

W.B. Yeats and the Introduction of Heteronym into the Western Literary Canon

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Abstract:

At first glance, heteronyms may be considered as imaginary names, a kind of poetic signature. However, unlike pseudonyms, heteronyms are names given to fully developed characters that, in spite of being imaginary, possess nearly all human qualities such as physical features, biographies, world views, writing styles, etc. – characters that, surprisingly enough, are capable of having views in sharp contrast to those of the author who has created them. Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935), arguably one of the most significant literary figures of the 20th century as well as one of the greatest poets in the Portuguese language, is the writer credited with the development, naming and introduction of this concept into literature. However, considering the whole body of works produced by the Irish Nobel laureate W.B. Yeats (1865-1939), strong heteronymic qualities can also be discerned in a number of his works some of which produced about twenty years before Pessoa even started his career as a writer. Through a close examination of some of Yeats's poems and other works, especially his short stories and the prose masterpiece *A Vision*, the present paper aims at illuminating the origins of the concept under study, as well as presenting its readers with the reasons why certain characters in some of Yeats's works go beyond mere masks and personae and fulfil the criteria to be considered as heteronyms.

Keywords: Fernando Pessoa, Heteronym, Mask, Persona, Pseudonym, W.B. Yeats

In those days they were men of one idea, but now we are more nervous, more developed, more sensitive; men capable of two or three ideas at once... Modern men are broader-minded
(Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Idiot*, 1868)

1. Introduction

As the focus of the present paper is on the heteronym, whose conception, i.e. both its meaning and name, are usually credited to the Portuguese modernist poet Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935) (Cuddon 2013, 331-332), it seems fit to consider how Pessoa himself describes the concept:

A pseudonymic work is, except for the name with which it is signed, the work of an author writing as himself; a heteronymic work is by an author writing outside his own personality: it is the work of a complete individuality made up by him, just as the utterances of some character in a drama would be. (Qtd. in Monteiro 1998, 7-8)

A heteronymic work is therefore a writer's work which is not to be considered the utterances of that writer's apparent personality, but a work providing the opportunity for that same writer to utter what seems to be another man's sentiments. In spite of being created by the writer himself, a heteronymic character is presented in such a way that the readers consider him as a completely distinct figure, a real man possessing human qualities like all other real men, except one, which is being real itself.

Pessoa's heteronymic system is a rather complex one, with about 75 different names. Nevertheless, three of them, as stated in a famous fictitious letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, dated 13 January 1935, seem to be of the greatest significance: Alberto Cairo (or Caeiro) (1889-1914), a man of no profession or education, of medium height, with blue eyes, who dies of consumption; Álvaro de Campos (1890-?), a tall bisexual Jewish-Portuguese man, who is an unemployed naval engineer wearing a monocle, and Ricardo Reis (1887-?), a classicist and a physician living in Brazil (Ciuraru 2012).

Scanning the collected poems of Yeats, one comes across three fictional names; Red Hanrahan, Owen Aherne, Michael Robartes. A brief investigation outside Yeats's poetry leads to the fact that these three characters were first introduced in some stories published shortly before *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899), the first poetical work in which two of these characters reappear. Hanrahan was firstly introduced in a short story collection entitled *Stories of Red Hanrahan* (1897), while the other two were introduced in three different short stories, i.e. "Rosa Alchemica", "The Tables of the Law" and "Adoration of the Magi", also published in 1897. In the first version of *The Wind Among the Reeds*, i.e. the copies published between 1897 and 1906, there are some poems whose titles include the names of Michael Robartes and Hanrahan, e.g. "Michael Robartes Bids His Beloved be at Peace", "Hanrahan Reproves the Curlew", "Michael Robartes Remembers Forgotten Beauty" etc. (Yeats 1902, v-vii). In 1906, however, when a revised version of the same collection is published, the titles, and only the titles not the poems themselves, are neu-

tralized, and all the proper names are excluded and replaced by the pronoun *he*¹. Such changes must have been obviously crucial to the later obscurity of the heteronymic nature of his poetry and its pioneering role.

According to the literary critic and biographer Richard Ellmann “even as a boy he [Yeats] had begun to pose before the world as something different from what he was, and by late adolescence he had come to think of himself as divided into two parts” (1948, 177). Similarly, as a mature poet, Yeats does not always speak in his own voice, “but uses beggars, hermits and fools to voice with safety opinions about life and afterlife that he is not prepared to guarantee” (Ellmann 1960, 205). This is not a unique aspect since a lot of poets have done the same thing, but Yeats’s masks are not limited to these types. A careful examination of his works reveals a more profound and newer style of mask-making associated with recurring characters of Aherne, Robartes, and Hanrahan and similar to Pessoa’s concept of heteronym. Yeats himself asserts in the introduction to *A Vision* that “I had invented an unnatural story of an Arabian traveller I must amend and find a place for some day because I was fool enough to write half a dozen poems that are unintelligible without it” (1975, 19). Later on, we find out that this Arabian traveller is the visionary philosopher/mystic introduced earlier as Robartes.

