A STUDY OF W.B. YEATS'S AND GEORGE MOORE'S DIARMUID & GRANIA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a critical examination of a play which has virtually been forgotten in the eighty-five years since its first and only production. Since 1901 most critics have preferred to recount the host of legends and anecdotes surrounding the authors and the performance, and thus the play itself, which is by no means without literary interest, has been unjustly overlooked. As the work was the result of a collaboration, the critical approach taken in the thesis has been to isolate themes and theories peculiar to its authors, Yeats and Moore, in an attempt to consider the text meaningfully. Yeats in this period was attempting to unite mystical and artistic expression, while Moore wanted to explore psychological conflict, develop memorable female characters, and employ Wagnerian ideas and borrowings within his writing. This variance of literary objectives, it will be argued, is primarily responsible for the failure of Diarmuid and Grania as a work of art. Because both men were attempting to enrich Irish culture by providing an alternative to its moribund, foreign-dominated drama, this thesis also considers the text within the context of dramatic innovations in the 1890s, and suggests that its principal significance is as a landmark in the evolution of a truly Irish theatre.

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This thesis is dedicated, with respect and affection, to David Clark, an Olympian whom it has been my good fortune to know and to learn from.

"The moral's yours because it's mine."

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Introduction

Max Beerbohm's famous caricature, "Mr. W.B. Yeats presenting Mr. George Moore to the Queen of the Faeries" (see Tuohy 149), brilliantly captures the implausible nature of the collaboration which produced the play Diarmuid and Grania (1901). There is Yeats, looking suitably "hieratic" and rookish, confidently introducing a doubtful Moore, who, as John Eglinton once recalled, looks "more like an army officer than a distinguished writer" (Eglinton 85). A diminutive Fairy Queen hovers before them, symbolising the vague and unreal nature of Yeats's pronouncements on sheoghues and spooks. A collection of tomes, including Half Hours with the Symbols, complements the image.

We expect such brilliance from caricatures, but the caricature is no substitute for criticism. It is always easier and more amusing to consider the literary personality (a commodity of which Ireland has an infinite supply) than it is to consider literature. For this reason most readers unfamiliar with the play itself will know its story in the two men's autobiographies, or will have at least seen the Beerbohm drawing. Diarmuid and Grania exhausted its authors' patience with one another, and led to a lifelong distrust

between them. Yeats is immortalised in Hail and Farewell, droning and muttering "his little tales" before a midnight fire (Ave 56), certainly not the Byzantine transmutation he would later have hoped for. Moore suffered in turn, and is frozen forever in Dramatis Personae, thanking a friend "with emotion" for the secret of keeping his underpants from falling down (Autobiographies 405). An entire thesis could be filled with such anecdotes.

I have chosen to consider the play itself, from the perspective of (generally) dispassionate scholarship. Such an undertaking, for a play which has enjoyed precisely one production (to my knowledge) in its eighty-five-year history, may seem curious at best. The slight critical notice accorded to Diarmuid and Grania has been disparaging, and tends to regard it as an unfortunate mésalliance which marred Yeats's development as an artist. While it is not my intention to rehabilitate the play and to claim masterpiece status for it, this thesis will attempt to show that beneath the years of anecdotes and bon mots lies a subject of genuine literary interest.

It is generally accepted, on the authors' authority, that in dividing the labour Moore chose construction and Yeats undertook to give a style to the play. However, any attempt to examine Diarmuid and Grania along these lines, or to try and guess who wrote which passage, is, I think, doomed

to failure. James Cousins discovered this during the play's first night:

> Moments of poetry elicited the whispered exclamation, 'Ah! that's Willie.' Other phrases were attributed to 'dirty George'. But it came out, as a disturbing rumour, that the typical poetical Yeatsian patches were by Moore, and the typical Moorish splashes of realism were by Yeats.
>
> (qtd. in Hogan & Kilroy 109-110)

One might think that the autobiographical writings of Yeats and Moore would tell us who wrote what, but because of the later acrimony between them I have chosen to rely sparingly upon these sources. Another reason for this decision is what Hugh Kenner calls "the Irish Fact". Graham Hough writes of Moore's Hail and Farewell that "As a historical record it is probably wrong; as a way of treating one's friends it is certainly shabby; aesthetically it is a success" (Owens 169). Yeats's memory could be similarly selective. Of their play he could only recall the music contributed by Elgar and the enthusiastic crowds afterwards (Autobiographies 442-443), yet he was quite capable of remembering Moore's troubles with clothing.

This thesis will instead take the opportunity of examining Diarmuid and Grania as the product of two quite distinct artists. By considering the dramatic output and theories of Yeats and Moore in the years prior to 1901 it

should be possible to isolate thematic interests particular to each author, and thus find avenues into the text. I have chosen to deal specifically with Yeats's application of mystical beliefs to literary endeavour, what he called "Spiritual Art"; with Moore I have singled out interests in psychological conflict, strong female characters, and with "literary Wagnerism". Because the period was one of profound dramatic experiment, I have also attempted to situate the text within a "context of innovation".

Chapter One
Irish Theatre in the Nineties: The Context of Innovation

The emergence of the Irish Literary Theatre and the coming together of these unlikely collaborators may be better appreciated by a brief survey of Irish drama in the 1890s. Dublin's two major theatres, the Royal and the Gaiety, were scarcely different from the theatres of London and New York: plays and players were almost exclusively English or American (Hogan & Kilroy 10). On nationalist grounds alone the promotion of Irish plays was desirable, but Yeats and Moore shared the additional ambition of restoring the artistic, or literary, playwright to prominence within the theatre.

Commercial drama is, of course, dominated by the need for large and satisfied audiences, and the actor-managers of the nineteenth century had developed successful conventions which generally ensured their financial success. Heroes and villains in these conventional plays were clearly defined, and as plots careened towards edifying conclusions they provided enough reversals, perils, and sentiment to keep their audiences in enthralled attention. Playwrights such as Scribe and Sardou, and their English imitators, Bulwer-Lytton and T.W. Robertson, specialised in such "well-made" plays,

often starting with a climactic scene of triumph over villainy, the scène à faire, and then constructing a plot around it (Styan 2, 5). Acting tended to be declamatory and expansive, and actors were measured by their ability with "points", outbursts of sonorous language. Dramatic criticism thus tended to be simplistic, and employed criteria such as the audience's ability to empathise with the hero, or the moral tenor of the play.

Towards the end of the century novelists and playwrights of the Continent began to influence British drama. The naturalists, as some called themselves, attempted to duplicate real life upon the stage through "genuine, plain language", and by establishing a theatre of social criticism. Writing in 1881, Émile Zola complained that the theatre had become "an entertaining lie" insulating its audiences from "the sad realities of the day" (Cole 7). Zola was not satisfied with exact and ordinary dialogue, and called for an intellectual, challenging theatre:

> The question of sentimental characters now remains. I do not disguise the fact that such a question is of capital importance. The public remains cold when its passion for an ideal character of loyalty and honour is not satisfied. A play which presents the audience with living characters taken from real life looks black and austere to it, when the play does not completely exasperate the public. It is on this point especially that the battle of naturalism is fought.
>
> (Ibid.13)

One of Ibsen's later plays, Ghosts (1881), reveals a debt to the "well-made" sentimental melodramas in the concealed past guarded by Mrs. Alving and in the play's climactic third act, when that past is catastrophically revealed. What makes the play naturalistic, in the "scientific" sense defined by Zola, is the hypocrisy represented by the supposedly virtuous life of the Captain and Mrs. Alving's indecisive response to Osvald's request for the fatal morphia. The concealed past in this play does not serve to get the hero out of a tight scrape, as often occurs in conventional melodrama; instead the father's sins damn the innocent Osvald. While it is now severely dated, the fate of much social criticism, Ghosts still powerfully suggests that beneath propriety and manners "we are, all of us, so pitifully afraid of the light" (Ghosts 61).

The main contribution of Ibsen and Zola was to return the play of ideas, la pièce à thèse, to the theatre. One of Ibsen's most fervent British admirers was J.T. Grein, who saw that such plays required an autonomous showcase and so used the model of André Antoine's non-commercial Paris-based Théâtre Libre. Grein's Independent Theatre Society led a struggling existence between 1891 and 1898, and relied upon gifts, members' subscriptions, and amateur actors. The Society's objectives were put forth in an 1889 proposal:

> ... a British Théâtre Libre would aim, neither at fostering playwriting of a merely didactic kind, nor at introducing subjects of an immoral, or even unwholesome realistic nature. It would nurture realism, but realism of a healthy kind, it would strive to annihilate the puppets which have done yeoman's service for years and years, and would instead depict human beings, bearing human characters, speaking human language, and torn by human passions.
> (qtd. in Schoonderwoerd 101)

Grein brought Ghosts to London in 1891 and drew upon himself a now-famous storm of vituperation. Clement Scott in the Daily Telegraph, for example, compared Ibsen to "one of his own Norwegian ravens emerging from the rocks with an insatiable appetite for decayed flesh" (qtd. in Williams 25). Grein himself fared little better. Among his few allies, Bernard Shaw began to shock audiences with Ibsenesque plays such as Mrs. Warren's Profession (1893) and Arms and the Man (1894). Ibsen's more numerous detractors condemned his plays as morally corrosive. Nevertheless the naturalistic play became popular without being completely understood.

The naturalistic influence is visible in the work of two prominent English commercial playwrights, Arthur Wing Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones. The Second Mrs. Tanqueray (1893) was Pinero's attempt, in his own words, to write a play "more truthful, more sincere than the old stuff" (qtd. in Wyatt 79), and superficially resembles Hedda Gabler and A Doll's House. Pinero's Paula shares the frustrations of Hedda Gabler but while Ibsen's heroine is fiercely indignant Paula

merely seems peevish. Her suicide does not seem tragically inevitable as does Hedda's, and, as Stephen Wyatt observes, "we long for Paula to go out, slamming the door behind her like [Ibsen's] Nora" (ibid. 81). Pinero's genius is in generating sympathy for his heroine without greatly endangering, or even identifying, the conditions which generate that sympathy. In Jones's The Liars (1897) the inhumanly decent Sir Christopher persuades his friend not to elope with a married woman, and at the final curtain the two are about to leave and do great things in Africa for Queen and Country. By winning over his friend, Sir Christopher saves the audience from concluding that his class is a pretty shiftless lot. In offering such peerless heroes as moral standards Jones was opting for the theatre of idealism, which is not the same thing as the theatre of ideas. While he admired Ibsen's "tense and shattering" dramatic ability, Jones condemned European naturalism as "the base strife/ Of petty dullards, soused in native filth" (qtd. in Jackson 12).

Mrs. Tanqueray and The Liars are indications of the state of serious English drama in the 1890s. Imitating Ibsen had become so fashionable that in 1895 Shaw wrote disparagingly of "the commonplace playgoer ... moved for the twentieth time by the conventional wicked woman with a past" (Shaw 24). Pinero and Jones could successfully imitate Ibsen's style while staying firmly rooted in the conventions

of genteel romance and melodrama. Their elaborate sets are "splendid", "richly and tastefully decorated", their characters stock figures such as the loyal and worldly friend, and their stages are cluttered with Admirals, Ladies, waiters, footmen, Knights, MPs and MDs. Neither playwright was able or willing to grasp the dangerous social component of Ibsen's vision.

The absurd potential of naturalism in extremis was fully explored by the spectacular melodrama. Drury Lane's sophistication was largely confined to elaborate visual effects. In 1898 Max Beerbohm noted of the Lane that "Last year, the management wanted Battersea Park and a diving bell, amongst other things; this year it wanted Lord's, a balloon, a four-in-hand, bicyclists on the road, Prince Ranjitsinhji, and the Military Tournament" (Beerbohm 56). This type of entertainment was immensely popular in Dublin. Audiences at the Queen's thrilled to Wild West gunfights, mustachioed villains, and collapsing buildings. The "Irishness" of these plays was hugely unsophisticated and sentimental, in the tradition of the "Stage Irishman". In 1895 the inveterate playgoer Joseph Holloway saw On Shannon's Shore, or The Blackthorn at the Queen's, and recalled that "Mr. Fred Cooke, the author, behaved in the character of 'Barney Shanaghan' as a blithering idiot right through and nearly made me ill by his exaggerated tomfoolery" (qtd. in Hogan and Kilroy 19).

The melodrama produced one of the few Irish playwrights (other than Mr. Cooke) of the period, Dion Boucicault. Between 1838 and 1890 he churned out highly successful plays, skillfully mixing romantic intrigue, murder, and comedy. His The Shaughraun (1875), a Dublin staple for years, features the wily Conn, "the soul of every fair, the life of every funeral, the first fiddle at all weddings and patterns" (Krause 174) . This engaging soul aids a young Fenian gentleman to win his sweetheart and to avoid redcoats, smugglers, and an evil landlord. Despite any nationalist sympathies Boucicault may have entertained, The Shaughraun is adroitly neutral. Robert, the dashing young Fenian, is pardoned by a fortuitous general amnesty and his pursuer, the English Captain Molineux, is too attracted to Robert's sister to serve with much relish as an officer in an army of occupation. Irishness was to Boucicault above all a commodity: Conn first delighted audiences at Wallace's Theatre, New York.

While he is not a "serious" dramatist, Boucicault was a master of comic dialogue which still sparkles today. The Shaughraun contains some clever, if predictable, scenes, and as David Krause notes, Conn prefigures the comic characters of Synge, O'Casey, and Behan, and is a cousin to Christy Mahon and Joxer (Krause 31). Boucicault's influence on Irish drama is in fact quite startling: in an 1895 production

of The Shaughraun at the Mechanics' Theatre (later The Abbey) one could have found the youthful Sean O'Casey attempting a paternal brogue as Father Dolan (Krause 45). However, while Boucicault's plays survived his death in 1890, they were fast becoming antique.

The Dublin stage at the century's end was thus neither especially innovative nor especially Irish, and it is not surprising that its first restorers were exiles from London (like Yeats), or Paris (like Synge), where the dramatic climate was more favourable to innovation. Besides the high-society melodramas of Pinero and Jones, and the merry antics of Boucicault and his many imitators, theatres such as the Queen's and the Empire Palace billed a variety of grotesques, singers, and lady clog dancers (Hogan & Kilroy 20-21). Reviewers such as Frank Fay in the United Irishman routinely mourned the lack of an Irish talent to rival the past glory of the Sheridans. While a revelation was not visibly at hand, there was a developing sense of dissatisfaction with existing dramatic forms. Lennox Robinson, in recalling this period, laconically remarked that "the London theatre was not the place to attract a person of culture and intelligence" (Gwynn 72).

A century of domination by the great actor-managers had developed commercially successful conventions which prohibited real innovation. The independent theatre movements

of Antoine and Grein (and there were many more) indicate a perceived gulf between the theatre of art and experiment and the theatre of Boucicault's "philosophy of pleasure" (Krause 47). While the critic Max Beerbohm deplored the "dramatist who appeals only to a few cognoscenti", he admitted that dramaturgy "is the one form of art which is at the mercy of the multitude":

> When the public knows what to expect and gets it, it is a good enough judge of a play. When it hoots 'the usual thing', that is a sign that 'the usual thing' has not been well done. Its opinion of the unusual thing is, however, quite worthless.
>
> (Beerbohm 73-75)

The Irish Literary Theatre, and particularly Diarmuid and Grania, were attempts to overcome the dilemma posed to the artist by the commercial theatre. The dramatic ideas of Yeats and of Moore must thus be understood within this context of dissatisfaction. While both agreed upon the need for a national, literary theatre, and saw little of either in Dublin, their prescriptions differed remarkably.

