

**SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR TRANSLATING THE ENGLISH  
TENSES AND ASPECTS INTO  
ARABIC**

YOWELL Y. AZIZ  
COLLEGE OF ARTS - MOSUL UNIVERSITY

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With Yeats I compare painters like El Greco or Van Gogh; his pictures smoulder on the canvas. They have vaster dimensions of thought and feeling, ranging from the primitive, the esoteric and the fantastic to the intensely personal. They have an order which is all their own and an evocative power that is terribly disturbing. As Alex Zwerdling says of the heroes of the Easter Rising; they :

‘transcend the ordinary terms of right and wrong’ of ‘practical and impractical action.’ (1)  
and as such offer a remarkably exciting literary and psychological experience

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(1.) Yeats and the Heroic Ideal : by Alex Zwerdling .N. Y. University Press 1965 - page 124

In his fascinating review of drama, *The Death of Tragedy* Steiner states that tragedy is not possible in the modern Godless world; that if one takes out of an environment where he is subject to an omnipotent spiritual power, bars the doors of hell to him, places him in a society where the causes of disaster are temporal, and where conflict can be resolved by technical or social means, one takes tragedy out of his life. He omitted to mention, however, that there are some backwaters of the modern world where tragedy may still be possible, and surely Ireland is such a place. Even today, Ireland has escaped most of the turmoils of the Industrial Revolution and is a land in which religion still plays a dominant role and in which older, if somewhat tarnished values than those respected elsewhere in the west are held in esteem. This is, possibly why Sean O'Casey's plays are so fundamentally tragic, and why Yeats was able to preserve his idealism. Judged in the light of Steiner, Yeats dwelt in a more potentially 'tragic' environment than Marvell since the latter, although *living* at a time when a civil war was being waged on religious grounds, tended to put the preservation of good government above other considerations - as did Shakespeare in his 'history plays'.

I realize, of course, that most of the criticism that I have cited concerns itself with drama rather than with poetry and that the poet, and especially the lyric poet, is not usually expected to exhibit the same characteristics. I do, however, believe that some interesting conclusions may be drawn and feel that there are elements of drama in both of these poems. I mention this criticism also, not because it is my intention to employ it to come to any decisive conclusions in favour of one or the other poet but in order that each may thereby shed more light on the other and assist in a form of mutual appreciation. In the light of these criticisms and of my own thoughts on these great poems I can express my own opinion best by making reference to painting. I detect in Marvell's poems much of the balance, formality and restraint of the early Italian school. They exhibit the clarity of the whole age of Enlightenment. At one and the same time they belong to an age that can never return but are yet essentially modern with their simple clear lines and an essentially scientific order in their construction. They are, however, dignified with a human rather than an abstract theme.

from misgivings about the characters or motivations of his country-men,  
to doubt even of the patriots themselves :

This other man I had dreamed

A drunken , vainglorious lout. . (1 )

However ,once they had made the supreme sacrifice of offering their lives  
to Ireland, all doubts are swept aside and the heroes are enshrined in the  
national pantheon of Ireland.

Bradley defines Shakespearean tragedy(2) as a demonstration of the terrible  
waste of human potentiality, and from this standpoint Yeats is essentially tragic.  
The suicidal « delirium of the brave » could certainly be viewed in this light.

Again, if one is of the opinion that the heroes :

MacDonagh and MacBride

And Connolly and Pearse, (3)

were martyrs one removes the tragic element and substitutes an element of  
ultimate fulfillment ( as did Milton in *Samson Agonistes* or Dante in ( *The  
Divine Comedy* ) which, although dramatic cannot be defined as "tragic".

One further factor which does not appear to have been considered  
by critics, concerns the presence of an Oriental element in Yeats' philosophy  
which reveals itself mainly in his conception of the historical process, of birth  
and rebirth /with the idea of final judgement and extinction ruled out . Since  
great critics of Sanscrit drama(4) have noted this 'romantic - ' element at the  
root of Oriental thinking perhaps it could be argued that the Yeatsian con-  
ception of human destiny cannot result in tragedy . Perhaps this dramatic  
element in Yeats is worthy of a new classification ; certainly his poems are  
more , archetypal than those of Marvell and delve back to a 'Dionysian' (5)  
pre- Sophoclean area of sensibility .,

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(1.) Easter 1916 *Lines* 15- 16. *Stanza* 11.

