

BEST-LOVED YEATS



selected by MAIRÉAD ASHE FITZGERALD

OBRIEN

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THE O'BRIEN PRESS
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WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

THE POET AND IRELAND

William Butler Yeats was born in 1865, the son of John Butler Yeats, an artist whose forebears were Protestant churchmen in Sligo, and Susan Pollexfen who belonged to a Sligo merchant family. The Yeats family was to make a unique contribution to the cultural and artistic life of twentieth century Ireland: William Butler Yeats became the greatest poet writing in English in the twentieth century; his brother, Jack Yeats was one of the most gifted Irish painters of modern times; his sisters, Elizabeth and Susan, devoted their lives to artistic endeavours and were the founders of The Cuala Press.

THE ENCHANTED LAND

William Butler Yeats's relationship with his native county was one of the main influences in shaping his future as a great poet. For the young emerging poet, Sligo was a place of enchantment. While his artist father, adored by his son, but mercurial and unreliable, moved his family between Sligo, Dublin and London, long summers were spent in Sligo, and it was Sligo that fired William's poetic imagination.

He filled his mind with the lore of the people of the Sligo countryside, people who had within them, as he wrote, 'the