

The Woman's College of  
The University of North Carolina  
LIBRARY



CA  
no. 477

COLLEGE COLLECTION

Gift of  
Brian Joseph Benson

BENSON, BRIAN JOSEPH. An Examination of the Contributions of Lady Augusta Persse Gregory to the Development of the Irish National Theatre. (1967) Directed by: Dr. Robert Watson.  
pp. 71

Augusta Persse, Lady Gregory, was a leading figure in the development of the Irish National Theatre. Her humble beginnings at Coole Park, in 1898 where the seed of the movement was planted and nurtured led her through a series of personal triumphs. She began as an interested patron of the theatre, who gave vital support to the dream of William Butler Yeats and others for an all Irish Theatre, progressed to a directorship of the Irish stage, and concluded with a triumphant tour of America in 1911. The effort of these Irish literature enthusiast had succeeded by gaining the attention and admiration of the literary world.

At one time or another, she was financial backer, moral supporter, peace maker, publicity agent, and co-director, earning the respect and admiration of friend and foe alike. All these roles were taken by Lady Gregory from 1898 to 1912. During this time she helped to weather crises, secure popular support, engender legal negotiations for patents and the like, all for the promotion of the Irish National Theatre.

It is most fortunate that she chose as she did for it is difficult to imagine the birth of the theatre if she had not lent her administrative and organizational abilities to the Irish Dramatic Movement.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS  
OF LADY AUGUSTA PERSSE GREGORY  
TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IRISH NATIONAL THEATRE

by

Brian J. Benson

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the  
University of North Carolina at Greens-  
boro in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of  
Arts in the Department of English

Greensboro

June, 1967

Approved by:

Robert Watson

Director

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis has been approved by the following  
committee of the Faculty of the University of North  
Carolina, Greensboro, North Carolina.

Thesis  
Director

Robert W. Watson

Oral Examination  
Committee Members

James R. Ellis  
John B. Bryant

Converse D. Clouse

Robert W. Watson

May 3, 1967  
Date of Examination



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE. . . . .	iv
CHAPTER ONE. . . . .	1
CHAPTER TWO. . . . .	27
CHAPTER THREE. . . . .	52
APPENDIX ONE . . . . .	61
APPENDIX TWO . . . . .	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
(A) WORKS CITED . . . . .	64
(B) WORKS CONSULTED . . . . .	66

## PREFACE

Ample if not comprehensive studies have been made of the Irish dramatic movement which began around 1900. This transitional period in the history of the Irish theatre had far reaching consequences and is indeed unique in the history of literature. For this reason, many scholars have concentrated on the technical aspects of the movement with emphasis on outstanding contributors. Lately, research on William Butler Yeats's theatrical contributions has become increasingly significant. For this reason, I began a study of Yeats. In the course of reading I came upon the name of Augusta Persse, Lady Gregory. Attempts to discern her connections with Yeats led me to read The Irish Dramatic Movement by Una Ellis-Fermor, the most comprehensive study of the history of the movement.

Lady Gregory is mentioned to some extent but, from a scholarly standpoint, her actual role and connection with Yeats and others is quite vague and requires piecing together. One must discern the actual circumstances from her diary, Our Irish Theatre; Elizabeth Coxhead's biography, Lady Gregory; and notations from several volumes by Yeats among others. It seemed to me that there was a need to compile this material so that an inquisitive reader

might have little difficulty discerning the true nature of her relations with the Irish literary theatre movement and to present her contributions in a proper light. I found that, in actuality, she had been neglected, being overshadowed by the wake of the movement proper and by the fact that Yeats was such an outstanding peer.

Finding additional material has been extremely difficult. The volumes used contain a number of inaccuracies and contradictions especially autobiographies and volumes concerning the Irish theatre written by those who actually participated in the movement. J. M. Hone and Denis Gwynn, in particular, are often inaccurate in details and present a somewhat slanted view of the events of the theatre. For this reason, I have relied heavily on four volumes: Lady Gregory's Our Irish Theatre; Elizabeth Coxhead's Lady Gregory; A. E. Malone's The Irish Drama; and Una Ellis-Fermor's The Irish Dramatic Movement.

My original plan was to trace Lady Gregory's connection with the theatre from her historical meeting with Yeats and Edward Martyn in 1901, which led to the formulation of an Irish theatre, to her death in 1932. However, these plans had to undergo considerable alteration. She actually contributed to the success of the theatre after 1915 in name only, and the last significant contribution she made was to lead the Irish players on a tour of America in 1912, the termination point of this examination.

Lady Gregory also wrote a number of one-act and full-length plays, and collaborated with Yeats to write and translate into English many more. A detailed study of her plays is beyond the scope of this paper but a separate study needs to be made concerning her artistic contributions to the theatre.

The ensuing has been sub-divided into three sections. These are as follows:

Chapter One: Biographical material concerning Lady Gregory up until the time she and Yeats began formulating plans for an Irish National Theatre; a view of the several organizations and subsequent re-organizations of the Irish theatre in its formative years (the Irish Literary Theatre, 1899-1902, The Irish National Theatre Society, 1903, and the establishment of the permanent Abbey Theatre in Dublin); and a view of her role in the managerial, financial, and leadership needs at the time.

Chapter Two: An examination of Lady Gregory's concern with several controversies which threatened to end the aspirations of the theatre group. These controversies include: The Playboy of the Western World, The Shewing

Up of Blanco Posnet, and the conflicts during the tour of America supervised by Lady Gregory which the Irish players made in 1912.

Chapter Three: A summary of Lady Gregory's contribution to the financial, managerial, and popular receptional aspects of the Theatre. Historical and critical estimates including notations from Malone, Jones, Martyn, and Yeats are given.

I have also included, for the benefit of the reader, several appendices which summarize the organizations of the theatre up until its culmination as the Abbey Theatre and a chronological chart of the most outstanding events involving Lady Gregory during this period. Although the charts will be helpful for the reader's understanding of the Irish Theatre Movement, their purpose is obviously secondary. The major concerns of the thesis are the contributions of Lady Gregory.

CHAPTER ONE  
THE FORMATIVE YEARS, 1901 - 1907

In tracing the role of Lady Augusta Gregory as a leading figure in the Irish National Theatre's development, it is important to note the circumstances of her heritage, through her birth; to indicate the social milieu which her marriage brought to her; and to give a brief overview of the types of writing which constituted her first literary efforts. That type of approach seems logical when one attempts to specify the importance of the formative years, 1901-1907, with respect to their impact on her emerging importance as a significant patron and writer of Irish literature.

Augusta Persse was born March 15, 1852, at Roxboro, County Galway, Ireland as the daughter of Dudley Persse, a wealthy protestant landholder. She matured in an atmosphere of luxury and leisure. Her interests turned toward the Irish countryside and the persons who inhabited it.<sup>1</sup> The local grandeur of the Irish countryside brought her in contact with native and rustic Irish folklore, as practiced by Irish folk characters. This exposure impressed her

---

<sup>1</sup>Andrew E. Malone, The Irish Drama (London, 1929), pp. 55-56.



deeply and caused her to develop an abiding and consummate passion for the lore of the Irish peasant, in particular.<sup>2</sup>

She continued her interest in folklore after her marriage to Sir William Gregory, who gained recognition as an outstanding politician and administrator. He possessed a thorough knowledge of men and public affairs, and at one time served as Governor of Ceylon. He had many acquaintances throughout Europe, and taking Lady Gregory with him, he introduced her to the upper echelon of British political and literary circles. Sir William thus managed to move her into a distinguished intellectual realm and into "a larger world where her energies were suddenly wholly engaged in acquiring from him and through him larger ideas and social, administrative, and intellectual skills."<sup>3</sup> No biography covers this period of her life adequately. Consequently, little is known about her during this time of intellectual and social growth, but it is evident that her abiding interests remained with the Irish people and their literature.

Sir William died in 1892 leaving her with a son, Robert, and an estate at Coole Park. She began to occupy her time with literature, editing and publishing her husband's memoirs in 1894. Next, she undertook to edit her grandfather's

---

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 52-53.

<sup>3</sup>Herbert Howarth, The Irish Writers 1880-1940. (New York, 1959), p. 84.

letters, published in 1898 as Mr. Gregory's Letter Box. She also began to compile folk legends and peasant stories and made some progress in the next several years toward publishing these collections.<sup>4</sup> These collected folk tales and songs proved to be invaluable as a major source of the dialects found in the New Irish Drama.<sup>5</sup>

Lady Gregory's concern with local legends and close relationship with her late husband's circle of literary enthusiasts, the most notable being William Butler Yeats, formed the basis for her contributions to the Irish Dramatic movement. These circumstances, the deep passion for the common folk of Ireland, exposure to literary circles, and proximity to men like Douglas Hyde and Edward Martyn, who nourished the concept of an Irish literary renaissance, served to prepare Lady Gregory for later developments. She herself said these meetings and private conversations offered " . . . the principal opportunity of sharing in what was going on [in Irish literary circles]." <sup>6</sup>

Another set of circumstances served to solidify her feelings about Ireland and to increase her desire to "do

---

<sup>4</sup>In 1902, her publication of Cuchulain of Muemthermue was issued. At this time she was more intensely aware of the need for an Irish theatre. She did find time to compile several volumes: Poets and Dreamers in 1903; Gods and Fighting Men in 1904; A Book of Saints and Wonders in 1906; The Kiltartan History Book in 1909; and The Kiltartan Poetry Book in 1919.

<sup>5</sup>Malone, p. 58.

<sup>6</sup>Elizabeth Coxhead, Lady Gregory (New York, 1951), p. 45.

something for the country."<sup>7</sup> Two years after her husband's death, she gained a mastery of the Gaelic language. Of course, it was too late for her to become a linguistic scholar in Gaelic but she developed the skill to "follow conversations, ask questions, read a modern text, and translate from it [the text] into English."<sup>8</sup>

Finally, "the starting point [of the Irish Dramatic Movement] for Lady Gregory and for many like her was the publication of two books in 1898: W. B. Yeats' The Celtic Twilight and Douglas Hyde's Love Songs of Cúnnacht."<sup>9</sup> From The Celtic Twilight she learned more thoroughly about offerings of the folk-lore tradition in Ireland; and The Love Songs, which contained beautiful lyrical passages increased her interest in native Irish poetry. After reading the Songs she said, "I realized that while I had thought poetry was all but dead in Ireland the people about me had been keeping up with the lyrical tradition that [has] existed in Ireland since Chaucer."<sup>10</sup> She realized that she had been virtually unaware of these untapped literary resources saying " . . . it does not comfort me to think how many besides myself

---

<sup>7</sup>Malone, p. 58.