Chapter Two
The Collaborators - Yeats

Yeats the dramatist is a topic of labyrinthine complexity, best explored with trustworthy guides such as Clark, Flannery, and Saddlemyer. This thesis could not hope to rival the scope of their scholarship, but fortunately Yeats's plays and dramatic theory up to 1901 make a more manageable subject. A brief examination of this early period in his career should allow us to grasp the ideas which Yeats brought to the writing of Diarmuid and Grania.

In 1889 Yeats confidently declared that "England is an old nation, the dramatic fervor has ebbed out of her" (New Island 69). Despite his numerous occult, nationalist, and romantic preoccupations in the 1890s Yeats stayed aware of new plays and ideas and kept a cold eye on English mainstream theatre. He had little patience with Pinero and Jones, and with "those two slatterns, farce and melodrama" (ibid. 114). While his reputation prior to the Irish Literary Theatre was primarily as a lyric poet, Yeats wrote several dramatic poems and theatre reviews, and later in his life would declare that "I need a theatre, I believe myself to be a dramatist, I desire to show events and not merely tell of them" (Plays and

Controversies 416).

Yeats was well aware of the many attempts at dramatic innovation in these years. Like the English Ibsenites, he disdained the commercial theatre and wrote of Ibsen that, "though [my generation] and he had not the same friends, we had the same enemies" (Autobiographies 279). His dislike of Ibsen was fundamentally aesthetic; Yeats recalled attending the London premiere of A Doll's House and repeating to himself during the performance that "Art is art because it is not nature" (ibid.). To Yeats the theatre that honestly attempted to portray life as it is could not hope to present beauty and heroism, "music and style". In his famous critique of the Independent Theatre's Ghosts Yeats complained that the characters were merely "whimpering puppets ... in the middle of that great abyss" and wondered what oppressive force "weighed upon their souls perpetually" (qtd. in Flannery 139). He disliked the "inorganic, logical straightness" of Shaw for similar reasons, and in December 1896, after seeing Alfred Jarry's Ubu Roi in Paris, Yeats felt "very sad, for comedy, objectivity, has displayed its growing power once more" (Autobiographies 348). While the anarchic fury of Jarry's play was completely opposed to the world represented by Boucicault, it did not satisfy Yeats the artist. Social criticism, be it realistic or surreal, was firmly rooted in the world he sought to escape.

If a playwright in the 1890s were dissatisifed with Ibsenesque naturalism and with melodrama or farce à la Jones, the only other practicable alternative was poetic drama. Hugh Kenner has somewhat unkindly described this drama as "blank-verse tushery with Shakespeare on its curved horizon, but mediated by the Keats of Otho the Great" (Kenner 30). But he does correctly identify the models. Other than Shakespeare, the poetic dramatist could copy the five-act tragedies of Keats and Shelley, or imitate Tennyson or Browning. This was primarily the drama of the little theatres, performed for audiences of students and artists. Yeats's friends, John Todhunter and John Davidson, wrote plays which, because of their pseudo-Elizabethan diction, were largely restricted to pastoral or quasi-medieval subjects. Such plays often over-taxed the abilities of amateur casts and rivalled the mainstream stage for bombast. As Robin Skelton notes, poetic drama posed the difficult problems of marrying "colloquial vigour to the traditional rhetorics of dramatic blank verse" and of achieving "a heroic theme without the use of fustian" (Skelton 134).

Stephen Phillips's Paolo & Francesca (1899), a fairly typical example of English poetic drama in this decade, is a tragedy vaguely set in feudal Italy. Its tone suggests a Burne-Jones painting come to life, and its doomed lovers embrace their fate with such pure enthusiasm that they

generate little dramatic tension. The use of language displays some promise (and a debt to Shelley) yet lacks vitality because of its decidedly literary nature:

> Us, then, whose only pain can be to part,
> How wilt Thou punish? For what ecstasy
> Together to be blown about the globe!
> What rapture in perpetual fire to burn
> Together! - where we are is endless fire.
> (Phillips 112)

Poetic drama, at least in London, tended to be either unpopular, as many of Todhunter's plays were, or a jealously guarded secret. The Shelley Society's 1886 production of The Cenci, a play banned by the censor, was performed for an audience that was "not a society, nor even simply a coterie, but a huge fan-club, assembled for a very private performance" (Curran 189). Nevertheless Yeats had high hopes for this art form. Writing in 1890 in praise of Todhunter's A Sicilian Idyll, he declared:

> A fine poetic drama ... lifts us into a world of knowledge and beauty and serenity. As the Mohammedan leaves his shoes outside the mosque, so we leave our selfhood behind before we enter the impersonal temple of art. We come from it with renewed insight, and with our ideals and our belief in happiness and goodness stronger than before. Melodrama can make us weep more; farce can make us laugh more; but when the curtain has fallen, they leave nothing behind.
> (New Island 113)

Here we detect some characteristic "Yeatsian" elements. The ideas of mystic revelation, otherworldly beauty, and the belief in a spiritual art are important refrains in Yeats's aesthetics, and are worth pursuit and elaboration.

"I was in all things Pre-Raphaelite" recalled Yeats of his youth in the 1880s (Autobiographies 114). His early dramatic poems certainly reflect this early influence. The Island of Statues (1885), subtitled "An Arcadian Faery Tale", reveals the same dissatisfaction with the external world visible in "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" and deploys a number of Shelleyan characters. Furthermore, if we peer through the archaic language and ornament ("why, in sooth,/ Almintor, thou hast grown so full of ruth"), we note what John Unterecker calls "the ambivalence at the heart of things" (Unterecker 73) so common to Yeats's works:

> ALMINTOR: I hear the whole sky's sorrow in one voice.
> ANTONIO: Nay, nay, Almintor, yonder song is glad.
> ALMINTOR: 'Tis beautiful, and therefore it is sad.
>
> (Alspach, Plays 1231)

Almintor is one of those perceptive Yeatsian characters confronting a peculiar dilemma. While he perceives beauty within the living world, he distrusts the life of the senses. Dissatisfied with mortality, Almintor desires not external things but "truth,/ And elvish wisdom, and long

years of youth" (ibid. 1232). His search for the faery flowers which grant such desires, despite the danger of petrification, suggests the self-destructive quality of such immortal longings. We thus find in one of Yeats's earliest works this conflict between the spiritual and material, between the internal and the external, which Yeats called the "war of immortal upon mortal life". He would find this concept embodied, not in English but in French poetic drama.

It was Arthur Symons, Yeats's friend and colleague in mystical inquiry, who introduced the Belgian Maeterlinck and other French writers to England. In The Symbolist Movement in Literature (1899) Symons defined Symbolism as "a literature in which the visible world is no longer a reality, and the unseen world no longer a dream" (Symons 2-3). This definition thus allies itself with the many occult and theosophical societies of the 1890s which repudiated the material world and searched for things spiritual. In Symbolism, Symons wrote, "art returns to the one pathway, leading through beautiful things to the eternal beauty" (ibid. 4) and "becomes itself a kind of religion, with all the duties and responsibilities of the sacred ritual" (ibid. 5). Symons's definitions themselves resist definition. His concept of "sacred ritual" is as uncertain as those "most secret and inviolate" Roses Yeats was then writing of, and yet this book captures the excitement the two men obviously felt for their

subject. Symons had known Yeats since 1891 and the Rhymers' Club, and The Symbolist Movement certainly grew out of their discussions. More importantly, Symons introduced Yeats to two practitioners of Symbolism, Maeterlinck and Villiers, who would shape Yeats's idea of the theatre.

Maurice Maeterlinck's book on dramatic theory, The Treasure of the Humble (1896), greatly affected Yeats, who saw it as part of "an insurrection against everything which assumes that the external and material are the only fixed things, the only standards of reality" (Frayne 2, 45). For Maeterlinck the theatre was ideally a medium for revelation, and should capture "the strange moments of a higher life that flit unperceived through my dreariest hours" (Cole 30). The adjective most used to describe his drama is static, which reflects Maeterlinck's belief that words rather than actions evoke the "beautiful and great":

> One may even affirm that a poem draws the nearer to beauty and loftier truth in the measure that it eliminates words that merely explain the action, and substitutes for them others that reveal, not the so-called "soul-state", but I know not what intangible and unceasing striving of the soul towards its own beauty and truth.
> (Ibid. 33)

Again we note that such statements tend to evade critical definition; "I know not" seems to have been a favourite phrase of Maeterlinck's. His play Pélléas and

Mélisande (1898), however, affords us an opportunity to see symbolist ideas in operation. At first glance Maeterlinck's "spectral" and "static" drama seems quite conventional; Pélléas' plot, a wife loved by her husband's trusted comrade, closely resembles that of Paolo and Francesca. Yet this world is infused with weirdness. The castle perched on a mountain hollow with sepulchral vaults is a symbol of the material world poised on the edge of a great and uncertain abyss:

> GOLAUD: ...No one suspects the decay which is going on here. The whole castle will be swallowed up some day, if something is not done. But no one likes to come to this place ... There are strange cracks in many of the walls...
>
> (Pélléas 73)

Pélléas' characters are caught in a web of hesitancy and uncertainty. Their few actions are uncertain. The lovers Mélisande and Pélléas escape this stasis by fervently embracing rather than resist the onrushing Golaud. They sense a great transcendence in death, for Maeterlinck's heroes are those whose spirits seek beyond the physically perceived world. Pélléas and Mélisande experience what Symons calls "the last rapture", when "[the spirit] may become dazzling, may blind the watcher with excess of light, shutting him in within the circle of transfiguration, whose extreme radiance will leave all the rest of the world henceforth one darkness" (Symons 90-91). Maeterlinck

attempted to capture the fear and tragedy which is part of this "transfiguration" by assigning his characters key phrases repeated hesitantly:

> ARKEL: -The human soul is silent, it must tread its path by itself ... It passes and suffers and shrinks alone ... The pity of it, Golaud, - ah, the pity of it!
>
> (Ibid. 134)

These are simple words which require skillful acting. A faltering, convincingly reverential delivery may well convey "the pity of it", while a flat or exaggerated performance will hardly convince the audience that a transfiguration has occurred. Maeterlinck himself realised this vulnerability of his "static" drama, and wrote evasively that "the theatre is a place where masterpieces die; for the production of a masterpiece by means of accidental and human elements has something antimonic in itself" (qtd. in Moses' intro. to Winslow's Pélléas, n.p.). Yeats however sensed the dramatic potential of Maeterlinck's innovations. In an 1899 lecture to the Irish Literary Society he praised a London production of Pélléas and Mélisande which employed "scenery of the simplest character", and found it preferable to another performance of the same play at the Lyceum, which used "all the adjuncts of stage craft" (Frayne 2, 156-157). Yeats was moving towards a theatre of simple and powerful lyricism unmarred by complicated and distracting visual

elements. Maeterlinck's experiments with masks and marionette-like gestures are almost certainly reflected in Yeats's later plays.

While he admired the Belgian's later plays as "a force helping people to understand a more ideal drama", Yeats gave them only qualified praise. In 1895 he wrote to Olivia Shakespeare: "I feel about his plays generally however that they differ from really great works in lacking that ceaseless revery about life which we call wisdom" (Wade 255). He was troubled by the oppressive forces which burdened Maeterlinck's characters and caused them to dwindle in stature. Such forces prevented characters from ever becoming truly heroic. The year before his letter to Mrs. Shakespeare Yeats had seen in Paris the play which influenced him the most in this decade, Villiers de L'Isle Adam's Axel.

Axel, as it is often recalled, took five hours to perform, and Symons claimed that it attained "that divine monotony which is one of the accomplishments of great style" (qtd. in Flannery 118). The play, packed with Rosicrucian symbolism and lore, is about repudiation: of wealth, of sex, and of imposed religious and secular asceticism. In repudiation of everything lies the "transcendental giving up of life at the moment when life becomes ideal" (Symons 26). Axel's heroes, again two lovers, sensing a fleeting moment of perfection within their souls, choose suicide to crystallise

that moment. Here we again note the annihilation of self which paradoxically leads to perfection, the experience at the very heart of mysticism. As Axel's tutor, Master Janus, urges:

> The gods are they who never doubt. Escape like them, by faith, into the Uncreated! Fulfil yourself in astral light! Rise, reap, ascend! Become the flower of yourself. Since you are but your own thought, think yourself immortal! Do not waste time in doubting of the gate which opens, of the moments which you singled out in your germ and which yet remain for you. Can you not feel your imperishable substance shining beyond all darkness and beyond all doubt?
>
> (Axel 216)

Today, when our faith in things "imperishable" is slight at best, the Master's words seem remote and alien, like the mystical writings of Julian of Norwich. To sit through a performance of Axel would be an experience of almost stupefying boredom, and even its translator admitted that, "dramatic as it is in treatment, Axel would gain little from a performance in the theatre" (ibid. 27). Villiers' characters are, as Yeats tells us, "symbols" and are as severely defined as are the well-dressed socialites of The Liars. Axel reads more like a sacred book than a play, and its characters are given pedantic and tedious lectures to deliver. The coming together of Sara and Axel, despite the Master's claims of divine ordainment, seems clumsy and highly circumstantial. Yet the play's appeal to Yeats was precisely

because it seemed a sacred book. In his preface to H.P.R. Finberg's translation he recalled that Axel "did not move me because I thought it a great masterpiece, but because it seemed part of a religious rite, the ceremony of some secret Order wherein my generation had been initiated" (ibid. 7).

We have already noted that Yeats's conception of poetic drama had from its start an almost religious element to it. The French Symbolists confirmed his vision of a spiritual theatre. Villiers gave him a model of mystical transfiguration which did not diminish its characters' heroic potential; in Axel and Sara, Yeats saw "the pride of hidden and august destinies, the pride of the Magi following the star over many mountains" (Frayne 2, 52). Maeterlinck suggested a simple and highly charged language quite distinct from that of the English poet dramatists, and Yeats was quick to see this difference. His work with Florence Farr and her psaltery, despite its many detractors, thus arose from a carefully considered theory. In a 1900 essay, "The Symbolism of Poetry", Yeats wrote:

> The purpose of rhythm, it has always seemed to me, is to prolong the moment of contemplation, the moment when we are both asleep and awake, which is the one moment of creation, by hushing us with an alluring monotony, while it holds us waking by variety, to keep us in that state of perhaps real trance, in which the mind liberated from the presence of the will is unfolded by symbols.
>
> (Essays and Introductions 159)

Yeats's mystical and symbolist beliefs are crucial in understanding his objection to the Victorian commercial stage which, as we have seen, was dominated by visual effects and bombastic deliveries. His dramatic theory called for a conjuror's hand in the production process, and the attentiveness of a communicant in the viewing:

> All sounds, all colours, all forms, either because of their preordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions, or as I prefer to think, call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions; and when sound, and colour, and form are in a musical relation to one another, they become, as it were, one sound, one colour, one form, and evoke an emotion that is made out of their distinct emotions and yet is one emotion.
>
> (Ibid. 156-157)

Under the influence of John O'Leary, Maud Gonne, and the poems of Young Ireland, Yeats's Arcadian shepherds and Indian lovers were giving way to Irish subject matter. By 1890 we find Yeats urging John Todhunter to abandon his Greek shepherds, their "ankles splash'd with vintage", for more "valuable" themes. Such pastoral plays, he wrote, "have at best a reflected glory - modern imitation of the antique" (New Island 106). Yeats himself was providing an example of a nationalist poetic drama, yet each of his pre-Diarmuid plays was an admixture of Irish and personal, mystical concerns. Each of these early works, which Yeats called "miracle"

plays, pursues the theme of spiritual longing and dissatisfaction with material things which we first noticed in The Island of Statues. In each play the influences of Maeterlinck and Villiers are notable as Yeats portrays what we might agree to call "the transcendence of self".