(2.) Shakespearean Tragedy *MacMillan* , London , 1964 .

(3.) Easter 1916 *Lines* 19 - 20.

(4.) See 'Indian Drama and the West' by Henry W. Wells Pages 86-94 in *The  
Journal of Commonwealth Literature, University of Leeds, September 1965*

(5.) See *Modern Continental Criticism : O . B . Hardison, Jr. Appleton-  
Century New York 1962 . Part IV Psychology and Anthropology on  
Nietzsche's Theory of Tragedy - Page 231-233*

'They 're with O'Leary in the grave' (1)

beyond the spite of the crowd and immortalized by verse.

One sees in this poem how perfectly Yeats has transformed the local, individual experience into a work of eternal significance. Stripped of its contemporary reference it might be interpreted as a passionate response to the finer, more generous human instincts, a celebration of virtue as much as an attack on narrow provincialism. Whether or not one is attracted by the aloof aristocratic persona is a matter of personal taste, but perhaps a poem should be evaluated by the passion it generates, and there can be little doubt that this is very powerful.

The difference between Classicism and Romanticism is in essence, what really divides these two works : Marvell's great poem is restrained, and in the clash between two forces, both almost equally right, one is reminded of the Sophoclean tragedy *Antigone* which is cited by Lessing as the first great example of pure tragedy. Cromwell would represent Creon, who is responsible for the good government of Thebes and Charles would represent Antigone, who obeys a more fundamental law, that of respect for the dead, or, in the case of the English monarch, the divine right of kings. The fate of both protagonists is tragic : Charles suffers death and Cromwell is condemned to live by the sword - and possibly perish by it :

The same Arts that did gain  
A Pow'r must it maintain. (2)

In the Yeats political poems the tension is not generated by ideas of right or wrong ; so far as 'principles' are concerned he is full of conviction. The Yeatsian tension springs from more personal sources : from misgivings about the effect of his poetry :

Did that play of mine send out  
Certain men the English shot? (3)

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(1.) September 1913 ; *Line* 32 .

(2.) An Horatian Ode : *Line* 119-120 .

(3.) The Man and the Echo *Lines* 11-12

The History Plays and *Henry iv* particularly are almost archetypal English representations of this problem. The basic problem involved was the reconciliation of the desire for peace and firm government with the perception of the illegality of the ruling power, —I doubt if anyone could imagine Yeats coming to terms with this dilemma in anything resembling the recognizing of «illegality». His whole life, indeed, was a paean in praise of the sacrificial death of heroes, and the establishment of a culture worthy of them.

It seems to me that there are two distinct strains woven into the texture of Yeats thought. There is the essentially healthy strain of change and rebirth of the joyfull recreation of past glory which rings out through his final poems :

Cast your mind on other days  
That we in coming days may be  
Still the indomitable Irishry .(1)

and there is the strain of nostalgia and pity, a yearning almost, for the impossible which seems to express a distinct facet of the Irish temperament. The final stanza of *September 1913* catches this mood:

Yet could we turn the years again,  
and call those exiles as they were  
In all their loneliness and pain ... (2)

as he considers the recalling of those exiles and the startled response of the middle-class, whose ignoble sanity is contrasted with the apparent madness of the heroes. All Yeats tenderness and admiration wells out in the next line:

They weighed so lightly what they gave (3)  
and this is followed by the resignation and immediacy of :

But let them be, they 're dead and gone, (4)  
which echoes a paternal concern and protectiveness for the peace and safety of these heroes slumbering where they had fallen in a noble cause. The stanza ends with the refrain slightly changed:

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(1.) Under Ben Bulbin *Verse V*, Lines 14-16.

(2.) *September 1913* Lines 25-27.

(3.) *ibid* Line 30.

(4.) *ibid* Line 31.

John M. Wallace is of the opinion that Marvell's fine political balance is partly due to his classical education and philosophic temperament and that

His millenarianism , however , was tempered by his aristocratic bias , his dislike of religious and political enthusiasm ,his classical training and Horatian irony, and perhaps above all, by his opinion of the poet's role. His function was to speak not himself but the truth , to mirror reality not to express opinion , and the solemnity of the ode is in part derived from the effacing of personality. (1)

Here , perhaps , is the basic reason for the difference in the style of Marvell and Yeats .It is a difference that concerns the whole evolution of poetry over the last three hundred years. Marvell was still attached to the classic tradition from which Yeats was debarred, not only by a change of taste but also by a lack of formal education .Yeats' heritage was Romanticism and though this had been stiffened by the influence of symbolism and even when it retreats behind a mask. Such impartiality as he has is the expression of the genuine dilemma of being able to see right on both sides: it is achieved not by philosophic rationalizing of political necessity but by agonizing self appraisal and doubt .

