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By Memory Inspired:
W.B. Yeats's "September 1913"
and the Irish Political Ballad

by ADELE M. DALSIMER

W. B. YEATS wrote five poems in response to the controversy stirred by Sir Hugh Lane's offer of his collection of paintings to the city of Dublin. Of these *Poems Written in Discouragement*, "September 1913" is deservedly the best known and the most significant. Indeed, "September 1913" is a brilliant response to a specific public controversy as well as to a condition which Yeats perceived in Ireland as a whole. Following a venerable Irish tradition, he chose the ballad form to express his attitudes towards a national situation.

In 1907 Sir Hugh Lane, Lady Gregory's nephew and a man greatly respected by Yeats, lent his excellent collection of modern French paintings to Dublin and offered to give them to the city if the Municipal Corporation could assure him that they would be appropriately housed. Lane favored a design by the English architect Sir Edward Luytens for a bridge gallery over the Liffey, but this plan gained little support. The Corporation argued that they should be given concrete proof of a public need and demand for the paintings before they appropriated money for the museum.

Public reaction was generally negative. The objection to housing the paintings in Dublin was not primarily financial, however, but moral—an objection shared by several members of the Corporation as well. Fostered by William Martin Murphy of the *Irish Independent*, the attitudes of those Yeats called the "mob" prevailed. In his note to the poem Yeats commented that the pictures—works of Corot, Manet, Degas, and Renoir—were compared to the Trojan Horse "which destroyed a city." They were dubbed "indecent," and the people who had raised thousands of pounds "to give Dublin paintings" were labeled immoral "self-seekers, self-advertisers, picture-dealers, log-rolling cranks and faddists. . . . A member of the Corporation said there were Irish artists who could paint as good if they had a mind to, and another described a half-hour in the temporary gallery in Harcourt Street as the most dismal of his life."¹ In disgust with the response of the Municipal

1. *The Variorum Edition of The Poems of W.B. Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt and R.K. Alspach (New York: Macmillan, 1957), p. 819.

Corporation as well as of the general population, Lane gave the valuable collection to the National Gallery in London.²

Yeats believed the kind of provincial complacency and malicious ignorance displayed by the public in this incident to be representative of modern Irish intellectual and spiritual life. He considered the refusal to provide a permanent home for the Lane Collection symbolic of the general refusal of the emergent middle class to grant culture, education, art, and genius their rightful place in the Irish community. The public outcry revealed, he said, that

neither religion nor politics can of itself create minds with enough receptivity to become wise, or just and generous enough to make a nation. Other cities have been stupid . . . but Dublin is the capital of a nation, and an ancient race has nowhere else to look for an education. . . . Religious Ireland . . . thinks of divine things as a round of duties separated from life and not as an element that may be discovered in all circumstance and emotion, while political Ireland sees the good citizen but as a man who holds to certain opinions and not as a man of good will. Against all this we have but a few educated men and the remnants of an old traditional culture among the poor. Both were stronger forty years ago, before the rise of our new middle classes which . . . [shows] how base at moment of excitement are minds without culture. (*Variorum Edition*, p. 818)

In "September 1913" Yeats transformed specific issues and events into a scathing indictment of modern Irish mentality and morality. The poem is not only intense, but also complex, for it integrates a number of diverse political and poetical traditions, themes, and techniques. Although the impact of "September 1913" is evident even to the casual reader, its various elements and their relationships have not been widely analyzed. "September 1913," for example, clearly exhibits several important characteristics of Irish political ballads—characteristics which are of special interest in relation to John O'Leary's prominent place in the poem and to the nature of his contribution to Yeats's political and cultural development.

Poems such as "The Ballad of Moll Magee," "The Ballad of the Foxhunter," and "The Ballad of Father O'Hart," reveal Yeats's early interest in the ballad form. His awareness of its political potential was not fully awakened, however, until 1886 when John O'Leary, in the process of converting Yeats to the cause of Irish nationalism, introduced him to the political songs published in the *Nation* by the so-called "Young Irelanders," among them Thomas Davis, Charles Gavan Duffy, James Clarence Mangan, and Thomas D'Arcy Magee. For a number of years, the poets of the Young Ireland Movement, in their attempt to create a national image for Ireland, provided an ideal and useful model to Yeats for his own work. He did not, at first, express reservations about their frequently inferior verse because he admired its capacity to

2. Lane died on the *Lusitania*, leaving a pencilled but not properly witnessed codicil to his will that restored the paintings to Dublin. Until 1959, the paintings remained in the Tate Gallery in London. A compromise was finally reached, and the pictures are shared by London and Dublin.

arouse intense emotion and patriotic feeling. At this stage, apparently, he was able to overlook the fact that most of this verse was propaganda, aimed at affecting public opinion, and, as such, was bombastic and rhetorical, marred by weak, stereotypic content, unimaginative rhyme, and conventional rhythms.