To explain this term we might first consider the 1892 and 1899 (acting) versions of The Countess Cathleen (which, incidentally, Yeats took from a French source). The essential vision of the play is of an exhausted, desolate world that defeats all hope and which forces its idealistic inhabitants to wither and long for death. Cathleen's sense of despair is especially vivid in the 1892 version. Despite her old nurse's urging to "no more turn aside and brood/ Upon Love's bitter mystery" (Alspach, Plays 54), the Countess' thoughts are more with the ancient heroic past and fading notes of Fergus' horn than with her famine-stricken land:

> KATHLEEN: O, I am sadder than an old air, Oona;
> My heart is longing for a deeper peace
> Than Fergus found amid his brazen cars;
> Would that like Adene my first forbear's
> daughter,
> Who followed once a twilight piercing tune,
> I could go down again and dwell among the shee
> In their old ever-busy honeyed land.
> (Ibid. 60-62)

The Countess' vague and ethereal longings are entirely opposed to the grim enthusiasm and purpose of the demons seeking to destroy her. Significantly disguised as

merchants, their gold has an irresistible effect upon her peasantry. One of the few unaffected by the gold's allure is the bard Kevin (Aleel in later versions) who, like Cathleen, represents spiritual values but whose extreme abstraction prevents him from effectively combatting such gross materialism. By breaking his harp Kevin signals his loathing of the world and his desire for obliterating rest:

> FIRST MERCHANT (reading): A man of songs: -
> Alone in the hushed passion of romance,
> His mind ran all on sheogues, and on tales
> Of Finian labours and the Red Branch kings,
> And he cared nothing for the life of man:
> But now all changes.
> KEVIN: Aye, because of her face,
> The face of Countess Kathleen dwells with me.
> The sadness of the world upon her brow -
> The crying of these strings grew burdensome,
> Therefore I tore them - see - now take my soul.
> (Ibid. 134-136)

In later versions Yeats more deliberately juxtaposes the Almintor-like longings of Cathleen and Kevin with the desperate desire of the peasants to sell their souls. Like good country hucksters, the Merchants skillfully misrepresent the true worth of what they seek:

> FIRST MERCHANT: They have not sold all yet.
> For there's a vaporous thing - that may be nothing,
> But that's the buyer's risk - a second self,
> They call immortal for a story's sake.
> (Ibid. 43)

The Countess attempts to combat the Merchants by buying food (one wonders why she does not do so earlier) but as commerce is the demons' medium she is easily defeated. With her gold stolen Cathleen sacrifices her own peerless soul to redeem her tenants "mad from famine", and so to use later Yeatsian language she is "changed, changed utterly":

> THE ANGEL: The light beats down, the gates of pearl are wide;
> And she is passing to the floor of peace,
> And Mary of the seven times wounded heart
> Has kissed her lips, and the long blessed hair
> Has fallen on her face; The Light of Lights
> Looks always on the motive, not the deed,
> The Shadow of Shadows on the deed alone.
> (Ibid. 167)

In The Countess Cathleen Yeats does his best to portray the physical world as an unattractive and hostile place, from which his heroes feel a great need to escape. Cathleen is too perfect a creature for earthly existence, and her nurse Oona, "broken" by her weight of years, concludes the play with a prayer to follow her mistress. Cathleen's sacrifice brings material benefit to her people but is a triumph of the spirit. She is transfigured into a heroine of legend, for the angels command men, when they "gaze upon the flying dawn", to "dream of her" (ibid. 166).

The "transcendence of self" is clearly seen in a much simpler play, The Land of Heart's Desire (1894). Mary Bruin, a newly-married young woman, must choose between life with

her prosperous but dull-minded family and the seductive coaxings of a Faery Child. Mary's fondness for reading old Irish legends and of "the Land of Faery" establishes her as another of Yeats's characters afflicted with a sense of life above the everyday round. This dreaminess is irritating to her family, who would prefer Mary to think of her husband and their "stocking stuffed with yellow guineas" (ibid. 184). It is obvious that Mary and her husband Shemus could find happiness if their marriage were not governed by the restrictive morality and convention represented by Father Hart, the play's principal spokesman for order:

> FATHER HART: My daughter, take [Shemus'] hand -
> by love alone
> God binds us to Himself and to the hearth,
> That shuts us from the waste beyond His peace,
> From maddening freedom and bewildering light,
> (Ibid. 193)

Mary is not abducted or enchanted by the Fairy Child. Her ability to see the supernatural figures in the surrounding woods suggests Mary's spiritual sensitivity. Prior to the Child's appearance she cries "Come, faeries, take me out of this dull house!/ Let me have all the freedom I have lost" (ibid. 192) which sets to us thinking of Blake and of the soul's pre-natal existence. As the Child calls to Mary, bidding her come away from chores and old age "shivering at the grave", she uses the crucial words "I call

you in the name of your own heart" (ibid. 206). Mary thus consciously chooses to follow the Faery Child and to "ride the winds, run on the waves" (ibid. 208), even after being told that the cost of such freedom is death. She then dies, and while the priest laments her loss to "the spirits of evil" the dancing figures visible to the audience just before the final curtain indicate the world Mary Bruin has passed into.

The Shadowy Waters, which was first performed in 1904 but was begun in Yeats's early career, is perhaps the most striking example of heroic transfiguration in his dramatic corpus. At first the play was a morass of Irish myth and theosophical notions, amidst which stood the clearly defined figure of Forgael, a pirate prince. Michael Sidnell has noted that while the background and descriptions of this Shelleyan hero change frequently in the early drafts, "the main aspects of the characterization - physical and magical power, frustration and immortal longings - are always present" (Sidnell 4). Forgael's quest is for an "Ever-living woman" who will accompany him in a voyage, like Oisin's, to some land of "ever-summered solitudes", for he is tired of earthly passion:

> FORGAEL: It's not a dream,
> But the reality that makes our passion
> As a lamp shadow - no, no lamp, the sun.
> What the world's million lips are thirsting for

Must be substantial somewhere.
(Alspach, Plays 322)

In these dreamy and rather Platonist words we note the now-familiar heroic dissatisfaction with life. This theme however is not presented convincingly. Unlike Cathleen and Mary Bruin, who have to struggle with the fear which makes their transfiguration heroic, Forgael has apparently resolved to end his mortal existence before the curtain rises. His "Ever-living" woman is conveniently provided for him by his sailors, who plunder her ship and murder her husband. Forgael then overcomes the lady's resentment of this rough treatment with a magical harp, and while he later feels remorse for enchanting Dectora she finds that she genuinely loves her captor. The two are abandoned by Forgael's men, who prefer the wealthy cargo they have captured to further mystical seafaring, and the lovers resolve to die and find "a country at the end of the world/ Where no child's born but to outlive the moon" (ibid. 336).

Critics have frequently compared The Shadowy Waters to Axel, and while the resemblances are striking (the superhuman and suicidal lovers, a huge tempting treasure), the play can be seen more accurately as the extension of a theme conceived in the earliest stages of Yeats's career. As we saw earlier, the French Symbolists merely confirmed ideas which Yeats found in mysticism and expressed in drama. The

longing for immortality, the "transcendence of self", pervades his early works. It appears in early poems such as "The Wanderings of Oisin" (1889) and "The Song of Wandering Aengus" (1897) and in later poems such as "A Meditation in Time of War" (1920) where the speaker declares "that One is animate,/ Mankind inanimate phantasy" (Allt, Variorum Poems 406). In a later play, The Unicorn from the Stars (1908), Martin's anarchic desire to see the supernatural unicorns trampling the earthly Law closely resembles the revolt of Mary Bruin in Heart's Desire. Clearly the "war of immortal upon mortal life" was never far from Yeats's mind.

Yet while a theme may be clear to the scholar it is often lost to the artist's contemporaries. The trouble with Yeats's "transcendence of self" is that to become truly heroic the hero must quite literally die to achieve immortality. The central characters of the three early plays we considered are all transfigured, but are all transfigured at the expense of their mortal lives. Nothing could have been more foreign to the audiences of the day. While a Victorian would have probably agreed that Gordon of Khartoum died a hero's death, he or she would most likely have been baffled by Yeatsian or Symbolist transfiguration, which, as we have noted, arose out of confusing and vague doctrine. George Russell (AE) was perhaps not too far from the mark when he complained:

> Yeats has no philosophical basis for his poetry. Except for an arbitrary system which he has from the "Rosicrucian Cult" which is obscure and unsatisfactory and has an arbitrary system of symbols only to be understood by initiates. The gods to Yeats are merely symbols, which he frequently uses in a merely fanciful way...
> (qtd. in Sidnell 289)

Yeats was developing a dramatist's sense of clarity and order in these years, and later would return to the early plays to pare away "ornament" in search of the "simple and natural" (Plays and Controversies 299). The Shadowy Waters sharpened his sense of staging and he worked to achieve a "monotony of colour [which] ... made the players seem like people in a dream" (qtd. in Alspach, Plays 341), always hoping to achieve that "one emotion" which would captivate the audience with a sense of meaningful ritual. It did not matter if that audience were but a small one. Yeats was also developing a vision of the theatre which perhaps anticipated the scandalised Dublin burghers who greeted The Countess with cries of "Souls for Gold". In an 1889 review we find him declaring that "we must go to the stage ... to be inspired, not amused, if modern drama is to be anything else than a muddy torrent of shallow realism" (New Island 176), and later in the same review Yeats speaks admiringly of Renan, who had called for a state-subsidised theatre "in all matters to be under the control of the greatest artists and poets of the time".

While Yeats had not yet reached the stage of At the Hawk's Well (1916) and the theatre of the invited guest, by 1899 and the founding of the Irish Literary Theatre he had clearly rejected the popular or commercial drama. He may have inwardly agreed with Russell's charge that his ideas were "only to be understood by initiates". When he edited the first number of Beltaine, the organ of the I.L.T., Yeats chose a telling subtitle, St. Paul's "I wished to be anathema for my brethren". Yeats used this first number extensively to denounce "the ordinary play of commerce", imbued with the confidence which came from Edward Martyn's agreement to underwrite the first productions:

> [Our] writers will appeal to that limited public which gives understanding, and not to that unlimited public which gives wealth; and if they interest those among their audience who keep in their memories the songs of Callanan and Walsh, or old Irish legends, or who love the good books of any country, they will not mind greatly if others are bored.
>
> (qtd. in Hogan & Kilroy 35)

Yeats went on to claim that the plays of this Theatre, written "with imaginative sincerity and filled with spiritual desire", would find the right audiences - the discerning playgoers or else those "few simple people who understand from sheer simplicity what we understand from scholarship and thought" (Beltaine No. 1, 20). He was clearly making every effort to distance this new movement from the theatre of

Pinero and Boucicault.

We have pursued Yeats's drama and dramatic ideas up to the point of Diarmuid and Grania, and this thesis will not attempt to recount the well-known story of the Irish Literary Theatre and its fortunes. It has instead shown the evolution of Yeats's search for a dramatic form and revealed the importance of the "transcendence of self" in the early works. The later Yeats would devote great efforts to championing Synge and O'Casey, and his own increasingly austere and aristocratic vision of the theatre, as is often said, would deny Yeats the popularity of those he fought for. But in the 1890s there were some who already sensed and appreciated the innovative nature of his drama. After the Dublin opening of The Countess, Max Beerbohm declared:

> In writing The Countess Cathleen and in starting the 'Irish Literary Theatre', Mr. Yeats's aim has been to see whether beauty be not, after all, possible on the stage. Everyone who cares about the stage ought to be grateful to him, whatever the outcome of his experiment. If I were asked what were the two elements furthest to seek in the modern commercial drama, I should have my answer pat: 'truth and beauty'. I should, however, hasten to admit that there is some considerable attempt at the former element. In recent years, dramatists have been educating themselves to attain in their work, and their audiences to demand in it, a nearer approach to the realities of life and character. ... About beauty I have said nothing. To say anything about it, could have served no practical purpose; for there is no faintest effort among ordinary modern dramatists to attain any kind of beauty. In the ordinary modern theatre, beauty begins and ends

> with the face of the leading lady. ... To an Irishman, perhaps, Mr. Yeats's play may seem steeped in national character. To me it seems merely a beautiful poem about some men and women.
> (Beerbohm 141-143)

Chapter Three
The Collaborators - Moore

The dedication of Evelyn Innes, one is tempted to think, should read: "To Arthur Symons and W.B. Yeats, Two contemporary writers with whom I am (currently) in sympathy". To one acquainted with Moore's complex and mercurial career the insertion of the adverb somehow seems fitting. As Graham Hough expresses it, Moore was a man of ambitions: "to ride the winner of the National; to paint like Manet; to write like Zola; to be a great lover; to write like Flaubert, Balzac; to be a man of the world; to be an Irish patriot; to write like Landor; to write like Pater" (Owens 167). With each ebullient ambition came a renunciation of the past enthusiasm, which at least partially explains Moore's lifelong habit of revision and rewriting. His ideas were always in flux.

Moore certainly deserves better than his present state of literary eclipse, but this too is the result of his many enthusiasms. His discipleships were loudly announced and loudly terminated, and his caustic, self-deprecating manner as alter ego Amico Moorini gave rise to a host of hostile recollections. Moore the buffoon, the bore, the "old lecher from Mayo" has been impaled upon so many anecdotes that, as

Douglas Hughes has observed in his introduction to The Man of Wax, much of the writing about him since Moore's death in 1933 focuses upon the man rather than on the writer (vi). Moore would often admit that he liked to have a finger "in every literary pie", and his critical champions regard him as a consummate innovator and friend of the avant garde. Contemporaries such as James H. Cousins, who dismissed Moore as "a literary scavenger" (qtd. in Hogan and Kilroy 109), were less kind.

Moore's reputation was and is primarily as a novelist. Prior to Diarmuid and Grania he was best known for Esther Waters, a work which retains some of the Zolaesque characteristics which pervade his first novels and which identified Moore as the first English naturalist. He was an English novelist in that from 1881 to 1901 he was resident in London, with little interest in his family's Mayo estate. During this period Moore developed interests in Ibsen, Wagner, and through Symons became marginally acquainted with Huysmans and some French Symbolists. His dramatic production between 1881 and 1899, when he became a Director of the Irish Literary Theatre, amounts to exactly one play. It does seem curious, therefore, that a Paris-trained and Irish-born Londoner should have become involved in a nationalist dramatic movement in Dublin. One might easily follow D.E.S. Maxwell's lead and dismiss Moore's dramatic credentials,

which "were sufficient to allow him to condescend to Yeats and even more to Martyn ... instruct his colleagues and to display himself to advantage" (Maxwell 9).

If we set aside the myth of Amico Moorini we actually find that Moore, like Yeats, was an attentive observer of English drama in the Nineties. He was an Ibsenite in that he demanded plays of psychological depth and, to a lesser extent, of social criticism. Like Yeats he rejected the commercial theatre in favour of an independent, subsidised organisation, although he did not share the poet's quasi-religious conception of the theatre.