<sup>8</sup>Coxhead, p. 39.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>10</sup>Howarth, p. 37.

having spent a lifetime in Ireland must make this confession."<sup>11</sup>  
 She managed to contribute several collections of Irish mythology in the course of her life and helped to popularize the literature.

These Irish cultural examinations, the folk-lore tradition in particular, constituted for Lady Gregory " . . . the small beginnings of a weighty change. It was an upsetting of the table of values . . . ." Of these experiences she said:

"My own imagination was aroused. I was becoming conscious of a world close to me . . . that I had been ignorant of. It was not now in the corner of a newspaper I looked for poetic emotion . . . . It was among the farmers and potato diggers and men in workhouses and beggars at my own door that drawing room poet of my childhood [Moore] in the expression of love, and grief, and the pain of parting that are the disclosure of the individual soul."<sup>12</sup>

We have seen that Lady Gregory's preparation for her involvement with the Irish theatre movement was nearly complete. It now seems appropriate to note that at this time there was a movement toward an Irish literary renaissance and Lady Gregory happened, by circumstance, to have prepared herself culturally and intellectually to contribute to the early successes of the movement. Why was there a need for an Irish Renaissance? "The [later] explanation given by both Yeats and Lady Gregory, and repeated by historians

---

<sup>11</sup>Coxhead, p. 43.

<sup>12</sup>Preface to the Kiltartan Poetry Book.

after them, is that the Nationalist Urge, disappointed by the overthrow of Parnell, converted itself into an imaginative and creative urge, that people turned to art and literature because they were sickened of politics."<sup>13</sup>

Lady Gregory herself said in Hugh Lane's Life and Achievement: "There had become a setting loose of the mind, of the imagination, that had for so long dwelt upon some battle at Westminster or some disputed farm."<sup>14</sup>

In Ireland proper, this theatrical enthusiasm coincided with "the last flickers of a dying language, and the far from dying tradition of a strong folk-culture and memory; and the researches of scholars immediately preceding them had brought to light an ancient literature which would be an inspiration and starting point."<sup>15</sup>

The next step was to be one of the most important in the movement, for the meeting between Yeats and Lady Gregory led to concrete action toward the formulation of an Irish theatre. The details are faithfully Ireland in her Diary. She said: " . . . we sat there through that afternoon, and though I had never been at all interested in theatre, our talk turned on plays."<sup>16</sup> Among the subjects discussed was

---

<sup>13</sup>Coxhead, p. 40. Parnell was an Irish Nationalist who gained the favor of the common folk of Ireland.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>16</sup>Lady Gregory, Our Irish Theatre, (New York, 1913), pp. 6-7.



the fact that Edward Martyn's The Heather Field and Maeve could not be produced in Ireland for no theatre or Irish actors were available. Lady Gregory recalled that "I said it was a pity we had no Irish theatre where such plays could be given." Yeats admitted that he had often dreamed of such a theatre; but he said that it began to seem more impossible than ever when he realized that "it could not at first pay its way, and there was no money to be found for such a thing in Ireland."<sup>17</sup>

Yeats said in his autobiography<sup>18</sup> that " . . . even before I arrived [Lady Gregory] began collecting for me, stories of fairy belief. At this moment, I have believed . . . that she came in reply to the invocations [for creativity]."<sup>19</sup> She first appealed to Yeats as possessing a mind and personality directly attributable to her social and historical memories,<sup>20</sup> being humble and proud to the point of snobbery. He said: "Lady Gregory, as I first knew her, was a plain dressed woman of forty-five, without obvious good looks, except the charm that comes from strength, intelligence, and kindness."<sup>21</sup> The only point which he failed to discern from their first

---

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>W. B. Yeats, Dramatis Personae, (New York, 1936), pp. 15-16.

<sup>19</sup>W. B. Yeats, Autobiography.

<sup>20</sup>Torchiana, p. 93.

<sup>21</sup>Dramatis Personae, p. 10.



meetings was her faithfulness in the role of a servant of Ireland.<sup>22</sup>

The two continued their discussion with growing enthusiasm and formulated some plans, hoping "to collect money or rather ask to have a certain sum of money guaranteed." If successful they would obtain a theatre in Dublin and present Martyn's Heather Field and Yeats's, The Countess Cathleen.

Lady Gregory and Yeats then issued a statement to the general public spelling out the aims of the group. It went as follows:

We propose to have performed in Dublin, in the spring of every year certain Celtic and Irish plays, which whatever be their degree of excellence will be written with a high ambition, and so to build up a Celtic and Irish school of dramatic literature. We hope to find in Ireland an uncorrupted and imaginative audience trained to listen by its passion for oratory, and believe that our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure for us a tolerant welcome, and that freedom to experiment which is not found in theatres of England, and without which no new movement in art or literature can succeed. We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism. We are confident of the support of all Irish people, who are weary of misrepresentation, in carrying out a work that is outside all the political questions that divide us.<sup>23</sup>

Several days later, Yeats returned to Coole and he and Lady Gregory drafted a formal letter requesting financial

---

<sup>22</sup>W. B. Yeats, A Vision, (London, 1956), p. 169-70.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 8-9.

assistance. The bulk of the subscription list came from her circle of friends and during her trips with Sir William, and they were influential enough to bring great attention to the cause. A guarantee fund of £ 300 was asked for the experiment which they hoped would last three years. It is notable that no more than that amount was asked for and people from every class felt that they were being called on to support the theatre.<sup>24</sup> The first person Lady Gregory wrote to was Aubrey de Vere, a noted Irish poet. He replied:

"Whatever develops the genius of Ireland, must in the most effectual way benefit her; and in Ireland's genius I have long been a strong believer. Circumstances of very various sorts have hitherto tended much to retard the development of that genius; but it cannot fail to make itself recognized before very long, and Ireland will have cause for gratitude to all those who have hastened the coming of that day."<sup>25</sup>

Promissory notes came trickling in although most were contributed in the spirit of good will with little faith in the outcome of the idea. A letter from a writer of historical romance, demonstrates this general feeling: He said,

"I enclose a cheque for one pound, but confess it is more as a proof of regard for you than of belief in the drama, for I cannot with the best wish in the world to do so, feel hopeful on that subject. My experience has been that any attempt at treating Irish history is a fatal handicap, not to say absolute bar, to anything in the shape of popularity, and I cannot see how any

---

<sup>24</sup>Malone, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup>Gregory, p. 10.

drama can flourish which is not to some degree supported by the public, as it is even more dependent on it than literature is. There are popular Irish dramatists, of course, and very popular ones, but then unhappily they did not treat of Irish subjects, and The School for Scandal and She Stoops to Conquer would hardly come under your category. You will think me very discouraging, but I cannot help it, and I am also afraid that putting plays experimentally on the boards is a very costly entertainment. Where will they be acted in the first instance? And has any stage manager undertaken to produce them? Forgive my tiresomeness; it does not come from want of sympathy, only from a little want of hope, the result of experience."<sup>26</sup>

The wheels had been set in motion. Lady Gregory asked Yeats what he wished her to do to promote the movement other than guaranteeing £25. He could offer no concrete suggestions so she helped whenever possible. Coole became the center for both the ideas and mechanical operations of the movement.<sup>27</sup>

Yeats said that she contributed so much through her personal "magnificence, greatness of soul". He continued saying that Ireland was in political and social chaos at the turn of the century but she had the "soul" to offer her services.

She typed the drafts and speeches on her Remington; provided words when they failed Yeats; and constantly looked for some gap to fill.<sup>28</sup> All she managed to do was get the

---

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>27</sup>Malone, p. 57.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

tasks at hand done and "she remained to the end of her life a connoisseur in nobility in living and in thought."<sup>29</sup> Yeats recorded in Dramatis Personae that "during these first years Lady Gregory was friend and hostess, a center of peace, an advisor who never underestimated or overestimated trouble." He also felt that her task at the beginning was to provide suitable conditions for men of genius to work in.<sup>30</sup> Her unflinching devotion and will served to keep the movement together in the early days. Her position was unenviable because many personality conflicts and financial problems arose. She said what mattered was doing one's best work and she gave Yeats money from time to time. Eventually Yeats owed her £500 and, with great embarrassment at having accumulated so great a debt, toured on a lecture series to re-pay her.<sup>31</sup>

Lady Gregory continued to receive subscriptions primarily from her circle of friends to guarantee backing of the Irish Literary Theatre. Here, her great powers of persuasion was complemented by an equally substantial organizational ability with the result that the 300 was guaranteed.<sup>32</sup>

When Yeats and Martyn went to Dublin to carry out some

---

<sup>29</sup>Yeats "Modern Ireland" Mass Review, V. (Winter, 1960) p. 259.

<sup>30</sup>Dramatis Personae (New York) p. 38.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>32</sup>Malone, p. 59.

of their plans, problems immediately arose. First, it seemed that the possibility of obtaining a theatre was remote. The only theatres in Dublin, the Gaiety, Royal, and the Queen's, were booked solid for several months. This was just as well, however, because the price of rental was beyond Yeats's and Martyn's means. They then considered the possibility of securing a concert hall but legal problems prevented such a move. An act, passed before Union, placed a fine of 300 on any individual or group who charged admission for a performance given in any unlicensed building. Unfortunately, the only licensed theatres in Dublin were the three mentioned and the only means by which a license could be obtained was by hiring lawyers to argue the case before the Council of Dublin. They were further discouraged to learn that even charities were forced to rent one of the three theatres for their benefits. Friends suggested that a Stage Society be formed to give performances for members only, but Lady Gregory and the others felt this would not be a fit beginning for the theatre.<sup>33</sup> An Irish member of Parliament, T. M. Healy, wrote to Yeats saying:

"I am acquainted with the state of the law in Dublin which I should gladly assist to alter as proposed. Whether the Government are equally well disposed may be doubted, as the subject

---

<sup>33</sup>Gregory, p. 17.



is a little outside their Bill, and no adequate time exists for discussing it and many other important questions."<sup>34</sup>

Lady Gregory wrote a letter at the time saying: "I am all for having the Act repealed or a Bill brought in, empowering the municipality to license halls when desirable."<sup>35</sup> Within a year after she set to work on this seemingly impossible task, she actually succeeded in having the legal obstruction removed. She wrote to a member of Parliament, a Mr. Lecky, who was an old friend of her husband, for advice.<sup>36</sup> He informed her that a Bill was before the House of Commons which could have a clause added to meet the needs of her company. The passage, the first actual break for the group, proved to be the initial legal foundation for the committee.