*An Horatian Ode* is however not as impartial Here as it is often made out to be .After the execution scene, which acts as a kind of poetic watershed ,Cromwell's supremacy is depicted by the use of imagery from falconry, Cromwell being the falconer obedient to the Falconer ,the constitution . He wears the laurels which were rejected in *The Garden* having left his retreat, where his highest plot (note the double meaning of plot ) had been to plant the Bergamot perhaps a double meaning to Bergamot I'm told means prince peal(2)he proceeds effectively to ruin a great work of Time . There is nothing in this concept of political change of so vast a perspective as Yeats concept of gyrations and the rise and fall of civilizations . Marvell , indeed, might well be compared to Shakespeare in his handling of this theme of political power.

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(1.) *Destiny His Choice: The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell* by John M. Wallace. Cambridge University Press 1968. p 105.

(2.) *An Horatian Ode Line 32 .*



man. In both cases the 'form' is admirably suited to the content and in Yeats particularly, the tone of disappointment and disdain in *September* 1913 and of transforming revelation in *Easter* 1916 is perfectly suited to the 'persona' of the poet.

The third stanza of *September* 1913 opens with the magnificent lines:

' Was it for this the wild geese spread

The grey wing upon every tide,

In this memorable outburst of impassioned rhetoric, the 'wild geese' refer to the Irishmen who as a result of persecution, left their country to wander abroad. They are the symbols of loneliness, remote beauty and austere nobility, and their instinctive migrations possibly anticipate those of *The Wild Swans' at Coole* whose hearts had not grown old or degenerated in nobility as our own have done.

The repetition of 'for this' in lines one, three and four of this stanza enhances the dramatic rhetorical effect and emphasizes Yeats' plea that it most assuredly was not for this degenerate society that these martyrs had shed their blood. There follows the tolling chant of the heroes names imparting an almost epic quality and a 'keening' note of melancholy and pathos at the waste of life in this thoughtless self sacrificing 'delirium of the brave, and one is left wondering if, by the use of this most telling phrase, Yeats was not just a little regretful that their energy had not been more carefully husbanded.

Marvell too is critical of his heroes: the criticism of Cromwell may be oblique but by such expressions as 'forward youth' ( which usually implies over ambition' ) and restless Cromwell' who urged his active star,) Marvell seems to recognize an indecent ambition in 'The Lord Protector', as well as a certain rightness in the claims of the Royalists:

' Though Justice against Fate complain.,

And plead the antient Rights in vain :

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(1.) An Horatian Ode *Line* 1.

sensitive : the voice of a man as virtuous and much travelled as Chaucer, the voice of an age of refinement.

However detached he may appear to be, judging by the tenor of my argument above, in such poems as *The Coronet*, Marvell shows that he is by no means insensitive. He recognizes also (as perhaps Yeats does not) that the 'real' ever falls short of the 'ideal' and discovers in the very Chaplet with which he would crown Christ's head:

the Serpent old  
That, twining in his speckled breast,  
About the flow'rs disguis'd does fold,  
With wreath of Fame and Interest'. 13 - 16

Even in his own day, Marvell was considered a formal poet: a comparison between *The Coronet* and Herbert's *The Collar* is very enlightening and reveals how Marvell preferred to work behind the formal facade of the 'pastoral' mode with its stylized expression and structure in preference to Herbert's stark and personal immediacy. After reading *The Coronet* one cannot, surely, doubt of Marvell's sincerity and yet it is a restrained form of emotion that is expressed and its appreciation is not always immediate.

*An Horatian Ode* exhibits these qualities in their highest degree it has, moreover, neither the emotion of *The Coronet* nor the idealism of *The Garden*. It exhibits, however, a mature and terrible honesty which has often been mistakenly regarded as an early example of 'double think'. Marvell, of course, was a born politician (perhaps I should say 'statesman') and he brought to the rather dubious world of 17th century government, standards of integrity that have rarely been surpassed.

