1928

# Rise and development of Irish drama

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

# RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF IRISH DRAMA

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(B.B.A., Boston University, 1926)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

1928

July 1929

# RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF IRISH DRAMA

I. Ossianic poems.
  1. Authorship.
  2. Enormous mass.
  3. Chiefly narrative.
  4. Minor epic type or semi-dramatic epopees.
  5. Usually introduced by a dialogue between St. Patrick and poet Ossian.
  6. Cannot prove they were acted.
  7. From a less promising beginning than this the drama of Aeschylus developed.

II. Growth of drama arrested.
  1. Unrest and disorder within the county.
  2. Under happier circumstances something great might have developed.
  3. Drama undeveloped until this century.

III Irish literary revival.
  1. Form of revival primarily poetic.
  2. Foundation of National Literary Society, 1892.
    a. Object.
    b. Development.
    c. Yeat's influence.
      1) Influence production in London of Yeat's "The Land of Heart's Desire"
      2) Encouraged by E. Martyn.
      3) Interested George Moore.
      4) Union due to revolt against theatrical conditions in London.
  3. Irish Literary Theatre founded, 1899.
    a. Founders.
      1) Yeats.
      2) Edward Martyn.
      3) Lady Gregory.
      4) George Moore.
    b. Founders influenced by
      1) European art.
      2) Irish mythology and folklore.
      3) French symbolists.
      4) Art of Villiers de l' Isle Adam.
      5) Mysticism of M. Maeterlinck.
      6) Ibsen.
      7) Realism in contemporary English drama.
    c. First performances.
      1) The Countess Kathleen--whole program.
      2) Later shared with Martyn's "Heather Field."
      3) Later Alice Mulligan's heroic play "The Last Feast of the Franna."
    d. Last production.
      1) Moore and Yeats collaborated in "Diarmiud & Grania," 1901.
      2) Difference in emphasis.

3) Ultimate scission in movement.

e. Divergence of ideal while purpose identical.

1) Martyn.

a) General universal lines.

b) Social and psychological drama.

c) Bears away from folk play.

2) Yeats.

a) Need of cultivation of own peculiarly national art.

b) Legend to folklore.

3) Lady Gregory.

a) Imbued with native Irish culture.

4) Synge.

a) Matter of fact realism.

4. Irish National Theatre Society, 1903.

a. Originated prior to separation of founders of Irish literature Theatre.

b. Not a development of the Irish Literary Theatre.

1) Irish National Theatre Society based on folk drama.

2) Irish Literary Society had no trace of folk drama.

c) Fays.

1) Two brothers.

2) Company of Irish players now called Irish Theatre.

3) Acting genius.

4) Contact with A. E.-Author of prose poem "Deirdre"--encouraged to lay foundation.

5) Fay desire.

a) Purely national drama.

b) Irish players.

c) Interpreted in native tradition.

d) Yeats and Lady Gregory.

1) Instrument ready to carry on work as dissatisfaction with original collabrators due to divergence of ideas.

e) Production A. E. Deirdre, April 2, 1902.

2) Costumes and Scenery by Fays.

1) Fay actors called Irish National Dramatic Company.

3) On a same program--Yeats' Kathleen ne Houlihan."

4) Success meant fate of Irish Theatre.

a) Charming acting.

b) Beautiful plays.

f) Moved to Antient Concert Rooms.

g) Repetition of initial success plus four new plays.

h) Accomplishment at close of second session of Irish Dramatic Company.

1) Prepared ground.
2) Collected company.
3) Created tradition of acting.
4) National folk and poetic drama assured.

5. Irish National Theatre Society after Fay Control.
   a. Yeats president.
   b. Fays lose control in 1903.
   c. Fays remained in theatre until 1908.
      1) Gave best
      2) Surpassed only by J. M. Synge.
   d. Decline dates with Fay departure.
   e. Grant of Abbey Theatre, Dublin, cradle and home of modern Irish drama.

IV. J. M. Synge.
1. Importance of his discovery.

   a. Yeats discovered him in Paris, 1897.
   b. Return to Ireland by Yeats' influence.
   c. Western Ireland stern life.
   d. Notable features of life work.
      1) Imagination
      2) Poetic quality.

2. Background.
   a. Different from fellow workers.
   b. Direct contact with foreign people and culture.
   c. Cared little for literature.
   d. Fled to continent after university to satisfy vagabond instinct among men and not books.
   e. Instinctively sought humble companion ship of roadside.
   f. Linguistic attainments.
      1) Allowed him to penetrate exterior aspects of foreign scenes.
      2) Caught rhythms and music of that idiom which he brought into literature from western sea-shore and Wicklow hills.
      3) Influences.
         a) Peasant plays, of Hauptmann and Anzengruber.
         b) French
         c) Loti Maeterlink.
         d) Marot, Villon, Ronsard, and Racine.

3. Plays.
   a. Aran Islands, 1907.
      1) Personality of Synge.
      2) Tragedy and Comedy in corner of world unspoiled by industrial civilization.
      3) Story.
   b. Riders to the Sea.
      1) Second one act play.
      2) Approved by opponents.
      3) Written same time as "In the Shadow of the Glen."
      4) Produced in 1904.
      5) Story.
   c. The Tinkers' Wedding, 1908.

1) Published one year before his death.
2) Written contemporaneously with Riders to the Sea and the Aren Island.
3) Weakest--perhaps the first.
4) Published version differs from original.
5) Story.

d. Well of the Saints, 1905.
1) Performed 1905.
2) One earliest international successes.
3) Performed in Germany at Berlin, 1906.
4) Story.

e. In the Shadows.

f. Play Boy.

V. Padraic Colum.
1. Second to Synge.
2. First of Peasant drama.
First to dramatise realities of rural life in Ireland.
3. Importance.
a. Synge divined human prototypes.
b. Colum revealed local peasant types.
c. Together they defined limits that folklore drama
It completed the dramatic realization of peasant Ireland.
4. Plays.
a. Broken Soil, 1903.
1) Not the first.
2) 1901--Contact with Fays.
a) Played in A. E.'s Deirdre, 1902.
b) First published plays.
a. The Kingdom of the Young.
b. The Sason Shillin--success, 1903.
c. Wrote many.
3) Story.

b. The Land.
1) Second play published, 1905.
2) Agrarian comedy--relation peasant to land.
3) Story.

c. Fiddler's House.
1) Peasant life in spiritual and artistic manifestations.
2) Story.

d. Thomas Muskerry.

