

## William Butler Yeats and Phoebe Anna Traquair: 'The Drama of the Soul' Embroidered in Scotland

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Phoebe Anna Traquair (1852–1936) is nowadays recognised as a leading figure in the Arts and Crafts movement that developed in Britain and Ireland from the end of the nineteenth to the early twentieth century. A prominent artist across many genres, her work encompassed embroidery, manuscript illumination, mural painting, book-binding and metal enamelling. Most of her works were imbued with mysticism and symbolism and characterised by a Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic featuring rich colours and patterns.

Born into a medical family in Dublin, Phoebe Anna Moss received art training at the Royal Dublin Society in the late 1860s. In 1873 she married Dr Ramsay Heatley Traquair, a Scottish palaeontologist and the keeper of the Royal Scottish Museum, and settled in Edinburgh. While fulfilling her duties as wife and mother, Traquair actively sought commissions and participation in exhibitions, developing networks with artists and intellectuals.<sup>1</sup> By 1900, her remarkable achievements had secured her

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the Edinburgh-based architect Robert Lorimer (1864–1929) was a good friend of Traquair and strongly supported her artistic activity. John Miller Gray (1850–94), the first curator of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, introduced Traquair to writers and artists including the Scottish Pre-Raphaelite painter William Bell Scott, the poet Robert Browning, and Walter Pater. In 1887 the art critic John Ruskin (1819–1900) advised Traquair on creating manuscript illumination. See Elizabeth Cumming, *Phoebe Anna Traquair 1852–1936* (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland in association with National Museums Scotland, rpt. 2011), 10, 16–17.

position as an unrivalled artist in the Arts and Crafts movement.<sup>2</sup>

Amongst the many admirers of Traquair's works was William Butler Yeats (1865–1939), one of the foremost literary figures of twentieth century Ireland. In his early career Yeats played a major role in the late nineteenth century cultural movement known as the Celtic Revival. His efforts in collaboration with fellow writers culminated in the establishment of the Irish national theatre, the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, in 1904.<sup>3</sup> Along with literary activity, Yeats maintained a keen interest in the wide range of visual arts. Born into a painter's family and educated at art school,<sup>4</sup> Yeats noted that it was natural for him to see poetry as analogous to the visual arts.<sup>5</sup>

In 1906, in his role as director of the Abbey Theatre, Yeats accompanied a theatrical tour of Britain that included some major Scottish cities.<sup>6</sup> In June of that year, he wrote that 'Nearly all my time in Edinburgh I was absorbed in Mrs Traquair's work.' He had been 'overwhelmed, astonished' by 'her extraordinary abundance of imagination', and declared that she had 'the drama of the soul'.<sup>7</sup> This phrase encapsulates the core essence of her

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 71–72.

<sup>3</sup> Those who collaborated with Yeats included writers and dramatists such as Lady Augusta Gregory (1852–1932) and John Millington Synge (1871–1909).

<sup>4</sup> Yeats's father, John Butler Yeats (1839–1922) was a portrait painter (formerly a barrister) whose early works were greatly influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in Britain. Jack Butler Yeats (1871–1957), the youngest son of the family, was regarded during his lifetime as the most prominent painter in Ireland, and his reputation remains high today. Yeats's younger sister Elizabeth Corbet 'Lollie' Yeats (1868–1940) was a water-colourist and taught painting to children in the 1890s when the family lived in London.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Bergman Loizeaux, *Yeats and the Visual Arts* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 36. The influence of visual arts in Yeats's literary creation has also been demonstrated by scholars such as Giorgio Melchiori and Edward Engelberg.

<sup>6</sup> Roy Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life. Vol. I. The Apprentice Mage* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 347.

<sup>7</sup> Letter to Lady Augusta Gregory, in Colin Smythe, ed., *Seventy Years: Being the Autobiography of Lady Gregory* (Buckinghamshire: Gerrard Cross, 1974),

creativity. According to her biographer Elizabeth Cumming, as an artist Traquair wished to 'celebrate the potential of the human mind', and valued the works of William Blake (1757–1827) and Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–82) especially for their 'exploration of the spirit'.<sup>8</sup> Blake was the English poet, painter and visionary of Romanticism. Rossetti, a poet and painter, was the founding member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Another source of inspiration was Walter Pater (1839–94), the thinker and art critic whose belief in 'art for art's sake' became a doctrine of Aestheticism.

