CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	The healer in the tower: Biddy Early and discourses of healing in the work of W. B. Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory
Authors	Walker-Dunseith, Holly May
Publication date	2022-07-12
Original Citation	Walker-Dunseith, H. M. (2022) 'The healer in the tower: Biddy Early and discourses of healing in the work of W. B. Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory', Irish Studies Review, (17 pp). doi: 10.1080/09670882.2022.2095962.
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09670882.2022.2095962
Rights	© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The Version of Record of this manuscript has been published and is freely available in Irish Studies Review, 12 July 2022. To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2022.2095962 - http://creativecommons.org/ licenses/by/4.0/
Download date	2026-10-30 14:13:39
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/13381

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

IRISH STUDIES Review

30/2

Irish Studies Review

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cisr20

The healer in the tower: Biddy Early and discourses of healing in the work of W. B. Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory

Holly May Walker-Dunseith

To cite this article: Holly May Walker-Dunseith (2022): The healer in the tower: Biddy Early and discourses of healing in the work of W. B. Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory, Irish Studies Review, DOI: 10.1080/09670882.2022.2095962

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2022.2095962

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

Published online: 12 Jul 2022.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 200

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=cisr20

IRISH STUDIES REVIEW
https://doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2022.2095962

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

The healer in the tower: Biddy Early and discourses of healing in the work of W. B. Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory

Holly May Walker-Dunseith

Department of English, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland

ABSTRACT

The folk healer Biddy Early (1798–1874) is perhaps now best remembered in association with a mythical curse on the Clare hurling side. This article explores her healing practices and the significance of her life and legend to William Butler Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory. Writings by both these key revivalists, and their collaborative play *The Pot of Broth* (1904), testify to the continuing and ambivalent presence of Early's memory in the decades after her death. Gregory and Yeats spread the fame of Early as part of their revivalist project, and the latter rebuilt the tower he christened Thoor Ballylee with, among other things, the "old mill boards" where she had once, according to local lore, gathered her ingredients. This article looks at the place of Early in Yeats's and Gregory's imaginations, and seeks to reposition this non-elite woman as one of the culture-givers of the Revival period.

KEYWORDS

Traditional medicine; Thoor Ballylee; healing; Biddy Early; W. B. Yeats; Lady Gregory

Introduction

Biddy Early (1798–1874) was a folk healer who practised in the area around Coole Park and Ballylee in County Galway, a locale later made famous by W. B. Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory. Although Early's revived fame is often attributed to Yeats's work, Gregory supplied him with much of his knowledge of this traditional healer from County Clare.[1] On his early stays at Coole Park in both 1896 and 1897, Gregory took Yeats on walks around the vicinity as a natural cure for his nervous illness. The poet, who strongly associated this area with his own recoveries to health, learned on one of his first visits of Early's practice of gathering healing plants (most likely moss) from the boards of the mill next to the tower he would later christen Thoor Ballylee. A practitioner in words rather than medicine, Yeats rebuilt Thoor Ballylee with, among other things, the "old mill boards" where Early gathered her ingredients.[2]

Early plays an intriguing role in Yeats's earliest encounter with the tower. It is easy to imagine the appeal of the story of this County Clare wise woman to the Celticist and occultist Yeats. Folklore sources show that she was often associated with the fairies because it was believed that she could predict the future and heal illnesses using herbs and a magic bottle.[3] Yeats records discussing her in a conversation with a Ballylee miller in

CONTACT Holly May Walker-Dunseith hmwd@outlook.com

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

1896, on an excursion that he undertook during a visit to his theatrical collaborator Edward Martyn at nearby Tulira Castle. Yeats's earliest encounter with the tower at Ballylee in 1896 was also an encounter with Early.

> I HAVE been lately to a little group of houses, not many enough to be called a village, in the barony of Kiltartan in County Galway, whose name, Ballylee, is known through all the west of Ireland. There is the old square castle, Ballylee, inhabited by a farmer and his wife, and a cottage where their daughter and their son-in-law live, and a little mill with an old miller, and old ash-trees throwing green shadows upon a little river and great stepping-stones. I went there two or three times last year to talk to the miller about Biddy Early, a wise woman that lived in Clare some years ago, and about her saying, "There is a cure for all evil between the two mill-wheels of Ballylee," and to find out from him or another whether she meant the moss between the running waters or some other herb. I have been there this summer, and I shall be there again before it is autumn, because Mary Hynes, a beautiful woman whose name is still a wonder by turf fires, died there sixty years ago; for our feet would linger where beauty has lived its life of sorrow to make us understand that it is not of the world.[4]

Just as Early's patients actively travelled to her abode in order to seek her medical help, Yeats similarly sought out the miller who possessed information regarding the panacea that Early commented upon – the healing "moss [. . .] or some other herb." Arguably, however, it is not for her healing powers that Early is most remembered today.

The most famous feature of Biddy Early's legacy in popular culture is her alleged curse. Many Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) hurling fans in Ireland and internationally are familiar with the curse as it was believed to hang over the Clare hurling team until 1995, when the "curse of Biddy Early" was said to have at last been lifted following their victory in the All-Ireland hurling final that September. The fact that "their manager [at] the time Ger Loughnane hailed from Feakle, Biddy Early's home place, only added to the fascination of it all."[5] The story, uninfluenced by the fact that it is meant to have occurred long after Early died, is that she "wanted to travel with the Clare team to the provincial final of 1932," but "[w]hether from constraints of space or because of personal preferences, she was refused a lift" and so "[t]he resulting curse she put on that team was that every one of them would be dead before Clare would again win an All-Ireland final."[6] Edmund Lenihan writes that "[t]he very cats and dogs of Clare know that the reason why Clare hasn't won an All-Ireland senior hurling title since 1914 is because Biddy said they wouldn't until the last member of that team died."[7] He does not believe that Early is responsible for Clare's hurling misfortunes as "[t]he fact that they did not win in all the years since was taken as proof of her power, only no one bothered to ask how a woman who had died in 1874 could have made such a prophecy in 1914 – forty years after her own death."[8] It is easy to see how the story about Early is rooted in misogyny: an archetypal tale of a female figure who (rather than the team's male manager and players) can be blamed for misfortune. This story might also be read as one rooted in unease at the leaving behind of the traditional, an unease that was figured in the image of the abandonment of the local witch at the roadside. It is possible, therefore, that the popular tale and Yeats's and Gregory's revivalist interests are linked.