VI. Lady Gregory.
1. Contributed extensively to pepertoire of Abbey Theatre.
2. Faithful coadjutor of Yeats.
3. Slighr interest in plays unless acted.
4. Plays showed no progress.
5. First twenty-five crude and amateurish.
6. Plays.
a. Work house Ward.
1) Humor.
a) Droll conversation
b) Depends upon language and mimiory of the actors.

b. The Image.
   1) Longest comedy.
   2) Attempt in new direction frustrated. Subject does not lend itself to three acts.
c. Fold History plays (6 in number).
   1) In addition to broad farce.
   2) Purpose to make Irish history live in poplar imagination by interpreting legends and events in terms allied to folk play.

VII. William Boyle.
1. Boyle's three and four act comedies are counterpart of Lady Gregory's short farces in their successful and constant appeal to popular audiences.
2. 1905 with opening of Abbey Theatre he became associated with Dramatic Movement.
3. Previously--writer of verse and short stories for newspapers.
4. Plays--4 in number.
   a. Building Fund, 1905.
   b. The Eloquent Dempsey, 1906.
   c. The Mineral Workers, 1906.
   d. Family failing, 1912.
5. Seceded from Irish Theatre, 1907, protest against Synge's Playboy.
6. Returned to give his Family Failing.
7. Effect of Boyle and Gregory plays on Abbey Theatre.
   a) Catered for facile success of immediate popularit
   b) Gradual deterioration in quality of plays at Abbey Theatre.
   c) Corresponding decline in nature of the audiences.
   d) Instead of education public taste, people encouraged to be amused by an unusual spectacle.
   e) Comic effects secured by decking out imbeciles and brutes in the shreds and tatters of peasant speech.
   f) Superficial violence of melodrama replaces the drama of character.

VIII. Later Playwrights.
1. George Fitzmauricel
   a) Characteristics.
      1) Pure fantasy rivaled only by Lord Dunsany.
      2) Vigor and exuberance of his peasant speech surpassed only by Synge.
      3) Wealth of virile and vivid phrasing.
      4) Imagination and style sufficient to rand him as greatest folk dramatist since death of Synge.
   b) Plays.
      1) The Country Dressmaker.
         a. Importance of its revival to Fitzmaurice.
      2) Volume entitled "Five Plays."
         a. The Moonlighter.
         b. The Magic Glasses.
         c. The Dandy Dolls.
         d. The Country Dressmaker.
         e. The Pie-dish.
2. Seumas O'Kelly.

a) The Matchmakers.
b) The Stranger.
c) The Shuiler's Child.
d) The Homecoming.
e) The Bribe.

3. Lord Dunsay.
   a) Dramatist of distinction.
   b) Only worthy successor of Yeats to present time.
   c) Written plays whose poetry is not concealed by the fact that his medium is prose.
   d) Because of mythological and legendary inventiveness seems outside of Irish school.
   e) Rekindling the flame which has invested the Irish world with the glow of Celtic vision.
   f) Greatest genius revealed in his tales of gods and men.
   g) Plays.
      1) The Glittering Gate.
      2) The Gods of Pegana, 1905.
      3) Time and the Gods, 1906.
      4) The Sword of Welleran, 1907.
      5) A Dreamer's Tales, 1910.
      6) The Book of Wonder, 1912.
      7) FiftyOne Tales, 1915.
      8) King Argimens.
      9) The Gods of the Mountain.
      10) The Golden Doom.
      11) The Lost Silk Hat.
      12) The Tents of the Arabs, 1914.
      13) A Night at an Inn.

4. Others.
   a) Boucicault.
   b) W. F. Casey.
   C) R. J. Ray.
   d) T. C. Murray.
   eO Lennox Robinson.
   f) A. P. Wison.
   g) Sean O'Casey.

IX. The Ulster Literary Theatre.
   1. Origin.
   2. Environment.
   3. Mayne Rutherford.
   4. St. John G. Ervine.

X. Conclusion.
   1. Entrance into new phase of existence.
   2. Neither European war nor insurrection is Dublin destroyed the Abbey Theatre.
   3. What does the future hold for the Irish Drama?
   4. Irish drama as we have seen it presented in America.

The origin of drama in Ireland may be traced back to the Ossianic poems of the third century, which consisted of an enormous mass. They were written chiefly in narrative form, of a minor epic type or else semi-dramatic epopees, which were usually introduced by a dialogue between St. Patrick and the poet Ossian. Ossian was the son of Finn MacCumhail and he was fabled to have lived in Tirnanog, the country of the ever-young, the Irish Elysian. He lived three hundred years thus surviving all his Fenian contemporaries, and living to hold colloquy with St. Patrick.

The Ossianic lays are almost the only narrative poems which exist in the language, although lyrical, elegiac, and didactic poetry abounds. The amazing fact is that although the Irish are great producers of literature they never developed drama until the twentieth century. Previous to this century, the nearest approach is found in the Ossianic poems. The dialogue which is found in these poems between St. Patrick and Ossian is more or less dramatic in form.

It seems rather certain that these poems were acted, but this cannot be proved. Real acting might have taken place between two persons, one representing the saint and the other the old pagan. Douglas Hyde states that a letter was seen in an Irish-American paper by some one, whose name is now forgotten, who alleged that in his youth he had actually seen the Ossianic lays acted. Here we have a very promising beginning for drama, one which is far more promising than that from which the drama of Aeschylus developed. This dramatic germ was stifled and could not develop later in Ireland as all growth was arrested

due to the general unrest and disorder in the country. The conception of bringing the spirit of paganism and Christianity together in the persons of the first great saint and the last great poet and warrior was truly dramatic. The spirit and humor with which it has been carried out in the pieces which came down to us was a strong presumption that under happier circumstances something great would have developed from it.

