

American & Irish Literature: From Whitman to Montague

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Abstract: *This article traces some immediate interactions between American and Irish literature. Beginning in the nineteenth century, it also explores the importance of Walt Whitman to W.B. Yeats in his attempts to fashion a poetic – a democratic and un-English poetics – that would meet the requirements of what he deemed to be the new Ireland. The piece also explores, after Yeats, the ongoing desire to enter into various forms of poetic emancipation and accelerate the process of decolonization in Ireland as per the works of Patrick Kavanagh, Denis Devlin, Brian Coffey, Thomas MacGreevy and John Montague who all tapped into the unique possibilities that the American poetic experience put on offer. In so doing, the aforementioned writers – and so many more – helped to enlarge what it means to talk about “Irish” Literature in the twentieth century.*

On December 2, 1892, Douglas Hyde delivered his landmark speech, “The De-Anglicising of Ireland,” to the Irish Literary Society. Some two weeks later, on December 17, 1892, W.B. Yeats (1970) sent a letter to the editor of *United Ireland* in which he questioned Hyde’s belief that a resuscitated Gaelic language would provide *the* means of turning Ireland around. Yeats goes on to ask, in the same letter, “Can we not build up a national tradition, a national literature, which shall be none the less Irish in spirit from being English in language?” (I. 255). In response to his own question, Yeats turns to American literature as a national literature which “differs almost as much from English literature as does the literature of France” (I. 255-6).¹

Among the American authors Yeats cites in this regard are Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, Bret Harte and George W. Cable who, as he reminds his readers, are in a real sense American even though America had once been an English colony. And so, Yeats asserts, “It should be more easy for us, who have in us that Wild Celtic blood, the most un-English of all things under heaven, to make such a literature” (I. 256). He further asserts, and in this there is almost a prescient sense of decolonisation as uneven process, that if Ireland fails to establish a unique national literature it will not be because there is a shortage of materials but because the Irish “lack the power to use them” (I. 256).

The same America which Yeats praised in 1892 turned out to be, when he made his first visit to the United States in 1903-1904, something of a disappointment. In

“America and the Arts,” he wrote: “Everything, I said, had been a delight to me except American poetry, which had followed the way of Lowell, who mistook the imaginative reason for poetry, not the ancient way Whitman, Thoreau and Poe had lit upon” (339). Mary Colum (249) also thinks, as she puts it in *Life and the Dream*, that between the time of Whitman, Emerson, Poe, and the first decades of the twentieth century, most American verse had diminished in value.² To make her point, Colum describes one visit to the Poetry Society of America where, as she listened to Edward Wheeler read Robert Frost’s poems (Wheeler was then President of the Poetry Society of America), she realized how much English “approval” was still a prerequisite for critical acceptance in America (249).

Colum is just as quick to point out, as she does in *From These Roots*, that while American and Irish literature might lack the “abundance of the great English periods” both literatures – in particular, what she calls the new Irish literature – make up for such inabundance with narrative “intensity” (268). As for the United States, she has this insight (and here she is thinking of Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg, Sherwood Anderson, Vachel Lindsay) to offer: “The American direction was towards an internationalism in literature, towards a universal stream in which theirs would be a current – even, in time, the dominating current” (290).³

Stephen Spender takes much the same position with respect to English approval as Colum (though for quite different reasons) in *Love-Hate Relations: English and American Sensibilities* where he records the marked decline in British cultural wealth after World War II, or, as he likens it, an England “no longer the center of power and wealth and language and tradition but peripheral to the great self-involvement of America” (xxvii). Spender goes on to characterize England as a land of “bright small efforts and reduced economies”; bemoans the fact that what Emerson once deemed to be England’s “immense advantage” over America had, in such a short space of time, come full circle. He proceeds to equate the decline of English literature with the premise that it is “in danger of becoming a culture of ‘great hatred, little room.’” And then there comes (considering that last Yeatsian line) what, from the standpoint of this article, is a real dig – “In relation to America, England has become as Ireland was to England” (1967. 939).