Moore drew a sharp, almost annihilating, distinction between the commercial theatre of amusement and the theatre of art, another point on which his dramatic theory closely resembles Yeats's. He considered various explanations as to why the commercial theatre was inimical to art, such as the 300 night run (the great plays of Neoclassical France, he claimed, had much shorter runs), or the advent of cheap books: audiences see plays "for what they do not find in books - pretty faces, brilliant costumes, scenical display, and acting", whereas the Elizabethans attended plays for the "fine language" of their poets (Impressions & Opinions 209). Moore was thus anything but a populist. In his tedious preface to The Bending of the Bough (1900) he complains that the "mob" controls all but the individual arts "such as lyric

poetry and easel painting" (xii). A similar opinion is expressed by the haughty Baron Steinbach in Moore's play The Strike at Arlingford (1893):

> Education! What has it done? You've taught men to read, but what do they read? Are the books written to-day, when every one knows how to read, better than those that were written two thousand years ago, when few knew how to read?
>
> (Arlingford 97)

Those dramatists who served what Moore called "the ante-room of the supper club" (Beltaine 1, 9) were severely treated for catering to the "mob" and for profiting from mediocre, unartistic plays. In the 1891 essay "Our Dramatists and Their Literature", presumably an ironic title, Moore assaults Jones's Sweet Lavender (1889) because the play is dominated by the law that "every one must be made happy" (Impressions & Opinions 189). Pinero's The Profligate (1891) is similarly dismissed for evading "plain pyschological truth" and for merely showing "how a vicious nature might be reformed by the beneficient influence of a pure woman" (ibid. 190-193). In the second number of Beltaine we again find Moore pursuing the matter:

> The playgoer wants to be amused, not pleased; he wants distraction - the distraction of scenery, dresses, limelight, artificial birds singing in painted bowers. In Mr. [Beerbohm] Tree's production of The Midsummer Night's Dream an artificial rabbit hops across the stage and the

> greatest city in the world is amused. The London playgoer is content to be distracted if he is not amused; the intolerable thing is that the author should attempt to stir him out of the lethargy of his dinner; he prefers to be mildly bored.
>
> (8)

Like his cousin Edward Martyn, Moore admired and imitated Ibsen's plays. The appeal of Ghosts, he claimed, was that it captured a Greek sense of fate and tragedy while employing the naturalistic technique of scientific representation. From Ghosts "we learn that though there be no gods to govern us, that nature, vast and unknown, for ever dumb to our appeal, holds us in thrall" (Impressions & Opinions 224). While he disliked the "wooden manner" of Parson Manders, Moore praised the characterisation of Osvald and Mrs. Alving, who are sufficiently developed yet do not obscure the play's "idea". Moore, like Shaw, developed the concept of "the idea", of the dominating theme, from Ibsen. As Philip Armato explains it, "both the characters in a play and the construction of a play should work toward developing the central idea, and finally ... they should both be kept in strict subordination to the central idea" (qtd. in Davis 7).

The chance to employ this technique came with the founding of Grein's Independent Theatre, of which Moore was a vocal supporter. He had already argued that artistic, or literary plays, would be welcomed by "a small minority tired of conventional plays, good and bad" (Impressions & Opinions

238) and had called for a privately funded theatre along the lines of Antoine's Théâtre Libre. Grein's most immediate problem was to develop a repertoire of English plays to replace the Independent's Continental offerings, and Moore naively appealed to the mainstream dramatists for plays and ideas which could not be used "on the regular stage" (ibid. 246). Not surprisingly, little aid came from this quarter.

Aside from work on a translated adaptation of Zola's Thérèse Raquin, Moore's contribution to the Independent was The Strike at Arlingford, written with the little-advertised help of one Arthur Kennedy. The published text includes a brief note stating that "the labour dispute is an externality to which I attach little importance", and Moore goes on to say that "I applied myself to ... the composition of a moral idea". Arlingford is a political dialectic between the union leader Reid and the conservative aristocrat Steinbach. Through a glaring coincidence both love the mine owner, Lady Travers, Reid to the point where he forsakes his socialist fiancée and betrays the workers he represents. Why he should do this for the vacuous and selfish Lady is perplexing:

> REID: Anne, listen. I've come to tell you -
> LADY ANNE: You've come to tell me that you love me. I won't hear anything else. Look at my fan, see the ladies and gallants how they're grouped under the colonnade. That little woman in the brown dress, isn't she sweet? And the little gallant at her feet, he's nice too. He doesn't believe much in what he's saying; it's just part

> of the entertainment.
> REID: But, Anne, do you hate deep feeling? Must all love be light?
> LADY ANNE: I really don't know. You find fault with all my conversation. You argue everything.
> (Arlingford 127)

Arlingford thus advances the thesis that personal integrity and the need to obey one's conscience are often confused with mere selfish expediency. Reid realises this after having convinced himself that, in sabotaging the strike, he can save the miners much suffering while preserving Lady Travers's fortunes and thus winning her love. After he is discovered, the strikers riot and Travers flees with the avaricious Steinbach, leaving Reid to review his options:

> REID: ...I have lost all. I have betrayed the woman I loved, and have been betrayed by her. I've betrayed the woman who loved me. I have lost not only her love but her respect. Worse than all, I've lost honour; never again can I look the world in the face. Belief in the cause is gone too - everything is gone - I stand a moral bankrupt. In such a juncture of circumstances man must escape from his self...
> (Ibid. 172)

In our brief look at Jones's The Liars we noted a distinction between the theatres of ideas and of idealism. Sir Christopher operates within the Jones play as a moral standard, representative of and acceptable to the audience's ideals, against whom the other characters are implicitly

compared. In agreeing to abandon his pursuit of Lady Jessica, Falkner conforms to and thus confirms the play's moral standard. While this point may seem perfectly obvious, it is worth noting again that the naturalistic play (if we assume that this classification signifies more than lifelike dialogue and scenery) challenges rather than supports a moral standard. If we use Ghosts as our model, we are forced at its conclusion to ask ourselves: does Mrs. Alving administer the poison to Osvald and, if so, is the act mercy-killing or is it born out of the selfish unwillingness to live caring for an idiot? To return to Arlingford, Reid does the "honourable thing" and is seen with strychnine as the final curtain descends, "the glass in his hand, with his back partly turned to the audience" (ibid. 175). It does not matter if Reid actually does drink. By declaring himself a "bankrupt", this character appeals to a moral standard embedded within the play, and does not allow the audience to reach its own verdict. This is a far remove from the Zolaesque pretense of objectively examining life as it is, and not as it is supposed to be.

If the above digression has served any purpose it will, I hope, have illustrated the uncertainty of "naturalistic", the adjective most frequently employed to describe Moore's works. Moore claimed that he was interested above all in "plain, psychological truth", and while it

would be absurd to say that a naturalistic play can not have a "moral idea" (Shaw's plays, for example, are profoundly moral), it would be a perplexing task to draw any real distinction between The Strike at Arlingford and the high society melodrama of Pinero and Jones.

Arlingford was written to meet a challenge by the dramatist G.R. Sims, who had asked the Independent for "an original, unconventional play" (qtd. in Schoonderwoerd 123), yet it is difficult now to see Moore's offering as "unconventional". Indeed his biographer Joseph Hone recorded that the only people provoked by the play were Fabians, "shocked by Moore's failure to distinguish between Trades Unionism and Socialism" (Hone 184). The play is perhaps most useful for showing up the weakness of Moore's dramatic criticism. For all his denunciations of the actor-managers he never seems inspired, as does Yeats, by an alternative vision of the theatre.

In Impressions & Opinions Moore had claimed that as a literary man his dramatic sense was superior to the actor's, since he had merely to read a play to judge it effectively:

> Plays read to me exactly as they act - only better, and I find myself still unable to admit the possibility that a play that reads well should act badly; when I say reads well, I mean reads well to him who follows each exit and entrance, seeing each part dovetail into the succeeding part, seeing all the parts in their relation to the entire play.
>
> (Impressions 216-217)

In essence Moore is suggesting that a writer's imagination and sense of construction are sufficient qualifications for a dramatist or drama critic, an assertion which would hardly have astonished the successors of Scribe and Sardou. After all, the "theatre of amusement" which Moore so heartily despised routinely profited from "well-made" plays. In an 1899 review the perceptive Max Beerbohm took issue with Moore's vague pronouncements on the theatre. Moore had just praised Martyn's The Heather Field and had found it highly superior to Pinero's Second Mrs. Tanqueray. Beerbohm admitted that Martyn's play was "better and more interesting than the plays to which one is accustomed", but had difficulty in seeing the "transcendent peculiarities" which Moore had claimed to see in the play. While defending Moore's right "to sneer at the plot of Mrs. Tanqueray", Beerbohm noted that Martyn's play had its share of "pettifogging conventions" and was hardly uncommon in its use of drawing room intrigues. He then made this telling comment:

> At present, I will merely say that, as a literary play, - by which I mean a play that is well-written - it has little or no merit: the writing is dull and heavy. Mr. Moore seems to apply the term 'literary' to any play which interests him as drama, and to deny it to any play which does not ...
>
> (Beerbohm 108-109)

Nevertheless Moore knew something of "theatre business", more so than did Yeats and Martyn at the time. Lady Gregory, as Ann Saddlemyer reminds us, praised Moore's "excellent help in finding actors" (qtd. in Skelton 219). His arrival in Ireland after nearly twenty years of London residence gave rise to much skepticism and amusement, the nationalists being especially doubtful. Although we resolved earlier to avoid the Moore legends, some examination of his motives is in order. There were two reasons for Moore's decision to come to Dublin, his loathing of England's war in the Cape Colonies and his literary admiration for Yeats. After their friendship cooled, Yeats described him as "Violent and coarse of temper ... bound to follow his pendulum's utmost swing ... till he had found his new limit" (Autobiographies 428). This comment may be true to a degree but it does little justice to Moore's feelings about the Boer War. He had heard from his brother Maurice, an officer serving with Kitchener, of British atrocities in the Cape, and Moore arranged with the journalist W.T. Stead to publish Maurice's anonymous reports, at "considerable" danger to all three (Gerber 202-204). Moore's agitation over the War pervades Hail and Farewell, and at least one of his characters, Ned Carmady in the short story "The Wild Goose", goes to fight for the Boers. This was a period of profound crisis for Moore, who found England (for a time) unbearable.

As Helmut Gerber observes of "The Wild Goose", "...Ned's quest for a homeland is, except for the marked political overtones, not unlike [Moore's]" (ibid. 204).

Moore first met Yeats in the late 1890s, and his admiration for the younger man then can not be questioned. While his criticism could often be scathing and at times almost irrrational, Moore was always willing to see merit in younger artists such as James Joyce, Nancy Cunard, and Austin Clarke. He sought Yeats's help in writing the third edition of Evelyn Innes (1901) and while Moore's praise tended to be embarrassingly fulsome, he saw great promise in the poet, as an 1898 letter reveals:

> I want you now to finish "Shadowy Waters" and then to write "Grania". To fully realize yourself you must produce more. I think you can. If you don't your genius will not perish, it will result in a small gem of great beauty, not a jewel of the first magnitude like Shelley but equally pure in quality. I hope however that you will abandon politics as Wagner did and that you will realize as he did that his mission was not politics but art.
>
> (Finneran, Letters to W.B.Y. 1, 45)

Perhaps more than anyone it was Yeats who awakened whatever Irishness that existed in Moore. Despite its many teasing references to rooks and mislaid umbrellas, there is in Ave a portrait of Yeats which captures much of its author's fascination, and even awe:

> ... Yeats and his style were the same thing; and his strange old-world appearance and his chanting voice enabled me to identify him with the stories he told me, and so completely that I could not do otherwise than believe that Angus, Etaine, Diarmuid, Deirdre, and the rest were speaking through him. 'He is a lyre in their hands; they whisper through him as the wind through the original forest ... There is more race in him than in anyone I have seen for a long while,'...
> (Ave 57)

In concluding this examination of Moore and his ideas we can observe, especially in some of his novels, three essential themes which dominate his art and which we can expect to find in our play. Briefly, these concerns are the portrayal of psychological conflict arising from difficult choices (an interest stemming from Moore's own chronic restlessness), the presentation of strong and generally positive women characters, and the literary application of Wagnerian material and ideas.

As we noted earlier, John Reid confronts an unenviable dilemma which represents an important Moore theme, what Anthony Farrow calls "the question of choosing an appropriate vocation in life" (Farrow 45). The situation of choice was Moore's avenue into "plain, psychological truth" and in presenting his characters with perplexing alternatives he was honestly attempting to examine human nature. Moore learned naturalism from Zola, and despite his claims of scientific detachment Zola carefully constructed situations which dictated his characters' actions. In his introduction to

Thérèse Raquin, Leonard Tancock notes that the author "has so arranged things that it would have been a miracle if anything other than adultery and murder had been the outcome" (14). The distinction between Zola and Moore is that the latter's protagonists are endowed with that singularly spiritual faculty, the conscience. Reid in Arlingford realises that he has ruined himself by taking the easiest and most tempting of options, and finds the courage to declare himself a "moral bankrupt". Self-examination and self-definition are always crucial moments in the developments of Moore's characters.

In Evelyn Innes (1898) the heroine's conscience is represented by her latent but powerful Catholicism. Evelyn discovers self-expression as an operatic soprano but finds this expression threatened by her dominating lover Owen. Taking a second lover does nothing to ease this situation and only exacerbates the guilt imposed by her resurgent conscience. The novel is thus the chronicle of a quest for identity:

> The forces within [Evelyn] were at a truce. She was conscious of a suspension of hostilities. The moment was one in which she saw, as in a mirror, her poor, vague little soul in its hapless wandering through life. She drew back, not daring to see herself, and then was drawn forward by a febrile curiosity. ... She foresaw nothing but deception, and easily imagined that not a day would pass without lies. All her life would be a lie, and when her nature arose in vehement revolt, she looked round for a means to free herself from the fetters and chains in which she

had locked herself.

(Evelyn Innes 245)

Evelyn's choice is more than "a choice between sensuality and penitence" (Farrow 108). Her decision to enter a convent is one of vocation, for her life must be right to be bearable, and her relentless conscience allows her no other destiny. This is not to say that Moore deprives his heroine of free will. Evelyn's mind is inquisitive, even skeptical, and Moore would write a sequel, Sister Teresa, depicting Evelyn's continuous search for some equilibrium. As Moore himself once wrote, "Life has no other goal but life" (qtd. in Cave 161).

Evelyn Innes presents as a protagonist "a mixture of strength, fickleness, and impetuosity, constantly refusing definition and a puzzlement to her friends" (Farrow 108); to anticipate our story, there is much of Grania in her. Moore was an attentive and sympathetic observer of women, and his works tend to be memorable because of their strong female characters. Frederick Seinfelt writes:

> ... as he advanced as an artist, he steadily inclined towards an idealization of women, especially emphasizing their mystery and beauty. Yet, in spite of this, Moore's basic view is one in which man and woman ultimately are depicted as failing to attain ideal contact or understanding of each other.
>
> (Seinfelt 2)

This comment is both true and untrue. Moore's women are not mysterious in the way that the Sidhe and "glimmering" girls of Yeats's early works are. Evelyn, for example, displays a healthy streak of vanity and selfishness in her character. We can accept "idealization" if we take it to mean the celebration of independent and resilient spirits which marks many of Moore's characters, and it is this desire for independence which causes his women to evade happy unions with men. It would not be excessive to describe Moore as something of a feminist.

Evelyn's artistic potential is discovered and fostered by her lover Owen Asher, but we are led to question the motives underlying his patronage. As Richard Cave observes, Owen is something of an Aesthetic Pygmalion, and Evelyn gradually realises that artistic success will force the submission of her true identity (Cave 148-149). Her other lover, the operatic composer Ulick Dean (who, curiously enough, is working on his own version of the Grania story), is <u>prima facie</u> intensely spiritual whereas Owen is atheistic, but he too values Evelyn primarily for her sexuality. The strength of Moore's heroine is revealed by her decision to reject these two men. Her life must also be hers to be bearable.

<u>Evelyn Innes</u> lacks the sharpness of focus which animates Moore's most successful novel, <u>Esther Waters</u> (1894).

