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Dead, mad, or a poet

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Publisher

Sara Amis

Authors

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Description

A single issue of this literary journal was published by an Anderson Faery initiate. Originally aimed for being issued at Beltane, the first issue of this biannual would not come to fruition until Lughnasad 2011. This issue featured five poems, a novel excerpt, and an essay and was edited by Sara Amis.

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Dead, Mad, or a Poet

A Journal to Faerie

"Pomegranate" by Kathryn Hinds

"Yeats, Primitivism, and the Magic of Art" by Kerry Higgins Wendt

The story goes
that if you spend the night
on a fairy mound,
the morning will find you
dead, mad, or a poet.

Those who dare knock
on hidden doors
run certain risks.

DEAD, MAD, or a POET

A Journal to Faerie

Editor in Chief
Sara Amis

Editorial Minion
Kerry Higgins Wendt

Technical Wizardry
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Mark Saucier

INVITATION

The marvelous
Queen Gloriana
sends her greetings
to the inhabitants
of the Upper World

to those enfleshed in
the fallen paradise
she sends regards

she reigns in perpetual beauty
crystalline and catlike
far away and yet close by
on the other side of your breath
a little to the left-hand side
of where you are now

To you of the Middle World
who find yourselves outliers
she sends her august greetings

to those of you
who do not fit in
to those a little abstracted and
disconnected
out of place and forgetful
and daydreamers

to those who sparkle
subtly or not-so
our most gracious Queen
sends her best wishes

and if you are in receipt
of this message
it was meant for you

Her Majesty wishes you to know
that if you linger a bit too long
in the light of the moon
if you arrive late or
not at all because you
went by the wayside

to dream
Let it be known by these presents
that you are invited
to the Court

for in her forgiving monarchy
the ill-fit and the misfit
the distracted and the wanderers
come unto their own
and are glorious

their Will realized
in multifarious
superbly fashioned creations
not the least of which are themselves

and when you yourself make the journey
to her court -
when you ride forty days and forty nights
and walk the middle path
all the way
to the other side of yourself -

when you get there
show this letter

and by Her Majesty's Will
and through Her most excellent Grace

the doors will open
the din will resolve itself
into music
the courtier will announce you
you will step inside
and you will be among your own
at last

and this good word

signed and sealed this day
by Our hand
the 13th second of the 13th
minute of the 13th hour
of this day of this month
of this year
of right
now

WEATHER MAGIC

Elinor Prędota

This then is
the parching I asked for.

The weather has always been
responsive to my requests. There was a time
(it was late February
in the year of Foot and Mouth) I took
an icicle from the paddock fence and waved it
like a wand, thrust it into earth,
asking for the land to be safe. It froze

and we were held for seven days
in thick and heavy whiteness
after two of trudging, knee deep, head
down against the endless thorns of snow.
No movement of animals in this valley, no
carcass stench of cattle pyres,
no sheep piled thick in sudden trenches.

Now, the sky holds the smiling,
golden sun in her blue mantle
and the green, still earth shines back
their joy purely for my pleasure for my
heart's ease. So the little child in me
thinks and feels loved as she breathes
in the scent of meadowsweet.

The adult basks, then worries if
the water will last or the spring give up
all its moisture
to the hot, caressing air. Survival
depends on these: cloud, sun
and rain. I dare not risk leave off
the gifts of food, of whisky, of my
voice to these gods, encouraging the rain to fall,
the sun to shine, enchanting myself to calm
the child's need to be centre of the universe,
the adult's need to control, protect, avert
all future threat. I do not know
the needs of flock and herd,
of farmer, of the earth.

The weather needs nothing, is itself;
that is magic.

In ancient days, when only women were warriors, there lived three brothers, herdsmen in a country still half wild. In those days, in that half-wild land, giants walked the earth. They were few and, for all their size, not often seen, but on stormy days they could be heard arguing amongst themselves in their deep rumbling tongue.

One day the eldest of the brothers took his sheep out to graze. He had far to go into the wilderness, and there he spied what he took to be a stone house, built lonely far away from the houses of men. When he approached it, he saw that it was no house, but a huge table made of stone. Two great stones set on end thrust up out of the earth, with an immense stone slab across the top of them.

A holly tree grew in the shelter of the stones, and by climbing it the eldest brother was able to reach the tabletop. There he saw a golden platter that held an entire lamb, roasted to a turn, an enormous silver goblet filled with wine, and a stone the size of his foot.

"Well now," he thought to himself, "there are no sheep but mine here in this wilderness, and no lambs but belong to my sheep, so this lamb must belong to me."

He sat down on the tabletop beside the golden platter, cut himself a fat slice of meat, and ate his fill.

"Well now," he thought to himself, "a little bite of what was mine already hardly makes up for the theft of a lamb, so perhaps I should play with this thief a game of turnabout."

And the eldest brother tucked the golden platter under his arm, climbed back down the holly tree, and went off home with his sheep.

His brothers admired the golden platter, and when they heard there was still a silver goblet on the stone table, they thought it would be a fine thing to have that too.

The eldest brother had begun to have unquiet thoughts about his theft of the golden platter, so he said to his brothers, "Since I brought the platter back, it seems only fair that someone else should bring the goblet."

The middle brother claimed his right to be the next to seek adventure, and in the morning he took his sheep out to graze in the wilderness. He found the stone table without difficulty, but when he drew near to it, he saw that the holly tree had been torn out of the ground, roots and all, and lay some distance away.

The middle brother was both strong and clever. He dragged the holly tree back to the stone table, leaned it up against one of the upright stones, and clambered up it to the tabletop. There he found the silver goblet filled with wine and a stone the size of his foot. He drank as much of the wine as he could hold and reluctantly spilled the rest onto the ground. Then he took the silver goblet, climbed back down the holly tree, and went off home with his sheep.

The two brothers hid their treasures away, for they had little use for them in the simple life they led. From time to time they would take them out to admire them and congratulate themselves on their adventures. Then they would put their treasures carefully away again.

Now the two older brothers believed their youngest brother to be a little simple, and one evening they decided they would have some fun at his expense. They took out their treasures, the golden platter and the silver goblet, and cleaned and polished them until they shone brighter than the sun and moon together.