In 1894, however, Yeats stated in "Some Irish National Books," a review of *The New Spirit of the Nation* published in the *Bookman*, that whereas the songs of Young Ireland had great political force, they had little value as poetry. By 1896, he was questioning not only their aesthetic quality but also their sincerity and their usefulness to the cause of nationalism. Since the poems of Young Ireland were prompted by political considerations rather than by concrete emotions aroused by some stirring event, Yeats now condemned them as insincere. Furthermore, he pointed out that the songs were not, in any legitimate sense, "popular," since they attracted only one portion of the population and, according to Yeats, its worst portion—the half-educated "mob." Indeed, the poems of Young Ireland were of value neither to the peasant living in his traditional world nor to the educated man. Ultimately, in a review of a biography of Sir Samuel Ferguson in the *Bookman* of May, 1896, Yeats described the ballads he once admired as the "false coin of a glittery and noisy insincerity." He felt that the poets, though sincere in themselves, had "for the most generous of reasons" allowed themselves to become "a mirror for the passions and blindness of the multitude." In fact, he dismissed them as members of the despised middle class—people who had "unlearned the unwritten tradition" and not replaced it with artistic skill.³ Only the unwritten lore of the folk tradition and the art of the educated elite were of cultural value to Ireland.

It is widely assumed that when Yeats grew disenchanted with the poetry of Young Ireland in the late nineties, he lost interest in song forms altogether—that he stopped writing literary ballads, and according to George-Denis Zimmerman, for "a period of some twenty years beginning about 1908 . . . did not much care about ballads in general."⁴ Although it is certainly true that Yeats was not as interested in composing ballads during the middle period of his career as he had been and would in later years become, he neither abandoned the ballad nor lost sight of its potential as a form of political and nationalistic expression. Indeed, Yeats wrote several ballads in response to the dramatic events of Eastern Week, 1916, and its aftermath.

Significantly, between 1908 and 1915, Yeats had come into close contact with another species of political ballads. During these years the Cuala Press, under the supervision of Jack Yeats, issued a monthly

3. *Essays and Introductions* (New York, Macmillan, 1961), p. 6.

4. Georges-Denis Zimmerman, "Yeats, the Popular Ballad, and the Ballad Singer," *English Studies* (Amsterdam), 50 (1969), 193.

series of broadsides, of which a surprising number contained the immensely popular "come-all ye" type of political street song. These ballads, like those of the Young Irelanders, were about the major events and significant figures in Ireland's turbulent history. They were written, however, not by the *literati* of the semi-educated middle classes, but by the humble men of the streets who wrote for men like themselves—the poor people, peasants, and beggars whom Yeats considered with ever-increasing conviction were the true inheritors of genuine Irish culture.

W.B. Yeats's exact role in the publication of these broadsides is not known, but certainly he was closely involved in both selection and production, and thus fully aware of these examples of the "sincere" political and national poetry he now admired. Thus it is not surprising that—in spite of Yeats's feelings about the poetry of Young Ireland—he chose traditional ballad form in "Sixteen Dead Men" and "The Red Rose Tree" to express his reaction to the Easter Uprising and its consequences—a reaction so widely shared that it united the Irish to a degree unprecedented since the time of Parnell.

But Yeats's "Easter Week" poems in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* are not his first specifically political poems; "September 1913" is also a "political" poem.⁵ Like the later poems, it shows the influence of the street song and reflects Yeats's continuing concern that Irish writers find new and personal ways to use the traditional forms so vital to the cultural heritage of the nation. In "September 1913" Yeats makes particularly interesting use of traditional form, however, for he turns the conventions to ironic ends. He uses the same formal devices the nationalistic poets used to unify large segments of the Irish population. But where they used them to heap praise on this population, he uses them to criticize; where they made heroic promises, he expresses scorn. By refusing at every turn to fulfill his audience's expectations, Yeats achieves a brilliant satiric effect.

