

叶芝中期抒情诗中的 戏剧化叙事策略

The Dramatic Narrative in Yeats's
Lyrics of the Middle Period

王 珏 著





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前 言

2003年攻读博士学位期间,我在暑期通读了叶芝的全部诗作,对诗人复杂多变的创作风格有所感受,很是喜欢。在吟诵回味那些或哀婉动人、或铿锵有力的诗行之余,我隐约感到叶芝中期抒情诗中的说话者很像戏剧舞台上的演员,他们既与自我对话,又向观众吐露心曲,具有很强的戏剧效果。这一戏剧效果是如何产生的?它与丁尼生、布朗宁等的戏剧独白有何异同?阅读过程中产生的第一印象牵曳出一系列问题,促使我为自己的直觉感受寻找旁证和理论解释。随着文献阅读的深入,我发现包括理查德·艾尔曼(Richard Ellmann)、约翰·盎特瑞克(John Unterecker)和特伦斯·布朗(Terence Brown)在内的学者都对叶芝抒情诗的戏剧性有过评述。看来叶芝诗歌的戏剧效果是确实无疑的了。已有研究成果对叶芝诗歌的戏剧效果产生原因的解释,可以归为两类:一类以布朗为代表,认为这是叶芝戏剧写作经历对其诗歌创作的影响使然;另一类以艾尔曼为代表,将其视为叶芝“面具理论”在实际创作中的运用。上述专家从创作经历和诗学理论两个方面入手给出的解释,显得合情入理,本可以对我的问题予以完满解答,但对照叶芝本人有关戏剧化呈现的评论后,我觉得以上解释尚未触及诗人采用戏剧化手段的深层原因,没有对作品的戏剧性做进一步的区分和界定。

首先值得注意的是,叶芝在谈及“戏剧化”这一概念时,并没有把它看作剧作家独有的表现手法,而是在很大程度上将其视为作家熔炼个人

情感经历,将其陌生化,并使之得以转化为艺术之真的有效手段。甚至在叶芝看来,正是由于现代作家几乎丧失了将私人经验“戏剧化”的能力,所以文学作品才失去了它的“戏剧性”。从这个意义上讲,单纯把戏剧化呈现看作戏剧创作经历影响结果的观点,显然忽略了相关评论中所包含的叶芝对私人经验和公共性知识、对生活 and 艺术的真实之间转换关系的反思和见解。

其次,从提出概念的时间看,20世纪初正值叶芝创作风格发生变化的转折点:前拉斐尔派的创作技法已走到尽头,诗人急于将民族运动、对新兴中产阶级的道德批判等公众话题引入他的诗歌;抒情诗的非私人化问题也困扰着诗人,虽然他开始借助象征和民间文学素材来避免私人感情的过分流露,但他的早期象征主义在融合私人性和公众性方面显得不尽如人意。以上问题涉及世纪之交叶芝诗学理念转变的几大方面,并最终决定他的戏剧化表现手法绝非随意为之,而是在重新梳理创作思想和方法论的基础上做出的、目标明确的理性选择。

再次,诚如艾尔曼所指出的,“面具”使诗人得以跳出主流价值观的约束,表达离经叛道、荒诞不经的人生感想和经验。但我们也应看到,虽然深受印度古代哲学和佛教思想的浸染,叶芝的“自我/反自我”和现代主义作家对分裂“自我”的关注有相通之处,两者的“自我”意识均源自现代人日益深重的、被工业理性异化的危机感。叶芝的惊人之处于于,他不停留于感喟和叹息,而是决绝地要让诗人具备“上帝”的造化之功,把“面具”看作诗人建构统一完美“自我”的绝佳机会。依照叶芝的观点,这个由语言建构的“自我”虽然基于原初自我混杂的人生经验和心理感受,但它像诗歌《驶向拜占庭》中由黄金铸就的金雀一样,已至完美艺术之境,并将超越历史和时间而不朽。这里尤需指出的是,对作为叶芝“面具理论”终极目标的“存在的统一”(Unity of Being),西方研究者已有不少论述,但鲜有学者论及叶芝的“面具”作为文本建构的形式意义及其所遵循的形式和美学原则。本书的目的就是要以1914年至1933年间出版的五部诗集为研究对象,结合书信、随笔和评论,分析并论证叶芝的戏剧化手段作为文学表现形式,如何既顺应了现代英语诗人寻求“非私人化”的创作趋势,又契合了作者全力捍卫诗人以及现代人主体地位的诗