Yeats, too, was aware that these writers and artists had been key to cultivating his intellectual thought as well as his sense of beauty, especially in his youth in the late 1880s and 1890s. In recollection he stated that he had learned to think in 'the midst of the last phase of Pre-Raphaelitism',<sup>9</sup> and also acknowledged that 'If Rossetti was a subconscious influence, and perhaps the most powerful of all, we looked consciously to Pater for our philosophy'.<sup>10</sup> During the same period, there was a 'revival of interest in the supernatural and the occult',<sup>11</sup> and Yeats was among those keen to pursue spiritual knowledge and experience.<sup>12</sup> As Roy Foster notes, the manifold

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435. Hereafter cited as *Seventy Years*.

<sup>8</sup> Cumming, 10

<sup>9</sup> William Butler Yeats, *Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 346. Hereafter cited as *E&I*.

<sup>10</sup> William Butler Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 302. Hereafter cited as *Au*.

<sup>11</sup> Foster, 50. Books such as Eliphas Lévi's *Mysteries of Magic* (1886) and Cornelius Agrippa's *Occult Philosophy* (1531) were widely circulated.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 46–52, 101–07. Led by Theosophical guru Madame Blavatsky, the Dublin Theosophical Society was founded in April 1886, when Yeats became its charter member. The doctrine of the Society 'encompassed Neo-Platonism, the symbolism of the Cabbala, the mysticism of Swedenborg, and, later, the insights of Indian religion'. By the 1890s Yeats had become the central member of another occult circle, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Under the charismatic instruction of its former guru Samuel Liddell Mathers, author of *The Kabbalah Unveiled* (1887), the Order practiced ritual magic

uses of occult practice gave him 'metaphors for his poetry'.<sup>13</sup> For example, Yeats's continuing interest in the condition of the soul after death was reflected in his studies of 'the Blakean idea of total art fuelled by a mystic vision'.<sup>14</sup> In this light, it is possible to suppose that 'the drama of the soul' that Yeats found in Traquair's works would have appealed to his spiritual reflections.

By the time of Yeats's visit in 1906, the city of Edinburgh had become a treasury of Traquair's craft arts. She had completed mural paintings for at least three public buildings, although Yeats referred specifically only to those in the mortuary chapel at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children,<sup>15</sup> and we cannot know how many other of Traquair's works he encountered on this visit. However, Yeats's familiarity with and appreciation of one element of her craft repertoire, namely embroidery, is well documented, as will be explained in detail below. From the late 1880s to the 1900s, Traquair created a series of large-scale embroideries on ecclesiastical and spiritual themes. As Cumming remarks, 'the human spirit and its development through life to the point of death – and beyond',<sup>16</sup> were abundantly depicted

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based on wide-ranging studies of Esoteric Theosophy, Rosicrucian Symbolism, cryptic records of the Elizabethan alchemist and astrologer John Dee, theories derived from numerology, and the Tarot. Although this organisation 'subsisted on gossip and internal crises', Yeats's experiences in the Golden Dawn 'exerted a considerable influence' on his occult development.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 98–101. In 1893, Yeats published *The Works of William Blake: Poetic, Symbolic and Critical*, in collaboration with his fellow artist poet Edwin Ellis.

<sup>15</sup> *Seventy Years*, 435. Traquair's mural paintings for the Song School of St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral were executed between 1888 and 1892. Another series of mural works, for the Catholic Apostolic Church, were begun in 1893 and finished in 1901.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Cumming, 'Phoebe Anna Traquair: Angels and Changing Concepts of the supernatural in *fin-de-siècle* Scotland', in P. Jupp and S. Buckham, eds., *Death in Modern Scotland, 1855–1955: beliefs, attitudes and practices* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016), 12.

in her embroidery panels. It is in the light of this aspect of Traquair's work, and Yeats's undoubted knowledge and interest, that this essay attempts to present a possible correspondence between Yeats's interpretation of 'the drama of the soul' and the visual expression of human soul in Traquair's embroidery.