Yeats 'tone of passionate involvement' (1) while it hardly convinces one of detached rationality, is much more the creation of a poet than of a statesman

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(1) *Yeats and the Heroic Ideal* by Alex Zwerdling, New York University Press - page 126

and exasperated disappointment that these men had been able to preserve so little. The persona, an irreverent, aristocratic soul boils over with pity and indignation .

Marvell holds his emotions much tightly under control. There is a distinct relationship between the restraint of his opinions and the formal style in which they are expressed. The pace of the poems must have been increased, one would think , if the passion had seethed as it does in *September 1913*. The classical strophe and anti - strophe perfectly transpose the solemn Horatian metre into English and the Metaphysical 'wit' of stanza eleven:

' Nature that hateth emptiness ,

Allows of penetration less :

And therefore must make room

Where greater spirits come ' . (1)

If nature will not tolerate a power vacuum, no more will it allow two bodies to occupy the same space - although an apt analogy, serves to distance the emotional impact and , in a manner which would ,no doubt, have met with Yeats' intense disapproval, removes the immediate argument to a plain of abstraction .

Cromwell, himself, is praised because of his restraint : even the Irish :

can affirm his praises best,

And have, though overcome , confest

How good he is, how just , (2)

The overall effect of this poem is extremely ambiguous, reminding me somewhat of the work of another writer of an age of political transition, Sir Walter Scott. Scott, however, had accepted the new English dominated culture and in *Redgauntlet*, ( although the old life is sanctified by noble tradition), he throws the weight of his reputation on the opposite balance on the ground of progress and political expediency.' (3) yet, inspite of its elusive quality, Marvell's verse has quite a distinct tone, it may be muted but it is melodious and full of harmony .It is also reflective, ironic, intelligent and

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(1) An Horatian Ode- Lines 41-44

(2) An Horatian Ode Lines 77 - 79 .

(3) I feel that a very valuable and interesting thesis could be done on the manner in which Scottish and Irish writers - particularly Yeats and Scott - faced up to this problem.

a similarity of tone. To compare him with a poet like Marvell who really represents a tradition, not just of poetry but of culture, can only result in the discrediting of those who call Yeats austere and impersonal.

In the second stanza of *September 1913* for instance, consider how the 'hollow men' of middle class Dublin are contrasted with the heroes whom they idolized in the more artless years of their childhood. The intensity of these heroic lives is vividly captured in the lines:

'They have gone about the world like wind,  
And little time had they to pray' (1)

Their deeds would stand up and shout for them. Note too how the line 'They have gone about the world like wind' explodes among the more pedestrian language of this stanza and how the alliteration of 'world' and 'wind' evokes an atmosphere of infinite space suffused with nostalgia, pathos and tragedy. Yeats had repudiated Wordsworth's views on diction, (perhaps they were too democratic for him) and produced instead a passionate syntax with a momentum and energy that is capable of wonderful effects -not least an oracular tone of which the next line are a good example :

'But little time had they to pray

For whom the hangman's rope was spun,

Here, perhaps, is fatalism of an especial kind, for though 'the hangman's rope was spun' with the tragic vindictiveness of a Clotho, the victims were destined not for execution but for martyrdom. This raises the further question of the nature of Yeatsian tragedy -was it indeed tragedy when the protagonists sought their own deaths ?

The polarity between oracular formality and rhetorical intensity is nowhere better seen than in the line which follows :

'And what, God help us, could they save ? (2)

This terse immediacy intensifies the personal involvement, the aching concern

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(1). *September 1913* - Lines 11 -12

(2) *September 1913* - Lines 14 .

Marvell's distinctive voice is in the tension: it is the tension of an age of political uncertainty but of traditional civilized living. How essentially different from Yeats who is committed to Ireland in spite of its pettiness, thanklessness and insularity. By deaths oftenless noble than that of Charles who mounted the scaffold, while all around :

"the armed Bands

Did clap their bloody hands ." (1)

The Irish patriots performed an almost ritualistic act of sacrifice which, though it might effect nothing, transmuted their little lives into the stuff of art .

An essential difference is not difficult to discover. Yeats evolves while Marvell is static . The Byzantine poems for instance are concerned with the problems of old age and its sublimation through art. They carry a stage further the dilemma touched upon in *The Wild Swans at Coole* :

'I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,

And now my heart is sore.

