CHAPTER FOUR

A Full Moon in March and New Poems

I A Full Moon in March

After the 1933 Collected Poems Yeats did not issue any new poetry in book form in London until A Full Moon in March, published on 22 November 1935 in an edition of 2000 copies. This contained only a relatively few poems, gathered under the heading “Parnell’s Funeral and Other Poems”. Yeats described the volume to Ethel Mannin as “Not much in it – illness interfered” (L 844), overlooking the several other projects he had been engaged on during the recent past.

Most of the poems in the collection had already appeared in The King of the Great Clock Tower: Commentaries and Poems, published by the Cuala Press on 14 December 1934 and by Macmillan, New York, in May 1935. Yeats seems to have made no attempt to have this volume published by Macmillan, London, probably wanting to protect the sales of the Cuala edition. But early in June 1935 Yeats must have instructed his agent to send his English publishers the material for a new volume. Macmillan responded to Watt on 13 June as follows:

Many thanks for your letter of June 7th enclosing ‘copy’ for Mr. Yeats’s new work entitled ‘The King of the Great Clock Tower’, or rather, as he now intends to call it, ‘A Full Moon in March’. We shall, of course, be glad to publish this, but I suggest we had better wait for actual publication until the Autumn. (BL 55678/147)

On 9 September, Macmillan was able to forward “a marked set of the page proofs of ‘A Full Moon in March’, together with the original typescript” (BL 55771/152). Yeats returned the proofs within a few days: Macmillan acknowledged their receipt on 16 September, indicating that “your corrections are quite clear, and
a revise will reach you shortly" (BL 55771/319). The final proofs were sent to Yeats on 26 September (BL 55771/554); he must have kept them but a single day, as they were back in London, passed for press, on the 28th (BL 55771/589). On 1 October, Macmillan received a correction to the text of The King of the Great Clock Tower, replying that they could "make the alteration without any difficulty" (BL 55771/626). However, two weeks later they were forced to inform Yeats that the production of the volume was "too far advanced" to permit the insertion of some music to accompany The King of the Great Clock Tower. The publishers suggested "that it might be well to reserve it, with your approval, as one of the special features of the big collected edition of your works, which we still have in hand. I take it that anything new we have published for you is to be added to the material for that edition" (BL 55772/332).

Although A Full Moon in March did not present any particular problems to Yeats or his publishers, a different situation obtains when incorporating the lyrics into any comprehensive edition of Yeats's poetry. The first problem concerns the very title of the section. The heading used in the 1949 Poems is "From 'A Full Moon in March'", a title found on the first 1939 Prospectus for the Edition de Luxe. Although Yeats had used a parallel construction when reprinting works from The Green Helmet and Other Poems in several earlier volumes, the heading used in the 1933 Collected Poems is not "From The Green Helmet and Other Poems" but simply "The Green Helmet and Other Poems". Moreover, in revising the Macmillan list of contents for the Edition de Luxe, Yeats changed "Poems from 'A Full Moon in March'" to "Poems 1933–1937", a title also used on the materials sent to Scribner's in June 1937. Since the spring of 1938, however, that revised title has been defunct, as many of the lyrics in the section were incorporated into New Poems. In the revised edition of The Poems I have thus offered "Parnell's Funeral and Other Poems", a heading which takes up a full page in the 1935 collection.

A second and more important problem is the inclusion in Poems (1949) of "Three Songs to the Same Tune", which also appears in its revised form as "Three Marching Songs" Poems. The retention of both texts was the decision of. She wrote to Mark on 17 April 1939 as follo-