Among the Cuala Press broadsides, the street song "By Memory Inspired," published in November, 1909, is of particular interest to a consideration of "September 1913." Its similarities to Yeats's poem are striking and emphasize Yeats's ironic handling of conventional devices. Possibly some lurking memory of the song was one of the inspirational forces behind "September 1913."

In spite of obvious similarities between "By Memory Inspired" and "September 1913," I would not be tempted to single out this ballad were it not for the fact that it also appeared in *Irish Minstrelsy: A Selection of Irish Songs and Ballads*, edited by H. Halliday Sparling (London,

5. Conor Cruse O'Brien, in "Passion and Cunning: An Essay on the Politics of W.B. Yeats," in *Excited Reverie*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares and K.G.W. Cross (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 236, discusses Yeats's politics in the poem "To a Shade." His remarks, however, are pertinent to all the *Poems Written in Discouragement*, for they suggest that Yeats's quarrel with Lane's opponents was social and political as well as aesthetic.

"By Memory Inspired,"⁷ which appeared some time after John Mitchell's death in 1875, is thought to be the work of James Kearney, "a labourer from Clare who wrote many of the songs sung by . . . Dublin music-hall favorites" (Sparling, pp. 367-368). The song, though it praises Mitchell and Daniel O'Connell, deals primarily with the political martyrs of the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries—the heroes of the 1790's: Robert Emmet and the United Irishmen. This poem praises the same great men—Tone, Emmet, and Fitzgerald—who figure so prominently in Yeats's poem. Each stanza

7. "By Memory Inspired"

We saw a nation's tears
Shed for John and Henry Shears ;
Betrayed by Judas, Captain Armstrong
We may forgive, but yet
We never can forget
The poisoning of Maguire that is gone.
 boys, gone :
Our high star and true apostle that is gone !

How did Lord Edward die?
Like a man, without a sigh!
And he left his handiwork on Major Swan.
But Sirr, with steel-clad breast,
And coward heart at best,
Left us cause to mourn Lord Edward that
is gone, boys gone:
Here's the memory of our friends that are
gone!

September, 'Eighty-three,
Closed this cruel history,
When Emmet's blood the scaffold flowed
 upon :
O, had their spirits been wise,
They might then realize
Their freedom—but we drink to Mitchell
 that is gone, boys, gone ;
Here's the memory of our friends that
 are gone !

of "By Memory Inspired" is devoted to one or several of these heroic dead, condemning their betrayers, and concluding with a refrain in the form of a toast:

Here's the memory of John Mitchell that is gone!
Here's the memory of John Mitchell that is gone!

or

Left us cause to mourn Lord Edward that is gone, boys, gone:
Here's the memory to our friends that are gone.

The refrain, with its repetition of "gone," is enticingly close to Yeats's refrain in "September 1913,"

Romantic Ireland's dead and gone
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

One of the most interesting aspects of "September 1913" is the prominence of John O'Leary—the subject of the refrain. Unlike the martyred heroes recalled in "By Memory Inspired," O'Leary—whom Yeats considers their modern equivalent—shares the honor of the refrain with no one. It was John O'Leary who converted Yeats to the cause of Irish cultural nationalism—who was, in fact, responsible for Yeats becoming an "Irish" writer. A man of great moral rectitude, a vehement patriot and active Fenian, he suffered long years of prison and exile in behalf of an ideal, if somewhat imaginary, Ireland. To Yeats, he seemed the embodiment of the romantic conception of Ireland and of Irish nationalism. O'Leary recommended to Yeats the writings of the Young Irelanders, maintaining that the nature and intensity of the feeling they had inspired had been of great political value. However, he never claimed that they were noteworthy for quality. In fact, despite his stress on the importance of a nationalistic purpose to aspiring Irish writers, O'Leary insisted that poetics should never be sacrificed to politics, nor aesthetics to argument. In his essay "Poetry and Tradition" Yeats recalls O'Leary insisting that a "writer must not write badly, or ignore the examples of the great Masters in the fancied or real service of a cause, . . . [just as] he must not lie for it or grow hysterical" (*Essays and Introductions*, p. 257). O'Leary protested the right of patriots to perpetuate bad verse. Hoping to promote an Irish literature of the greatest kind, he supported Yeats in his refusal to praise second-rate literature in order to strengthen the cause of Irish nationalism. Thus Yeats associated O'Leary not only with Irish cultural nationalism but with an insistence on the highest standards of artistic excellence. Yeats had faith that O'Leary, like himself, would have recognized the intrinsic quality of the Lane Collection and deplored the perversion of nationalism which led to its loss.

