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Lauren Arrington

'I Sing What Was Lost and Dread What Was Won': W. B. Yeats and the Legacy of Censorship

The historiography of theatre censorship has recently undergone a transformation. Received wisdom formerly held that since there was no legislative censorship of theatres, no censorship occurred, but work by Joan FitzPatrick Dean and Peter Martin has significantly revised the understanding of the way that censorship operates. In *Censorship in the Two Irelands*, Martin devotes a chapter to 'Censorship Without Censors: Theatre and Radio' in which he briefly outlines the Abbey's receipt of a grant (which 'gave the state an uncertain influence over the theatre'), the well-known attacks on O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* in 1926, the objections to the Abbey's touring programme in 1933, and the controversy over *The Silver Tassie* in 1937.¹ In all of these cases, the Abbey defeated the attempted censorship. Martin concludes, 'theatres had more freedom than cinemas or publishers, as well as more allies to defend them if controversy erupted'.² Yet Martin's assertion of freedom is complicated when the financial considerations of the theatres, which relied on public (and in the case of the Abbey, government) support, are taken into account. In *Riot and Great Anger*, Joan FitzPatrick Dean extends the traditional definition of stage censorship in her argument that theatrical censorship occurred on an *ad hoc* basis through the control of funding, the selection or rejection of plays for production, and the legal statutes regulating performance, which restricted 'indecency, public disorder, hate speech, and incitement to riot'.³ Dean asserts that 'one of the most potent sources of censorship' is the control of funding. However, in her analysis of the Abbey Theatre, Dean maintains that although censorship as a result of its state subvention was attempted, it was ultimately unsuccessful.⁴ I argue that censorship of the Abbey Theatre did occur, and these cases of censorship were inextricably tied to the financial relationship between the theatre and the state. Furthermore, W. B. Yeats was not the uncompromising champion of artistic freedom he has been assumed to be.⁵

This is not such a drastic reconfiguration as it might first seem. R. F. Foster's biography is a portrait of Yeats's depth and unity and – importantly for this context – of a politically savvy thinker in a constant process of negotiation with regard to his political, intellectual,

and artistic ideals. A careful account of Yeats's actions on the Abbey board in the years before his death dismantles simplified histories of the theatre that lionize its founder and vilify characters like Ernest Blythe and Richard Hayes, whom I shall discuss further. Moreover, in the early history of the Abbey, there was a tradition of self-censorship and thus a precedent for the kinds of changes made to plays during the subsidized years. In his essay on 'The Beginnings' of the Abbey Theatre, Sean McCann emphasizes Yeats's 'flexibility'; it was evident, for example, in the changes made to *The Countess Cathleen* for the Irish Literary Theatre's opening programme.⁶ Edward Martyn (whose play *The Heather Field* was to debut alongside Yeats's *Countess Cathleen*) objected to what he believed were anti-Catholic elements in Yeats's play. Martyn was an important financial contributor to the Irish Literary Theatre, and it was important to keep him on board the enterprise, so Yeats partially altered the play to appease him.⁷ Martyn's objections were exacerbated by further opposition from the conservative Catholic nationalist quarter, spearheaded by Frank Hugh O'Donnell, who circulated a pamphlet, *Souls for Gold*, which objected to Yeats's portrayal of the Irish peasantry. Although Yeats and Lady Gregory anticipated difficulty over the *Countess* due to the advance publicity, a public controversy was regarded positively (as long as the Abbey kept its funding).⁸ Likewise, before Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* was staged, the manuscript was subject to cutting to eliminate 'bad language' and 'violent oaths', which Lady Gregory believed would detract from the thrust of the play.⁹ After the opening night, she recommended further cuts, and Synge acquiesced.¹⁰ Yet, the Abbey directors were not always willing to risk a row, even when it came to Synge. *The Tinker's Wedding* was never produced because, according to Lady Gregory, 'a drunken priest made ridiculous appears in it'.¹¹ A play that attacked religion (not politics, as the *Playboy* had done) would offend too great a portion of the audience. In a similar incident, in *Some Impressions of My Elders*, St John Ervine recalls Yeats's initial refusal of Ervine's *The Magnanimous Lover*:

it may provoke some disturbance among the audience, and as our patent expires shortly we do not wish to give the authorities any ground for refusing to renew it. They were very angry over our production of Bernard Shaw's *Blanco Posnet* after the Censor refused to license it in England. We'll leave the production of *The Magnanimous Lover* until the patent has been renewed.¹²

Yeats's attitude to censorship was ultimately pragmatic.

As Yeats aged and battled increasingly frequent illnesses, he was conscious of the need to secure a future for the theatre that he had co-

founded. The Abbey was in desperate need of structural repairs and was suffering from heavy losses, due largely to competition from the Gate Theatre. Micheál Mac Liammóir (director of the Gate Theatre) described the limitations of the Abbey stage:

It was very cramped, the proscenium opening being only 21 feet wide and the depth of the stage from curtain line to wall only 16'4". Its low roof did not admit of the flying of scenery. When a scene needed the full depth of the stage, players who were required to make an entry on the side furthest from the dressing room had to go out into the lane in the rain or snow to get round to the point from which they could appear. All these disadvantages made certain types of production very difficult.¹³

A new theatre space would give the Abbey a much-needed boost; better still, if in addition to reconstruction, the Abbey could be amalgamated with the Gate Theatre (as Yeats hoped), the Abbey's competition might be eliminated. These plans required the co-operation of the Fianna Fáil government, and this alliance resulted in artistic compromises that betrayed the aesthetic that Yeats himself professed. A chronological analysis of the Abbey Theatre's dialogue with the government and the board of directors' consideration of new plays for production reveals a correlation between the demand for the revision of texts with regard to sexual, religious, and (to a lesser extent) explicitly political content and crucial stages in the negotiations for the reconstruction scheme. This evidence suggests that the Abbey directorate censored plays in the hope of financial gain. Moreover, Yeats was complicit in the censorship.