The authorship of the Ossianic poems is a much disputed point. In the book of Leinster, there are three short pieces ascribed to Ossian himself, five to Finn, but of the great mass not much is actually accredited to Ossian. The five that were here ascribed to Finn in another old manuscript are said to be written by Caoilte, Ossian's companion and fellow survivor, and to Gergus, another son of Finn.

From the paucity of pieces attributed to Ossian in the oldest manuscript, it is probable that the Gaelic race singled Ossian out as their typical pagan poet instead of Fergus or Caoilte or others of his alleged contemporaries; just as they singled out his father Finn as the typical pagan leader of their race. It is very likely that a large part of our Ossianic lays and literature is post-Danish while a great mass of the Red Branch saga is in its birth many centuries anterior to the Norsemen's invasion. This seventeenth century collection of Ossianic poems may be found today in the Franciscan Convent in Dublin.

It is remarkable how dependent England has been for her plays upon Irishmen from the Restoration onwards, or at least for her comedies. Congreve, though Ireland fostered, she

cannot claim, but Farquhar was Irish, and so also were Steele, Sheridan, Goldsmith, Wilde, and Shaw, as well as such lesser lights as Macklin, Sheridan Knowles, and Dion Boucicault. Here is sufficient evidence of an Irish genius for drama which populous England was unable to match. All that was needed was organization and encouragement and this was offered by Mr. Yeat's venture.

A notable feature of the revival was that the form was primarily poetic. This Irish dramatic revival is a romantic story. The foundation was made by Mr. Yeats and others of the National Literary Society in 1892. The object of the society was to spread "a tradition of life that makes neither great wealth nor great poverty, that makes the acts a national expression of life, that permits every common man to understand good art and high thinking, and to have the fine manners these things can give."

In 1894, Yeats produced his play, "The Land of Heart's Desire", at the Avenue Theatre, London. This awakened in him a definite ambition to give Ireland a theatre where uncommercial drama might be patronized. There was no opening in London except at the Independent Theatre for such plays as he could write. It occurred to him that the intellectual awakening which was a part of the literary revival in Ireland might make possible in Dublin a small theatrical enterprise modelled like the Independent Theatre, Theatre Libre, and Freie Bühne. For encouragement Yeats turned to E. Martyn, a great admirer of Ibsen. At this time, there was not the slightest hope of seeing intellectual plays in the ordinary profiteering play houses. Together Yeats and Martyn were able to interest George Moore and convince him

that commercalism made drama a literary impossibility in London. The very nature of conditions brought Yeats, Martyn, and Moore together for the erection of a play house in Dublin; and it is evident that folk drama was not one of their preoccupations. Their union was primarily a revolt against theatrical conditions in London, which rendered impossible the production of plays whose character did not ensure immediate financial success. All three were consciously inspired by the example of the Théâtre Libre and its German analogue. Ibsen was their master and they were determined to do for Ireland what Ibsen had done for Norway. There were a host of people prominent in various walks of Irish life who interested themselves in the movement and gave sufficient guarantee for establishing the Irish Literary Theatre; among their number were found such people as Lady Gregory, A.E., and Standish O'Grady.

Moore's dramatic contribution was neither considerable nor typically Irish; whereas Martyn's and Lady Gregory's contributions were very important. Lady Gregory's consisting in her help to Yeats as well as her contribution to the work of establishing and consolidating the modern Irish theatre in Dublin. Her work, which sprang from the soil was imbued with peasant life and contributed to native Irish culture. The ideals that led them on were the desire to develop culture in Ireland; to have their country take its place in the world of art and particularly in drama; to develop an appreciative Irish audience; to develop the faculty for play making and play acting among their fellow country men.

The three prime instigators, Yeats, Martyn, and Moore, drew their inspiration and sustenance not only from their own Irish

environment, but by being deeply versed and stimulated by the great body of European art. Yeats turned to Irish mythology and folklore, but was profoundly influenced by the French symbolists. Directly he was inspired by the art of Villers de l' Isle Adam and by the mysticism of M. Maeterlinck. Yeats also found much in the poetic and highly imaginative side of the art of Ibsen. The influences that Yeats felt were even more directly found in the drama of Martyn. Moore's common tendencies were toward realism which were becoming manifest in contemporary English drama. All three felt that the Irish revival became vital only when it became narrowly national.

The first performance of the Irish Literary Theatre was "The Countess Kathleen" May 8, 1899. This constituted the whole program, but the following evening Martyn's "Heather Field", was added. In February 1900, a second season opened with "The Bending of the Bough", by George Moore. This was succeeded by Martyn's "Maeve" and a heroic drama of ancient Ireland, "The Last Feast of the Fianna" written by Alice Milligan. This was Miss Milligan's sole contribution of importance as a distinguished poet to dramatic literature. In October, 1901, the Irish Literary Theatre terminated its official career with the production of "Diarmuid and Grania", in which Moore and Yeats collaborated. The fundamental cause of the ultimate scission in the movement was due to a marked difference of emphasis. It is significant that this play appeared to be a reconciliation of literary ideals, but it marked in reality the disruption of the association. The summary of achievement was the performance of six plays in English

and one in Gaelic, all of which had Irish themes and were played, with the exception of the last, by English actors.

The Irish Literary Theatre represents an important step taken in the direction of a national theatre; but the essential condition of a national drama--native interpretations--was lacking. It is doubtful whether even the creation of a national theatre was the purpose of the enterprise. Yeats certainly dreamed such a dream, but both his coadjutors were far more concerned with the production of literary drama without special reference to nationality. The plays reflected both ideas; Martyn and Moore were influenced by the cosmopolitan "drama of ideas" so prevalent in London, while Yeats' ambition was in terms of Chekov's or Strindberg's poetic folk plays. Here we have elements of dissolution from the clash of motives. Difference in ideal set Yeats and Martyn moving in opposite directions. Martyn's new aim was to develop Irish culture on general and universal lines. He wished the theatre to provide for Irish plays belonging to the common current of European Art. He rebelled against the tyranny of materialism and it seemed to him that the imaginative and spiritual vitality of Ireland was being destroyed. He wanted not merely political liberty for his country but freedom to realize and express latent spiritual qualities which he felt to be in danger of extinction by the influence of alien domination. He believed that the way to effect this emancipation was by putting Ireland en rapport with the best art of the world. Although Yeats' aim was the same, his method of bringing about the renaissance of Irish culture differed greatly from that of Martyn. Yeats himself was steeped in the art of many lands and many ages, yet he felt,

