A SELECTIVE INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF LADY GREGORY

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A SELECTIVE INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF LADY GREGORY

by

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A Thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English Language and Literature
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's Newfoundland

March, 1969.

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Thesis topic: A Selective Interpretation and Analysis of the Plays of Lady Gregory

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is a biographical introduction, the second is a chapter of analysis and interpretation of Lady Gregory's major comedies, the third is a chapter of analysis and interpretation of her Folk-History plays, including a discussion of one play outside that group, The Gaol Gate, the fourth is a general conclusion uniting the themes of chapters two and three and forwarding an evaluation.

Matters of fact in this thesis, such material as the details of Lady Gregory's life, and references to the growth of the Abbey Theatre are taken from the standard accounts of the Abbey, which are given in the bibliography at the end of the thesis. The range of critical reference which is drawn upon consists mainly of works that deal directly with Lady Gregory or other dramatists of the Abbey Theatre. Such works are not numerous and references are therefore limited.

The thesis has been organized around this tenet; that Lady Gregory achieved her dramatic potential when her plays had a base or core of emotion in league with her particular dramatic skills. The support of this tenet was

seen to be more lucidly accomplished by a selective consideration. For this reason I have not included the "Wonder Plays" (The Dragon, Aristotle's Bellows, The Jester and The Golden Apple). These plays are really dramatized fairy tales, "sunny fantasies", and as such are not immediately relevant to the discussion. I have also excluded the three plays in the volume Three Last Plays (Sancho's Master, Dave, The Would-Be Gentleman). The plays chosen for consideration are those which in my opinion most aptly demonstrate my main argument.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO LADY GREGORY

It may prove of advantage before beginning a direct critical assault on Lady Gregory's works to sketch some pertinent biographical data and to outline briefly her involvement in the Irish Dramatic Movement. Una Ellis-Fermor's The Irish Dramatic Movement is perhaps the definitive general account. She lists four other sources in an appendix to that work. They are George Moore's Hail and Farewell (1911-14), Lady Gregory's Our Irish Theatre, A.E. Malone's The Irish Drama (1929), and J.M. Hone's W.B. Yeats. These are the chief references for the following information.

Yeats has written that

> The modern literature of Ireland, and indeed all that stir of thought which prepared for the Anglo-Irish war, began when Parnell fell from power in 1891. A disillusioned and embittered Ireland turned from parliamentary politics; an event was conceived; and the race began, as I think, to be troubled by that event's long gestation. Dr. Hyde founded the Gaelic League, which was for many years to substitute for political argument a Gaelic grammar, and for political meetings village gatherings, where songs were sung and stories told in the Gaelic language. Meanwhile I had begun a movement in English, in that language in which modern Ireland thinks and does its business; founded certain societies where clerks, working men, men of all classes, could study the Irish poets, novelists and historians who had written in English, and as much of Gaelic literature as had been translated into English. But the great mass of our people accustomed to interminable political speeches read little, and so from the very start we felt that we must have a theatre of our own.

> They were empty buildings hired by the English travelling companies and we wanted Irish plays and players. When we thought of these plays we thought of everything that was romantic and poetical, because the nationalism we had called up--the nationalism every generation had called up in moments of discouragement--was romantic and poetical. It was not, however, until I met in 1896 Lady Gregory, a member of an old Galway family, who had spent her life between two Galway houses, the house where she was born, and the house into which she married, that such a theatre became possible. All about her lived a peasantry who told stories in a form of English which has much of its syntax from Gaelic, much of its vocabulary from Tudor English, but it was very slowly that we discovered in that speech of theirs our most powerful dramatic instrument, not indeed until she herself began to write. Though my plays were written without dialect and in English blank verse, I think she was attracted to our movement because their subject matter differed but little from the subject matter of the country stories.[1]

Augusta Persse Gregory was born on the 15th of March, 1852. Her parents were Dudley Persse, and Katherine O'Grady. There is some indication of a creative temper in her maternal ancestry, which boasted Standish O'Grady, first Viscount Guillamos, distinguished lawyer and wit; his nephew Standish Hayes O'Grady, a scholar who was one of the first to translate from the early Irish texts, and her French great grandmother, Francoise Algoin whom Lady Gregory regarded as responsible for her own "moments of light-heartedness"[2] and her feeling for the French classical comedy.

As a child her nurse was Mary Sheridan, a speaker of Irish, familiar with fairy-tales and folklore. These stories motivated her to learn Irish, and were, very likely,

the first impulse towards her love of Irish life, and folklore. Her education conducted by a governess was otherwise uninteresting, and the family house Roxborough gave little intellectual nourishment. At the age of twenty-eight Lady Gregory married Sir William Gregory of Coole, and for the twelve years that union enjoyed, travelled, mingled with the artistic life of London, and undertook studies in French, German, and Italian from her husband. In 1892, Sir William died.

On January 16th, 1899 the Irish Literary Theatre was founded. It was in the promotion of this theatre and the avid pursuit of its ideas, that Lady Gregory found the channel for her many energies. She worked very closely with Yeats, and became involved in all aspects of the theatre's work:

> In the interval between 1892 and 1899 Yeats had discussed with many people the possibilities of finding a small theatre in London or Dublin, with Florence Farr, with George Moore, with Edward Martyn, and finally and fruitfully, with that fine practical genius, Augusta, Lady Gregory. 'Things seemed to grow possible as we talked' she says; and we can believe it. 'Things'--whether the founding of a theatre, the writings of plays, the obtaining of a patent for the Abbey Theatre Company, the vanquishing of the hostility of the United Irish Societies of America or the witnesses in the Judges Court of Philadelphia,--all seem to have become possible when Lady Gregory talked.[3]

Of the stormy history of the theatre, and the thousand varied difficulties it faced Lady Gregory has herself written.[4] Of more immediate importance for this discussion

are its ideals, Lady Gregory's discovery of her latent dramatic talent, and the exigencies of the theatre that prompted her to write. In 1898 Yeats and Lady Gregory drafted the following statement, explaining their ambitions in the hope of obtaining guarantees of money for the theatre:

> Our statement--it seems now a little pompous--began:
> "We propose to have performed in Dublin in the spring of every year certain Celtic and Irish plays, which whatever be their degree of excellence will be written with a high ambition, and so to build up a Celtic and Irish school of dramatic literature. We hope to find in Ireland an uncorrupted and imaginative audience trained to listen by its passion for oratory, and believe that our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure for us a tolerant welcome, and that freedom to experiment which is not found in theatres of England, and without which no new movements in art or literature can succeed. We still show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism. We are confident of the support of all Irish people, who are weary of misrepresentation, in carrying out a work that is outside all political questions that divide us."[5]

It was an attempt at cultural nationalism. The dramas of the Irish Theatre were to be distinct and experimental. Its productions were to capitalize upon the resources of dialect for diction, and Irish story-telling and legend for subject matter. Educational in the manner of all literature, the Irish Dramatic Movement differed only in that its founders set out more consciously with this ambition, and proceeded more vigorously, as if to rescue

their country from the contamination of foreign sources:

"ADVICE TO PLAYWRIGHTS WHO ARE SENDING PLAYS TO THE ABBEY, DUBLIN"

> The Abbey Theatre is a subsidized theatre with an educational object. It will, therefore, be useless as a rule to send it plays intended as popular entertainments and that alone, or originally written for performance by some popular actor at the popular theatres.[6]

Lady Gregory had spent many years gathering folklore and stories of the Irish peasantry, and had also gained facility in the idioms, patterns, and accents of the Kiltartan speech. This background was to be of immense assistance to her own work, and to the work of Yeats and other writers. The extent of her scholarship and her closeness to peasant life meant that she had a greater direct relation to the ideals of the movement than any other of the founders.

Before her involvement in the Abbey Theatre Lady Gregory had not been indolent. She had edited her husband's biography in 1894 and as Lennox Robinson explained in his issue of the Journals:

> Then about the beginning of the century, she became interested in Gaelic, got instruction in the language from local teachers, started classes in Gaelic among her tenantry, worked hard in our National Library putting together translations of old sagas and making "Cuchulain of Muirthemme" (1902), "Gods and Fighting Men" (1904), and a lovely book "Poets and Dreamers" (1903), which consists of translations of Douglas Hyde's little plays and bits of Kiltartan folklore. Later came "Saints and Wonders" (1907), "The Kiltartan History Book" (1909) and "Visions and Beliefs" (1920). But her place in Irish

> literature depends little on these books, important as they seem to us. Her place depends on her achievement as a dramatist.[7]

Her dramatic work was from the beginning spontaneous in character and natural in setting, theme, and evolution. It has been recorded by historians of the movement that her writing began almost unintentionally, and that it was indeed, accompanied by a measure of surprise. Working with other writers, discussing theories, helping with dialect, at times writing a sentence or two, and finally entering into full collaboration with Yeats, she gradually unfolded her potential for dramatic work. Next she was induced by necessity to write short sketches for production after the more poetic plays of Yeats and Synge. She responded to the demands for a balanced repertoire with flexibility and competence.[8] She began unconscious of her own powers, and continued to write until in volume (she wrote in all thirty-one plays) and in popular appeal, she was one of the Abbey's most significant and successful playwrights.