Whatever about Spender’s concern over imperial decline, Yeats, for his part, savors America’s “immense advantage” because Whitmanite nationalism represents a guiding principle for that nascent literature which would be “none the less Irish in spirit from being English in language.” And Yeats was not alone in his Whitmanite values. After all, Whitman’s influence was widespread during the entire Revival period. A circumstance Herbert Howarth makes clear in his article, “Whitman and the Irish Writers,” where he points out that an intimate awareness of Whitman, Emerson and Thoreau appears at numerous textual sites throughout the 1880s and 1890s. Howarth also makes it clear that the American influence on Irish writers involved not only a young Yeats who wandered around with an earmarked copy of Whitman stuffed in his pocket

but included an even younger Joyce who “steeped himself” in “The Song of Myself” as well as the mystic-collectivist, George Russell (AE), who read Whitman’s work with great admiration (479-480).⁴ In fact, it is AE who argues that all modern writers must first break new ground, much as Whitman did, in order to realize their own creative urgencies and fashion significant literature narratives in the new century (as footnote to this, AE writes, “I think Europe is tired out and one cannot expect more from England”) (165).

T.W. Rolleston, in keeping with the general enthusiasm surrounding Whitman’s work, writes in “Walt Whitman Abroad” (this article first appeared in the *Camden Post* of February 13, 1884), that “As politician, Walt Whitman’s is in fact the first appearance in poetic literature of a real Democratic mind, because nobody has before seen and represented in writing, what infinite significance in all departments is embodied in this word ‘Democracy’” (Frenz 115). Some years later, Rolleston provides the following comment in another article entitled “Walt Whitman” (the piece first appeared in *Academy* of April 2, 1892) which related to Whitman’s masterful sense of poetic use: “Of the peculiar form in which Walt Whitman has chosen to express himself it is not possible to say much that is profitable. To defend it is impossible – to attack it looks like a sort of *ignoratio elenchi*” (Frenz 123).

If nothing else, then, Whitman provided a form of poetic and political emancipation which set a course for Yeats and his epigones to write “un-English” verse (Grennan 95).⁵ That said, the kind of discourse Yeats is after when he repudiates Englishness (of a type), embraces Americanness (of a type) and creates Irishness (of a type) codifies, as Gerry Smyth argues in a different context – *Decolonisation and Criticism: The Construction of Irish Literature* – a reverse discourse which is “implicated in the reproduction and survival of that which it disdains” (15). In the case of Ireland, such reverse discourses, and there are at least two, contain what Smyth refers to as liberal and radical modes of resistance. And in broad terms, at least, Yeats and AE both fit Smyth’s “liberal” mode of reference to the extent that their texts, in keeping with their specific ideological location as members of a Protestant Anglo-Irish elite, help them maintain a particular hegemonic position while attempting to reduce dependence on English poetic rule and embracing American emancipation as a model for Irish – to be more precise, Anglo-Irish – independence narratives (15-16).

It is also important to recognize that even though “liberal” Anglo-Ireland was big on American freedom, Anglo-Irish writers found it difficult, at times impossible, to break the overdeterminate hold England had on their reverse narratives. As Herbert Howarth puts it, no matter how much Yeats and his contemporaries might honor Whitman “his free verse was not for them” (480).⁶ Howarth makes the related point that Yeats, over the course of his career, continued to maintain an almost paradoxical relationship with reference to Whitman’s complex political and poetic line: “Having rejected Whitman’s metrics, Yeats proceeded through half-a-century of writing to progressive rejections. . . . This is so devastating a series of rejections that it might seem to leave nothing; and yet at the end, when he seems furthest from Whitman, he is most using Whitman as his poetic monitor” (480).