"What a shame," the eldest brother said, "that our youngest brother should not have had an adventure and gained a treasure for himself."

"What a pity," the middle brother said, "that our youngest brother should be such a poor man, while both his brothers are men of wealth."

They went on in this way until the youngest brother felt a little sorry for himself. He decided that

he would go and find the stone table, to see if there might be a treasure there for him.

The next day the youngest brother took his sheep out to graze in the wilderness. He found the stone table without any trouble, but the holly tree that his brothers had told him of had been broken in two as a man breaks a kindling stick over his knee. One part lay a great distance to the east, and the other lay a great distance to the west. Even if he could have dragged both pieces back to the stone table, neither piece was long enough to reach the tabletop.

The youngest brother despaired of ever being able to discover if there might be another treasure on the stone table. Then the earth beneath his feet began to tremble, and he saw, striding toward him, a giant whose head seemed to touch the clouds and whose shadow blocked out the sun. The giant appeared to move quite slowly, but the length of his stride more than made up for the slowness of his gait. The young man stood where he was, as if his feet had grown roots that held him there, and in as little time as it takes to tell, the giant stood before him.

The youngest brother had heard of giants, of course, but he had never hoped to see one, yet here one was, and he rejoiced in his good luck.

"Hail, giant," he called out to the giant, who towered above him. "Will you lift me onto this stone table, so that I may see if my brothers have left a treasure behind for me?"

The giant bent down and picked the young man up, as a father picks up his child, and set him upon the tabletop. The youngest brother looked around him and saw with disappointment that the only object on the table was a stone the size of his foot.

"Young man," the giant said to him in a voice so deep that the youngest brother felt his heart tremble in his chest. "If your brothers have taken a golden platter and a silver goblet from this table, they are thieves, for those things belong to me."

The young man's heart fell.

"I must indeed be as simple as my brothers think me," he said to himself, when he understood his plight. Still, he was determined to do what he could to save his life.

"Friend giant," he said, "my brothers and I never meant to do you harm. I will bring what is yours back here tomorrow, if you will let me go."

Now giants aren't as stupid as people believe them to be, although they may appear to be a little slow, and this giant knew that once the young man was safely home, he would have no reason to return with the golden platter and the silver goblet.

"I will let you go," he said, "but you must swear you will return with what belongs to me, and when you do, I will reward you with a gift that is worth much more than gold or silver."

"I swear I will return with your treasures in the morning," said the youngest brother, greatly relieved that the giant wasn't going to kill him. He leaped down from the stone table and ran all the way home, leaving his sheep to follow as best they could and growing more excited by the minute at the prospect of receiving a gift more valuable than gold or silver.

The young man told his brothers of his meeting with the giant and of the giant's promise, but his brothers only laughed at him.

"Such a silly boy," said the eldest brother.

"Such a foolish boy," said the middle brother.

"To think that we would be taken in by such an obvious trick."

"To think that we would give him our treasures so that he could keep them for himself and bring us back who knows what worthless thing."

"To think we would believe that he had met a giant."

"A giant would have eaten him on the spot."

And the two elder brothers went on in this way until the youngest brother gave up trying to argue with them and went to bed.

But the young man couldn't sleep, because he had sworn to return what his brothers had stolen and he meant to keep his word. He waited until he was certain his brothers were asleep. Then he took the golden platter and the silver goblet from their hiding place and went by the moon's light out into the wilderness.

By night the wilderness was quite a different place. The wind rattled the bare branches of stunted, twisted trees. Unseen things made strange noises in the dark. Misty wraiths swirled around him and twined their tendril fingers in his hair. The young man was trembling with fear by the time he reached the giant's table. He crept beneath it to wait for morning, and there at last he fell asleep.

When the young man awoke, it was daylight. The golden platter and the silver goblet were gone. Beside him lay a stone the size of his foot, the very stone that he had seen on the giant's table.

"I must indeed be as simple as my brothers think me," the young man said to himself, and he feared their anger when they discovered their treasures gone and that he had brought home to them only this worthless stone.

For a long time his brothers were angry with him. They called him a thief and other unkind things, until his tears convinced them that he had not taken their treasures for himself. For a longer time they called him foolish for allowing a stupid giant to deceive him, and for yet a longer time they teased him about the stone he kept on a shelf beside his bed. But the time came at last when they forgot they had once been rich men, and they were content to live the simple life they had always led.

One night, long after his foolishness had been forgotten, the youngest brother felt drawn to the giant's stone. It was an ordinary stone, blue-grey in color, worn very smooth. When he picked it up, it felt warm in his hands, as if it were a living thing. On a whim he placed it under his pillow.

That night the young man dreamed. His dream took him to a crossroads, and there, beside a stone seat where weary travelers could stop and rest, he found a purse filled with gold coins. When he woke the next morning, the dream seemed so real to him that he went to the crossroads to see what he might find there. Beside the stone seat he found the purse of gold coins, just as it had happened in his dream. He took the purse to his eldest brother and said, "Now I can make amends to you for losing your golden platter." is brother thanked him and forgave him and went by way of the crossroads to live in a town, where he soon became a wealthy merchant.

Not many days later the giant's stone called him again, and the young man placed it under his pillow. Again he dreamed. His dream took him to an abandoned house that lay in ruins, and there, among the tumbled stones, he found a purse filled with silver coins. The next morning he went to that ruined house and found the purse where he had found it in his dream. He took it to his brother and said, "Now I can make amends to you for losing your silver goblet." His brother thanked him and forgave him. He rebuilt the ruined house into a very grand house indeed and went to live there.

At first the young man found life more peaceful without his brothers, but as time went by he was troubled more and more by loneliness. One night he picked up the giant's stone. It grew warm in his hands, and he placed it under his pillow. That night he dreamed. His dream took him to the marketplace, where he saw a beautiful young girl. From the moment he first saw her in his dream, the young man loved her. The next morning, when he went to the marketplace, he found her there. For half a year he courted her, and in the spring he married her. On their wedding night, the young man placed the dreamstone beneath their pillow, and both he and his young wife dreamed of children and grandchildren, blooming gardens, thriving flocks, and every good thing that fills the heart with joy.