The Censorship of *The Silver Jubilee*

In the summer of 1935, Yeats and Robinson began to formulate plans to amalgamate the Abbey and Gate Theatres in an attempt to curb competition. The new theatre, incorporating both companies, 'should dominate the local scene', Yeats wrote to Robinson; 'we shall in a few months, I hope, have all Irish dramatic talent under one roof.'¹⁴ Yeats approached the Earl of Longford (Edward Arthur Henry Pakenham), proprietor of the Gate, regarding amalgamation, but as of 13 September, he could not report any agreement to the Abbey's board of directors.¹⁵ Longford saw that there was little in Yeats's scheme for the Gate's benefit, and he wrote directly to Blythe to say that he did not think amalgamation would be possible; the only purpose it served was 'the pumping of a little new blood into the Abbey, that is if the new blood is ready to be pumped'.¹⁶ Although the Gate faced its own financial problems, Edwards and Mac Liammóir had no desire to work

under the Abbey's iron hand. 'At the moment', Longford wrote to Blythe, 'our directors would rather favour a frank liquidation in case of failure than amalgamation with a concern in which Yeats would continue to hold the financial whip.'

But the financial whip lay less in the hands of Yeats and the Abbey than Longford presumed. At the beginning of November 1935, the Abbey was £313.7.4 overdrawn, and by the end of the month, the figure had more than doubled to £719.9.1.¹⁷ By mid-December, the overdraft had broken the one-thousand pound mark.¹⁸ With Ernest Blythe ousted from the Department of Finance as a result of Fianna Fáil's 1932 election victory, the Abbey relied on the new government-appointed director, Richard Hayes, to liaize between the theatre and the Department of Finance. Hayes had formerly served as Censor of Films and had been appointed by Fianna Fáil in 1934 to serve on the Abbey board. His presence was initially unobtrusive, but in April 1936 Hayes raised opposition to a new play, *The Silver Jubilee*, by Cormac O'Daly.¹⁹ The play had already been accepted for production, but Hayes stated that 'he would insist on the elimination of certain passages in the play which he considered offensive and objectionable'.²⁰ Hayes's objection recalls that of George O'Brien, the first government representative to the board. In that case, the directorate had refused to compromise the texts (Robinson's *The White Blackbird* and O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*) for the sake of O'Brien's sense of propriety. By contrast, on the day following Hayes's complaint, the board voted to return the play to its author 'with a request that he reconstruct it and if he so wished resubmit it when he had done so'.²¹

Unlike O'Brien in 1925, Hayes was too valuable an asset to lose, and his censorious interventions had to be tolerated since he was a key factor not only in retaining the subsidy but in the success of the reconstruction scheme. At the end of March 1936, the directorate had voted to approach the government regarding reconstruction plans including alterations to the stage and the pit. The Abbey also proposed that, in exchange for the production of six plays performed in the Irish language per annum, the government should increase the theatre's grant by £1,000.²²

Exactly one month later, on 27 April (two days after Hayes objected to *The Silver Jubilee* and the day after the board voted to comply with his demands), Hayes reported to the board that he had met Seán MacEntee, the Minister for Finance, to discuss reconstruction.²³ While there is no explicit evidence to prove that the directorate's acquiescence was due to Hayes's opposition at this time, the sequence of events and the fact that the directorate had never complied with the government directors' demands before suggest

that the censorship of *The Silver Jubilee* is directly related to the reconstruction scheme.

Unfortunately, the version of the play that was submitted and refused by the directorate is not extant, so there is no marker of how much of the original script was altered according to Hayes's demands. A plot summary of the accepted version of the script runs as follows. The 'Very Reverend Michael O'Carroll, P.P. Ballyrowan' is suffering from disillusionment with his role in the parish; his disenchantment is exacerbated by the arrival of Mrs Casey and her daughter, Mary, who is 'in trouble'.²⁴ The young man who is implicated in the 'trouble' is the Secretary of the Catholic Young Men's Association, John Joe Barrett. O'Carroll urges the couple to be married, but Mary refuses. She goes missing and later returns to tell Fr O'Carroll that she has been to visit the convent, has asked for forgiveness, and is willing to do penance. The play ends with the happy – and socially conforming – resolution of Mary and Barrett agreeing to be married and O'Carroll finding personal satisfaction in his role in the parish. This revised version of the play was accepted and scheduled to premiere on 14 September 1936.

Two weeks before opening night, the leading actor, Michael J. Dolan, 'asked to be relieved of his part in "The Silver Jubilee" as he considered the play would give much offence.'²⁵ He specifically objected to 'the references to the Catholic Young Men's Association'. When players had objected to their assigned lines in the past, the directorate had refused to alter the parts; the Abbey would not tolerate what Seán O'Casey had called 'a vigilance committee of the actors'.²⁶ However, the directorate now agreed to 'cutting anything in the play to which exception could be taken'.²⁷

Michael Dolan's prompt copy retains the full version of the play with passages marked for excision. Religious and sexual references are purged in addition to strong language and references to alcohol. When Fr O'Connell asks Mary how she came to be 'in trouble', she says that she doesn't know. His line, 'Don't tell me 'twas miraculous!' is crossed through.²⁸ Four pages of the text that follows are marked with a bracket for excision. These passages include Mary's reference to Barrett's position as Secretary to the Catholic Young Men's Society, and Mrs Casey's reaction on hearing that Barrett is the other guilty party:

The dirty cur. The dirty cur. When her father hears about it he'll murther him, the craw-thumping Blah-ghard. (Stridently) And he'll murther her too, the slut. Oh! Sacred Heart to-night, to think that this should happen to us after all our trouble rearin' her and edjicating her at the Ursulines with extras, including the VOILin and fancy-dancin. Better to have her dead in her cradle than...[trails off]

The likening of the Mary of the play to Mary Magdalene was likewise dangerous theological territory and had to be cut. Emendations were made before the entire following passage was struck through for removal:

- Mrs C (~~Impatiently~~) (Plaintively) Yerra, Father, it's beyond human nature to forgive as aisy as a priest. *YOU EXPECT.*
- O'C (Curtly) Humbug, Ma'm! Our Lord proved otherwise when he refused to condemn the woman taken in Adulthry.
- Mrs. C But, as you say, Father, that was Our Lord, and besides, she [crossed out illegible] wasn't his daughter.
- O'C (Sternly) She was, Julia, as much His daughter as Mary is.
- Mrs. C ~~Well, anyway, Father, that never said she was expecting anything~~
 BUT YOU MUSN'T SPEAK LIKE THAT
- O'C ([crossed out illegible]) Julia, you're blasphemous!
- Mrs. C (Hurt and ~~Frightened~~ TEARFUL) Me, Father!!!? Blaspheme-us? And I out of me mind with trubble? Wisha, God forgive ye, Father, to say that about me and I coming to ye for consolation and sympathy in me sorrow and shame....
- O'C ~~Well, give it to others, Julia, and you'll get it.~~ [Ms resumes] You can't expect one to extend a hand when all you'll extend is a finger.

