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Margaret Mills Harper

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WORDS FOR MUSIC? PERHAPS.

Margaret Mills Harper

The title of the sequence *Words for Music Perhaps*, published by Cuala Press in 1932 and then included in *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933), is a red herring: the twenty-five short poems of the sequence are not really meant to be set to music. Yeats told his old friend Olivia Shakespeare as much when he wrote her in March 1929 that “I am writing *Twelve poems for music*—have done three of them (and two other poems)—no[t] so much that they may be sung as that I may define their kind of emotion to myself. I want them to be all emotion & all impersonal” (*L* 758). Indeed, both W. B. and George Yeats seem to have found the question of actual musical settings the cause for amusement. R. F. Foster quotes George Yeats writing to Tom McGreevy that “William...yesterday came dashing along from his cot to announce that he was going to write twelve songs and I had got to purchase ‘a musical instrument’ at once and set them to music...All said songs being of a most frivolous nature!” (*Life* 2 385).¹ Given that George did not play a musical instrument, not to mention that it seems not to have mattered *which* musical instrument she was meant to buy, frivolous might be the least that could be said about the idea.

However, the poems in this major late sequence are certainly musical in the sense that Yeats seems to have meant in his letter to Shakespeare: short, intense lyrics, often in modified ballad metre or even more compact rhythm, with seemingly simple diction, often including song-like refrains. The *Words* also seem more “frivolous” than weighty poems in *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* like “A Dialogue of Self and Soul,” “Blood and the Moon,” “Coole Park, 1929,” and “Coole and Ballylee, 1931,” or even from other major sequences of this period, such as “A Man Young and Old,” “A Woman Young and Old,” or “Supernatural Songs” (which of course shares the suggestion of musicality in its title—and is also distinctly unlikely to inspire actual musical settings).

Yet the phrase “Words for Music” can suggest a way of reading these poems productively, particularly the seven that feature the speaker Crazy Jane. Some of the philosophical elements of the poems may come into focus if we suppose the ambiguous phrase “words for music” to mean not only “words designed for setting to music” but also “words substituted for music” or even “words whose purpose is musical.” For the poems are anything but frivolous—or rather, their light touch is part of a spiritual and intellectual purpose which includes the question of words’ inherent musicality and what the nonverbal qualities of words contribute to their ability (or not) to express certain states of

the human soul. These short lyrics call into question verities about art, such as the importance of beauty and the link between beauty and nobility, of which Yeats was often (but not always) a fierce proponent. The poems also highlight ideas that are prominent in Yeats's work after 1917 such as an emphasis on the simplicity of joy and wisdom. Tom O'Roughley, a poetic speaker from a decade earlier than Crazy Jane and who in some ways prepares the way for her, notably says that "An aimless joy is a pure joy" and "wisdom is a butterfly / And not a gloomy bird of prey" (*VP* 337–338). Other philosophical conceptions that are part of the soundscape of *Words for Music Perhaps* include the ideas, first, that souls create reality through many lives and by means of images, and, second, that eternal truths must be local and temporally specific even though reality is spaceless and timeless. As is often true in late Yeats, the particular self (or ego, or will, to use some of the terms of *A Vision*) is always in dialogue with the soul (that aspect of the human being which is timeless and spaceless). The opposition between the two is also a cooperation or refraction: the one requires the other. This notion implies a continual interaction between multiplicity and singularity in individual people as well as all they create (which is all of reality).

As I write the words above, the poems themselves seem to mock me, especially those spoken by Crazy Jane. As Yeats wrote in the letter to Olivia Shakespear quoted above, the poems are "the opposite of my recent work and all praise of joyous life" (*L* 758). They resist the scholar almost successfully, as Wallace Stevens might say; their intellectual virtuosity occurs within a bold dismissal of abstract language as well as the magisterial and confessional personal voice that characterises much of Yeats's mature poetry. This resistance is part of their purpose: the *Words for Music Perhaps* put weighty concepts under a "frivolous" surface, demonstrating that wisdom is like the butterfly effect in chaos theory, causing a hurricane by fluttering its wings, or (to change metaphors) like a harmonic structure sounding silently behind a musical melody played on a single instrument.