Franz Marc

Kerry Higgins Wendt

I am trying to intensify my feeling for the organic rhythm of all things, to achieve pantheistic empathy with the throbbing and flowing of nature's bloodstream in trees, in animals, in the air.
-Franz Marc to Reinhart Piper, December 1908.

The earth is wild. Everything has
its own geometry, interlocking with
its own world.
The worlds hold together.

A tiger is a sharp striped jungle
with an eye of topaz, his fur
soft planes of color. Foxes
are shards of tails and snouts.

Horses are haunches of solid flesh,
and cats composed of springs
wound tight. A cow is a smile of moon
joyously mooing. All animals,

as the deer and the dog, sometimes
curl into blue, burrow tight in
the spiral of themselves,
gather energy, self, shape—

then Spring. Breathe. Expand.
Breathe. Expand. The earth is alive.

Many early twentieth-century writers and artists turned to so-called primitive art for inspiration. Picasso used African masks in *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon,* Gabriele Münter, Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky were inspired by children's art, and Gaugin went to Tahiti. Yeats too, throughout his career, turned to so-called primitive models and ideals of the primitive, and shared with such artists as Picasso and Kandinsky similar attitudes regarding art and the primitive. From his early Indian poems through his Abbey Theatre and *Vision* years, Yeats championed the primitive and primitivism in art. This primitivism is a key to understanding the thrust of Yeats's work as a whole; understanding Yeats's primitivism means understanding a little bit about Yeats's ideas on magic. The use of primitive models and ideals in general has deep ties to colonialism, to problems surrounding cultural appropriation, and to *nostalgie de la boue*, a critique of industrialism and the ways it changed the social structure and culture - a critique that often valorized the past. It raises serious questions for contemporary pagans and artists about cultural appropriation. But reflecting on how Yeats understood art as a magical act also provides insight into how magic and art work.

"Primitive" Art

The primitive, for the purposes of this essay, was commonly seen in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as undeveloped or uncivilized, and included non-Western, ancient, early, child, and folk art and artifacts. To Modernist artists and writers, the "primitive" was anything that was once viewed as undeveloped or uncivilized, but which they saw as more vital, spiritually rich, magical, truer, and/or superior because it was untainted by various kinds of progress, not least the progress of industrialization. Of course, twenty-first century readers will squirm at the idea of the primitive; we must understand the term not as one we use, but one that artists a century ago used in a very particular manner. Even for them, *primitive* was a predefined term, coming down from colonial Darwinist attitudes of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century West, attitudes they sought to rehabilitate by fetishizing the primitive.

Before the twentieth century, the primitive was seen as inferior, partly as a result of Eurocentric attitudes - of not viewing primitive arts in terms of their cultural setting and traditions. The negative view of primitive art changed, but the problem of not seeing this art in its original cultural context remained. Previous to the artistic revolution against Realism, artists and ethnographers saw "faithful naturalistic representation as the touchstone of artistic value" (Goldwater 17). All art was judged in direct proportion to its relationship to Realism; the more abstract any given piece was, the less artistic it was thought to be. In the mid-nineteenth century, primitive arts were negatively valued because they did not conform to Realist standards and aesthetics. With growing artistic dissatisfaction with Realism, primitive arts were more positively valued and eventually seen as surpassing Western art in quality, worthy for Western artists to go to school with and model their arts on. Robert Goldwater says that "among modern artists . . . the word "primitive" has been not merely a description, but a term of praise. . . . It . . . refers to a wide variety of styles and sources, connected by a [perceived] vitality, intensity, and formal inventiveness which have appealed to the modern artist and have had a considerable, even though largely indirect, effect upon him [sic]" (273). The praise has to do with the idealized concept of primitive art that sees in it the vitality, intensity, and formal inventiveness that modern Western artists wanted for their own art and which they believed Realism to be largely incapable of containing and expressing.

The valuation of primitive art had little or nothing to do with that art in itself; rather, the West's relationship with Realism and its own culture guided its attitudes toward and uses of primitive art. Typically, the primitive model was discovered as an answer to artists' quests for superior models; their

dissatisfaction with the current model came first, prompting the search. Primitivists were seekers. The artist's vision and relation to the Western artistic tradition guided the artist's interpretation of the primitive model was skewed to bring it in line with his or her preexisting vision. Primitivism, while it bases itself on primitive models, is essentially a Modern Western movement, motivated by Modern Western artistic concerns. Primitivism differs from the primitive in that it resides in the theories and attitudes of those artists who turn to primitive models, while primitive artists had no such consciousness, but were rather working within their own cultural traditions. Primitivism, then, is a term for arts and artists which use so-called primitive arts as a model, but which are predominantly part of the Western tradition.

The term *primitivism* connotes a skewed and highly individual view of so-called primitive arts. Goldwater remarks that "generations of modern artists had been inspired by an ideal image of the primitive largely drawn from their imaginations, and also by many works of African, Oceanic, and pre-Columbian sculpture seen from their own highly personal perspectives" (xv). In fact, it is this idealization that is at the center of primitivism. By projecting an idealized conception of primitive art onto that art, Modern artists were able to create a concrete model on which to base their own art. Primitive arts provided the primitivist with specifics to work from, and because the cultural specifics of these primitive objects were often unknown or not fully known - many museums displayed these objects without much, if any, cultural context - primitivists were able to embed their own ideals within these models.

Primitivist artists often saw, at the root of primitive art's vitality, little concern with outward detail and a concurrent focus on the inner or fundamental qualities of art. Goldwater finds that this concern with the inner workings of art is at the very center of primitivism - that the common thread uniting primitivism in art

> lies in a *common assumption* . . . . that externals, whether those of a social or cultural group, of individual psychology, or of the physical world, are intricate and complicated and *as such not desirable*. It is the assumption that any reaching under the surface, if only it is carried far enough and proceeds according to the proper method, will reveal something "simple" and basic which, because of its very fundamentality and simplicity, will be more emotionally compelling than the superficial variations of the surface; and finally that the qualities of simplicity and basicness are things to be valued in themselves: In other words, it is the assumption that the further one goes back - historically, psychologically, or aesthetically - the simpler things become; and that because they are simpler they are more profound, more important, and more valuable. (251)

The simplicity and fundamentality at the heart of primitivism were more than emotionally compelling and profound; they were also sacred and spiritually important for many Modern artists,[1] including Kandinsky[2] and Yeats. In Goldwater's summation of two ethnologists' opinions on the primitive as "a mixture of admiration for the qualities of the work produced by the primitives with a nostalgia for the supposedly simple and comforting psychological character of the savage world, a world in which the conflicts of the individual with nature and with society were not yet realized" (40), he implicitly refers to the idea of the fall. Human strife with nature, in Christian belief, did not begin until the fall; neither was there any basis for a conflict with society in the prelapsarian world, while one of the first events after the fall was Cain's

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1 Though outside the purview of this essay, this interest in fundamentals and roots was an even deeper Modernist impulse, and behind its borrowing of scientific language and models of thought, amongst them evolution and atomic structures. See Daniel Albright, *Quantum Poetics: Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and the Science of Modernism*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1997.