Further examples of lines deemed unutterable occur when John Casey (Mary's father) challenges Fr O'Carroll and asks why he is willing to spare Barrett public humiliation. (O'Carroll wants to get Barrett transferred to a job in Dublin.) John Casey says:

Will I tell you why you're doing it? [that is, sparing Barrett humiliation] You're doing it BECAUSE HE'S ~~because yer 'Bouchal Bawn'~~ there is a Cosgrave ~~ite~~, a green Unionist, like yourself; and his [Barrett's] Uncle, in Cork, is an old crony of you'rs [sic]; and because you will look foolish in the eyes of the whole Parish if the fella you cocked-up so much is found out. That's why.

Fr O'Carroll replies to Casey's insult; 'neither fear of my dignity or political belief will influence me in my Parochial duty.' This only serves to provoke Casey further:

(Throwing off all restraint) Wouldn't they? I suppose that's why you refused me absolution during the trouble, when I was in the Column, and never knew the minit I'd be murdhered by the Tans? I suppose the fact that you were an Imperialist had nothing to do with your attitude in denying the Sacraments to a Rebel? Mi-yah! No benefit of Clergy for a man that was true to his country but every consideration for a cur that betrayed a girl!

This second passage was allowed to stand without alteration. It was permissible for Casey to insult the priest based on his political stance during the Anglo-Irish war, but references to civil war politics – 'yer "Bouchal Bawn" there is a Cosgrave ite' – had to be excised. With Fianna Fáil and the Church in such tight alliance, the reminder that the Church had formally stood in opposition to the Republicans was deemed inappropriate.

Humorous references to the priests' fondness for alcohol were similarly expunged. In the first act, Fr O'Dowd calls on Fr O'Carroll, and O'Carroll produces 'a half full "Paddy Flaherty bottle"' to make punch. O'Dowd comments on O'Carroll's small measure, to which the latter replies, 'I can't afford it with all the bummers that call on me' (as he crosses himself and replaces the bottle). This scene was allowed to remain; O'Carroll was, after all, displaying moderation. However, a subsequent scene in which John Casey calls on O'Carroll and accepts a drink is cut as is another exchange when O'Dowd enters and drink is offered; the following lines are deleted: 'Sure the Priest's Bottle is only a legend in this country, That is as far as the rank and file is concerned, anyway. If I were a Bishop or a Dean, now, or even only a Canon, I suppose I'd be exploded with it'.

While these lines were altered *after* the board of directors accepted the revised version of the play, the changes made to the script give an indication of the type of material that was considered offensive. Consistently, lines were censored due to sexual and religious content, the same type of material that Hayes would deem objectionable in subsequent plays under consideration.

The Suppression of *The Herne's Egg*

Plans for the reconstruction scheme continued to develop through the autumn of 1936. At a directors' meeting on 27 November, Hayes reported a telephone conversation with MacEntee in which the minister had enquired about the financial well-being of the theatre.²⁹ Hayes told the directorate that he thought that MacEntee 'was favourably disposed towards the theatre and [Hayes] suggested it might be possible to approach the Minister with a view to obtaining increased financial help.' The following day, on 28 November, Yeats

wrote to Dorothy Wellesley to say that the Abbey would produce his new play, *The Herne's Egg*, the next spring, and 'there will be an uproar'.³⁰ But when the directors considered *The Herne's Egg* on 4 December, the minute book records, 'Dr Hayes was altogether opposed to it and considered it unfit for production. After some discussion it was decided to postpone further consideration of the matter until the next meeting of the Board'.³¹ No subsequent discussion of the play is documented.

The Herne's Egg builds upon themes raised in Yeats's poem 'Leda and the Swan', which provoked objection from religious conservatives when it was published in 1924. As in the Leda poem, Yeats's philosophical schema involves the transfer of power from a god figure in the guise of a bird to a woman through the sexual act. Here, it is the coupling of a heron god and Attracta (a priestess) that symbolizes the earthly manifestation of divine power. While the subject is esoteric, the language is – as Foster puts it – 'earthy'.³² Attracta describes her imminent coupling with the herne god:

Strong sinew and soft flesh
Are foliage round the shaft
Before the arrowsmith
Has stripped it, and I pray
That I, all foliage gone,
May shoot into my joy.³³

King Congal describes the act that the seven men must commit in revenge for having the heron's egg that he stole reposessed by Attracta:

Must handle, penetrate and possess her
And do her a great good by that action
Melting out the virgin snow.³⁴

Hayes's objection to the play centred on its sexual explicitness and its provocative allusions to religion; he told Frank O'Connor that he had been assured that Yeats intended for the seven men to represent the seven sacraments.³⁵ Hayes was right in sniffing out religious allusion, though Yeats's concern here is not an attack on Catholicism but a drama rooted in Indian, Celtic, and Christian myth. Despite attempts by O'Connor to persuade him of a deeper philosophical significance, Hayes's objections won out. O'Connor later wrote in a letter to *The Irish Times* that Yeats's play was rejected because 'religion and politics [had] entered the theatre'.³⁶

The day following Yeats's letter to Dorothy Wellesley in which he

wrote that his play would cause ‘an uproar’ (a phrase that bears a tone of delight), he wrote to her again to say that he was ‘greatly relieved’ that the staging would not go ahead since he was ‘no longer fit for riots [...] a bad riot almost certain’.³⁷ This acquiescence is uncharacteristic of Yeats, regardless of his health. Yeats famously relished the *Playboy* riots in 1907 and the *Plough* riots in 1926, literally capitalizing on the controversy as the Abbey drew packed houses. More recently, in August 1935 before the Abbey began its negotiations with the government for reconstruction, Yeats had delighted in the possibility that O’Casey’s *The Silver Tassie* promised another good fight.