> Even the hypercritical Miss Horniman recognized the value of these little comedies, and she wrote to Yeats in 1906,
>
> > Lady Gregory's work must be well treated--she is the best 'draw' of the lot of you. I am so proud of her because she makes the people laugh in a witty manner.[9]

Ample testimony can be found to the importance of Lady Gregory's person in the functioning of the Abbey Theatre.

> Her greatest work, and her most lasting achievement, however, is in that theatre which she did so much to establish. Of Lady Gregory more than any other single one of the four it may be said, the Irish Theatre is hers and she made it. Because not only did she provide the necessary organizing ability in the initial stages, but she also moulded its policy and its plays in ways that will be demonstrated in these pages from its very earliest days. She has been a Director of the Theatre from the first. . . .[10]

It is important to realize the enormous extent of her involvement in the Irish Theatre and her contribution as full-time handmaiden and charwoman of the Abbey. Her dedication was outstanding and it can be counted primary in the impulses that brought her more and more directly into its spiritual and creative progress.

CHAPTER TWO

SECTION A: COMEDY

Before proceeding with the following discussion of the comedies of Lady Gregory it will be necessary to give some elucidation of her opinions on comedy, its form, purpose and constituent elements.

A characteristic of this intensely practical woman, manifested in her life as in her art, was a nonchalant attitude towards literary theory. Though it has been recorded that at the beginning of her career she spent time in discussion of dramatic theory with her fellow playwrights,[1] her interest in such theory was centered on the purely practical question of 'how a play was written'. In Lady Gregory's Journals, in Our Irish Theatre, and in notes to the plays, are various comments rising from her basically intuitive understanding of comedy. These are in the main random jottings, not so much comprising a consistent or elaborated theory, as offering information regarding particular works or proposing general ideas about theatre.

Though she thought comedy more difficult to write than tragedy, she commented on this extra difficulty in little more than a sentence:

> In a lecture I gave last year on playwrighting I said I had been forced to write comedy because it was wanted for our theatre, to put on at the end of the verse plays, but I think that tragedy is easier.[2]

Tragedy shows the hero 'in the grip of circumstance'[3] and for the dramatist writing a tragedy 'it is a mere question as to how nearly you will let him escape'.[4]

> But in comedy it is different. Character comes in, and why it is so I cannot explain, but as soon as one creates a character, he begins to put out little feet of his own and takes his way.[5]

The contrasts she offers between comedy and tragedy are on the simplest terms, based solely on the problem of actually writing one or the other. Comedy for that purpose is a business of character, tragedy a question of situation. Nowhere is there evidence of a concern for the conception of tragedy and comedy as genres,--given forms associated with rules drawn from tradition, and responsible as forms, to ultimate or absolute determinations of what is a comic or a tragic experience. Rather her understanding or her concern, is limited to the much more immediate question of what should be emphasized in the writing of a comedy or a tragedy. If one is to write a comedy the eye must be trained on character, for character is the substance of our interest in comedy. Therefore the development of material for comedy should be a development along the lines of character. The rule is general and extremely flexible.

Lady Gregory does not plot her plays in the sense of determining beforehand the story or the movement of the action. Rather she sees a 'play as a picture'[6] and that picture is a token of mood rather than action. She attempted

to promote a plan but was frustrated:

> Then I thought it would have been a good stage effect if old Damer could walk just once across the stage in the background. His relations might have come into the house to try and make themselves agreeable to him, and he would appear and they would vanish. . . . Damer comes in, and contrary to my intention he begins to find a tongue of his own. He has made his start in the world, and has more than a word to say. How the play will work I cannot be sure, or if it will ever be finished at all. But if ever it is I am quite sure it will go as Damer wants, not as I want.[7]

The play was completed however:

> This is what I said last winter, and now in harvest time the play is all but taken out of my hands. But as I foretold, Damer has taken possession of it, turning it to be as simple as a folk-tale, where the innocent of the world confound the wisdom of the wise. The idea with which I set out has not indeed quite vanished, but is as if extinct and pale; not darkness, but light that has become dead.[8]

The spontaneity of manner revealed in these notes is the strongest evidence of Lady Gregory's individual and impulsive manner of writing.

The Canavans, one of her best efforts at good-natured satire, seemed to her

> . . . remote, inexplicable, as if written less by logical plan, than in one of those moments of lightheartedness that comes, as I think, as an inheritance from my French great grandmother, Frances Algoin; a moment of that "sudden Glory, the Passion which maketh those Grimaces called Laughter." It plays merrily, and there are some who like it the best of my comedies.[9]

Here again the impulsive nature of her creativity is underscored. It is in comments like 'it plays merrily' that one

finds Lady Gregory's definition of comedy. Elsewhere comedy is referred to as a 'pleasant interruption'. Such remarks reveal a conception of literature based not so much on the appreciation of a given literary work as on the reaction of an audience to it. It may also indicate an attitude which, however refreshing in its naturalness and simplicity, is perhaps too superficial.

There is no need to labour the point. Lady Gregory writes in isolation from any accepted body of tradition, either of criticism or practice. The purpose of her comedies is generally speaking, entertainment. Her understanding of the heavy emphasis due character in comedy, does, however, require explication.

Character, as seen in the body of her comedies, is not consistent in depth or meaning. The tone of these plays reflects this inconsistency,--from the whimsical, merry world of Cloon to the serious, compelling atmosphere of The Rising of the Moon. Character may be seen at one time as the total of reactions between people, at another, as deeply rooted in emotion. The flexibility of her treatment of character from surface to depth, is in harmony with the flexibility of her interpretation of comedy. Comedy, as shall be seen, covers for her a variety of situations, a variety of perspectives on character, and a shifting sense of identity, proceeding from the purely social to the distinctly human and individual.

It is difficult to distinguish Lady Gregory, founder, manager and jack-of-all-trades of the Abbey Theatre from Lady Gregory, playwright. The Abbey Theatre was her prime concern and one cannot escape the impression that she became a dramatist because the Abbey needed plays. As Andrew Malone has written:

> A theatre was needed, so she set out to found a theatre: plays were needed when that theatre had been founded, so she started to write plays.[10]

One is apt to look askance at such a pragmatic approach to art and the criticism of her work is sometimes coloured by an oversensitive reaction to this. Too much attention has been attached to the element of 'necessity' as it relates to her writing. Her plays are neither good nor bad because 'necessity' makes them so. More significant are her reasons for considering the Abbey of such importance, that she was willing, to the point of high-enthusiasm, to devote her life energies to it. These reasons are mainly her love of Ireland, of Irish folklore, and her particularly aggressive cultural nationalism. Her sympathies for and with Irish peasant life, and her scholarly familiarity with it, have extensive implications for her drama.

On reading the Notes appended to Lady Gregory's plays, one finds that her dramatic imagination is frequently aroused by some common incident, chance phrase, or an excited curiosity about how some characters would act if placed in a given situation. A few random quotations will

exemplify this point:

> But one day by the sea at Duras a melancholy man, who was telling me of the crosses he had gone through at home, said,'But I'm thinking if I went to America, its long ago today I'd be dead. And it is a great expense for a poor man to be buried in America.' Bartley was born at that moment.[11]

> I was pointed out one evening a well-brushed, well-dressed man in the stalls, and was told gossip about him, perhaps not all true, which made me wonder if that appearance and behaviour as of extreme respectability might not now and again be felt a burden.[12]

> I heard of an old man in the workhouse who had been disabled many years before by, I think, a knife thrown at him by his wife in some passionate quarrel. One day I heard the wife had been brought in there, poor and sick. I wondered how they would meet, and if the old quarrel was still alive, or if they who knew the worst of each other would be better pleased with one another's company than with that of strangers.[13]

> I think it was seeing a performance of 'The Dumb Wife' in New York, and having a memory of Moliere's Lucinde, that made me wonder how it would fare with a man forced to be silent in the same way. I do not count Jonson's Epicoene for he had been with too much labour trained for the part. So Hanrahan, poet and talker, borrowed from Mr. Yeat's 'Celtic Twilight' took the sudden plunge into silence.[14]

One might almost deduce from these remarks that she writes to satisfy her own curiosity. How different are these comments from the critically oriented discussions of, for example, Mr. T. S. Eliot when he is writing of verse drama. Lady Gregory's interests are not 'purely literary', nor is her creativity inspired by literature. She said herself that the actual writing of a play seemed to release unknown

energies within her, till characters she had decided upon 'put out little feet of their own'. Without attempting to draw from the notes a diagnosis of her creativity, it is apparent from what has been said and quoted above, that her initial impulses tend to be unorganized, and that in the planning of her plays, people and situations are allowed (within limits) to develop with spontaneity. And this underscores what has been said concerning her relation to theory and her sense of plot, namely that the element of planning or abstract organization plays a minor role in her work.