As much as Yeats might have “rejected” Whitman’s metrics, Terence Diggory is convinced that there are a number of ways (*Yeats & American Poetry: The Tradition of the Self*) in which Whitman helped to draw Yeats’s combinative use of poetic form into much sharper focus. Diggory further insists, and there is nothing new or radical in this, that Ezra Pound had a decisive and direct bearing on Yeats’s poetic as evidenced in the emergence of modern free verse forms such as “The Dawn” and “Lines Written in Dejection” (*The Wild Swans of Coole*) (57). Diggory is just as quick to remind his readers that Pound and his associates – in turn – valued Yeats most whenever he used “natural speech” as an effective public medium in collections like *The Green Helmet* (1910) and *Responsibilities* (1914) (59).⁷

By providing American poets with such modes of natural speech, Yeats thus gave a certain credence to their own nationalist and regionalist potentialities and helped to “reaffirm the independence from England that Whitman had earlier declared” (Diggory 59). It is hardly surprising, then, that Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom and Robert Penn Warren found, at least when it came to matters of “independence,” an ally in Yeats because – as they saw it – he legitimized their position as Agrarians from the Deep South. To reinforce this point Diggory cites a personal communication Robert Penn Warren sent him (dated May 2, 1974) wherein Warren states, on the record, that he and his companions “‘used to talk about Yeats and Ireland vis-à-vis England as having a sort of parallel to the writer in the South, in a retarded and depressed society facing a big, booming, dominating society’ “ (135).⁸

While Yeats provides a resonant parallel for some American writers, he provides, for others, an initial textual attraction followed by a measure of poetic disavowal; the kind of disavowal which Steven Matthews describes like this: “For male American poets, writing after Yeats and haunted or possessed by him, the transplanted, emptied-out formality of his work seems to have become ultimately disappointing” (181). “Emptied-out formality,” apart, the influence Yeats had on poets like Robinson Jeffers is undeniable (“Shane O’Neill’s Cairn” [5] and “Ossian’s Grave” [6-9] as two obvious citations).⁹ There is no doubt, either, about the close ties between Yeats and John Berryman in poems like “The Animal Trainer.”

Such ties are confirmed by John Montague who reminds us that Berryman was more than just a little “intrigued” by the later and last poems of Yeats (Montague thinks it is noteworthy that Berryman finished *The Dream Songs* while ensconced in Ireland) (203). Theodore Roethke also penned some fine pieces, “Song,” “The Shy Man,” “Her Wrath,” while living on Inishbofin (Seager 267; Heyen 33-34). More, Roethke’s poems, like some of those belonging to Jeffers and Berryman, turn under the spell, if only at an acute or oblique angle, of Yeats’s extensive poetic repertoire. Immediate evidence of such an abiding relationship between Yeats and Roethke is best seen in such poems as “The Dying Man” (“I am the clumsy man / The instant ages on”) (153-156), “In a Dark Time” (“In a dark time, the eye begins to see”) (239), and “In Evening Air” (“I’ll make a broken music, or I’ll die”) (240).

Inasmuch as Yeats provided a starting point for some American poets – Jeffers, Berryman, Roethke are just the tip of the iceberg – it is clear that America’s writers are the ones who have had and continue to have the predominant influence (“immense advantage”) over Ireland’s evolving poetic.¹⁰ Writers like Denis Devlin, a product of European and American modernism in the 1920s and 1930s, certainly found recourse in the works of T.S. Eliot, Hart Crane and Wallace Stevens. Tate and Warren write, in their Preface to Devlin’s *Selected Poems*, that he produced three outstanding modern poems: “The Passion of Christ,” “From Government Buildings” and “Lough Derg” (13). The most important of these, “Lough Derg,” is, according to Tate and Warren, a poem that ranks right alongside Stevens’ “Sunday Morning,” Eliot’s “Gerontion” and Crane’s “The Broken Tower” (13). Tate and Warren also believe, which brings us back to the distinction between liberal and radical modes of narrative exchange, that Devlin bears almost no trace of Yeatsianism while at least one of his poems, “Ank’hor Vat,” bears a striking resemblance to Charles Olson’s “The Kingfishers.”¹¹ Given such cosmopolitan tastes in verse, it is no surprise that Tate and Warren end up calling Devlin “one of the pioneers of the international poetic English which now prevails on both sides of the Atlantic” (14).