学观和哲学立场;阐明戏剧化呈现如何得以成为叶芝中期作品的主导艺术形式,使他能自持一家风格,兼收并蓄,更新英语诗歌的浪漫主义传统。

除了“戏剧化”,“叙事”是本书题目中的另一个核心关键词。依照赫尔曼·费舍尔在《浪漫主义叙事诗:类型发展史》(*Romantic Verse Narrative: The History of a Genre*)中的观点,至少自浪漫主义时代以降,诗人对诗才的过度推崇和遁世的人生态度使诗歌背离了叙事的前提条件:切近历史和对当前现实真正的精神和物质关注。费舍尔对浪漫主义诗歌所做的这一诊断同样适用于叶芝的早期诗作,并能从更深层面解释诗人前期与中后期作品的巨大差异——即以1914年诗集《责任》的出版为标志,作者开始试图在诗人的浪漫主义意象和诗人的社会担当之间寻求一种平衡,他的创作主题也因此表现出明显的向历史真实和现实生活的回归。

书名采用“叙事”的另一目的旨在强调戏剧化呈现对叶芝中期作品的抒情方式和时间模式的影响。乔纳森·卡勒在《符号的追寻》里提出,虽然抒情诗也能讲述一系列事件,但在时间安排上,抒情诗通常表现为“呼语的胜利”,即以艺术虚构的、非时间性的对立取代时间性的对立,以指涉性的时间取代话语的时间。必须承认,叶芝的有些中期作品仍然沿用了这一传统的时间模式,但由于戏剧化表现手法意在突出作者和戏剧化说话者间的区别,进而强调读者对诗歌意义的解读和诠释作用,因此大部分作品不再是“我(说话者)”不理睬读者感受的直抒胸臆,而是表现为戏剧化说话者和理想读者的对话交流模式。不仅如此,说话者的性格和生存现实还决定着诗歌中的时间类型和性质,使作品呈现出三种截然不同的时间观念和向度。

最后,在论说过程中,本书除适时采用了一些现当代文学批评的研究方法外,还借用了现代小说和叙事理论的若干术语和观点,以便从多角度阐明戏剧化表现手法的形式意义和文化诗学价值。例如,在论述叶芝采用戏剧化手段的目的时,本书把他与几乎同时代的小说家亨利·詹姆斯的“作者引退”理论相比较,提出在力求有效实现诗歌的道德功能方面,诗人和小说家不谋而合,也认为让作者隐入幕后、由读者自己进行道德判断是道德教诲的最佳手段。

本书包括四个章节,每个章节为一主题研究。第一章着重分析叶芝诗

学观的变化,阐明选择戏剧化呈现的原因。在决定采用这一表现手法前,诗人曾尝试利用象征和爱尔兰民间文学素材来克服前期作品中由唯我论导致的滥情主义和感伤情绪。虽然叶芝稍后发现象征主义和民间文学的表达方式都存有缺憾,但在创作实践中,他领会到读者在诗歌话语意义交流中的重要作用,并从民间故事的叙事艺术中受到启发,意识到可以从丰富说话者的类型和视角入手,改变诗歌的抒情方式。与作者对艺术形式不懈探索同时展开的,还有他对诗人身份和作用的反思。旧有道德体系失据和风起云涌的民族主义运动使他不再安于做一名隐修诗人,而是要让诗歌接替宗教,承担传播道德思想的重任。在如何有效实现诗歌的道德教诲功能的问题上,叶芝坚决反对维多利亚时代小说家滥用修辞术的做法,坚持诗歌艺术的相对独立性,提倡应用客观、戏剧化的方式把一切呈现给读者,由读者自己做出判断。同年轻一代诗人艾略特、庞德等一样,叶芝也认为现代英语诗歌的表达方式应更趋非私人化,但他同时又坚持好的作品应是私人性和非私人性的平衡和融合,反对年轻一代放逐诗人、远离生活的主张。在汲取包括科尔律治在内的前人诗歌理论与创作经验的基础上,他最终决定把戏剧化方式作为他诗歌的主导艺术形式。