In 1898, a clause was inserted by Mr. Clancy, a Nationalist. Mr. Lecky wrote:

"I have not been forgetting the Celtic Theatre and I think the enclosed Clause, which the Government have brought forward, will practically meet its requirements. The Attorney-General objected to Mr. Clancy's Clause as too wide and as interfering with existing patent rights, but promised [to attach] a Clause authorizing amateur acting. I wrote to him, however, stating the Celtic case, and urging that writers should be able, like those who got up the Ibsen plays in London,

---

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Yeats credits her with the passage of the bill in Dramatis Personae, p. 18.



to get regular actors to play for them, and I think this Clause will allow it . . . After Clause 49 insert the following Clause: (1) Notwithstanding anything in the Act of Parliament of Ireland of the twenty-sixth year of King George the Third, Chapter fifty-seven, instituted an Act for regulating the stage in the city and county of application of the council for the county of Dublin or the county Borough of Dublin grant an occasional license for the performance of any stage play or other dramatic entertainment in any theatre, room or building where the profits arising therefrom are to be applied for charitable purpose or in aid of the funds of any society instituted for the purpose of science, literature, or the fine arts exclusively. (2) The license may contain such conditions and regulations as appear fit to the Lord Lieutenant, and may be revoked by him."

The Clause passed and fulfilled its purpose admirably until the Abbey Theatre was able to obtain its own patent. With legal rights assured, the group could begin operating. The title, the Irish Literary Theatre, was provided by Edward Martyn; the general plan was developed from Yeats' conversations with Lady Gregory, while George Moore assisted in procuring actors and a rehearsal hall in London but soon lost all patriotic interest in the enterprise. Edward Martyn favored the plays of Ibsen and the popular continental drama while Yeats and Lady Gregory stood firm in their convictions asserting that the Theatre should be purely Irish. These four, however, managed to agree long enough to continue the experiment for three years and, under Lady Gregory's firm hand, to receive financial and popular

support for it.<sup>37</sup> Yeats later indicated that if it had not been for her disarming personality and perserverance to the cause, the movement would never have emerged from obscurity, let alone have prevailed as long as it did.<sup>38</sup>

After these difficulties, the first performance was set for May 8, 1899, almost one year following the gathering at Lady Gregory's. The two plays selected for production were Yeats's The Countess Cathleen and Martyn's Heather Field. Although George Moore solved the problem of finding actors and a rehearsal hall in London, further difficulties quickly arose. The Countess Cathleen was attacked on the grounds of religious unorthodoxy. The plot reads: "During a famine in Ireland some starving country people, having been tempted by demons, dressed as merchants to sell their souls for money that their bodies may be saved from perishing. The Countess Cathleen sells her own soul to redeem theirs, and dies."<sup>39</sup> The play was accused as being a libel against the people of Ireland which intimated that they would consent to sell their souls and " . . . it was a libel on

---

<sup>37</sup>M. Gassners, Masterpieces of Drama (New York, 1937), p. 545. "The Irish Literary Drama will appeal rather to the intellect than to the senses. It will eventually, it is hoped, furnish a vehicle for the literary expression of the national thought and ideals of Ireland such as has not hitherto been in press-cuttings (See Appendix 6).

<sup>38</sup>Ernest Boyd, The Contemporary Drama of Ireland (Dublin, 1919), p. 124.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-21.

the demons that they counted the soul of a countess of more worth than those of the poor." At Cathleen's death the play tells us, "God looks on the intention, not the deed." She is then forgiven and enters Heaven, a development supposedly contrary to the teachings of the Church.

Lady Gregory attempted to smooth over the controversy, which helped to bring attention to the group. She said, "It was a stormy beginning for an enterprise, and a rough reception for a poetic play."<sup>40</sup> She recalled that the controversy soon died down and the Countess Cathleen was performed many times afterward with no adverse comments. Many years later she said of this experience and with authority that she herself had seen "hills in comparison with which you'll call this a valley."<sup>41</sup> In fact she recognized some of the more enthusiastic members of the audience as being formerly staunch hispers.<sup>42</sup> The Theatre was gaining popularity, even in time of crisis, being supported by every faction, party, and in the country at the time, thanks to Lady Gregory's promotional abilities.<sup>43</sup> They decided to never yield to public

---

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 24-25.

<sup>41</sup>Fermor, p. 48. The reviews were generally kind. The most interesting reviews are available in The Saturday Review, May 13, 1899, The Express, The Nation, The Freeman on the same date and The Saturday Review "Literary Ideals in Ireland," p. 37 of Fermor.

<sup>42</sup>Gregory, p. 25.

<sup>43</sup>Malone, p. 84.

opinion, a decision which brought much controversy to the Abbey; but as Yeats and Lady Gregory both confirmed, the theatre was determined to produce drama judged meritorious by its leaders whether extreme Irish Nationalists, English or Irish moral critics or any others objected."<sup>44</sup>

The following year, English actors were secured to perform in the Gaiety Theatre. On February 20th and 21st, 1900, Mulligan's The Last Feasts of the Fianna, Martyn's Maeve, and Moore's The Bending of the Bough were presented. The Bending of the Bough, according to Lady Gregory, was the first play performed by the group which dealt with the Irish question of independence. In 1901, Mr. F. R. Benson undertook to develop Diarmid and Grania, a heroic play by Yeats and Moore which Lady Gregory records was the first play written using an Irish subject to be performed in a Dublin theatre.<sup>45</sup>

The three year experiment ended. Lady Gregory remarked of it, " . . . a breaking and rebuilding is often for the best, and so it was now. We had up to this time, as I have said, played only once a year and had engaged actors from London, some of them Irish certainly, but all London trained. The time had come to play oftener and to train actors of our

---

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Gregory, p. 29.

own."<sup>46</sup> In Samhain, 1901, she and Yeats made this need known to the general public.

The original Irish Literary Theatre ended and new plans had to be formulated. The society was reborn as the Irish National Dramatic Company which soon took the name the Irish National Theatre Society founded in 1902. It was founded, to "continue - if possible on a more permanent basis - the work begun by the Irish Literary Theatre."<sup>47</sup>

Yeats and Lady Gregory could have rested on their laurels but a more permanent theatre was needed. Lady Gregory's introduction to The Image, a local color Irish play, demonstrates her high ambitions. She said, ". . . But if the dreamer had never tried to tell the dream that had come across him, even though to 'betray his secret to the multitude' most shatter his own perfect vision, the world would grow clogged and dull with the weight of flesh and clay. And so we must say 'God love you' to the Image-makers, for one does not live by the shining of those scattered fragments of their dream." She and Yeats maintaining their vision to "restore dignity to Ireland" began the next phase of the movement.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>The Image: A Play in Three Acts (Dublin, 1910), pp. 100-101.



Two brothers living in Dublin, William and Frank Fay, who were part-time playwrights met Lady Gregory and Yeats. The brothers had thought of seeking employment in America, but had seen the Irish theatre performances, and thought that it might be feasible to create a school of drama in Ireland. Yeats agreed and the Irish National Dramatic Company was founded. In the Irish National Dramatic Company, Yeats found all that he needed to make his appeal to the people, with the materials drawn from the lives of the people. In a short time, Lady Gregory formally entered the group. Neither George Moore nor Edward Martyn had any part in it. They had just dropped out when the Literary Theatre was allowed to lapse. "There was no open breach, no quarrel amongst the four people who had directed the theatre."<sup>49</sup> Mr. W. G. Fay was ready when his chance came and when his brother also became enthusiastic, they took advantage of it. The Irish Literary Theatre and The Fays converged to give to Ireland "A drama and a group of actors which was temperamentally and technically adopted to the interpretations of that drama."<sup>50</sup>

Lady Gregory observed that interest was continuing and suggested that more concrete plans be formulated intimating that "if all breaks up, we must try and settle something with

---

<sup>49</sup>Donald T. Torchina, W. B. Yeats and Georgian Ireland (Evanston, 1966), p. 70.

<sup>50</sup>Malone, p. 89.



Fay, possibly a week of the little plays he has been doing through the spring."<sup>51</sup> Her suggestions were taken seriously and in May 1903, the Irish National Theatre Society travelled to London for the first time. The players left Dublin on a Friday night, arrived in London on Saturday morning, played in the afternoon, and again in the evening at the Queen's Gate Hall, and were back at work in Dublin on Monday morning. The plays taken were: Fred Ryan's Laying The Foundations, Yeats' Hour Glass, Pot of Broth, Kathleen Ni Houlihan, and Twenty-Five. Lady Gregory was not able to be present for the performances but Yeats wrote to her saying, "The plays were a great success. I never saw a more enthusiastic audience. I send you some papers [with reviews of the plays] . . . when I remember the notices I have seen of literary adventures on the stage. I think them better than we could have hoped."<sup>52</sup>

In a sense, the London press assured the success of the Irish National Theatre Society. The plays became the talk of London. Reviewer, A. B. Walkley, said in the Times that " . . . a little band of Irish men and women, strangers to London and to Londoners, gave some of us [the more frequent theatre goers] a few moments of delight outside the range

---

<sup>51</sup>Gregory, p. 47.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

of anything which these houses have to offer."

This triumph for the young Irish players and the Irish drama inspired the group to continue the project. By the end of 1903, Yeats, Lady Gregory, and the Fays were constantly improving the quality of the New Irish Theatre and formulating the principles which would result in a permanent Abbey Theatre. These theories were important but the primary concern was with the traditions in acting, producing, and settings handled by Yeats and the Fays, and the theatre policy and promotion managed by Lady Gregory. In her words, "we went on giving what we thought good until it became popular."<sup>53</sup>

It must be recalled, however, that the conditions under which they worked were uncomfortable at best. There was poor lighting and makeshift costumes and a constant threat of disaster from all sources. Lady Gregory said that "often near midnight - after the theatre had closed, I have gone around to the newspaper offices, asking as a favor that notices might be put in, for we could pay for but few advertisements. Often I have gone out by the stage door when the curtain was up, and come round into the auditorium by the front hall, hoping that in the dimness I might pass for a new arrival and so encourage a few, scattered people in the stalls."<sup>54</sup> She demonstrated her

---

<sup>53</sup>Gregory, p. 42.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 46-47.

own perserverance with a maxim directed toward her easily discouraged charges which stated "Grip is a good dog, but Hold Fast is a better."