Now the question is whether or not we can consider Yeats as instrumental in introducing the concept of heteronym into the Western literary canon. Based on the scholarship, there are a lot of similarities between the poetry of Yeats and Pessoa, but only few studies are devoted to them; Sol Biderman’s “Mount Abiegnos and the Masks: Occult Imagery in Yeats and Pessoa” and a number of papers by Patricia Silva McNeill. Biderman focuses on the two poets’ common interest in occult writings and practices as well as how such works influence their writings. Similar to Biderman’s article, McNeill’s “The Alchemical Path: Esoteric Influence in the Works of Fernando Pessoa and W. B. Yeats” is concerned with the influence of occult studies, theosophy, magic, alchemy, etc. in the works of the two poets. Focusing on three different aspects of Pessoa’s writings in “Affinity and Influence: The Reception of W. B. Yeats by Fernando Pessoa”, McNeill demonstrates the overt and partly documented influence of Yeats on Pessoa’s writings. She examines the use of Masks and heteronyms in the works of the two poets in “The Aesthetic of Fragmentation and the Use of ‘Persona’ in the Poetry of Fernando Pessoa and W. B. Yeats”. In this study, she

¹ The changes may be taken as ordinary since most poets do such mere revisions, but considering the fact that Yeats always proved himself a diligent poet revising and republishing his poems years after their original date of composition, these changes may be more than simple revisions. Considering the fact that Yeats lived in an age when old ideas of literary consistency were still strongly adhered to, he may have replaced the names afterwards to neutralize these different characters and make them part of himself and his later poems, and the first titles could have only been used to give a hint to the multifaceted nature of his works.

focuses on numerous characters from Yeats's poetry including nameless characters like hermits and beggars, mythological characters like Fergus and Oisín and his own fictional characters such as Robartes. The last of McNeill's papers is the one closest to the topic of the present study. Due to the wide variety of characters it takes into consideration, the aforementioned article cannot afford to trace heteronymic qualities of Yeats's poetry and points only to some similarities between the two poets. In this regard, the present paper focuses only on three characters and provides a detailed analysis of the poems attributed to them, showing how Yeats can be considered as an influential figure in the development of heteronymic writings.

Another relevant work, perhaps the closest one to the purpose of the present paper, is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Principles of the Mind: Continuity in Yeats' Poetry", which is different from the aforementioned in that it does not compare the two poets and focuses only on Yeats. Still, Spivak's emphasis is rather on the tone of the poems whereas the focus of the present work is on the form, language and content of the poems. Accordingly, this study attempts to provide the readers with poems that are so distinctive in their form and content that it may be argued they have been composed by different authors – a quality so close to Pessoa's concept of heteronyms. What follows is a study of some poems that could be attributed to the three different fictional characters introduced by Yeats.

2. *Owen Aherne, the Intellectual Questioner*

Aherne is a character introduced in Yeats's early fiction and later on developed in some of his poems, e.g. "The Phases of the Moon" and "Owen Aherne and His Dancers", clearly influenced by the actual events of Yeats's own life, i.e. his marriage (Jeffares 1968, 307). He is the writer of a little fictional book on the Alchemy entitled *Rosa Alchemica* (Yeats 1959, 267), a big old man, "sedentary-looking, bearded and dull of eye" (Yeats 1975, 37), who is usually considered along with Robartes as one of Yeats's "carriers of mystical and revealed knowledge" (Rosenthal 1994, 195). However, firstly, Yeats says that "a certain friend of mine has written upon this subject a couple of intricate poems called 'The Phases of the Moon' and 'The Double Vision' respectively, which are my continual study [...]" (1962, 258-259), arguably crediting Robartes with the authorship of the poems. Secondly, the letter in "Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends" introduces the imaginary brother of Aherne, i.e. John Aherne, who has written to Yeats himself (Yeats 1975, 53). And thirdly, Aherne and Robartes make certain remarks about Yeats and his writings in "The Phases of the Moon." Thus, Yeats may consider, or at least means his readers to consider, these characters as real individuals living in the same world as himself, and not merely in his writings. Therefore, assuming that Aherne could also be considered a gifted poet, what follows is to consider some of Yeats's poems and see if Aherne's voice can be recognized in them.

There are a number of poems which seem to be in agreement with the characteristics described for Aherne. “Sailing to Byzantium”, one of Yeats’s monumental achievements, may be considered a quintessential example.