The “international” English which Tate and Warren have in mind here is, as Alex Davis (1999) likes to remind us, a convenient prescription for New Criticism. Davis also points out that Samuel Beckett’s short article, “Recent Irish Poetry” (written in 1934), draws a clear line between Ireland’s “younger antiquarians” and those writers he identifies with the more speculative features of American and European modernism. In particular, he hails the newest works of Denis Devlin and Brian Coffey while denigrating the works of “twilighters” like Austin Clarke, Padraic Colum, Monk Gibbon and F.R. Higgins (Davis and Jenkins 137). True to form, the same Brian Coffey who Beckett praises for his innovative verse ended up producing *Missouri Sequence* under the influence, if not guidance, of Eliot. As direct evidence of Coffey’s eclectic approach here is a brief passage from *Missouri Sequence* (1983) (“Missouri Sequence I”) where he draws some familiar, and familial, links between Ireland and the United States as he thinks, out loud, about how his young charges “grow American”:

Our children have ended play,
have gone to bed,
left me to face
what I had rather not.

They know nothing of Ireland,
they grow American.
They have chased snakes through the couch-grass
in summer, caught butterflies and beetles
we did not know existed,
fished for catfish,
slept on an open porch
when whip-poor-will and tree-frog

work all night,
observed the pupa of the shrill cicada
surface on dry clay,
disrobe for the short ruinous day.
The older ones have helped a neighbour, a farmer,
raise his field of ripe corn
in heat that hurts us to the bone,
paid homage to dead men
with fire-crackers in July,
eaten the turkey in November.
Here now they make their friendships,
learn to love God.

Yet we must leave America,
bitter necessity no monopoly
of Irish soil.
It was pain once to come,
It is pain now to go (*Selected Poems* 30-31)

It should be noted that Coffey dedicated the first section of *Missouri Sequence* to another innovative Irish writer, Thomas MacGreevy, who published what was perhaps the first book-length study of Eliot at the beginning of the 1930s (MacGreevy published his own *Poems*, a few years later, in 1934) and maintained a longstanding correspondence with Wallace Stevens.¹² Indeed, throughout the course of his many letters to MacGreevy (the following letter is dated May 12, 1948), Stevens makes it clear that American verse no longer requires, or desires, English “acceptance” for its continued well-being and growth: “The truth is that American poetry is at its worst in England . . . or in any other land where English is spoken and whose inhabitants feel that somehow our English is a vulgar imitation” (597). Even more unambiguous, another Stevens letter to MacGreevy dated September 9, 1949, makes it ultra-clear where he stands on “the British” question and all that:

But most of the insults we get from the British are the sort of thing that we have been getting regardless of when or why and having nothing to do with economics and politics as they exist between the British and the Americans How natural that sort of thing seems to be to them in their ‘ancient civilization.’ In what sense is it any more ancient than ours? There are older ghosts and perhaps there is Ropmann money in the ground. The truth is that the British flatter themselves at the expense of the world, always have and always will. (646-7)

While MacGreevy, Coffey and Devlin have all been recognized for their interest in, and engagement with, American modernism, Patrick Kavanagh has often been portrayed as someone who wrote about Ireland’s native culture as if *ex nihilo*; as if he was an Irish poet who wrote outside Ireland’s standard modes of discourse