Perhaps the most significant result of the London performances was the interest shown by Miss Horniman, a wealthy Londoner. After the performances she told Yeats, whom she greatly admired, that if the group would remain together for yet another year she would provide a theatre for them. She stated that "I can only afford to make a very little theatre, and it must be quite simple. You must do all the rest to make a powerful and prosperous theatre with a high artistic ideal."<sup>55</sup> The efforts of the week-end players were justified. The promised support was really all the players and directors needed as Lady Gregory had foreseen for "their own genius and indomitable will did the rest."<sup>56</sup>

Miss Horniman was as good as her word and the generosity of an Englishwoman provided a theatre for the Irish. The Mechanics Institute on Abbey Street, Dublin, was selected. It had at one time been a cultural center but had been reduced to a low-class theatre. She also secured the adjoining building which had been the city morgue. The reconstruction process was handled by Mr. Joseph Holloway, a noted Dublin architect and frequenter of the theatre. The total cost has been estimated at £13,000, a sum of money which would have

---

<sup>55</sup>Gregory, p. 39.

<sup>56</sup>Fermor, p. 46.

been impossible to secure without the assistance of Miss Horniman.

The theatre building was now available but certain legal hurdles had to be overcome. In Dublin a new theatre could not be opened to the public without a patent from the Crown of England. This theatrical law, from the Irish Parliament of 1782-1800, proved a severe test. Of course, the existing Dublin theatres were violently opposed to the granting of a patent. The opposition began its attack by condemning certain plays on grounds of immorality. These accusations were received by Dublin with little interest. Finally, as Lady Gregory notes in a letter to Yeats, a request for the patent was placed before the Privy Council in August, 1904.

The patent was granted, after stiff opposition, with Lady Gregory as Patentee. She recalled that she was "engendered and commanded to gather, entertain, govern, privilege, and keep such and so many players." She also was requested "not to put on the stage any exhibition of wild beasts or dangerous performances or to allow women or children to be hung from the flies or fixed in positions from which they cannot release themselves." The granters concluded saying, "It being our Royal will and pleasure that for the future our said Theatre may be instrumental to the promotion of virtue and instruction of human life."<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup>Gregory, p. 42.

The construction of the theatre and the legal negotiations were going on simultaneously. Lady Gregory and Yeats both succeeded in their quest to allow new laws to replace strictly political ones.<sup>58</sup>

The new theatre, called the Abbey, opened its doors to the public on the evening of December 27th, 1904, and remained open for one week. Four one act plays were performed: On Baile's Strand and Cathleen Ni Houlihan, by W. B. Yeats; Spreading the News by Lady Gregory; and In the Shadow of the Glen by J. M. Synge. In the program appeared the name of these three directors who dominated the policy and promotion of the theatre for many years.<sup>59</sup>

Lady Gregory was ill and unable to attend the first performances.<sup>60</sup> Yeats wrote to her saying, "The company are very disappointed that you will not be up for the first night. Fay says they would all act better if you were here."<sup>61</sup> Yeats also stated that the opening was highly successful and that he had never seen such an enthusiastic audience.

---

<sup>58</sup>A letter to Lady Gregory dated August, 1904.

<sup>59</sup>Gregory, pp. 24-25.

<sup>60</sup>"The Late Lady Gregory," An Phabhlacht, 28 May, 1932, p. 5. She contributed imagery from her folk lore collections and phrases like "They shall be remembered for-ever" in Yeats's Cathleen Ni Houlihan.

<sup>61</sup>Gregory, p. 43.



It was now up to the directors, producers, and players to continue their work. Building an audience was not easy. Lady Gregory noted that "one night there were so few in any part of the house that the players were for dismissing them and giving no performance at all. But we played after all, and just after the play began, three or four priests from the country came in . . . they came round afterwards and told us how good they thought the work was . . . ."62

The final transition came about in 1905. The Irish National Theatre Society became the National Theatre Society Limited, The Abbey. There was nowhere in Europe such a group of people who were so qualified to develop a new drama whose purpose was so appreciated that the actors and theatre workers toiled without pay. The courage of the organization assured a measure of success from the beginning.<sup>63</sup>

Lady Gregory and others continued to promote the theatre in many ways by providing nearly half the plays staged and also playing a vital role in the management and inspiration of players until a major crisis developed in the rioting over the production of Synge's Playboy of the Western World in 1907.<sup>64</sup> She herself stated that there had not always been peace in the theatre, for "breaking and rebuilding, . . . is in the course of nature, and one must think all

---

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>63</sup>Fermor, p. 47.

<sup>64</sup>Malone, pp. 15-16.

for good in the end." At times of discord she said, "I am myself a lover of peace so long as it is not the peace of a dead body." She closes her chapter in Our Irish Theatre with "The Theatre in the Making" after reviewing the early work of the theatre up until the Playboy controversy saying "This is how I came to work for a National Theatre in Ireland and how that Theatre began."<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup>Gregory, pp. 45-53.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THREE CRUCIAL EVENTS

#### (A) THE PLAYBOY CONTROVERSY

During the next several years three events of great importance to the theatre occurred. These were: first, the controversy with Nationalist groups over John Millington Synge's The Playboy of the Western World in 1907; second, a somewhat different controversy with the officials of Dublin Castle over the production of George Bernard Shaw's The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet in 1909; and, finally, the tour of America made by the Abbey players in 1911 which resulted in the settlement of former controversies and established the artistic supremacy of the company.<sup>1</sup>

Lady Gregory played a significant role in each of the crises, the details of which will be given in three sections of this chapter but, in the way of introduction, an overview is necessary. She defended the right to present controversial plays on the Irish stage during The Playboy crisis and kept the spirits of the entire production assembly from falling into despair. Following this triumph, she

---

<sup>1</sup>Ellis-Fermor, p. 46.

and Yeats engineered another successful defense of the Irish theatre against the complicated legal devices employed by the Dublin Castle Officials in an attempt to deny them the right to certain performances on the Irish stage. Finally, Lady Gregory gained universal recognition for herself and the Abbey players during a highly successful tour of America. After these stormy years, the Abbey Theatre became firmly entrenched in the repertory world but much effort had been put forth. The circumstances surrounding the germination, development, and result of each of these crises will be examined from an historical standpoint with emphasis primarily on those events with which Lady Gregory became personally involved.

The Abbey Theatre began to develop a fine reputation in the years following the foundation of its permanent home. However, by late 1906, there was increasing opposition to the productions offered to the Irish public. John M. Synge, among others, had been writing controversial plays which were not exactly complimentary to the Irish National character. The Nationalist party felt extreme indignation over Synge's latest offering, The Playboy of the Western World, slated for production in early 1907. The opposition set out to censor the Abbey production with the only available means, mob violence, and to slander the reputation of the theatre on political grounds.

Synge brought the play to Dublin in November 1906 for

a first reading by the directors of the Abbey Theatre. Yeats and Lady Gregory found that it was necessary to omit many of the objectional sentences.<sup>2</sup> She admitted, "we were almost bewildered by its abundance and fantasy, but we felt . . . there was far too much bad language [i.e. violent oaths]." <sup>3</sup>

All historic and critical documentaries confirm that Lady Gregory was, indeed, disturbed by the "bad language."<sup>4</sup> She was not present at rehearsals but assumed that her recommendations were complied to in their entirety. Synge agreed to make a number of deletions but he failed to make the more important ones. Later after viewing the first performance, Lady Gregory told him that many more omissions had to be made. It was too late in a sense but he gave his word and she said, ". . . I took out many phrases which . . . have never since . . . been spoken on our stage."<sup>5</sup> Synge also included in later performances, at Lady Gregory's insistence, a program note concerning the language of the play but it created more controversy than enlightenment.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Maurice Bourgeois, John Millington Synge and the Irish Theatre (London, 1913), p. 200.

<sup>3</sup>Our Irish Theatre, p. 133.

<sup>4</sup>The Irish Writers, p. 230.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>6</sup>David A. Greene and Edward M. Stephens, J. M. Synge (New York, 1959). p. 236. (The text of the program note is found on the page cited).



The general plot of The Playboy is relatively uncomplicated. Christy Mahon, an illiterate farmer, confesses that he has brawled with his father and has slain him with a loy. Pageen Mike bethrothed to Michael Jerus, a man she detests, becomes interested in Christy. His act of parricide, supposedly committed because he would have been forced to marry one he didn't love, sets him apart from the other young men. The peasant women swoon over their new-found idol but Pageen has won his heart. The father, very much alive, comes to the village and attempts to humiliate Christy before the villagers. Pageen and his former admirers shun Christy, prompting him to attack his father for the second time. He enjoys no more success than he did in the first attempt and the play ends with the Mahons departing in shame to wander the world.

The particular objections to the play centered around common criticisms. Several words and phrases which bore religious, moral and political overtones came, as expected, under severe criticism; and the presentation of parricide as an admirable act under the guise of the ignoble character portrayals of the Irish peasantry raised the ire of the Nationalists.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Synge's insolent attitude helped to personalize the emotional tensions which erupted on the opening night.

---

<sup>7</sup>John Millington Synge, pp. 200-201.

The opening performance on January 26, 1907, began calmly enough. Lady Gregory and her following breathed a little easier. Yeats was lecturing in Scotland and, by necessity, she was the one to defend the play if need be.<sup>8</sup> Synge himself was ill and totally unable to defend it. Consequently, the grand lady began to feel the weight rather than the prestige of command.

There were no disturbances until the third act. Lady Gregory telegraphed Yeats after the first act saying, "play great success" but it was a premature optimism. The audience exploded in anger when the word "shift" was used. The next day, a Freeman reporter stated that "one of the characters makes use of a word that no refined woman would mention, even to herself."<sup>9</sup> Afterward, there was some applause but the mood was angry.<sup>10</sup> The rumbling of the audience left Lady Gregory and Synge particularly shaken fearing the worst was yet to come and it was.

Immediately after the final curtain, Lady Gregory and Synge took counsel and decided to go on with the production after sending Yeats a telegram requesting his immediate return to Dublin.

---

<sup>8</sup>Lady Gregory, p. 124.

<sup>9</sup>The Irish Writers, p. 231. Note: The word shift had several Irish connotations not understood by the average reader. The anti-Parnellites had waved a shift as a banner for their cause.

<sup>10</sup>Synge, p. 23.

Mr. Howard Howarth stated flatly that Yeats had "managed" to be absent for the opening performance and "While she resolutely kept the play running against organized interruptions," he quickly returned to Dublin.<sup>11</sup> She was all for requesting police protection and Synge offered no objection. The papers helped to add fuel to the controversy by being very critical of the opening performance. Emotions were running high.