Brinsley MacNamara, a writer and member of the Abbey’s board of directors, had raised an objection to the *Tassie* on the basis that the chant at the beginning of the third act ‘suggested a travesty of portions of the liturgy of the Catholic Church’.³⁸ The play was produced despite MacNamara’s protest. However, opposition arose from the conservative Catholic quarter soon after the play’s debut. Conservative nationalists joined with conservative religious groups in denouncing the theatre. The president of the Gaelic League wrote a letter condemning the Abbey and referring to the shame that the production of the *Plough* had inflicted upon the nation.³⁹ Weeks after the *Tassie* had closed, audiences continued to pour into the theatre. Yeats interpreted the full houses as a ‘silent protest against the attacks’ on the Abbey since the general public did not feel free to disagree openly with the conservative clergy.⁴⁰ Importantly, there is no record in the directors’ minute books or in private correspondence of any protest by Hayes to the *Tassie*. In fact, the *Catholic Standard* lamented in their report on the controversy that there had been ‘no demurrer even from the Catholic director nominated by the Government or from the Vice-President of the late Ministry [Blythe]’.⁴¹

After the success of the *Tassie* controversy but – crucially – before the negotiations with the government began, Yeats planned to profit from another scandal. A production of Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* had recently raised riots in Paris, and Yeats hoped that it might do the same in Dublin.⁴² *Coriolanus* pits the career of a political leader against the mutable sympathies of the populace. The Parisian production of Pichaud’s translation of the play into French was praised by some critics for being so close to the vernacular; for others, his depiction of the crowd as fickle showed too much sympathy with the leader. (The socialist Geneva city council prevented the production of the play there).⁴³ When the play was staged by the Comédie Française in late 1933, as Speight writes, ‘the anti-democratic sentiments received a standing ovation; cries of “Vive Boulanger” came from all parts of the auditorium’.⁴⁴ In December 1933, the Commission des Finances, which funded the theatre company, denounced the ‘adaptation by the

foreign fascist Pichaud', and the next February, the play was suspended at the request of the French president, Doumergue.⁴⁵ When the production was resumed in March, the play was sold out. In the hopes of instigating a similarly lucrative controversy, Yeats insisted that the play be produced 'in coloured shirts' (most likely blue).⁴⁶ O'Connor writes that Yeats hoped 'that, as in France, a Dublin audience might riot and he could defend the message of the play as he had defended the message of *The Playboy of the Western World* and *The Plough and the Stars*'.⁴⁷

The Abbey directorate debated whether or not to produce the play throughout the autumn of 1935. In early November, Walter Starkie (a prominent figure in European fascism), Robinson and Blythe (a well known Blueshirt) voted in favour of the production, while O'Connor and Higgins remained against.⁴⁸ (Interestingly, Hayes was not present to cast a vote).⁴⁹ A compromise was reached; the play would be produced – but without coloured shirts – the following January (1936). The Renaissance costume, O'Connor later wrote, 'saved a riot maybe, but it lost the theatre a lot of money'.⁵⁰ O'Connor, of course, did not grasp Yeats's strategy; riots turned profits. While the funding body of the Comédie Française had denounced the production, the Parisians had turned out in droves. Without anything to distinguish it, the Abbey's production was just another revival and an unprofitable one at that.

The failed production of *Coriolanus* proved the last opportunity for the Abbey to profit from a scandal. In late spring 1936, the theatre's negotiations with the government began in earnest. Concurrently, *The Silver Jubilee* was censored by Hayes, and Yeats acquiesced to the withdrawal of *The Herne's Egg*. I hold that this acquiescence was due to the belief that the production would endanger the Abbey's chance for reconstruction. This argument is buttressed by Yeats's comments during the controversy surrounding his play, *Purgatory*, and his complicity with the Abbey board in the censorship of Paul Vincent Carroll's new drama, *The White Steed*.

Amalgamation and Reconstruction

In January 1937, MacEntee recommended that the Abbey should – instead of seeking to renovate the current theatre building – 'go in for the reconstruction of a proper theatre with a theatre hall which could be used by the Gaelic players'.⁵¹ He also proposed, as Blythe, Hayes, and Higgins reported to the board, that the structure incorporate 'a building which would be a home for international drama as distinct from the type of work done in the Abbey'. This suggestion bears a remarkable similarity to the plans for amalgamation that Yeats and Robinson had attempted in the summer of 1935, although there is no

evidence to prove that either Yeats or Robinson had inspired MacEntee's suggestion. MacEntee did make it clear that he was speaking 'very personally', and the rest of the Executive Council might not concur with the proposal.

MacEntee was an advocate of the Irish language, artistically minded, and wrote poetry as a hobby.⁵² His interest in the arts is therefore a plausible explanation for his support of the theatre. Even so, it is surprising that the Department of Finance would entertain plans for the construction of a State Theatre to any degree given the Free State's financial situation in the midst of the economic war and the greater context of global depression. The reduction of competition between Irish firms and the amalgamation of businesses under the State (as in the case of the Industrial Credit Company, the Irish Sugar Company, and the Hospitals Commission) might be a possible impetus for these plans, though the extension of industry and public service models to the arts is not entirely convincing.⁵³ More intriguing, though perhaps no more certain, is the tension that ran between the Department of Finance and the Executive Council, which had developed over debates regarding cuts to the civil service that de Valera had advocated in 1932. MacEntee and his department had seen these measures as politically rather than economically motivated and had refused to support them. Perhaps the plan – however genuine – to sink a large portion of the budget in the construction of a State theatre was a tactical manoeuvre arising out of these antagonisms.⁵⁴ Whatever his motivation, the Abbey had MacEntee's support and submitted a statement on 2 February outlining their immediate requirements and the greater need for a new National Theatre.

The Abbey's reconstruction scheme seems to have been accelerated by Yeats's courting of an Irish-American contingent, 'old Fenians' including Patrick McCartan whose *The Lost Legion* Yeats had tried to persuade the Abbey to produce in 1935. Yeats's poem, 'Roger Casement', had drawn the approbation of the Irish-Americans, who raised a monetary tribute for the author.⁵⁵ The Irish Academy of Letters held a banquet to thank McCartan and his fellow contributors. The tension between the political objectives of the Irish-Americans and the aesthetic objectives of the Irish Academy were bound to come into conflict. One of the guests, another 'Old Fenian' took the opportunity to sermonize on the vulgarizing anti-national influence of cinema and radio, and he called for a censorship of the Irish airwaves.⁵⁶ This was a bold affront to Yeats and the Academy of Letters, which had been established as a direct response to the Censorship of Publications. However, courting nationalist support – especially from wealthy Irish Americans – and tolerating narrow-minded calls for censorship proved worthwhile, not only for Yeats's personal financial situation. The day

after the banquet for the old Fenians, Yeats had 'an offer from certain persons to re-build the Abbey', as he reported in a letter to Edith Shackleton Heald.⁵⁷