2 Kandinsky's most famous book, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst - Concerning the Spiritual in Art* - illustrates the extent to which the spiritual is important in Kandinsky's work.

murder of Abel. This fundamentality, then, goes beyond simplicity to a sense of religious or spiritual union with the divine.

Modern artists thought these new, primitivist ideas were so basic and fundamental to human experience that they should be easily accessible to the general public, with perhaps a little training. Goldwater says of critics and collectors of the time that "They admire its formal organization and what they conceive is its expressive power, and believe these qualities can be grasped by immediate examination alone. Not only have they no desire to approach its meaning through a study of its context in its own society, they often feel that such knowledge will hinder its direct apperception" (35). Though these perceived intrinsic meanings were thought to be readily available to anyone who could see clearly, often, primitivists felt that the general public's vision was clouded by externalities and conventions. "If there are any difficulties, they are those of explanation to an unenlightened or misguided public; they do not doubt that anyone who has arrived at an understanding of the primitive will see it as they see it, and find in it all the virtues" (Goldwater 35). Primitivist art was a mystery revealed - indeed, a mystery that needed no revelation, a mystery that, in common sense terms, was no mystery at all. Part of the function of the cultural context of a mystery, part of the function of all those trapping, is to give it a lived frame of reference in which it makes sense. The cultural context stabilizes the mystery; without it, much of the power dissipates. How much of that power genius alone, the hero of individualist society, can rescue is hard to say. This, of course, is all beyond any ethical considerations of appropriating another culture's mystery in the first place. Much of the prose we have from Modern artists is aimed at educating the public on how to view primitivist art. We need to understand their art in light of this prose, and also understand this prose in the context of its time. We must take the idea of primitivism into account when reading work from this period, especially when, as Yeats did, the artist goes to great lengths to explain his art in such terms. To see Yeats as a primitivist, then, is not to condemn him for the way he uses or misuses primitive arts in his own writings, but to see how he employs primitive models, to what use and to what effect he puts them, and to what extent his oeuvre relies on such primitivizing maneuvers. The concept of primitivism ties Yeats's work together; it is a uniting thread running through it, lending it coherence.

Yeats's Early Poetry

Yeats's primitivism began early. "The Song of the Happy Shepherd," the first poem in Yeats's *Collected Poems*, idealizes the pastoral life, one possible way primitivism manifests. When this pastoralism is combined with the particular kind of truth in the poem, something beyond mere pastoralism is achieved: when Yeats writes "there is no truth / Saving in thine own heart" (26-27), he expresses a primitivist sentiment. The idea that truth is not available in "dusty deeds," by "hunger[ing] fiercely after truth," "toiling," or "learning from starry men / Who follow with the optic glass / The whirling ways of the stars that pass" (22-29) further points to a primitivist notion of truth. Truth is not to be obtained, in Yeats's opinion, through scientific learning or the study of externalities; it is available in dreams, in the heart, in the words which the shepherd can speak to himself: "Go gather by the humming sea / Some twisted, echo-harbouring shell, / and to its lips thy story tell" (36-38). The pastoral is intricately connected to the primitive in this poem. The only real truth - the "human truth" (34) that eschews the "Gray Truth" which is now the world's "painted toy" (4) - is simple and pastoral, readily accessible by primitive folk inside themselves, and in danger of being corrupted by the study of externalities.

Many readers approach Yeats through the *Collected Poems*, and "The Happy Shepherd" is likely to be their first encounter with his poetry; the primitivism in this first poem sets the tone for the interpretation of his oeuvre. Yeats was no doubt aiming at this sort of primitivism from the beginning. In moving to the first person in the last stanza of the poem and in issuing direct commands in the second stanza, Yeats turns this poem from a mere pastoral description of a shepherd into a directive to those who would read his

poetry to seek a deeper truth.

This first volume in the *Collected Poems* moves through many primitive models. In "Anashuya and Vijana," Yeats moves to another primitive model by setting the poem in "*A little Indian temple in the Golden Age.*" The poem dramatizes Anashuya's jealousy when Vijana speaks another name instead of hers; this is bookended by Anashuya's prayers in the temple for the land and for Vijana - the two are interwoven. Though the temple is surrounded by a garden and a forest, and is thereby connected with the pastoral, the main mood of the poem is an exotic Indian spirituality and a very Western romance. Only the setting has changed - and that is both the exotic other and the mythic past. Yeats uses the setting to unite religion and romantic love - something he could not do in a Western setting very easily: even in a Greek setting, it would be already understood in a way contrary to what Yeats wanted to convey. Using the Indian setting allows Yeats some play in dramatizing this moment between two lovers. In this way, Yeats is able to embed his own notion of a deeper reality into a romanticized, eroticized, and sexualized notion of Indian culture. What is formed is not an objective picture of ancient Indian religion and romantic life, but a Yeatsian ideal that finds its expression in Yeats's highly individual take on Indian culture. The culture is skewed to fit Yeats's preexisting notions of deeper truth - that it is both religious and romantic or sexual in nature - in a typically primitivist fashion.