The opposition was more organized to the second performance which went smoothly through the first act. The uproar began with the rising of the curtain for the second act. Lady Gregory said, "It was impossible to hear a word of the play. The curtain came down for a minute but I went round and told the actors to go on playing to the end, even if not one word could be heard."<sup>12</sup> The police moved in but Lady Gregory felt that the disturbers would soon tire themselves out so she ordered the police outside. Unfortunately as she notes, "The disturbance lasted to the end of the evening, not one word being heard after the first ten minutes."<sup>13</sup> William Fay, who was portraying Christy, stepped forward and appealed to the audience for quiet. Many persons

---

<sup>11</sup>The Irish Writers, p. 226.

<sup>12</sup>Our Irish Theatre, p. 113.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

criticized Lady Gregory for not rising and making the appeal herself. Obviously, she could not have been heard if Fay wasn't.<sup>14</sup>

Lady Gregory's burdens were somewhat relieved when Yeats returned the next day. She had already gotten in touch with her nephew, a student of nearby Trinity College, requesting that he and several of his more athletic acquaintances come to the third performance. These young men were of little assistance. In fact, one managed to start a scuffle in the orchestra pit. Yeats made an appeal to the audience and was effective to a degree. He offered to debate the issue publicly the following Monday.

The remaining performances during the week were marred by similar disturbances. Lady Gregory recalled that protestors attended each night blowing trumpets and the police carried many off to the station. Each afternoon the papers would give reports of magistrate trials for the protestors. The magistrate had never heard or read the Playboy, but always insisted on hearing of it from the police and the defendants rather than attending or reading the play.<sup>15</sup>

She wrote Arthur Sinclair saying, "I don't know what you mean by a fiasco in Dublin. It got plenty of applause. The Freeman and Independent abused it, the Express and

---

<sup>14</sup>Lady Gregory, p. 224.

<sup>15</sup>Our Irish Theatre, p. 115.

[Irish] Times praised it, but no one ever gives much heed to Dublin praise or blame."<sup>16</sup>

The group held on for the rest of the week and Yeats carried on his scheduled debate with a measure of success. For all practical purposes, the worst was over.

In Dramatis Personae, Yeats credited Lady Gregory with courage and honor in the Synge controversy. It is worth noting that when he recalled the incident, personal bitterness prevailed. He resented the criticism which he received during the open debates and felt that such matters were not meant for public approval. In contrast, Lady Gregory felt that the integrity of the theatre proper caused the ultimate victory for the Irish stage.<sup>17</sup> She had, indeed, taken a more active part than Yeats in the attempts to allow a hearing for Synge's work.<sup>18</sup> Her motives and beliefs were always concentrated around the theatre. She was Nationalistic but never wished the theatre to be used for political purposes, feeling propagandist art to be bad art and fearing that the theatre would have lost its subscription along with the financial support of Miss Horniman.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup>Letter dated 25, April, 1915.

<sup>17</sup>Dramatis Personae, pp. 108-109.

<sup>18</sup>Lady Gregory, p. 123.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 123.



Thus, she was forced to neutrality and became the object of severe criticism from the Nationalists and her own class. She never really enjoyed controversy and the Synge episode nearly wrecked her career and mental framework but she never lost heart in the matter.

In the defense of the theatre's policies Lady Gregory did not become secondary to Yeats. In fact she proved to be more than his match in wit. The opinions delivered to and, at the same time, scoffing at the newspapers are masterpieces of satire and irony. She reached her full powers in the delightful scathing of the Castle officials in a later skirmish.<sup>20</sup>

One prime example of her wit and grit during the Playboy controversy was a newspaper clip editorial stating:

We have already declared publicly [sic] that in the opinion of those conducting this theatre, it is the fiddler who chooses the tune. The public are quite at liberty to stay away, but if they come in, they must take what is provided for them. 'The Playboy' will be produced at the Abbey Theatre every night during the week, as originally arranged.<sup>21</sup>

The directors affirmed their beliefs in the purposes of the Abbey Theatre. Lady Gregory stated that they had fought so hard for a fair showing of the Playboy because "we [the directors] would not allow any part of our audience to make itself final judge through preventing others from

---

<sup>20</sup>W. B. Yeats and Georgian Ireland, pp. 76-77.

<sup>21</sup>Evening Telegraph, 19 May, 1909.

hearing and judging for themselves." She continued in a later comment by saying, "we have been justified, for Synge's name has gone round the world; and we shall have been ashamed forever if we had not insisted on a hearing for his most important work."<sup>22</sup> Lady Gregory stated that even if it had been an inferior play by an unknown Irish writer they would have reacted in the same manner. She finally realized that by giving in to "organized dictatorship" the theatre would have lost its purpose and been closed. She emphasized the need to respect the rights of others, who were not used to Synge's methods, to disagree but she criticized the means the critics used for they became a wild mob. She conceded that a part of the audience was lost in the controversy and the supporters of the theatre began to have their doubts but she was not despairing. Perhaps they realized as she did that "there was no other theatre to go to and [they] came back."<sup>23</sup> The Playboy remained in the production schedule of the Abbey theatre for many years and became one of the most popular plays ever produced there.

The ultimate success of Synge's play brought to an end the romantic fairy concept of peasant life which had formerly occupied the Irish playwrights and supplanted this concept with a more realistic view of the Irish national

---

<sup>22</sup>Our Irish Theatre, p. 117.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

character. This alteration meant much to the literary movement of Ireland.<sup>24</sup> The perservance of the grand lady of the Irish theatre was rewarded through the continued freedom of production for the Irish stage.

<sup>24</sup>Lady Gregory, p. 130.

<sup>24</sup>The Irish Writers, p. 228.

## (B) THE BLANCO POSNET CONTROVERSY

The affairs of the theatre continued smoothly for the next several years. Lady Gregory became more engrossed in the managerial and financial aspects of the Abbey Theatre and, as a director, came in contact with many other aspects of the theatre. The theatre was lacking in directors for stage productions and when summoned to aid Sara Allgood she discovered the talent. She later said, "I thought out positions during the night, and next morning, when I had another rehearsal, I began to find an extraordinary interest and enthusiasm in the work."<sup>25</sup> From this time on, she filled gaps in this capacity whenever called on but she admitted it taxed her strength. She did, nevertheless, add another contribution to the movement.

In the summer of 1909 she received a manuscript from George Bernard Shaw entitled The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet. It had been rejected by British censors on little or no pretext and Shaw offered the play for production in Ireland.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup>Lady Gregory, p. 130.

<sup>26</sup>Gerald Fay states in The Abbey Theatre, (Dublin, 1953), p. 138, that the Abbey exploited the fact but no evidence of exploitation exists. Also, there is still no English censorship in Ireland.

The English censors held no jurisdiction in Ireland but Lady Gregory conceded that it was "an accidental freedom."<sup>27</sup> The directors agreed to produce the play in late August, 1909, and felt that it probably an oversight on the part of the censors.

Soon after rehearsals of Blanco Posnet began, Lady Gregory received a letter from an official in Dublin Castle stating that the play could not be produced in Ireland. No concrete reasons were given but the most important aspect of the letter was found in the implications of the final paragraph which stated:

His Excellency, after the most careful consideration, has arrived at the conclusion that in its original form the play is not in accordance either with the assurances given by those interested when the Patent was applied for, or with the conditions and restrictions contained in the Patent as granted by the Crown.

As you [Lady Gregory] are the holder of the Patent in trust for the generous founder of the Theatre, His Excellency feels bound to call your attention, and also the attention of those with whom you are associated, to the terms of the Patent and to the serious consequences which the production of the play in its original form might entail . . . .<sup>28</sup>

She immediately went to the Castle official and the fight began. In the following section, I have relied on her account of the events because all other sources supplement hers and verify her version. The account given in the

---

<sup>27</sup>Our Irish Theatre, p. 140.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 144.



chapter "The Fight with the Castle" in Our Irish Theatre contains delightfully humorous passages aimed at exposing the weakness of the Castle's position.<sup>29</sup> For instance, her opening remarks to the official were, "Are you going to cut off our heads?" which the official found somewhat less than humorous. He threatened to have the theatre closed on the grounds that the patent had been violated. She replied, "If you decide to forfeit our Patent, we will not give a public performance; but if we give no performance to be judged by, we shall rest under the slur of having tried to produce something bad and injurious."<sup>30</sup> She further stated the case for continuing with the production by reminding the Lord Lieutenant that the Abbey Theatre was "giving a great deal of employment, spending in Dublin over £1500 a year" and all would be forfeited if the good name of the theatre were blemished. He replied that the situation was familiar to all and perhaps the directors would consider producing the play in Cork, Galway, or Waterford because the Lord Lieutenant held no power except in Dublin. No conciliations were made and Lady Gregory departed.<sup>31</sup>

Several days later, the officials demanded that several

---

<sup>29</sup>See also Appendix II, The Nation on Blanco Posnet and a letter from Shaw to Lady Gregory.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 149-150.

"blasphemous" passages be deleted. She refused to concede explaining "that the blasphemer's defiance of heaven constituted the subject of the play."<sup>32</sup>

The directors decided to go on with the performance and let the Patent be forfeited. Shaw, at the suggestion of Lady Gregory, made several changes in the play, and as he admitted, improved its dramatic structure. The changes did not, however, have anything to do with the censorship laws.<sup>33</sup> Lady Gregory informed the authorities of their decision. The immediate reaction was to threaten the theatre with closure. The reaction of Shaw to these goings on is available in a letter he sent to Lady Gregory dated August 12th, 1909. He said:

Your news is almost too good to be true. If the Lord Lieutenant would only forbid an Irish play without reading it . . . the green flag would indeed wave over Abbey Street, and we should have questions in Parliament and all manner of reverberating advertisement and nationalist sympathy for the Theatre."<sup>34</sup>

Shaw deeply admired her strength of character and became one of her most devoted supporters. He realized that her strength was not only one of duty but of devotion to the cause of freedom.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup>Lady Gregory, p. 131.

<sup>33</sup>Archibald Henderson, Bernard Shaw Playboy and Prophet, (New York, 1932), p. 527.