That is no country for old men. The young
[...]
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect. (Yeats 1996, 193)

Being an old friend of Aherne, the narrator of the short story “Tables of the Law” describes him by saying “When you [Aherne] and I lived together, you cared neither for wine, women, nor money, and had thoughts for nothing but theology and mysticism” (Yeats 1959, 293). The speaker in the poem’s opening stanza is obviously an old, gloomy man, just like Aherne, who is in sharp contrast with his surrounding, i.e. the exciting “country of the youth”, where sensual side of humanity is highlighted and intellect neglected; this is absolutely in agreement with Aherne’s characteristics:

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress. (Yeats 1996, 193)

In a note to the third and fourth lines of this stanza, Edward Larrissy writes “[these lines] may recall [William] Blake’s story of his brother Robert and his death, when the soul emerged from the body clapping its hands” (Yeats 1997, 503), and from what we know of Aherne, he is interested in the works of William Blake. In “Rosa Alchemica”, there is a passage when Aherne is left alone in “one of the most exhaustive alchemical libraries” he has ever seen, and after mentioning the names of some of the greatest alchemists whose works are included in the library, he points to a complete set of Blake’s works, calling them “prophetical writings of William Blake” (Yeats 1959, 282). What shows Aherne’s specific interest in Blake is the fact that he says there are a lot of works by poets and prose writers on the shelves, but the only writers he mentions by name are a number of alchemists, who are considered to be his colleagues or masters, and Blake, who is not an alchemist but a prophetical writer.

The most important idea in the third stanza of the poem, the speaker’s desire to be “gathered into the artifice of eternity”, may well be traced in Yeats’s “The Tables of the Law” as Aherne utters “[...] terror and content, birth and death, love and hatred, and the fruit of the Tree, are but instruments for that supreme art which is to win us from life and gather us into eternity like doves into their dove-cots” (Yeats 1959, 300-301). Also, in the

part from “*Rosa Alchemica*”, where Aherne is talking about his discovery of the true purpose of great alchemists’ experiments, demonstrates that, like the poem’s speaker, Aherne is concerned with eternity and being unified with it:

I had discovered, early in my researches, that their doctrine was no merely chemical fantasy, but a philosophy they applied to the world, to the elements and to man himself; and that they sought to fashion gold out of common metals merely as part of a universal transmutation of all things into some divine and imperishable substance. (Yeats 1959, 267)

Moreover, there is a subtle point to be made about the speaker’s request for the “sages” to be his “singing-masters” in the poem. Reading “*The Phases of the Moon*”, one cannot help but notice that in the dialogue between Aherne and Robartes, the latter is confident and knowledgeable, while the former is the one who asks all the questions and makes all the requests; “What made that sound?”, “Why should you not / Who know it all ring at his door [...]”, “Sing me the changes of the moon once more” (Yeats 1996, 163-167). Thus, Aherne is characteristically in agreement with the unnamed traveller/speaker of “*Sailing to Byzantium*”.

The last point to be made here about the third and fourth stanzas is that the imagery is so close to some of the objects Aherne is interested in. In a passage describing his house, Aherne says he is happy to have been able to design his rooms in a way that they become the expression of his favourite doctrine, describing “tapestry, full of the blue and bronze of peacocks, fell over [...] doors [...] [and he] looked in the triumph of this imagination at the birds of Hera, glittering in the light of the fire as though of Byzantine mosaic [...]” (Yeats 1959, 268-269). The former part of the quotation may remind us of the artificial birds “Grecian goldsmiths make of hammered gold and gold enamelling”, while the latter part seems to be describing the closest replica one can get of the image of the Byzantine “God’s holy fire” and “the gold mosaic” presented in the first lines of the third stanza. Considering these images, it seems that Aherne is trying to decorate his house in a way that evokes Byzantium, and so, it may be concluded that the favourite doctrine he was talking about has strong associations with Byzantium.

A final personality trait shared by Aherne and the speaker of the poem is their sense of hatred for life. The poem’s speaker says “Once out of nature I shall never take / My bodily form from any natural thing / But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make” (Yeats 1996, 194). In “*Tables of the Law*”, the narrator, Aherne’s friend, describes Aherne by saying “more orthodox in most of his beliefs than Michael Robartes, he had surpassed him in a fanciful hatred of all life” (Yeats 1959, 294). Thus, it may be said that both characters harbour some sort of aversion towards life.

It is obvious that Aherne is not limited to just this poem, and it can be well argued that some of Yeats’s poems related to the symbol of the tower and its winding stair are rather associated with Aherne and his house than

with Thoor Ballylee, Yeats's home, which he purchased at the age of 52 (Ross 2009, 567). It may be interesting to note that all through Yeats's poetry, the name Thoor Ballylee is mentioned only once, and that is in the short poem he wrote to be carved on a stone at Thoor Ballylee. Thus, in spite of all the commentaries written on Thoor Ballylee as Yeats's emblem, symbol and ancestral tower, the tower and its ancestral implications may not be necessarily related to Thoor Ballylee, but some other tower. Now, let us examine some of the passages from the two short stories in which the central character seems to be Aherne:

[...] in my house in one of the old parts of Dublin; a house my ancestors had made almost famous through their part [...] in the politics of the city and their friendships with the famous men of their generations [...] The portraits, of more historical than artistic interest, had gone [...]. (Yeats 1959, 267-268)