The Academy of Letters banquet was on 17 August 1937; Blythe (who was no longer in government but remained an influential member of the directorate) reported at a directors' meeting on 18 August that a sum of £50,000 or £60,000 would be available for the construction of a theatre block to accommodate the Abbey, the Gate, and the Gaelic players. The Abbey subsequently drafted another proposal, recommending that the government purchase the premises between the existing Abbey and the Liffey. In the midst of these negotiations, Hayes raised the question of his resignation. Hayes had joined the Abbey directorate with the understanding that it would be for a period of three months, and he had long outstayed his tenure. He now offered to make 'way for some other Director who might be considered more useful to the Theatre'.⁵⁸ Despite the fact that Hayes's interference had led to the censorship of *The Silver Jubilee* and the cancellation of *The Herne's Egg*, the Abbey could not afford to lose him at such a crucial juncture. O'Connor and Blythe pressed Hayes to remain given the present talks with the government, and he consented to stay for at least another year. At the end of October, it was reported to the board that MacEntee had said that 'sympathetic consideration would be given to the scheme submitted by the board for the establishment of a State Theatre'.⁵⁹

Purgatory

On 5 August 1938, five days before the premiere of Yeats's *Purgatory*, Blythe and Higgins reported to the board that they, along with Starkie, had met MacEntee to discuss the reconstruction scheme.⁶⁰ MacEntee reported that the government was prepared to spend up to £100,000 on the construction of a new theatre block on the present site and Eden Quay. The Abbey, the Gate, and the Irish language theatre would comprise the new State Theatre. MacEntee asked that the matter be kept in strictest confidence. Therefore, when Yeats's *Purgatory* debuted at the Dublin Theatre Festival and became a target of criticism from the clergy, the public debate put the Abbey in an uncomfortable position.

Robinson had warned Blythe that *Purgatory* was not only 'powerful'; it would also 'shock'.⁶¹ Although Yeats borrows from Catholicism for the title of his play, the purgation that is his subject deals with 'this world' as much as 'the next'. An Old Man and his son return to a ruined house; the Old Man revisits the sins of past generations, and in order to purge the sins of the living and the dead, he murders his only child, thus preventing further degeneration of the line. Yeats had planned for *Purgatory* to debut alongside *On the Boiler*, an essay that

outlines his eugenicist argument and his opinions on the rightful government of Ireland. It was not a timid pamphlet, but it deliberately deflects attention from religious issues: 'the old man on the boiler has been silent about religion, but soon this occasional publication, probably in its next number, will print his words upon that subject without tact or discretion'.⁶² This calculated avoidance distances *Purgatory* (the text of which was included in the volume) from religious debates. In the preface to *On the Boiler*, Yeats refers to *Beltaine* and *Samhain*, occasional publications dating back to the founding years of the theatre which had, in his words, 'contained my defence of the Abbey, its actors and its plays'.⁶³ *On the Boiler* was a similar defence: an apologia for Yeats's politics but also a barricade against potential attacks on his new play by religious conservatives. The publication of *On the Boiler* was frustratingly delayed, and *Purgatory* had to premiere without its accompanying tract. True to Yeats's expectations, it came under fire from the conservative clergy.

Following a lecture by F. R. Higgins on Yeats's drama, the American Jesuit, Fr Terence Connolly asked Higgins 'to tell him what the play [*Purgatory*] symbolised'; *Purgatory*, it should be noted, had not yet premiered, so Connolly had somehow obtained an advance copy of the text.⁶⁴ Higgins answered that it was not his role 'to interpret a work of art. Everyone would interpret the play differently', but Connolly was unrelenting. Higgins tried to deflect the issue by saying that 'the play was surely more within the province of the questioner than it was in his'.⁶⁵ While this drew laughter from the crowd, it was a misstep since it reinforced a religious interpretation of the play, which was expressly not the essence of Yeats's text. Yeats was forced to 'explain' his play in the press – 'my plot is my meaning'. At the next meeting of the board of directors, he made delicate enquiries within the company as to the source of the leak; ultimately it emerged that the actor, F. J. McCormick (who had raised moral objections to plays in the past) had passed the script of *Purgatory* to Connolly 'in good faith'. McCormick's good faith was pious Catholicism, not fidelity to the Abbey; this could prove to be a critical slip at an important juncture in the plans for reconstruction.

Concurrent with the controversy in the press, the Abbey was liaising with the management of the Gate to draw up a scheme for submission to MacEntee.⁶⁶ Yeats was concerned that Connolly's objections would endanger the negotiations. He wrote to Dorothy Wellesley on 15 August (making a rather tasteless allusion to the Spanish Civil War), 'A Boston Jesuit, a smooth rascal, has tried to stir up trouble, but has I think failed. [...] After a week of clerical conspiracy I understand the satisfaction a Spaniard finds in raping a nun.'⁶⁷ This was not just a personal vendetta against the power of the Church in Ireland. Yeats

seemed genuinely afraid that the Abbey would suffer as a result of the *Purgatory* controversy. The previous year he had written to Ethel Mannin expressing the fear that

if the Spanish War goes on, or if [it] ceases & O'Duffy's volunteers return heroes my 'pagan' institutions, the theatre, the academy will be fighting for their lives against combined Catholic & Gaelic bigotry. A friar or a monk has already threatened us with mob violence.⁶⁸

After the *Purgatory* debate, in another letter to Wellesley, he expressed relief that the 'Catholic action' against the theatre had been defeated since 'certain delicate negotiations were at their crisis which might have been stopped'.⁶⁹

The Censorship of *The White Steed*

Although the controversy over *Purgatory* proved harmless, in its aftermath – as plans for reconstruction became increasingly concrete – the Abbey board proved unwilling to risk a production of Paul Vincent Carroll's *The White Steed*, regardless of the fact that the play was excellent in Yeats's estimation.⁷⁰ *The White Steed* is a robust critique of the heightened religious and social conservatism in contemporary Ireland, and despite its blatant ideological bent, Carroll crafts a well-made play. He addresses contemporary issues such as the campaign for regulation of the dance halls, which had received an almost fetishistic coverage in the Catholic press.⁷¹ His principal characters include an aged, paralysed, liberally minded priest, Canon Matt Lavelle and his younger, sprier, and more conservative successor, Fr Shaughnessy. Shaughnessy is attempting to instil a new piety in the parish: 'Down with the drink, down with the dancin', down with the lovemakin', a solid Catholic nation for a holy Catholic people, and a dig at the wee handful of Protestants in every line'.⁷² Shaughnessy challenges Lavelle about the books in the parish library: 'Here the laxity is incredible. Dean Swift's filth, Bernard Shaw's blasphemous humour, AE's pantheistic cant, and the ravings of a humbug called Henrik Ibsen, and a score of others here all either blasphemous or anti-Catholic, or both'.⁷³ Carroll's language is direct and his critique is unmistakeable, but his position is not stated any more strongly than opinions expressed in plays that had been staged by the Abbey before.⁷⁴