that for Ireland, it should be the cultivation of her own peculiarly national art. Pursuing this end he had valuable aid from Lady Gregory. Yeats was particularly anxious that the dramatic association in Ireland should distinguish itself from its kindred in London by this use of the national legend as material for poetic drama. Martyn and Moore were interested in social and psychological drama, as was natural, one being an admirer of the Scandinavian dramatist and the other the author of "The Strike at Arlingford" performed by the Independent Theatre in 1893. From legend to folk lore was but a step for Yeats and at once the peasant play was merely a question of time; consequently, continuity of ideas no longer existed between the orginators of the movement. All had the same purpose, but Yeats put his emphasis in the direction of folk plays, whereas Martyn pursued the opposite course. Moore and Martyn gave to the Irish Literary Theatre a tone consistent with the conception of national drama that they professed in the beginning. Yeats found in the embryo an enterprise in which he might realize the cherished dream of an Irish National Theatre. Yeats' triumph was a practical one over Martyn, who in his constancy went unrewarded.

The separation of the first and second stages of the dramatic revival in Ireland was not only that of a literary ideal, but also a literary generation. Yeats was born in 1865 in Dublin and belonged to the younger generation of poets and prose writers who initiated the movement known as the Celtic Renaissance. He was the first to obtain wide public recognition. Yeats' first play was published in 1892, "The Countess Cathleen". This is probably his best known play although it

has never been as popular on the stage as "Cathleen Ni Houlihan". "The Countess Cathleen" has been classified by Mr. Yeats as a play purely symbolic. The two demons represent the world; the gold is the pride of the age; the peasants we have in our hearts; the Countess Cathleen simply a soul or human spirit which perpetually makes sacrifices and gives itself into captivity for all good causes and in the end wins peace because every high motive is in the substance peace. If we accept this interpretation we are entering the field of allegory as well as symbolism. Many critics believe it is a superficial folk-tale dramatized. The play may be classified as fantastic rather than imaginative. In his other two plays, "The Land of Heart's Desire" and "The Shadowy Waters", the illusion is more perfect. Here we are more easily carried into the fairy world and we live with them in their world of woods, water, and enchanted seas. The magic of fairyland is missing from "Countess Cathleen". One hears so much about the wealth of ancient Irish literature and its richness that we wish that Mr. Yeats had chosen less the legends of the past and used more his own imagination and experiences. "The Land of Heart's Desire", although it has not the subject matter of a heroic chronicle, has proved to be his masterpiece. It is a beautiful thing. It has a radiantly delicious loveliness, a quality of inspiration, an exquisite freshness and fragrance of things destined to immortality. The unity of effect and the sustained poetic charm are unsurpassable. Every line has creative value and every line is poetically beautiful. The pagan note is felt in its mythopoeic quality and its spiritualization of nature.

"The Shadowy Waters" is more deeply pondered, more elaborated,

and patiently perfected. It has no plot or rather the plot is simply the mood in which the play is written. As you read you float "beyond the misty borders of the world" and on and on "to the streams where the world ends". It is a quest of the ideal. Here is love that is something more than brief longing and deceiving hope and bodily tenderness; love is a spiritual ideal, any passionate faith that seeks perfection, for we love nothing but the perfect, and our dreams make all things perfect, that we may love them. The play is flawless and it is impossible that anything could be more filled with atmosphere. Its beauty is heavy, delicious, and drowsy; like a thing dreamed in a weariness of life or in some unnatural sleep. In the "Land of Heart's Desire" the attraction is the fresh woodland charm, but this is entirely gone in "Shadowy Waters" as it is the last autumnal echo of Mr. Yeats' great period, the decade from 1890 to 1900. "Shadowy Waters" could never be made a practical stage play but it might be produced artistically upon the stage by actors with beautiful voices if they were willing to think only of the music of the lines which they were speaking.

Yeats was not easily discouraged as he might have been after the writing of "Countess Cathleen". The fact that in that play an Irish woman would sell her soul to the devil was to the Irish a deliverate slander upon the whole Irish nation. There was a multiplicity of pamphlets and newspaper articles because the Catholicism of Ireland had been insulted, and no Irish insult was ever silently suffered. What freedom, or hope, could any act have in a community so constituted? The plays which Yeats wrote while the theatre was under his direct control were eight;

"Cathleen Ni Houlihan", "The Pot of Broth", "The Hour Glass", "Where There is Nothing" (later rewritten by Lady Gregory as "The Unicorn and the Stars"), "The King's Threshold", "On Baile's Strand", "Deirdre", and "The Golden Helmet" (later "The Green Helmet"). All of these except "Where There is Nothing" are one act plays with varying degrees of imprtance.

The general impression that the present Irish National Society developed out of the Irish Literary Theatre is erroneous. It takes a strong imagination to connect the two. How could a theatre justly famous for its school of folk drama and peculiarly national tradition of acting represent the further evolution of an institution which contained no trace of either and ceased to exist because of its supposed inability to admit them? Prior to the separation of the founders of the Irish Literary Theatre, the two brothers W. G. and F. J. Fay brought together a company of Irish actors, which later grew into what is now called the Irish Theatre. The Fays had native genius for acting which was imperfectly satisfied by giving amateur performances of different plays throughout Dublin and its neighborhood. They came in contact with A.E. through the intermediary of James H. Cousins and they were encouraged to lay the foundations of the Irish National Theatre. A.E. had written the delicate prose poem, "Deirdre", which is his only contribution to Irish dramatic literature, and this appealed to the Fays. Their sincere wish was for drama that was purely national and acted by Irish players who would be able to interpret the native tradition far removed from the English stage of commercialism. Here we find the collaborators required by Yeats, who was also dissatisfied with English acting and the divergent aims of

the Irish Literary Theatre. Yeats found in the Fay organization an instrument ready to carry on the work which had not recommended itself to his original collaaborators.