The essay that follows will examine some of the texts surrounding the Crazy Jane poems from *Words for Music Perhaps*, using as the starting illustration for its concepts some of the contents of the Rapallo D Notebook. I hope to show that the sequence, especially the Crazy Jane poems, gave Yeats the creative vehicle he needed to set space and time against ideas of the universal and eternal, to explore issues of possession and dispossession, and to find oppositions and interactions on the level of voice and subjectivity that were necessary for his theme. Crazy Jane became the main instrument upon which he played the tunes of *Words for Music Perhaps*. Her instrumentality moved him towards his late paradigm of creativity, which posits imaginative surrender as the source of power.

I. RAPALLO D NOTEBOOK, SEVEN PROPOSITIONS, AND A VISION

The manuscript holdings of the National Library of Ireland include five of what are known as Rapallo Notebooks. The fourth of these “sacred objects in the great Yeatsian mine of manuscripts” (Foster 385), usually referred to as Rapallo D (NLI 13,581), documents Yeats’s ongoing research and creative work undertaken after he and George Yeats moved to their sunny flat in Rapallo, Italy, in the autumn of 1928. Rapallo D contains a curious assortment of topics. Research aimed at revising *A Vision*, about such topics as the Great Year in Indian philosophy and “Astrology & the nature of reality,” join fragments of several poems, including “Coole Park, 1929,” several of the poems collected into the sequence *Words for Music Perhaps*, and “Byzantium.” On some pages are lists, of books to read or events on the social calendar, and on some are intriguing ideas that never became finished works.

The importance of *A Vision* to the *Words for Music Perhaps* sequence is amply demonstrated by the notebook, if that were needed, though Yeats also made it plain in September 1929 to Olivia Shakespear:

But this new edition [of *A Vision*] will be a new book, all I hope clear and as simple as the subject permits. Four or five years’ reading has given me some knowledge of metaphysics and time to clear up endless errors in my understanding of the script. My conviction of the truth of it all has grown also and that makes one clear. I am taking to Rapallo what will be I hope a clear typed script of the whole book. I will work at it here and there free at last, now that all is constructive to sharpen definitions and enrich descriptions.² I should go to press with it next spring. I shall begin also I hope the new version of the Robartes stories. Having proved, by undescribed process, the immortality of the soul to a little group of typical followers, he will discuss the deductions with an energy and a dogmatism and a cruelty I am not capable of in my own person. I have a very amusing setting thought out. I shall also finish the book of thirty poems for music I am more than half through. “For Music” is only a name, nobody will sing them. (*L* 768–69)

Revising *A Vision*, which was published after much effort in January 1926 but unsatisfying to its author even before it was finished, took many years of reading as well as redrafting and writing new large parts of the book. The many other projects undertaken during the long process of reworking *A Vision* do not all depend upon its occult system, or do not depend upon it in the same ways (given that Yeats regarded the system as a structure that underlay all the aspects of his, and all, life). The poems in *Words for Music Perhaps* do not derive from the system explicitly, but some of the issues underlying the lyrics of the sequence show themselves if some of the concepts from *A Vision* are kept

in sight. Nor was *A Vision* the only thing on Yeats's mind. *Words For Music Perhaps* is the sequence in which are found most of the poems containing the persona or mask that Yeats called Crazy Jane, and it is this figure around whom cluster some of the pressures on Yeats at the time: anxieties over ageing, ill health, and mortality; anger at censorship and sexual repression in the new Irish Free State; and frustration with toxic politics in the Irish Seanad and the Abbey Theatre.³

About halfway through the Rapallo D notebook are two drafts of "Seven Propositions," a brief and deceptively compact numbered outline of statements that comprise several assumptions upon which the system of *A Vision* rests presented.⁴ Yeats sent a copy of them to Frank Pearce Sturm in October 1929, explaining that the numbered list of Propositions was "probably stiff" because "They are mainly aimed at AE who in reading my Packet preferred to it certain Indian aphorisms, & seems to think that aphorism [is] the true method." The Propositions are presented not as the Yeatses' system but as a justification for the validity of astrology, as Yeats told Sturm: "They contain the first theoretical justification of Astrology made in modern times, & even that which antiquity must have had has not come down to us."⁵ Thus, Yeats wanted to see what Sturm (and also AE) thought about them. In the Rapallo notebook, the Propositions (six in the first draft, seven in the second) are headed "Astrology & the nature of reality."