In "The Madness of King Goll," we see Yeats's first use of Irish myth in the *Collected Poems*, and in "The Stolen Child," we see the first poem which uses Faerie as a main theme. Far from being a mere hodgepodge of far away, misty-eyed mystical settings and characters, the volume draws together, as all of Yeats's work does, in its search for a fundamental primitive basis for life. One primitivizing theme that runs throughout the volume is the notion of a lost ancient knowledge of this fundamental primitive basis, but that is only one of many qualities that Yeats attributes to the primitive essence of life, which is the true theme that ties these early poems together. It is certainly possible to enumerate Yeats's primitive models *ad infinitum*, but such a venture will not easily bring us closer to an overall sense of Yeats's primitivism and work; looking at Yeats's prose, in which he lays out his theories on art and the primitive, will. These theories bring us face to face with Yeats's occultism and magical practices.

Yeats and Magic

One of Yeats's most interesting essays concerning the primitive is "Magic." Yeats devotes a third of the essay to telling the story of a particular magical event:

> Some ten or twelve years ago, a man . . . asked me and an acquaintance . . . to witness a magical work. . . . The evoker of spirits and his beautiful wife received us in a little house, on the edge of some kind of garden or park belonging to an eccentric rich man, whose curiosities he arranged and dusted, and he made his evocation in a long room . . . Almost at once my imagination began to move of itself and to bring before me vivid images that, though never too vivid to be imagination . . . had yet a motion of their own, a life I could not change or shape. (29)

The "evoker of spirits" is MacGregor Mathers, a "self-created authority on magic" and a central founding figure in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a magical Theosophical group to which Yeats belonged (Foster 104, 103). Annie Horniman was another initiate of the Golden Dawn; her father, Frederick Horniman, was a tea merchant whose collection of "curiosities," or ethnographic objects, was housed in his home as the Surrey House Museum and was open for public viewing on bank holidays and by appointment until December 1891, around the time of Yeats's anecdote (Foster 104, Coombes 113).[3] The "eccentric rich

[3] After 1891, it was transferred from private control to the London County Council, opened to the general public for three days a week because of increased demand, and renamed the Horniman Free Museum (Coombes 113).

man" Yeats speaks of, then, is Frederick Horniman, and the "garden or park" is the grounds of Surrey House in Forest Hills. Mathers was briefly employed as curator of the museum until 1891 (Foster 105).[4]

Yeats doesn't say that he viewed the "curiosities" in the museum, but it's reasonable to assume that he would have, given his long relationship with Annie Horniman, who in addition to being a fellow student of magic was a benefactress of the Abbey theatre for many years. That the ethnographic objects in the museum were connected with ideas of magic is evident by the arrangement of the collection. Annie Coombes tells us that "Before entering the African and Japanese Room, visitors would have passed through the Annexe where a collection of 'deities' from China, India, Scandinavia and Peru were on offer, together with a Buddhist shrine and 'a Chinese banner fixed on the wall,'" as well as a human skeleton (115). While Coombes maintains that the order of the museum is primarily evolutionary, where any order can be discerned, and while she shows that the mindset of the general public was such that it interpreted the order as evolutionary whether guided to do so or not, it seems that the African and Japanese Room was intended by the arranger - most likely Mathers at this point - to be viewed in terms of religion and magic. The order specified for viewing the museum on the guide is from "Bible Room" to "Antiquities Room" to "Annexe" - with "Human Skeleton and Gods" - to "African and Japanese Room" to "Print and Embroidery Room," where viewers were instructed to "Inspect Bibles" (Coombes 116). The order encouraged viewers to see the primitive as the center of religious experience, by sandwiching "Human Skeletons and Gods" between ethnographic religious figures and objects, and sandwiching those between "primitive" exhibits and Biblical exhibits: Bibles - primitive culture - human skeleton and Gods - primitive culture - Bibles: the human skeleton and gods are the mystery at the center of the center of the experience; primitive and ancient cultures are in analogous positions, close to the mystery; and the Bibles are in relation, but furthest out - closest to the outside world that from which the viewer comes and to which the viewer exits. Yeats was likely one of these viewers, and he was predisposed to view things in a magical or religious light already. If he did not view the collection, certainly he would have absorbed through Mathers and others something of a propensity for viewing ethnographic objects, stories, experiences and literature in a fundamentally magical or religious light.

Yeats also mentions Andrew Lang frequently in *Essays and Introductions*, once in "Magic":

> We cannot doubt that barbaric people receive such influences [psychic impressions] more visibly and obviously, and in all likelihood more easily and fully than we do, for our life in cities, which deafens or kills the passive meditative life, and our education that enlarges the separated, self-moving mind, have made our souls less sensitive. Our souls that were once naked to the winds of heaven are now thickly clad, and have learned to build a house and light a fire upon its hearth, and shut-to the doors and windows. . . . A certain learned man, quoted by Mr. Lang in his *Making of Religion*, contends that the memories of primitive man and his thoughts of distant places must have had the intensity of hallucination, because there was nothing in his mind to draw his attention away from them - an explanation that does not seem to me to be complete - and Mr. Lang goes on to quote certain travelers to prove that savages live always on the edges of vision. (41-42)

Andrew Lang was one of many turn of the century scholars who, like James Frazer, searched for the roots of religion in "savage" societies. The central idea to such ventures was that "savage" or "primitive" civilizations were comparable to the civilizations of the Western past out of which the modern Western world had grown. To study these civilizations was to search for the roots of Western society. The entire venture depended on the predominant evolutionary model which conflated the Western past with the

[4] He presumably lost the job in the transfer of the museum from private to public hands.

"savage" present, because both, it was thought, were at the same evolutionary stage of civilization. Such thought is Euro-centric in that it assumes there is only one track along which civilization can progress, a track defined by European civilization, with modern-day European civilizations the furthest progressed along that evolutionary track, and "savage" civilizations far back enough on the evolutionary ladder to represent Western prehistory.

Yeats metaphorically figures the difference between primitive fundamental experience and civilized detail-oriented experience in exposure to the winds of heaven versus the house and the hearth. This metaphor only works when modern-day "barbaric" people are romanticized as shelterless. While "primitive" housing often differed from Western housing, it was a rare civilization which did not at this point in history have some manner of human made shelter. This image of "barbaric" people as cave people is a prime example of the easy equation of the prehistoric Western past with the non-Western present. The important factor, for Yeats, is not the past or the "barbaric," but the fundamental. This fundamental is always opposed to the externalities or distractions of modern Western life - the "mere complexities" - in this passage typified by "our life in cities" and "our education that enlarges the separated, self-moving mind."