On April 2, 1902, A.E.'s "Deirdre", for which the author himself designed the costumes and scenery, was produced by the Fays and their group of actors now called the Irish National Dramatic Company. On the same program we find Yeats' "Kathleen Ni Houlihan". The excellence and charm of the Fay acting resulted in the success of the two little plays and determined the fate of the Irish Theatre. No longer was there any doubt as to the possibility of the success of native Irish drama. It was proved that with the assistance of this group of enthusiasts the future had great possibilities. Later in the same year the Irish National Dramatic Company moved into the Antient Concert Rooms. Due to their initial triumph they added four new plays: "The Sleep of the King", a minor essay in genre, by James H. Cousins; the second, also by Cousins, "The Racing Lug", a peasant story of the sea; third, Yeats' "A Pot of Broth", which is a legitimate ancestor of comedies and which forced Lady Gregory to make her own; the fourth, by Frederick Ryan, "Laying the Foundations". With the exception of the last, a satirical comedy of municipal life, recalling Edward Martyn's similar attempts, all these plays were then of the new school which is now so familar.

At the close of the second season, the Irish National Dramatic Company under the influence and direction of the Fay brothers traced the boundaries of the domain in which the Irish theatre was to become master. The Fays prepared the ground,

collected the company, created the tradition of acting which was to give the fullest play to the peculiar quality of national folk and poetic drama. When Yeats and Lady Gregory turned to the Irish National Dramatic Company there was not the freedom of the Literary Theatre and they had to accept the medium already formed with certain pronounced characteristics. These characteristics harmonized almost miraculously with their own conceptions of what the greater part of Irish drama should be. It was the duty of Yeats to explain the limitations of the theatre where only subjects drawn from legend and peasant life could be treated. These they preferred to the characteristics of the theatre of Edward Martyn. We may find mnay eloquent pages in the theatre's organ, "Samhain" of which Yeats was the editor.

In 1903, we find that the control passed out of the hands of the Fays when the Irish National Theatre Society was formed with Yeats as president. The Fays remained in the theatre until 1908 giving their best and helping the Irish drama to distinction, which was only surpassed by J. M. Synge. W. S. Fay's wonderful interpretation of the title role in "The Playboy of the Western World" and also his creation of the chief male part in every other play of Synge's was far superior to anything previously performed in Ireland. Frank Fay's contribution was the training of a company without which the Irish theatre was deprived of its most valuable asset. So important was the part played by the Fays that the decline of the theatre dates from their departure.

In 1903, the theatre produced Yeats' admirable poetic plays, "The King's Threshold" and "The Shadowy Waters", Synge's

"In the Shadow of the Glen", and Padraic Colum's "The Broken Soil". The production of these plays introduced the two most notable of the new dramatists as remarkable, but totally dissimilar exponents of the peasant drama. The Irish Literary Society invited the players to London where they were appreciated by disinterested critics. Miss A. E. F. Horniman was so impressed that she granted the Irish National Theatre Society an annual subsidy and provided the Abbey Theatre, which she leased to them for six years rent free. 1904 found the National Theatre in Ireland in material as well as in the literary sense. In 1905, the title, "The National Theatre Society", was adopted. This adoption of title was the ultimate metamorphosis of the W. G. Fay Irish Dramatic Company.

A great event in the history of the Irish Theatre was the discovery and universal recognition of the genius Synge. The brief activities of the six years from 1903 to 1909 were a decisive influence upon contemparary drama in Ireland. There is little doubt that the peasant play which is now the characteristic of the National theatre, owes its success to Synge who revealed its dramatic and poetic possibilities. His series of masterpieces established this form of drama which was adapted either to comedy or tragedy and proved to be of material to rank with the great dramatists of European literature.

With the exception of Yeats, Synge's equipment differed from his fellow workers. None of the new dramatists had come into direct contact with foreign people and foreign culture, but this was not true of either Yeats or Synge. Yeats' experiences of London and Paris were those of literature rather than of life. Synge cared little for literature. He

fled to the continent after his university career to satisfy his instinct of vagabondage among men and not books. His sonnet, "Kottabos", 1893, the year of his departure from Trinity College, Dublin, was the only evidence of his literary proclivities before his wander years. Fortunately in the year 1898 he met Yeats in Paris. His return to Ireland was due to the suggestion of Yeats to go to the Aran Islands and develop his already sharpened sense of the realities of life as felt by those living more directly in contact with nature. Instinctively Synge sought the humbler companionship of the roadside. His linguistic attainments permitted him to penetrate the exterior aspects of foreign scenes. His ears were trained to the sounds of several European languages as well as English and Gaelic which fitted him to catch the rhythms and the music of that idiom which he brought into literature from the western seashore and the Wicklow hills. The influences of the various sources upon this man are most interesting. It is a matter of conjecture whether he learned anything from the peasant plays of Hauptmann and Anzengruber. The French influence is shown in his desire to become known as the interpretrer for English readers. Occasionally Loti and Maeterlink are visible in his dramatic works but these observations are general rather than particular. His attraction to the French influence is evidenced in his love for Marot, Villon, Ronsard, and Racine. Especially is this true of Racine upon whom he proposed to write a critical study. This project he abandoned at the suggestion of Yeats whose project was less open to criticism. One so careless of ideas as Synge could hardly adequately criticize literature. The reading of French left a mark which

was a highly cultivated sense of selection and a need of artistic order. This method caused him to rewrite with meticulous conscientiousness and helped him to fashion the Anglo-Gaelic idiom into a perfect instrument of poetic and dramatic speech. His contact with Voltaire and Anatole France encouraged him to express his own sardonic humor of his ironic disillusionment in the presentation of human nature. Many critics were unfriendly because of the lack of a common point of view which was the price he paid for coming to the dramatic movement with a wider and more varied experience than is usual in an Irishman of letters.

