de citer Yeats mais il reprend et développe la métaphore du poète irlandais : ‘Les contraintes de la technique nous obligent à plonger sous la surface des choses, générant en cela un mouvement d’aliénation de soi qui nous fait traverser des profondeurs auxquelles nous n’avons pas normalement accès et qui sont ainsi susceptibles de produire l’objet inhabituel’.3

Elizabeth Muller

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The international conference that led to this collection of essays was held at the Catholic University of Paris in early September 2013, on the 140th anniversary year of Charles Péguy’s birth. Sir Geoffrey Hill, who was present and read from his poetry at the end of the day, also took the opportunity, while in France, of visiting Orléans, Péguy’s birthplace, and Villeroy, where Péguy died on September 5, 1914. In Villeroy, at the annual commemoration for the poet organized by Amitié Charles Péguy, and to the delight of Péguy’s grandson Michel Péguy, he read a short passage from his poem *The Mystery of the Charity of Charles Péguy*, which was filmed and posted on line by Olivier Péguy. This link between Yeats and Péguy may seem fitting, if only because they were both caught up with history and politics, and at the same time, were writing visionary poetry looking toward ‘time to be’. Writing in *The Guardian* in 2002, Robert Potts insisted that Hill’s poem on Péguy, ‘invites a difficult contemplation between poetry and political action, between words and deeds, and the nature of honour.’

When the conference ‘European paths and voices in the poetry of W.B. Yeats and Sir Geoffrey Hill’ was planned, the conference organizers were not aware that one of the early drafts of Hill’s poem about

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3 ‘It is the being forced down under the surface by the resistance of technique that inaugurates a self alienating process which, as it drives down under strata that are not normally encountered, may produce alien objects’, my translation, *Collected Critical Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2008, p. 567–68, ma traduction.
Péguy contained descriptive allusions to events that occurred at a session of the Yeats Summer School in Sligo. Nonetheless they were cognizant that, in comparison to numerous books and articles discussing Hill and Eliot or Pound, less attention had been accorded of late to the Yeats-Hill connection. This book will take up that slack, and it should contribute to bringing Hill’s poetic works, *Broken Hierarchies: Poems 1952–2012* (2013) into sharper focus.

Both Yeats and Hill have turned to the literary traditions and the history of Europe as sources for their poetry. In different yet parallel ways, history, testimony and resistance color their writing as they incorporate the mythologies, arts, and literatures from antiquity, the medieval period, the renaissance, and also recent European culture into their works. In fact, Hill has devoted considerable attention in his poetry to the German resistance to Hitler during the nazi period, in *Canaan* and elsewhere, as Kenneth Haynes shared with us during the conference.

Beginning with Yeats, Elizabeth Müller opens this collection of essays by evoking the ‘Dantean Echoes in Yeats’s Aesthetics’ suggesting that both Dante and Yeats shared a quest for unity of being, understanding it as a pre-requisite for great art – hence the desire by Yeats ‘to retrieve a lost unity of culture’. Jean-Baptiste Picy considers the impact of Walter Pater on Yeats, and their differing approaches concerning Dionysius, whose presence in the poems of Yeats is manifest in the figure of Fergus. He suggests that both Yeats and Hill operate poetic resurrections of Indo-European voices. Yeats and Oedipus is the topic for Brian Arkins, who speaks about the plays Yeats wrote, showing how they continue to influence the reception of Greek mythology in English today. According to Yeats, Sophocles might be a greater writer than Shakespeare, and Arkins points out characteristics of Greek literature that Yeats incorporated, such as his obsession with opposites, which is, in the case of Oedipus, an internal duality.

Peter McDonald explains that reading late Hill is rather like reading late Yeats, using poems such as ‘Lapis Lazuli’ (1938), *The Orchards of Syon* (2002), and *Scenes from Comus* (2005). Colbert Kearney explores how the contextualization of Yeats within his country and time affected the reception of his work. Even so, the poet saw himself as a
visionary, who was guided by ‘the mystical life’ and was consciously writing prophetic poetry, as is carefully demonstrated by analysis of ‘September 1913’ and ‘Easter 1916’. Focusing on the way modernist poets have rewritten texts from antiquity, my own paper attempts to trace the modernist lineage from Yeats to Hill, specifically regarding each poet’s education in the classics.