The landscape from which Thoor Ballylee rose had long been associated by Yeats with recovered health. In both 1896 and 1897, Yeats recovered from ill health whilst at Coole Park, which stood nearby. Yeats's first visit to the environs of Thoor Ballylee was in August 1896, and from his first encounter with the place it is associated with a narrative

of recovery from illness. He was "in poor health" because, he later recalled, "the strain of youth had been greater than it commonly is, even with imaginative men, who must always, I think, find youth bitter" and he "could neither write nor cease to write" his forever-unfinished novel – *The Speckled Bird*.[9] Lady Gregory "drove over to Tulira, and after [Yeats's friend, Arthur] Symons' return to London [Yeats] stayed at her house," a visit he identifies as marking the start of his recovery.[10]

On this first stay he took part in folklore collection in the district with Gregory as an antidote to his illness:

> Lady Gregory, seeing that I was ill, brought me from cottage to cottage to gather folk-belief, tales of the faeries, and the like, and wrote down herself what we had gathered, considering that this work, in which one let others talk, and walked about the fields so much, would lie, to use a country phrase, "very light upon the mind." She asked me to return there the next year, and for years to come I was to spend my summers at her house. When I was in good health again, I found myself indolent, partly perhaps because I was affrighted by that impossible novel, and asked her to send me to my work every day at eleven, and at some other hour to my letters, rating me with idleness if need be, and I doubt if I should have done much with my life but for her firmness and her care. After a time, though not very quickly, I recovered tolerable industry, though it has only been of late years that I have found it possible to face an hour's verse without a preliminary struggle and much putting off.[11]

In his late memoir *Dramatis Personae: 1896–1902* (1935), Yeats again connected his recovery from ill health with the work he did at Coole. He recollected that, when he arrived, his "health was giving way" and his "nerves had been wrecked."[12] Moreover, he again remembered how, in response to this, Gregory sprang into action. "Finding that I could not work, and thinking the open air salutary, Lady Gregory brought me from cottage to cottage collecting folk-lore."[13]

Yeats returned, as Gregory requested, the following year in 1897, and was again in need of recovery from illness.[14] In this second recovery, he confessed that he had been suffering from lost love and chronic heartbreak.[15] The cause of this, according to Yeats, was Maud Gonne's repeated refusals of his marriage proposals since 1891. In addition, Olivia Shakespear's decision to end her and Yeats's affair contributed to the "disappointed love" that "tortured" him.[16] In his *Memoirs*, Yeats states that "[i]t was a time of great personal strain and sorrow" because "[s]ince [his] mistress [Olivia Shakespear] had left [him], no other woman had come into [his] life, and for nearly seven years none did."[17] The keynote of his earliest encounters with Coole Park is the restoration of health, and the Coole-Thoor Ballylee area never lost these associations for him.

Yeats and Early

Ballylee's importance to Yeats as the site of a panacea is indicated in his revisions and additions to a poem written by his friend AE (born George William Russell), "The Well of All-Healing," which was published in the periodical *A Celtic Christmas* in 1897. Yeats was likely to have been staying in Coole when he made the revisions because Lady Gregory owned the copy that he wrote upon in pencil. These changes show that ideas of both illness and recovery were turning in the mill-wheels of his mind.[18] AE had originally written that "[t]here's a cure for all things in the well at Ballykeele."

Yeats, evidently a tireless reviser of the work of others as well as his own, set to work on this poem, redrafting it according to his own tastes. In the first line, Yeats crosses out "all things," and replaces it with the alliterative "every evil." This change, of course, aligns the poem with the tale told by the miller at Ballylee to whom Yeats had spoken. This redraft is thought to be where Yeats first wrote down the proper noun "Ballylee" on paper.[19] He also changes the third line from "[t]here's a joy-breath blowing from the land of youth I feel" to "[t]here's a joy-breath blowing from the land of youth to me," fatefully yoking together "Ballylee" and "me" in rhyme.[20] It is interesting that Yeats operates on this poem during his own recovery and recuperation; it is as if a sympathetic healing is taking place.

It is noticeable that Yeats places a pencil stroke, prompting a new line, near every word that is applicable to the heartbreak he felt in 1897, reminders of his own unsuccessful relationships and rejected proposals. For example, Yeats signals a line break after the following word groups: "every evil," "sunbright maiden" and "pain of love."[21] He breaks the poem in order to put it back together again, deconstructing the interweaving *ABAB* rhyme scheme and quickening the hexameters of the original into loose trimeters.[22] Although he demolishes the rhyme scheme using his new line markers, thus bringing dissonance to the first three lines of almost every stanza, he leaves the final line of each stanza intact with the original three-or-so stresses. His freehand rewriting of AE's poem echoes the willingness to remake and restore that he was to eventually bring to the tower in Ballylee, the one proper name he wrote into the poem.

In AE's poem, "joy-breath" emanates "from the land of youth"; Lady Gregory advised that the "open air" would be "salutary" for Yeats's recovery, a health tip that is recorded in *Dramatis Personae: 1896–1902*.[23] These words are, in their own ways, reflections of nineteenth-century nostrums that placed the highest value on fresh air and ventilation as both preventatives and cures for illness. Miasmas, it was believed, built up in poorly ventilated spaces and caused illness. To read of oxygenation is to read of the necessary precondition of recovery to the Victorian mind. Already, from his earliest visits to the district in 1896 and 1897, the environs of Coole Park and Ballylee were associated in Yeats's imagination with healing. The miasmatic hypothesis was believed to be the leading aetiology for illness until 1890, when germ theory took centre stage.[24] Meaning "stain" and "defilement" in ancient Greek, miasmas were thought to be a build-up of "[n]oxious vapours."[25] As an escape from this, Victorian people would visit the seaside or country areas, especially if they had chest complaints.[26] The Victorian associations between health and fresh air that AE's poem contains act as reminders of the tuberculosis epidemic in the early twentieth century, particularly in impoverished parts of Ireland, including crowded Dublin. There is a hint of the belief of the healthful qualities of fresh air in a later play by Gregory, *The Story Brought by Brigit: A Passion Play in Three Acts* (1924), a play about Jesus Christ's death told from St. Brigit's perspective. This occurs when one protagonist tells another that it is "[a] fine day, Marcus, to be taking the air outside the gate" because "[t]here is too much of noise and of dust within in the city."[27] When the sickness-prone Yeats altered AE's poem to link Ballylee and "a joy-breath blowing from the land of youth to me," he was reflecting contemporary medical ideas.

