomis
- Reid, Forrest
- Rodgers, William Robert
- Russell, George William
- Scott-James, Rolfe Arnold
- Shaw, George Bernard
- Sitwell, Edith, Dame
- Strong, Leonard Alfred George
- Synge, John Millington
- Ussher, Arland
- Warner, Rex
- Wilde, Oscar
- Young, Stark

Index Terms

Correspondents

Alsapach, Russell K. (Russell King), 1901-.

Beardsley, Mabel, 1871-1916.

Buss, Kate.

Dulac, Edmund, 1882-1953.

Farr, Florence, 1860-1917.

Gonne, Maud, 1866-1953.

Gregory, Lady, 1852-1932.

Hickson, Pamela.

Hone, Joseph M. (Joseph Maunsell), 1882-1959.

Horton, W.T. (William Thomas), 1864-1919.

Moore, T. Sturge (Thomas Sturge), 1870-1944.

Russell, George William, 1867-1935.

Squire, John Collings, Sir, 1884-1958.

Wellington, Dorothy, 1889-1956.

Unwin, T. Fischer (Thomas Fischer), 1848-1935.

Organizations

James F. Drake, Inc.

Subjects

Dulac, Edmund, 1882-1953.

Ballads, English, Ireland.

English poetry.

Folklore, Ireland.

Irish drama (English), History and criticism.

Mysticism.

Theatre, Ireland, History.

Document Types

Galley proofs.

Prompt books.

I. Works, 1887-1939

A-K

Box 1 Folder 1

"At the grey round of the hills..." holograph with author revisions and note, 1917, 1p **Folder 2**

The Countess Cathleen

Prompt copy with author revisions, nd, 96pp **Box 1 Folder 3**

Two sets of page proofs with author revisions, 1898, 142pp each **Folder 4-5**

Page proofs with author revisions, 1912, 108pp **Folder 6**

The Hour Glass, holograph with author revisions, ca. 1903 **Folder 7**

"King Goll," holograph with author revisions, notes and photocopies, 1887 **Folder 8**

L-Z **Folder 9**

Oedipus at Colonus, typescript with author revisions, 78pp **Folder 10**

"An Old Song Resung," bound holograph with author revisions, nd, 1p **Box 2 Folder 1**

"Per Amica Silientia Lunae," two holograph versions with author revisions and additional pages, 1920, 72pp **Folder 2-3**

A Reverie Over Childhood and Youth, typescript with author revisions, 1914, 110pp **Folder 4**

Various holograph poems, holograph letter, and newsclippings in a bound volume, 1916-1930 **Folder 5**

<i>The Wanderings of Oisín</i> , page proofs with author revisions, 1889, 156pp	Folder 6
<i>Wild Swans at Coole, Other Verses and A Play in Verse</i> , page proofs with holograph additions and author revisions, 1917, 43pp	Folder 7
<i>The Winding Stair</i> , typescript and paste-up for first edition with author revisions throughout, 1928-29	Folder 8-9
Collected Poetry and Prose, page proofs and typescript indices, 1937-1939	
	Box 2
List of contents and description of proposed eleven volume project	Folder 10
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Volume 2	Box 3 Folder 1-5
Volume 3	Folder 6
Volume 4	Folder 7
Volume 5	Folder 8
Volume 6	Folder 9
Volume 7	Box 4 Folder 1-2
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Volume 9	Folder 5
Volume 10	Folder 6
Volume 10, cont.	Box 5 Folder 1
Volume 11	Folder 2-3
Page proofs and photocopies from various volumes	Folder 4-5
Draft holograph tables of content, 22pp	Folder 6-7

II. Correspondence, 1891-1938

Outgoing, 1891-1938

A-B	Box 5 Folder 8
Beardsley, Mabel	Folder 9
"Twenty-One Letters to Mabel Beardsley," edited with an introduction by Hazard Adams, nd, 67pp	Box 6 Folder 1
Bullen, Arthur Henry	Folder 2
C-G	Folder 3
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Higgins, F. R.	Folder 7
Hone, Joseph Maunsell	Folder 8
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Matthews, Elkin	Folder 5
Milligan, Alice L.	Folder 6
P-Z	Folder 7
Russell, George William	Folder 8
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Unwin, T. Fisher	Folder 2
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Moore, Thomas Sturge, 1901-1936	Folder 4-5

Moore, Thomas Sturge, cont.

