



Critical Introduction to *The Green Sheaf* No. 7, 1903



Figure 1. Pamela Colman Smith, *Colour Palette for The Green Sheaf, No. 7, 1903*. Courtesy of Marion Grant and the RGB Eyedropper Tool

With its seventh number in November 1903 *The Green Sheaf* began the second half of its thirteen-issue print run. This monthly number stands out for both its unique material format and its new transatlantic distribution system. After the *Green Sheaf's* inaugural number, each succeeding issue had been sixteen pages in length. Number 7 reverted to the eight-page extent of the first issue, but dramatically expanded this limit by including, as a twelve-page *Supplement*, an entire three-act play, printed in double columns by Farncombe & Sons, with hand-coloured illustrations by [Pamela Colman Smith](#) (1878-1951) and Cecil French (1879-1953). John Baillie (1868-1926), whose Gallery in Bayswater regularly advertised in *The Green Sheaf*, opened a well-received exhibition of mystical water-colour drawings by the two artists on 13 November (“Fine-Art Gossip” 658; “The Galleries and Ateliers” 6). The combined demands of producing the large *Supplement* while preparing for the exhibition that month may have limited the time Smith had for the issue itself, which included a mere five poems, two black-and-white line drawings, and two hand-coloured ornaments. With the exception of the December issue, which was once again sixteen pages in length, *The Green Sheaf's* remaining monthly numbers kept to the eight-page limit, sometimes expanded by supplements. The second significant change introduced in the seventh number was

Smith's announcement that the magazine could now be purchased at Brentano's Literary Emporium, New York's largest bookstore. Appearing on both the front cover and the supplement's advertisements, the announcement signalled the editor's desire to increase her magazine's American readership.

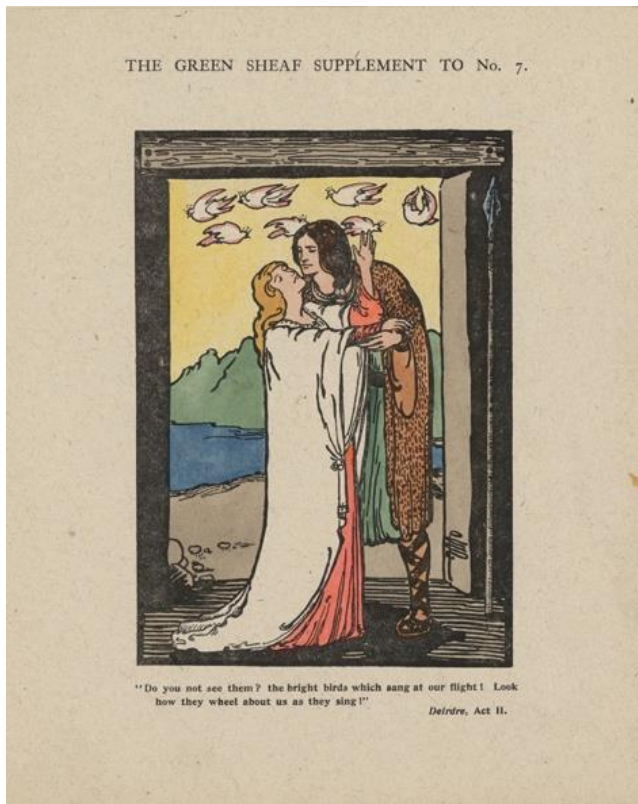


Figure 2. Pamela Colman Smith, "Do you not seem them?" Illustration for A.E.'s *Deirdre*, Supplement to *The Green Sheaf*, No. 7 (1903)

Both the issue's poems and the Supplement's play incorporate themes of love and death. Smith's colour palette of green, slate, and brown shades, contrasted by mustard, coral, and deep purple, expresses the romance and passion of these concerns, particularly in the illustrations she and French produced for *Deirdre: A Drama in Three Acts* (figs. 1 and 2). A traditional Irish legend about the doomed lovers Deirdre and Naisi [sic] and their violent deaths at the hands of traitorous King Conor, *Deirdre* was retold by many participants in the Irish Revival movement, including *Green Sheaf* contributors Lady Augusta Gregory (1852-1932), W.B. Yeats (1865-1939), and J. M. Synge (1871-1909)