Healers as Lady Gregory's role models

Biddy Early was an important figure in Gregory's investigations into the folk history of her locale. In *Poets and Dreamers: Studies and Translations from the Irish* (1902), Gregory includes the chapter "Herb-Healing," which she wrote in 1900. It was expanded into a more substantial chapter, titled "Herbs, Charms, and Wise-Women," in the second series of *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* (1920). There is a passing mention of Early in "Herb-Healing," which is part of a passage on a little-remembered healer named Bridget Ruane who taught Gregory herbal medicine. In this chapter, Gregory records a conversation with "[a] neighbour whom I asked about Bridget Ruane and her brother."[28] The neighbour revealed that "[s]ome people call [Ruane] 'Biddy Early' (after a famous witch-doctor)."[29] Gregory later wrote a long chapter in the first series of *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* (1920) about Early, "Seers and Healers," which focuses on local practitioners of folk medicine and their healing remedies. In this chapter, Gregory recounts how she visited Early's old house in Feakle in County Clare, which a mother and daughter occupied after Early's death "twenty years before."[30] Gregory reports that the mother "told me some of the stories I give below, and showed me the shed where the healer had consulted with her invisible friends."[31] Gregory adds that "I had already been given by an old patient of hers a 'bottle' prepared for the cure, but which she had been afraid to use" and "[i]t still lies unopened on a shelf in my storeroom."[32] The chapter largely focuses on Early and her herbal cures, foresight, association with the fairies, and conflict with modern medicine. Within this chapter, one of the subsections is named after Mrs Sheridan, an elderly woman that "once met Raftery, the Gaelic poet, at a dance" and who supplies further knowledge about Early, illness, and fairy-induced sickness.[33] Gregory delineates the elderly Mrs Sheridan's recollection of a supernatural encounter with a "tall man" who is "[f]rom Tir-nan-og" which, he continues, is "not far from you" as "it's near the place where you live," that is, Coole.[34] It is fascinating that the Land of Youth is here associated with a physical geographic location specific to Gregory and Yeats, which maps their metaphysical and folkloric ideas on to their familiar Coole surroundings.

Gregory's self-reinvention – from landlord to arch-revivalist – has been a matter of interest to scholars. Part of this change was Gregory's remodelling of herself as a contemporary Biddy Early. Letters reveal her dispensing of cough cures. In a letter to the poet and her sometime lover Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, with whom she visited Egypt in December 1881, Gregory writes that the poor people "believe that I can cure them of all diseases."[35] This language that she uses to portray her neighbour's perceptions of her is strikingly similar to the words describing Early in the first series of *Visions and Beliefs*. In "Seers and Healers," Gregory records that Early knows "a cure for all sicknesses."[36]

Yeats was very curious to know whether the "cure for all evil between the two mill-wheels of Ballylee" referred to "the moss between the running waters or some other herb."[37] Lady Gregory provides the most likely answer to Yeats's question in her *Visions and Beliefs*. In "Seers and Healers," she writes about Early and the healing moss:

> Biddy Early's cure that you heard of, it was the moss on the water of the mill-stream between the two wheels of Ballylee. It can cure all things brought about by *them* [i.e. fairies], but not any common ailment. But there is no cure for the stroke given by a queen or a fool. There is a queen in every house or regiment of them. It is of those they steal away they make queens for as long as they live or that they are satisfied with them.[38]

The historian, Meda Ryan, states that "[m]oss had many curative properties and Biddy was openly seen picking bits of this tufty growth from around the wheel of the mill-stream of Ballylee, beside the Tower where W. B. Yeats came to live later."[39] Moss was not efficacious against a queen of fairies, which was a stolen child.

Gregory cements the links between Coole-Ballylee, Early and the special moss. The Spinning-Woman, an informant, discloses that Early herself "told me she slept in Ballylee mill last night, and that there was a cure for all things in the world between the two wheels there."[40] This local interviewee, in conversation with Gregory, explores the possible reasons behind Early's knowledge of both the mill's whereabouts and the cure itself:

> And she said that there is a cure for all sicknesses hidden between the two wheels of Ballylee mill. And how did she know that there was a mill here at all? Witchcraft wherever she got it; away she may have been in a trance.[41]

Another informant, the elderly Mr Saggarton, even suggests that Early owned this cure and knew its exact location: "The cure for all things in the world? Surely she had it and knew where it was."[42] Early searched in millstreams to collect some of the ingredients needed for cures. She also collected early-morning dew and, at times, instructed her patients to do the same. Daniel Shea, who went to Early in order to cure his fairy-stricken son, was told "to go out before sunrise to where there'd be a boundary wall between two or three estates, and to bring a bottle, and lay it in the grass and gather the dew into it."[43] More recently, John Rainsford has written that moss was the substance that Early sought in millstreams:[44]

> [Early] used such ingredients as moss taken from a local mill stream, dandelions, seeds of flax, cat mint, turnips, thyme tea, nettles, potatoes, apples and honey for ailments like coughs, colds, wounds and scalds.
>
> Biddy gathered these ingredients before sun-up to ensure that the dew was still on them. This was reminiscent of earlier "Alchemists" who regarded dew as "a secretion from dawning light" – a key ingredient of the "Philosopher's Stone" – said to cure all ailments and to grant its owner eternal life.[45]

Yeats sought the shade of Early as she gathered moss with the dew still on by the millstream of Ballylee at dawn. This image of the Celtic Twilight, of a woman and culture with its own distinctive beliefs, culture and medical practices, was what he attempted to capture.

"Has anybody ever gone from here to consult Biddy Early?"[46]

When Yeats came to write *Dramatis Personae: 1896–1902*, thoughts of Early immediately link themselves to thoughts of the recently deceased Gregory. Written at a time when health concerns were very much on the poet's mind, Yeats recalls a conversation

with an elderly shepherd in Doneraile, a town in north County Cork, in which he asks about Early and receives an answer that both deflects him and feeds his interest. Yeats records how he asks

> "Has anybody ever gone from here to consult Biddy Early?" – a famous Clare witch – and in a moment the man's face became excited; he himself had stood at the roadside, watching spirits playing hurley in a field, until one came and pulled the cap over his eyes. What he saw, what he did not see but thought he saw, does not concern me here, being but a part of that traditional experience which I have discussed only too much elsewhere. That experience is my obsession, as Coole and its history, her hope that her son or her grandson might live there, were Lady Gregory's.[47]

Early, as Yeats's talisman for healing in the west of Ireland, is the spirit of the region. She represents medicine, but also a distinct otherworld that crosses over into the everyday world, and thus forms a connection between the two. He evokes the same restorative powers in the introductory rhymes to *The Shadowy Waters* (1900), a dramatic poem in which the sea god Forgael follows souls that are embodied as birds, as "I walked among the seven woods of Coole" which "[w]ise Biddy Early called the wicked wood."[48] Yeats treats the mystical experience of the fairy realm and everyday Irish country life as one and the same. The fact that his question about the earthly Biddy Early prompts an answer about an encounter with fairies is significant. Yeats is not entangling himself in a debate about whether fairies are real or not; the experience of hearing the real and the otherworldly bound up without distinction is what fascinates him. For Yeats, this kind of free interchange between this world and others is a sign that contemporary rifts – between ancient and the new, between mystical and scientific worldviews, between Gaeldom and Ireland's other cultures – might be healed.