First, it will be helpful to focus on exactly how embroidery became such a familiar art to Yeats. During the late 1880s, when the Yeats family were living in Bedford Park in London, Yeats was a frequent visitor to William Morris (1834–96), the socialist designer, artist and proponent of the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain. At meetings of the Socialist League at Morris's home, Kelmscott House in Hammersmith, Yeats came to know many leading craft makers and artists,<sup>17</sup> including Morris's daughter May (1862–1938), a renowned embroiderer in the London-based Arts and Crafts scene. In 1888, Yeats introduced his younger sister Suzan Mary 'Lily' Yeats (1866–1949, hereafter Lily) to May, and for the next 6 years Lily worked as a salaried employee and trainee under May's instruction in the Morris family's Kelmscott atelier. Her major work during this period was an extra-sized bedcover, displayed in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition in 1893, made in collaboration with her Kelmscott colleagues and based on a design by May Morris, featuring motifs of fruit trees, flowers and animals. Yeats would later recall the work's detail in his autobiography.<sup>18</sup> Lily was to become a respected embroiderer of the Irish Arts and Crafts movement,<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> For example, the designer and art lecturer Walter Crane (1845–1915) was influential in Britain and Scotland. Emery Walker (1851–1933) was a process engraver and typographical expert known as a specialist in book-printing; together he and Cobden Sanderson (1840–1922) set up Doves Press. Yeats was also acquainted with the clergyman Selwyn Image (1849–1930), illustrator and designer of stained glass.

<sup>18</sup> *Au*, 144.

<sup>19</sup> The Arts and Crafts movement in Ireland is considered to have started in

and over the years Yeats continued to pay close, and sometimes critical, attention to his sister's embroidery, particularly regarding her designs, as will be discussed in more detail later.

In 1895, Traquair's large triptych of silk embroidery, *The Salvation of Mankind* (1886–93), featured in the Arts and Crafts exhibition in Glasgow. It attracted great admiration and was shown again the following year in Dublin.<sup>20</sup> The three panels, each permeated with a Pre-Raphaelite atmosphere, are over 180cm in height (Figure 1). Close observation of the stitched motifs, figures, and symbols reveals a convincing visual realisation of what Yeats described as 'the drama of the soul'. The concept of this triptych, as noted by Cumming, was 'the judgement of the soul in death', encompassing a dramatic narrative of Christian redemption, with 'its own identity which draws on sources varying from Victorian to Italian religious art'.<sup>21</sup> In the right-hand panel, titled 'Souls Waiting on Earth' (1891–93), human figures, some with hopeful countenance and others covering their faces in despair, are depicted over a round sphere strewn with flowers, probably symbolising the Earth (Figure 1-c). The left-hand panel, 'The Souls of the Blest' (1889–91) (Figure 1-a), depicts a line of winged angels reaching out their hands to welcome the human souls to the heaven above the mountains. However, it is the central motif, 'The Angel of Death and

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1896, with the first exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Society of Ireland, and declined after the last exhibition in 1925. See Paul Larmour, *The Arts & Crafts Movement in Ireland* (Belfast: Friar's Bush Press, 1992), 216–18. Nicola Gordon Bowe, 'The Irish Arts and Crafts Movement (1886–1925)', *GPA Irish Arts Review Yearbook 1990–1991*, 172–85.

<sup>20</sup> Nicola G. Bowe and Elizabeth Cumming, eds., *The Arts and Crafts Movements in Dublin and Edinburgh 1885–1925* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998), 64. In Dublin, this work was valued for its 'broadness of treatment, decorative feeling, colour, and dexterity in dealing with a difficult material'. See also Larmour, 27.

<sup>21</sup> Cumming, *Phoebe Anna Traquair*, 23–24.

Purification' (1885-87), that is the most significant of the whole set of the triptych (Figure 1-b). Cumming gives a detailed account:

...an angel with a golden halo bearing the motto *Caritas* (Love) weighs the souls of the deceased using a flaming skull from which rises a phoenix, the traditional symbol of rebirth...The physiognomy is close to a Rossetian style of beauty, but this red-winged creature may rather have been inspired by a well-known Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) embroidery design of 1884 for Frances Graham. That also was an angel of love, *L'Amor che muove il sole e l'altre stelle* from the *Paradiso* of Dante's *Commedia*.<sup>22</sup>

The backgrounds of these three narrative embroideries are harmonised with one another by the patterns of streaks and cloud shapes, in which can be discerned the influence of Japonism. Given that this is the largest and most renowned of Traquair's embroidery works created in the 1890s, it is probable that Yeats had this work in mind when he contacted Traquair in 1902 for advice to support his sister's embroidery enterprise.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

[Figure 1]

Phoebe Anna Traquair,  
*The Salvation of Mankind* (1886-93)  
City Art Centre:  
City of Edinburgh Museums and  
Galleries.