Numerous critics have praised this novel for revolutionising the English genre because of its honest and unsentimental portrayal of a common serving-girl. In his introduction to the novel Graham Hough notes that "The radical novelty of Moore's plot is that it avoids the myth of retribution" (xi). Moore never condemns or punishes Esther for being an unwed mother. By raising her son to manhood she doggedly asserts her independence. Esther <u>is</u> her son. In defending her decision to marry the boy's father Esther articulates a personal, deeply-felt creed:

> 'A woman can't do the good that she would like to in the world; she has to do the good that comes to her to do. I've my husband and my boy to look to. Them's my good. At least, that's how I sees things.'
>
> (<u>Esther Waters</u> 302)

Esther's life is not one of mindless selflessness. She marries after a difficult struggle with the resentment caused by her abandonment, and her Chapel upbringing makes Esther constantly uneasy with William's gambling. However there is value in caring and attachment, and Esther is another expression of Moore's peculiar faith in the human spirit, quite unlike Thérèse Raquin. Zola's explorations of the mind were intended to depict humanity as animals, motivated solely by selfishness and self-preservation. There is a quiet heroism in Esther, and defiance in her decision to

raise her son despite society's condemnation of them. Like Esther, Moore's heroines tend to resist Victorian conventions in their unwillingness to see marriage, motherhood, or love affairs as entirely fulfilling and self-effacing roles. It would thus be a mistake to regard Millicent, in The Bending of the Bough (the play Moore took over from Edward Martyn), merely as the siren who lures the hero from his duty:

> MILLICENT: But your love, Jasper, much as I covet it, is not sufficient. I want your life, Jasper. I want to share it. I cannot consent to be either a sensuality, a housekeeper, or both.
> (Bending of the Bough 70)

Moore's admiration of memorable, heroic women is certainly one reason for his attraction to Wagner's works. His Paris days brought him into contact with Wagnerians such as Mallarmé, Verlaine, and Dujardin, and later he would make several "pilgrimages" to Bayreuth. This enthusiasm was by no means unique. British Wagnerians included T.W. Rolleston, Annie Horniman, and Edward Martyn, although Moore was perhaps the most dedicated in applying this interest to literary endeavours. Quite early in life he had declared that the novel, like a Wagnerian opera, should "be melody from beginning to end" (qtd. in Hughes 195) and Esther Waters is his best early attempt at "an unceasing flow of narrative". The novel's successful exploration of Esther's psyche also accords with Wagner's interest in portraying the beauty and

mystery of the interior life. In Opera and Drama the composer wrote that an artist must devote himself "without reserve to the impressions which move his emotional being to sympathy" and, as Richard Cave notes, this sympathy arises from "nature and a proper concern for one's fellow men" (Cave 138).

Evelyn Innes was Moore's first substantial attempt at "literary Wagnerism", and as we have noted is an attempt, albeit one of uncertain success, to portray the heroine's "mind-life". While Moore was able to translate Wagner into metaphors, his limited musical knowledge had unfortunate results. Owen Asher, for example, woos Evelyn by playing the love theme from Tristan und Isolde on her father's harpsichord. The power of the phrase and of Wagner, "full of sex - mysterious, sub-conscious sex" (Evelyn Innes 148), has the desired effect upon her, but, as William Blissett reminds us, "The only snag is the practical impossibility of playing sustained oceanic harmonies on [the harpsichord]" (Owens 55). Although he can refer to the power of the key, leitmotifal phrases which charge Wagner's operas, Moore does not himself attempt such a technique. He was in the habit - Cave gives this example - of allowing other artists to do his own work through the crudest of allusions:

> John raised his eyes - it was a look that Balzac would have understood in some admirable pages of human suffering.
>
> (qtd. in Cave 111)

Moore takes great pains to develop parallels between Evelyn's situation and those of Wagner's heroines. Such parallels are never subtle, and the reader wishes for more technique and less advertisement. Evelyn awakes from a dream in which "there were two Tristans, a fair and a dark" Evelyn Innes 116), obviously Owen and Ulick. The comparison is allowed to fade with the dream, however, partly because Ulick is less fully realised than is his rival and of course because Evelyn chooses neither Tristan. In fact Evelyn is compared to numerous heroines, Isolde, Kundry, Elisabeth, and never does the comparison aid our appreciation of her character. She even imagines herself as Brünnhilde when seeking forgiveness, kneeling "at her father's - or at Wotan's feet - she could not distinguish; all limitations had been razed" (ibid. 163). This opportunity is also lost, and we search in vain for an organising principle to the Wagnerian borrowings. Perhaps this lack of purpose compelled Virginia Woolf to describe Moore's novels as "silken tents which have no poles" (qtd. in Hughes 59). We are thus forced to conclude that, at least at this stage in his career, literary Wagnerism for Moore was more of a quarry than a doctrine.

In summary we might say that Moore was certainly not a kindred spirit to Yeats, but was a useful ally. Both shared an aristocratic aversion to the drama of their day, and both

were inspired by the idea of an independent theatre, although their dramatic visions were distinct (Yeats's being more clearly developed). It would be unfair and spurious to say that Yeats was the greater patriot, for Moore in his own way loved the country if at times uncertain of its people. While his playwriting experience was more limited than he cared to admit, Moore shared Yeats's great faith in art, even if his conception of art lacked the mystical elements of the poet's. These common threads brought together, at least for a time, two collaborators of startling diverse beliefs and backgrounds, and Diarmuid and Grania thus allows the fascinating opportunity of examining two singular minds at work.

Chapter Four
"All That the Heart Desires" - The Choice of a Subject

Writing in The Bookman in 1898, Yeats claimed that artists return to legend and myth to find

> ... the magical beryls in which we see life, not as it is, but as the heroic part of us, the part which desires always dreams of emotions greater than any in the world ... Because a great portion of the legends of Europe, and almost all of the legends associated with the scenery of these islands, are Celtic, this movement has given the Celtic countries a sudden importance, and awakened some of them to a sudden activity.
> (qtd. in Flannery 142)

Ireland, or more accurately, intellectual Ireland, had disinterred and been enchanted by its heroic mythology long before Diarmuid and Grania, although the Celtic glamour was still powerful in 1901. The extent of this spell is suggested by the fact that four out of the Irish Literary Theatre's seven productions, including our play, were treatments of legendary material. This chapter will consider the importance of myth and legend to the collaborators, especially to Yeats, and will argue that their choice of the Diarmuid and Grania story reflects highly idiosyncratic conceptions of culture and nationalism.

Many leading members of the "Celtic Renaissance",

including Yeats and AE, acknowledged a debt to Standish James O'Grady. As Hugh Kenner notes with amusement, O'Grady was something of an Irish Rider Haggard, whose "vigorous murk" (Kenner 69) of prose had done much to call forth Cuchulain and Finn from heroic limbo. As a champion of the bardic imagination, the "legend-making faculty", O'Grady admitted (at times) the distinction between myth and history by defining myth as "that kind of history which a nation desires to possess" (Selected Essays 27). There were two essential components to his bardic enthusiasm. The first was a delight in martial glory, in "an age bright with beautiful heroic forms, ... loud with the roar of chariot wheels", ibid. 87), and an assertion that the memory of kings and heroes in the "homogeneous bardic mind" had a unifying effect on the people (this despite the fact that Ireland's heroes seem to have spent much of their time killing one another). The second component was a profoundly moral purpose in the storytelling, for O'Grady, like Henry Arthur Jones, was an idealist. Finn and his Companions (1892), an Irish Camelot only without the adultery, concludes its tale of strong and honest warriors with the reminder that

> The lesson taught by Finn in his power is the lesson of flowing goodwill towards men. From his youth we learn the lesson of cheerfulness and courage.
>
> (125)

O'Grady's heroic propaganda was simple-minded and unbending nationalism of the type practised by Arthur Griffith and Maud Gonne, but at the time it strongly influenced its readers. In his rambling preface to Lady Gregory's Gods and Fighting Men (1904) we find Yeats, inspired by the chivalry of Finn's warriors, exclaiming that "I do not know in literature better friends and lovers" (xv). Yet while he shared O'Grady's bardic enthusiasms, Yeats had some characteristic, mystical ideas concerning the treatment and uses of legend. We are told, for example, that the age of Finn is much older than the relatively civilised era of Cuchulain and his "barley-fed horses", and that the Fianna "are hardly so much individual men as portions of universal nature, like the clouds that shape themselves and re-shape themselves momentarily" (ibid. xiii). Heroic Ireland, when the Fianna lived with the gods as equals, charmed Yeats, for it symbolised a stage of unity with the supernatural. The old heroes themselves became symbols, "full of power, and they are set in a world so fluctuating and dream-like, that nothing can hold them from being all that the heart desires" (ibid. xv).

The use and manipulation of these hero-symbols was part of the recreation of "the old foundations of life", and the reunification of a people. Yeats imagined a future generation of young patriots learning to associate the Irish

countryside with the names and deeds of the old heroes, "and perhaps when many names have grown musical to their ears, a more imaginative love will have taught them a better service" (ibid. xxiv). The trouble with this near-religious reverence was that patriots raised on Young Ireland's poetry were more familiar with heroes like Robert Emmet than with Finn and Diarmuid. In the first Beltaine Yeats had felt the need to give a summary of The Countess Cathleen's archaic references, "as the old mythology is still imperfectly known in modern Ireland" (No. 1, 9). One of his roles, Yeats realised, would have to be as the medium through which Ireland relearned or, better yet, was assigned its heroic past. Yeats was particularly autocratic on this subject, no doubt inspired by O'Grady's vision of "a single homogeneous nation, owing allegiance to a single sovereign, and governed by edicts issuing from one centre of rightful authority, namely Tara" (O'Grady, Selected Essays 82).

We have seen that Yeats needed the theatre to express ideas of mystical importance, and that his dramatic vision invariably took an otherworldly turn. It was natural that Yeats would use the theatre for the exposition of the old legends, and that these legends would be "hammered into unity" with his mystical beliefs. Diarmuid and Grania was not the first attempt at an epic play in this period, and Yeats was a keen observer of potential models for such drama. The

success of other heroic plays was widely debated, and he tried hugely to monopolise this discourse. Wagner's was perhaps the best example of a nationalist use of legendary material, although Yeats seems to have been interested in Bayreuth only as a possible model for an Irish theatre.

The Vikings at Helgeland (1858) was one of Ibsen's first attempts at a legendary subject, and it inspired Yeats as an example for Irish playwrights. Raymond Williams finds this early play "near in spirit to Ibsen's reading of experience" (Williams 32), although he deplores the use of coincidence which relegates the play to mediocrity. The reader familiar with old Norse stories such as Burnt Njal will note that Ibsen is largely successful in capturing the minimal characterisation and laconic poetry of the sagas in his lean prose. Yeats's interest was probably piqued by the play's two strongest characters, the lovers Sigurd and Hjördis, who find the world too constricting for them:

> SIGURD: But Egil, your son ... ! They will kill him!
> HJÖRDIS: Let him die ... then my shame will die with him!
> SIGURD: And Gunnar ... they will take your husband's life!
> HJÖRDIS: What do I care! I shall go home with a better husband tonight! Yes, Sigurd! It must be so! This place holds no happiness for me .... The White God makes for the north. I do not wish to meet him. The old gods are no longer strong, as they were before .... They sleep, they are almost like shades .... We shall fight them! Out of this life, Sigurd! I will set you on the throne of

> heaven, and I will sit by your side! [The storm rages.] Listen! Listen! There is our escort! Can you see the black horses racing by? One for me and one for you ... [She raises her bow and shoots.] Away, then, on your last journey!
> (The Vikings 60)

Unfortunately for Hjördis, Sigurd has become a Christian (one of the coincidences which troubles Williams) and so the two are forever separated. Yeats must also have been attracted by this portrayal of the heroic past giving way to the Christian present, for a similar vision is expressed in "The Wanderings of Oisin". Hjördis's speech also may have given Yeats an example of the "transcendence of self" as a theme for epic drama, although it is unlikely that Ibsen would have wholeheartedly accepted such an interpretation. Fate and supernatural visions are powerful forces in The Vikings, but we may choose to accept them as manifestations of equally powerful psychological turmoil. Hjördis becomes more and more Valkyrie-like as the action progresses, yet her rage and frustration stem from the same social and sexual inequalities visible in Hedda Gabler.

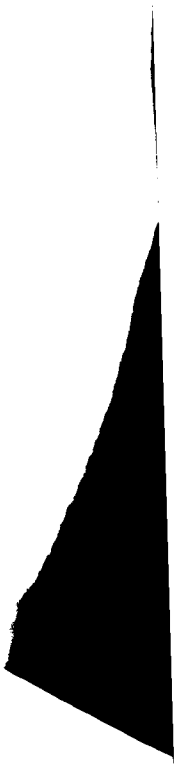
Yeats undoubtedly shunned such a naturalistic reading, and used "The Heroes at Helgeland" (sic) as an illustration, like Wagner's works, of a national imagination evoked upon the stage. The German and Scandinavian legends, he told his readers, were beautiful but faded with age, whereas Ireland's long-forgotten mythology had the "beauty and wonder" of

novelty. "May one not say", wrote Yeats of the Irish legends, "without saying anything improbable, that they will have a predominant influence in the coming century, and that their influence will pass through many countries?" (Frayne 2, 125). The peculiar qualities of the Celtic imagination were advanced to reinforce this position. In the first Beltaine Yeats declared that the Irish mind "is romantic and spiritual rather than scientific and analytical" (6).

Many disagreed, however, with such ethereal claims and doubted the importance of retelling legends at an urgent phase in Ireland's history. For that same number of Beltaine [illegible]eats had chosen to reprint an essay on "The Scandinavian [illegible]amatists" by C.H. Herford, which supported his comparison [illegible]he situations of Norwegian and Irish drama, but warned of [illegible]imitations of a "Nationalist stage". While the "mighty [illegible]f gods and heroes" may thrill the reader, Herford [illegible]reat artist will feel the need to go beyond a [illegible] program to "an individual message", as [illegible]ent from Henry V to Hamlet (ibid. 18). Herford [illegible]r example Ibsen's successor Bjornson, who had [illegible] faery" relevant to the "drawing room"

(1

who was progre[illegible] does not exactly contradict Yeats, [illegible]rds an "individual message" of his own by expressing my [illegible]al ideas in legendary contexts. But



there were others who openly questioned the value of retelling old stories, and the distinction between the "drawing room" and "faery" resolved itself into a debate between naturalism and what Yeats called "Spiritual Art". In his 1898 essay "What Should be the Subjects of National Drama?" the critic John Eglinton had expressed concern about antiquarian preoccupations, which could only lead to "belles lettres" and not to "a national literature" (Literary Ideals 11). The art of telling the old legends, he argued, was lost and their heroes were too alien for modern sensibilities. Not reassured by Yeats's subsequent talk of Bayreuth and Ibsen, Eglinton continued in a second essay to say that art is made great by the "vitality" of the artist's mind, and not because of its archaic qualities. "Brutus and Caesar," he maintained, "... are rather reincarnations of Romans in the Elizabethan age than archaeologically Romans" (ibid. 24). Yeats smarted from the charge that in ignoring contemporary life his nationalism became escapist, and responded with an essay of his own in defence of "Spiritual Art". He may well have been inspired by Blake's defiant claim that "Art & Artists are Spiritual & laugh at Mortal Contingencies" (Blake 597). The debate was thus between a popular nationalist and a mystical nationalist who saw Ireland best served by the "revelation of a hidden life" (Literary Ideals 36-37).

At least one contemporary, Max Beerbohm, would likely

have sided with Eglinton. In a 1903 review of The Vikings at Helgeland Beerbohm had concluded that the coldly fatalistic barbarism of the Vikings was too unfamiliar for London audiences to accept as anything but "a monstrous, impossible fantasy" (Beerbohm 563-564). It is one thing in playwriting to insult an audience's intelligence by underestimating its knowledge, but it is another to recognise the confines of the familiar, as this review realised. Yeats's defence against such charges lay in the fact that because the hidden life was unfamiliar, its revelation became the necessary duty of the spiritual artist. Contemporaries such as AE and William Larminie gave the debate to Yeats, Larminie noting that life and art without the direction of "transcendentalism" becomes "aimless, corrupt, or both, the only point of interest being the pathos of the spectacle of souls robbed of their heritage" (Literary Ideals 63).