Early, though, was not represented by Yeats and Gregory in an entirely positive light, and it is worth looking at one of their collaborative plays, *The Pot of Broth* (1904), for insight into the ambivalent light in which she is viewed. In this play, a tramp claims that he possesses a magical stone that conjures food. The stone's powers are described in his conversation with John and the miserly Sibby Coneely, a married couple who inhabit the cottage kitchen that the tramp trespasses upon. This homeless character recalls an encounter with a mystical "little old man" in a "hareskin coat,"[49] who gives him the stone as an exchange:

> "Call off your dog," says he, "and I'll give you that stone, and if ever you want a good drop of broth or a bit of stirabout, or a drop of poteen itself, all you have to do is to put it down in a pot with a drop of water and stir it awhile, and you'll have the thing you were wanting ready before you."[50]

The tramp adds that meat cannot be combined with the broth on Fridays, when Catholics fast, as this would result in "a fistful of bog mould."[51] As the stone "has enchantment on it" and can be mixed in a pot with "a bit of an herb for fear the enchantment might slip away from it," such as "[s]lanlus" that is "cut with a black-handled knife" or "a bit of the Fearavan that was picked when the wind was from the north" or "a sprig of the Athair-talav, the father of herbs," it is an unyielding source of food and prevents hunger.[52] In the Great Famine (1845–1852), approximately one million people – and more – died from hunger.[53] *The Pot of Broth* struck a chord with Irish audiences, because of the continued presence of memories of this time on the popular psyche at the time Yeats and Gregory were writing.

Yeats and Gregory introduce a reference to Early at the resolution, but she is portrayed in a negative light. The parsimonious and credulous Sibby, who has "no more pity in her heart than there's a soul in a dog," is the medium through which Yeats delivers his message.[54] She exclaims:

> Broth of the best, stirabout, poteen, wine itself, he said! And the people that will be coming to see the miracle! I'll be as rich as Biddy Early before I die![55]

Yeats inherited this negative view from Gregory, whose attitudes to Early we can read about in the "Seers and Healers" chapter. Gregory recorded reports about this famous folk healer, some of which painted Early as a mercenary character intent on making financial profit from patients. An informant of Gregory's, Mrs Kearns, averred that "her fingers" were "all covered with big gold rings."[56] Mr McCabe, a past patient of Early's, tells Gregory about the material profits that she gained from healing:

> There were side-cars and common cars and gentry and country people at the door, just like Gort market, and dinner for all that came, and everyone would bring her something, but she didn't care what it was. Rich farmers would bring her the whole side of a pig. Myself, I brought a bottle of whiskey and a shilling's worth of bread, and a quarter of sugar and a quarter pound of tea. She was very rich, for there wasn't a farmer but would give her the grass of a couple of bullocks or a filly. She had the full of a field of fillies if they'd all been gathered together.[57]

If Early's motives were suspected by Gregory and subsequently by Yeats, she had many defenders. Leah Butler, writing for the *Women's Museum of Ireland*, blames both a witchcraft trial in 1865 and the Catholic Church for blackening her name.[58] Early was accused of being a witch, and her trial took place in Ennis; she was exculpated due to withdrawn testimonies and support from the peasantry.[59] Following Catholic Emancipation in 1829, the Church's scepticism about non-orthodox invocation became a witch-hunt that aimed to eradicate heretics. Michael Hogan (1832–1899), a Limerick-born poet and contemporary of Early's, sought to defend her from the allegations of profiteering that Yeats's play hints at:

> She was not a mercenary imposter, for she'd take nothing, neither money nor value, from any person whom she could not serve, and if the required service could be rendered she'd accept nothing but the merest trifle, never surpassing a shilling.[60]

This was far from what Gregory had discovered in her investigations, and Early's memory had come down to Yeats with some suspicions of mercenary conduct. He clearly was in two minds about her: if he included a negative comment about her in *The Pot of Broth*, he put this comment in the mouth of an ungenerous, self-centred, and comical character that readers are not likely to take seriously. And, of course, he had returned to ask about her several times at the mill she frequented at Ballylee.

The mix of light and dark, veneration and fear, that makes up the folk memory of Early might be considered in relation to Angela Bourke's famous account, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary* (1999). Bourke tells of how, in County Tipperary in the nineteenth century, a woman named Bridget Cleary becomes ill. Her husband, Michael Cleary, convinced that she is a fairy changeling, burns her to death on 15 March 1895. Although Bridget Cleary's doctor William Crean diagnosed her with "nervous excitement and slight bronchitis," Bourke suggests that this "may have been pneumonia."[61] Irish ideas of gender and womanhood in the nineteenth century are central to her tragic narrative.

Bourke writes that "Michael Cleary comes across to us as intense, hard working, and taciturn; Bridget Cleary as articulate, clever, strong willed, and proud."[62] Bridget Cleary's independent financial success, unusual for a woman at the time, was gained through her dressmaking profession as well as poultry keeping.[63] Bourke suggests that

> [n]eighbours or relatives who disliked Bridget Cleary, or who were envious of her, as some must have been, might easily have expressed their concern about her sudden loss of health as speculation about fairies, especially given her recent prosperity and her childlessness.[64]

These traditional beliefs existed against the backdrop of a changing Ireland. Bourke writes that "[s]tandardization and uniformity were hallmarks of nineteenth-century official thinking, gradually imposed throughout the countryside" and "[i]n Ireland, as elsewhere in Europe, these were the symptoms of profound cultural change."[65] Though Early and Cleary were very different women, the life and death of the latter show how, at this time of change, misogyny and a fear of the supernatural could mix, and could make life very difficult for a capable woman from a non-elite background.

Magical moss and Biddy Early

Although the taint of the supernatural could be dangerous, it also gave Early her power over Yeats's imagination. Seán Hewitt, in a recent article, notes that "[a] re-enchanted natural world is [. . .] fundamental to his poetical, philosophical and aesthetic project."[66] Through Early, Yeats was able to see the moss of Ballylee itself as imbued with magical properties. It is therefore worth returning to Yeats's early wanderings around Coole, during which he learned of Early and, as it turned out, laid down materials which were to resurface in his poetry decades later.

John Rainsford, who has written on Early, suggests that dawn-gathered moss had some of the properties of the philosopher's stone.[67] This chimes with Yeats's rooted desire, visible everywhere in his poetry, to avoid age, remain youthful, maintain health, and defy death. Moss is a herb of preservation and recovery; it carries qualities that help to sustain health and encourage the body to recover from illness. In Irish folklore, moss features in many beauty treatments and cures for ailments of the skin. Patrick Logan asserts: "There are, of course, a whole series of beauty treatments which form a part of Irish folk medicine."[68] In the Battle of Clontarf, soldiers "stuffed their wounds with moss" due to its anti-septic nature.[69] It was revived as a treatment for injuries in World War One, where it was recognised as an old Irish cure.[70] Historically, sphagnum moss preserved what were known as "bog bodies" due to its natural ability to prevent decay. Yeats's poetry is replete with references to age and decrepitude; moss might preserve and renew an ageing and ailing human body.