We passed between the portraits of the Jesuits and priests -some of no little fame- his family had given to the church. (Yeats 1959, 294-295)

[...] the wide staircase, where Swift had passed joking and railing, and Curran telling stories and quoting Greek. (Yeats 1959, 271)

These excerpts indicate that Aherne is of a noble, aristocratic descent, and his house has been the home of his forefathers and is actually an ancestral house. As the speaker claims in the second part of "The Blood and the Moon", the tower and its ancestral stair have seen some of the most significant characters in the history of Ireland, including "Goldsmith [...] Dean [...] Berkeley [...] Burke [...]" (Yeats 1996, 237). According to different accounts about the origins of Thoor Ballylee, the tower dates back to a time between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries (Ross 2009, 567). Furthermore, there is no solid proof showing that Thoor Ballylee had ever been visited by great people such as those described in the second part of the poem "Blood and the Moon"; it was originally built by the de Burgo family as one of their many defensive towers and was inhabited by a farmer and his wife at the time Yeats bought it (McCready 1997, 391). Another reason that the tower referred to in "Blood and the Moon" is most probably not *Thoor Ballylee* is the age of the tower stated in the third part of the poem:

The purity of the unclouded moon
Has flung its arrowy shaft upon the floor.
Seven centuries have passed and it is pure. (Yeats 1996, 238)

The lines above show that the tower, or more specifically its "floor", is at least seven centuries old. Considering that Thoor Ballylee was built in the period of time between the 14th and 16th centuries, it does not seem pos-

sible that the poem's speaker is describing Thoor Ballylee, but some other tower that might be Aherne's house. Thus, it may be concluded that this poem can also be attributed to Aherne. It is also curious to know that, based on Yeats's own acknowledgment of the possibility that he had chosen Thoor Ballylee as his home under the spell of Milton's "Il Penseroso" and Shelley's "Prince Athanase", George Bornstein states that Yeats chose Thoor Ballylee for himself to become Athanase at last (qtd. in Ross 2009, 569); but why not considering Yeats's effort to live the life he himself had created for Aherne?

Moreover, the mere mention of the word ancestral in the context of Yeats's poetry, reminds us of the first poem in the sequence "Meditations in Time of Civil War"; i.e. "Ancestral House", which is supposedly inspired by a number of such houses as Lady Gregory's Coole Park and is considered by Yeats as the symbol of "tradition, ceremony, and aristocratic strength of character" (Ross 2009, 44). Nevertheless, since there is no reference to any specific house or name, it is possible that the poem has different origins. Furthermore, regardless of such concerns with the origin, the central theme seems to be the question repeated in the fourth stanza; "O what if [...] But take our greatness with our violence?" can be traced in the following part of Yeats's "Rosa Alchemica":

When I pondered over the antique bronze gods and goddesses [...] I had all a pagan's delight in various beauty and without his terror at sleepless destiny and his labour with many sacrifices [...] I had but to go to my bookshelf [...] to know what I would of human passions without their bitterness and without satiety. (Yeats 1959, 268)

Obviously, Aherne is also concerned with the same quest as the speaker of "Ancestral Houses"; he also wants to know whether it is possible to separate elements of passion from bitterness. As Norman Jeffares asserts, the poem seems to echo the thought "that the new kind of violence which was coming into the world would be unlike the kind of violence which had brought the houses of the rich (in particular the country houses of Ireland) into being" (1968, 267). This seems to be consistent with Aherne's analytical mind and his historical knowledge, by which he seems to try to work out a kind of philosophical-alchemical perfection. Moreover, the poem's imagery, with references to "bronze and marble" architecture in the third stanza, "peacocks" in the fourth and "famous portraits of our ancestors" in the fifth, is much similar to the atmosphere and images associated with Aherne and discussed earlier².

² There are some other poems worth considering in this light: "The Statues", especially its first three stanzas, which seems to be based on the analytical method of Aherne's historical reviews and is full of images characteristic of Aherne's style; "Long-legged Fly", which follows the same historical views as "The Statues"; "Wisdom", with its references to the towers of Babylon and ancient mosaics and "Byzantium", which is considered a sequel to "Sailing to Byzantium" and contains imagery similar to that of the latter poem.

3. *Robartes, the Indescribable Visionary*

Bloom begins his book on Yeats by asserting that, like his poetic ancestors Blake and Shelley, he “was a poet very much in the line of vision” (1970, v). In fact, any serious reader acquainted with Yeats’s most notable literary achievements will most probably testify to this assertion. It may suffice to note that one of his most important and equally unique prose works was, as he himself claimed, revealed to him by supernatural agents (Ross 2009, 416), which is interestingly enough entitled *A Vision*. The purpose of this part is to consider some of Yeats’s more visionary poems and, of course, the imaginary character who seems qualified for being considered their author.