As Neil Mann notes, the Propositions are intimately related to *A Vision* although they present reality from the perspective of spirits rather than of the perceptible world.⁶ The first proposition, in the version Yeats sent to Sturm, describes existence as a "timeless & spaceless community of spirits," each unique, who perceive and are perceived by each other. The second proposition brings this immaterial multiplicity of spirits into the world humans can know; the spirits are reflected into time and space as "destinies," which see each other in the material world as "thoughts, images, objects of sense." Propositions three and four note the mechanisms through which destinies take shape. They form completely only at "certain moments of birth, or passivity," and they translate a spirit's emotion and intellect as temporal and spatial location, respectively (validating horoscopes, which require such coordinates). The slightly more expansive versions of the propositions in the Rapallo notebook describe these certain receptive moments in human life, when the self "is reduced almost to nothing," as moments in which a fundamental yoking of fate and freedom take place. In propositions five and six, human life is described as consisting either of struggling against or working with fate—that fate or destiny, from the point of view of spirit, being the transcending of time and space back into limitless existence. Thus "Every possible statement, in principle contains both terms—self and that which is perceived—but the perception of fate precedes the

experience of freedom.” The horoscope or destiny comes first, but “The body & mind of the new born child is the reply freedom makes to the horoscope.”

The concepts in *A Vision* that most clearly relate to the Seven Propositions occur in the material Yeats found perhaps least acceptable about his first edition, and which he was hoping to correct as he revised. He admits as much in the opening to Book II of the new book: “I knew nothing of the *Four Principles* when I wrote the last Book [that is, Book I of *AVB*, retained from *AVA*]: a script had been lost through frustration, or through my own carelessness” (*CW14* 137). The *Four Principles* are discarnate versions of the *Four Faculties*, their “innate ground,” as Yeats describes them in *AVB*. They might be thought of as occurring in the realm of the timeless and spaceless spirits, reflecting in the world of time and space as the Faculties, the fundamental idea being again that reality exists as an interaction between the perceptible world and something that cannot be perceived or imagined (though *A Vision* attempts to describe it). The term most often used in *AVB* for this reality, which must be conceived of as simultaneously fully populated by multiplicities of spirits and a single unity, is the *Thirteenth Cone*.⁷ Book III of *AVB* ends with an image-rich depiction:

The Thirteenth Cone is a sphere because sufficient to itself; but as seen by Man it is a cone. It becomes even conscious of itself as so seen, like some great dancer, the perfect flower of modern culture, dancing some primitive dance and conscious of his or her own life and of the dance. There is a mediaeval story of a man persecuted by his Guardian Angel because it was jealous of his sweetheart, and such stories seem closer to reality than our abstract theology. All imaginable relations may arise between a man and his God. I only speak of the Thirteenth Cone as a sphere and yet I might say that the gyre or cone of the Principles is in reality a sphere, though to Man, bound to birth and death, it can never seem so, and that it is the antinomies that force us to find it a cone. Only one symbol exists, though the reflecting mirrors make many appear and all different. (*CW14* 175)

Note that this passage is suffused with sexuality: dance, flower, and curious tale of the jealous Guardian Angel all lead to the observation that “All imaginable relations may arise between a man and his God.”

II. “CRAZY JANE REPROVED”

That “All imaginable relations” describe the interactions between humanity and divinity, with the emphatic inclusion of sexual relations, links the system of *A Vision* with Crazy Jane and *Words for Music Perhaps* (among other characters from the 1920s and 1930s, from Ribh in *Supernatural Songs* to Attracta in *The Herne’s Egg* to Mary Bell in the *Stories of Michael Robartes and His Friends*,

mentioned in the letter to Shakespear above). Yeats quite often in his late works expresses intense (and often sexual) ways in which inconceivable, dimensionless entities (which are both singular and plural) are reflected into time and space as “destinies” and see each other in the material world as “thoughts, images, objects of sense.” Like the stories mentioned in the passage from *A Vision*, the poems in *Words for Music Perhaps* aim to be “closer to reality than our abstract theology.”