because he managed to free himself from the imposing presence of Yeats (Grennan 97). Citing Seamus Heaney as someone who at one time thought that Kavanagh had all but invented his own “idiom,” Eamon Grennan provides a short, sharp, corrective: Kavanagh “saturated himself in the Americans” (97). And, yet, as much as Kavanagh might have “saturated” himself in American poetics, it is clear that he never took to Whitman. His dislike of Whitman apart, Kavanagh was certainly open to whatever American influence might afford him in terms of narrative emancipation – poetic experimentation. Among the influences Kavanagh does acknowledge, he says that Gertrude Stein “was like whisky” to his work (“her strange rhythms broke up the cliché formation of my thought”) (*The Green Fool* 244). He also acknowledges, with characteristic bluster, the influence of the Beats who provided him with, example, Alan Ginsberg’s *Howl*, some unconventional – “un-English” – modes of poetic expression. In this way a lot of America’s “strange rhythms” helped Kavanagh to find a comfort level, a measure of linear roominess, which exceeded that of his closest contemporaries and competitors. It is thus no exaggeration to suggest that Kavanagh could never have written pieces like “Literary Adventures” without the interposing influence of American literature and the calculated sense of insouciance (“Other exclusive / News stories that cannot be ignored”) which such styles of poetic praxis represented for him at the time:

I am here in a garage in Monaghan.
 It is June and the weather is warm,
 Just a little bit cloudy. There’s the sun again
 Lifting to importance my sixteen acre farm.
 There are three swallows’ nests in the rafters above me
 And the first clutches are already flying.
 Spread this news, tell all if you love me,
 You who knew that when sick I was never dying
 (Nae gane, nae gane, nae frae us torn
 But taking a rest like John Jordan).
 Other exclusive
 News stories that cannot be ignored:
 I climbed Woods’ Hill and the elusive
 Underworld of the grasses could be heard,
 John Lennon shouted across the valley,
 Then I saw a new June moon, quite as stunning
 As when young we blessed the sight as something holy . . . (*Collected Poems* 187)

As much as Heaney might favor the idea that Kavanagh invented his own “idiom,” he is keenly aware of the enduring influence America has had on Irish literature as a whole. When he was asked, in an interview with the *Paris Review*, “Are you aware of a great deal of cross-fertilization between Irish and American poetry?” Heaney responded that such “cross-fertilisation” was nothing new (127). It was, as he put it, an undeniable fact that Irish writers had been “involved in absorbing and coming to terms with” American literature for a long time (127-8). More to the point, Heaney offered the

following conclusion with reference to England's determinate power vis-à-vis Ireland's poetic traditions: "the forms of Irish poetry and of Irish society are still in some uneasy, self-questioning relation to the determining power and example of England and English and the whole Anglo tradition" (128).

Perhaps some of the most striking examples of this "self-questioning relation to the determining power and example of England and English" are found in the texts of John Montague who, from the beginning of his career, embraced the work of Gary Snyder, Robert Creeley and William Carlos Williams in a conscious effort to develop a "new ecology" in Irish poetry (Heaney 128). In the course of developing such a new ecology Montague introduced a more Olsonian line (Heaney's term of reference) into Irish discourse (Heaney 128). Montague (50), himself, insists that while he was reared on canonical English it was William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound and E.E. Cummings – not to mention Robert Duncan, Alan Ginsberg, Kenneth Rexroth, Robert Bly, Robert Penn Warren, W.D. Snodgrass, Carolyn Kizer – who introduced him to "the fascination of the unusual, the bizarre, the blatantly contemporary" ("Fellow Travelling with America" 177).¹³

In "American Pegasus," Montague is just as clear that while he is indebted to Warren for his "pursuit of the colloquial line" and Rexroth for his "casual California toughness" (196), he is also indebted to several other American traditions for his ongoing development as a poet (198). Among these, Montague (circa 1959) has the intellectual and political wherewithal to celebrate Williams's *In The American Grain* because it features a more inclusive sense of "America" than Eliot and his colleagues ever could, or did: "The tradition it posits in its investigation of the American past is, paradoxically, wider than Eliot's, because it acknowledges more than American Protestant experience: there is also, after all, pre-Columbian America, Indian America, Spanish America, even for a brief moment Russian America (their trading posts came as far south as Monterey)" (198-9).¹⁴ Given such a broad-based appreciation of American poetics it is not at all surprising that America figures in so much of Montague's work. It is also no surprise that Michael O'Neill has found it possible to make a compelling case with reference to how Montague's "The Silver Flask" (*The Dead Kingdom*) could never have been written without Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*. The same O'Neill (1999) makes an equally persuasive case that it was Williams who provided Montague with the incentive he needed to mix together prose passages and verse narratives in *The Rough Field*.¹⁵ The same thing, give or take, can be said about Montague's inner-city poems, for example, "A Flowering Absence," which serves as active reminder of just how much the American experience fed into his verse. Beginning, as he makes so clear, somewhere on the mean streets of "darkest Brooklyn" ...