She writes as the notes imply, under the stimulus of ordinary occurrence. This is true not only of the awakening of her imagination but also of its exercise. Her mind gravitated towards the actions of people, not people in a formalized context, or under the strain of unusual situations, but people in the ordinary course of daily affairs. The little incidents that prick her imagination come from her interested inquiries into peasant life. The characters that people her drama spring from that love of Irish life and peasant culture that is the root explanation of all her activities. There are then, several factors that contribute to Lady Gregory's creativity; her great love of the life and lore of the Irish peasant, a somewhat capricious imagination, an indifference to theoretical criticism, and finally a belief in the dramatic

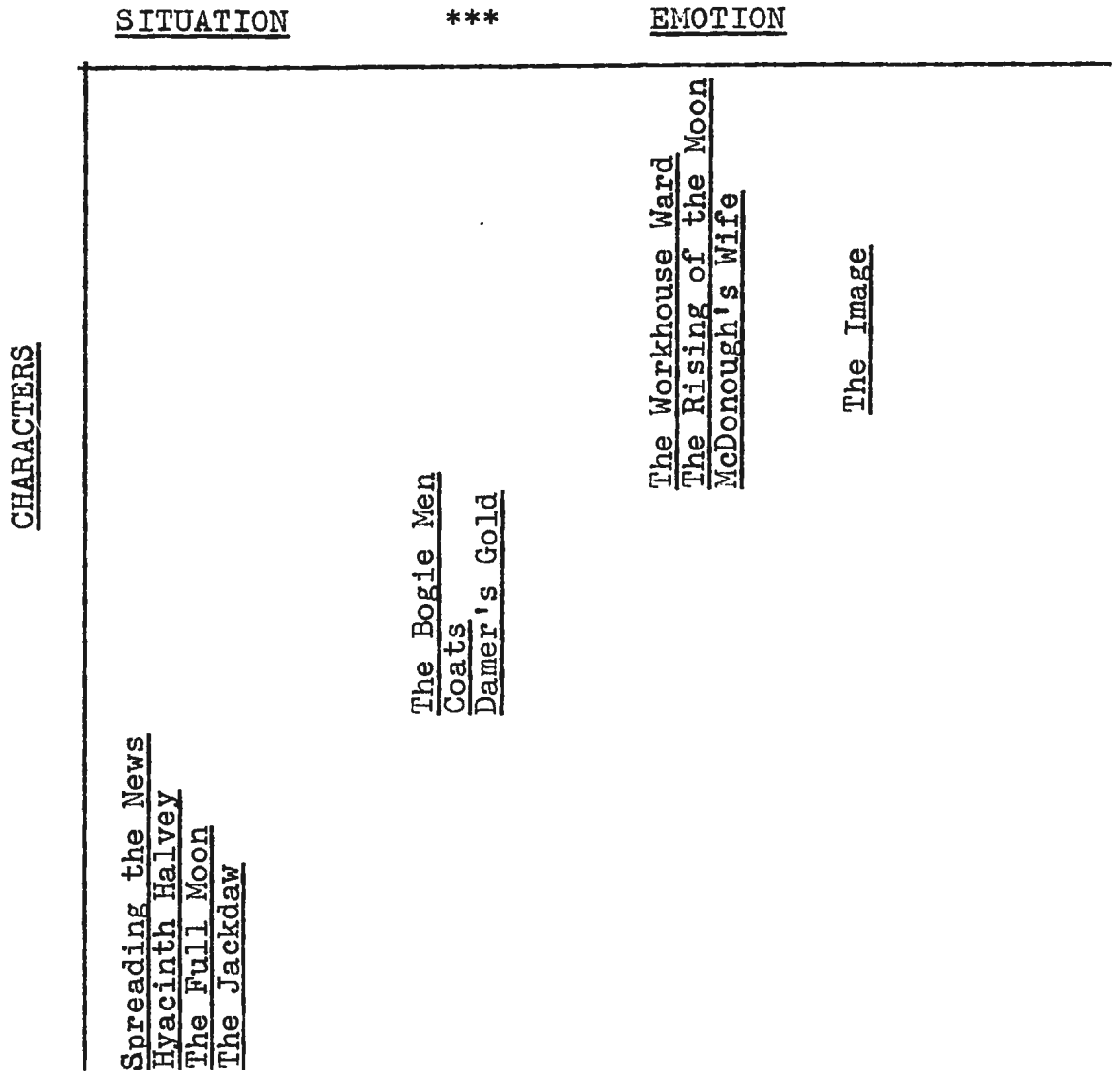
potential of ordinary events and ordinary people. The development is almost circular.

Much can be said of the characters that people her 'comic world'. They are drawn from 'low life' and express the social range of the lower class, from magistrate to telegraph boy. Her interest in characters is unambiguous, as her approach is expository. Their world, as has already been said, is a natural one. It has been mentioned that her love of Irish peasant life has extensive implications for her drama. One of the most obvious and important effects is that in the decision to depict this area of life, Lady Gregory established the boundaries of her comedy and predetermined its tone. The characteristics of this level of society are those of simplicity and impulsiveness, as opposed to sophistication and 'stiffness'. The people display an inbred naivety, tantamount to gullibility, and have a love of gossip closely associated with this gullibility. Above all and perhaps because they are Irish, they are obsessed with talk. Their world is a world free from introspection, intellection, or the artifice of sophistication. Emotion and feeling are unhampered by the conventions of a more formalized society. The comedy which portrays this world captures much of its flavour and is made the artistic correlative of its 'tone'. The comic effects obtained from it are defined by one's preconceptions of it and particular sympathies for it. In

such a way is Lady Gregory's work decidedly influenced by her love of peasant life.

Despite what has been referred to as the inconsistency of Lady Gregory's achievement, or the 'shifting' sense of identity within her comedies, all these plays can be traced to a single source. The manner of dialogue, type of situation, and unique insights are generally of the same order. Yet for the purpose of discussion it will be useful to establish two categories for her comedies. In the first category are those plays which are directly concerned with village life, in one or more of its aspects. These have a large number of characters, are light in treatment, and could be loosely classified as 'situation' comedies. Among them are Spreading the News, Hyacinth Halvey, The Full Moon and The Jackdaw, plays set in Cloon. The inhabitants and physical characteristics of Cloon, correspond with Gort, a village situated near Lady Gregory's home in County Galway. The second category encompasses plays which are more concentrated in the number of characters, often having only two principal figures. These plays are more serious in presentation than the Cloon plays, dependent more on character and emotion than on situation. Of these The Workhouse Ward and The Rising of the Moon provide the chief examples. These categories represent two distinct tones and levels in her comedies, between which are a number of

plays not strictly encompassed by either. There are for example, some with a restricted number of characters that are light in tone. There are also comedies in three acts, concerned with serious themes, having a large number of characters. Coats and The Image are such plays respectively. The following table gives a rough positioning of the comedies to be discussed in this chapter along the lines of tone and structure suggested above.



This analysis will begin with four plays, almost identical in tone. They are set in Cloon and present a large number of characters, who appear often in more than one play. For discussion Spreading the News, Hyacinth Halvey, The Full Moon and The Jackdaw will be used.

Hyacinth Halvey, written in 1906, tells the story of a young man, who attempts to ruin his own 'good' reputation. Halvey comes to the small town of Cloon as a Sub-Sanitary Inspector, a position obtained by means of a number of testimonials to his superlative character, from a thousand officials who do not even know him. He finds his unearned goodness a burden and tries to rid himself of it by disgracing himself. However, the townspeople, represented by James Quirke, Sergeant Carden, Mrs. Delane, and Miss Joyce, are willing, even anxious, to accept report of him as sufficient reason for according him something near popular cononisation. Halvey's protestations are not even heard by these willing practitioners of the art of self-deception. He steals a sheep and learns that it qualifies 'a man to go preaching', robs a church and becomes 'an example and a blessing to the whole of the town'.