<sup>34</sup>The Irish Writers, p. 104.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

Yeats and Lady Gregory returned to the Castle for further consultation. They reiterated by saying, "we are determined to produce the play. We cannot accept the censor's decision as applying to Ireland and you must make up your mind what course to take, but we ask to be let known as soon as possible because if we are to be suppressed, we must find places for our players, who will be thrown out of work."<sup>36</sup>

Several days passed with consultations being carried on by both sides. The exact penalty for defying the Crown was given at this time. The legal answer was "If the theatre ceases to be licensed . . . and any performance for gain takes place there, the penalty under the 26 Geo. III is £300 for each offence, to be recovered in a court action; one half of the £300 going to the Rotunda Hospital, the other half to the informer who sues."<sup>37</sup>

Immediately afterward the Castle officials sent notice to Lady Gregory that a formal legal document, forbidding any performance, was soon to arrive at the Theatre. The matter became one of grave concern now for if the patent, savings, and perhaps the building itself were lost, the Abbey Theatre Movement was doomed. The managers and players conceded that they had lost the battle.

Yeats and Lady Gregory were quite upset and they felt

---

<sup>36</sup>Our Irish Theatre, p. 157.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

the keen disappointment of being in the right but having too much at stake to risk forfeiture. They were saved, as usual, by themselves. One of the truly great organizing collaborations occurred. The two went to the Theatre and carried out the rehearsals. They had decided that since their word had been given at all risks they must keep it or it will never be trusted again.<sup>38</sup>

They composed a statement of the situation which included a note on English censorship which stated,

"If our Patent is in danger, it is because the decisions of the English censor are being brought into Ireland, and because the Lord Lieutenant is about to revive on what we consider to be a frivolous pretext, a right not exercised for one hundred and fifty years to forbid, at the Lord Lieutenant's pleasure any play produced in any Dublin theatre, all their theatres holding their patents from him."<sup>39</sup>

This very dignified statement was forwarded to the proper authorities. Blanco Posnet was given on the previously announced date, August 25, 1909, with no unusual occurrences.<sup>40</sup> The bluff of the Castle officials had been called. In fact, the officials at Dublin Castle were so overwhelmed and chagrined that the final plea made was for the omission of "Dearly beloved, brethren." Of course Lady Gregory took full advantage of the chance to make the Castle appear

---

<sup>38</sup>Lady Gregory, p. 132.

<sup>39</sup>Our Irish Theatre, p. 164.

<sup>40</sup>Henderson, p. 527. They played to packed houses.

even more ridiculous.<sup>41</sup> There were no further protests made from either side and the play is still popular.<sup>42</sup> Lady Gregory concluded her chapter on the controversy by saying, " . . . does not Neitzsche say 'a good battle justifies every cause'?"<sup>43</sup>

The triumph gained world popularity once again for the Abbey Theatre and, perhaps, more importantly regained the support of the Nationalists who applauded the disgrace of English authorities attempting to control the affairs of Ireland. These Nationalists were just recently showering the Abbey with insults during the Playboy controversy.<sup>44</sup>

Firm belief in the validity of their cause led the directors through a strenuous period. Lady Gregory's will and devotion persevered, gaining her the admiration of theatre goers everywhere. She was preparing herself for the greatest test, the tour of America, to be begun in 1911.

---

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Lady Gregory, p. 133.

<sup>43</sup>Our Irish Theatre, p. 168.

<sup>44</sup>The Irish Theatre, p. 27.



(C) THE TOUR OF AMERICA

The Abbey company's reputation was growing and when the directors received an invitation from Liebler, American theatrical agents, to conduct an extended tour of America, they quickly decided to accept. Yeats decided to forgo responsibility and gave Lady Gregory the sole leadership of the venture. She was apprehensive but accepted the position as manager. The company sailed to Boston on September 29, 1911, for its first performance. The Leibler sponsors had especially requested the The Playboy be given for reasons of advertisement. If there was any adverse reaction from the Irish Americans, there was sure to be publicity and tension.<sup>45</sup>

Lady Gregory recorded fully the events of the tour in the section entitled "The Playboy in America" of Our Irish Theatre including eye witness reports, newspaper accounts, personal records and the like in appendices three, four, and five. Only the most significant events will be given here because several crucial events did move the general public to accept and approve the touring Irish players.

The first performances, including The Playboy, were

---

<sup>45</sup>Lady Gregory, p. 150.

given in Boston and received with little adverse criticism. Beforehand, the play had received several scathing editorial comments but the opposition was not able to prove either obscenity or misrepresentation of Irish life.

Lady Gregory also helped their cause by encouraging several athletic Harvard men to come to the performances. These young men were determined that the play be heard, as it was, and her noble dignity inspired a desire to help the players. The mayor of Boston set his seal of approval and, for all practical purposes, the controversy in Boston was over.

During the opening nights in Boston, Lady Gregory gave her first public speeches in behalf of the Abbey players. She composed a short lecture on playwrights and playwriting and, as always, was the admiration of her audience. Lady Gregory realized that commentary about the theatre made to clubs and gatherings throughout the tour was an obligation of the manager but she had not really anticipated the task. She wrote to Dublin saying, "It is a great relief to me and the discovery of a new faculty. I shan't feel nervous again."<sup>46</sup>

Her little lectures soon took her to many areas where the Abbey players did not come. She went to Vassar and Smith, for example, and completely enchanted her young audiences. She recalled an amusing anecdote from this

---

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 151-152.

lecture. It seems that, on a prearranged signal, the President of a college was to hold up a handkerchief to indicate that she was to speak louder. She saw him raise the handkerchief about the middle of the lecture and she stopped to ask if she could be heard. Actually, he was just blowing his nose and the girls burst into laughter. She also visited Detroit, Columbus, and Niagara Falls among other places. She said that "Dozing in midnight trains, I would remember, as in a dream, 'The flight of a bird through a lighted hall' the old parable of human life."<sup>47</sup>

These anecdotes and others too numerous to mention are delightfully presented in "The Playboy in America." For instance, she was at one time asked about The Cowboy of the Western World and the moral purpose behind her writing the Playboy.<sup>48</sup>

The first great test took place in New York where on November 28th, 1911, an unruly crowd interrupted continuously the first act of the Playboy. Theodore Roosevelt had escorted Lady Gregoy to the theatre and that night she gained his undying admiration. She says, "I went round when the disturbances began, and knelt in the open of the hearth, calling to everyone who came within that they must not stop for a moment but spare their voices, as they could

---

<sup>47</sup>Our Irish Theatre, pp. 194-196.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

not be heard, so we shall do the whole act again." It was given again and to a hushed audience. Her fortitude and leadership prevailed and the following nights gave rise to standing ovations.<sup>49</sup>

The most serious threat to the Playboy plays occurred in Philadelphia on January 17, 1912. Lady Gregory received a call from one Mr. Bradford, the manager of the Philadelphia theatre, requesting that the Playboy performance be canceled. Because of some legal technicality the entire cast was in danger of arrest. However, Lady Gregory insisted that the performance be given. She arrived at the theatre to discover that the cast had been put under technical arrest at a time chosen to coincide with the opening curtain. Lady Gregory gave credit to the theatre lawyer and the Chief of Police for not permitting such a fiasco. Warrants were based on a bill which forbade "immoral or indecent plays." Several players were arrested but soon released the following night, on January 18. The charges were eventually dropped and the first performances of The Playboy went off smoothly.

The group began a series of weekly performances in the major interest of the Eastern Seaboard. After such weary business no wonder Lady Gregory said, "It is a strange note that sends me into battle after my peaceful life for so many years and especially The Playboy, that I have never really

---

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

loved, but one has to carry through one's job." The last several cities in which the Abbey players performed were more hospitable than hostile and their four months' tour ended on a note of triumph.

Lady Gregory felt that some believed Ireland to be made to appear less glorious by representing the people as ones who "drink and swear and admire deeds of violence" but the truth was that the image had been greatly improved. Several Irish plays had been borrowed from the stage before the Playboy controversy and no one could question their literary merit. Her leadership and faith in the Abbey players led to the triumph in America. At the conclusion of her story of the Irish National Theatre, she advised her son to "think a long time before you choose your road, but when you have chosen it, follow it on to the end."<sup>50</sup>

Theodore Roosevelt presented his views on the Irish Theatre and its success in dimension in The Outlook, Dec. 16, 1911. He said: "In the Abbey Theatre, Lady Gregory and those associated with her have not only made an extraordinary contribution to the sum of Irish literary and artistic achievement, but have done more for the drama than has been accomplished in any other nations of recent years." "The Abbey Theatre is one of healthiest signs of the revival of the ancient Irish spirit and . . . it has been thoroughly

---

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 244-257.



national and has developed on its own lines. It's especially noteworthy and is a proof of the general Irish awakening, that this vigorous expression of Irish life should represent the combined work of so many different person. Incidentally, Lady Gregory teaches a lesson to us Americans . . . they are vital and human [writing of] . . . their own vital interests and traditions and history." The Freeman's Journal said: "The Abbey Theatre has made it possible for a writer living in Ireland and writing on Irish subjects to win a position of dignity, and it has made it possible for an Irishman or woman with acting ability to play in the plays of their fellow-countrymen, and to earn a decent living . . . ." <sup>51</sup> These eulogies and many others verify the favorable impression which the Abbey plays, under the leadership of Lady Gregory, had made in America. During the tour in 1911 - 1912 she had led the group through battle and controversy with Irish American Nationalists climaxed with the arrest and trial proceedings in Philadelphia. From that time she was known as the "Grand Old Lady" of the Abbey Theatre who could still stand up for her beliefs. <sup>52</sup>

She had realized her ambitions to lead rather than to follow and she had indeed followed the advice given to her son at the close of Our Irish Theatre. What remained for

---

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 314-317.

<sup>52</sup>Ellis-Fermor, p. 136.

her to do was to become a rallying point and remain a believer in their cause. She never fully gained the recognition she justly deserved but those who knew her realized that, as the American tour as well demonstrated, she truly believed and sacrificed for Ireland and the Irish people, until her death in 1932.

### CHAPTER III

#### AFTERMATH AND EVALUATION

Lady Gregory returned from the highly successful tour of America in 1912 as an established leader of the Abbey Theatre group. She had proved that she could handle difficult managerial and promotional tasks without the help of Yeats or anyone else. Her humble beginnings at Coole Park in 1901 where the seed of the movement was planted and nurtured had led her through a series of personal triumphs. She began as an interested patron of the theatre, progressed to a directorship of the Irish theatre, and concluded with a solo effort with the American tour. The efforts of the Irish theatre enthusiasts had succeeded by gaining the attention and admiration of the literary world.