I took the subway to the hospital
in darkest Brooklyn, to call

on the old nun who nursed you
through the travail of my birth
to come on another cold trail.

‘Sister Virgilius, how strange!
She died, just before you came.
She was delirious, rambling of all
her old patients; she could well
have remembered your mother’s name.’

Around the bulk of St Catherine’s
another wild, raunchier Brooklyn:
as tough a territory as I’ve known,
strutting young Puerto Rican hoods,
flash of blade, of bicycle chain.

Mother, my birth was the death
of your love life, the last man
to flutter near your tender womb:
a neonlit bar sign winks off & on,
motherfucka, thass your name. (*Collected Poems* 180-1)

Since Montague’s return to the Brooklyn of his birth, a host of other Irish poets – among them, Eavan Boland, Paul Muldoon, Ciaran Carson, Medbh McGuckian – have all benefited from a close reading of the poetic experiments and political urgencies that have defined the United States in recent times. While there is not enough space, here, to explore these recent poetic exchanges, it is crucial to recognize that without Boland’s reading of Muriel Rukeyser and Anne Sexton, Muldoon’s reading of Raymond Chandler, Carson’s reading of C.K. Williams, and Medbh McGuckian’s reading of Marianne Moore, Irish Literature in the year 2012 would lack a certain vibrance: an *international* vibe that would never have come into play without the creative exchanges that took place between Whitman/Yeats and so ensured, for future generations, that Ireland’s premier writers would be “none the less Irish in spirit from being English in language.”

Notes

- 1 It is interesting that Theodore Roosevelt makes much the same point with reference to Irish Theatre. See: Theodore Roosevelt. *A Note on the Irish Theatre and An “Interview” on the Irish Players in America* by George Bernard Shaw (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1912. 10).

The Irish plays are of such importance because they spring from the soil and deal with Irish things, the familiar home things which the writers really knew. They are not English or French; they are Irish. In exactly the same way, any work of the kind done here, which is really worth doing, will be done by Americans who deal with the American life with which they are familiar; and the American who works abroad as a

make-believe Englishman or Frenchman or German –
or Irishman – will never add to the sum of first-class achievement.