Although his dialogue is pointed, Carroll's play is a subtle critique in that *The White Steed* is not anti-Catholic; rather, his target is the Vigilance Committees, the civil authority of the Church, and the legal institution of religious values that he believed was destined to pervert

spiritual authority.⁷⁵ This is illustrated in a stand-off between Canon Lavalle and Fr Shaughnessy in the final act of the play when the older man advises his successor:

We rule this nation with laws that no one writes but that everyone instinctively accepts. You can cross out a law that's on paper, but you can't cross out a law that has never been written. The day you put these laws on paper in this country, you and I and all we stand for will have to take the field and fight to the death for our continuance.⁷⁶

The insinuation of religious values into the life of the State, as exemplified in the 1937 constitution, is exactly the relationship between religion and politics to which Carroll was opposed. This opposition is what made his play so dangerous for the Abbey to produce.

The White Steed was accepted for production at a directors' meeting on 2 September 1938. However, following the same pattern as his objection to *The Herne's Egg*, at the next meeting of the board, Hayes informed the directorate that he could not agree to its acceptance.⁷⁷ The directors' minute book does not record the details of Hayes's objection and merely states that 'the Board decided that the play be returned to Mr. Carroll.' But the eyes and ears of the Dublin theatre scene, Joseph Holloway, noted in his diary that Carroll's play had been declined because 'the Abbey Directors voted it too anti-clerical.'⁷⁸ The underlying reasons for the board's rejection of the *White Steed* are elucidated by the continuing negotiations for reconstruction and the correspondence regarding Carroll's manuscript subsequent to its rejection.

Richard Hayes once again attempted to resign from his position as government director, and the Abbey directorate once again pleaded with him to reconsider despite his increasing habit of interfering with productions. At a meeting on 21 October, Ernest Blythe was nominated to write to MacEntee to ask him to urge Hayes to reconsider his resignation.⁷⁹ At the same meeting, Carroll resubmitted his manuscript of *The White Steed* with alterations. Although Yeats was not in attendance, the minutes of the meeting record that both Yeats and O'Connor were against the production at that time. The reasons for their objections to the production are, again, not stated.

After he was informed that his play had been declined a second time, Carroll asked Yeats for a copy of his reader's report on the play, perhaps suspecting that he was not being given the full story.⁸⁰ Yeats wrote to Higgins giving him permission to send Carroll only extracts

from his report. Yeats told Higgins that his comments on *The White Steed* were 'logically incomplete without the statement that the play might endanger the future of the Abbey'.⁸¹ He continued:

We obviously would not have rejected it merely because it was propaganda considering the excellence of its kind. I recognise, however, that you may not think it wise to draw his attention to the peril in which the Abbey might be, as we cannot explain our present relation to the government.

In this discreet comment to Higgins, Yeats betrays the fact that the Abbey declined a play of high merit solely on the basis that it would endanger the negotiations for reconstruction. The significance is twofold. First, it is incontrovertible evidence that the theatre's aesthetic changed in relation to its financial position with the government. Secondly, it demonstrates that Yeats was accountable for the rejection of Carroll's play. This action runs directly counter to Yeats's statements in *On the Boiler* published earlier the same year. There, he had claimed that he had defended the freedom of every Abbey dramatist:

Again and again somebody speaking for our audience, for an influential newspaper or political organisation, has demanded more of this kind of play or less, or none of that. They have not understood that we cannot, and if we could would not comply; the moment any dramatist has some dramatic sense and applies it to our Irish theme he is played.⁸²

Because Yeats's complicity in the rejection of *The White Steed* remained confidential, his public image as a stalwart defender of artistic liberty was unchanged, and the eulogies following his death in January 1939 maintained that image. After the Abbey's rejection of *The White Steed*, Carroll and the Abbey's producer, Hugh Hunt (who resigned at the time of the controversy), took the play to New York, where it won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award in 1939 for the best foreign play.⁸³ Despite its success, Carroll still smarted from the Abbey's rejection and wrote a long letter to *The Irish Times*.⁸⁴ Carroll attacked the Abbey directorate with the exception of Yeats and Walter Starkie. Hayes and Blythe were particular targets:

Mr Hayes seldom goes to the theatre. He, therefore, knows as much about the drama as I do about Ogham stones. We can therefore dismiss him. Mr Blythe is apparently one of those Protestants who is so obsessed with the fear of being called a bigot that he urgently appears to agree at all costs with the merely pious

utterances of any given Catholic nonentity. [...] Shortly before his death, Dr. Yeats read *The White Steed*, and dealt with it in a letter to the Abbey Board. The contents of this letter were denied to me except for one small adverse line that seems sadistically to have been taken from its context, with the apparent intention of hurting me. Yet its full contents are known to me, and I am well aware it contained a generous praise from Dr. Yeats. As a test, I here and now challenge the Abbey Theatre Board, without resource to the niceties of administration to print that letter in full in the Dublin Press. [...] The hand of death has certainly ushered the celebrated Abbey into paltry days. [...] I can almost foresee an Abbey with its paintings of Synge and Yeats and A.E. consigned to the morgue beneath its floors, and its vestibule desecrated with the enlarged photographs of boobs and idiots, while its auditorium reeks of the odoriferous sanctity of the merely pious.⁸⁵

Carroll claims to have full disclosure of Yeats's opinion; if this was the case, his failure to note the Abbey's 'delicate negotiations' with the government is surprising. While it might have seemed inappropriate to implicate Yeats in the play's refusal just four months after his death, the fact that it was declined solely because of the theatre's relationship with the government would have provided priceless ammunition for an attack on the directorate's policy and further cause to incriminate Hayes.