There is a tangible evidence of sources left in Synge's plays. "The Aran Islands", which was published in 1907, belongs to the period of his return to Ireland. This in conjunction with his notebooks compiled from Wicklow experiences contains a complete record of the dramatist and his work. They reveal the personality of Synge, his tragedy and comedy as found in a corner of the world unspoiled by industrial civilization. This drifting, silent man full of hidden passion surrenders to the primitive yet highly sensitive race whose joys and sorrows we feel to be his own. There is an intimate note of understanding and sympathy in the account of the Islanders which disposes at once the accusation that he went there as a literary stranger bent upon securing "copy". The strange irony which we find indicated in Synge's notebooks is most obnoxious to Gaelic puritanism so that it leaves little doubt of the native origin. "In the Shadow of the Glen", one of his earliest offences to the moral jingoists, the author actually

modified. In the "Aran Island", Pat Dirane's denouement of adultery and murder is a more disquieting reflection upon certain "patriotic" illusions than the little play itself. It is the familar story of a husband who assumes death to test his wife's fidelity. Nora Burke is not the vehicle of any protest as she lives a loveless life beside an old husband in the lonely valley drowned in mists from the mountains. The only voice she knew was the whispering wind, which is mysteriously eloquent as only Synge is capable of making it. Nora Burke was not Ibsen's Nora of the "Doll's House" with a door to bang. Ibsen's Nora is rather the intellectual sister of this solitary woman whose human instinct craves the adventure of freedom and youth. A tramp takes her with him to share the wild joys of a roadside existence and thus releases her from her bondage.

The second one act play written by Synge was the "Riders to the Sea", and here we find a gracious approval by Synge's opponents. The roots of this play may be traced to the Aran volume. It was written about the same time as "In the Shadow of the Glen", and was produced shortly after "In the Shadow of the Glen" by the Irish National Theatre Society in 1904. Here is concentrated all the passionate horror of death that constantly broods over the Aran fishermen, and the constant menacing struggle with the sea. Old Maurya becomes a symbolic figure and personifies the grief of the people in face of a common enemy; she has lost five sons and her husband to the demon sea and there is no suspense as to the fate of the sixth and last son, Bartley, who rides away never to return. Maeterlinck's "Intruder" has an air of artificiality, because of the disembodied action, beside the

spiritualised realism of the "Riders to the Sea". Maurya takes on a profound significance of an Aeschylean figure in vain protest against fate and the ultimate resignation. She is widely human in revolt and submission and essentially a woman of the Islands. The play is a consummate technical achievement and a dramatic summary of the Aran Islands. The cry of pain is not soon forgotten as they shriek with pitiable despair. The poignancy of this cry is heard through every line of the "Riders to the Sea".

"The Tinker's Wedding" was given to us in 1908, which was the year before Synge's death. It was written contemporaneously with the "Riders to the Sea" and "The Aran Island". It is the weakest and may have been the first play. Yeats informs us that the published version differs from the original in being more unpopular. The experiences of the Wicklow tramp life should have provided something more substantial than this farce. There is fine energy of grotesque humor in the anecdote of the two tinkers' belated desire to legalize their union. It results in an utterly lawless outburst of contempt for religion and morality. If "In the Shadow" and "Play Boy" seem irreverent then "The Tinker's Wedding" is positively blasphemous judged in the full light of middle class Irish propriety. Synge has no concern for scruples, but rather an artistic conscience and the play is inferior to the rest of his work.

"The Well of the Saints", published in 1905, is in the initial volume of the "Abbey Theatre Series", which consists of fifteen volumes--a synthesis of the best of the dramatic movement. This play was one of the earliest international successes of the newly established theatre. It was performed

in Germany at Berlin in 1906. The experimental two acts of "The Tinker's Wedding" may be regarded as a point of transition to the full development of his power in the three acts of "The Well of the Saints" and its successors. The personality and the mood of the story are not traceable to the usual sources. The theme is as universal as "The Riders to the Sea". In this play, the blind beggars regain their sight by the operation of a miracle and lose it again together with the desire to see. They prefer the beauty of the imaginary world as contrasted with the ugliness of reality as revealed to them by the recovery of their sight. It is at once symbolic and personal.

"The Playboy of the Western World" was laboriously written in 1905 and 1906, and it is a notorious and grandly named comedy. Wherever it has been produced it has been the occasion of uproarious demonstrations which were magnificent advertisement for the Irish players. Whether or not the management was wrong in calling the Imperial police into the Irish National Theatre and enforcing upon the public a play which they disliked it is hard to decide. It is certain that had the play been withdrawn Synge would be utterly unknown today except to the curious student of literature. Yeats indefatigably explained the play to the public during that memorable week, which was an act of highly meritorious generosity and self sacrifice because it dethroned Yeats from his position of the Standard Bearer of the Celtic Revival and gave Synge the first place in the Irish movement. The principal and ever-recurrent objections to the play fall into two main headings; first, there were objections to certain words and episodes in the comedy;

the second, and more important class of specific objections concerns the dramatic verisimilitude of certain scenes. In spite of the length of time devoted to the writing of this play, he seems to have written it somewhat at random, without any very definite fore knowledge of its dénouement. For example, in the first act of the Playboy arrives harassed and dirty; is it likely that in the third act he, without special training, will be fit to take part in the race? Again, if Pegeen loves him because he has killed his father, is it so obvious a counter-part that she must cease to love him because he has not killed him? While the play is realistic and sociologically accurate, it contains a strong element of humorous or satirical symbolism and allegory. The Playboy might as well have killed both parents instead of one and it would not have mattered greatly. It is an extremely searching study of the Celtic temperament with the ever possible imaginative perversion of ethical ideals although there are those who say it is pro-Irish and anti-Irish. "The Playboy" if not Synge's best play is at least an important and representative contribution to the modern stage.

Padraic Colum differs from his contemporaries because he had given the measure of his originality before Synge had exerted any influence upon the work of the Irish Theatre. The débuts of Synge and Colum were contemporaneous, the latter's "Broken Soil" having followed "In the Shadow of the Glen" by a few weeks in 1903. Padraic Colum was one of the original group when the Fay brothers launched the movement. It was in 1901 that he came in contact with the embryonic association promoted

by the Fays and the experiment awoke in him the creative desire. He actively participated in the enterprise by playing in A.E.'s "Deirdre" at the inaugural performance of the National Dramatic Company, the successor of the Irish Literary Theatre. He is therefore one of the oldest workers in the movement which has given to Ireland a National Theatre. He was the first to dramatize the realities of rural life in Ireland. Where Synge divined human prototypes, Colum revealed local peasant types, and together they defined the limits that folklore drama covers, the dramatic realization of peasant Ireland.