Susan Ang considers Hill’s Pindarics in *Without Title* as an interaction with otherness, as presented in dialogue with Cesar Pavese (1908–1950), the great Italian poet who witnessed the 1922 Turin Massacre when he was fourteen and subsequently became a specialist and promoter of American Literature as a way of countering fascism. Ang’s essay offers surprising parallels between Hill’s treatment of Pavese and Alexander Turing, when the other is like a code that must be deciphered. Peter Behrman de Sinéty deepens the reader’s understanding of *A Treatise of Civil Power* by a close exegesis of ‘In Memoriam: Ernst Barlach’ in which the focus is on ethical memory and memorializing. Finally, the closing contribution to this volume is an interview by Kenneth Haynes of Sir Geoffrey Hill, entitled, ‘On Péguy’ relating his first contact with Péguy and the beginnings of his long poem about him.

There is no doubt that literature-as-resistance is what Hill’s poetry aims at. Whether this be political resistance, à la Pavese, Bonhoeffer, or Péguy; or literary resistance, the ‘difficulty is our Plough’ of Yeats. In the case of both Hill and Yeats, the complete works offer an astounding *pièce-de-résistance*, to which this volume may act as a kind of *apéritif*. We invite readers to continue the banquet on their own. In fact, whether you are a specialist of modernism or not, the time to read this poetry is now.

The present challenge of continuing to educate students in the humanities, despite ongoing economic and structural constraints, also offers a unique vantage point from which to understand and savor modernist poetry. One may wonder to what extent literature, art, history, and culture will continue to exist, when in Universities in Europe and in the United States departments of humanities are closing, the study of foreign languages has diminished, and teachers of Latin and Greek as well as contemporary literature have difficulty finding work. In the United States, small liberal arts colleges are beginning to close,
such as Sweet Briar in Virginia (1901–1915) or Tennessee Temple University in Chattanooga (1946–2015). To what extent can educators or individuals guarantee that literary culture, as we know it today, will be preserved, given the continued closing of bookstores and even university libraries? Several academics even predict that literature will survive primarily in the interest of inspiring plots of new video games. In such a context, Hill’s words in *Speech! Speech!* (2000), ring out prophetically, possibly echoing Péguy’s *L’Argent* (1913), ‘What if Scattergood / Commodity took all?’ Later in the poem he ironically insisted, ‘Don’t say TIME / WIPES ALL THINGS CLEAN.’ Many educators place a great deal of hope in the digital humanities – and one need look no further than the excellent application of T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (Touchpress, 2011) for an example of their best use. Yet we should also be fully aware that electronic texts and applications do not bring only advantages. The age of the virtual cloud suggests that our virtual and actual memories are now all keyed into the fragility of machinery, branding, and finance. Although previously libraries were never totally stable entities, since they could and did burn, it was still relatively impossible to destroy all written records at once. In the age of virtual clouds, wiping out whole branches of knowledge may have become much easier. While it is agreeable to carry several thousand pages of text around in a lightweight electronic device, nothing guarantees that the e-culture we now enjoy will not one day also disappear. What then? The situation of cultural transmission and preservation is probably even bleaker than we have yet realized. Nonetheless: modernist poetry is a response, from within the humanities, to the tenants of modernity developed at the end of the nineteenth century. By its very nature modernist poetry affirms culture, from the origins of human text making until now. It requires concentration and thought to read a modernist text, and in that sense, it is an urgent call to participate in resisting the disappearance of cultivation and culture. In the great œuvres of Yeats and Hill, the reader will discover, in this aspect

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as well as in others, a passionate hope and appeal for a brighter future where the plurality of these European voices will endure.

The publication of this book was made possible with generous funding from the research group *Langues, Cultures, Histoire et Education*, which is part of the Catholic University of Paris’s research structure, *Religion, Culture et Société*. Elizabeth Muller and I wish to express our warmest thanks to Ineke Bockting for her kind encouragement for this project and for her help with the editorial process. We are also extremely grateful to Father Olivier Artus for his opening remarks at the beginning of the conference, and his delight at meeting our distinguished guests, Sir Geoffrey Hill and Dr. Kenneth Haynes.

Jennifer Kilgore-Caradec