All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,

The first time on this shore,

The bell- beat of their wings above my head,

Trod with a lighter tread . (2)

Yet are they really more moving than Marvell's formal verse with all the weight of Horace, Catullus, Ovid, Jonson and Donne behind it ? With all his stoicism, Marvell seems to see a great void at his feet :

yonder all before us lie .

Desarts of vast Eternity (3)

By viewing Yeats beside Marvell one cannot but be struck by the seething passion of the Irish poet. This, I think, would not be nearly so obvious by comparing him with a poet of his own age where the 'Zeitgeist' introduces

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(1) *ibid* Line 55-56

(2) *The Wild Swans at Coole* Lines 15 - 18

(3) *To His Coy Mistress* - Lines 23 - 23

to rule which was not by "ancient rights" but by a supreme dynamism of character. He is pictured as a natural vortex :

'Tis madness to resist or blame .  
The force of angry heaven's flame .  
And, if we would speak true ,  
Much to the man is due , ... (1)

He is revealed as an electrifying force who outstrips his parliamentary colleagues by "Breaking the Clouds"(2) where he had been nursed , and , by his " restless " energy ruining a 'great Work of Time'(3) and casting the kingdom old "into another Mould" (4) .

Al though the king is painted with sympathy :

'He nothing common did or mean .

Upon that memorable scene :"(5)

destiny carries cromwell forward to success and glory . The fate reserved for the usurper is allotted to him and :

"The same Arts that did gain

A Pow'r must it maintain . "(6)

The informing morality activating Marvell is that of the detached rational philosopher. The king, though he met his death nobly , is not a martyr, but rather perhaps an actor on the " Tragick Scaffold"(7) of life, playing his role along with Cromwell . The theme of the drama in which they are both playing is the good government of England.

The divergent political elements : a natural inclination towards Puritanism, and a generous commiseration with Charles are kept under perfect control.

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(1.) An Horatian Ode - Lines 25 - 28

(2.) *ibid* - Line 14

(3.) *ibid* - Line 34

(4.) *ibid* - Line 36

(5.) *ibid* - Lines 57 - 58 .

(6.) *ibid* - Lines 119 - 120

(7) An Horatian Ode Line : 54

For Marvell, civilization was greater than either king or Cromwell: by his education and temperament he was ideally suited to view them both dispassionately. The philosopher of *The Garden* did not alter appreciably when he stepped outside its confines. Even in his love poem *To His Coy Mistress* there is a note of self mockery and stoicism. in the midst of his ecstasy he can always hear: 'Timeswinged Charriot hurrying near'. in spite of his urbanity and poise, there is an undercurrent of fatalism and deep concern rippling under the calm surface of his poetry:

"Thus, though we cannot make our sun  
Stand still, yet we will make him run ., (1)

or :

Though justice against Fate complain,  
And plead the antient Rights in vain :  
But those do hold or break  
As Men are strong or weak . (2)

Even at the depth of his despair for the loss of 'Romantic Ireland there is nothing of this fatalism in Yeats. He himself, and Parnell not long before, were evidence of this 'potentiality' for rejuvenation. Even in line 25 of *September 1913* 'Yet could we turn the years again' there is the suggestion that this might yet be possible - it is as if he already experienced intimations of that triumphant metamorphosis when all would be 'Transformed utterly'.

Yeats, heroes could undergo a metamorphosis which the more objective Marvell could not be deluded into believing possible: even John MacBride, that drunken, vainglorious lout, (3) could be numbered in this song. Marvell is never so generous with the fame of Cromwell. The theme of *An Horatian Ode* might be considered as Cromwell's witness

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(1.) *To His Coy Mistress* Lines 45 - 46 .

(2.) *An Horatian Ode* Lines 37 - 40 .

(3.) *Easter 1916* Line 32 .

to celebrate stable government in England. England was really more important to him than who governed it. When Marvell turns to other lands, Ireland, Scotland or Holland he shows little sympathy. There is certainly nothing approaching Yeats, honest self appraisal, self criticism tormenting doubt. Even though Yeats was much nearer the centres of power, he was not swayed. The opening of *September 1913* is bitterly critical of contemporary Ireland. The persona addresses itself to the detested Catholic commercial middle class in tones of admonition and disgust. He portrays the 'shopkeeper mentality, the loathsome 'fumbling' in 'greasy' tills which evokes the image of a Shylock sweating out his life at an ignoble profession. He points out the hypocrisy and cowardice of this class as they add 'prayer to shivering prayer' and also their self righteousness— in the ironic line— "For men were born to pray and save". Here, in verse, is the priest-ridden society of *The Playboy of the Western World*, these were the Shawn Keogh's whose very marrow or vital sap had been 'dried' ... 'from the bone'. Here indeed, the atrophy of the unheroic bourgeois is laid bare. As Yeats seems to imply in line four, neither religion nor politics can create minds generous enough to make a nation.