The plays which are Colum's more important contribution to contemporary Irish drama are the "Broken Soil", 1903; "The Land", 1905; "Fiddler's House", 1907; and "Thomas Muskerry", 1910. Each play portrays some special aspect of rural life as seen by the peasant mind. Colum makes no attempt to formulate problems with a view to their solution, but rather presents those situations which afford a dramatic insight into the workings of the folk nature. No other Irish dramatist dispenses so boldly with plots as Colum who relies entirely upon the psychological interest of the situation presented by the grouping of character and motives. There is a strain of Ibsen not in violent dénouements as in "Hedda Gabler" or "Ghosts", but rather as the Ibsen of "The Doll's House". Colum was born in the Irish Midlands and the drama of existence naturally projects itself upon his consciousness in terms of the peasantry whose world was his own. His pictures are ever restrained and free from any forced note, and his sobriety is as impressive as the vivid fantasy of Synge.

Like most of his early companions, including the Fays, he has seen his work gradually neglected by the National Theatre. With the departure of the actors and playwrights who were the pioneers, his plays disappeared from the current repertory of the Irish Players. Precedence has been given to the stereotyped farces and melodramas whose only claim to distinction is their Irish accent. The newcomers have learnt the formulae and count upon popularity with those to whom the Irish Theatre is a species of eccentric show. They have assumed the external features of Colum's realism and the superficial violences of Synge's verbal energy. At the cost of popular success, Colum remained faithful to himself and withstood the temptation to melodramatize Synge.

Lady Gregory and William Boyle serve as the connecting link between the pioneering era and the newcomers, to whom the original organization is a vague tradition. Socially, financially, and administratively Lady Gregory has used her influence to foster the early undertaking of Yeats when A. E. had convinced him of the possibilities of the W. G. Fay company of players. She is primarily a writer of comedy. Her chief gift is her faculty for dialogue. Vivid imagination and vast absurdity are the chief ingredients of her plays, and they move with a speed and vivacity which keep mirth tuneful with a constant ripple of laughter, but her range is narrow. "The Workhouse Ward" consists of little but an endless use of pugnacity among friends to create a farcical situation and gives an opportunity for spirited vituperation. "The Bogie Men" and the longer more serious plays, "The Canavans" and "The Deliverer" are made of similar elements. Although she definitely set to writing comedies she has not entirely neglected tragedy. There

is deep poignancy in the short "Goal Gare" and it is little more than a lyrical narrative in the form of a tableau. It is saved by its shortness and concentration. In her full length tragedies, the weakness is their lack of dramatic interest. In comedy, she overcame tedium by her wealth of dialogue which makes it possible to keep a humorous chant and comic squabbling going, but tragedy is not amenable to such treatment; in such plays as "Grania" and "Kincora". Regardless of the critical strictures meted out to Lady Gregory's dramatic work there is no doubt of its intrinsic merit and its value in selling the Abbey repertory when it was in need of sustenance and of handing to the younger men the tradition of the pioneers.

Closely connected with Lady Gregory's work is that of William Boyle. His three and four act comedies are a counter part of Lady Gregory's short farces in their successful and constant appeal to popular audiences. In 1905 with the opening of the Abbey Theatre, he became associated with the Dramatic Movement. Previous to this he was a writer of verse and short stories for newspapers. His plays are four in number: "The Building Fund", 1905; "The Eloquent Dempsey", 1906; "The Mineral Workers", 1906; and "The Family Failing", 1912. He seceded from the Irish Theatre, 1907, as a protest against Synge's "Playboy"; and he returned to the theatre to give his play, "The Family Failing". The effect of both Boyle's and Lady Gregory's plays on the Abbey Theatre has been interesting. They catered for facile success of immediate popularity and this gradually led to a deterioration in the quality of the plays and a corresponding decline in the nature of the audiences.

Instead of educating the public taste they encouraged people to be amused by an unusual spectacle. The comic effects were produced by decking out imbeciles and brutes in the shreds and tatters of peasant speech. The superficial violence of melodrama replaced the drama of character, which can only come from inner life.

Among the newcomers we still have some who are worthy of the traditions of the National Theatre. In 1908, the Abbey Theatre became notorious and famous after the playing of the "Playboy" and this marked the beginning of the third phase of the Dramatic Revival. "Samhain", the organ of the theatre, discontinued and with it the principles and theories for which it stood. Miss Horniman's subsidy was withdrawn at the same time making the financial conditions difficult, which had previously been the source of strength. Dramatists were given preference when they combined the qualities that brought the proper receipts. There was considerable criticism and controversy in the Irish press and a compromise was reached. The eternal comedies of Lady Gregory and William Boyle and the melodramas of Casey, Robinson, and Murray made way for men who had prior claims upon the public. The most remarkable saving was that of George Fitzmaurice. The characteristics of this dramatist were of great promise. His pure fantasy was rivaled only by Lord Dunsany; the vigor and exuberance of his peasant speech is surpassed only by Synge; there was a wealth of virile and vivid phrasing; and his imagination and

style were sufficient to rank him as the greatest folk dramatist since the death of Synge. His plays consisted of "The Country Dressmaker" and the volume entitled "Five Plays", which is comprised of "The Moonlighter", "The Magic Glasses", "The Dandy Dolls", "The Country Dressmaker", and "The Pie-dish". It was the revival in 1912 of his play, "The Country Dressmaker", that had almost completely faded that brought him back to the public eye. The play is packed with observation and is brilliantly written. It is rich in quaint terms and delectable words. Here and there one is shocked by gross caricature.

Fitzmaurice is an example of a writer first encouraged and then neglected by the directors of the National Theatre, but Seumas O'Kelly is quite the opposite as his work was recognized elsewhere before the National Theatre accepted it. His plays consist of "The Matchmaker", which first appeared in book form, 1908; "The Shuiler's Child", which long escaped the attention of Yeats and Lady Gregory; "The Stranger" and "The Homecoming", which are situations that appeal to the Irish audiences. In "The Bribe" we have a type of play which conforms more nearly to the "Abbey play" although O'Kelly has a talent of sufficient strength and individuality to save him from the banalities of the average peasant melodramatist.