The play turns on Halvey's attempts to frustrate his own reputation. The comic idea is well chosen, both for the irony contained in its inversion of values and for the emphasis it places on talk and rumour in the progression of the plot. The comic idea involves all the characters in

the town because Hyacinth's reputation is a product of their collective opinion of him. He is not so much a main character as a specific instance of the power of gossip. The play is one of situation rather than character, providing light satire on an aspect of small town existence.

The characters Lady Gregory selects represent a cross-section of rural types. There is a pretentious sergeant:

> The arrangements have all been left to me, the Archdeacon being away. He knows I have a good intellect for things of this sort.[15]

Miss Joyce is the priest's housekeeper, a position of some importance in Cloon. Mr. Quirke, the butcher is described by Miss Coxhead as 'one of Nature's publicity agents'.[16] Fardy is a poor telegraph boy labelled with a 'bad' reputation by the very people who have given Halvey such a good name. Because Lady Gregory is attempting to portray an image or impression of the pace and flavour of the life of the town, rather than the strong emotions or dominant motivations of its inhabitants, type characters are her vehicles. Types, because they are representative, bring a set of associations rather than distinct personalities, and do much to forward quickly and economically such a general impression.

Simplicity and reduction of detail are the mode of this comedy. The locus of her simplicity is to be found in the selection of detail and economy of emphasis with

which she represents social patterns and ideas. That characters are types is established by the simplicity and predictability of their reactions. Characters are placed within the framework of a predetermined psychology, a comic logic, which is present in the very introduction of the play:

Mrs. Delane: . . . It's hard enough on myself to be down ready for the mail car in the morning, sorting letters in the half dark. It's often I haven't time to look who are the letters from--or the cards.

Mr. Quirke: It would be a pity you not to know any little news might be knocking about. If you did not have information of what is going on who should have it? Was it you, ma'am, was telling me that the new Sub-Sanitary Inspector would be arriving today?[17]

Mrs. Delane is shown as a somewhat innocent busybody with access to the news and Mr. Quirke, a sample townsman, is a willing recipient of any information she can provide. The comic logic of the play is even more apparent in an exchange which centres on Hyacinth's testimonials:

Mrs. Delane: Testimonials he has by the score. To Father Gregan they were sent. Registered they were coming and going. Would you believe that they weighed up to three pounds?

Mr. Quirke: There must be great bulk in them indeed.

Mrs. Delane: It is no wonder he to get the job. He must be a great character so many persons to write for him as what there did.

Fardy: It would be a great thing to have a character like that.[18]

This is the curious reasoning that equates bulk with worth,

weight with truth, which will become Halvey's frustration and the object of Lady Gregory's satire. No one character has a distinct psychology; they are all participants in the collective mentality of the town. The logic of this world must be accepted if its humour is to be appreciated. But it must not be forgotten that such logic is a fundamental simplification, a simplification oriented towards a comedy of situation.

This method of simplification is present in all the comedies of Cloon, operating on all its characters, setting the limits of their actions and existence. Spreading the News is postulated on the artificial simplicity Lady Gregory makes of village life. Briefly stated the action of the play is this: a number of coincidental situations give rise to the rumour that Bartley Fallon has murdered Jack Smith, a fellow inhabitant of Cloon. The evidence for such a story is wild and circumstantial. As in Hyacinth Halvey there is a touch of satire aimed at the credulity that characterizes the townspeople. There is much amusement in the sheer involved growth of the rumour which quickly mushrooms out of all proportion from meaningless incidents and mistaken and misinterpreted facts. The play may be described as an enthusiastic display of exuberant naivety; a sketch of varied and loquacious characters against the backdrop of the humorously trivial. The strength of effect and the recognized popularity are products of Lady Gregory's

superb control of pace. Pace evolves from Lady Gregory's instinct for dramatic economy which provides the necessary structural tension or organization for the 'uncontrollable' dialogue of her characters. It manifests itself in the development of the rumour and the intensification of comic effects which parallel each new height reached by the rumour. Of Spreading the News Una Ellis-Fermor has written:

> The sureness with which the pace is maintained is, I think, unsurpassed by any comedy of the kind that I can recall. Every fresh reading (and still more every fresh attempt to cut it) shows the firm delicacy of its articulation, the technique peculiar to this kind at its best.[19]

The Full Moon is Lady Gregory's extrication of Hyacinth Halvey from the burden of his good reputation:

> It had sometimes preyed on my mind that Hyacinth Halvey had been left by me in Cloon for his lifetime bearing the weight of a character that had been put on him by force. But it failed me to release him by reason, that "binds men to the wheel"; it took the call of those unruly ones who give in to no limitations, and dance to the sound of music that is outside this world, to bring him out from "roast and boiled and all the comforts of the day." Where he is now I do not know, but anyway he is free.[20]

A knowledge of Hyacinth Halvey increases the comic effect of this play but is not essential. The action takes place in a crowded railway station at the time of the full moon. It is not so much gossip that undoes Halvey this time, as the townspeople's natural superstitions and volatile imaginations. Folklore provides a context or rationale for

the action. The characters here are credulous and gullible as they were in Hyacinth Halvey and Spreading the News. On this occasion their credulity is associated with the superstitions surrounding the time of the full moon and with the action of a mad dog. The underlying simplicity of character which is Lady Gregory's premise for the entire line of her 'social' comedies is fully apparent. The Full Moon is a 'social comedy' in that it shows the reactions of people as a group, participating in a collective psychology and ethos. As has been repeatedly maintained both the psychology and ethos are creations of Lady Gregory, resulting from her particular emphasis of certain traits and selective omission of others. The town life of Cloon is caricatured for comic purposes. Hyacinth in this play, as in Hyacinth Halvey becomes the object of the attentions and observations of the other characters. Fluctuation of opinion, instability of appraisal, superficiality of assessment are made comic factors. By the use of Cracked Mary, Lady Gregory has enriched her light satire by a clever inversion of values. Time and time again Cracked Mary proves herself independent of the madness of the full moon, at least as it affects the 'normal' people. Her repeated comments underscore the irony of the situation:

Cracked Mary: (With a cackle of delight.) Give no heed to them Davideen! That's the way the crazed people used to be going on in the place where I was, every one thinking the other to be cracked.[21]

Cracked Mary: Let you throw open the door, Davideen. It is not ourselves are in dread that the white man in the sky will be calling after us and ridiculing us. Ha! Ha! I might be as foolish as yourselves and as fearful, but for the Almighty, that left a little cleft in my skull, that would let in His candle through the night time.[22]

Whenever Lady Gregory introduces figures either supernatural or distinct from the ordinary run of people, the dialogue is appropriately a little more poetic.

Cracked Mary: Stop where you are so. In my opinion it is little difference the moon can see between the whole of ye. Come on, Davideen, come out now, we have the wildness of the night before us. O golden God! All bad things quieten in the night time, and the ugly thing itself will put on some sort of a decent face! Come out now to the night that will give you the song, as Helen of the Greek gods, that hanged the day there first came a wrinkle on her face!

Davideen: (Coming close and taking her hand as he sings;)
Oh! don't you remember
What our comrades called to us
And they footing steps
At the call of the moon
Come out to the rushes
Come out to the bushes,
Where the music is called
By the lads of Queene Anne!
(They look beautiful. They dance and sing in perfect time as they go out.)[23]

Cracked Mary is an agent of comment on the comic abnormality of the other characters. Her own craziness, it is suggested, imparts its special insights. The motif of the fool who is wise is not original with Lady Gregory, but her use of it here is distinctive. Cracked Mary is a wild figure, given

to a mixture of raving and superior comment on the other characters. She is outside the social group and is, it is implied, a part of the superstition that surrounds the full moon. She is as much a product of folklore as the peculiar opinions mouthed by the other characters. She gives the stamp of authenticity to the setting and comments upon it. She, it is given to believe, is the only character who knows what is really going on, and this knowledge lets her see the folly of the others. The introduction of a figure like Cracked Mary as a norm marks a complexity and subtlety that are lacking in Spreading the News and Hyacinth Halvey. The inversion of values she embodies is a constant irony throughout the play.

The Jackdaw is mere and mad confusion. A brother wishing to keep secret his assistance to his sister, who is troubled by debts, enlists the advice of one of Cloon's 'educated' people. To explain the brother's gift of ten pounds this gentleman is forced to weave a story on the spur of the moment. He invents a tale of a wealthy miner who wishes to buy a jackdaw to keep him company in his mine in Africa. The story is supposed to be kept secret but unfortunately it leaks or gushes out, and the whole town, including the brother and the town magistrate, devotes itself to the capture of jackdaws for future sale. Gullibility and the absence of common sense on a community

scale compose the comic psychology of this play. The elements of sheer detached fun, the enthusiasm of situation that characterized Spreading the News, The Full Moon, and Hyacinth Halvey are present in The Jackdaw.