Equally important to Yeats was the fact that O'Leary shared his own contempt for the "minds without culture" of the Irish middle class. In

his *Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism* (London, 1896), I, 31, O'Leary attacked the middle class as "the lowest class morally—that is, the class influenced by the lowest motives." In his "Poetry and Tradition," Yeats refers to this aspect of O'Leary's thought. "Power passed to small shopkeepers, to clerks, to that very class who had seemed to John O'Leary so ready to bend to the power of others, to men who had risen above the traditions of the countryman, without learning those of cultivated life, or even educating themselves, and who because of their poverty, their ignorance, their superstitious piety, are much subject to all kinds of fear" (*Essays and Introductions*, p. 260). Thus when Yeats attacked the cultural and aesthetic values of his middle-class contemporaries in "September 1913," he used O'Leary as a symbol for the lost ideal of aesthetic excellence in Ireland. O'Leary had worked for the political viability of the Irish nation, but he also understood that a national culture and artistic tradition of genuine excellence was essential if Ireland was to be fully alive both spiritually and politically. The loss of the Lane Collection in 1913 seemed to indicate that the Ireland of which both Yeats and O'Leary had dreamed had been superseded by a philistine nation, enslaved not only by a growing materialism and narrow-minded religiosity, but also by a strait-laced nationalism which valued tawdry patriotism over aesthetic excellence, sentiment over authenticity, and display of feeling over integrity. It is this Ireland that Yeats attacked in "September 1913."

The refrain reminds us at the end of each stanza that all that O'Leary had come to represent for Yeats had vanished:

Romantic Ireland's dead and gone
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

The traditional refrain functioned as a unifying device; here, however, Yeats turns the form on its head and uses it to separate himself and his ideals from the "huxters" and "shopkeepers" he has described. Had Yeats's listeners joined his song at this point, instead of affirming a great and glorious heritage to which they all belonged, they would have found themselves bemoaning their separation from the past that had once been the very "marrow" of Irish bones.

In addition to its striking refrain, many of the poem's ballad characteristics are obvious at a glance: the direct address to a listening audience, tetrameter, a highly regular cross-rhyme scheme, and a stanzaic pattern of six lines with a two-line refrain—in one of his letters Yeats commented that the six-line stanza "suggests ballad stanzas."⁸

The strict and emphatic rhyme scheme points particularly strongly to the relation of "September 1913" to the street ballad tradition. In a practice unusual for Yeats, all the rhyme words except one are mono-

8. *Letters on Poetry from W.B. Yeats to Lady Dorothy Wellesley* (London: Oxford, 1964), p. 82.

syllabic and heavily stressed. Certainly, it is true that Yeats wrote rhymed verses almost exclusively, but his rhyme schemes are usually neither so visible nor so insistent as they are in this poem. Generally, especially in his middle period, rhymes are subsumed through enjambment within the overall movement of the lines. In some poems the enjambment is so pronounced that the rhymes go virtually unnoticed. But in his ballads—like those in *Last Poems* where his interest in the ballad form is greatest—the lines are mostly end-stopped, and the rhymes obvious. The prominence of rhyme in virtually all of Yeats's ballads suggests his belief in its importance to this particular form. In a letter to Lady Dorothy Wellesley during the period when Yeats was writing the ballads of *Last Poems*, he insisted that rhyme was crucial to capturing the authentic “folk lilt” and wrote to her, “Look through any old book of ballads and you will find that they have all perfectly regular rhyme schemes. . . . Regular rhyme is needed in this kind of work. . . . The swing of the sentence makes the reader expect it . . . the fundamental sing-song” (*Letters to Dorothy Wellesley*, pp. 80-82).

Obviously Yeats was aware that in the traditional ballads of which he spoke, the “fundamental sing-song” functioned simply as a mnemonic device to probe the memories of the singers. Seldom was there semantic connection between the rhyming words. As Yeats developed as a poet, however, he made increasingly good use of the semantic potential of rhyme for amplifying a poem's meaning.⁹ He does this even in his last ballads where he is seeking the illusion of “folk simplicity.”

In “September 1913” Yeats's rhymes function in an intricate and complex manner. Their regularity and generally monosyllabic and end-stopped quality underline the poem's relationship to traditional forms. But in addition, the rhymes are used to add to the poem's bitter meaning. Thus Yeats uses rhyme—one of the chief means by which poets had kept the spirit of national patriotism alive in Ireland—to expose and bemoan the loss of that same heroic Ireland which they had so exalted.