The value of heroism can never be measured in money :it is only that romantic vanished society, to which Yeats always appeals, which could appreciate such ideals. The society of contemporary Ireland was at the end of an epoch, prefiguring the memorable warning note of *The Second Coming* :

'Things fall apart ; the centre cannot hold ;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,' Lines 3-4.

Even the life of the 'big houses' only preserved the old values with difficulty against nature and mankind. Only in such civilizations as that of Byzantium or China (as conceived in *Lapis Lazuli*) could 'passion and precision' really survive the ravages of time .



destruction of ancient rights would have appalled all just men and enlisted their resistance, but a purpose had now emerged of which Cromwell was the embodiment. (1)

The philosophy of Yeats, however, does not seem to include the concept of God; the ultimate release from the gyrations of history being akin to the Buddhist conception of Nirvana. It seems almost as if, as early as *September 1913* he was moving to this view, the patriots having, by their heroism and suffering, gained release from the cycle of history.

While Marvell's hero, Cromwell, is an instrument of fate, Yeats' martyrs seem to overcome fate and time and dwell apart in a world of art transformed utterly and beyond defamation, 'with O' Leary in the grave'.

*An Horatian Ode* teases the reader by its ambiguity, both verbal and political. It is typical, stylistically and philosophically of an age of sophistication and doubt. Although a poem of transition (being both a metaphysical poem and a forerunner of the neo-classical works of Gray and Collins), *An Horatian Ode* is possibly Marvell's most typical work. The poet is at once an artist and a man of affairs. *An Horatian Ode* is packed with implication, irony and ambiguity: it is neither a manifesto of Puritanism, as is the *Bermudas*, nor a eulogy on Cromwell, as is *Upon the Death of Oliver Cromwell*, but the true echo of a divided age. Though it is a monument of impartiality, it is not a monument of indifference. Marvell's hero has not to be called up from the grave; he is alive and vital. If he fails to move us, it is surely because he is 'distanced' from us by a convention far more pervading than anything Yeats invented. The 'Ode' was written to celebrate Cromwell's return from Ireland at the close of 1650. He was also preparing to attack Scotland, and Marvell anticipates the day when:

The Pict no shelter now shall find  
Within his party-coloured Mind;  
But from this Valour sad

Shrink underneath the Plad: Line 105- 108.

While Marvell remained an incorruptible man in a corrupt age, he was perhaps more narrowly nationalistic than Yeats. His prime concern was that of Shakespeare in the history plays was

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(1.) *Destiny His Choice The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell* by John M. Wallace. Cambridge University press 1978. page 72

celebration of the contemplative life. The pastoral garden, as in the poem *Bermudas* is a temple where to sound his (God's) name (1) and within this setting the poet's meditations are worked out; this working out is done in a charming but stylized manner. Unlike Yeats who avoided extreme abstraction by embodying his ideas in concrete form, as we have seen in *The Tower*, Marvell's elusive personality expresses itself best behind a facade of formality and abstractionism. One of the key passages which embodies favourite Neo-Platonic doctrine is the much discussed verse .6:

Meanwhile the Mind, from pleasure less,  
 Withdraws into its happiness:  
 The Mind, that Ocean where each kind  
 Does straight its own resemblance find;  
 Yet it creates, transcending these,  
 Far other Worlds, and other Seas;  
 Annihilating all that 's made  
 To a green Thought in a green Shade.

In which everything is reduced to its "ideal" form of greenness or innocence, as is fitting in this ideal garden.

It is not surprising, therefore, when we turn to examine *An Horatian Ode* that we find a detachment in the handling of episodes of extreme dramatic potentiality.

John M. Wallaca seems to be of the opinion that (in an almost miltonic manner) Marvell is demonstrating the ways of God to man:

The theme of the ode is deliverance, and Marvel envisaged, in accordance with the concept of "dux bellorum" which permitted dictators at the commencement of new empires, Cromwell's election to the constitutional dictatorship of England. With the passage of time, and after more laurels for the victorious general, the meaning of the previous tragedy had begun to reveal itself, and the end to which God's judgments pointed had, to Marvell at least, been made clear. The signs could not have been read before, when the

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1. Marvell's *Bermudas*, line 32.