To illustrate this principle with reference to poems rather than my own abstractions, I turn first to “Crazy Jane Reproved,” the second of the twenty-five lyrics of *Words for Music Perhaps*. The nod to music occurs in the last of both seven-line tetrameter stanzas: “*Fol de rol, fol de rol.*” Yeats told Margot Ruddock that the nonsense syllables had “no special value...any meaningless words would do...I put ‘fol de rol’ at the end of the stanzas in this poem to make it less didactic, gayer, more clearly a song.”⁸ Yeats may also be playing with the form of the “little song” of a Shakespearean sonnet: the seven-line stanzas are half the length of the fourteen of a sonnet, and each stanza, rhyming abab before a rhyming couplet, gestures toward sonnet form. We may be hearing an echo of sonnet-like eroticism, in the sestets as well as the *fol de rols*, which nod toward such Shakespearean bawdiness as in the song “It was a lover and his lass” (*As You Like It* V.3).⁹ The little songs treat profound matters, though: each stanza contains a quatrain setting forth the argument that “Heaven” works harder to create a minute and intricate thing like a shell than a huge event of the kind usually associated with godlike power. “I care not what the sailors say,” Jane begins: “All those dreadful thunder-stones, / All that storm that blots the day / Can but show that Heaven yawns” (*VP* 509). The blunt opening quatrain, putting Jane’s “I” the first word in her blunt refutation of common wisdom, uses the short lines and words typical of her lyrics (with words like “thunder-stones” and “blots” nonetheless packing intense images). Heaven “yawns,” a word that in Yeats is often associated with sexual arousal (along with “stretch,” as has been analysed definitely by David R. Clark), and the linked suggestions of divinity, sexuality, and raw power may explain the abrupt transition into the couplet that follows, which reproves Europa for her choice of bestial partner: “Great Europa played the fool / That changed a lover for a bull.” An equal jolt follows into the nonsense syllables “*Fol de rol, fol de rol.*”¹⁰

The second stanza repeats the intellectual movement of the first: cosmic argument for four lines and then personal comment about a woman’s erotic choice. The tone of the first quatrain is sweeter, however; trochaic metre is replaced in the first two lines by less aggressive iambs, as is appropriate for the matter described: “To round that shell’s elaborate whorl, / Adorning every secret track / With the delicate mother-of-pearl, / Made the joints of Heaven crack.” The last couplet (before the final line of *fol de rols*) marks the only moment in

the poem that might justify the title, as Jane may be reproving herself for having chosen Jack the Journeyman as a lover, the “roaring, ranting” Jack of course in the position of Zeus as bull in the first stanza.

The voice of Crazy Jane has been introduced to the reader of the sequence in the first poem, “Crazy Jane and the Bishop,” which gives some introduction of her specific situation: we learn that she is Irish and rural, old, openly sexual, and outrageously anticlerical (promising to “spit” on the Bishop in the strong rhyming word in her final line before the refrain). In “Crazy Jane Reproved,” Jane’s voice sounds in a doubled tone, which is present also in the previous lyric though it is perhaps less pronounced there. The unreproved Jane of the second lyric sounds both like a licentious old peasant woman and, especially in the second stanza, like a certain young male Irish poet: the description of the shell may well remind readers of the “twisted, echo-harboured shell” of “The Song of the Happy Shepherd,” the first poem Yeats kept for his collected poems throughout his career, or the “wilderling whirls” of the shell in “The Sad Shepherd,” the companion poem (*VP* 64–69). What is new in this poem from the early Yeats is the explicit reflection of divinity in sexuality, the tonal boldness (noting that Europa “played the fool,” for example, makes free with colloquial language), and the sudden transitions between ideas. These effects all force the reader to imagine what connections exist between the ideas and images. Something is moving behind the scenes, behind the structures of the poem, something that in terms of Jane’s specific situation may be connected with her having done what she advises against, setting her heart on her journeyman. The story of her life becomes part of a world of storms at sea, myth, and the intricacies of a heaven found in a shell if not a Blakean grain of sand.