- 2 It is worth noting here that Lawrence Buell talks about much the same kind of “post-colonial anxiety” in terms of America’s “classic” writers.
- 3 Also see Padraic Colum’s discussion of Hawaii: Padraic Colum, *Legends of Hawaii* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1937).
- 4 Wilde, too, was a devotee of Whitman. For more on this see Harold Blodgett, *Walt Whitman in England* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1973). Also check out Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (New York: Knopf, 1988) where Wilde explains that his mother had purchased a copy of *Leaves of Grass* when it was first published and that Lady Wilde read the poems to her son often (168). Also see Lewis Lloyd and Henry Justin Smith, *Oscar Wilde Discovers America 1882* (New York: Benjamin Blom 1936).
- 5 For more on the Yeats/Whitman connection also see James A. Quinn, “Yeats and Whitman, 1887-1925.” *Walt Whitman Review* 20 (September 1974): 106-109.
- 6 In immediate, marked contrast to Yeats & Co., Joseph Campbell, who fits into the “radical” brand of nationalist politics, was also a devotee of Whitman – for the record, he did attempt some free verse. In fact, Austin Clarke claims that Campbell was “the first poet to write free verse in Ireland” (Nora Saunders and A.A. Kelly. *Joseph Campbell: Poet & Nationalist 1879-1944*. Dublin: Wolfhound, 1988. 48). Campbell was also, it might be said, a member of the Imagist Group in Soho which included Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle and T.E. Hulme – Pound called Campbell the “dark man from the north.” (Nora Saunders A.A. Kelly. *Joseph Campbell: Poet & Nationalist 1879-1944*. Dublin, 49). As well as his attempts at Whitmanesque free verse and an associated effort to assimilate the techniques of Imagism, Campbell’s achievements in New York include his founding of a School of Irish Studies at Fordham University in 1928. Here is a shortlist of Campbell’s work: *The Garden of the Bees* (Belfast: W. Erskine Mayne & Dublin: M.H. Gill, 1905); *The Rushlight* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1907); *The Gilly of Christ* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1907); *The Mountainy Singer* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1909); *Irishry* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1913); *Earth of Cualann* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1917); *The Poems of Joseph Campbell*. Ed. Austin Clarke (Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1963).
- 7 For more on the Pound/Yeats connection, see Thomas Parkinson, “Yeats and Pound: The Illusion of Influence,” *Comparative Literature* 6 (Summer 1954) 256-264; Richard Fallis, *The Irish Renaissance* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1977); Peter Faulkner, “Yeats, Ireland and Ezra Pound,” *Threshold* 18 (1963) 58-68; K.L. Goodwin, *The Influence of Ezra Pound*. (London: Oxford UP, 1966) 75-105; George T. Wright, *The Poet in the Poem: The Personae of Eliot, Yeats, and Pound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960); James Longenbach, *Stone Cottage: Pounds, Yeats, and Modernism* (New York: Oxford, 1988); W.B. Yeats, *A Packet For Ezra* (Dublin: Cuala Press, 1924). It might also be noted, here, that while Pound might have admired some things in Yeats’s poetic, he was a lot less flattering when it came to Northern Ireland. Here he is, in one contribution to *The New Age* (1917), criticizing those in Northern Ireland as, at best, provincial . . .

Neither from South Ireland nor from Ulster has anyone spoken on behalf of civilization, Or spoken with any concern for humanity as a whole. And because of this the ‘outer world’ not only has no sympathy, but is bored, definitely bored sick with the whole Irish business, and in particular with the Ulster dog-in-the-manger. No man for any care of civilisation as a whole can care a damn who taxes a few hucksters in Belfast, or what rhetorical cry about local rights they lift up as a defence against taxes. As for religion, that is a hoax, and a circulation of education would end it. But a nation which defends its bigotry by the propagation of ignorance must pay the cost in one way or another.

Provincialism is the enemy.

As references for above, see: “Provincialism is the Enemy,” *The New Age* 26 July 1917. Reprinted in *Selected Prose 1909-1965*. Ed. William Cookson (London: Faber, 1973).

For discussion of same, check out the following: Hans-Werner Ludwig, "Province and Metropolis, Centre and Periphery: Some Critical Terms Re-Examined." *Poetry in the British Isles: Non-Metropolitan Perspectives*. Ed. Hans-Werner Ludwig and Lothar Fietz. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995. 47- 69).