The play has many good comic touches: Nestor, an army pensioner, the 'wise man', recounts his education:

Nestor: One Joseph Nestor I am, there are few in the district but know me. Indeed they all have a great opinion of me. Travelled I did in the army, and attended school and I young, and slept in one bed with two boys that were learning Greek.[24]

The brother is trapped in his own deceit:

Cooney: (Advancing a step.) What is that you are saying?

Nestor: I say that no one came in here but yourself.

Cooney: Did he say or not say there was a rich man come in?

Sibby: He did surely.

Nestor: To make up a plan. . .

Cooney: I know well you have made up a plan.

Nestor: To give it unknownst. . .

Cooney: It is to keep it unknownst you are wanting.

Nestor: That way she would not suspect. . .

Cooney: It is myself suspect and have cause to suspect! Give me back my own ten pounds and I'll be satisfied.

Nestor: What way can I give it back?[25]

The townspeople attempt to get anything on credit to help

them capture the jackdaws:

Tommy Nally: (coming in shaking with excitement) For the love of God. Mr. Nestor, will you give me that live-trap on credit! 26

The humour of the play as exemplified by these passages is basically superficial and incidental. The main idea of the play is a thread uniting a number of situations designed purely for the sake of the humour they contain. Humour growing from character, or humour with a specific satiric commitment, Lady Gregory eschews in favour of her simple amusing portraits of the life of Cloon. A comparison that comes to mind when reading of Cloon and its inhabitants is to be found in Stephen Leacock's treatment of the citizens of Mariposa. Leacock's simplification of life, his ever so obvious love of fun for its own sake, his penchant for broad unsubtle humour, and his overall sympathetic attitude are very close to Lady Gregory's dramatic methods and her treatment of Cloon.

These four plays are chiefly alike in their simplicity and spontaneity. Their humour is the product of the simple, impulsive talk and actions of rural characters embroiled in situations barren of both accepted logic and sense. They are light satires; yet as satires they are not specifically aimed at either particular characters or situations. Lady Gregory too obviously enjoys the excitement of their confusions and misapprehensions. She will not judge them. Her sympathy though warm is not

sentimental. Sentimentality, as opposed to sentiment, offended her. It was the reason for her triple writing of Twenty-Five. In the notes she writes:

> It was rather sentimental and weak in construction, and for a long time it was an overflowing storehouse of examples of "the faults of my dramatic method." I have at last laid its ghost in The Jackdaw and I have not been accused of sentimentality since the appearance of this.[27]

These social plays do not seek to involve an audience emotionally so that possibly it loses its objectivity, because such involvement is foreign to the spirit of comedy, particularly satirical comedy. Furthermore their thorough simplicity hinges on the absence of any emotional dimension in the treatment of character.

The opening of this discussion contained a reference to Lady Gregory's 'radical notion of economy'. This notion of economy, as has been seen, is revealed in her marked preference for the one act form (most of her plays were written for one act) and in the tight management of materials that may be found in all her works. With particular reference to the four plays already studied this economy is chiefly concerned with comic effect, the single faceted pursuit of a given comic idea. It has not, in these plays, infringed on the number of characters as each has at least more than five. Economy to Lady Gregory at times meant an almost radical reduction of cast, as a passage in Our Irish Theatre indicates:

> The success of this set me to cutting down the number of parts in later plays until I wrote Grania with only three persons in it, and the Bogie Men with only two. I may have gone too far and I have, I think, given up an intention I at one time had of writing a play for a man and a scarecrow only, but one has to go on with experiment or interest in creation fades, at least so it is with me.[28]

The economy of these plays lies in the presentation of character, the building up of effects and the strict regulation of actions to theme. More important, it is to be found in the limitation of the life-view of all characters in town life, what has been referred to as their comic psychology.

Moving to a central group of comedies of which The Bogie Men, Coats, and Damer's Gold will serve as the critical examples, her notion of economy and desire for experiment will lead in new directions. The emphasis on character which has been noted as one of her touchstones for a 'definition' of comedy is restored and the element of situation underplayed. Characters are no longer seen in the community setting, and their 'psychology' approaches a normal level of intelligence and feeling.

The Bogie Men is a comedy of situation tagged with a moral. Two young chimney sweeps are appointed to meet their respective cousins both supposedly of great reputation. One of these cousins is a marvel for learning, the other for wealth. Both sweeps suffer considerable anxiety in anticipating the meeting with their celebrated kin. Each

has with him a change of clothes and when the time of meeting approaches, they change and wash, separately. When they encounter each other, newly washed and dressed, each makes the mistake of believing the other to be the fabled cousin. They stand back to back, exchanging humilities. Eventually they discover their error and stumble on the truth. They are indeed cousins, but not the cousins of magnificent fortunes as they had been led to believe. The moral of the play is expressed by Taig:

> Taig: That is so. (Drinks.) I'll strive no more to fit myself for high relations. I am free from patterns of high up cousins from this out. I'll be a pattern to myself;[29]

and reinforced by Darby:

> Darby: It is great things I will be doing from this out, we two have nothing to cast up against one another. To be quit of Timothy the bogie and to get Taig for a comrade, I'm as proud as the Crown of France![30]

The play ends on this note of fellowship.

In this play, as in others by Lady Gregory, the disparity between reputation and fact is exploited for comic purposes. The Bogie Men shows no interest in the building of a reputation (as in Hyacinth Halvey) but shows rather the effect reputation has on those who place credence in it. There is an effort made to correct values, symbolized by the renunciation of idle dreams of wealth and comfortable dependancy for the substance of good fellowship and a faith in one's own powers:

Darby: What signifies chimneys? We'll go up in them till we'll take a view of the Seven Stars! It is out beyond the hills of Burren I will cast my eye, till I'll see the three gates of Heaven!

Taig: It's like enough, luck will glow to you. The way most people fail is in not keeping up the heart. Faith, it's well you have myself to mind you. Gather up now your brush and your bag. (They go to the door holding each other's hands and singing: "All in my hat I will cock a blue feather," etc.)[31]

"Image-building" is shown, at least in the facet of it here displayed to be a vanity and inferior to reality. The irony of The Bogie Men is that both Taig and Darby are happier and better served by each other as they really are, than they would or could have been by their more 'fortunate projections'.

The situation of The Bogie Men has been designed to permit a wide use of comic irony within the play itself. Taig and Darby try to outdo each other in describing the legendary cousins who, as has been seen, turn out to be themselves. When they mistakenly encounter each other, dressed and washed, their remarks are to each other as superiors. As a result each believes that the other is deliberately trying to humiliate his 'unfortunate relation'. These ironies are broad and plainly humorous, arising straight from the situation of confusion.

(Darby comes in. He has changed his clothes and wears a straw hat and light coat and trousers. He is looking for a necktie which he had dropped and picks up. His back is turned to Taig, who is standing at the other door.)

Taig: (Awed.) It cannot be that you are Dermot Melody?

Darby: My father's name was Melody sure enough, till he lost his life in the year of the black potatoes.

Taig: It is yourself I am come here purposely to meet with.

Darby: You should be my mother's sister's son so, Timothy O'Harragha.

Taig: (Sheepishly.) I am that. I am sorry indeed it failed me to be out before you in the street.

Darby: Oh, I wouldn't be looking for that much from you. (They are trying to keep their backs to each other, and to rub their faces cleaner.)

Taig: I wouldn't wish to be anyway troublesome to you. I am badly worthy of you.

Darby: It is in dread I am of being troublesome to yourself.

Taig: Oh, it would be hard for you to be that. Nothing you could put on me would be any hardship at all, if it was to walk steel thistles.[32]

Character is lightly dealt with. This may be the result of Lady Gregory's choice of the one-act form which does not easily permit extensive or significant revelation of character but is well adapted by her to humour that is situation-oriented. Her sense of economy, reinforced by an almost symmetrical pattern of dialogue is obvious in The Bogie Men. Dialogue passes neatly from one character to the other in almost perfect balance:

Taig: A bright scholar she laid Dermot down to be. A good fellow for himself. A man would be well able to go up to his promise.

Darby: That is the same account used to be given out of Timothy.

Taig: To some trade of merchandise it is likely Dermot was reared. A good living man that was never any cost on his mother.

Darby: To own an estate before he would go far in age Timothy was on the road.

Taig: To have the handling of silks and jewelleries and to be free of them, and of suits and the making of suits, that is the way with the big merchants of the world.

Darby: It is letting out his land to grass farmers a man owning acres does he making his profit.