Carroll's subsequent journalism suggests that he was not aware that *The White Steed* was a casualty of the reconstruction scheme. Following the fire that destroyed the Abbey building in 1951, Carroll wrote an article for the New York publication, *Theatre Arts*, in which he continued to praise Yeats for 'having blazed the Irish trail of dramatic achievement through the jungles of misrepresentation, clerical opposition and press vilification'.⁸⁶ Carroll hoped that the Irish government would not sponsor the Abbey's reconstruction since '[i]t will almost inevitably come under subtle government control and be subject to the numerous national taboos of the ignorant and the smug pietistic provincialists'.⁸⁷ The irony hardly needs articulating; all that Carroll feared had already come to pass.

When Yeats rejected *The White Steed* and acquiesced to the suppression of *The Herne's Egg*, he had acted in what he believed was the best interest of the theatre. The compromises were intended to ensure the long life, fiscal security and – by extension – the artistic freedom of the Abbey Theatre. In what may be an apocryphal story, in *My Father's Son*, Frank O'Connor recalls asking Yeats, "'Hasn't it occurred to you that we have created vested interests?'" to which Yeats

replied, ‘bitterly, “Did you think I wasn’t aware of it?”’⁸⁸ But Yeats could not predict the events that would sabotage the scheme following his death in January 1939. That year, Sean MacEntee was transferred from the Department of Finance to the Department of Industry and Commerce, and the Abbey lost a valuable ally.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the buildings on Abbey Street whose purchase would allow for the expansion of the Abbey could not be ‘acquired at a reasonable price on a voluntary basis’, and in order to force the purchase the government would have to enact legislation, since (another great irony) one of the buildings was ecclesiastical, and a church could not be ‘compulsorily acquired for such a purpose as to facilitate the erection of a Theatre’.⁹⁰ Before the purchase of another site could be considered, the Second World War erupted, postponing all plans.⁹¹ The unfortunate legacy of Yeats’s compromise was not the secure future for which he had hoped. Rather, it was the institution of a policy of censorship from within the Abbey directorate that would plague the theatre in the decades to come.

NOTES

1. ‘I sing what was lost and dread what was won’ from ‘What Was Lost’, *The Poems: W.B. Yeats*, edited by Daniel Albright (London: J.M. Dent, 1994), p.359. Peter Martin, *Censorship in the Two Irelands 1922-1939* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), p.112.
2. Martin, p.116.
3. Joan FitzPatrick Dean, *Riot and Great Anger: Stage Censorship in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p.28.
4. Dean, p.126.
5. For examples of Yeats as a champion of freedom from censorship, see Julia Carlson, *Banned in Ireland: Censorship and the Irish Writer* (London: Routledge, 1990), Peter Kavanagh, *The Story of the Abbey Theatre* (Orono, Maine: National Poetry Foundation, University of Maine at Orono, 1984), Frank O’Connor, *My Father’s Son* (London: Macmillan, 1968), and Lionel Pilkington, *Theatre and the State in Twentieth Century Ireland: Cultivating the People* (London: Routledge, 2001). Pilkington argues that the Abbey was not representative of the majority Irish opinion, but even his antagonistic thesis relies on the positioning of Yeats as a man who refused to concede his ground.
6. Sean McCann, ‘The Beginnings’, in *The Story of the Abbey Theatre*, edited by Sean McCann (London: New English Library, 1967), pp.7-17.
7. R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997-2003), I, p.209.
8. For George Russell’s correspondence with Lady Gregory about the Countess and the anticipation of controversy, see Foster, *Yeats: A Life*, I, p.210.
9. Lady Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre: A Chapter of Autobiography* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1972), p.80. See also Foster, *Yeats: A Life*, I, p.360.
10. Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre*, p.80.
11. Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre*, p.91. Levitas notes that Synge attempted to market the play to Continental theatres ‘with the appetizing promise of something “too immoral for Dublin”’. See Ben Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.105. Christopher Murray ignores these cases of self-censorship when he writes that ‘Synge became the acid test of Yeats’s commitment to the independence of art in the theatre’. Murray cites the Abbey’s productions of the *Playboy, Blanco Posnet* and the *Plough and the Stars* as examples of the Abbey’s unwavering stance on

- the freedom of the theatre in the face of censorship from social and political forces. See Christopher Murray, 'Friel's "Emblems of Adversity" and the Yeatsian Example', in *The Achievement of Brian Friel*, edited by Alan J. Peacock (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1993), pp. 69-70.
12. St John Ervine, *Some Impressions of My Elders* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1923), p.260.
 13. T.S., Micheál Mac Liammóir, 'Abbey Theatre 1937-1965, A Review', NLI MS 41,269/2.
 14. Yeats to Robinson (6 July 1935), Accession #6283 in online *Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*
 15. (13 September 1935) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (5).
 16. A.L.S., Longford to Blythe (12 Sept 1935). Blythe papers, UCDA P24/1069.
 17. (8 November 1935) and (29 Nov 1935) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (5).
 18. (13 December 1935) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (5).
 19. (24 April 1936) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (6).
 20. (24 April 1936) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (6).
 21. (25 April 1936) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (6).
 22. (27 March 1936) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (6).
 23. MacEntee advised Hayes not to make any binding contracts regarding reconstruction since the government would require an open competition for new theatre design. See (27 April 1936) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (6).
 24. T.S., Cormac O'Daly, *The Silver Jubilee*, NLI MS 29,415.
 25. (1 Sept 1936) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (6).
 26. O'Casey to Lennox Robinson (10 Jan 1926), in *Letters of Sean O'Casey*, edited by David Krause (London: Cassell, 1975), I, pp.165-6.
 27. O'Daly, *The Silver Jubilee*.
 28. O'Daly, *The Silver Jubilee*.
 29. (27 November 1936) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (6).
 30. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley (28 Nov [1936]) Accession #6731 in online *Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*.
 31. (4 December 1936) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (6).
 32. Foster writes that *The Herne's Egg* was 'considered too earthy for the Abbey to produce'. R. F Foster, *W.B.Yeats: A Life*, II, p.593.
 33. Yeats, *The Herne's Egg and Other Plays* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), pp.26-7.
 34. Yeats, *Herne's Egg*, pp.49-50.
 35. O'Connor, *My Father's Son*, p.191.
 36. Frank O'Connor, 'Letter to the Editor', *The Irish Times* (12 Oct 1938), p.5.
 37. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley (9 Dec [1936]) Accession #7116 in *Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*.
 38. (14 August 1935) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (5).
 39. See Peter Kavanagh, p.169 and Donal Dorcey, 'The Big Occasions', in *The Story of the Abbey Theatre*, edited by Sean McCann (London: New English Library, 1967), pp.126-57, (p.152).
 40. Yeats to Frank Pearce Strum (17 September [1935]) Accession #6343 in *Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*.
 41. 'Abbey Quarrel', *Catholic Standard* (6 September 1935), p.8.
 42. O'Connor, *My Father's Son*, p.161.
 43. Robert Speaight, *Shakespeare on the Stage: An Illustrated History of Shakespearean Performance* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1973), p.199.

