



W. B. Yeats: A Life, Volume II: The Arch-Poet 1915-1939

R. F. Foster

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The first volume in Roy Foster's magisterial biography of W.B. Yeats was hailed as "a work of huge significance" (*The Atlantic Monthly*) and "a stupendous historiographical feat" (*Irish Sunday Independent*). Now, the eagerly awaited second volume explores the complex poetic, political, and personal intricacies of Yeats's dramatic final decades, a period that saw the Easter Rebellion, the founding of the Irish state in 1922, and the production of Yeats's greatest masterpieces.

In the conclusion of this first fully authorized biography, Foster brilliantly illuminates the circumstances--the rich internal and external experiences--that shaped the great poetry of Yeats's later years: "The Wild Swans at Coole," "Sailing to Byzantium," "The Tower," "The Circus Animals Desertion," "Under Ben Bulbin," and many others. Yeats's pursuit of Irish nationalism and an independent Irish culture, his continued search for supernatural truths through occult experimentation, his extraordinary marriage, a series of tempestuous love affairs, and his lingering obsession with Maud Gonne are all explored here with a nuance and awareness rare in literary biography. Foster gives us the very texture of Yeats's life and thought, revealing the many ways he made poetry out of the "quarrel" with himself and the upheaval around him. But this consummate biography also shows that Yeats was much more than simply a lyric poet and examines in great detail Yeats's non-poetic work--his essays, plays, polemics, and memoirs. The enormous and varied circle of Yeats's friends, lovers, family, collaborators and antagonists inhabit and enrich a personal world of astounding energy, artistic commitment and verve; while the poet himself is shown returning again and again to his governing preoccupations, sex and death.

Based on complete and unprecedented access to Yeats's papers and written with extraordinary grace and insight, *W.B. Yeats, A Life* offers the fullest portrait yet of the private and public life of one of the twentieth century's greatest poets.

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