

CHANGED UTTERLY

Scene

More shade than image in his Dreaming Back, Yeats climbs to the Hawk's Well.
More image than shade, Maud Gonne is sitting beside it.
Courtesy prevailing over sudden, unaccountable bashfulness, he sits opposite her.

M.G.: By your boots and trousers legs I see how overgrown with heather and
bracken and briars is the path to wonder.

W.B.: A wonder it is, this well. It is on a hill high above the sea. Hard, and of
unfissured gneiss, the Ox Mountains lie between it and the sea. And yet, night
and day, no moon or full moon, it ebbs and flows with the tide. And what is
more, its water is sometimes salt, sometimes sweet.

M.G.: What a wonder it is, this small well! What a wonder it is in its dilapidated
ordinariness!

W.B.: And the wonder of it by credulous consent, the wonder of its ebbing and
flowing, what of that?

M.G.: It isn't why I am here. I am here to learn ordinariness. Ordinary water
mirroring an ordinary sky.

W.B.: And the hawk? What if it suddenly mirrored the hawk?

M.G.: The hawk is your invention.

W.B.: Not my invention. In a dream one night I cupped my hand down into it. So
nearly dead from thirst was I, I ignored the outraged screech of a hawk above
me. Half way to my mouth, my fingers withered into hawk talons and the
water fell back.

M.G.: Then what?

W.B.: My thirst getting the better of me, I tried again.

M.G.: And then?

W.B.: A third time the same thing, only worse. This time I couldn't shake the hawk
talons back into a human hand.

M.G.: But you did, eventually. How?

W.B.: It's a long story.

M.G.: Too long for the telling?

W.B.: There is more to the world than meets the modern eye or the modern mind. It is to seek healing from that eye and mind that I am here, at the Hawk's Well, called that for a reason hanging now above us in the air, hanging now beneath us in the well.

And so, as for the ordinariness you would learn, cup your pearl-pale, Cathleen ní Houlihan hand down into it, bring it to your mouth and see what will happen.

M.G.: The hawk throwing his thunder on the stones?

W.B.: Things being what they are, we should always be ready for something alarmingly more in them than the utmost that we can empirically know of them, and it was this something more, ordinarily reserved, that screeched above me in my dream. Not only above me, of course. The hawk of the Hawk's Well has screeched above an entire people.

M.G.: Meaning that things are fighting back against our modern way of perceiving them?

Meaning just that.

M.G.: Meaning that Cuchulainn, the national hero, must come all the way back from revolutionary politics in the Post Office, must come back to this, the Hawk's Well.

W.B.: Revolutions in politics are effective essentially not just circumstantially when they have their original and continuing source in our prior re-education at the well.

M.G.: Cuchulainn cupping his hand down into the something more in things – in that our re-inauguration as a people!

The Fifth Province more a deed than a place. A deed not a place. My mistake was that I staged him more or less as I found him, a defender not an innovator.

M.G.: You had him fight the invulnerable tide. Now he must sit by a well that ebbs and flows with the tide, even if it does so only in popular credulity.

Given how the world is, science is as much a liability as superstition used to be. I agree with you, though. It is only because we are used to them that ordinary things aren't as insurgently numinous to us as they actually are.

M.G.: But the tall tales that give life to Cuchulainn, are they not as toplingly tall as they are for the reason that they are addicted to the outlandish?

W.B.: All land, even tired farmland, is outlandish. It is insurgent alike to the securities of science and superstition. It is insurgent alike to idle and exact sensation. It is what this well in its dilapidated ordinariness is saying to you, isn't it?

M.G.: So why the hawk? Mirrored in it, hovering in it, the hawk is a distraction.

W.B.: Reality fell out of the hand with which I would have apprehended it. So with my eyes. So with my mind.

So with John Locke's philosophy.

Cup John Locke's philosophy down into this well and see what happens as you draw it up to your mouth. Cup $E=mc^2$ down into it and see what will happen.

Whether with hand or eye or mind, it is in apprehending things that we lose things.

Whether with hand or eye or mind, we shouldn't therefore be apprehensive of things.

It is with an eye not apprehensive that we see things as they are.

It is with a hand not apprehensive that we bring clear clarifying water to our mouths.

Evict apprehensiveness from your hand and reality will be to hand.

It is apprehensiveness that degrades seeing into sight.

M.G.: Are you saying that it was the apprehensiveness of a raptor's talons that you shook out of your hands, that you shook out of your eyes?

W.B.: The apprehending hawk's foot in hearing, seeing, touch, taste, smell, in instinct and intellect, that is what was shown to me in my dream.

What I learned is that where satori naturally is sight apprehensively is.

Sight is usurpation. Endlessly frustrated usurpation. As I've said, in seeking to close its ocular talons on reality it spills reality.

M.G.: You are seeking, aren't you, to enlist me in an Easter insurrection against ourselves?

W.B.: This time also we will call on Cuchulainn our national hero, but only for the reason that he too must fight the hawk's foot in his hand. In the national hand.

M.G.: History you are saying has come to the Hawk's Well?

W.B.: To the screech of a kestrel, not, as I used to think, to the scream of Juno's peacock.

M.G.: Given the choice, would you reincarnate within hearing of a Zen gong in Kyoto or within hearing of a Christian gong in Byzantium?

W.B.: Given the choice, I'd be born out of wedlock to a girl in that white house, the nearest one there, under this hill. That way, within hearing of the screech, I'd be less likely to waste my time cupping John Locke's philosophy down into the well. That way I wouldn't waste my time cupping $E=mc^2$ down into it.

M.G.: Have you given up on eye and mind?

W.B.: What I know now and what I hope I will anamnetically know in my next incarnation is that the hawk is forever too wild to come down and sit on my wrist.
Here at the Hawk's Well is my Easter Rising against the hawk's talons in my hand.

M.G.: The apprehensive hand with which you cannot bring immortal water to your mouth. The apprehensive hand with you wrote Cathleen ní Houlihan.

W.B.: As I see her now, she voyages with Maelduin.

M.G.: From where to where?

W.B.: From an island we can to an island we cannot lay claim to.

M.G.: To where we are?

W.B.: A land beyond anything heart or mind can desire, or hand can apprehend.