第二章比较了叶芝与亨利·詹姆斯等小说家采用戏剧化表现手法的异同,论述戏剧化手段在诗歌结构、意义生成和与不同意识形态进行对话等方面发挥的作用。虽然叶芝与詹姆斯等小说家不谋而合,都提倡“作者引退”,但基于对真实的不同理解,他们意欲取得的艺术效果也大相径庭。詹姆斯之所以对戏剧化手段推崇备至,是因为它能增强小说故事的逼真性,使小说能以艺术之真与生活之真相媲美。简言之,詹姆斯在评价叙事艺术效果时以外部世界为参考体系,强调作品的再现功能。叶芝则坚持诗歌的表现功能,希望通过戏剧化手段把诗人对社会生活的主观认识和感受呈现给读者。从作品的戏剧效果看,詹姆斯既把小说人物置于戏剧冲突之中,又强调读者的积极参与,叶芝则仅依赖读者的作用。按戏剧场景和所扮演的角色分类,叶芝作品中存在三种戏剧化说话者,即“预言者”、“行仪者”和“旁观者”。他们丰富了诗人审视社会和个人经历的视角,使他得以融合私人性和非私人性元素,在浪漫主义诗人和公众诗人的形象间建立起微妙平衡。

第三章主要论述作者与说话者的关系。为避免诗人单一、占据统治地位的声音,叶芝将说话者置于对话的场景,通过说话者间的对话、争吵与辩论,打破诗人话语的单一性,使诗歌中的叙述声音既相互竞争,又互相融合,形成了多声部。针对有些批评家把“旁观者”视为作者的傀儡的观点,本章着重分析了这一类型说话者的作用,提出与有些现代主义作家哀叹现代人分裂、破碎经验意识的悲观立场相比,叶芝把这类说话者看作诗人借缪斯女神的神力,建构另一完美统一“自我”的机会,从而肯定了艺术在帮助实现现代人存在的统一性方面所具有的文化诗学价值。不过,受象征主义诗学的影响,叶芝笔下的“旁观者”只是诗人持有的主体身份,而不是陀思妥耶夫斯基笔下完整意义上的“他人”。通过分析读者混淆作者与说话者界限的原因,本书提出戏剧化呈现并未使诗人退出作品,而只是改变了诗人介入作品的方式,叶芝的戏剧化呈现在本质上属于戏剧化抒情(dramatic lyric)。

第四章分析作品中的时间模式和时空体,讨论叶芝的时间哲学和历史观。与三种戏剧化说话者相对应,论文区分出三种时间模式/时空体:“世界末日论”、“历史倒置”和“狂欢的广场”。在前两种时间模式中,“预言者”和“行仪者”悬置并抽空了未来时间的意义。前者认为新纪元的到来只是历史的又一轮回,后者按照神话、艺术的思维把现实换位到过去,把诗人和他的友人同神话中的英雄人物相提并论。然而,叶芝对诗人主体性的强调使他最终以诗歌话语的时间取代了经验的、物理的时间。“旁观者”把个人生活场景、事件和狂欢的广场相联系,以具体的时间和空间颠覆虚假意识形态确立的历史时间,肯定了个人在社会历史进程中的积极作用。这样,叶芝的时间哲学呈现出既固恋过去、又关注当下的双重指向,他的诗歌也因而成为他返回过去的永恒性、建构新的现在的一种重要手段。

最后必须承认,由于笔者学养不足,本书的论说过程中难免有这样或那样的疏漏之处。如果本书能起到抛砖引玉的作用,激发专业研究者和读者对叶芝更大的兴趣,笔者的心血也就算是没有白费。

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Introduction

It seems to act against a generally accepted opinion to claim that this dissertation aims to analyze and explore the adoption of dramatic narrative in Yeats's lyrics of the middle stage, for critics like Herrmann Fischer have pointed out that at least since the Romantic period, poets' excessive emphasis on individual genius and embrace for escapism have turned lyrics away from the condition of narrative — nearness to historical reality, and true spiritual and material concerns for the contemporary world (Fischer 221-6). But as is the problem with most generalizing surmises, while Fischer's observation is true with the young Yeats, it fails to account for the poet's increasing concerns about Irish social problems since the beginning of the 20th century. It is now widely acknowledged that the decline of western civilization in general, and the demoted state of Ireland under the rule of British Empire in particular, jostled Yeats out of his wistful faery land and made it his new mission and priority to address Irish social reality directly and curb the solipsism in his earlier verse. To fulfil these objectives, he adopted a variety of dramatized personae to refine his unmediated authorial presence while proffering his individualized interpretation of reality at once. Hence, while a dramatic means of presentation is theorized and strongly recommended by critics like Henry James, Yeats's option for it proves that the strategy is by no means a technique tributary and unique to novelists alone. But for all the means available to him, why should Yeats give dramatic narrative such an overbearing weight in his