From left:

- a) 'The Souls of the Blest' (1889-91)
- b) 'The Angel of Death and Purification'  
(1885-87)
- c) 'Souls Waiting on Earth' (1891-93)



a) 'The Souls of the Blest'





b) 'The Angel of Death and Purification'



c) 'Souls Waiting on Earth'

In that year, Lily Yeats shifted her life and activity in Dublin, where she co-founded the Dun Emer Guild craft industry,<sup>23</sup> with responsibility for producing embroidered decorations. In its first year of business, the Guild received a commission from Loughrea Cathedral in county Galway to produce a set of ecclesiastical banners. The commission was part of a comprehensive project to embellish the cathedral by the hands of Irish craftworkers. Together with the stained glass decoration,<sup>24</sup> the Guild's banners were acclaimed as signifying the successful rise of the Irish Arts and Crafts movement. However, while the embroidery project was underway, Yeats heard that the cathedral's administrator, Father O'Donnovan, was displeased with the original designs.<sup>25</sup> He therefore sought advice regarding Lily's work from his contacts in the British Arts and Crafts movement, including Christopher Whall,<sup>26</sup> Eric Maclagan, and Traquair.<sup>27</sup> Maclagan was an expert on English ecclesiastical embroidery,

<sup>23</sup> Lily was a co-founder of this craft business, along with her younger sister Lollie Yeats, who specialised in book-printing. The Dun Emer Guild's chief founder was another Anglo-Irish textile artist, Evelyn Gleeson (1855-1944). The cooperation by these three women lasted until 1908.

<sup>24</sup> The stained glass was executed by the workers of An Túr Gloine (The Tower of Glass) stained glass studio established by Sarah Purser (1848-1943) in Dublin in 1903. The main design was based on that by leading British stained glass artist Christopher Whall (1849-1924), who was invited to direct the production of the Loughrea windows.

<sup>25</sup> Father O'Donnovan was critical especially of the figure of St. Patrick, saying it was not 'reverent' and even calling it 'the hurler'. See Yeats's letter to Lily Yeats, 19 July 1903, in John Kelly and Ronald Schuchaud, eds., *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats, vol.3* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 410. Hereafter cited as *CL3*. The St Patrick design was made by Yeats's fellow writer and artist George Russell (also known as AE, 1867-1935). In fact the design was said to be made under his subversively mischievous concept of 'disguising the Celtic gods as angels and archangels so that Christians 'would become worshippers of the Sidhe without knowing it'. See Henry Summerfield, *That Myriad Minded Man - A.E.* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1975), 119.

<sup>26</sup> *CL3*, 401, Letter to Lily Yeats, 19 July 1903.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 410, Letter to Eric Maclagan, 31 July 1903.

who would go on to publish *A Guide to English Ecclesiastical Embroideries* (1907). Yeats wrote to him 'It is only at the beginning of what may be a great movement, the fortunes of which may depend on our making the Loughrea decorations beautiful'.<sup>28</sup> As it turned out, none of Yeats's input into the design improvement was adopted, and Lily decided to keep to the original design prepared in collaboration with her friends and family.<sup>29</sup> Judging from Lily's report that 'Mrs Traquair...promised me one year and a half ago. It has not come yet',<sup>30</sup> it is clear that for some reason Traquair failed to provide the help that Yeats had expected. The Loughrea banners produced by the Dun Emer Guild were a great success. However, comparing some of the reviews describing the embroidered saints of the Loughrea banners as 'familiar to Irish people', such as might be found 'in the streets of any Irish village',<sup>31</sup> with the impact that works such as *The Salvation of Mankind* might have had on Yeats, it is understandable how keenly he had anticipated Traquair's advice to improve his sister's embroidery.

While the Dun Emer Guild was working on the project for Loughrea Cathedral, another of Traquair's grand-scale embroideries, *The Progress of a Soul* (1893-1902), was gaining recognition overseas, first at the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art in Turin in 1902, and then at the World's Fair in St. Louis in 1904. When it had been shown at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in London in 1903, Traquair had stipulated a price of 1,000 pounds 'to prevent their sale'.<sup>32</sup> Consisting of four

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 406, 410-11. Eric Maclagan (1879-1951) was also director of the department of textiles at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

<sup>29</sup> Along with AE, Jack Butler Yeats and his wife Mary Cottenham 'Cottie' Yeats (1863-1947) designed the whole set of banners.