Yeats's thoughts on primitive civilization were, of course, a bit different, manifesting themselves in the model of the gyres, a broad cycle of historical repetitions at the ends of which humanity was alternately closest and furthest from the fundamental magic of life. But these thoughts, and his work as whole, have something in common with the late-nineteenth-century evolutionary equation of the foreign with the ancient, and of both foreign and ancient with a proximity to fundamental religious experience. Although a focus on magical religious experience is at the center of Yeats's primitivism, and although Yeats fashions his own particular brand of primitivism - a primitivism which, I believe, not only marks his work as a whole, but marks it as especially moving even a century later - his primitivism is still related to, and still grows out of, the primitivism popular in the late nineteenth century which was so fascinated with evolutionary thought, with foreign civilizations and with the Western past. Thus, we can see in the above passage from "Magic" an easy equation of Yeats's experience with telepathic phenomena with not only the everyday experience of "barbaric people," but also with the Western past. We also see, in this passage, a dislike of modern Western civilization and a concurrent appreciation for primitive life - a life more closely aligned with fundamental religious and magical experience - whether that life is represented by the Western past or by "barbaric" people.

Yeats conceptualized civilizations and external concerns in at least three different ways. The first is the idea of progress, or "life in cities," which separates us from fundamental experience. The second conceptualization of externalities is Realism and Naturalism, the movements against which Yeats sought to define his art. Yeats believed that

> The scientific movement brought with it a literature which was always tending to lose itself in externalities of all kinds, in opinion, in declamation, in picturesque writing, in word-painting, or in what Mr. Symons has called an attempt 'to build in brick and mortar inside the covers of a book'; and now writers have begun to dwell upon the element of evocation, of suggestion, upon what we call the symbolism in great writers. (SP 155)

What he describes in the first portion of the passage is Realism; in the second part, he defines his own art - in this case, Symbolism - in direct contradiction to Realism. He would define his artistic movements against Realism throughout his career, whether that movement was Symbolism, speaking to the psaltery, Noh-based dramaturgy, or something else entirely.

In "The Theatre," Yeats demonstrates the immensity of his undertaking in trying to overturn

Realism in the theatre, as well as making known his intense dislike of Realism. What had happened to theatre, in Yeats's mind, was that:

> As audiences and actors changed, managers learned to substitute meretricious landscapes, painted upon wood and canvas, for the descriptions of poetry, until the painted scenery . . . became as important as the story. . . . At the same time the managers made the costumes of the actors more and more magnificent, that the mind might sleep in peace, while the eye took pleasure in the magnificence of velvet and in the physical beauty of women. These changes gradually perfected the theatre of commerce, the masterpiece of that movement towards externality in life and thought and art against which the criticism of our day is learning to protest. (169)

However, the change was difficult, for such a protest necessitated a complete overturn of Realist theatre, since "Even if poetry were spoken as poetry, it would still seem out of place in many of its highest moments upon a stage where the superficial appearances of nature are so closely copied; for poetry is founded upon convention, and becomes incredible the moment painting or gesture reminds us that people do not speak verse when they meet upon the highway" (Theatre 169-170). This is why, seventeen years later, Yeats found that "it is natural that I go to Asia for a stage convention, for more formal faces, for a chorus that has no part in the action, and perhaps for those movements of the body copied from the marionette shows of the fourteenth century" (Japan 226). Yeats's own conventional system would not allow for the kinds of changes he wanted; to enact them, he felt the need to import, almost whole, and entirely different convention.

The third way that Yeats figures external concerns is, surprisingly, in a suspicion of capitalism, evident in his pitching of his own dramaturgy, "the theatre of art," against what he considers "the theatre of commerce." Realism, in this paradigm, is a pandering to the masses motivated by a desire for purely monetary gain. It is in this light that much of Yeats's anti-middle class sentiment should be seen - not as a type of Protestant aristocratic snobbery. When Yeats asks in "September 1913," a poem in sympathy with the Dublin Lock-Out[5], "What need you, being come to sense, /But fumble in a greasy till /and add the halfpence to the pence" (1-3), he is criticizing a group of people in terms of a monetary obsession at the expense of any higher, more artistic, religious, or political loyalties. The middle class is obsessed with making money and with empty prayer, "For," he says caustically, "men were born to pray and save" (6). The nature of Yeats's anti-capitalist sentiment can be seen more clearly when he says

> Indeed, it is certain that before the counting-house had created a new class and a new art without breeding and without ancestry, and set this art and this class between the hut and the castle, and between the hut and the cloister, the art of the people was as closely mingled with the art of the coteries as was the speech of the people that delighted in rhythmical animation, in idiom, in images, in words full of far-off suggestion, with the unchanging speech of the poets (PP 11).

Yeats's reasoning for his anti-capitalist and hence anti-middle class attitude is that capitalism disturbs the preexisting natural unities between peasant and ruling class, and peasant and church class, which provided a common ground of understanding for a meaningful literary tradition. His attitudes about class, then, are at root a desire for an ideal literary audience, and perhaps a desire to turn back the clock, but not strictly a class bias. Their snobbery is an artistic intellectual snobbery rather than a class one, though they manifest themselves in terms of class as a result of his romanticizing of the pre-capitalist past as a pre-Realist Garden of Eden for literature.

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[5] A labor strike that lasted from August 1913 to January 1914, noted for its ruthlessness towards the working classes.