Yeats's early knowledge of the place of moss in the cosmology of magical cures is evidenced in Lady Jane Wilde's "The Horned Women," first published in *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland* (1887), her own collection of mainly oral narratives and past beliefs. With only a few minor changes, Yeats reprinted Wilde's story in his early compendium of folklore, named *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*

(1888).[71] A wealthy woman is instructed to "[t]ake yellow clay and moss, and bind them together, and plaster the sieve so that it will hold."[72] This moss contributes to the family being "restored" from some witches' enchantments.[73]

Yeats sets "A Song of the Rosy-Cross" (1891), a poem about "gain and loss" on the "wandering pathway" of life, in "a wood of dew and moss."[74] Composed using trochaic tetrameters, this one-stanza work was written on 15 November 1891, approximately six years prior to his arrival at Ballylee and his encounter with the old miller's story.[75] The "dew and moss" combination chimes with Early's practice of collecting moss in rivers in Limerick, Clare and Galway. Folk practices like these informed his thinking long before he came to Ballylee. By the time he arrived there, he was tuned to the idea that moss and dew could be salutary, even salvific, helping to preserve life, escape death, and thus avoid age.

Yeats was very likely to have later read about bygone cures, including moss and honey in Lady Jane Wilde's *Ancient Cures, Charms, and Usages of Ireland* (1890), a copy of which secured a place in Yeats's personal library.[76] In total, moss is mentioned in Wilde's work five times as a cure for inflammation and blood loss.[77] Among them, "[n]ine handfuls of mountain moss, dried on a pan to powder" forms part of a cure for inflammation; "the moss from a dead man's skull brought over from Ireland" was used to stop bleeding.[78] Lady Wilde records a theory that robins built up moss around Jesus Christ in order to hide Him from His persecutors; the water-wagtail bird then removes this moss and thus betrays Him.[79] In "The Doctor's Visit," she writes about a medical doctor, who returns from the fairy world with "a handful of moss" that replaces the "golden guineas."[80] By the time Yeats first heard the tale of Early's healing moss or herb from the miller in 1896, he was well primed by his reading to see the magical significance in such things.

Yeats imagined his medieval stone tower, which he purchased in 1916, as a living organism. It was "[h]alf dead at the top"[81] and prone to ageing and decay, but its stonework contained crevices that were alive with birds and bees, and it contained the potential for resuscitation, restoration, and recovery. The restoration of his tower was also a restoration back to health, as Yeats simultaneously recovered his own health after the shocks of the 1916 Rising and the tumultuous circumstances of his marriage in the years after its purchase.[82] At the same time, he was tending to the primary aim of the Irish Literary Revival: to resuscitate and revive to full health an ailing Irish heritage. To Yeats, this meant joining different elements that might grow together: the semi-submerged Gaelic tradition could knit with the "bloody, arrogant" energies of the "men-at-arms, cross-gartered to the knees," who built the tower, and with the best courtly and intellectual traditions of the Anglo-Irish world as it was represented by great houses like the nearby Coole Park.[83] Through healing Thoor Ballylee, by extension he was repairing a fractured Ireland following the Easter Rising and a wounded world following the First World War. The tower is not only a shelter that Yeats restored, it is also a place that could, in his imagination, contribute to wider spiritual and societal restoration. Ideas of healing, revival, and recovery were built into the restored walls of Thoor Ballylee itself.

The connections between Coole-Ballylee (the latter of which stands on grounds that formerly belonged to the Coole estate) and restored health run very deep in his imagination and writing. The alliance between Coole-Ballylee and recovered mental health is attested to in the title poem to *In the Seven Woods* (1903), a work that begins ominously: "I have heard the pigeons of the Seven Woods/Make their faint thunder, and

the garden bees/Hum in the lime-tree flowers."[84] Soon, conversely, the speaker is able to "put away/The unavailing outcries and the old bitterness/That empty the heart"; the way is paved for the "Quiet" that "[w]anders laughing and eating her wild heart/Among pigeons and bees."[85] In both Yeats's personal life and literary works, Coole and Ballylee are united with both nature and the recovery of internal peace after involvement in public dissensions.[86]

It is perhaps significant that Yeats recalled how Gregory sought to restore his strength through bringing him on folklore-collecting forays, as this practice itself sought to revive the subdued Gaelic energies that, in her eyes and those of other revivalists, were falling prey to the encroachments of modernity. For Yeats, a personal narrative of the recovery of health, and a national narrative of the recovery of the Gaelic past, supported by the order and rigour of Coole Park, were linked. These ideas were to have a profound effect on how he was to eventually view the nearby tower that he bought in 1916.

As always, on the contrary, Yeats's visions of unity and healing are in a dialectical relationship with disunity and destruction. It is telling that "the tower" is the tarot card which, blasted by lightning, has a dual connotation: destruction and the flash or bolt of inspiration.[87] The tower tarot card is a deeply disturbing major arcana card that, among its many catastrophic and destructive implications, can indicate illness and be connected to spiritual sickness and physical disease. Yeats would have been well aware of this meaning. Edward Larrissy proposes that "Yeats became once again a spokesman for his nation, and might be said at last to have forged for it an image of unity" although "this was a development that had to wait for a few years."[88] He notes that "a broad reaction against 'bitterness,' [. . .] is bound up with 'brokenness.'"[89] Larrissy claims that "[a]t a more general level," Yeats "associates violence and bitterness with the antithetical and demonic," which is exacerbated by "the [t]arot pack, with which, as a member of the Golden Dawn, he had acquired a deep familiarity."[90] "'The [t]ower'" is also a "[t]arot trump card" that "shows a tower with its top struck off by a zig-zag of lightning," which of course resonates with Yeats's own tower that is "[h]alf dead at the top."[91] Furthermore, Larrissy writes that "Kathleen Raine points out that initiates would have associated this image with the downward path of inspiration."[92] Larrissy adds that "[t]he normal path of the initiate was to toil upwards through the spheres of the [t]ree of [l]ife; but God descending through the [t]ree was the unasked inspiration."[93] There is still hope for a spiritual healing due to Jesus Christ's ultimate sacrifice for the world's sin. Although Yeats's tower – like the fallen world – was broken, there is still chance for healing and salvation through an amalgamation of different elements that might grow together regardless of their brokenness.