<sup>30</sup> Foster, 322.

<sup>31</sup> 'Irish Saints at Dun Emer', *The Irish Homestead*, 13 February 1904, 134.

<sup>32</sup> Bowe & Cumming, 66.

panels, each about 6 feet in height, the work's source of inspiration was the story 'Denys l'Auxerrois' collected in *Imaginary Portrait* (1887) by Walter Pater (Figure 2). The story begins with the narrator's finding of old tapestries hung in a little Gothic church in Auxerre, 'the prettiest town in France'.<sup>33</sup> The tapestries in the story depict 'Denys' who 'came suddenly and oddly to Auxerre to be the centre of so pleasant a period, though in truth he made but a sad ending'.<sup>34</sup> The images in Traquair's quartet allude to key concepts identified by her, which together can be taken as 'the epic journey of the human spirit through life'.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the steps of the 'journey' in these panels can be construed more specifically as Yeats's 'drama of the soul' than can the images in the earlier *Salvation of Mankind*.

The central figure of each panel, a young man clothed in leopard skins, is Denys. As the name makes clear, he is a personification of Dionysus, the Greek god of fertility and vegetation (known as Bacchus in Roman myth), often associated with wine and ecstasy, represented here with vines and bunches of grapes. The first panel, 'The Entrance' (1893-95), shows Denys playing the golden harp, an exemplar of music and youth. Natural motifs such as birds, butterfly and rabbit, and flowers blossoming in the sunrise, represent fertility (Figure 2-a). This panel corresponds to the scene in which Denys enters the story.

Denys himself certainly was a joyous lad enough... The sight of him made old people feel young again... The culture of the grape greatly increased. The sunlight fell for the first time on many a spot of deep woodland

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<sup>33</sup> Walter Pater, *Imaginary Portraits* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1922), 51.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>35</sup> Cumming, 9.

cleared for vine-growing.<sup>36</sup>

In the second panel, 'The Stress' (1895-97), shadows of earthly vice disturb Denys (Figure 2-b). The hands of unseen figures grab and tear at the flora and fauna that surround Denys; a rabbit is held, broken and bleeding, in the beak of a large bird; and Denys too is bleeding. A serpent, the embodiment of evil in Christianity, crawls at Denys' feet. This scene can be related to the original story in which, as the dark and vicious side of Denys' dual personality occasionally comes to the surface, he arouses suspicion among the villagers:

...when the guilt of a murder, committed with a great vine-axe far out among the vineyards, was attributed vaguely to him [Denys], he could but wonder whether it had been indeed thus, and the shadow of a fancied crime abode with him.<sup>37</sup>

Denys' end comes when he takes part in a village pageant. While performing in a stage-play in an attempt to 'restore his popularity' amongst the villagers, Denys accidentally injures himself:

And it happened that a point of the haircloth scratched his lip deeply, with a long trickling of blood upon the chin. It was as if the sight of blood transported the spectators with a kind of mad rage..., which brought out, in rapid increase, men's evil passions.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Pater, 59-62.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

The moment of Denys' death is embroidered in the third panel, 'Despair' (1897-99), in which can be discerned elements of the Christian symbolism of crucifixion: Denys' body is caught in a tree, entangled with a serpent and briar thorns (Figure 2-c). However, in the story, even though his body is torn apart mercilessly, 'the soul of Denys was already at rest'.<sup>39</sup> And so in the fourth embroidery panel, 'The Victory' (1899-1902), Traquair depicts Denys' salvation, despite his tragic death. His spirit is woken by an angel, who lifts him above the rainbow (Figure 2-d). The design of the two kissing figures ascending to Heaven is modelled on William Blake's illustration 'The Union of the Soul with God' (from *Jerusalem*, 1829).<sup>40</sup> This symbolic narrative of the uniting of earthly and divine spirits, particularly the phases from Denys' 'Despair' to the 'Victory' of his soul, can be taken as corresponding to Yeats's interpretation of Traquair's 'drama of the soul', whose process Yeats described as 'captivity, the divine descent to meet it, its liberation, its realisation of itself in the world of spirit'.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Cumming, 66-69.

<sup>41</sup> *Seventy Years*, 435.