III. “CRAZY JANE ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT”

The poem that follows “Crazy Jane Reproved” in the sequence is “Crazy Jane on the Day of Judgment,” drafts of which occur in the Rapallo D Notebook along with an alternate title: “Crazy Jane at the End of the World.” The first inkling of the poem seems to have occurred in October 1929, in the middle of other work, notably the poem “After Long Silence,” with its theme of bifurcated wisdom and passion: “Bodily decrepitude is wisdom; young / We loved one another and were ignorant” (*VP* 523). Like “After Long Silence,” this Crazy Jane poem features two lovers, though these have not chosen either love or wisdom in what presumably is a long-standing affair. Instead, Jane’s voice, the dominant of the two, insists upon love taking “the whole / body and soul” (*VP* 510). Her lover, who seems a slightly amused echo rather than an active speaker, chimes in that “That’s certainly the case” after every other stanza. Jane’s voice itself again occupies several tonal registers simultaneously.

The first and last of the four very short stanzas (merely two-beat except for the final lines) are abstract and philosophical, on the topics of love in its relation to unity and timelessness. The second features the verbally provocative voice that is recognisably Jane's. She speaks words that are short, harsh, and invasive, like *spit* in "Crazy Jane and the Bishop." Here, the monosyllabic words *scoff*, *lour*, *scold*, and *hour*, whose alliterative hard *sk* consonant and assonant [aʊ] diphthong contain sonic echoes of Anglo-Saxon or, indeed, Old Norse, make short work of any notion of romance or beauty in association with love, even before her lover gets in his comment.

The idea that seems to have prompted this poem occurs in the line that Yeats toyed with using as a refrain in the first draft, which is labelled "Subject for a Crazy Jane Poem" in Rapallo D: "Love is for wholes whether of body or souls." Yeats wrote variants of this line repeatedly until he arrived at the phrase as he wanted it: "Love is for whole," "Love is not love unless it take the whole," "Love is not satisfied with less than all," "Passion asks for all," "Love needs all," "Love asks all," and finally "Love is all / Unsatisfied / That cannot take the whole / Body & soul" (NLI 13,581 *passim*).¹¹ For the final shape of the poem, Yeats opens the poem with the main concept, in the irreducible shorthand of the word "whole" in conjunction with the phrase "body and soul," using for refrain not the abstract statement but the prosaic, nearly comic alternating lines: "And that is what Jane said" and "'That's certainly the case,' said he." "Crazy Jane on God" makes a different choice, using as repeating line *All things remain in God* and as material for its four stanzas sharp images that compare a nightly lover to ghostly armies, a mysteriously lit ruined house, and the woman's body as a road that "makes no moan" as "men pass over" it. It too, however, draws a sharp distinction between the matter of the rest of the poem and the line that nods to the "music perhaps": the repeating refrain.

The strategy is similar in the two poems, and it is one that Yeats uses throughout *Words for Music Perhaps*. The effect might be best described using musical terms such as counterpoint or dissonance, a formal effect applying tension between two separate strands of sound or tone or discursive register as a determinant of meaning. The purpose is to indicate formally that the "body and soul" of Crazy Jane's philosophy must also mean the "body" of the poem interwoven with its "soul." Yeats would not have hesitated to connect poetic practice with philosophical and religious concerns, and this "music perhaps" is that which sounds in these lyrics. To use the language of the Seven Propositions, this kind of opposition is the visible trace of spirits at work, creating what might be described as the "destinies" or purposes of the poems, which occur there as "thoughts, images, objects of sense." The language of the last Proposition, about "self and that which is perceived," might also be used to describe this concept. If a poem were to illustrate the

last Proposition, that “Every possible statement, in principle contains both terms—self and that which is perceived—but the perception of fate precedes the experience of freedom.”

The continual interplay between text and meaning, and between form and formlessness, are poetic problems. Yeats displays them in stark terms in this series, using as mouthpiece an outrageous spokeswoman who is insistent that only by means of binaries—of body and soul, passivity and activity, sexuality and spirituality, transgression and truth, among others—is truth to be expressed. Yeats also engages in a unique way with the questions of possession and dispossession that haunt (a word I choose purposefully) his work generally. Jane is in some ways possessed by Yeats, her creator, as a medium is possessed by a spirit. Similarly, though, Yeats is also possessed by Jane, in the sense that he requires her voice in order to speak these poems. Formally, the problem Yeats seems to have been working with concerns the interplay between control and release, and complexity and simplicity: the strong poet was exploring new possibilities of the seeming quick sketch rather than the fully painted picture, a minimalism that is unusual in his body of work.