Unities

It becomes clear that one of the key attributes of Yeats's primitivism is the idea of unity among many diverse elements - class being only one of them. In the primitive world of Yeats's imagination, humanity is united, as we have seen, not only with each other across class distinctions, but also with nature and the supernatural. Yeats figures the fundamental magic of existence as a king of proto-Jungian unity, something similar to the collective unconscious: "We are always praising men in whom the individual life has come to perfection," he wrote, "but they [primitive humans] were always praising the one mind, their foundation of all perfection" (Magic 44). This overarching unity is also a characteristic of art in Yeats's primitive world and is discernible, if one looks for it, in both his drama and his poetry - indeed, both his drama and his poetry are based on it. It is so important to his work that, in the introduction to *Essays and Introductions* Yeats proclaims

> I would have all the arts draw together, recover their ancient association, the painter painting what the poet has written, the musician setting the poet's words to simple airs, that the horseman and the engine-driver may sing them at their work. Nor am I for a changeless tradition. I would rejoice if a rich betrothed man asked Mr. T. S. Eliot and the dancer Ninette de Valois to pick a musician and compose a new marriage service, for such a service might restore a lost subject matter to the imaginative arts and be good for the clergy. (Intro. ix)

It is easy to see, then, why Yeats was so taken with the dramatic form: it could most easily incorporate all of the arts, and it grew out of religious ritual. For Yeats, unity in the arts is inseparable from a return of the arts to the common people - "the horseman and the engine driver." It is also indistinguishable from religious rituals such as marriage.

By returning to the folk Yeats returned to a paradigm in which art and rite are indistinguishable. For Yeats, using the folk primitive as model was a way of getting to the underlying magic of existence, which he believed is the proper subject of art. In Yeats's ideal primitive world, all unities lead to each other and to the great unity that underlies being. Though it is possible to distinguish different aspects of unity within Yeats's prose, if Yeats's ideal world existed, it would be impossible to draw out the various components of this unity from within that world. The aim to achieve a total unity is also behind the unity of arts that is the basis of his championing of speaking to the psaltery and of his Symbolism. In "Speaking to the Psaltery," Yeats maintains that

> The relation between formal music and speech will yet become the subject of science, not less than the occasion of artistic discovery. I suggest that we will discover in this relation a very early stage in the development of music, with its own great beauty, and that those who love lyric poetry but cannot tell one tune from another repeat a state of mind which created music and yet was incapable of the emotional abstraction which delights in patterns of sound separated from words. To it the music was an unconscious creation, the words a conscious, for no beginnings are in the intellect, and no living thing remembers its own birth. (20)

We see here a familiar aspect of Yeats's primitivism: the idea that, once, in a prehistorical era, the arts were united. We also see the idea that music as a separate art grew out of the rhythmic aspect of poetry. In speaking poetry, a person would sense the rhythm and unconsciously create music by doing so; they would have little to no grasp of music as such, but would vaguely apprehend its existence. The idea that music grew out of poetry, and that the two art forms thus naturally belong together, is seen in Yeats's whimsical desire "to hear poems spoken to a harp, as I imagined Homer to have spoken his" (Psaltery 14). To recapture the union of music and poetry would be to return not only to a primitive world where music and poetry, peasant and aristocrat, and humanity and the supernatural are joined; it would also be to recapture

the glory of a golden age of literature that, for the modern western world, is typified by classical Greece.

While such ideals of overarching unity may seem foreign to us, Yeats was sure that they were not at all unique, and told us that "Images used to rise up before me, as I am sure they have arisen before nearly everybody else who cares for poetry, of wild-eyed men speaking harmoniously to murmuring wires while audiences in many-coloured robes listened, hushed and excited" (Psaltery 14). This vision of total unity reached beyond art and its effect to its modern day audience, who must surely, in Yeats's mind, share the same vision, since this vision was so fundamental and incontrovertible. More than being undeniable, it was also part of that "one mind" which is at the basis of all existence and especially available to those who love poetry. It is also, as we have seen, readily accessible to those who are uncorrupted by Realism and capitalism - the people who "cannot separate the idea of an art or craft from the idea of a cult with ancient technicalities and mysteries" (PP 11); these people are typified for Yeats in "savage" societies and people untouched by Western civilization. His dearest example of such people are the Irish-speaking folk of the Aran islands. Yeats's statement that "Among seven or eight hundred thousand who have had Irish from the cradle, there is, perhaps, nobody who has not enough of the unwritten tradition to know good verses from bad ones, if he has enough mother wit" (PP 11) shows that, if only one is sufficiently untouched by a declining civilization, an appreciation for poetry and its profound connection with the fundamental magic of life are simply a matter of common sense. Thus, an understanding and appreciation of art is a natural part of life which is stripped by the progress of modern civilization.

Yeats's Religious Art

Making true art a part of the modern world, then, required education. This was the goal behind the journal *Samhain*, which was available at productions by the Abbey Theatre and included essays helping to explain the theatrical works to the audience. It was also the goal of many of Yeats's essays, a surprising number of which refer to his own art rather than being critical essays on other writers. Many of Yeats's essays read like manifestos, a popular form in Modernism and Primitivism, necessitated by the extent to which Modern art broke away from the art preceding it. For Yeats, however, the goal was more than building an audience that could understand his work; the goal was to reinstill an older order in which humans were closer to the fundamental magic of existence. He hoped to attain this goal through his art. "How," he asked, "can the arts overcome the slow dying of men's hearts that we call the progress of the world, and lay their hands upon men's heartstrings again, without becoming the garment of religion as in old times?" (SP 162-163). Yeats saw his poetry as nothing less than magic-based religion in the guise of art.

Rhythm and Symbol

Yeats incorporated religious experience into his art through trance-inducing rhythm and through Symbolism. Both rhythm-induced trance and Symbolism are ways to bring humans in touch with the magical realm. Trance is Yeats's means for preparing the mind for contact with the magical realm, and rhythm is his means for inducing that trance:

> The purpose of rhythm, it has always seemed to me, is to prolong the moment of contemplation, the moment when we are both asleep and awake, which is the one moment of creation, by hushing us with an alluring monotony, while it holds us waking by variety, to keep us in that state of perhaps real trance, in which the mind liberated from the pressure of the will is unfolded in symbols. (SP 159)

Yeats sees trance as a liminal state that opens the mind to symbols, which come from the mind itself, or more specifically, are manifestations of the mind. Where, then, is the idea of a fundamental magic in all of this? The clearest answer to this question, which further explains how this fundamental magic is inherently

available to all humanity, comes from "Magic": "Such magical simples as the husk of the flax, water out of the fork on an elm-tree, do their work, as I think, by awakening in the depths of the mind where it mingles with the Great Mind, and is enlarged by the Great Memory, some curative energy, some hypnotic command" (50). Interestingly, there is no split between mind and soul in Yeats's world view; the split is only between external and internal concerns. This means that his world view is layered and that all humans, however much they are concerned with externalities, have the potential for deep magical experiences.