[Figure 2-a]

Phoebe Anna Traquair, *The Progress of a Soul* (1893–1902)

'The Entrance' (1893–95), National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.



[Figure 2-b]

Phoebe Anna Traquair, *The Progress of a Soul* (1893-1902)

'The Stress' (1895-97), National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.





[Figure 2-c]

Phoebe Anna Traquair, *The Progress of a Soul* (1893-1902)  
'Despair' (1897-99), National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.



[Figure 2-d]

Phoebe Anna Traquair, *The Progress of a Soul* (1893-1902)

'The Victory' (1899-1902), National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.

It should be noted that this account of 'the drama of the soul' must have been based upon the spiritual ideas of the eighteenth century theologian philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772),<sup>42</sup> whose *Spiritual Diary* Yeats had read with passion during his occult practice in the 1890s.<sup>43</sup> Traquair had acquired the same philosophical notions through the Swedenborgian poet Garth Wilkinson (1812-99).<sup>44</sup> In 1914, Yeats wrote an essay titled 'Swedenborg, Medium, and The Desolate Places', in which he affirmed his belief in the afterlife of the human soul. In this essay, he noted that 'it was indeed Swedenborg who ...discovered a world of spirits where there was a scenery like that of earth'.<sup>45</sup>

According to Yeats's interpretation of Swedenborgian ideas, the imaginable journey of a soul after death can be related as follows:

All angels were once men...who attend us immediately after death, and communicate to us their thoughts, not by speaking, but by looking us in the face as they sit beside the head of our body. When they find their thoughts are communicated they know the time has come to separate the spiritual from the physical body...Then follows a period which may last but a short time or many years, while the soul lives a life so like that of the world that it may not even believe that it has died.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Yeats learned about Swedenborg's concept of 'Conjugal Love' from reading Rossetti's poetry, such as 'The Blessed Damosel' and some of the sonnet collection *The House of Life*. See Yuki Takahashi, 'William Butler Yeats and Phoebe Anna Traquair: Their Fascination with 'Love's Hour' in Literature and Art', in *The Review of Liberal Arts*, vol.141 (Otaru University of Commerce, March 2021), 71.

<sup>43</sup> William Butler Yeats, *Explorations* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 32. Hereafter cited as *Ex*.

<sup>44</sup> Cumming, 17.

<sup>45</sup> *Ex*, 32.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

Calling this condition 'earth-resembling life', Yeats continued that it is 'the creation of the image-making power of the mind, plucked naked from the body, and mainly of the images in the memory'.<sup>47</sup> Then, these 'angelic spirits who act upon us there as here, widening and deepening the consciousness at will, can draw forth all the past, and make us live again all our transgressions and...all the pleasures and pains of sensible life awaken again and again'.<sup>48</sup> Thus Yeats's faith in the potential of the human soul is powerfully stated, with great imaginative detail. At this stage, the way such angelic spirits attend the dead can be described as 'the divine descent to meet' the human soul, just as Yeats had explained Traquair's 'drama of the soul' in 1906.<sup>49</sup> Next, as further 'preparation for the spiritual abyss',<sup>50</sup> Yeats touches on the possibility that these human souls and angelic spirits 'see one another in the unfolding of a dream, believing...that their lips are joined in a kiss'.<sup>51</sup> In visual terms this moment can be construed as corresponding to the 'Victory' panel of *The Progress of a Soul*, and therefore equivalent to the final stage of the 'drama of the soul', which Yeats described as 'its liberation, its realisation of itself in the world of spirit'.<sup>52</sup>

During his stay in Scotland in 1906, Yeats was able to gain 'strong support' for his Abbey Theatre company from 'the Scottish brains' such as Traquair.<sup>53</sup> Of what other communication there was between them, or how long their friendship lasted, little is recorded. However, considering that

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Seventy Years*, 435.

<sup>50</sup> *Ex*, 36.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Seventy Years*, 435.

<sup>53</sup> Foster, 348.

their intellects and sense of aesthetic beauty developed under the influence of the same literary and artistic figures, it is possible to interpret Traquair's work as a visualisation of Yeats's spiritual vision actualised by needle and thread. Then, the supposition that in Traquair's embroidery Yeats was able to explore 'the identity of the human spirit through and beyond life'<sup>54</sup> becomes a persuasive, even convincing, hypothesis.

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<sup>54</sup> Cumming, 'Phoebe Anna Traquair', 29.

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