For those who doubt Yeats's sincerity it is worth noting how fiercely he defended "Spiritual Art" in this and in other debates. Richard Ellmann has shown how his nationalism was inextricably bound up in his mystical beliefs (The Man and the Masks 115-134), and Yeats himself admitted at one point that The Shadowy Waters "has ... no definite old story for its foundation but was woven to a very great extent out of certain visionary experiences" (qtd. in Alspach 1284). Clearly this interest in "old stories" was more than that of

the antiquarian. As another example of "Spiritual Art" Yeats cited Alice Milligan's one-act play The Last Feast of the Fianna, produced by the I.L.T. in 1900. He explained in Beltaine that

> Miss Milligan's little play delighted me because it has made, in a very simple way and through the vehicle of Gaelic persons, that contrast between immortal beauty and the ignominy and mortality of life, which is the central theme of ancient art.
> (No. 2, 21)

Set at the court of Finn and Grania many years after the death of Diarmuid, The Last Feast imagines the Fianna's bitterness over Grania's role in the death of their comrade, and their uncertainty now that Finn is entering old age. Niamh, a lady of the immortal Sidhe, interrupts this acrimonious feast in search of a lover willing to accompany her back to "the land of Youth". Finn is too proud to escape death, but one of his warriors, the bard Oisin (significantly an artist), accepts:

> OISIN: [Pauses, half relents, but looks at GRANIA and says plaintively.] Since Grania came to bide here with her angry looks and bitter words, with her stories to you of how I befriended Diarmuid, my life has known no peace. ... Without peace, without joy, without music, I am weary of the place and willing to depart.
> (The Last Feast 24-25)

The play is not of the first order, but such a brief glance shows what Yeats found "delightful" in it. Here was another example of "transcendence" in a legendary play, and he was also able to see it as a validation of his own treatment of the Oisin story. Milligan, who on at least one other occasion had been generously interpreted by Yeats (Hogan & Kilroy 52), expressed some amusement at Yeats's lofty assertions of "immortal beauty":

> ... but to tell the truth I simply wrote [The Last Feast of the Fianna] on thinking out this problem. How did Oisin endure to live in the house with Grania as a stepmother after all that had happened? We know, as a matter of fact, that he was allured away to the Land of Youth by a fairy woman, Niamh of the golden locks. I have set these facts side by side, and evolved from them a dramatic situation..
>
> (Ibid. 67)

To summarise, Yeats saw Ireland's heroic legends as proof that men had once lived in unity with the eternal and unseen. The retelling of these legends as drama would infuse the nationalist cause with spiritual strength and purpose, and the enthusiasm with which Yeats defended and cited examples of "Spiritual Art" may be seen as indicative of his sincerity. By embedding the "transcendence of self" in legend, he was unifying public and private causes, melding "visionary belief" with the "old story".

It would be safe to say that Moore did not share his

collaborator's lofty faith in the spiritual power of Ireland's heroic past. As we noted earlier, Ave reveals his interest in the literary potential of myth, but this interest was certainly mixed with skepticism. For example, the character Ulick Dean in Moore's Evelyn Innes is undoubtedly modelled on Yeats (and later remodelled on AE), a dreamer full of "tales of bards and warriors" (Evelyn Innes 122), and Ulick is the subject of this revealing exchange between the Monsignor and Evelyn:

> 'Mr. Dean seems a very extraordinary person. Does he believe in astrology, the casting of horoscopes, or is it mere affectation?'
> 'I don't know, he always talks like that. He believes, or says he believes, in Lir and the great mother Dana, in the old Irish gods.'
> (Ibid. 327)

While one could not prove that Evelyn on Ulick is really Moore on Yeats, the passage clearly indicates an amused regard for the poet's preoccupations. If we believe the report in Ave, Moore asked Yeats "if he knew the legend of Diarmuid and Grania", and after an hour's lecture on the story's many variants the two agreed "to write an heroic play together". The storyteller in Moore was attracted by the legend's "psychology in germ" rather than to any mystical potential (Ave 269). Later, in Lady Gregory's Ideals in Ireland (1901), Moore announced that he and Yeats were at work upon "the most popular of our epic stories", but spoke

more highly of the prospects for a play in Gaelic, Douglas Hyde's The Twisting of the Rope (Gregory 45-46). While enthusiastic, Moore was not exactly on fire with mystic ardour.

While it would take considerably longer than Yeats's hour to give all the variants of the legend, the basic contours of the Toruigheacht Dhiarmada Agus Ghraínne (The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grania) are readily apparent. It is at least as old as the twelfth-century Book of Leinster, which mentions but does not give the story (Small 222). Essentially Diarmuid and Grania are Ireland's Lancelot and Guinevere, or Tristan and Iseult. Diarmuid was the champion of the Fianna, but was undone after meeting Grania at the feast celebrating her betrothal to his king, Finn (Arthur or Mark). The variants generally agree that the lovers were peerless in their beauty, and that Diarmuid had an irresistible love-spot (ball sierce) which compelled women's love. They further agree that Grania used a sleeping potion and gessa (oaths of allegiance) to coerce Diarmuid into eloping with her. Finn relentlessly pursued the two (this pursuit being the greatest portion of the narratives), and while Diarmuid attempted to maintain his allegiance to Finn by remaining chaste, Grania eventually seduced him. Peace was eventually made between the three, but the still-jealous Finn manipulated Diarmuid into hunting a magical boar. Diarmuid

was thus wounded, in accordance with an old prophecy, and to complete the job Finn (very much a villain in these stories) deliberately spilt the water which alone could have saved the hero. Grania, along with the Fianna, were outraged and wars followed, but eventually she succumbed to Finn's blandishments.

It is difficult to say how popular the story was in the 1890s, but it could not have been widely known outside of philological circles. One stilted translation of the Pursuit was done by Standish Hayes O'Grady (not to be confused with Standish James) for the Ossianic Society in 1857, and variants existed in several manuals of folklore. Ray Small, who has studied the legend as much as anyone, concluded that "there is no reason to believe that Yeats did not know the legend ... in almost every existing variant" Small 235). This familiarity began with Yeats's childhood, when his landscapes - Ben Bulben and Howth - were rich in associations with the legend.

While other literary figures such as Alice Milligan and AE shared his interest in Ireland's heroic past, Yeats and his faeries were faintly ludicrous to uninitiated observers such as Max Beerbohm. Such amusement is understandably a function of temperament, and it is more surprising to note that Standish James O'Grady, the "father" of the "Celtic Renaissance" (not the only one to enjoy such

an appellation), should have been horrified by the prospect of a play on the eloping of Diarmuid and Grania. We observed earlier that O'Grady's storytelling was serious and moral. Not once in his pulp mythology did he allow Grania to lay her fickle hands on Finn's champion; bourgeois Ireland had no need of such goings-on. On the eve of the production O'Grady spoke from the pulpit of his journal The All-Ireland Review:

> This story is only one out of thousands of stories about the great, noble, and generous Finn - the greatest, the noblest, and perhaps the most typical Irishman that ever lived - the one story, I say, out of them all in which the fame of the hero and the prophet is sullied, and his character aspersed.
> And, speaking for myself, I am not one little bit obliged to Mr. Yeats or to Mr. Moore for writing and exhibiting an Irish drama founded upon one entirely untrue chapter of pretended Irish history, written in the decadence of heroic and romantic Irish literature. Needless to say, I shall not go to see their drama.
> (qtd. in Hogan & Kilroy 101)

Bourgeois Ireland had spoken, and as Hogan & Kilroy note, it was a "rather chilling omen". As The Countess Cathleen controversy had shown, Irish nationalism was selective of its propaganda, and O'Grady's was the first of many fulminations which at least partially account for the cloud that has hung over Diarmuid and Grania since 1901. Yeats, with his belief in "Spiritual Art", and Moore, with his interest in psychological drama, would pay a price for their brand of literary nationalism. It would be excessively

generous, however, to argue that the Standish O'Gradys were solely responsible for the play's lasting unpopularity. As we shall discover, the combination of psychological naturalism and spiritual mythology was to have unfortunate results.

Chapter Five
"Flying Bits of Darkness" - Analysis of the Play

In late 1900, when their collaboration was in danger of coming unstuck, Moore wrote to Yeats seeking to clarify the division of labour. Yeats had evidently expressed dissatisfaction with passages assigned to Grania, and this clearly irritated his colleague. "Diarmuid is largely your conception," Moore wrote, "and the character as it stands owes much to you." Moore went on to say that

> If we look to the other side we find that Grania was mine from the first, she was my clear idea; you always said that you approached her from the out side and I am bound to say that you left me quite free to draw the character according to my conception of it. But now in the eleventh hour your (sic) wish to rewrite her character and in the very moment when I wish to reveal to the reader (or the hearer) the character in its essential essence.
>
> (Finneran, Letters to W.B.Y. 1, 73-75)

Moore's letter, and a second written by him in early 1901 (ibid. 78-79), support this chapter's intention of considering Diarmuid as Yeats's creation, and Grania as Moore's. The reader may well wonder why such an examination is situated so late in the thesis. However, in outlining the thematic interests of the collaborators we are better

prepared to appreciate the treatment of the play's central characters. Diarmuid's transformation from the unsophisticated youth of Act One into the proud and suicidal figure of Act Three, it will be argued, is an example of the "transcendence of self" seen in Yeats's earlier plays and also an example of "Spiritual Art". A more complicated character, Grania affords us the opportunity of further examining Moore's ideas of "plain, psychological truth". Finally, we shall consider the use of Wagnerian, operatic elements in the play, particularly the musical contribution which Sir Edward Elgar contributed at Moore's request.

When he is first revealed to us, Diarmuid is simply a young man. The first to mention him is Conan, the Fianna's messenger, who speaks of the close relationship between Finn and Diarmuid (1174, 54-57)[1]. We learn from Laban, Grania's old nurse, that Diarmuid is

> ... the youngest and comeliest of all. He has brown hair and blue eyes, and light limbs, and his skin is white but for freckles. He is courteous and he is merry with women. It is said of him that he will not be remembered for deeds of arms but as a true lover, and that he will die young.
>
> (1177-78, 186-191)

This initial portrait is of a figure quite different from the brooding and melancholy heroes of Yeats's earlier

1. All references to the text of Diarmuid and Grania are to Alspach, Variorum Plays, and henceforth will be given as page and line number(s).

plays, and when he is first presented, Diarmuid gives no indication of sensitivity to the otherworldly, a trait which marks Almintor and Forgael. His first encounter with Grania suggests that he is instead a rather unimaginative and loyal warrior of Finn's:

> GRANIA: And this is Diarmuid. Has Diarmuid nothing to say to me?
> DIARMUID: What should I say to you. I see you on your wedding night, Grania.
> GRANIA: The wedding feast is spread, and I shall be wedded and bedded before dawn if someone does not carry me away.
> DIARMUID: If someone does not carry you away!
> (1181, 305-311)

Diarmuid slowly takes Grania's meaning, and the perceptive Usheen realises that his comrade is susceptible to her attractions. As the act focuses upon the two of them, it quickly becomes apparent that Diarmuid is no match for her. Under the impact of Grania's seductive, almost poetic appeals, he lapses into halting, largely monosyllabic language. Diarmuid's social responsibilities, as represented by the sleeping Finn, are similarly no match for Grania's presence and for her alluring talk of "paths ... where there are sudden odours of wild honey, and where [we] will often throw [our] arms about one another and kiss one another on the mouth" (1187, 481-483). While Diarmuid declares as he leaves that his allegiance to Finn will remain unbroken, we have little doubt that his relationship with Grania will be

less than platonic.

The Diarmuid that we see in Act One is thus not especially heroic, and his yielding to Grania is understandably the action of a young man confronted with a powerful temptation. In Act Two we see him in maturity, for seven years are assumed to have passed, and Diarmuid's sensuality has hardened into fierce possessiveness. Under the protection of Grania's father, Cormac, he has become dull and prosperous, as suggested by his first entry "carrying fleeces". Diarmuid's self-imposed exile from the Fianna and from his obligations to the kingdom cannot really be compared to the withdrawal of the speaker in "The Lake Isle of Innisfree", who leaves the material world to seek contentment in his "bee-loud glade". Diarmuid's "black bull", a traditional emblem of prosperity and source of strife in Irish myth, symbolises the prosperity amidst which he has tried to find content.

Diarmuid's love for Grania, which she now finds "has become terrible", is the love of a possession. In a long and revealing speech he expresses grief at the thought that she should be possessed by another man, namely Finn.

> DIARMUID: My life began with you and it ends with you. Oh, that these breasts should belong to another, and the usage of this body. Life of my life, I new (sic) you before I was born, I made a bargain with this brown hair before the beginning of time and it shall not be broken

> through unending time. And yet I shall sit alone upon that shore that is beyond the world - though all the gods are there, the shore shall be empty because of one who is not there, and I shall weep remembering how we wandered among the woods. But you say nothing Grania. You are weary of the shadows of these mountains and of the smell of the fold. It is many days since you came to my bed and it is many weeks since I have seen an ornament upon you. Your love is slipping away from me, it slips away like the water in the brook. You do not answer. These silences make me afraid.
>
> (1195, 216-229)

The key phrase here is "the usage of this body", which indicates where Diarmuid's love is anchored. Diarmuid is firmly rooted in the material plane of existence, despite his talk of bargains made before "the beginning of time". To look ahead briefly, it is worth noting that another of Yeats's lovers, Naoise, is not alarmed at the prospect of Conchubar possessing Deirdre's body, but fears instead that her "eagle spirit" might be crushed. Nevertheless there is some evidence that Diarmuid has sensed the impossibility of material happiness, and is beginning to feel the pull of the unseen world, for his talk of a "shore beyond the world" suggests a spiritual awakening. Like Almintor, Diarmuid senses the imperfection of material happiness, but has not yet reached the point of renouncing the mortal world.

At this juncture in the play we note the beginning of "the war of immortal upon mortal life" as the tone inclines more and more towards the supernatural. Immediately after his

long speech to Grania, Diarmuid sees a ghostly shepherd "carrying a hazel stick" (1196, 252), which he interprets as a sign that his time in the valley, and in the material world, is ending. The intrusion of this shepherd heralds the intrusion of Finn and his warriors, and an attempt at reconciliation is made with the ceremony of the blood bond (1200-01, 381-406). Structurally speaking, the ceremony prevents Finn and Diarmuid from duelling, and so allows the prophecy of the fatal boar to run its course and resolve their conflict. The "monotonous and half-audible muttering" of the Fianna, as they circulate the symbolic sod, suggests Yeats's idea of the "trance, in which the presence of the mind liberated from the presence of the will is unfolded by symbols", and probably originated in his efforts, with Maud Gonne, to develop rituals for "Celtic Mysticism" (Wade, Letters 295). But if the blood bond is an attempt to demonstrate the closeness of these characters to the gods, it seems singularly ineffective. Finn and Diarmuid, despite being "born again out of the womb of the earth" (1201, 404), soon must be restrained from flying at one another. While impressive in itself, the ceremony, if it were conceived as "Spiritual Art", does not bear close examination.

At the conclusion of Act Two, Diarmuid's comfortable existence has come undone. He has realised his error in assuming that Grania could ever be content as a farmer's wife

and prized possession, and Finn's reappearance and jealousy have proven the impossibility of Diarmuid's return to the Fianna. As he bitterly remarks after entering upon his fatal hunt, "I am not in the road that leads on and on, and then shatters under one's feet, and becomes flying bits of darkness" (1210, 85-87). His road has already shattered. Like a medieval character who has trusted in Fortuna rather than in things immaterial, Diarmuid now recognises his error. At this juncture, in the consideration of his motives for pursuing the boar fated to kill him, lies the key to understanding this character.