(Smyth 174 and 164). The *Supplement to The Green Sheaf* offers a version by A.E. (George Russell, 1867-1935), who had called for modern poets to recreate traditional bardic tales in an essay entitled "The Dramatic Treatment of Heroic Literature" (Boyd 257). According to Ernest Boyd, A.E.'s *Deirdre* was "the first important play to be performed by the company from which sprang the Irish National Theatre" (ibid.); notably, the latter asserted its copyright over the Dramatic Rights to the play on the *Supplement's* title page. Pamela Colman Smith collaborated with A.E. on another important periodical of the national revival, the *Irish Homestead*, which the latter edited. From 1904-1908, Smith's design graced the cover of its annual special number, A

Celtic Christmas. In keeping with the mythic woman-nation image prevalent in the Irish Revival movement (Doyle 35), Smith represented Deirdre as the national spirit by superimposing the monumental figure of a robed woman superimposed on a map of Ireland (fig. 3).

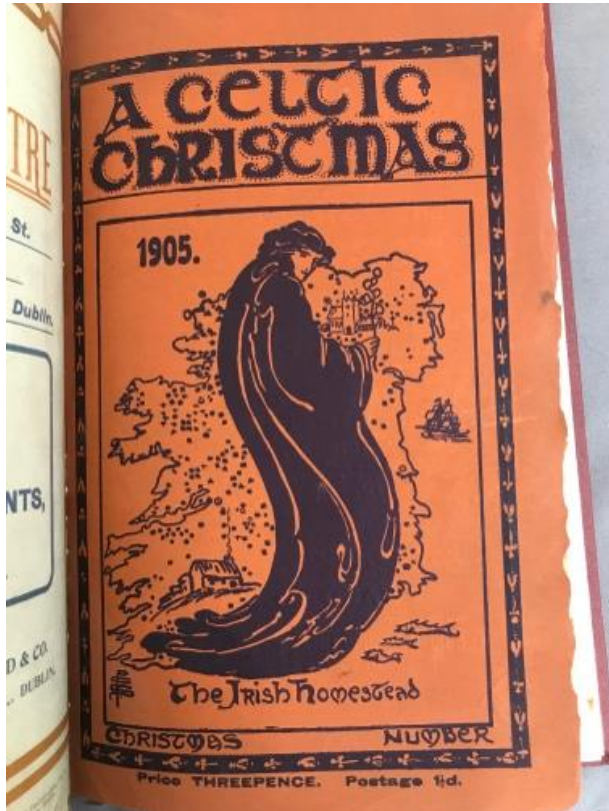


Figure 3. Pamela Colman Smith, Cover Design for *A Celtic Christmas*, 1905. Trinity College Dublin.

While A.E.'s *Deirdre* makes the *Supplement* a key publication of the Irish Revival, only one of issue's five poems could be associated with the movement: "The Calling Voice," by Alix Egerton (1870-1923). The poem's references to supernatural encounters with "The Land of Faery" recall Egerton's "Faerie Dance" in *The Green Sheaf's* fifth number, and may also allude to a vision of The Sidhe that she and Smith claimed to have experienced on a visit to Peacock's Well (Campbell 262). Egerton's poem appears on the recto of the first opening, sharing the page with Smith's brief quatrain personifying "Echo" as an elusive female spirit; a pair of ornamental roses separates the two lyrics ([Database of Ornament](#)).

On the verso is the issue's opening poem, "Autumn," by fourteen-year-old Eleanor Vicocq Ward (1889-1976), limned with a full-page decorative border by her older sister, Dorothy Priestley Ward (1879-1969). "Autumn" seems an apt choice for the November number's leading item; its seasonal tropes chime with the issue's themes of death and dying. However, the linear black-and-white design surrounding the poem lacks the vibrant colours of *The Green Sheaf's* typical opening page. The same is true for the issue's final full-page image, "The Old Book," by American artist Frederick J. Waugh (1861-1940), which is likewise printed in black and white. In addition to the coral-coloured roses between Egerton's and Smith's poems, the issue's only other hand-coloured image is Smith's pictorial initial "I" for "Blind Man's Vigil," by John Masefield (1878-1967) (fig. 4).