- lyrics of the middle period, namely from 1914 to 1933? Hadn't he already tried his hand at symbolism and Irish folk literature to curb his sentimentality?
- 2 And if he regarded dramatic narrative as a measure better than the other two alternatives, what worth could the new one claim? Writing at a time when modern poets were preoccupied with the formidable task of turning away from Victorian decorum and solipsism, did his solution of the problem bear any similarity to that of the leading modernists? Did he, like the more out-spoken and avant-garde Eliot, also declare a theory of impersonality? Or did he seem to be more conservative by continuing to insist on the personal side of poetry? Moreover, given that Yeats used dramatic means at a time when it virtually became a popular trend among English novelists, did he employ the same method to achieve a like effect? And ultimately, did the new mode bring about any changes in his crafting of poetic devices like imagery and rhyming scheme, the generation of meaning for the reader, and his treatment of the point of view?

Answers to these questions can be first found in clarification of motives which prompted Yeats to adopt dramatic narrative as the predominant form of expression in his lyrics of the middle stage. While a survey and analysis of the changes in poetics may help prove the appropriacy of the poet's much weighted choice, a comparison between Yeats and novelists like Henry James, in terms of their employment of the dramatic means, is also highly necessary since only in this way can we make clear Yeats's individualized adaptation of the technique and his contribution to the use of it when it became very popular among the English novelists. The comparison naturally leads on to a study of Yeats's employment of dramatized personae. And given that the "drama" of the lyrics, best represented by the interplaying voices of the personae, denies the presence of a monoglossic poet who more often than not uses apostrophe to address an animated natural scene or object, a study of Yeats's treatment of time and space, based on a comparison with conventional lyrics, will also be one of the central tasks of the dissertation, so that the poet's unique sense of history and cosmology can be illuminated. Before delving into a detailed analysis of the various aspects of Yeats's dramatic narrative, it seems essential that we first map out the foci and leading trends of Yeats studies to have a broad idea of the ways that the poet has been so far approached by

critics and researchers, and what remains yet less frequently explored and calls out for more research efforts.

The inauguration of the reception of Yeats's verse in English-speaking countries like Britain and America can be traced back to the nineties of the 19th century. Boasting of more than fifty years of poetic creation, Yeats first made his name known to reviewers and readers in 1885 when his first published poems appeared in the *Dublin University Review*, followed by the launch of the first volume of poems, *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems* (1889). Most articles from critics acclaimed the volume a success, and tried to establish a link between the poetic themes and the poet's personal life.¹ Yet in spite of the applause to Yeats's matchless poetic achievements, the studies remained isolated and intermittent until it developed scope and assumed systematization in the 1940s. One reason obviously is that the poet's death in 1939 made it possible for researchers to chart a complete map of the growth of the modern Homer. The development is also attributable to the new measures of interpretation theorized and advocated by New Criticism. As is the case with most poetry criticism of the 1940-50s, a close reading of formal elements like meter, rhyme, images, as well as emphasis on ambiguity and tension turned out to be enormously helpful in deciphering the display of multiple meanings and the inclusion of multifold sources in Yeats's poems. In terms of research methods and perspectives, the studies mostly revolve around the following aspects and areas, with some combining several at once: 1) critical-biographical studies; 2) close readings; 3) cultural-historical studies; 4) influence studies; 5) Yeats and modernism; 6) Yeats's poetics and literary criticism; 7) linguistic studies; 8) Yeats and postmodernism. The last one is an overarching category which can be further divided into the following sub-divisions: psychoanalytical approaches, deconstructive reading, feminist research, reader-response inquiry, inter-textual analysis and post-colonial studies. Generally speaking, the psychoanalytical approaches and deconstructive readings were more favored in the 1950s and 60s,

1 K. P. S. Jochum, and Allan Wade, eds. *W. B. Yeats: A Classified Bibliography of Criticism Including Additions to Allan Wade's Bibliography of the Writings of W. B. Yeats* (Urban: Illinois, 1976) 12-25.

superseded by a diversification of critical interests in a wider range of topics and across interlaying research areas ever since the 1980s. Given the fact that nearly each approach manages to yield some seminal reading and criticism of the poet, it is advisable that we arrange the forthcoming review according to categorization of focus while running through a diachronic thread-line to evaluate the link and connection between the respective achievements at the same time.