In his study of the play, Ray Small complains that Diarmuid is "far less a hero than his prototype" (45). The Diarmuid of legend, Small notes, only accompanied Grania under strong bonds of obligation, whereas in the play he is swayed by her "sex appeal". While it is true that Diarmuid is ignobly seduced, a careful reading of Act Three, in which the hero becomes quite a different person, suggests that in the first two acts Diarmuid is deliberately rendered unheroic. In Acts One and Two he develops from an unimaginative young warrior into an unimaginative mature farmer. However, as his prosperity and complacency are disturbed, Diarmuid begins to awaken spiritually. When the story of the deadly boar is first told at Finn's wedding feast, Diarmuid dismisses it as "an old story, and it no

longer makes me afeard" (1184, 384-385). With the prophecy beginning to unfold, though, his reaction is much different.

> DIARMUID: The things to come are like the wind; they could sweep this house away. This image of death is coming like the wind - who knows what enchantment has called it out of the earth? It was not here yesterday; it was not here at noon. I have hunted deer in these woods and have not seen the slot of natural or unnatural swine. No, it will not bear thinking of. I am caught like a wolf in a pit ... .
>
> (1206, 564-570)

David Clark has effectively argued that "Yeats was attempting to dramatize the moment of perception, of epiphany, at a time when the individual consciousness can have little faith in its own version of objective reality" (Clark 104). The above speech is Diarmuid's "moment of perception", in which he moves from panic to grim resolve; his simile, "like a wolf in a pit", displays ferocity as well as fatalism. It is worth noting that Conan, who reports the boar's arrival, is the one who stings Diarmuid into action with his taunts. From the play's first lines, Conan reveals his gluttonous, comfort-loving, and cowardly nature. His habits of relishing aloud the prophecy of Diarmuid's death, and of impugning the hero's courage, effectively juxtapose Conan and Diarmuid; Conan is essentially a Thersites-like, anti-heroic standard, strongly associated with the material plane. At one point Diarmuid is about to cut down this

unpleasant character, and while Grania protests that "He is not worthy enough for you to strike him" (1205, 522), the materialistic Diarmuid of Act Two is actually little removed from Conan's level. It is perhaps no accident that the fleeces he carries at the beginning of the Act are the material associated with Conan, "That man with the sheep skin" (1174, 71). Diarmuid has seen through his version of objective reality to discover that he is not much better than Conan; his transformation must be from the material to the spiritual, and, as suggested by his grim simile, from sheep to wolf.

In Act Three, as the fierce and dreadful night of prophecy unfolds, Diarmuid rises in stature above the surrounding characters. He is as much detached onlooker as participant, grimly amused by the shepherds who "croak like ravens over carrion - croak, croak, croak" (1209, 49). In his crucial encounter with Grania, Diarmuid follows a pattern of repudiation made familiar to us by Axel and Mary Bruin. Grania reminds him of his home, and Diarmuid ignores her. She speaks of the prophecy and of a warning in a dream, and he mocks her. Finally Grania tells him that she has come "as a wife comes to her husband" (1212, 146), and Diarmuid rejects both her claims of love and her sexuality:

> DIARMUID: I would not see your blood nor touch your hands. Your lips and teeth, and all this

> beauty I have loved seem in my eyes no better than a yellow pestilence. Grania, Grania, out of my sight.
>
> (1213, 180-182)

In dismissing Grania, Diarmuid also dismisses material life: sexuality, prosperity, and comradeship. A psychological reading of this act would probably explain Diarmuid's suicidal longings and rage as attempts to revenge himself upon Grania for her coolness, but we have seen in his earlier plays how little Yeats valued psychological naturalism. While Diarmuid does display jealousy ("I see thoughts of Finn in your eyes"), he should not be understood merely as a jealous husband. By hunting the supernatural boar he escapes from a world which has become intolerable to him, and rises to "the pride of [a] hidden and august" destiny, the quality which Yeats admired so much in Axel.

John Rees Moore, in his glancing examination of the play, makes the conventional declaration that Diarmuid "achieves at best a youthful pathos and dignity but never rises to the grim nobility of a Cuchulain" (J.R. Moore, 75-76). The comparison is unfair, considering that Cuchulain is mostly an achievement of Yeats's artistic maturity. Unlike Forgael, who calmly sails into oblivion, Diarmuid pursues death and immortality with a fierce enthusiasm. In a long exchange with Usheen and Caoelte, both afraid of shepherds moving in the shadows, Diarmuid is shown to advantage, and later the

arrival of the terrified Conan further accentuates Diarmuid's bravery (1213-18, 192-353). If he had merely awaited death unresisting, Diarmuid would have been reduced to the sort of "whimpering puppet" which Yeats saw and despised in Ghosts. Instead, Yeats's hero carefully plans to meet his adversary:

> DIARMUID: Yes, yes, there is a beast coming that I am to kill. I should take him so, upon my spear. The spear will be my best weapon, but the land must be steady beneath it. If the point slipped he would be upon me. Maybe it will be better to let him run upon my shield and kill him with my sword, while he digs his tusks into my shield. My danger will be the darkness, for the darkness makes the hand shake, and day breaks but slowly. Higher up in the woods there is a little more light.
>
> (1213, 183-191)

In planning to defeat the boar, Diarmuid makes a gesture of defiance, against the gods, against his fate, and against Finn and Grania. He is truly alone in his rage. By contrast, Finn, who tells Grania that "The deaths of everyone of us and the end of the Fianna have been foretold" and cannot be altered, appears decidedly inferior. The defiant, doomed enthusiasm displayed here by Diarmuid was certainly the quality Yeats had in mind when he later recalled how "I have heard Lady Gregory say, rejecting some play in the modern manner sent to the Abbey Theatre, 'Tragedy must be a joy to the man who dies'" (qtd. in J.R. Moore, 20).

Of all the alterations made to the legend during the

adaptation, the scene of Diarmuid's death most clearly reveals Yeats's purpose. In the Toruigheacht, as we saw earlier, it is Finn who twice deliberately spilt the water capable of healing Diarmuid (Ní Sheaghdha, 95-97). The altered incident is worth quoting in full.

> DIARMUID: Water, is there no water? My life is ebbing out with my blood. [Finn goes to a well and comes back with water in his hand, but as he holds up his hand the water drips through his fingers].
> If I had water I might not die.
> GRANIA: Finn, bring him water in your helmet.
> [Diarmuid looks from one to the other].
> DIARMUID: Grania and Finn. [When Finn returns with his helmet filled with water, Diarmuid looks from one to the other, and then whether by accident or design he overturns the helmet].
> GRANIA: Why have you done this? Why will you not drink the water that Finn has brought you? [She takes the helmet and fetches the water herself. Again Diarmuid looks from one to another, and puts the water away].
> For my sake, for the sake of Grania, I beseech you to drink it.
>
> (1219-20, 406-414)

The stage directions disguise motivation with ambiguity, but do not forbid us from seeing Diarmuid's final actions as the "transcendence of self". It could be argued that suicide is Diarmuid's final act of revenge against Grania, or that this self-sacrificial action is intended to spare Eri from further fratricidal strife (which followed Diarmuid's death in the legends). Both explanations could be accepted without denying that Diarmuid, like the Countess, Forgael, and

Almintor, has decided upon an otherworldly path. The spirits which Finn and Grania are dimly aware of but which Diarmuid seems to see, and the music of "harp-playing" Aonghus audible only to the dying man, recall the scene at the end of The Land of Heart's Desire. Diarmuid's two refusals of the life-giving water are thus his final, highly symbolic acts of repudiation; like Mary Bruin, he has been claimed by the "immortals". To interpret his death merely as the suicidal protest of an aggrieved lover could only be achieved by completely ignoring Yeats's role within the collaboration.

Psychological depth was, however, Moore's goal in developing Grania. His approach to the character, within the confines of the source material, was similar to his treatment of other female protagonists. Like Evelyn, Grania is presented with a situation of choice designed to reveal the essence of her being. Her independent spirit resembles Esther's, although it is allowed to lapse in Act Three. The Grania of legend is something of a wanton, whose motives in seducing Diarmuid are unclear at best. Moore evidently set himself the task of translating her into a complex and generally positive character, and his success, as we shall see, is debatable.

In Act One it soon becomes apparent that Grania's betrothal to Finn is her father's doing. It is further

apparent that she has experienced an epiphany, or awakening, prior to the commencement of the action. When describing his intentions to Yeats, Moore wrote that he wished to portray Grania "at the moment when her nature is most exultant and intimate" (Finneran, Letters 1, 75). Grania's moment of awakening and exultation has led her to view her betrothal with distaste.

> LABAN: Hush! no man matters to you now but Finn.
> GRANIA: ... A month ago I was in the woods...
> LABAN: It was spring time when the young find many things among the woods.
> GRANIA: I had climbed a little path, and stood on the hill, where the trees grow sparer, looking into the mist.
> LABAN: And it was then that you thought about a young man.
> GRANIA: The mist was hanging on the brow of the hill, and something seemed to be moving over the world and to come out of the mist. It was beautiful, mother. The world was singing and the singing came into my breasts.
>
> (1176, 128-140)

Like his colleague, Moore generally placed moments of emotional intensity in natural settings. In Esther Waters, for example, the Sussex downs fill the heroine with "a romantic love for the earth, and ... a desire to mix herself with the inmost essence of things" (42). Grania's awakening, however, is not "Yeatsian" in that sensuality, rather than spirituality, is awakened within Grania.

The moment of choice, always a crucial moment for Moore's characters, allows Grania to realise herself.

Agreeing to marry Finn will give her respectability, for he represents maturity and power, but marriage cannot be achieved on her own terms. By eloping, Grania chooses instead to assert her autonomy, youth, and sensuality. Here Moore is somewhat kind to her. In legend Grania shows little discrimination in her choice of a lover, picking Diarmuid only after Usheen declines the honour (Ní Sheaghdha 11). While Grania concentrates her attention solely on Diarmuid in the play, her criteria are not, however, especially noble, for she displays interest, not in his mind, but in his body:

> GRANIA: I believe in your soothsaying, Mother, that a man as young as I am will come and carry me away.
> LABAN: No, no, Diarmuid will not break his oath to Finn. Diarmuid has saved Finn's life three times and Finn has saved Diarmuid's once. They always stand together.
> GRANIA: You said his hair was brown, and his limbs light, and his skin white but for freckles. It was for such a man that I looked into the mist. But thinking of love makes the brain giddy.
> (1178, 195-203)

Moore's intention, at least in Act One, was clearly not to create a noble heroine like the Countess Cathleen. Grania is instead a rather spoiled and adroitly manipulative young woman, who enlists Laban's aid by threatening to run away into the woods (1178-79, 209-233). She brilliantly entangles Diarmuid in a manner which, were it not for the gravity of the situation, would be thoroughly comic:

> GRANIA: I desired you and you were in my thoughts before I saw you, Diarmuid. You were in my thoughts, Diarmuid. [She takes him in her arms].
> DIARMUID: I too desired you and you were in my thoughts - oh beautiful woman! You were in my thoughts, Grania. Let me look at you. Let me put back your hair. Your eyes are grey and your hands ... But Finn, but Finn ... Grania wife of Finn, why have you played with me?
> GRANIA: I am not the wife of Finn [She goes towards Diarmuid]. And now I cannot be Finn's wife for you have held me in your arms and you have kissed me.
>
> (1185, 427-436)

Pressing her advantage, she describes Laban's prophecy in such sensuous detail that Diarmuid reels. Her ace of trumps, an appeal to his sense of chivalry, finishes the job. Diarmuid has no choice but to follow Grania out the door.

While Grania is keenly aware of her sexuality and of her appeal, she resists being treated merely as a sexual object. When Cormac urges her to prepare as a bride should for Finn's arrival, she pointedly tells her father that "you have often seen me wear my bracelets, and my clasp, and can love me without them, as can any other man" (1179, 250-251). Grania is equally well aware of her father's intentions in marrying her to Finn, and while Cormac's desire is for the good of the kingdom, she is too much a romantic to tolerate being used merely for political ends. As she plaintively observes when Diarmuid first retreats from her, "It may be that no man will take me because he wants me, but because I am a king's daughter" (1185, 444-445). Later in Act Two

Grania tells Cormac that her flight, from what she feared would be a loveless political match, was an assertion of her independence (1192, 111-113). Our Grania is thus more complex than her legendary prototype in that her actions do not merely stem from lust. The need to express an individual essence, even at the price of social responsibilities and status, is a need common to many of Moore's protagonists. Self-expression in itself is inherently valuable in Moore's characters, who are seldom judged by their author; Grania's action of flight, be it right or wrong, is comparable to Esther's keeping her son, or Evelyn's taking the veil. It is a "choice of vocation".

Grania's decision to escape the arranged marriage is also born out of immaturity. Like Diarmuid, Grania too has changed in seven years, and in Act Two has come to regret a decision made on impulse and in passion. As we noted earlier, Diarmuid is not allowed to rise to heroic stature until the boar's arrival, in order to emphasise the ennobling nature of Yeats's heroic transcendence. Grania, who was chiefly attracted by Diarmuid's youth and reputation, has understandably tired of life as a farmer's wife. Moore's intent at this juncture was obviously to suggest, in a plausible and natural manner, how the two lovers could drift apart after the heroic years of their pursuit by Finn. His approach was to show how Grania's independent and intense

nature could only accept a mate of comparable stature. Thus, when her lover complains that "You are not that Grania I wandered with among the woods", she replies with equal bitterness that "You are no longer that Diarmuid who overthrew Finn at the house of the seven doors" (1195-96, 235-238). Clearly we are led to see Grania's gradual turning towards Finn in Act Two as the expression of her dissatisfaction with the unheroic, materialistic Diarmuid.

> GRANIA: Then I have done well in sending [Diarmuid] to Finn. I did it for Diarmuid's sake, and for my father's sake and for the sake of my father's kingdom. I chose Diarmuid because he was young and comely, but oh, how can I forget the greatness of Finn. he has gone to bring Finn to me. In a few minutes Finn and his Fianna will stand under this roof.
>
> (1197, 273-278)

In later years Yeats would recall that, because of the play's structure, Act Two "was reminiscent and descriptive, almost a new first act" (Autobiographies 436-437). This is true to the extent that in Act Two we are almost dealing with a new Grania. Her sudden decision to put on jewellery for Finn is a startling change, given her previous thoughts on the subject of ornamentation. In Act Two she was attracted to youth and beauty rather than to reputation and deeds, but now, as she tells Diarmuid's rival, "I wanted to see you because of your greatness" (1203, 471). Her sudden interest in her father's kingdom is an equally

surprising volte-face, seven years notwithstanding, and is perhaps meant to show Grania reaching for a lame excuse to disguise her change of heart. Moore resists indicating which man, Finn or Diarmuid, Grania really loves, and even after Diarmuid distresses her by leaving to hunt his boar, we are unsure of her true feelings.