He was at once disillusioned and inflamed with scorn and it was in this mood that the opening lines of *September* 1913 were written. It might be argued that Yeats was blind to the actual realities of the Ireland of his day and that 'hard riding country gentlemen' ( 1 ) have no place in a modern 20th century republic but this does not invalidate the political poems or lessen one jot of their force.

Yeats once declared that modern cities have taught people to live on the surface of life, and so he set about the task of lashing his contemporaries into an awareness of their heritage. He was not so much against the British as against anything that savoured of abstractionism and impersonality in government or private life .

Much of the time he wore a mask of Parnellian pride and disdain. Typical of this attitude is *To a friend whose work has come to Nothing* :

'how can you compete,  
Being honour bred, with one  
Who , were it proved he lies,  
Were neither shamed in his own  
Nor in his neighbours eyes?

but even here ,the mood is permeated by a strain of hurt pride and melancholy which is so typical of the true Yeats .

What really raises both Yeats and Marvell above the level of so many of their lesser jingoistic contemporaries is their personal integrity. As has already been mentioned they both possess an awareness of the deeper historical movements which catch up the transient affairs of the moment and transform them into significant facets of an organic process.

A representative philosophic poem of Marvell's is *The Garden* and once one has grasped the essence of this work one can appreciate the detachment with which the poet approaches so disturbing a subject as the execution of a King and the acceptance of a new regime. The central theme of *The Garden* is a

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1. Under Ben Bulbin *Stanza V*; line 8.

Auden's poem *In Memory of W. B. Yeats* as, I think, it reveals the essence of the 'love-hate' relationship which Yeats felt for Ireland and it was this that generated the tension and the passion of the political poems, proving triumphantly that great poetry can be made out of indecision and that often a situation is too complex to be honestly resolved. It was this searching honesty that irritated Maud Gonne and lost him many friends among the fanatics of the Republican party.

This "searching honesty" overcomes the more petty form of nationalism, and in *September* 1913 is directed against his fellow Irishmen, the shallow minded mercantile middle-class of Dublin.

The initial impulse in writing this poem was a political speech which Yeats made in July, 1913, in which he described Ireland as a 'little greasy huxtering nation groping for half-pence in a till'. Yeats was constantly trying to elevate Ireland to the heroic status it held in Celtic legend and his political career evinced a slow and painful realization of the truth that 'Romantic Ireland' 'was indeed, 'dead and gone'.

In 1913 Ireland was passing through a period of unrest prior to 'The Troubles' and political excitement is woven into the texture of most of the poems of this phase. Unlike the formal political poems of an earlier age(1) Yeats poems contain elements of satire, lyricism and electrifying oratory. They embody the very atmosphere of the age and are a distillation of all that Yeats thought and felt most profoundly. Even in *Easter* 1916 he could still say :

"England may keep faith

For all that is done and said"

and one cannot but sympathise with Yeats for the inner torment that these poems of excruciating ambivalence must have caused.

The petty squabbling which arose over the design and financing of the gallery to house the Lane Art Collection was a typical example of what Yeats hated most in the mentality of the middle-class.

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1. Dryden's *Absalom and Archithophel* is good example of what I mean.

'The fact that of all Marvell's verse, which is itself not a great quantity the really valuable part consists of a very few poems, indicates that the unknown quality of which we speak is probably a literary rather than a personal quality ; or, more truly , that it is a quality of a civilization, of traditional habit of life . i

Yeats, on the contrary, lived in an age devoid of tradition, the representatives of Irish culture had been :

beaten into the clay

Through seven heroic centuries; lines 12- 13 Verse V *Under Ben Bulbin*. and the creation of his new style was painfully achieved by sloughing off outworn pre-Raphaelite influence as he tells us in *A Coat*:

' I made my song a coat  
Covered with embroideries  
Out of old mythologies  
From heel to throat ;  
But the fools caught it,  
Wore it in the world's eyes  
As though they'd wrought it .  
Song, let them take it,  
For there's more enterprise  
In walking naked .