Taig: A queer thing you to be the way you are, and he to be an upstanding gentleman.

Darby: It is the way I went down; my mother used to be faulting me and I not being the equal of him. Tormenting and picking at me and shouting me on the road. "You thraneen," she'd say, "you little trifle of a son! You stumbling over the threshold as if in slumber, and Timothy being as swift as a bee!"

Taig: So my own mother used to be going on at myself, and to be letting out shrieks and screeches. "What now would your cousin Dermot be saying?" every time would come a new rent in my rags.[33]

This symmetry may not reflect the detailed similarity of background and outlook of the two cousins, but it does emphasize the fact that they share a common existence and in this instance a common experience. Even their anxieties are the same:

Taig: I would recognise the signs of a big man. I wish I was within in his kitchen. There is a pinch of hunger within in my heart.

Darby: So there is within in myself.

Taig: Is there nothing at all in the bag?

Darby: It is a bit of salted herring.

Taig: Why wouldn't you use it?

Darby: I would be delicate coming before him and the smell of it to be on me, and all the grand meats will be at his table.

Taig: (Showing a bottle.) The full of a pint I have of porter, that fell from a tinker's car.

Darby: I wonder you would not swallow it down for to keep courage in your mind.

Taig: It is what I am thinking, I to take it fasting, it might put confusion and wildness in my head. I would wish, and I meeting with him, my wits to be of the one clearness with his own. It is not long to be waiting; it is in claret I will be quenching my thirst to-night, or in punch![34]

The evenness of exchange creates a rhythm that follows their tension and anxiety, shapes their fantasies of wealth and manners, and harmonizes with their acceptance of each other. The rhythm of dialogue is not one of metre. It is created, as has been pointed out, by the equal apportionment of dialogue among characters and by the common language they speak.

Coats is very similar to The Bogie Man. Its two main characters, Hazel and Mineog enjoy the same occupation as editors of Cloon's two newspapers, are of the same class and suffer a confusion.

The small town of Cloon can hardly support two newspapers and it is only with some inventiveness that Hazel and Mineog find sufficent material for them:

Mineog: Last week passed without anything doing. It is a very awkward place to give information for two papers. If it was not for the league between us, and for us meeting here on every Monday to make sure we are taking different sides on every question may turn up, and giving abuse to one another in print, there is no person would pay his penny for the two of them, or it may be for the one of them.

Hazel: That is so. And the worst is, there is no question ever rises that we do not agree on, or that would have power to make us fall out in earnest. It was different in my early time. The questions used to rise up then were worth fighting for.[35]

The comic situation of the play is this: Each has written an obituary of the other 'for when there is nothing doing, that might come in handy in a hurry'. The obituaries are in their coat pockets and when they mistakenly put on the wrong coats and find them they explode with resentment and recriminations against each other, both getting carried away in the histrionics of their own reactions. Neither will let the other explain and the incident is blown out of all proportion. The quarrel is not serious and one of the implications of the play's theme is the very inconsequence of the fight. As John, a waiter in the play expresses it:

John: There to be more of battles in the world there would be less of wars.[36]

The editors are reconciled, reality returns, Thursday's deadline approaches:

Hazel: (Stopping John and taking them.) Thursday is very near at hand. Two empty columns is a large space to go fill.

Mineog: Indeed I am feeling no way fit to go writing columns.

Hazel: (Putting his M.S. in his pocket.) There is nothing ails them only to begin a good way after the start, and to stop before the finish.

Mineog: (Putting his M.S. in his pocket.) We'll do that.

We can put such part of them as we do not need at this time back in the shelf of the press.

Hazel: (Filling glasses and lifting his.) That it may be long before they will be needed!

Mineog: (Lifting glass.) That they may never be needed![37]

The play ends on this note of fellowship and understanding.

The one-act form is Lady Gregory's chosen medium for comic confusion arising out of a chance incident. In selecting the one-act form she shows a concern for not over-extending the comic value of a situation. Apart from the appearance of John at the end of the play Coats is a series of exchanges between Mineog and Hazel. In the vigorous comic dialogue, interspersed with dialect and rhetoric, lies the play's strength. As in The Bogie Men the exchanges have a balance and rhythm. The regularity of rhythm and the constant 'see-saw' motion of conversation borders on the mechanical, suggesting a source of the comic by its very regularity. This is an example of Bergson's thesis that comic incongruity is achieved when the mechanical is encrusted on the living. As long as the editors react almost on cue, and hassle over an innocuous discovery they will be comic. The dialogue captures by its balance and its very predictability the unreal quality of the quarrel, unreal in that it is mere display. Characters in Lady Gregory's comedies are rarely conscious of themselves, especially when they are being most comic. It is their lack of self-consciousness and the automatic

quality of their rhetoric that, according to the Bergsonian interpretation of laughter, makes them comic. The 'passion' of Hazel and Mineog is without motive as it is without substance. When each comes to his good senses the quarrel is over and they are 'human' once again.

The notes to the play, though brief, are interesting:

> I find some bald little notes I made before writing Coats. "Hazel is astonished Mineog can take such a thing to heart, but is quite different when he himself is offended."[38]

Each character is capable of realizing a sensible norm for the other but is blind to the existence of this norm for himself:

> "The quarrel is so violent you think it can never be healed, but the ordinary circumstances of life force reconciliation. They are the most powerful force of all." And then a quotation from Nietzsche, "A good which justifies every cause."[39]

The quarrels of Lady Gregory's characters are never deadly serious. They are rhetorical contests in which combatants lose their good sense in the sound of their fury, to emerge sanity intact, when the din of battle has ceased. It is difficult to estimate how strongly she feels that the Irish penchant for quarreling with the mouth instead of the heart is a quality shared by all men. This feeling is demonstrated in Coats in the editors' too easily excited imaginations and too eager indulgence in banter. The play does present a hot quarrel, one man firmly set against

another, but two outbursts occurring independently. It is a strange quarrel that permits one man to be a spectator. The Workhouse Ward manages to give a forceful and more convincing presentation of the themes of quarreling and fellowship combined.

Damer's Gold is situated in tone between the decidedly social situational plays of Cloon, and the more restricted character-oriented plays such as The Bogie Men and Coats. Briefly the story of Damer's Gold is as follows: An old man has a gallon jar of gold which his relatives, believing him to be near death, attempt to get from him. A nephew, whom he does not know, wins it from him at cards. The old man is ultimately made aware of the fact that he has lost to his nephew and recognizes in his nephew's luck and daring an image of his former self.

Damer and his nephew are not, strictly speaking, conventional characters. Of Damer, Delia, his sister, says:

Delia: A queer sort of brother he is. To go searching Ireland you wouldn't find queerer.[40]

Staffy, his brother regards Simon the nephew 'to be mostly a fool.' But the relatives misunderstand both. Damer gives this account of good sense:

Damer: . . . It is in the asylums all the sense is these times. There is only the fools left outside.[41]

Ralph, Delia's husband, seems to perceive the truth when he comments 'there is nothing only will or wit could pick any profit out of Damer', but he, it is learned, does not

know the real meaning of 'will or wit'. Damer and his nephew are set apart from the conventional figures of the relatives by their freedom of impulse and their peculiar respect for luck. This respect for luck is a main force behind both of their characters without which the play would lose much of its logic. In the closing scene of the play when it is revealed to Damer that it is his nephew to whom he has lost, he gives a full account of what luck means:

Delia: Is it that you are taking Simon Niland to be a stranger?

Damer: What Simon Niland?

Delia: Your own nephew and only son to your sister Sarah.

Damer: Do you tell me so! What way did it fail me to recognise that, and he having daring and spirit the same as used to be rising up in myself in my early time?

Delia: He was born the very year of you coming into possession of this place.

Damer: The same year my luck turned against me, and every horse I would back would get the staggers on the course, or would fail to rise at the leaps. All the strength of fortune went from me at that time, it is into himself it flowed and ran. The dead spit and image of myself he is. Stop with me here through the winter season and through the summer season! You to be in the house it is not an unlucky house will be in it. The Royalty of England and of Spain cannot touch upon yourself. I am prouder of you than if you wrote the wars of Homer or put down Turgesius of the Danes! You are a lad that can't be beat. It is you are the Lamb of Luck![42]

When luck abandoned Damer he became a miser. When it returns with his nephew he is revitalized. Such is the

peculiar, almost idiomatic 'wisdom' between the two main characters. The value placed on luck, and the esteem or power it suggests, places Damer and his nephew in the same class as the figures of poets, singer and pipers in Lady Gregory's works. It is a measure of her understanding of the ethos of the peasant life she copied, that she does invest such characters as Damer and McDonough and the ballad singers with either a quality of mystery or a special kind of dignity.