Upon her return to Dublin, Lady Gregory reported the success of the tour and settled down to the task of promoting, managing, and encouraging the further development of the movement. The major crises of the theatre were over, especially where she was concerned. She wrote Our Irish Theatre in 1913, fully explaining the events which she had been connected with and the text remains a valid account of the early history of the movement. She neglected to mention the vital roles which she played in the crucial events and one is led to believe

that she only helped whenever circumstances allowed. This view is not quite true because she, more than any other, offered her services on all possible levels. We have seen that she was, at one time or another, financial backer, moral supporter, peace maker, publicity agent, co-director, and more. She earned the respect and admiration of friend and foe alike. Theodore Roosevelt conveyed the general consensus of opinion about her worth to the movement when he said, "Lady Gregory and those associated with her . . . have not only made an extraordinary contribution to the sum of Irish literary and artistic achievement, but have done more for the drama . . . [than] any other nation of recent years."<sup>1</sup>

After 1912, the fortunes of the grand lady of the Irish theatre declined. She accompanied the players on two subsequent tours of America in 1913 and 1914. Both tours were highly successful but they left her physically and mentally drained. She was aging quickly and her vitality was being sapped. She continued to be particularly involved with the activities of the Abbey Theatre but the glamour of the early years ended. The Abbey was more firmly established by 1915 and enjoyed some financial security. She herself said that the development of Yeats' early dream had been "a steady source of faculties discovered, difficulties surmounted,

---

<sup>1</sup>Theodore Roosevelt, "Outlook" Dec. 16, 1911.

battles won."<sup>2</sup>

Her personal life was soon thwarted with disaster. Briefly, she suffered the loss of two loved ones, Hugh Lane and her son Robert. Mr. Lane, a noted painter, drowned when the Lusitania was sunk; and the subsequent controversy over the ownership of his paintings intensified her personal grief. Robert Gregory was killed in combat over France in 1918, leaving her emotionally spent. From that time until her death in 1932 she was in declining health and was considered more representative than an active participant in the Abbey Theatre.

Her passing left a gap in the Irish Theatre which still remains to be filled. Many individuals have listed the value of her contributions to the movement. The Irish Times contained the following remarks shortly after her death: "She was inspirer, founder, dramatist, and director, from the conception of the enterprise until her death and throughout all that long period she nursed the theatre as probably no one ever will again." The article emphasized that she had the interest of Ireland at heart and since, as noted, the original plan was to develop a theatre in England, her determination precluded the outcome because "she it was who ordained that the center of the movement should become Dublin and not London."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Elizabeth Coxhead, Lady Gregory (New York, 1961), p. 162.

<sup>3</sup>Coxhead, p. 215.



Another, who was her best friend of all; said, "I have lost one who has been for me for nearly forty years my strength and my conscience."<sup>4</sup> He continued: ". . . Lady Gregory never rebelled like other Irish women I have known, who crowned themselves and their friends; in spite of Scripture she put the new wine in the old bottles." George Russell said, "She was a very noble old Lady . . . [and] I think of her as one who thought in the noblest and most disinterested way about her country."<sup>5</sup>

Her home at Coole Park was a haven for Abbey theatre workers for she invited them there to rest and write in peace. She devoted herself almost continuously from 1901 to her death to the interests of the Abbey. Gerard Fay said that "Nobody in the whole history of the Abbey can be compared with Lady Gregory for devotion to duty. She was so like Queen Victoria (to my eyes) that I almost called her "your Majesty" and the fantasy was not too far fetched for she had a queenly way and she ruled the Abbey for years."<sup>6</sup>

Lady Gregory's hospitality gained necessary respect from the drudgery of the theatre and publicity. "She was able to bring all sorts of people to the theatre to see the plays and to keep them afterward to have supper on the stage with us,

---

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>5</sup>Gerard Fay, The Abbey Theatre (Dublin, 1958), p. 155.

<sup>6</sup>Alan Denson Letter From AE (New York, 1961), p. 197.

and this became the regular custom on all first nights."

"Another scheme of Lady Gregory's that we liked even better than the first night suppers was the company's own private party after the dress-rehearsal, when she would arrive at the theatre laden with heavy parcels containing cooked chickens and pies, among other dainties."<sup>7</sup>

The scarred tree at Coole bearing the initials of Yeats, O'Casey, Synge, and Shaw among others bears mute testimony to her circle of friends and the debt of gratitude which they and the Irish people owed her. She had befriended them all.

In a twelve year span she had been a most vital asset to the promotion of the cause of the theatre in Ireland, encouraging Yeats and the rest to believe "such a thing possible" by never losing her enthusiasm nor failing to encourage the founders when there seemed to be no reason to hope. Let us remember that these tasks never came easy. She was born in wealth but chose to dedicate her late years to the cause of the theatre. She could well have been satisfied with her rank and of all the possibilities afforded to her, such as tradition and marriage but she chose only those which caused action or change.<sup>8</sup> Sean O'Casey said to her in a letter dated 1928: "You can always walk with your head up. And remember you had to fight against both position and comfort

---

<sup>7</sup>W. G. Fay and Catherine Carswell, The Fays of the Abbey Theatre (New York, 1935), p. 187.

<sup>8</sup>Herbert Howarth, The Irish Writers (New York, 1950), p. 89.

. . . so that power may be gained . . . ." Time and again she met and conquered the challenges offered to her proving that "her vitalized potentialities were outside the norm of her family and her kind."<sup>9</sup>

She was a "faithful follower of W. B. Yeats from the time when she was appointed to control the policy of the National Theatre. George Moore said, "Is there one among us who would undertake such a job of work and accomplish it as well as Lady Gregory?"<sup>10</sup>

It is most fortunate that she chose as she did for it is difficult to imagine the birth of the theatre if she had not lent her administrative and organizational abilities during the crises of patent granting, and the productions of The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet, and The Playboy of the Western World.

Yeats admitted that "when Lady Gregory's name and John Synge's name are spoken by future generations, my name, if remembered, will come up in the talk, and that if my name's spoken first their names will come in their turn because of the years we worked together."<sup>11</sup>

We have seen how she subscribed to and helped to weather each of these crises in addition to directing the policy of

---

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 108-109.

<sup>10</sup>George Moore, Hail and Farewell (New York, 1914), p. 217.

<sup>11</sup>Monk Gibbon, The Masterpiece and the Man (New York, 1961), p. 47.

the theatre and offering her services whenever possible. Her intrinsic worth has been considerably underestimated for several reasons. She remained in the shadow of the genius of Yeats for many years until the tour of America with the Abbey players. This project was hers and hers alone. She withstood the testing of her leadership abilities and won lasting respect for herself and her cause. Biographers have generally neglected her in recording the personages and events of the movement. Even Yeats, who gained most from her contributions, slighted Lady Gregory in Dramatis Personae. He recorded a few details of her family heritage and notes that she offered her friendship and understanding but fails to credit her with being the second most important figure in the movement. She was unique because "few men or women have had so rich a flowering so late in life and fewer still have kept . . . so fine a genius."<sup>12</sup>

Once realized, her own merits prevailed and the same may be said of Lady Gregory as the promoters because, "they have won much praise for themselves and raised the dignity of Ireland."<sup>13</sup>

We have seen that Lady Gregory participated actively in almost every phase of the theatre but perhaps her most enduring contributions are best remembered by the patrons

---

<sup>12</sup>Lady Gregory, Our Irish Theatre (New York, 1913), p. 136.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

of the Irish Theatre.

"As an organizer, Lady Gregory earned in 1921 her richest reward from the discovery of Sean O'Casey. This is not to say, of course that without her he would have remained unknown. But she was the first to discern them through the fumbling of his early efforts and she was the only one of the Abbey group to make his friendship, and to give him the sympathy which was far more important to his development than any amount of criticism or technical hints."<sup>14</sup>

Shaw called her the charwoman of the Abbey Theatre but she was authoritative as one may see in reading her opinions expressed in newspapers.<sup>15</sup> When speaking of the Playboy riots she said in the Evening Telegraph that "it is the fiddler who chooses the tune."<sup>16</sup> Her admirers said, "The echoes she has left behind her are the voices of living men and women."<sup>17</sup>

Lady Gregory was aptly described as being completely self-possessed and making her decisions, "constantly renewed in solitude."<sup>18</sup> Yeats said she had a deep compassion for the human nature. In his poem "The Death of

---

<sup>14</sup>Coole Volume in 1931, Coole Press, p. 212 of Lady Gregory.

<sup>15</sup>W. B. Yeats and Georgian Ireland, (Evanston, 1966), p. 76.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>17</sup>Coxhead, p. 218.

<sup>18</sup>Yeats Autobiography, p. 395.



Lady Gregory", Yeats remembered her more as seeing the world as comic than tragic while she held to the tradition of Protestant Ireland.<sup>19</sup>

The early dreams of an all Irish National Theatre had come to be a reality. No more eloquent tribute can be given than the following:

Here traveller, scholar, poet take your stand  
When all these rooms and passages are gone,  
When nettles wave upon a shapeless mound  
And saplings root among the broken stone,  
And delicate - eyes bent upon the ground,  
Back turned upon the brightness of the sun.  
And all the sensuality of the shade -  
A moment's memory to that laurelled head.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup>Lady Gregory Journal, p. 268.

<sup>20</sup>Yeats, "The Death of Lady Gregory", Collected Poems.

## APPENDIX I

### IRISH DRAMA: THE ORGANIZATION OF THE THEATRE\*

- I. Irish Literary Theatre (1899-1902) Yeats, Martyn  
Lady Gregory, Moore
  - A. Founding: Yeats and Lady Gregory after a meeting  
at Coole Park, 1901.
  - B. Initial Aims: Attempt to present "Celtic and Irish  
plays" to an "Uncorrupted audience."
  - C. Divergent Ideals of Founders: Confusion of purpose,  
cosmopolitan as national drama (Martyn and Moore -  
Ibsesque plays of ideas; Yeats and Lady Gregory -  
poetic drama and folk plays, respectively).
  - D. Degree of Success
    1. Plays presented: 1899 Yeats' Countess Cathleen,  
Martyn's Heather Field  
1900 Martyn's Maeve  
Moore's Bending of the Bough  
Mulligan's Last Feast of the Fianna  
1901 Yeats and Moore's Diarmuid and  
Grania Twisting of the Rope
    2. Sponsorship by people of all classes, all  
political beliefs.
    3. Fame and Notoriety: Attack on Countess Cathleen,  
George Moore's unpopularity, attack on Diarmuid  
and Grania by Standish O'Grady.
  - E. End of 1st movement: Yeats and Fays join forces.