While Marvell, through his birth, education and attainments never questioned his role in society , Yeats suffered from the nagging fear of being considered ' provincial '. He sprang from the outer fring of the Irish Protestant Ascendancy, his father being a rather bohemian, if genteel, artist from whom Yeats inheirted a romantic disposition but little in the way of a formal education. The Anglo-Irish, the 'people of Burke and Grattan/That gave, though free to refuse' (2) were outsiders, a minority in Catholic Ireland and it was of this minority that Yeats always felt himself .

'Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry ' is a particularly significant line in

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(1) Andrew Marvell - *an essay by T. S. Eliot which appeared first in The Times Literary Supplement on 31st March, 1921. Included in Andrew Marvell: Tercentenary Tributes. P. 63 .*

*Russell & Russell, New York 1965.*

(2) *The Tower V III I 12 - 13 .*

age, sought an ideal civilization in either the heroic age of ancient Ireland or the regenerative "phases" of the future, which like his ideal man, "does not exist" (2) and "is but a dream" (3)

While both poets gave their support to the more liberal and popularist political faction neither could be classed as a democrat. Yeats was a poet of defeat while Marvell celebrated victory and neither poet was an unequivocal supporter of his party. Marvell was the master of the learning of his age and the heir to a tradition of art and fine living: Yeats was self educated and partly because of this, eccentric, egotistical and vulnerable to criticism.

Although Marvell took no appreciable part in the struggle between king and parliament his Anglican faith and his friendship with Lovelace and other Royalists suggests that his initial sympathies must have lain with Charles. However, the years 1650 - 52 found him serving as tutor to the daughter of Lord Fairfax the retired parliamentary general, at the latter's estate, Nun Appleton. Like Yeats he admired the ordered life of the 'big houses' and benefited from the patronage that went with it.

Marvell's poem *Upon Appleton House*, like its model Jonson's *To Penshurst*, celebrated the harmonious life that was danger of disappearing in the tumult of civil war:

But all things are composed here,

Like nature, orderly and near

Lines 25- 26

How closely this resembles the tone of Yeats, *Upon a House Shaken by the the Land Agitation*:

Where passion and precision have been one this house,

Time out of /mind,

Lines 1- 3

only Yeats is more obviously concerned with the creation of 'passion and precision while Marvell reflects it, almost unconsciously. T. S. Eliot seems so rightly to have identified Marvell's voice when he says :

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(2) Yeats, W.B. The Fisherman. Line 35 .

(3) ibid line 36

Marvell and Yeats are separated not just by time, personality and life style, but by that almost indefinable quality derived, not only from a culture but from that particular "phase" at which a culture has arrived. Like Yeats, I must admit to being a disciple of Vice, and to being fascinated by the vast cyclic movements of history, which, as they come to an end or "Fall apart", leave poets, and all those sensitive to the deeper unity of a culture, gasping in a limbo of doubt - rootless and tormented, attempting heroically to create an order and harmony of their own.

As a European who has felt the tremors of war shake the very foundations of our civilization, I am, perhaps, over sensitive to those wider issues which are not generally the concern of the literary critic. However, as I am here considering "political poetry", for which some background knowledge of the age is vital, I feel somewhat justified in adopting this historical approach.

Both Marvell's "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland" and Yeats, "September, 1913" had their genesis in times of Civil War. The former was written in 1650 when thinking men were finding the opportunity to reflect in tranquility upon the emotional and bloody happenings of the preceding decade. Since 1642, when Charles I raised the royal standard at Nottingham, England had been rent by civil war. This ended in the execution of the king - but not in the smothering of Royalist sympathies. Marvell, the philosopher and public man, was able to view these events in perspective. Like the historian Clarendon, he thought of them as movements in a broad historical process, with which as John M. Wallace writes, "it was necessary for men to combine, if providence were to bring good out of evil". (1)

Yeats' concept of the historical process was fundamentally different from that of Marvell. While Marvell saw the passing of the tragic Stuart monarchs as an event necessary for the establishment of good government and the preservation of a civilization, Yeats, railing at the decadence of his

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(1) *Wallace, John M. Destiny His Choice : The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell. Cambridge University Press, 1968. P.2 .*





**A CONSIDERATION OF THE POLITICAL POEMS OF ANDREW  
MARVELL AND WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS, WITH PARTI-  
CULAR REFERENCE TO "AN HORATIAN ODE"  
AND " SEPTEMBER, 1913 "**

BY

JOHN G. PATTISON

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