

W.B. Yeats and the Learning of the Imagination

W.B. Yeats & the Learning of the Imagination by KATHLEEN RAINE



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At a time when Yeats studies are narrowing down the focus of interest to the minutiae of the poet's personal life, this book argues that by his 'learning of the Imagination' W.B. Yeats was not only a great poet but also a great imaginative mind. His work marks a cultural watershed in that where as English poetry up to and including Eliot drew upon European civilisation, Yeats additionally drew upon world culture: Irish mythology, Arabic, Japanese, Indian wisdom and much besides. The extent and import of his learning cannot, as the author argues, be appreciated by a mentality that merely reflects current materialist values. The Irish poet stood within a tradition of spiritual and esoteric knowledge which has been largely ignored by his critics making many of their judgements inappropriate. Kathleen Raine's words in this book distill for us the essence of Yeats's imagination. We appreciate not only the beauty of the poems of this great craftsman of words but also his desire to inspire the deepening of soul knowledge.