The tower is an amalgam of fragments from the Irish past, and it is a microcosm of various contradictions of Ireland that are melded into a unity. The Anglo-Normans invaded Ireland in the twelfth century, and they became the original authors of Yeats's tower, which was constructed at some point between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. (Yeats, inevitably, preferred an earlier date).[94] Though the arrival of powerful Norman clans like the de Burgos, who built the tower, is more often associated with ideas of conquest and the assertion of power, and thus Ireland's history of violence and colonisation, there are other elements that are visible in the environs of Ballylee as well. The thatched cottage that adjoins the stone tower connects it to the vernacular

architecture of the locality, and that of the wider Irish countryside. Furthermore, the mill boards that Yeats used in the tower's restoration link the building to a local myth of healing through the practitioner Biddy Early.

Conclusion

The mossy mill boards where Early gathered her healing materials are a key component of Thoor Ballylee. Yeats renovated this tower, according to a letter to John Quinn, using "contents of an old mill – great beams and three-inch planks, and old paving stones."[95] The three drafts of Yeats's "To be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee" (1921), which mention these boards, metamorphose from curse to the withdrawal of this curse. Just as the tower's honeybees could either sting or store, witches can either curse or cure. In his successive redraftings, Yeats leaves witch-like premonitions on healing instead of a cursing note, and literally sets the final draft in stone to secure its permanence.

In total, there are three successive drafts of "To be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee."[96] The curse only survives in the first two drafts: "[t]hey call a curse/On him who alters for the worst [or worse]" changes to "[a]nd on my heirs I lay a curse/If they should alter for the worse." Then, as if by magic, the curse disappears into thin air at the arrival of the third draft. Yeats leaves out the curse and hopes that "these characters remain/When all is ruin once again."[97] Similarly, healing is a precursor to brokenness in so far as the "wood from Coole & good brown sedge" turn into "common sedge and broken slates" and finally are reimagined as "old mill boards and sea-green slates."[98]

Whilst writing the third draft, Yeats recalls the mill boards, which carry a patina of associations with Early and the healing moss. Both physically and symbolically, Early is embodied in the building itself through the construction materials, the poetic voice, and the healing moss that weaves these ingredients together. Not only are the mill boards part of the tower, their presence is signalled on a carved stone and in a printed book. These mill boards have associations that bring Yeats back to his earliest days in Ballylee, to his early collaborations with Augusta Gregory and, further, to the magical folk culture of the area.

Notes

1. Gregory is likely to have given Yeats her Biddy Early notes to publish as Mary Lou Kohfeldt states that Yeats, early on in their friendship, "wrote up the stories from the notes she gave him and they were published by the editors to whom Augusta introduced him" (*Lady Gregory*, 105).
2. Yeats, "To be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee," in *Variorum Poems*, 406.
3. This information is from Rainsford, "Biddy Early's Limerick Connections," 45. John Rainsford writes that "[t]he first account of Biddy Early's life appeared in 1903" ("Biddy Early's Limerick Connections," 45). This takes the form of journalist R. Burke's "The Last of the Irish Witches," a newspaper article published on 10 October 1903 in the *Weekly Irish Times* (3).
4. Yeats, "The Celtic Twilight," in *Mythologies*, 14. Liam Miller notes that Yeats's "impressions were set down in an essay 'Dust [H]ath [C]losed Helen's Eye,' which first appeared in the October 1899 issue of [the aestheticist arts periodical] *The Dome* and was later included in the 1902 enlarged edition of *The Celtic Twilight*" (*Thoor Ballylee*, 12). Eventually collected in Yeats's *The Celtic Twilight* (1902), this conversation links the folkloric, the occult, and medicine.
5. McNulty, "Curses and piseoga," 45.

6. Wiley, "Clare," 27.
7. Lenihan, *Biddy Early*, 11.
8. Ibid.
9. Yeats, "The Trembling of the Veil: Book V: The Stirring of the Bones," in *Autobiographies*, 282, 283.
10. Ibid., 282.
11. Ibid., 283.
12. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, 298.
13. Ibid.
14. Gregory treats both examples of illness in the same way. In both 1896 and 1897, she nurses Yeats back to health by bringing him on folklore-collecting forays in the hope that this would be therapeutic. This revival of Yeats's health, brought about by natural lifestyle changes, is a stark contrast to his approach to recovery in 1934. Following Gregory's death on 22 May 1932, and therefore the loss of a strong support system, Yeats turned to medicine rather than therapeutics. This took the form of his purported rejuvenation through the Steinach operation, which Yeats underwent two years later on either 5 April 1934 or 6 April 1934, almost the same time as Gregory's passing.
15. Yeats, "Dramatis Personae: 1896–1902," in *Autobiographies*, 298.
16. Yeats, "Notes," in *Autobiographies*, 493; Yeats, *Memoirs*, 125.
17. Ibid.
18. Yeats refers to "the mill of the mind" in "An Acre of Grass" (1938), a poem about the declining "strength of body" and the pledge that "[m]yself must I remake" (*Variorum Poems* 575, 576). AE's "The Well of All-Healing," is a poem that was published in *A Celtic Christmas* in 1897. Yeats made his own pencil annotations to this poem within the periodical. Lady Gregory owned this copy, which Yeats would turn into a manuscript revision. A scan of this part of the periodical can be found in James Pethica's article "'Uttering, Mastering It'?," (219).
19. Pethica, "'Uttering, Mastering It'?," 219.
20. The "Land of Youth" is a mythological place where health does not diminish and age does not progress.
21. Perhaps this is Yeats's way of literally drawing a line under his misery and ill health; it is a way to move forward and leave illness behind.
22. His revisions also intriguingly make AE's poem much less imitative of "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" (1890) in terms of metrical form. Metrically, both AE's poem and "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" are very difficult to scan; they sound vaguely dactylic, but there are trochees and iambs in there too (which is unsurprising, as the dactylic is hard to maintain in English). The gifted prosodist, Thomas MacDonagh, is probably right to say that "[i]t is wrong to scan this verse" (*Literature in Ireland*, 68).
23. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, 298.
24. Germ theory gradually overtook miasmatic theory as the reason for disease that manifests in the body. Scientists, such as Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch, progressed this microbe hypothesis so that it became more widely accepted by 1890.
25. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "Miasmas," January 2021, https://www-oed-com.ucc.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/117825.
26. James Johnson, a nineteenth-century royal surgeon, provides a Victorian perspective about the effect of sea air and the climate on both mind and body in *Change of Air or the Diary of a Philosopher in Pursuit of Health and Recreation* (298).
27. Gregory, *Selected Plays*, 290.
28. Gregory, *Poets and Dreamers*, 114.
29. Ibid.
30. Gregory, *Visions and Beliefs*, 1: 37.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., 70.
34. Ibid., 91.