Robartes is an old friend and companion of Aherne under whose influence Aherne’s writing becomes more and more unintelligible and unpopular (Yeats 1959, 267). In Yeats’s “Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends”, he is described as “lank, brown, muscular, clean-shaven, [a man] with an alert, ironical eye” (Yeats 1975, 37), which somehow hints at his lively and adventurous nature and his sheer contrast to Aherne. He is described by Aherne as a man “whose wild red hair, fierce eyes, sensitive, tremulous lips and rough clothes, made him look now, just as they used to do fifteen years before, something between a debauchee, a saint, and a peasant” (Yeats 1959, 271). Unlike Aherne, Robartes’s primary source of knowledge is not the books he leaves unfinished and open (Yeats 1996, 160); he is one of those whose motto seems to be *I learn by going where I have to go*, shown through his travels to places as far from his comfort zone as Arabia, to live with a tribe called Judwalis and learn their mystical dance, or Teheran, to buy the lost egg of Leda (Yeats 1975, 41, 51). Furthermore, in “Adoration of the Magi”, the intuitive visionary nature of this character is vividly elaborated by the assertion that “At last a man, who told them he was Michael Robartes, came to them in a fishing-boat, like Saint Brendan drawn by some vision and called by some voice; and told them of the coming again of the gods and the ancient things” (Yeats 1959, 309).

Now let us discuss the poems which can be best attributed to Robartes. Three of Yeats’s poems with so much in common that it may be justified to call them a trilogy are taken into consideration here; “Leda and the Swan”, “The Mother of God” and “The Second Coming”. The first similarity among these poems is the fact that they all begin by descriptions of chaotic scenes to disturb the readers’ minds immediately:

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed. (Yeats 1996, 214)

The three-fold terror of love; a fallen flare
Through the hollow of an ear;

Wings beating about the room;
 The terror of all terrors that I bore
 The Heavens in my womb. (Yeats 1996, 249)

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
 The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
 Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world [...]. (Yeats 1996, 187)

The opening stanza of “Leda and the Swan” depicts the mythical rape of the mortal Leda by Zeus in the shape of swan (Holdman 2006, 89). Unlike “Leda and the Swan”, the subject matter of the second poem is an obviously religious one, i.e. the birth of Jesus Christ. However, the emotional state of the Virgin Mary is nothing like the serenity usually depicted in the Renaissance paintings, as here she feels the terror of all terrors. Moreover, the fallen flare in the poem, which Yeats himself attests to its obscurity (qtd. in Ross 2009, 160), is suggested by T.R. Henn to have as its source of inspiration not only William Blake’s drawing “Annunciation” but also Charles Rickett’s “Eros Leaving Psyche” (qtd. in Jeffares 1968, 359-360). This could be interpreted as an indication of Yeats’s idea that the two births, although one occurs in the mythological era and the other in the religious one, are of the same nature. The third stanza above, taken from “The Second Coming”, seems to be the most chaotic of all three. The poem itself, taken as a whole, is described by Carolyn Meyer as:

Part pronouncement on the immediate postwar situation in 1919, part prophecy of the terrifying shape of things to come, it [“The Second Coming”] plays upon war-wearied humanity’s hope for something better only to play into its worst fears—that the impending collapse of civilization is the sign not of the return of Christ, as the title suggests and as Matthew 24 foretells, but of a coming age of barbarism, an anti-civilization embodied by a savage, sphinx-like deity who makes the beast of the Apocalypse in Revelation pale by comparison. (2000, 189)

As it can be obviously perceived in the paragraphs above, the second and the most significant similarity among the three poems is the way they are based on the 2000-cycles of history that Yeats describes in *A Vision*. As Wendy Perkins writes in an essay on “Leda and the Swan”, each of these epochs represents a civilization which begins with a mystical conception and birth (2001, 192). The first one, described in “Leda and the Swan”, is about the beginning of 2000 BC-1 AD.

The Age of Homer [...] because springing from this union of the king of gods and the mortal woman were both Helen of Troy, who caused the Trojan War, and Clytemnestra, who slew the returning, conquering Agamemnon at the war’s end – primary themes of the Greek Age. (La Chance 1996, 2196)

The second one, described in “The Mother of God”, is about the second or the Christian era, i.e. 1 AD-2000 AD, the age beginning with the conception of Jesus Christ and the one the poet himself lives in. And finally, the third age, described in “The Second Coming”, is about the ending of the Christian era somewhere around the year 2000 AD and the beginning of a new era which the poet, who by the time of the composition of the poem had rejected his youthful optimism in the natural goodness of human beings (Lake 2000, 186), predicts to be a most terrifying era.