From representatives of popularity, we turn to a dramatist of distinction, Lord Dunsany. It has been an honor for the Irish theatre to introduce this man to the English speaking world. He is the only worthy successor of Yeats to the present time. He has written plays whose poetry is not concealed by the fact that his medium is prose. Because of the mythological

and legendary inventiveness of his work he seems outside of the Irish School. He is simply rekindling the flame which has invested the Irish world with the glow of Celtic vision. His greatest genius is revealed in his tales of gods and men. From his far from exhausting imaginative vein we have received the following plays: "The Glittering Gate", "The Gods of Pegana", "Time and the Gods", "The Sword of Welleran", "A Dreamer's Tales", "The Book of Wonder", "Fifty-one Tales," "King Argimens", "The Gods of the Mountains", "The Golden Doom", "The Lost Silk Hat", "The Tents of the Arabs", and "A Night in an Inn".

Those who have seen the performances of the Irish Players at home or abroad will remember such names as Boucicault, W. F. Casey, F. J. Ray, J. C. Murray, Lennox Robinson, A. P. Wilson, and Sean O'Casey. Robinson and his company crossed the Atlantic for their first visit to America in the autumn and early winter of 1911. The second tour came in the season of 1913 and 1914, which was also made under Robinson's unconventional but effective pilotage. At the close of the London season, which topped off the American tour in June, 1914, Robinson resigned from the post of producer manager to devote his entire time to writing. In November, 1927, O'Casey and the Irish Players once more came to America and played "The Plough and the Stars", by Sean O'Casey, at the Hudson Theatre under the direction of George C. Tyler. This winter, 1928, the Irish players appeared in New York but the play closed the first week because of the lack of support and the opposition offered by Americans of Irish decent, who failed to appreciate or

approve of the drama as presented.

An important new dramatist of the Abbey Theatre today is Sean O'Casey. He made his great sensation in "Juno and the Paycock" and "The Shadow of a Gunman". This dramatist shifted the center of dramatic interest from the peasant to the dweller in the city tenement. He discovered material that is as rich and racy as the material of the country side. By taking tenement life he is able to show a community that is a microcosm of proletarian life in Dublin. This life has a tradition and a raciness of its own. O'Casey's knowledge of tenement life comes from his inside knowledge as he had not only lived there, but he is a young Dublin working man in the building trade. His dramatic training came by watching the plays in the Abbey Theatre and writing for the dramatic society. The first work he published was a little book on the Dublin Citizens' Army as he is politically interested in the Worker's Republic. The national drama that Yeats aspired to create by poetic reshaping of Gaelic legends has nothing in common with O'Casey's boisterous transcriptions of Dublin slum life which have been the Abbey's greatest popular success.

Robinson's life for a decade or more has been built into the chronicles of the Abbey Company. His first long plays were "The Cross Roads", "Harvest", and "The Clancy Name", which were all in the repertory of the Irish Players. "The Clancy Name". is simply the story of a proud old Irish woman. It was his first venture in play writing and it is in one act as so many of the Abbey plays are. His "Crossroads" gave the most

horribly haunting picture of a remote dark place, full of cruelty. "The White-Headed Boy" is wholly comic, intensely Irish, but universal in its essentials. In "Harvest" there is a note of propaganda which may be traced to the influence of Bernard Shaw whom Robinson had met and known in London. The elements of drollery and whimsy in this play are also found in the playwright's personality but he seemed unable to put them into his earlier plays. The play Robinson himself thinks is his most significant work is "The Lost Leader". In this country it failed to duplicate the regard and success it had had in London. It might have been a greater drama if the mystic atmosphere of the first two acts had been carried more relentlessly through to the last. Mr. Robinson has a great aptitude for stage management and production. It was through him that the company came to America and also that the Abbey theatre regained something of the prestige it lost through neglect and dissension within its ranks during the war.

The regionalism of the Northern dramatists corresponds to a definite condition of Irish geography. The origin of the Ulster Literary Theatre dates back to 1902. The Belfast Protestant National Society decided to widen its purely political activities by coöperating in the work of the Fay brothers. An experiment was tried and the two plays, "Cathleen ni Houlihan" and "The Racing Lug" were produced in Belfast. The result was a desire to give Ulster a share in the dramatic revival. A.E.'s "Deirdre" after its performance in Dublin was produced in Belfast in 1904 and the Ulster Literary Theatre came into existence. In December of the same year a poetic drama of the heroic age "Brian of Banba" by Bulmer Hobson and "The Reformers" by Lewis Purcell

introduced two new playwrights both members of the Belfast Protestant National Society.

Mayne Rutherford is not only the best of the Ulster playwrights but one of the finest talents produced by the dramatic movement. His plays, "The Drone", "The Turn of the Road", "The Troth", and "Red Turf" are studies of Northern Ireland peasant life in which he has preserved the atmosphere and idiom of Ulster. With the assistance of the Ulster Players he has done for the North of Ireland what Synge has done for the West.

St. John G. Ervine did not identify himself with the aspirations and aims of his Irish contemporaries but preferred to seek in England the opportunities offered by a wider public for his talent. It was not until the Irish Plays had become a popular amusement in London that his first play was produced by them. The immediate success of "Mixed Marriage" in 1911 showed him the wisdom of a retarded entry upon the Irish scene. This play was published in the Abbey Theatre Series in 1911 and since that date four other Irish plays of his have been performed: "The Magnanimous Lovers", "The Critics", "The Orangeman", and "John Ferguson". St. John Ervine like other Irishmen such as Wilde and Shaw are destined to have their fame identified with another country than their own.

The history of the Irish theatre proves that a new chapter has opened and it is not possible that the Abbey Theatre will disappear. That fact has been proved as the theatre stood the strain of the European war and the insurrection in Dublin. What the future holds for the Irish drama we little know, but

we do know that it has been a manifestation of nationality, which has given us a literature and a theatre essentially different from those of any other English speaking country. It is the hope that it will continue by always remembering and living up to the standards and ideals which were its point of departure and its greatest strength.

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