35. Gregory, *Seventy Years*, 232.
36. Gregory, *Visions and Beliefs*, 1: 51.
37. Yeats, "The Celtic Twilight," in *Mythologies*, 14.
38. Gregory, *Visions and Beliefs*, 1: 99.
39. Ryan, *Biddy Early*, 33.
40. Gregory, *Visions and Beliefs*, 1: 52.
41. Ibid., 51.
42. Ibid., 97.
43. Ibid., 58.
44. Rainsford, "Biddy Early's Limerick Connections," 45.
45. Ibid.
46. Yeats, "Dramatis Personae: 1896–1902," in *Autobiographies*, 299.
47. Ibid.
48. Yeats, *Variorum Poems*, 217, 218.
49. Yeats, *Variorum Plays*, 244.
50. Ibid., 244–245.
51. Ibid., 246.
52. Ibid., 242, 243.
53. Ó'Gráda, *The Great Irish Famine*, 1.
54. Yeats, *Variorum Plays*, 238.
55. Ibid., 252.
56. Gregory, *Visions and Beliefs*, 1: 40.
57. Ibid., 42–43.
58. Butler, "Biddy Early," para. 3.
59. Ibid.
60. Quoted in Jenkins, "Transformation of Biddy Early," 167.
61. Quoted in Bourke, *Burning of Bridget Cleary*, 133; Bourke, *Burning of Bridget Cleary*, 70.
62. Ibid., 236.
63. Ibid., 49.
64. Ibid., 70.
65. Ibid., 10.
66. Hewitt, "Yeats's Re-Enchanted Nature," 17.
67. See note 45 above.
68. Logan, *Making the Cure*, 76.
69. Ayres, "The Kindly *Sphagnum* Moss," 28.
70. Ibid.
71. Amongst other changes, he employs commas in order to, both visually and grammatically, bind the ingredients together through punctuation. Yeats thought of moss as a material that could be used to weave ingredients together; likewise, moss and millstreams and Early are associated with each other.
72. Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales*, 166.
73. Ibid., 167.
74. Yeats, *Variorum Poems*, 744.
75. The poem's lines have seven syllables. Prosodically, the lines are trochaic tetrameters, the final foot of which omits the unstressed half of the trochee. This is very common: it allows the line to end on a "beat"; such lines are called catalectic. Blake's "The Tyger" (1794) is a famous example of this metrical form (*Poems of William Blake* 118–119). Yeats's poem, "A Song of the Rosy-Cross," has a very unusual rhyme scheme: two rhymes, barely differentiated from each other. It is rather like a troilet, which Robert Bridges had introduced to English-language poetry in the late nineteenth century.
76. O'Shea, *Descriptive Catalog*, 303.
77. Wilde, *Ancient Cures*, 12, 40.
78. Ibid., 12, 40.
79. Ibid., 61.

80. Ibid., 147.
81. Yeats, "Blood and the Moon," in *Variorum Poems*, 480.
82. The purchase of Thoor Ballylee is discussed in Foster, *The Arch-Poet*, 84–87 and Harris, *Yeats: Coole Park & Ballylee*, 1, 92, 93.
83. Yeats, *Variorum Poems*, 480, 412. The former quotation is from "Blood and the Moon" (1933) and the latter is from "The Tower" (1928).
84. Yeats, *Variorum Poems*, 198.
85. Ibid.
86. Two public dissensions are named explicitly in the poem: the Dublin Unionist celebrations of Edward VII's coronation and the desecration of the Hill of Tara by Anglo-Israelites, searching for the Ark of the Covenant.
87. Yeats, "Blood and the Moon," in *Variorum Poems*, 482.
88. Larrissy, *Yeats the Poet*, 179.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid., 165.
91. Larrissy, *Yeats the Poet*, 165; Yeats, "Blood and the Moon," *Variorum Poems*, 480.
92. Larrissy, *Yeats the Poet*, 165. Larrissy is referring to Raine, "Yeats, the Tarot and the Golden Dawn," 238–244.
93. Larrissy, *Yeats the Poet*, 165.
94. In *The Arch-Poet*, R. F. Foster notes Yeats's statement, directed towards doctor (otolaryngologist) and poet Oliver St. John Gogarty, which was written in a diary belonging to Horace Reynolds: "The Normans had form, Gogarty, the Normans had form" (quoted in Foster, *The Arch-Poet*, 84; *Horace Mason Reynolds's Papers* 1927, b Ms Am 1787 [5803]).
95. Quoted in Wade, *Letters*, 651.
96. The first draft was "preserved inside the plastic cover of a Cuala Press volume in the possession of Michael Yeats"; Hassett references Parkinson and Brannen's *Michael Robartes and the Dancer: Manuscript Materials* – specifically page 200 – as a source for this information (Hassett, "What Raftery Built," 103). Although it is undated, this draft is likely to have been written c.1917–1918. The second draft appears in Yeats's letter, dated on 23 July 1918, for John Quinn (Hassett, "What Raftery Built," 97). The final draft was published in the poetry collection *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), which can be found in Yeats, *Variorum Poems*, 406. Parkinson and Brannen list the poems in this order: they display an unknown writer's version first, and then the three drafts that Yeats wrote with his own hand (*Michael Robartes and the Dancer: Manuscript Materials*, 198–200). My argument for this order is that, in the first draft, Yeats acknowledges his wife's support with restoring Thoor Ballylee. This included financial contribution that began after their marriage, which took place on 22 October 1917. Also, in terms of style in comparison to his two proceeding dated drafts, it is premature in the sense that his grand entrance as the poet is absent: "I, the poet William Yeats" (*Variorum Poems*, 406).
97. Yeats, *Variorum Poems*, 406.
98. These quotations are chronologically taken from the three drafts of Yeats's "To be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee." In naming mill boards, "sea-green slates" and "smithy work" (*Variorum Poems*, 406), Yeats joins the elements of wood, water, and fire, proposing that the tower is a place where the differing aspects of creation are unified. Even though Yeats's first draft of "To be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee" contains a curse, Yeats subverts fire and water as cursors and recasts them as curers in the third draft by including the mill boards – which are an amalgamation of wood, fire, and water in themselves.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Holly May Walker-Dunseith http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3976-1977

Bibliography

Allt, Peter, and Russell K. Alspach, eds. *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*. New York: Macmillan, 1957.

Alspach, Russell K., ed. *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats*. New York: Macmillan, 1966.

Ayres, Peter. "Wound Dressing in World War I – The Kindly *Sphagnum* Moss." *Field Bryology* 110 (2013): 27–34. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://www.britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FB110_Ayres_Sphagnum.pdf

Blake, William. *The Poems of William Blake*. London: Florence Press; Chatto & Windus, 1921. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://archive.org/details/poemsofwilliambl00blakuoft

Bourke, Angela. *The Burning of Bridget Cleary*. New York: Viking, 2000.