The next similarity of the three poems is the use of bird imagery the instances of which in the first stanzas of all the three poems intensify, or better to say, create the immediate chaotic quality of the poems. As M. Loeffler-Delachaux asserts, “the bird, like the fish, was originally a phallic symbol, endowed however with the power of heightening – suggesting sublimation and spiritualization” (qtd. in Cirlot 2001, 27). The birds in the first two poems, i.e. Zeus and the archangel Gabriel, are definitely phallic symbols through which Helen and Christ are born. However, the birds in the third poem, both the falcon at the beginning of the poem and the indignant desert birds mentioned later, seem to be somehow different. The birds in the first two poems serve two purposes, one being the intensification of the chaos and the other being their power in generating life, hence catastrophe. However, the birds in “The Second Coming” do not explicitly possess that power, and are, for the most part, just watching what is happening. The first two birds represent the central role of “the terrible animal strength of the winged divinity” (Ross 2009, 160), based on which the new eras begin, and in the era described in “The Second Coming”, the centre is broken. Therefore, it may be concluded that the poet means to assert that the new era is one with no divine, or at least central, generator; an era “of cultural dissolution [...] where the commonplace images of everyday life are merged with an apocalyptic revelation about a new order that portends instability and chaos among humankind” (Edwards 1996, 3326). Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the birds in all the three poems have similar functions and can be considered as the products of the same mind thinking about the same patterns.

The last similarity is related to the closing questions of the three poems. As Ian Fletcher interestingly observes, “A strong reason why the poem [“Leda and the Swan”] will not let us rest are those questions: rhetorical? expecting the answer, yes, no, or don’t know?” (1982, 82). Fletcher’s assertion could also be linked to the other two poems in this sequence as they too end with question marks. But, how can it be the case that the poems attributed to Robartes, who has been shown as the all-knowing answerer, most notably in “The Phases of the Moon” and “Michael Robartes and the Dancer”, end with unanswered questions?! Studying the first two poems, one realizes that they are actually historical commentaries on what we already know; the first one talking about the murder of Agamemnon and the destruction of Troy

caused by the birth of the two sisters Leda and Clytemnestra, and the second one talking about the catastrophes following the birth of Jesus Christ, the most significant of which being the Crucifixion. However, the third poem is different in the sense that it is talking about the events of a coming era, but still the reader familiar with Yeats's ideas about the 2000-year cycles of history understands that even the question in the last poem, is not one without an answer, but a rhetorical one. Accordingly, Donald Weeks discusses that "From 1916 at the latest Yeats was increasingly concerned with the decline of the west, the trembling of the veil, the Great Year, the Second Coming, and the warnings of the end which came to man from the Great Memory" (1948, v. 288). It may thus be said that the nature, and also the function, of the three rhetorical questions are the same. In fact, in the case of these poems, being able to put forth the question is equal to providing the answer, only provided that the reader is ready enough to grasp it.

As demonstrated above, the three visionary poems, by virtue of their thematic unity and formal resemblance, could be considered parts of the same sequence, and so are most probably composed by the same author whom we take to be Robartes because of his intuitive nature. However, there is one last point to be made about these poems; the fact that they are not published in the same order as presented here. Chronologically speaking, the first poem is "The Second Coming", and "Leda and the Swan" and "The Mother of God" are the second and the third ones, respectively. This fact may somehow undermine the assumption that these poems were intended to constitute a sequence, but considering the poems to have been hypothetically composed by Robartes, this could also be justified by what we know of his impulsive and not-so-orderly nature³.

4. *Hanrahan, the Merry Songster*

Like the other two characters, Hanrahan was also introduced in a collection of short stories published in 1897 and then mentioned in the title of some of the poems in the first version of *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899), e.g. "Hanrahan Reproves the Curfew", which are all neutralized, or slightly changed, in the later and final version of the same collection. As a result, in the definitive editions of Yeats's complete poems, there is only one poem with the word "Hanrahan" in its title, i.e. "Red Hanrahan's Song about Ireland" and some two or three poems, including "The Tower", in whose texts

³ The other poems deserving consideration from this point of view include "Those Images", in which the speaker puts the emphasis on the "better exercise in the sunlight and wind" rather than the "cavern of the mind", that is experience rather than systematic study; "The Valley of the Black Pig", a folklore-influenced prophesy about the fate of Ireland; "The Magi", with its visionary nature demonstrated by what the speaker sees in "the mind's eye".

the name of Hanrahan appears. Unlike Aherne and Robartes, Hanrahan is a simple man, not preoccupied with occult sciences, alchemy, philosophy, etc.