- 8 For impact of *The Tower* see Cleanth Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967). In terms of Yeats and Faulkner see Cleanth Brooks, 'Faulkner and W.B. Yeats' in Cleanth Brooks, *William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).
- 9 Also check out Una Jeffers, *Visits to Ireland: Travel-Diaries of Una Jeffers* (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press, 1954).
- 10 Fintan O'Toole, for one, likes to trace the American influence on a backwater Ireland from the time of Yeats and AE through the emergence (as it were) of a more "radical" poetic period: just as Yeats had taken some political solace in Whitman's brand of cultural nationalism, or thereabouts, Ireland's more "radical" brands of nationalism – i.e., Irish Catholic poets – also tended to work in concert with American influence at the same time. Thus, as O'Toole puts it, the relationship between Ireland and the United States is one where "ironies abound" (13). And perhaps first among the "ironies" that O'Toole is anxious to explore is the fact that once the Irish government introduced the Censorship of Publications Act in 1929 the chances of Ireland ever creating a "native" literature with "mass readership" was cut off (13). But this is just the first ironic turn. Because the banning of books under the guise of the Irish Censorship Board created a sociological vacuum. And what, O'Toole asks, stepped into to fill such a vacuum? As he sees it, the "shelves emptied of banned Irish books were filled largely with American cowboy novels and their healthy, rural, asexual camaraderie" (13). As fate would have it, of course, the "asexual camaraderie" of American novels was, give or take a few asexuals, exactly what DeValera's Ireland was into. That said, a handful of writers – in the main, "radical" Catholic poets – managed (both before and after the Censorship of Publication Act) to make their peace with some things besides asexual reading materials. For example, while this article takes as its main focus poetics rather than prose narrative, it might help – albeit in footnotish terms – to at least recognize, in here, Joyce's influence – not asexual – on several major American writers. To that end, here are a few critical references which talk about Joyce in an "American" context: Forrest Read, *Pound/Joyce: The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce, with Pound's Essays on Joyce* (New York: New Directions, 1997); Jeffrey Segall, *Joyce in America: Cultural Politics and the Trials of Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Craig Hansen Werner, *Paradoxical Resolutions: American Fiction since James Joyce* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Robert McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together 1920-1930* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968); Robert McAlmon, *McAlmon and the Lost Generation: A Self-Portrait*, Ed., Robert E. Knoll (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962); Karen Lawrence, ed., *Transcultural Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Mary Colum and Padraic Colum, *Our Friend James Joyce* (New York: Doubleday, 1958); William Carlos Williams, "A Point for American Criticism," in Samuel Beckett et al. *An Exagmination of James Joyce* (New York: Haskell house, 1974) 173-185; Robert Martin Adams, *After Joyce: Studies in Fiction After Ulysses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Daniel J. Singal, *William Faulkner: The Making of a Modernist* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Richard Pearce, *The Politics of Narration: James Joyce, William Faulkner, and Virginia Woolf* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991); Robert E. Gajdusek, *Hemingway and Joyce: A Study in debt and Payment* (Corte Madera, CA: Square Circle Press, 1984); Robert N. List, *Dedalus in Harlem: The Joyce-Ellison Connection* (Washington: University Press of America, 1982).
- 11 Alex Davis. "Devlin and the New Criticism." *A Broken Line: Denis Devlin and Irish Poetic Modernism* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2000. 60). In this regard check out: Denis Devlin. *Collected Poems of Denis Devlin*. Ed. J.C.C. Mays (Dublin: Dedalus, 1989. 159):
The antlered forests

Move down to the sea.
Here the dung-filled jungle pauses

Buddha has covered the walls of the great temple
With the vegetative speed of his imagery
Let us wait, hand in hand.

- 12 Thomas MacGreevy. *Thomas Stearns Eliot, a Study* (London, Chatto & Windus, 1931). Thomas MacGreevy. *Collected Poems*. Forward by Samuel Beckett. Ed. Thomas Dillon Redshaw (Dublin: New Writers' Press, 1971); *Collected Poems of Thomas MacGreevy*. Ed. Susan Schreibman (Dublin/Washington D.C.: Anna Livia Press/Catholic University of America Press, 1991).
- 13 Also see: Sean V. Golden. "Duncan's Celtic Mode." *Robert Duncan: Scales of the Marvelous*. Ed. Robert J. Berthoff and Ian W. Reid. (New York: New Directions, 1979. 208-224).
- 14 Also see Montague's memoir, *Company: A Chosen Life* (London: Duckworth, 2001).
- 15 Also read: Elizabeth Grubgeld, "John Montague's *The Dead Kingdom* and the Postwar Elegy," *new Hibernia Review* 1.1 (1997): 71-82.

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