Figure 4. Pamela Colman Smith, Pictorial Initial for John Masefield's "Blind Man's Vigil," *The Green Sheaf*, No. 7, 1903, p. 4.

"Blind Man's Vigil" is Masefield's third and last contribution to *The Green Sheaf*. A celebrated poet and storyteller known for his nautical themes, Masefield fulfilled the magazine's promise to give its readers "tales of pirates and the sea" (Smith, Front Cover). While the ballad may connect to the issue's death themes, however, it gives love a wide berth. The eponymous narrator recounts burying casks of treasure on "the sunny beach of Muertos" (i.e., beach of Death) in the Spanish Main, and the subsequent capture and hanging of the rest of the crew. The speaker is the only surviving member of the pirate ship captained by the notorious "L'Ollanay" (François l'Olonais, 1630-1670), known as "Flail of the Spanish" (Masefield, 3-4; Cartwright, np). Masefield's speaker uses racialized terminology for a geographic landform resembling a dark-coloured human head; "Blind Man's Vigil" thus comes with an editorial warning of offensive language.

The last poem in the issue, "Eocene" by George Ives (1867-1950), is a homoerotic lyric celebrating a new day. Waking in bed, the speaker is greeted by "young Dawn," who is "gorgeous and strong in gallant hardihood," and who invites him outside to where "The River casts her bridal robe away" (6). "Eocene" means dawn in Greek and is also the geological term for the era of modern life on the planet. The Greek allusion illuminates Ives's lyrical representation of a new day for men who love men. An early campaigner for homosexual law reform in Britain, Ives founded the Order of the Chaeronea in the 1890s as a support group for gays and was a member of the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology (Cook 1). It is uncertain how Smith knew Ives, though she may have connected with him through [Laurence Housman](#) (1865-1959), a member of her circle who belonged to the Order. Her willingness to publish Ives's frankly homoerotic poem in her little magazine is characteristic of her open approach to non-traditional expressions of gender and sexuality. In the following number of *The Green Sheaf*, Smith was to publish her own lyrical "Dawn," in which a woman calls her to join her by the sea at "the glint of day" (Smith 11). Smith's "Dawn" may be her poetic response to Ives's "Eocene" from a queer-woman perspective.

Smith used the back pages of the issue and its *Supplement* to advertise her artistic work to *Green Sheaf* subscribers. An illustrated ad in the *Supplement* demonstrated her graphic skills and promoted her availability for custom bookplates, Christmas cards, dance cards, and dinner menus “Designed, Hand-printed, and Hand-coloured to Order” at her Chelsea studio (Advertisement for Bookplates). For eighteenpence, readers were told, they might also purchase a “Just Published” hand-coloured print by Smith illustrating Yeats’s play *Cathleen Ni Hoolihan*, available from either “The Editor of *The Green Sheaf*” in Chelsea or [Elkin Mathews](#) on Vigo Street (*Supplement* Advertisements, 12). The issue’s back page advertised Smith’s “for hire” performances of West Indian tales in her storytelling role of Gelukiezanger as well as an assortment of her hand-coloured prints of actress Ellen Terry (1847-1928) in various roles (Advertisements 8). Other advertisements promoted work by members of Smith’s professional circle. In addition to advertising John Baillie’s Gallery, where her own art was currently being exhibited, Smith printed Elkin Mathews’s publishing list for Autumn 1903 (Advertisements 8). The latter included works by two of the present issue’s contributors: Alix Egerton’s *The Lady of the Scarlet Shoes* and John Masefield’s *Ballads*. Smith used the title page to advertise *The Green Sheaf*’s next two issues. The December number (No. 8) was to include work by regular contributors Alix Egerton, Cecil French, and Christopher St. John, as well as newcomers Francis Annesley (1884-1914), Victor Bridges (1878-1972), Reginald Rigby (1881-1943), and E. Harcourt Williams (1880-1957), while the January issue was to feature “A Dream” by John Todhunter (1839-1916) as a supplement (Smith, Front Cover). With new contributors coming on board and work in hand for future issues, *The Green Sheaf* appeared to be thriving as the end of 1903 neared.

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