Due to the rather personal profile of his works, Yeats's private and intellectual life has long been the primary focus of critics' attention. Apart from the "official" biography *W. B. Yeats: A Life* (1952) by R. F. Forster, J. B. Hone's *W. B. Yeats: 1865-1939* (1952) and A. N. Jeffares's *W. B. Yeats: Man and Poet* (1949) made up the best lives of Yeats in the 1950s. As for a combined critical-biographical approach to the poet, the landmark achievements of Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (1954) and *The Identity of Yeats* (1954) remain unrivalled. Other masterful publications also include H. Bloom's *Yeats* (1970) and D. Donoghue's *Yeats* (1971), with both books claiming to evaluate the links between Yeats and his Romantic predecessors. While David Lynch's *Yeats: The Poetics of the Self* (1979) confines itself to a Freudian psychoanalytical approach, Douglas Archibald sets his *Yeats* (1983) to cover a wider range of topics, among which the best investigated are Yeats's interaction with the Romantic tradition and the modernist movement, Yeats's indebtedness to Anglo-Irish literary heritage, and his involvement with the occult movement. Attempts to perceive Yeats's personal and literary life continued well into the 1980s and beyond as A. N. Jeffares succeeded Archibald with *W. B. Yeats: A New Biography* (1988), and was superseded still further by R. F. Forster's *The Apprentice Mage* (1997) and Terence Brown's more recent *Life of W. B. Yeats: A Critical Biography* (1999).

Starting from the 1980s, due to the successful edition of Yeats's poems and other writings, Yeats scholarship has gained much vivacity and has embarked on a new stage. The publication of the first volume of edited letters by John Kelly in 1986 unveiled to readers and critics Yeats's unknown yet much sought-after side. The appearance of new editions of poems, *W. B. Yeats: The Poems Revisited* by R. J. Finneran (1989) and *Yeats's Poems* by A. N. Jeffares

(1989) also managed to give Yeats's whole work a definitive shape though the two editions remain two major contenders, representing two divergent editorial traditions. Meanwhile, much time and energy were also spent to outline and spell out Yeats's literary criticism. Of works published in this area, B. N. Prasad's *The Literary Criticism of W. B. Yeats* (1985) seeks to cover various aspects of Yeats's artistic creed and analysis of literary ideas — the symbolist tendencies in French poetry, the changing opinions of the role of poet, and Yeats's dramatic theory. Compared with Prasad's ambitious efforts, Michael J. Sidnell's *Yeats's Poetry and Poetics* (1996) is more finely woven and explores the literary giant's poetics of image making, inclusion of figures borrowed from arts and implication of spiritual philosophy at great length. With the publication of series of new guides, commentaries, manuscript materials like Jeffares's *A New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats* (1986), and the superb Cornell Yeats Series reproducing the manuscript materials for each individual volume in the 90s and onwards, critics are better guided in their critical and textual research. Moreover, as literary analysis and interpretation of Yeats gained momentum when it stretched out, periodical publications and journals devoted to Yeats studies began to appear around the late seventies, among which the most influential ones are *Yeats Review*, *Yeats: Annual* and *Yeats: An Annual of Critical and Textual Studies*. The first provides a forum for specialists to share their reflection on and insights into Yeats's work, and the last two have become an authoritative base for scholars if they want to track down biographical and textual information about any relevant researches conducted within each single year. Besides, since the launch of the Yeats International Summer School at Sligo in 1960, each year scholars, readers and amateur actors from around the world meet at the poet's hometown to promote the appreciation of Yeats's poetry and other writings. The impact of the literary great among scholars and readers of various cultural backgrounds is ample indication of the international scope that Yeats scholarship has been able to take up with.

As a precursor of modern Irish poetry, Yeats's questioning and constructing of Irish national identity has also overwhelmed critics' attention. Peter Ure's *Yeats and Anglo-Irish Literature: Critical Essays* (1974) and G. J. Watson's *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival: Synge, Yeats and O'Casey* (1979)