IV. DESTINIES AND PRINCIPLES

This is grand language for slender and compact poems, and I do not claim that this issue of formal poetics and philosophy is the only purpose served by *Words for Music Perhaps* (the lyrics also performed an important personal function, but that is a topic for another essay). However, it is still too frequently suggested that Yeats is, for example, a poet whose late work is marked by poems with great gravitas about cultural aristocracy and that the occult-inflected work is by and large not his best. Yet major work from the late period resists grandness, uses great tonal variation (including humour), and expresses occult truths—though sometimes, as in *Words for Music Perhaps*, not on the surface of the verse (or dramatic plot, in the case of the plays). In these poems Yeats composes short, harsh-sounding lyrics just after writing a beautiful and high meditation like “Coole Park, 1929,” and he works on *Words for Music Perhaps* in conjunction with a play like *The Cat and the Moon*. This sequence flamboyantly aims at profundities expressed through a seemingly worthless instrument, an old woman who refuses to keep to social norms and is thus regarded as “crazy.”

One problem remains with “Crazy Jane on the Day of Judgment,” which is that its title, like that of “Crazy Jane Reproved,” is not immediately obvious. Jane makes a claim for eternal truths, about love requiring “the whole, / Body and soul,” and the final stanza mentions the end of time, which in Christian theology occurs on the Day of Judgment:

‘What can be shown?
 What true love be?
 All could be known or shown
 If Time were but gone?
 ‘That’s certainly the case,’ said he.

The early title “Crazy Jane at the End of the World” suggests that “On the Day of Judgment” implies that the poem takes place “on” that day, in other words, that Jane (along with her lover, who might be taken to be Jack the Journeyman) are conversing “bone to bone,” to use the resonant phrase from “Sixteen Dead Men” (VP 395) that is also suggestive of the poem “Three Things,” one of the first of *Words for Music Perhaps* to be written. Jack is gone or dead in all the lyrics of the sequence, so the two would presumably be talking together only in an after-death state. (This is admittedly an overly literal requirement for the little lyric—and Jane herself is not dead in the other poems, unless we read “Three Things” to be spoken by her.) If “on” in the title means “on the topic of,” its applicability is clearer. Of course, both meanings may be present, which I suspect is the case. Jane is a philosopher whose theology of bodily wisdom will justify many, herself included, at the last day, *and* Jane’s wisdom, necessarily in the temporal and spatial world (the line “If Time were but gone” indicates of course that it is not), nonetheless participates in a condition that can be described in the terminology of *A Vision* as emanating from the realm of the *Principles*.

In a difficult passage added to the 1937 *A Vision* (and revised even when the book was in proof), Yeats describes a situation on the Great Wheel in which occurs a second “opening of the *tinctures*.” *Tincture* is the term for the counter-principles of Primary and Antithetical that underpin the system. The first opening of the *tinctures* occurs at the top of the wheel, in the Phases that cluster around the full moon. Yeats describes the phenomenon thus:

The opening means the reflection inward of the *Four Faculties*: all are as it were mirrored in personality, Unity of Being becomes possible. Hitherto we have been part of something else, but now discover everything within our own nature. Sexual love becomes the most important event in life, for the opposite sex is nature chosen and fated. Personality seeks personality. Every emotion begins to be related to every other as musical notes are related. It is as though we touched a musical string that set other strings vibrating. (CW14 65)

Yeats had described this main opening of the *tinctures* in the 1925 *A Vision*, but he seems not to have understood until the revision of the book that there is a second, and what it means. (In general, Yeats learned much more about the *Principles* between the first and second versions of the treatise.) The second opening, which occurs near the dark of the moon, uses words that I suggest

are appropriate to the spare poems of *Words for Music Perhaps*, which aim for a kind of transparency by means of sound and pattern as part of spiritual profundity: “During this spiritual objectivity, or spiritual *primary*, the *Faculties* ‘wear thin,’ the *Principles*, which are, when evoked from the point of view of the *Faculties*, a sphere, shine through.”¹²