> GRANIA: He has gone to this hunting ... he is gone that he may give me to Finn. [She turns her face to the wall and weeps].
> CORMAC: Have you ceased to love him? [Grania walks a few steps towards her father as if she was going to speak but her emotion overpowers her, and she returns to the same place]. If you have not ceased to love him, follow him and bring him back.
> GRANIA: I will follow him in the woods; he will take the path under the oak trees.
>
> (1207, 595-601)

We might have decided at this point to see Grania as a proud but essentially loyal lover, driven to indiscretion by Diarmuid's jealousy and unheroic lethargy, but only if Moore's characterisation was consistent. In Act Three the heroine, who previously was notable for her independent spirit, is reduced to pleading and wringing her hands. The best Grania can do to dissuade Diarmuid from suicide is to make a pathetic spectacle of herself:

> DIARMUID: Your hair is down and your hands are torn with brambles.
> GRANIA: Yes, look at my hands, and I am so weary, Diarmuid. I am so weary that I could lay down and

> die here. That mossy bank is like a bed; lay me down there. Oh, I have come to bring you home with me.
>
> (1209, 55-59)

That the vivacious and proud heroine of Act One should reappear in Act Three begging Diarmuid to kill her (1212-13, 154-182) reveals Moore's oscillating vision of this character. Grania starts off as a spirited and poetic young coquette, is transformed by seven years into a Bronze Age femme fatale won by the strongest sword, and ends up a tearfully conventional Victorian heroine, as weak, in Diarmuid's words, as "a flower by the wayside". In our discussion of Diarmuid we noted that his evolution throughout the play follows the pattern of the "transcendence of self" Yeats had developed in earlier plays and poems. No such claim of planned development could be made for Grania. While she is not a static character, neither is she an especially well-developed one. Moore's conception of Grania appears to have wavered during the collaboration, with unfortunate results. Although he appears to have wanted a complex and memorable heroine, by Act Three we lose patience with Grania and, like Diarmuid, want to drive her off the stage. She is closer at this point to Chaucer's Criseyde than to Wagner's creations.

While few, if any, of his contemporaries seemed to realise it, Moore had ideas of developing Diarmuid and Grania

along operatic lines. He seems to have been excited by the similarities between the Irish legend and Tristan und Isolde, modelling the Laban-Grania relationship on the one of Brangäne and Isolde, and retaining Grania's drugged mead from legend, although Isolde's use of the love potion is a moment of greater dramatic intensity. Ray Small has observed that in the third act, when the play finally comes to life, "the wonderful pictures of crashing trees, wind and storm, thunder and lightning are reminiscent of a Wagnerian opera" (Small 52).

In one of Diarmuid's passages, which reads very much as if Moore had a hand in it, Grania is described as a Brünnhilde or Valkyrie-like figure, in keeping with the equation of Wagner with sexuality visible in Evelyn Innes.

> DIARMUID: Grania was not meant to sit by the fireside with children on her knees. The gods made her womb barren because she was not meant to hold children on her knees. The gods gave her a barren womb, hungry and barren like the sea. She looked from the red apple in her hand to the green apple on the bough. She looked from me to Finn, even when she first lusted for me, and after Finn there will be some other. The malignant gods made your beauty, Grania.
> (1212, 147-154)

Another critic who has noted operatic qualities within the play, William Blissett, finds that "The style, a deliberate and sophisticated attempt to employ incremental repetition of primitive narrative, is Wagnerian in its

'endlessness', its progress by repetition and modification of phrase" (Owens 69). This primitive, essential language may be observed in the above passage of Diarmuid's, where the hero distractedly speaks, not to Grania, but of Grania. An initial statement is then reinforced by simple modifications: from "The gods made" to "The gods gave", from "the red apple ... to the green apple" and "from me to Finn". Generally speaking, this primitive quality in language is maintained throughout the play by a sparing use of pronouns and a complete absence of contractions, thus slowing pronunciation and achieving a slow, deliberate effect in speech. It would be difficult, however, to say whether this "primitive narrative" is Moore's "literary Wagnerism" or Yeats's attempt, within the confines of prose, to arouse "indefinable and yet precise" emotions. The collaborators may well have agreed upon the same style for different reasons, an unfortunate harmony, since the resulting language is so awkward and two-dimensional that it frequently threatens to overwhelm their attempts at poetic description. A more careful examination of Ibsen's The Vikings, which employs a lean but vigorous diction, would have animated their dialogue and considerably improved Diarmuid and Grania.

Herbert Howarth has written that "it became [Moore's] policy to work for strokes which took his audience or his readers back to the foundation experiences of culture"

(ibid. 84). This observation could be applied to Moore's decision during rehearsals to have Diarmuid first enter in Act Two carrying a sheep. In August 1901 he wrote to Yeats that "the shearing will take the audience back to the beginning of things ... and the wars and strife will break in upon Arcady as they have always done". Pleased with himself, Moore went on to tell how "I walk about thinking of the fleeces and the sheep" (Burkhart 270-271). The source for Moore's idea may have been Act Three of Wagner's Tristan, in which a shepherd's pipes establish a pastoral mood soon shattered by the final catastrophe.

Moore thus appears to have found in Wagner that which he found in the Grania legends, "psychology in germ", a vision of essential human nature. His operatic interest also explains his request to the composer Edward Elgar, whom Moore admired but did not know, for a horn motif to be performed during Diarmuid's funeral procession. Moore's rather bold request was rewarded by Elgar's generosity. Along with some incidental music, he composed a funeral march (Op. 42) in which a melodic line of restrained melancholy is subtly passed between horns and reeds, and punctuated by a choric motif for muted horns. The final notes are questing and poignant, given first by horns and then taken up, more quietly, by the clarinet; they suggest a hunter's horn heard from a distant hill. Moore was highly pleased with the music,

claiming that "Elgar must have seen the primeval forest as he wrote, and the tribe moving among the falling leaves - oak leaves, hazel leaves, for the world began with oak and hazel" (qtd. in Hogan and Kilroy 115). Even Yeats, who, as it is ritually observed, was tone-deaf, praised the work as "wonderful, in its heroic melancholy" (ibid.). Elgar, while he probably did not understand heroic transfiguration in Yeatsian terms, appears to have sensed that Diarmuid's death should be understood as a triumph rather than a tragedy. As several music historians have noted, his "Funeral March" "has nothing grim and morbid about it and ... has a quiet dignity of expression [which] no mere words could possibly utter" (ibid. 116). Elgar also set to music a spinning song for Laban, "There Are Seven That Pull the Thread", written by Yeats but not included in any of the play's typescripts (see Allt, Poems 770-771), which attains a weird otherworldliness.

Moore thus wanted to capture in Diarmuid and Grania human nature at its most primitive and essential, and his "literary Wagnerism" seems more of an aesthetic doctrine in this play than in the muddled borrowings of Evelyn Innes. His attempt to evoke this essential vision with the aid of music was highly innovative, and Elgar's compositions won the admiration of many who attended. However, Moore's attempts to achieve an operatic quality within the play are rudely undermined by its final lines, Conan's blunt observation that

"Grania makes great mourning for Diarmuid, but her welcome to Finn shall be greater" (1222, 491-492). The pseudo-Wagnerian grandeur ends abruptly on the most unheroic of notes.

Diarmuid and Grania's greatest flaw is, as we have seen, that its protagonists may be examined as two totally separate beings. There is practically no point where the two intersect, and they never seem able to communicate or to have anything in common. The play's structure is thus inadvertently chiastic, with Diarmuid moving towards Aonghus and the spiritual plane, while Grania is pulled down by Conan's bald utterance to the worldly and banal. The two travel along lines which barely meet in Act One and then veer off in different directions. Moore wanted a believable, psychologically complex Wagnerian heroine, and brought a naturalistic approach to legend. Yeats was interested in getting his hero into the company of the immortals, and ended the play with Conan to show how Diarmuid was better off out of things. Unfortunately, Conan's last words deny Grania any heroic stature she might have had. Like their characters, the two collaborators hardly intersect in their purposes.

In his review of The Vikings at Helgeland, Max Beerbohm noted that legend and the supernatural suffer fatally if "presented to us in the customary realistic manner", and suggested the use of masks for the Vikings' characters. An "impossible fantasy", he argued, could only

inspire its audience as such, and should be strictly confined to the imaginary level (Beerbohm 564). The same point, that legend must be unnatural to retain its elementary appeal, can be made of our play. Grania would have been immeasurably more memorable if Moore had presented her as a Brünnhilde or a Hjördis, whose actions are frighteningly inexplicable. The same could be said of Yeats, whose Diarmuid is dull and exasperating until Act Three. Yeats however was interested in creating an intensely unheroic world in order to arouse his hero's immortal longings, the technique he had admired in Alice Milligan's play. This approach had the unfortunate side effect of rendering the surrounding characters intensely uninteresting, as one of the play's reviewers complained:

> One of the grating drawbacks in this piece is the absence of nobility in the Knights of Tara and all connected with that establishment. One hears nothing but muttered doubts of one another's honour; every man accuses the other of pledge-breaking, drunkenness, lying, or something else. King Cormac himself is a mild precursor of Polonius ... and the minor knights and others in suits of pre-Christian pyjamas raise titters when they should draw tears ...
>
> (qtd. in Hogan & Kilroy 105)

The decision to entrust the play's realisation to a group of professional English actors, The Frank Benson Company, did not aid the play's success. While Moore made several trips to Birmingham to monitor the rehearsals, it appears that Benson, a product of the hyper-realistic London

stage, had free rein in the design of sets and costumes. Frank Fay, in The United Irishman, wrote that considerable "archaeological researches" were mounted by Benson's secretary, and was not impressed with the results.

> As usual, the attempt at realistic production has not been a success, and Fionn's striped trews, the material and colouring of which is so obviously and aggressively modern, can hardly be said to be convincing. Had a more subdued and suggestive method been employed both with regard to costumes and scenery - had a little more been left to the imagination of the audience - the effect would have been infinitely better.
> (Ibid. 108)

To the uninitiated observer that October in Dublin's Gaiety, there would have been very little evidence to suggest that Diarmuid and Grania was anything but a conventional play in period costume. The Benson's naturalistic production would have seemed curiously at odds with talk of "the harp-playing of Aonghus", and Diarmuid's entry with a kid evoked laughter rather than a sense of the "beginning of things". The "jaunty way [Mrs. Benson] moved about and sprawled limply all over the place" (Hogan and O'Neill 14) irritated Joseph Holloway and would have reminded one of a host of conventional, hand-wringing Ophelias and Desdemonas; indeed, to one critic Grania seemed "an embryo Mrs. Tanqueray, B.C." (qtd. in Hogan and Kilroy 105). Grania and Finn seemed to exchange "significant glances" over the dying Diarmuid.

While a few complained that Diarmuid and Grania was immoral, most Dubliners merely found it incongruous. One of the play's youngest and fiercest critics, James Joyce, observed that the Irish Literary Theatre, "the latest movement of protest against the sterility and falsehood of the modern stage", should "now be considered the property of the most belated race in Europe" (Mason 69-70).

Yeats's early dramatic heroes are the ones who progress towards the spiritual, while Moore's protagonists, like Esther Waters, are celebrated for their ability to live intensely in the material world, to appreciate natural beauty and unashamedly enjoy human passions. The two artistic visions were fundamentally incompatible. While the awkward and lifeless prose accounts in part for the play's obscurity, radically different conceptions of heroism are thus primarily responsible for the failure of Diarmuid and Grania. Like their protagonists, Yeats and Moore had little hope of reconciliation.

Conclusion

It is widely believed that the collaborators broke with one another over the issue of who owned the plot which became Yeats's play Where There is Nothing (1902). This quarrel certainly aroused hostility between the two, but their estrangement actually began over the future of Irish drama. In a November 1901 interview with The Freeman's Journal, Moore expressed hopes for the Irish Literary Theatre's continuation, and claimed that "Our success with 'Grania' has made the future safe" (qtd. in Hogan and Kilroy 119). He also suggested that Dublin was ready for a subsidised "National Theatre", proposing that, to avoid controversy, plays be first submitted for approval by the Church (ibid. 121). Yeats immediately responded to this idea by saying that "if any literary association I belong to asked for a clerical censorship I would certainly cease to belong to it"; he thus, as Hogan and Kilroy note, "in effect publicly dissassociated himself from Moore" (ibid. 127).

Cut loose from the dramatic movement by Yeats, and later by the Gaelic League, Moore continued to seek a place in Irish letters, writing a collection of short stories (The Untilled Field) for translation into Gaelic. In time, when

Hail and Farewell effectively ended his Dublin years, Moore's Irish associates dwindled to figures such as AE and John Eglinton. His interest in drama faded, and while he attempted experiments such as an adaptation of Esther Waters for the stage, these efforts were never significant. Moore continued, however, to explore the subconscious mind with novels such as The Lake (1905), in which the hero struggles to justify to himself his vocation as a priest. The influence of Diarmuid and Grania is apparent in later historical novels such as The Brook Kerith (1916) and Heloise and Abelard (1921), which show that human needs and emotional conflicts are common to all eras. Moore died in London in 1933.

Diarmuid and Grania ended the opening stage of Yeats's dramatic career, and he became increasingly involved in the production process, in "Theatre business, management of men". His experience with the Bensons had shown him the hazardous gap between the vision of the playwright and the achievement of the actor, and also revealed the need for a Dublin-based, Irish troop of actors and support personnel. Yeats and Moore had been widely criticised for importing the Bensons and for using an English composer's work in an Irish play. The future lay not with the Bensons but with the amateur, Gaelic-speaking actors whose production, The Twisting of the Rope, had been double-billed with Diarmuid and Grania. Their production had been unquestionably more

successful, and the shortcomings of the English professionals had been glaringly revealed when someone, probably Yeats, had attempted some last-minute coaching in Irish pronunciations, with disastrous results (O'Hehir 97-103). Yeats's decision to develop talents such as the Fay brothers and J.M. Synge is thus rooted in the aftermath of our play.

In later years Yeats used Moore as an emblem for all those who "aim at keeping the stage in a state of superficial excitement" and of "commonplace impulses" (Wade 439-442). His experiences with Moore and with the Bensons had brought Yeats uncomfortably close to the Victorian, naturalistic stage. Considering his talk in Beltaine of being "anathema to my brethren", his pride must have been sorely stung when critics found Diarmuid and Grania little better than the offerings of Pinero and Jones. Yeats's later efforts were thus increasingly experimental, involving masks, dance, and chant. While he seems for a while to have entertained hopes of salvaging something from the collaboration with Moore (ibid. 443), Yeats undoubtedly drew from this work in writing Deirdre (1907). The resemblances between the stories of Diarmuid and Grania and of Naoise and Deirdre, as presented in the two plays, are striking. Both sets of lovers have fled an angry, older king to whom the woman had been betrothed. In both plays the action commences after an assumed span of seven years' wandering and pursuit. In

Deirdre, however, Yeats clearly shows that his apprenticeship has ended. The motivations of each character are carefully defined, and operate against each other in such a way that the tragedy is the answer to an exquisitely crafted equation. As David Clark remarks, "The whole play has been a tragic chess game in which each player followed the rules sacred to him: Conchubar sovereign pride, Fergus statesmanly good-faith, Naoise heroic honor and Deirdre the laws of love" (Clark 41). Here Yeats also successfully employs choric commentators (who are, significantly, artists) and achieves a solemn but severe momentum which best illustrates his theories of ritual as drama. Deirdre also reveals Yeats beginning to mute his immortal desires. His later figures, like the dying Cuchulain, retain souls which strain towards perfection and "sing", but are still convincingly rooted in the material world. Where Deirdre succeeds over Diarmuid and Grania and the earlier Yeats plays is in the ability of its hero-lovers to triumph while still in the material world, playing chess as the executioner approaches. Their deaths are immensely more tragic and moving than the shadowy eclipses of Forgael and Diarmuid.

Diarmuid and Grania thus ends Moore's dramatic career and heralds Yeats's maturity as a playwright. Perhaps we could say that the play failed, not for want of talent but because of the diversity of talent displayed by the

collaborators. For this reason it is a fascinating encapsulation of dramatic trends prevalent at the turn of the nineteenth century. As a synthesis of French symbolist doctrine, nationalistic intent, Ibsenesque naturalism, literary Wagnerism, and personal eccentricity, it is surely unrivalled in modern drama. In the history of the Dublin stage, it marks a borderline between the years of Boucicault and foreign domination and the years of the Abbey and the awakening of a national consciousness. For Yeats scholars, the play is, at the very least, an important footnote. Diarmuid and Grania is also a fascinating, if not brilliant, example of George Moore's work and interests, and a useful introduction to this overlooked and much-maligned figure.

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