II. The Irish National Theatre Society (1903) Fay, Yeats, Lady Gregory, George Russell

- A. Founding of the Abbey Company and its claim to succession from I. L. T. in order that "The Irish National Theatre Society . . . continue on a more permanent basis the work of the Irish Literary Theatre."
- B. Struggle for continuity: Yeats, Synge, Gregory.
- C. The Fays.
- D. Controversies: Synge's Playboy of the Western World (1907)
- E. Successes: Development of Irish dramatists, plays, and world attention.
- F. Periods of Strength and Decline
 

1903-1908	good
1908-1920	decline
1920-	good
1930-1939	good Frank O'Connor directs.
1939-	chiefly commercial

\* Compiled with the assistance of Dr. Jack Weaver.

APPENDIX II

A CHRONOLOGICAL CHART OF LADY GREGORY'S

MOST

SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>SIGNIFICANCE</u>
1898	Gregory, Yeats Confrontation	Birth of Irish Theatre Movement.
1901	Theatre License Controversy	Amendment (Gained through her efforts).
1904	Abbey Patent Applied for	Patent granted to Lady Gregory
1907	<u>Playboy</u> Controversy	Triumph of Abbey
1909	<u>Blanco Posnet</u> Controversy	Triumph of Abbey
1911-12	American Tour by Abbey Players	Success and Fame in venture led by Lady Gregory.
1932	Death of Lady Gregory	Eulogies and recognition of her worth to the Movement.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### (A) WORKS CITED

- Boyd, E. A. Ireland's Literary Renaissance (New York, 1922).  
The Contemporary Drama of Ireland (Dublin, 1919).
- Bourgeois, Maurice. J. M. Synge and the Irish Theatre (London, 1913).
- Coxhead, Elizabeth. Lady Gregory (New York, 1950).
- Denson, Alan. Letters from AE (New York, 1961).
- Ellis-Fermor, Una. The Irish Dramatic Movement (New York, 1961).
- Fay, Gerald. The Abbey Theatre (Dublin, 1958).
- Fay, C. and Caswell, Catherine. The Fays of the Abbey Theatre (New York, 1935).
- Gassner, M. Masterpieces of Drama (New York, 1937).
- Gregory, Lady. Our Irish Theatre (New York, 1913).
- Gibbon, Monk. The Masterpiece and the Man (New York, 1961).
- Greene, David A. and Stephen, Edward. J. M. Synge (New York, 1959).
- Henderson, Archibald. Bernard Shaw, Playboy and Prophet (New York, 1932).
- Howarth, Herbert. The Irish Writers 1880-1940 (New York, 1959).
- Kiernan, T. J. Dalhousie Review, XXXVIV.
- Malone, A. E. The Irish Drama (London, 1929).
- "Modern Ireland" Mass. Rev. V. (Winter, 1960).
- Moore, George. Hail and Farewell (New York, 1914).
- Roosevelt, Theodore. "Outlook" Dec. 16, 1911.



"The Late Lady Gregory" An Phabhlacht (May 28, 1932).

Torchina, Donald B. W. B. Yeats and Georgian Ireland  
(Evanston, 1966).

Yeats, William Butler. Dramatis Personae (New York, 1936).

Autobiography (New York, 1956).

A Vision (London, 1956).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### (B) WORKS CONSULTED

- Agate, James. The Contemporary Theatre, 1923, 1924.
- Archer, William. English Dramatics of Today, 1882.  
About the Theatre, 188  
Theatrical World.
- Bancroft, Sir Squire. Recollections of Sixty Years, 1909.
- Blunt, Wilfred Scawen, Diaries, 1921 edition, with preface  
by Lady Gregory.
- Bourgeois, Maurice, John Millington Synge and the Irish  
Dramatic Movement (New York, 1913).
- Boyd, Ernest. Ireland's Literary Renaissance, (New York,  
1916).  
The Contemporary Drama of Ireland, (Boston, 1917).
- Brereton, Austin. The Life of Sir Henry Irving, 1908.
- Calvert, Adelaide Helen. Sixty-eight Years on the Stage, 1911.
- Carter, Huntly. The New Spirit in Drama and Art, 1912.  
The New Spirit in the European Theatre, 1914-24, 1925.
- O'Casey, Sean, Irish fallen, Fare Thee Well, 1949.
- Chandler, F. W. Aspects of Modern Drama, 1914.
- Christetl, W. "On the Influence of Lady Gregory on William  
Butler Yeats." Moderns and New-Moderns, New York, 1928.
- Clark, Barrett H. British and American Dramatists of Today,  
1915.  
A Study of Modern Drama, 1925.

Coleman, John. Fifty Years of an Actor's Life, 1904.

Cook, Dutton, A Book of the Play: Studies and Illustrations of Historic Story, Life, and Character, 1876; rev. ed. 1881.

Hours with the Players, 1881.

Nights at the Play, 1883.

Dickinson, T. H. The Contemporary Drama of England, 1920.

Dublois, L. Paul. Contemporary Ireland (Dublin, 1911).

Dukes, Ashley. Modern Dramatists, 1912.

Ellis-Fermor, Una. The Irish Dramatic Movement, 1939.

Ervine, St. John. The Organized Theatre, 1924.

Fahy, Dr. Jerome. History and Antiquities of the Diocese of Kilmacduagh, 1893.

Fay, Gerard. The Abbey Theatre, Cradle of Genius, 1957.

Fay, W. G., The Fays of the Abbey Theatre, 1935.

Filon, A., Le Theatre Anglais; hier, aujourd' hui, demain, Paris, 189; trans. by F. Whyte, The English Stage. Being an account of the Victorian Drama, 1897.

Fitzgerald, Percy H., The Kembles, 1871.

The Book of Theatrical Anecdotes, 1874.

The Romance of the English Stage, 1874.

The World Behind the Scenes, 1881.

Henry Irving, A Record of Twenty Years at the Lyceum, rev. ed. 1895.

The Garrick Club, 1904.

Sir Henry Irving: A Biography, 1906.

Forbes-Robertson, Sir Johnston, A Player under Three Reigns, 1925.

Gonne, Maude, A Servant of the Queen, 1938.

- O'Grady, Standish H., Silva Gadelica, 1892.
- Greene, Professor David H. J. M. Synge, 1959.
- Gregory, Dr. Vere H., The House of Gregory, 1943.
- Grein, J. T., The New World of the Theatre, 1923-24, 1924.
- Gwynn, Denis, Edward Martyn and the Irish Revival, 1930.
- Hale, E. E. Dramatists of Today, 1911.
- Headlam, Maurice, Irish Reminiscences, London, 1947.
- Henderson, Archibald, The Changing Drama, 1914.
- Hinkson, Pamela, "Letters from W. B. Yeats", Yale Review XXXIX (Dec., 1939).
- Hone, J. M., W. B. Yeats, 1942.
- Howe, P. P., The Repertory Theatre, A Record and a Criticism, 1910.

Dramatic Portraits, 1913.

- Huneker, James, Iconoclasts: A Book of Dramatists, 1905.
- Hunt, R. T., "William B. Yeats: His Plays, Poems, and Sources of Inspiration." Poetry Review XXVI (Sept., 1935).
- Hyde, Douglas, Beside the Fire, 1890.

Love Songs of Connacht, 1893.

- Jameson, M. Strum, Modern Drama in Europe, 1920.
- Jones, H. A., The Renaissance of the English Drama, 1895.

Foundations of a National Drama, 1912.

Literature and the Irish Drama.

The Foundations of the National Theatre.

- Krans, H. S., W. B. Yeats and the Irish Literary Revival, (London, 1894).

- Lady Gregory "The Coming of the Irish Players", Colliers XLVII, (Oct. 21, 1911).

Our Irish Theatre (New York, 1913).

Lewisahn, Ludwig, The Modern Drama, 1915.

The Drama and the Stage, 1922.

MacDonagh, Thomas, Literature in Ireland, (New York, 1916).

MacLiammair, Micheal, Alf for Hecuba, 1946.

Malone, A. E., The Irish Drama.

Marson, John Westland, Our Recent Actors, 1888.

Maude, Cyril, The Haymarket Theatre, 1903.

Moderwell, H. K., The Theatre of Today, 1914.

Moore, George, Hail and Farewell, 3 vols. (New York 1911-1914).

Ave, 1911.

Vale, 1914.

Morgan, A. E., Tendancies of Modern English Drama, 1924.

Morley, Henry, The Journal of a London Playgoer from 1851 to 1866.

Morris, Lloyd R., The Celtic Dawn (New York, 1913).

The Contemporary Drama of Ireland, 1928.

Nicoll, Allardyce, British Drama, 1925.

Oliver, D. E., The English Stage: Its Origin and Modern Developments, 1912.

Palmer, John, The Future of the Theatre, 1913.

Phelps, William Lyon, The Twentieth Century Theatre, 1918.

Essays on Modern Dramatists, 1919.

Pogson, Rex, Miss Horniman and The Gaiety Theatre, 1952.

Robinson, Lennax, Ireland's Abbey Theatre, 1911.

Lady Gregory's Journals, 1916-1930.

Ryan, W. P., The Irish Literary Revival (London, 1894).

Samhain (Official publication of Abbey Theatre).



Scott, Clement W., The Drama of Yesterday and Today, 1899.

Sharp, Robert Farquharson, A Short History of the English Stage, from its Beginnings to the Summer of the Year 1908, 1909.

Shaw, George Bernard, Dramatic Opinions and Essays, 1907.

Our Theatre in the Nineties.

Shiubheaigh, Marie Nic, The Splendid Years, 1955.

Sutton, Graham, Some Contemporary Dramatists, 1926.

Synge, J. M., The Aran Islands, 1906.

"Thoo Ballyle" English Studies, XXVIII (Dec., 1947)

Walbrook, H. M., Nights at the Play, 1911.

Walkley, A. B., Drama and Life, 1908.

Pastiche and Predjudice, 1921.

More Predjudice, 1923.

Still More Prejudice, 1925.

Watson, Ernest Bradler, Sheridan to Robertson, A Study of the Nineteenth Century London Stage, 1926.

Weygandt, Corneleius, Irish Plays and Playwrights (Boston, 1913).

Yates, Edmund, Recollections and Experiences, 1885.

Yeats, William B., The Celtic Twilight, 1893.

The Cutting of an Agate, 1919.

Plays, ed. 1922.

Dramatics Personae, 1936

Letters ed. Allan Wade, 1954.

Autobiographies.

Per Amica Silentia Lancie.