In the mockingly rhetorical question which begins Yeats's address to his audience in “September 1913,” he offers his listeners a picture of Ireland that almost directly inverts the heroic images of the nation traditionally hawked by the balladeers. Yeats's Irish are money-grubbing, professionally pious, suffocatingly narrow men—a nation of shopkeepers who have turned their country into a “little, greasy, huxtering nation groping for halfpence in a greasy till . . . by the light of a holy candle.”¹⁰ Yeats's scorn is underscored by the very first rhyme: “sense”

9. My discussion of the semantic meaning of the rhymes in “September 1913” is greatly indebted to Marjorie Perloff's study, *Rhyme and Meaning in the Poetry of Yeats* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970). Although Perloff does not consider this particular poem, she clearly demonstrates the development of Yeats's awareness and use of the semantic possibilities of rhyme.

10. Quoted in A. Norman Jeffares *A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (Stanford, 1969), p. 129.

and "pence." The closeness in sound suggests the close association of money and wisdom in the minds of Yeats's listeners. Moreover, the homonym of "sense"—"cents" implies that the desire for pence has obliterated all sense and wisdom.

The semantic relationship of the next rhyme—"till" and "until"—is equally interesting. The cherished "till," the repository for both money and prayers, is negated by its rhyme, "until." And this is precisely Yeats's point. Instead of accumulating things of true value (like the paintings in the Lane Collection), the modern Irish, in their devotion to prayer and material wealth, are depleting the sources of their vitality, destroying what they have that is of real value. They have, in fact, "untilled" themselves, leaving their tills—material and spiritual—empty.

The refrain continues the cross-rhyming pattern of the first six lines of the stanza, but introduces the poem's first approximate rhyme: "gone" and "bone." The slight but jarring variation in sound of the approximate rhyme heightens the awareness of the rhyme and draws attention to the "bone" image by emphasizing that all else is "gone." Indeed, in each succeeding stanza Yeats stresses "gone," the painful, central motif of his poem, by pairing it with an approximate rhyme: "spun" and "gone"; "Tone" and "gone"; "son" and "gone." The continued imbalance achieved by the persistent and consistently placed off-rhymes—as well as the constant repetition of the word "gone"—emphasizes the disparity with the noble past Yeats sees in the Ireland around him.

The first stanza concludes—as does every stanza—with an exact rhyme: "save" and "grave." "Save" has a double meaning. When Yeats says, "Men were born to pray and save," he is not only insisting that money and prayer have become equally precious to the Irish, but also suggesting the Catholic belief that salvation can be found through prayer. By rhyming "save" with "grave," however, Yeats slyly implies that both pence and prayer lead, not to salvation, but to the grave. The rhyme also suggests that Ireland's salvation will be found neither in pence nor in prayer, but only in those values which O'Leary has taken with him to the grave: art, culture, and standards of aesthetic excellence—values clearly offered by Hugh Lane's collection.

In the second stanza of "September 1913" Yeats begins his ironic development of the image of Ireland's political martyrs—that same image so central to the patriotic street song. Yeats was well aware of the implications of this convention and of its importance to political balladeers. In an entry in his *Diary*, for example, dated March 12, 1909 (several months before "By Memory Inspired" was published by the Cuala Press), Yeats said:

You cannot keep the idea of a nation alive where there are no national institutions to reverence, no national success to admire, without a model of it in the mind of the people. You can call it "Kathleen-Ni-Houlihan" or "Shan Van Vocht" in a mood of simple feeling, and love that image, but for the general purposes

of life you must have a complex mass of images, making up a model like an architect's model. The Young Ireland poets created this with certain images rather simple in their conception that filled the mind of the young—Wolfe Tone, King Brian, Emmet, Owen Roe, Sarsfield, the Fisherman of Kinsale . . . its most powerful work was this creation of sensible images for the affections vivid enough to follow men to the scaffold.¹¹

Yeats's statement not only indicates his recognition of popular associations to this particular poetic convention, but also suggests that his ironic use of this very same convention in "September 1913" was both conscious and intentional. What Yeats refers to in the *Diaries* as the "names that filled the minds of the young" become in the poem "the names that stilled your childish play," and while no specific hero is named yet, the greatness of all is contrasted with the present state of Irishmen. By simply mentioning "names," Yeats introduces the chief means by which he develops the poem's central theme: the contrast between the Ireland of 1913 and the "Romantic Ireland" that is "dead and gone."