The apotheosis of luck is not the main point of Damer's Gold. It is rather the frustration of the grasping relatives. The characters of Delia, Staffy, and Ralph are well-drawn, and achieve a distinctiveness and individual clarity that is not found in the minor figures of the Cloon plays. Each has a particular sense of values. Delia, though fully a clamouring woman and a grasping relative, is not a type. She has an individual perspective on worth, almost an aesthetic:

> Delia: There is no sin coveting things are of no great use and profit, but would show out good and have some grandeur around them. Those goats now! Browsing on the blossoms of the bushes they would be, or the herbs that give out a sweet smell. Stir yourself, Staffy, and throw your eye on that turf in the corner. It is that wet you could wring from it splashes and streams. Let you rise from the sods are on the hearth and redden them with a goosewing, if there is a goosewing to be found. There is no greater beauty to be met with than the leaping of a little yellow flame.[43]

The play opens with these relatives alone in Damer's house.

When he returns and discovers them, he is affronted by the sycophantic preparations they have made. At this point the characters begin to emerge as individuals. Staffy is Delia's opposite:

Staffy: That was the way with you, Delia, from the time you could look out from the halfdoor, to be coveting pictures and fooleries, that would shape themselves in your mind.[44]

The concern Lady Gregory displays in presenting these three characters, in granting them a measure of identity, marks a change from the plays already discussed. It also marks an improvement. Scenes become more fully dramatic when characters have established themselves. Delia, especially, is an effective counterweight to the querulous Damer. When the others retreat she presses on:

Delia: You to bestow it outside of your own kindred for to benefit and comfort your soul, all the world will say it is that you had it gathered together by fraud.

Staffy: Do not be annoying him now.

Delia: I will not. But the time he will be lying under the flagstone, it is holly rods and brambles will spring up from out of his thorny heart.

Damer: A hasty, cranky woman in the house is worse than you to lay your hand upon red coals! I know well your tongue that is as sharp as the sickle of the moon!

Delia: The character you will leave after you will be worse out and out than Herod's!

Damer: The devil upon the winds she is! That one was born into the world having the use of the bow and arrows!

Delia: You not to give fair play to your own it is a

pitiful ghost will appear in your image,
questing and craving our prayers!

Damer: I know well what is your aim and your drift!

Delia: I say any man has a right to give thanks to the heavens, and he having decent people to will his means to, in place of people having no call to it.[45]

The fact that Damer's Gold is in two acts, and has for a two act play very few characters, perhaps supplies a partial account of Lady Gregory's more satisfying treatment of character. It is to be noted that in scenes of quarrelling character is at its strongest. Lady Gregory does not seem to offer any profound or original notions of character. Her people are, even here, products of speech and superficial excitement. Given sufficient space they do become more convincing.

The conclusion of this play is in keeping with the theoretical understanding of comedy which maintains that comedy should begin with a complication and end with its resolution. Damer is lifted from a mood that has made him miserable for much of his life. The relatives are each granted some gift, and Simon, who was formerly thought the fool is really a hero. Coats ended with a return to reality, and The Bogie Men with the adoption of a proper estimation of people and a pride in fellowship. Lady Gregory's forays into the moral or ethical unknown are never deep. Rather she seeks to illuminate common experience with sympathetic humour. Her philosophy, like

her dialect, is a product of the life she drew upon, a philosophy of common sense.

From the somewhat rarefied atmosphere of Damer's Gold and the neat confusions of Goats and The Bogie Men one moves to the more natural and profound settings of The Workhouse Ward, The Rising of the Moon and McDonough's Wife. As will be seen these plays do not form a unit of consideration offering differences of theme and depth that qualify them as individual studies. They do, however, represent some of Lady Gregory's finest achievements in what she flexibly regarded as her comedies. In two of these plays, The Workhouse Ward and The Rising of the Moon, Lady Gregory moves away from the safety of stage situations, identical confusions, coincidences of overhearing, and the blatant mechanisms of farce, to a more difficult presentation of character and life. These two plays are endowed with a simplicity of theme and character that is striking in its proximity to life and its directness of genuine feeling.

As Lady Gregory retreated from the bustle and noise of the Cloon market place and indulged her preoccupation with smaller units of cast, her plays like The Workhouse Ward, and The Rising of the Moon grew in power and emotional appeal. The Workhouse Ward is set in a poorhouse and has but three characters. Two old men living in a workhouse spend their remaining days in mutual

quarrelling, yet this quarrelling disguises a bond between them, in fact, it operates as a means of communicating their essential fellowship and common situation. Lady Gregory saw an extension of their situation as it applied to Ireland:

> I sometimes think the two scolding paupers are a symbol of ourselves in Ireland.[46]

Beneath the noise of their quarrel one hears something of human nature--the delight in fellowship; affection rescued from sentimentality by the foil of half-serious deprecation. The idea of The Workhouse Ward is not profound but the precision with which it is managed shows the craftswoman at her best. The play opens with the two old men quarrelling. The sister of one comes to the workhouse and offers him a home. He seems overjoyed at the prospect, but when he realizes it means he must leave his companion he refuses to go. Such is the plot. All the skills of dialogue, of dramatic economy wielded somewhat unevenly in the earlier plays, here, in The Workhouse Ward she applies with confidence and success. Economy, as always is her strongest asset. Economy of presentation, the immediate establishment of mood and character, defines the opening scene:

Michael Miskell: Isn't it a hard case, Mike McInerney, myself and yourself to be left here in the bed, and it the feast day of Saint Colman, and the rest of the ward attending on the Mass.

Mike McInerney: Is it sitting up by the hearth you are wishful to be, Michael Miskell, with cold in the shoulders and with speckled shins? Let you rise up so, and you well able to do it, not like myself that has pains the same as tin-tacks within in my inside.

Michael Miskell: If you have pains within your inside there is no one can see it or know of it the way they can see my own knees that are swelled up with the rheumatism, and my hands that are twisted in ridges the same as an old cabbage stalk. It is easy to be talking about soreness and about pains, and they maybe not to be in it at all.

Mike McInerney: To open me and to analyse me you would know what sort of a pain and a soreness I have in my heart and in my chest. But I'm not one like yourself to be cursing and praying and tormenting the time the nuns are at hand, thinking to get a bigger share than myself of the nourishment and of the milk.

Michael Miskell: That's the way you do be picking at me and faulting me. I had a share and a good share in my early time, and it's well you know that, and the both of us reared in Skehanagh.

Mike McInerney: You may say that, indeed, we are both of us reared in Skehanagh. Little wonder you to have good nourishment the time we were both rising, and you bringing away my rabbits out of the snare.[47]

At the play's highest point (McInerney's rejection of his sister's offer) Lady Gregory captures with subtlety and keeness the ambivalence of his feeling--the longing for a better existence and his understanding of the relationship he enjoys:

Mike McInerney: (In a rising chant.) Every good thing! The goat and the kid are there, the sheep and the lamb are there, the cow does be running and she coming to be milked! Ploughing and seed sowing, blossom at Christmas time, the cuckoo speaking through the dark days of the year! Ah! what are you talking about? Wheat high in hedges, no talk about the rent! Salmon in the rivers as plenty as turf! Spending and getting and nothing scarce! Sport and pleasure, and music on the strings! Age will go from me and I will be young again. Geese and turkeys for the hundreds and drink for the whole world!

Michael Miskell: Ah, Mike, is it truth you are saying, you to go from me, and to leave me with rude people and with townspeople, and with people of every parish in the union, and they having no respect for me or no wish for me at all!

Mike McInerney: Whist now and I'll leave you. . . my pipe (hands it over); and I'll engage it is Honor Donohoe won't refuse to be sending you a few ounces of tabacco an odd time, and neighbours coming to the fair in November or in the month of May.

Michael Miskell: Ah, what signifies tobacco? All that I am craving is the talk. There to be no one at all to say out to whatever thought might be rising in my innate mind! To be lying here and no conversable person in it would be the abomination of misery!

Mike McInerney: Look now, Honor. . . It is what I often heard said, two to be better than one. . . Sure, if you had an old trouser was full of holes. . . or a skirt. . . wouldn't you put another in under it that might be as tattered as itself, and the two of them together would make some sort of a decent show?

Mrs. Donohoe: Ah, what are you saying? There is no holes in that suit I brought you now, but as sound it is as the day I spun it for himself.

Mike McInerney: It is what I am thinking, Honor. . . I do be weak an odd time. . . any load I would carry, it preys upon my side. . . and this man does be weak an odd time with the swelling in his knees. . . but the two of us together it's not likely it is at one time we would fail. Bring the both of us with you, Honor, and the height of the castle of luck on you, and the both of us together will make one good hardy man!