In “Crazy Jane on the Day of Judgment,” stanzas two and three emphasise the first kind of opening, in which every emotion is related to each other and “Sexual love becomes the most important event in life, for the opposite sex is nature chosen and fated.” In stanza two of the poem, every emotion is part of love, including “the sour” of Jane’s strong personality. Stanza three, beginning “Naked I lay, / The grass my bed,” and repeating the word *naked* in the third line, describes a sexual encounter “That black day,” though it is silent about in what sense the fated day is black. Jane’s description of lovemaking is also much tamer in the final version than seems to have been the poet’s inclination in the drafts. The version of the equivalent stanza in the early “Subject for a ‘Crazy Jane’ Poem” puts the event in present tense and turns it into an admonition to Jack (which includes additional proof of Jane’s temperament):

See [~~the~~] in the night, when we meet in
 the dark wood, that you touch—all potions [portions] of
 My body—every plane & mound—omit
 But one I shall think of Jim or John
 Or some that might take your place (NLI 13,581)¹³

The sexual union that is “hidden away” resonates throughout Crazy Jane’s lyrics as if it were “a musical string that set other strings vibrating,” but a less direct sense of destiny, self and perception, and timeless/spaceless reality, to echo again the terminology from the Seven Propositions, haunts the framing first and fourth stanzas of this poem. Something “wears thin” and “shines through,” or, to change from a visual to an aural metaphor, the “music perhaps” of words becomes audible. The poem that follows “Crazy Jane on the Day of Judgment” hints at this something as “the light lost / In my mother’s womb” (VP 511). Formally as well as conceptually, the moment when personality is nearly effaced—Yeats’s in the voice of Jane, Jane’s in the “light” or when she realises that “nothing can be sole or whole / That has not been rent” (VP 513)—is the moment of greatest clarity.

This is not to claim that “Crazy Jane on the Day of Judgment” or the other poems of *Words for Music Perhaps* apply the geometric concepts of *A Vision* in any straightforward way. However, the Yeatses’ system was present in all that Yeats did during the 1920s, and his work on its ideas, whether described in *A Vision* or the Seven Propositions, is of a piece with his work on poems, plays,

and stories. For *Words for Music Perhaps*, the system is more than generally relevant: issues such as the relation between the universe of time and space to realms that shine through as well as transcend it, the reality of spirits, perception creating reality, the many and the one, and freedom and necessity, are all motifs in the sequence.

Notes

1. Letter from 11 February 1929.
2. Wade's *Letters* gives the sentence as "constructive," but in *InteLex*, the sentence reads "now that all is constructed to sharpen definitions & enrich descriptions"; see letter to Olivia Shakespear, 13 September [1929], *CL InteLex* #5285.
3. The best study of Crazy Jane in these contexts remains that of Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
4. A corrected version of the Seven Propositions exists in a TS housed in NLI 30,280. See Mann's presentation and excellent summary of them: <http://www.yeatsvision.com/7Propositions.html>. The Propositions are reprinted, as Mann point out, in Virginia Moore, *The Unicorn: W. B. Yeats's Search for Reality* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 378–89; Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats* 2nd ed (London: Faber & Faber, 1964), 236–37; and Hazard Adams, *Blake and Yeats: The Contrary Vision* (New York: Russell & Russell, [1955] 1968), 287–88.
5. In Richard Taylor, ed., *Frank Pearce Sturm: His Life, Letters, and Collected Work* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1969), 100; see also *CL InteLex* #5291.
6. Mann, <http://www.yeatsvision.com/7Propositions.html>.
7. Neil Mann elucidates the concept in "The Thirteenth Cone." *W. B. Yeats's A Vision: Explanations and Contexts*, ed. Neil Mann, Matthew Gibson, and Claire V. Nally (Clemson, SC: Clemson University Digital Press, 2012), 159–93.
8. W. B. Yeats and Margot Ruddock. *Ah, Sweet Dancer: W. B. Yeats and Margot Ruddock, A Correspondence*, ed. Roger McHugh (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 30–31.
9. I am indebted to Lauren Arrington for noticing the Shakespearean echo here.
10. See David R. Clark, "Stretching and Yawning with Yeats and Pound," *The Malahat Review* 29 (1974): 104–107; rpt. http://baillement.com/dossier/clark_yeats_pound.html.
11. See also W. B. Yeats, *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems: Manuscript Materials*, ed. David R. Clark (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1999), 351–363.
12. Neil Mann was invaluable in helping me to understand this section of *A Vision* as Catherine Paul and I prepared our edition; any errors in my comprehension of course remain my own.
13. See also Clark, ed. *Words for Music Perhaps*, 351.