Whereas the first stanza had one strategically placed off-rhyme, the second stanza has two. The first is the rhyme between "kind" and "wind." The lines contrast the active heroes with present-day men who sit and pray, although as children, they were able to respond to the greatness of heroes. When considered in context, the rhyme of "kind" and "wind" reveals a semantic relationship. The "wind" with its speed and evanescence is a symbol of that quality which made these men a "different kind"—a "kind" of impulsive force and unyielding power that spread their fame throughout the world. The image of the traveling "wind" also prefigures the mention in the third stanza of the "Wild Geese," who literally spread themselves through the world because they were so different in "kind" from the modern Irishman with his prayers and his pence.

"Play" and "pray," the second rhyme in this stanza, are opposites, accentuating the differences between the heroic great and those ordinary Irishmen whose childish play has turned to the dullness of prayer and pence. The exact duplication of rhyming sounds suggests that the prayers of the modern Irish are equatable with the play of children. Implied is the notion that both are stilled—or should be stilled—by the mention of such "names."

In the second stanza the imagery suggests the brevity of the heroes' stay and of Ireland's greatness. The approximate rhyme of "spun" and "gone" contributes to this sense of brevity, for not only does it suggest the speed of the heroes' rush through the world, but implies an inevitable web from which they could not escape. The hangman's rope has been spun for them.

In the third stanza, Yeats conjures up specific heroes—the Wild

11. *Memoirs*, ed. Denis Donoghue (New York: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 183-184.

Geese who, driven from Ireland, spread themselves upon the tide, fighting in the armies of other nations, Fitzgerald, Emmet, and Tone. Instead of using these figures in the traditional manner to sing of Ireland's glory, Yeats asks incredulously if it was for the debased Ireland he sees around him that they were sacrificed.

Once again Yeats uses his rhymes and refrain to underscore his point that in modern Ireland the gift of a great life is nothing more than a visionary illusion, the false dream and delusion of madness—a "delirium of the brave." The exact rhyme of "brave" with "grave" emphasizes the futility of any such action. In modern Ireland, bravery becomes an illness, a self-inflicted disease that leads to self-destruction.

In the poem's final stanza, Yeats imagines the return of the heroes. Their heroism, their self-sacrifice, their noble deaths—the whole divinely inspired "delirium of the brave"—are interpreted by modern Irishmen as madness. Kathleen-Ni-Houlihan is reduced to "some woman;" her spiritual inspiration to the effect of her "yellow hair." Traditional symbols have lost their meaning, and heroes have no place or significance. So the poet cries, "Let them be, they're dead and gone." Finally, the poem insists, the Irish imagination is so debased, so devoted to praying and saving, that its richest symbols—Kathleen-Ni-Houlihan and the names of heroes which have been so traditionally stirring—are empty of meaning. Clearly, in such a place as this, the art that Hugh Lane offered can find no home. Its significance cannot be recognized, nor its value appreciated.

Considering the dissonant message of the last stanza, it is not surprising that most of the rhymes are approximate: "again"/"pain," "were"/"hair," "some"/"gone." The poet thwarts our aural expectations, just as Ireland has failed to meet his own expectations. Indeed, off-rhyme implies that what has been anticipated will not and cannot be.

In the entire poem Yeats uses a strict a-b-a-b rhyme scheme, yet he never permits the listener the full comfort of that conventional four-line pattern, so much a part of the "fundamental sing-song." In every stanza, the rhyme with "gone" is an off-rhyme and slightly disconcerting. Furthermore, in all but one stanza, there is enjambment of the fourth and fifth lines so that the reader cannot rest on the rhyme word, on an anticipated mating. In contrast, the author of "By Memory Inspired" uses only one off-rhyme in the entire poem, creates no semantic connections between rhymes, and never varies or disrupts the established, tightly-knit stanzaic pattern.

Indeed, in "September 1913" Yeats created a poem that, in spite of its apparent simplicity, is a dazzling virtuoso piece in the form of an Irish political ballad with its traditional patterns of rhyme, imagery, and refrain. In what is perhaps the greatest of the poem's many ironies Yeats elevates this form that the Irish particularly loved to an excellence

never before attained, in order to indict the values of middle-class Ireland. Compared to the glowing picture of the past and the inspired promise for the future in such songs as "By Memory Inspired," "September 1913" offers a "blackened glass"—a dismal picture of both present and future, a picture so dismal that even the symbols and heroism of the past have lost their meaning.

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