The first of the six stories describing Hanrahan's characteristics, adventures and, finally, his death begins with the description "Hanrahan, the Hedge schoolmaster, a tall, strong, red-haired young man" (Yeats 1959, 213). Hanrahan's characterization "is based on the Irish Jacobite poet Owen O'Sullivan the Red (1748-1784) [and] indeed, Yeats used the name 'O'Sullivan the Red' in the periodical versions of the stories [centred round him]" (Finneran 1972, 350). He is a young man who has "never had the habit of passing by any place where there was music or dancing or good company, without going in [...] [and] has no good name [...] among the priests, or with women that mind themselves" (Yeats 1959, 225). He is a singer/songwriter whose songs reflect the themes of love, repentance and Ireland and her grieves (Yeats 1959, 235). With these characteristics in mind, let us review the first poem "The Host of the Air" which is based on "an old Gaelic ballad that was sung and translated for [Yeats] by a woman at Ballisodare in County Sligo" (Yeats 1997, 476) and can be considered as connected with or, in a heteronymic way, composed by Hanrahan:

O'Driscoll drove with a song
 The wild duck and the drake
 From the tall and the tufted reeds
 Of the drear Hart Lake. (Yeats 1996, 56-57)

The first stanza of the poem starts with the name "O'Driscoll", a typical Irish name and ends with "Hart Lake", a lake about seven miles west of Ballisodare (Jeffares 1968, 56), showing that it is set in Ireland. Moreover, one point in this stanza about the song he sings reveals another similarity between the poem's central character and Hanrahan, a singer/songwriter. The succeeding stanzas of this poem unfold a story so similar to that of Hanrahan's life, especially the parts narrated in "Red Hanrahan", the first story in the collection centred round Hanrahan. The interest in singing, drinking and dancing is a characteristic found in both O'Driscoll and Hanrahan, but there are more interesting similarities as both men have sweethearts, Bridget and Mary Lavelle, and both succumb to the temptation of playing cards with ordinary-looking, but mysterious, old men. Hanrahan plays cards with an old man who later turns the cards into a hare and a pack of hounds and himself vanishes into the night (Yeats 1959, 218-219). The old men O'Driscoll plays cards with vanish like smoke and are found, later in the poem, to be the host of the air, i.e. related to the Sidhe who are usually depicted as evil creatures of ghostly nature.

The remaining stanzas recount how O'Driscoll wakes out of his dream and notices the changes around him; the merry crowd as well as his bride

have all vanished. It is almost the same as what happens to Hanrahan. At the end of "Red Hanrahan", Hanrahan falls sleep and upon waking finds out a year has passed and his bride Mary Lavelle is gone for good (Yeats 1959, 222-224). The two characters face the same fate, their brides are lost forever.

In Hanrahan's first story and the poem "The Host of the Air", it is not only the plotlines that are similar, but some of the stylistic features of the poem also remind us of the character of Hanrahan in the story. After a time, Yeats came to hate the elaborate language and artificial characteristic of his works in the 1890s and as a result, he was also dissatisfied with the first edition of *The Stories of Red Hanrahan* and started "the pruning of verbal dead weed" with the help of Lady Gregory (Ackerman 1975, 505-506). In other words, he rewrote the stories using a simpler language. This same quality can be easily observed in the poem just reviewed. Unlike many of Yeats's more complex and esoteric poems and also like quite a few other poems he wrote, "The Host of the Air" could be easily mistaken for the lyrics of an Irish folk song composed by an uneducated, and probably anonymous, songwriter; the poem uses the most basic words of the language. In addition, one of the other important characteristics of the poem is the lack of classical, biblical or mythological allusions and references, some of the most consummate examples of which in Western literature are to be found in Yeats's poems such as "Leda and the Swan" and "The Second Coming".

Finally, there is another stylistic feature easily observed in the poem that makes one consider it as a poem by Hanrahan. Looking at the lines, almost all of the same length, and considering the emphasis put on the rhymes at the end of the 2nd and 4th lines of each stanza, it may be concluded that "The Host of the Air" is rather a song than a poem. Since Hanrahan is described as a songwriter, it is most probable that he can be credited with its writing, and "The Host of the Air" can be considered as a quintessentially Hanrahanian poem.

The second Hanrahanian poem to be analyzed here is "The Wild Old Wicked Man". While "The Host of the Air", included in *The Wind Among the Reeds*, belongs to the early stage of Yeats's poetry; this second poem is taken from the poet's penultimate collection of poems, entitled *New Poems* (1938). The reason for mentioning this long interval here is to emphasize a stylistic point about the poem. "The Host of the Air" is composed in a verbally and allusively simple style incorporating Irish themes and a conspicuous emphasis on the musical aspects of poetry, which does not specifically belong to Yeats's youth, i.e. immature poetry, but can be traced in his later poems as well:

'Because I am mad about women
[...]
'Not to die on the straw at home,
Those hands to close these eyes,

That is all I ask, my dear,
 [...]
 I have what no young man can have
 Because he loves too much.
 Words I have that can pierce the heart,
 But what can he do but touch? (Yeats 1996, 310)