Burke, R. 1903. "The Last of the Irish Witches." *Weekly Irish Times (1876–1920)*, October 10. https://www.proquest.com

Butler, Leah. 2013. "Biddy Early: The Wise Women of the West." *Women's Museum of Ireland*. Accessed 22 January 2021. https://womensmuseumofireland.ie/articles/biddy-early

Donoghue, Denis, ed. *Memoirs*. London: Macmillan, 1972. Quoted in W. H. O'Donnell and D. N. Archibald, eds., *Autobiographies*. *Vol. 3 of The Collected Works of W. B*. Yeats. 14 vols. New York: Scribner, 1999, p. 493.

FitzGerald, Mary. *Selected Plays of Lady Gregory*. *Vol. 3 of Irish Drama Selections*. 16 vols. Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1993.

Foster, Robert Fitzroy. *II: The Arch-Poet 1915–1939. Vol. 2 of W. B. Yeats: A Life*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Gould, Warwick, and Deirdre Toomey, eds. *Mythologies*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://archive.org/details/mythologies0000yeat_n9c1

Gregory, Augusta. *Poets and Dreamers: Studies and Translations from the Irish*. Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, & Co., 1903. London: John Murray. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://archive.org/details/poetsdreamersstugreg00rich

Gregory, Augusta. *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland. First Series. Vol. 1 of Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*. 2 vols. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920a. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://archive.org/details/visionsbeliefsin00gregrich

Gregory, Augusta. *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland. Second Series. Vol. 2 of Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*. 2 vols. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920b. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://archive.org/details/visionsbeliefsin02greg

Harris, Daniel A. *Yeats: Coole Park & Ballylee*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://archive.org/details/yeatscooleparkba00dani

Hassett, Joseph M. "What Raftery Built." *Yeats Annual* 18 (2013): 97–106. doi:10.11647/OBP.0028.06.

Hewitt, Seán. "Yeats's Re-Enchanted Nature." *International Yeats Studies* 2, no. 2 (2018): 1–19. doi:10.34068/IYS.02.02.01.

Hogan, Michael. *Lays and Legends of Thomond, with Historical and Traditional Notes*. Limerick: Friends of the Bard, 1999. Quoted in R. Jenkins, "The Transformation of Biddy Early: From Local Reports of Magical Healing to Globalised New Age Fantasies." *Folklore* 118, no. 2 (2007): 162–182, p. 167. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://www.jstor.org/stable/30035419

Jenkins, Richard. "The Transformation of Biddy Early: From Local Reports of Magical Healing to Globalised New Age Fantasies." *Folklore* 118, no. 2 (2007): 162–182. doi:10.1080/00155870701337379.

Johnson, James. *Change of Air or the Diary of a Philosopher in Pursuit of Health and Recreation*. 2nd ed. London: S. Highley, 1831. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://archive.org/details/changeairordiar00johngoog

Kohfeldt, Mary Lou. *Lady Gregory: The Woman behind the Irish Renaissance*. London: André Deutsch, 1985.

Larrissy, Edward. *Yeats the Poet: The Measures of Difference*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994.
Lenihan, Edmund. *In Search of Biddy Early*. Ennistymon: Hayes Print, 2018.
Logan, Patrick. *Making the Cure: A Look at Irish Folk Medicine*. Dublin: Talbot Press, 1972.
MacDonagh, Thomas. *Literature in Ireland: Studies Irish and Anglo-Irish*. Dublin: Talbot Press, 1916. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://archive.org/details/literatureinirel00macd
McNulty, Chris 2012. "Curses and Piseoga; Myth and Mystique – But Jim Seeks Only the Performance." *Donegal News (1903-Current)*, September 10. https://archive.irishnewsarchive.com
Miller, Liam, ed. *Thoor Ballylee – Home of William Butler Yeats: Edited by Liam Miller from a Paper Given by Mary Hanley to the Kiltartan Society in 1961 with a Foreword by T. R. Henn*. Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1965.
O'Donnell, William H., and Douglas N. Archibald, ed. *Autobiographies. Vol. 3 of the Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*. 14 vols. New York: Scribner, 1999.
Ó'Gráda, Cormac. *The Great Irish Famine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
O'Shea, Edward. *A Descriptive Catalog of W. B. Yeats's Library*. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://archive.org/details/descriptivecatal0470oshe
Oxford English Dictionary Online, n.d. "Miasma, n." Accessed 22 January 2021. https://www-oed-com.ucc.idm.oclc.org/view/Entry/117825
Parkinson, Thomas, and Anne Brannen. *Michael Robartes and the Dancer: Manuscript Materials*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://archive.org/details/michaelrobartesd0000yeat_o6a3
Pethica, James. "'Uttering, Mastering It'? Yeats's Tower, Lady Gregory's Ballylee, and the Eviction of 1888." *Yeats Annual* 21 (2018): 213–267. doi:10.11647/OBP.0135.06.
Raine, Kathleen. "Yeats, the Tarot and the Golden Dawn." London: Allen and Unwin, 1986. *Yeats the Initiate: Essays on Certain Themes in the Writings of W. B. Yeats*. edited by K. Raine. Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1986. 238–244.
Rainsford, John. "Biddy Early's Limerick Connections." *The Old Limerick Journal* 46 (2012): 45–49 *limerickcity.ie.*Accessed 25 May 2021. http://www.limerickcity.ie/media/olj%202012%20p045%20to%20049.pdf
Reynolds, Horace M. *Horace Mason Reynolds's Papers*. 8 July 1927, Harvard Library, Harvard, b Ms Am 1787 [5803]. Quoted in R. F. Foster, *II: The Arch-Poet 1915–1939*. Vol. 2 of W. *B. Yeats: A Life*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
Ryan, Meda. *Biddy Early: The Wise Woman of Clare*. Cork: Mercier, 1978.
Smythe, Colin, ed. *Seventy Years: Being the Autobiography of Lady Gregory*. New York: Macmillan, 1976. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://archive.org/details/seventyyearsbein00greg
Wade, Allan, ed. *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954.
Wilde, Jane. *Ancient Cures, Charms, and Usages of Ireland. Contributions to Irish Lore*. London: Ward and Downey, 1890. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://archive.org/details/cu31924098811023
Wilde, Jane. *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland. Vol. 1 of Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland*. 2 vols. Boston: Ticknor and Co., 1887. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://archive.org/details/cu31924074445762
Wiley, Eddie 1995. "Clare Prepare to Confront the Curse of Biddy Early." *The Independent*, September 2. https://www.proquest.com
Yeats, William Butler. *The Celtic Twilight*. London: A. H. Bullen, 1902. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://archive.org/details/celtictwilight00yeatrich
Yeats, William Butler. "Dust Hath Closed Helen's Eye." *The Dome* 4, no. 10 (1899): 161–166.
Yeats, William Butler. *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*. London: Walter Scott, 1888. Accessed 25 May 2021. https://archive.org/details/fairyfolktalesof00yeatuoft