Box 9 Folder 1-4

III. Yeats Family, 1872-1970

Yeats, Elizabeth Corbet

Diary entry; two receipts; and correspondence, A-Z, unidentified, 1888-1939	Box 10
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James F. Drake, Inc., 1920-1936	Folder 3
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Yeats, Georgie Lees, correspondence, 1918-1945	Folder 4
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Yeats, Jack Butler

Correspondence, 1901-1952	Box 10 Folder 5
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MacGowran, Jack, 1949-1956	Folder 6
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Yeats, John Butler

Correspondence, 1906-1920	Box 10 Folder 7
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Yeats, Susan Pollexfen, 1872-1873	Folder 8
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Yeats, Lily

Works and correspondence, 1918-1948	Box 10
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Hone, Joseph Maunsell, 1939-1943	Folder 10
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Yeats, Michael, correspondence, 1970	Folder 11
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Yeats, William Butler, signed hand prints and notes, 1932-1933, nd	Folder 12
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IV. Third-Party Works and Correspondence

A-H

Box 10 Folder 13

Alspach, Russell K. to R. L. Dewilton, 1963-1970 (*galley files for the *Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats*, edited by Alspach, removed to galley folder 1) **Folder 14***

Dulac, Edmund, music for *At the Hawk's Well*, holograph, typescript and page proofs versions with author notations, 1920-1921, 49pp **Folder 15**

Hickson, Pamela

"The Fair Youth of Yates," typescript and carbon copy with author revisions, 1957, 160pp **Box 11 Folder 1**

Correspondence with Harry Ransom re publication of "The Fair Youth of Yates" in *The Texas Quarterly*, 1957-1966 **Folder 2**

I-Z

Folder 3

James F. Drake, Inc.

Correspondence with Elizabeth C. Yeats, 1920-1936 (fragile) **Box 11 Folder 4**

Correspondence with Jack Butler Yeats, 1921-1930 (fragile) **Folder 5**

Maxwell, William, *The Dun Emer Press and the Cuala Press*, bound volume with author notes and correspondence, 1932, 67pp **Folder 6**

Morgan, Louis, "How Writers Work: W.B. Yeats on the Future of Poetry," typescript, 1931, 14pp **Folder 7**

O'Reilly, James P., "W.B. Yeats and Undergraduate Oxford, 1919-1922," holograph, 1953, 20pp **Folder 8**

Reviews of *The Wanderings of Oisín*, holograph copies of reviews in a bound volume, handwriting unidentified, 6pp **Folder 9**

Wedderburn, William, Sir, guestbook with entries by Elizabeth Yeats and other signatures, 1905-1927

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William Butler Yeats Collection--Index of Correspondents

Names in **bold** appear in the RLIN record.

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- Cambell, --, Mrs.--6.3
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- Cockerell, Sydney Carlyle, Sir, 1867-1962--6.3
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- **Moore, T. Sturge (Thomas Sturge), 1870-1944--8.4-9.4**
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- O'Reilly, James P.--11.3
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 - "Music and Poetry" --10.13
 - *Music for At the Hawk's Well*--10.15
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- Gonne, Maude-- Yeats and Ireland--10.13
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 - Reminiscences of W.B. Yeats--10.13
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- *William Butler Yeats*--11.3
- Jones, M. Pryce-- W.B. Yeats, died 28/1/39--11.3
- Llewelyn-Davies, Moya-- W.B. Yeats and Bertrand Russell
- Maxwell, William--*The Dun Emer Press and the Cuala Press*--11.6
- Morgan, Louis-- "How Writers Work: W.B. Yeats on the Future of Poetry" --11.7
- O'Reilly, James P.-- "W.B. Yeats and Undergraduate Oxford, 1919-1922" --11.8
- Robinson, Lennox-- "Address to be made..." --11.3
- Rossi, Mario M.-- Yeats and Philosophy--11.3
- Salkeld, Cecil-- Memories of W.B. Yeats--11.3
- Yeats, Lily--
 - Account of Yeats' Family and Childhood--10.9
- Notes on W. B. Yeats--10.9
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 - The Dreaming of the Bone--1.1
 - A Fairy Song--1.1
 - *Four Plays for Dancers: Preface*--1.1
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 - In Memory of Robert Gregory--1.1
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