Not all art is as deeply resonant as Symbolist art, though - not even all primitivist art. Yeats, for instance, thought it was a tragedy that: "The radical critics encourage our painters to decorate the walls with those cubes, triangles, ovoids, that are all stiff under the touch, or with gods and goddesses, distorted by Rubenesque exaggeration, dulled by hard doll-like faces that they may chill desire" (Intro. x). Those cubes, triangles, ovoids, gods, and goddesses, of course, were the signature characteristics of the primitivism of other artists - artists who, like Yeats, turned to the primitive for inspiration and anti-Realist models, but found something entirely different from what Yeats discovered. The primitive was a blank slate for Modern artists to project their anti-Realist proclivities onto.

Though the magic foundation of life is inherent to all humanity, communication between this realm and humanity must take place through mediating symbols. Yeats laid out his understanding of symbols - and magic itself - most clearly at the beginning of "Magic":

> I believe in three doctrines, which have, as I think, been handed down from early times, and been the foundation of nearly all magical practices. These doctrines are: -
>
> (1) That the borders of our mind are ever shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy.
>
> (2) That the borders of our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself.
>
> (3)That this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols. (28)

Symbols are the communicating device between the great memory and the individual mind. Rhythm is used to induce a mentally liminal trance state which enables the mind to shift with greater ease and awareness and prepares the mind to communicate with the great mind through symbols. Symbol and rhythm were all at the service of this desire to delve under the surface of life and to experience art on a more fundamental magical level - a more primitive level, like the level that foreign, folk, and ancient people existed on naturally.

Yeats's primitivism can be divided into the external manifestation - the settings and models he chose, such as Noh drama, India, the Irish folk - and the related quest for a deeper, more meaningful, more fundamental existence. The external manifestations are interesting, but in terms of his work as a whole, not as important as the internal drive of his primitivism - the quest to represent and evoke life's foundations in his art. This, perhaps, is why Yeats used so many different primitive models. The models themselves were unimportant, so long as they could be easily shaped to accommodate his artistic vision. In this way, Yeats's work is a prime example of primitivism. Yeats's vision clearly predominates over his primitive models and gives his works a common ground. If we approach his work by keeping his vision first, many of the difficulties that his numerous individual models present fall away. Their meaning to his work is often merely peripheral. What is important is the magic that unites.

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Yeats, W. B. *Essays and Introductions*. New York: Macmillan, 1961. Individual essays in the volume have been abbreviated as follows.

Psaltery	"Speaking to the Psaltery"
Magic	"Magic"
Intro.	"Introduction"
Japan	"Certain Noble Plays of Japan"
PP	"What is 'Popular Poetry'"
SP	"The Symbolism of Poetry"
Theatre	"The Theatre"

Temperance

Ben Roberts

Why do your eyes burn? -what light is in them?
It is the light of judgment.
Why do your eyes burn? -you terrify me.
It is the light of freedom.

Why do you stand witness here? -what do you see?
I witness a fool throwing all his better visions away.
Why do you stare at me?
To see where the visions land.

What is that in your hands?
It is two cups. I pour the wine from one to another and back again.
What is that in your hands?
I could say it is you, but then again it isn't.

Where are we? - Is this heaven or hell?
Here by the river which runs from the mountains, who knows?
Is this heaven or hell?
It is the future.

Where do I go from here? I am lost.
Wade into the water.
Where do I go?
Walk on the water.

POMEGRANATE

Kathryn Hinds

I sit with my half

perfect in my hands

cupped as if they had been formed

long ago to be filled

with this beckoning redness

    like holding my own heart

    a cutaway view of the chambers

The fruit flesh pulses

bleeding juice through my fingers

staining my thighs

    A voice whispers

    "communion"

    in my ear

    "Come, union"

    I whisper in my heart

On a gentler day

I would pluck the seeds out

one by one with careful fingertips

Tonight I raise the fruit

to my lips like a chalice.

Mark Saucier is a poet, musician, and substance abuse counselor who lives in New Orleans. He is an initiate in the Anderson Feri Tradition, and is currently studying Thelema after having been baptized into the Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica earlier this year.

Elinor Prędota grew up in England's second city, but now gratefully lives deep among the hills, trees and waters of southern Scotland. Her relationship with the more-than-human environment inspires her in all sorts of ways, and provides the material for most of her writing. When not engaged in poetry or the mundane labour of training to be an academic, she can be found cuddling her dogs and/or her partner, making pretty things, baking, hanging out with trees and accidentally making people laugh.

Catherine M. Wilson's story "The Dreamstone" is an excerpt from her novel *When Women Were Warriors Book I: The Warrior's Path* which is available as a free download from www.catherinemwilson.com. Here is what she has to say for herself:

I have spent most of my working life as an engineer of one sort or another (broadcast engineer, software engineer) and people who know that side of me are surprised when they learn about the writing side. I like science and engineering because I like to know how things work, and I like the arts because I like to know how people work.

It took me 50 years to graduate from college, because I kept getting distracted by life, but I finally earned a BA and MS in Computer Science. Having accomplished that, I started writing a novel, which turned into a trilogy. I don't know why I needed that degree to write, at last, the book that I always knew was in me trying to get out. Maybe I just needed to be old enough.

I was born in New York City during WWII and grew up in California, where I still live.

Kerry Higgins Wendt is the proud owner of a newly minted Ph.D in English from Emory University, and the mother of a small boy who likes trains.

Ben Roberts has worked as a CT technologist and radiation therapist for many years. He currently holds a James A. Michener Fellowship at the University of Texas. His short stories have appeared in *Quarterly West* and *The Harvard Review*.

Originally from the southern shore of Lake Ontario, **Kathryn Hinds** now lives in the mountains of north Georgia. Her poetry has recently appeared in *Goblin Fruit*, *Canary*, 14 *by* 14, and *The Lyric*. With a handful of novels in progress, she's also the coauthor of a book on Celtic mythology and the author of more than fifty nonfiction books for young people, including the six-book series Creatures of Fantasy, due out in 2012. Kathryn sometimes moonlights as a belly dancer, but her main job, according to certain members of her household, is to ensure that cat food is available on demand.