The poem seems to be related to Hanrahan's middle age as described in "Red Hanrahan's Curse", the fourth story in the collection *Stories of Red Hanrahan*; "I have set Old Age and Time and Weariness and Sickness against me, and I must go wandering again" (Yeats 1959, 245). This is the first time in the stories where Hanrahan points to the physical decay that old age has brought upon him. Nevertheless, he is still burning with the two of the greatest urges he has always been known for, i.e. desiring women and wandering. The old man in the poem seems to be filled with the same desires because he declares himself "mad about women" and a wanderer not wanting "to die on the straw at home" (Yeats 1996, 310). As the poem progresses, he mentions his advantage over young men, that is the "words that can pierce the heart", an indication of his verbal skills; the gift bestowed, most of all, on literary men and songwriters like Hanrahan:

Then said she to that wild old man
 [...]
 I gave it all to an older man
 That old man in the skies.
 Hands that are busy with His beads
 Can never close those eyes.'
 [...]
 'Go your ways, O go your ways
 I choose another mark,
 Girls down on the seashore
 Who understand the dark;
 Bawdy talk for the fishermen
 A dance for the fisher lads' (Yeats 1996, 310-311)

As stated earlier, Hanrahan has no good name among priests or with women who mind themselves, and the lady the old man is apparently trying to woo seems to be such a lady. The fourth stanza of the poem reveals still more about the wild old man's personality; his bawdy talk and dancing. This is also in accordance with Hanrahan's personality.

'All men live in suffering
 I know as few can know, (Yeats 1996, 311)

The sixth stanza of the poem starts with a bold statement that only men of the world, that is the wild old man and the “few [who] can know” are qualified to make. The statement shows the wild old man has experienced a great deal of pain, and it may be related to the ever-present regret about a lost love, which is the case with Hanrahan.

In order to further clarify the points making “The Wild Old Wicked Man” an arguably Hanrahanian poem, it is worthwhile to consider some of the stylistic features of the poem as well. Clearly the poem, as it befits its contents, is written in a simple language. All the stanzas comprise eight lines of equal length, and the rhyme scheme is meticulously observed at the end of all the even lines. There is another characteristic which further amplifies the status of “The Wild Old Wicked Man” as a song, and that is the existence of a refrain at the end of all the stanzas which gives them a more melodic feel⁴.

5. Conclusion

Considering the discussion presented above, we may conclude that there are distinct voices in Yeats’s poetry that are different from, and even to some extent in opposition to, each other; Aherne is a weary-looking old man tired of sensual desires and lost in his studies; Hanrahan is the good-looking rustic songwriter always looking for pleasure; and, Robartes is the ever adventurous, wandering visionary. There is no doubt that Yeats himself composed all these poems, but what makes them heteronymic is the fact that his poems do not always represent the same mentality, and this is exactly what Pessoa did in his writings.

Now the question is the significance of Yeats’s writings in the introduction of the concept of heteronym into the Western literary canon. As Pessoa was the most important, although widely unknown, proponent of modernism in his native Portugal, it is almost certain that he was influenced by modernist figures such as Yeats, a fact acknowledged by his critic and translator Richard Zenith (2006). Just like Yeats, Pessoa started creating characters to be used in his poetry, only it was done about twenty years after Yeats did it. Even if Pessoa did not borrow from Yeats in creating the concept of heteronym, it is still feasible to think that the heteronymic nature of Yeats’s works could have been a source of inspiration and influence for Pessoa. Since Pessoa published only a few of his poems during his lifetime and even those poems were neither in English nor translated into English, he was not much known outside his country. In fact, it was only in the 1980’s that good translations

⁴ There is a large number of poems in Yeats’s *oeuvre* sharing qualities with the poem discussed above; “Two Songs Rewritten for the Tune’s Sake” with its emphasis on musicality and themes of lost love and sensual joys, “Ton O’Roughley” with its obviously Irish subject as well as the rejection of logic and exaltation of “pure joy”, “Colonel Martin” with its simple narrative style as well as everyday subjects and the use of refrain.

of his heteronymic works were provided for the English-speaking audiences (Zenith 2006, xliii), and until then he was mostly unknown and absolutely not considered a canonical poet. Thus, Yeats either originated the concept, albeit without giving it a name, or paved the way for its introduction into the Western literature that led Pessoa to his important achievement of heteronymic writings, praised and considered as canonical by Bloom (1994, 463-492).

As a final point, it may be interesting to take notice of Yeats's last published poem, entitled "Politics", which may well be considered as a final note, a council of personae:

How can I, that girl standing there,
 My attention fix
 On Roman or on Russian
 Or on Spanish politics,
 Yet here's a travelled man that knows
 What he talks about,
 And there's a politician
 That has both read and thought,
 And maybe what they say is true
 Of war and war's alarms,
 But O that I were young again
 And held her in my arms. (Yeats 1996, 348)

As can be seen, this poem seems to contain the three different attitudes encompassing Yeats's life and works; the travel type who knows what he talks about (similar to Robartes), the one who has both read and thought (similar to Aherne's), and the sensual one (similar to Hanrahan's). The interesting thing is that the speaker does not reject any of them, a sort of reconciliation or blending of the three different mentalities.

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