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44. Speaight, p.199. Like Coriolanus, Boulanger was forced from the city – in his case by the Paris Commune – due to his popularity. Both characters were accused of treason against the people who had supported them, and they both had a distaste for communicating directly with the lower classes. See Michael Burns, *Rural Society and French Politics: Boulangism and the Dreyfus Affair, 1886-1999* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).
45. Speaight, p.200. A. José Axelrad writes that the production ‘was used as a signal for the abortive fascist coup, the consequences of which were to be so serious for the ensuing years’. See ‘Shakespeare’s Impact Today in France’, *Shakespeare Studies* 16 (1963), 53-56, (pp.55-56).
46. O’Connor, *My Father’s Son*, p.161.
47. O’Connor, *My Father’s Son*, p.161.
48. Starkie published a review of *The Fascist Experiment* by Commendatore Luigi Villari in the *Irish Statesman* in 1926 in which he referred to fascism as ‘sane, idealistic patriotism’. See *Irish Statesman* (28 August 1926) Vol. 6, no. 25, 686-7. His book, *The Waveless Plain*, a narrative of his travels in fascist Europe, was published in 1938.
49. (8 November 1935) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (5).
50. O’Connor, *My Father’s Son*, p.161.
51. Reported by Blythe, Hayes, and Higgins on 22 January 1937, *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (6).
52. Máire O’Brien, *The Same Age as the State* (Dublin: O’Brien Press, 2004), p.34.
53. For the ‘state-sponsored bodies’ established in 1933, see Ronan Fanning, *Irish Department of Finance* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1978), p.254.
54. The Executive Council is reported as complaining in 1932, for example, that the Department of Finance was postponing legislative proposals. See Fanning, p.225.
55. See Foster, *Yeats: A Life*, II, p.594. Yeats’s personal finances were at an ebb due to his ill health and his footing the bill for Cuala Press.
56. Foster, *Yeats: A Life*, II, p.594.
57. Yeats to Edith Shackleton Heald ([22 August 1937]) Accession #6835 in *Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*.
58. Yeats to Edith Shackleton Heald ([22 August 1937]) Accession #6835 in *Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*.
59. Blythe and O’Connor made the report. They along with Higgins and Yeats formed a negotiating committee for the reconstruction scheme. (26 October 1937) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (6).
60. (5 August 1938) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (7).
61. Foster, *Yeats: A Life*, II, p.628.
62. Yeats, *On the Boiler* (Dublin: Cuala Press, 1939), p.32.
63. Yeats, *On the Boiler*, n.p.
64. ‘Puzzle Play at the Abbey; What Does Dr. Yeats Mean By It?’, *The Irish Times* (12 August 1938), p.7.
65. ‘Puzzle Play at the Abbey’, *The Irish Times* (12 August 1938), p.7.
66. (12 August 1938) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (7). The delicate nature of this stage in negotiations with the government is revealed not only by Yeats’s letter but also by Hayes’s reprimand of Robinson in the same directors’ meeting for not noting the names of members of government first in a list of people attending a reception at Charlemont House. This gave a ‘bad impression’, Hayes argued, and might impact on the reconstruction scheme.
67. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley (15 August [1938]) Accession #7290 in *Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*.
68. Yeats to Ethel Mannin (1 March [1937]) Accession #6835 in *Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*.

69. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley (7 September [1938]) Accession #7290 in *Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*.
70. Yeats to Higgins (7 November 1938) Accession #7327 in *Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*.
71. For example, see *Catholic Standard* for September 1935.
72. Carroll, *The White Steed* (New York: Random House, 1939), Act I, p.6.
73. *The White Steed*, Act I, p.12.
74. O'Casey's plays, particularly *The Plough and the Stars* and *Nannie's Night Out*, are exemplary points of comparison given his similar derision of narrow-minded ideology.
75. Carroll outlines the difference between anti-Catholicism and anti-clericalism in his article, 'Can the Abbey be Restored?' in *The Abbey Theatre: Interviews and Recollections*, edited by E.H. Mikhail (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), pp.188-91 (p.190).
76. Carroll, *The White Steed*, III, ii., p. 149.
77. (2 September 1938) and (9 September 1938) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (7).
78. (10 October 1938) Joseph Holloway, *Joseph Holloway's Irish Theatre* edited by Robert Hogan and Michael J. O'Neill (Dixon, California: Proscenium, 1968-1970), III, p.15.
79. (21 October 1938) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (7).
80. (4 November 1938) *Abbey Theatre Minute Book*, NLI Acc 3961/NFC 98 (7).
81. Yeats to Higgins (7 November 1938) Accession #7327 in *Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*.
82. Yeats, *On the Boiler*, pp.13-14.
83. See Mikhail, *Abbey Theatre*, p.191 for a note on the award. Also see Drew B. Pallette, 'Paul Vincent Carroll Since *The White Steed*', *Modern Drama* 7.4 (Spring, 1965), 375-81.
84. Quoted in full in Holloway, *Joseph Holloway's Irish Theatre* (10 May 1937), III, pp.27-28.
85. Holloway, *Joseph Holloway's Irish Theatre*, III, pp.27-28.
86. Paul Vincent Carroll, 'Can the Abbey Theatre be Restored?', *Theatre Arts* 36 (January 1952), 18-19, 79. Reprinted in E.H. Mikhail, *Abbey Theatre*, pp.188-92.
87. Carroll, 'Can the Abbey Theatre be Restored?', p.190.
88. O'Connor, *My Father's Son*, p.191.
89. T.S., Blythe, 'Summary of Negotiations Between the Minister for Finance and the National Theatre Society, Ltd', Blythe papers, UCDA P24/795.
90. T.S., Micheál Mac Liammóir, 'Abbey Theatre 1937-1935, a Review', NLI MS 41,268/2.
91. Mac Liammóir, NLI MS 41,268/2. See also Hugh Hunt's brief summary of the reconstruction plans in which he attributes the postponement to World War Two in *The Abbey: Ireland's National Theatre* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1979), p.157.