Mrs. Donohoe: I'd like my job! Is it queer in the head you are grown asking me to bring in a stranger off the road?

Michael Miskell: I am not, ma'am, but an old neighbour I am. If I had forecasted this asking I would have asked it myself. Michael Miskell I am, that was in the next house to you in Skehanagh!

Mrs. Donohoe: For pity's sake! Michael Miskell is it? That's worse again. Yourself and Mike that neverfighting and scolding and attacking one another! Sparring at one another like two young pups you were, and threatening one another after like two grown dogs!

Mike McInerney: All the quarrelling was ever in the place it was myself did it. Sure his anger rises fast and goes away like the wind. Bring him out with myself now, Honor Donohoe, and God bless you.

Mrs. Donohoe: Well then, I will not bring him out, and I will not bring yourself out, and you not to learn better sense. Are you making yourself ready to come?

Mike McInerney: I am thinking, maybe. . . it is a mean thing for a man that is shivering into seventy years to go changing from place to place.[48]

Neither, of course, leaves the other and they are left in the workhouse at the play's end, quarrelling and throwing

pillows at each other. Many things may be said of their quarrels. They are a form of amusement--a method of 'livening up' their otherwise unbearable existence; a means of communication between two defensive people; they are an indulgence in sham rhetoric for its own sake. But their quarrels are for them the substance of their relationship, more important than any material and external improvement of their condition. To go 'shivering into seventy years' alone is a prospect neither would enjoy.

The Rising of the Moon shares with The Workhouse Ward a sharp, quick focus on character and emotion. Its classification as a comedy is a tenuous one, resting on the humour of some exchanges within the play and its quiet note of exaltation. Lady Gregory classifies it as an historical play but her reasons as usual in such matters are slim:

> I may look on The Rising of the Moon as an historical play, as my history goes, for the scene is laid in the historical time of the Fenians in the sixties.[49]

She is, however, aware that this is a slender association with history and is quick to define the real source of drama in The Rising of the Moon:

> But the real fight in the play goes on in the sergeant's own mind, and so its human side makes it go well in Oxford or London or Chicago as in Ireland itself.[50]

Its 'human side' is the real force and attraction of the play. The sergeant's gradually awakening sympathy for the

rebel and the quietness of his decision is a moving study of character.

It is a skillfully limited drama, in one act, with only four characters, two soldiers, the sergeant and the ballad singer. The two soldiers are not very prominent in the play but serve to suggest the coldness and distance of people acting 'under orders'. This is the first play in those so far studied in which Lady Gregory exhibits a consciousness of the use of minor characters as a backdrop for the main figures. The two soldiers are not important for what they say or do but for what they suggest. They are woven into a texture of mood and atmosphere, making an organic contribution to the drama far out of proportion to the time they occupy on stage or the intrinsic importance of their actions.

The play is a proof of the efficacy of sentiment in providing truly moving drama. It is not a play of speeches and oratory. The great flow of dialogue one is accustomed to hear coming from characters of Lady Gregory is replaced by a series of taut, hesitant exchanges between the two main figures. The speech of the characters implies the tension of the situation, the subjects of their conversation are appropriate and suggestive. Replies are laden with significance that is neither obvious nor strained. for example:

Sergeant: Are you keeping a good lookout?

Man: I am; and for no reward too. Amn't I the foolish man? But when I saw a man in trouble, I never could help trying to get him out of it. What's that? Did something hit me? (Rubs his heart.)

Sergeant: (Patting him on the shoulder.) You will get your reward in heaven.

Man: I know that, I know that, sergeant, but life is precious.

Sergeant: Well, you can sing if it gives you more courage.

Man: (Sings)--
Her head was bare, her hands and feet with
iron bands were bound,
Her pensive strain and plaintive wail mingles
with the evening gale,
And the song she sang with mournful air, I am
old Glanuaile.
Her lips so sweet that monarchs kissed. . .

Sergeant: That's not it. . . . 'Her gown she wore was stained with gore,'. . . That's it--you missed that.

Man: Your're right sergeant, so it is; I missed it. (Repeats line.) But to think of a man like you knowing a song like that.

Sergeant: There's many a thing a man might know and might not have any wish for.[51]

Much could be said of the playwright's skill in the construction of the passage quoted above. The natural way Lady Gregory introduces the use of song in the play, and the obvious relevance to the action and theme of the songs is noteworthy. The sergeant's correction 'Her gown she wore was stained with gore', is more significant than a whole page of rhetoric. It is not only the natural quality of this dialogue that is compelling, the obvious realism of the

exchanges is only partly responsible for the play's force and truth. The latent power of suggestion and implication in each seemingly barren exchange, the symbolism of Ireland in the songs, and the controlled tension reflected in the sometimes staccato phrasing and reticence of speech, contribute immensely to the play's emotional impact. The songs are of prime importance. They are Irish and tell of the revolt of '98. When the sergeant demands that the Man cease singing the audience is never fully certain why he is forced to stop:

Man: (Sings)--
O, then, tell me, Shawn O'Farrell,
Where the gathering is to be.
In the old spot by the river
Right well known to you and me![52]

Sergeant: Stop that! Stop that!

Not only is the Man's singing interfering with the sergeant's attempts at silence, it is also unsettling his sense of duty and uncertain patriotism.

If this play is to be considered as a comedy it differs from these already considered in the depth of the emotion and character it treats. The action is entirely action arising out of character; its tensions are as Lady Gregory stated of the 'mind'. The other comedies achieve a neatness and smoothness of movement by mechanical simplifications and by a selectivity that limits the validity and range of the experience they comprehend. The Rising of the Moon omits none of the complexity of life.

There is real imagination in The Rising of the Moon, coupled with a truly genuine dramatic instinct. It contains an almost ineffable force, convincing beyond the bounds of the play itself. Unlike the 'social' comedies or the intermediate 'situation-character' plays, it manages to make a statement that transcends the limits of both action and dialogue. Una Ellis-Fermor comments on its strength by finding in it a mixture 'of humour and exaltation':

> But there were other potentialities in Lady Gregory's genius as we see in short plays such as The Rising of the Moon or her share of Cathleen ni Houlihan, where patriotic passion mingles with the humour and carries the play to a climax of exaltation that is almost like religious fervour.[53]

McDonough's Wife is also a play with a core of emotion. Its emotion is, however, neither of the kind to be found in The Rising of the Moon or The Workhouse Ward. It is something more poetic; in the notes Lady Gregory writes:

> . . . The story of his wife's death and burial as I give it has been told to me here and there. That is my fable and the emotion disclosed by the story is, I think, the lasting pride of the artists of all ages:
>
> > We are the music makers
> > And we are the dreamers of dreams. . .
> > We in the ages lying
> > In the buried past of the earth
> > Built Nineveh with our singing,
> > And Babel itself with our mirth.[54]

The play's emotion develops not by a process of tension

but by the poetic celebration of McDonough's grief and his musical skill. The dialogue is all important, or rather the speeches of McDonough himself as they seek to form a correlative to his dignity.

First Hag: There are worthier men than yourself maybe in storehouses and shops.

McDonough: But I am of the generations of Orpheus and have in me the breed of his master! And of Raftery and Carolan and O'Daly and all that made sounds of music from this back to the foundations of the earth! And as to the rich of the world, I would not humble my head to them. Let them have their serving men and their labourers and messengers will do their bidding. But the servant I myself command is the pipes that draws its breath from the four winds, and from a wind is beyond them again, and at the back of the winds of the air.[55]

McDonough: (Turning to her door.) If you got no great honour from your birth up, and went barefoot through the first of your youth, you will get great respect now and will be remembered in the time to come.
There is a lady dragging silk skirts through the lawns and the flower knots of Connacht, will get no such grand gathering of people at the last as you are getting on this day. It is the story of the burying of McDonough's wife will be written in the book of the people.[56]

McDonough is something of a folk-figure, who played at the marriage of Lady Gregory herself:

> He was so great a piper that in the few years since his death myths have already begun to gather around him. I have been told that his father was taken into a hill of the Danes, the Tuatha de Dannaan, the ancient invisible race, and they have taught him all their tunes and so bewitched his pipes that they would play of themselves if he threw them up on the rafters. McDonough's pipes they say, had not that gift, but he himself could play those inspired tunes. . .[57]

Lady Gregory does not shun the fantastical side of this story, indeed, she makes the casual realistic acceptance of it conditional to an enjoyment of the play. McDonough is different in stature and association from any of the simple folk of Cloon. He is one of those figures invested with an almost supernatural, magical flavour half way between reality and fantasy, a part of the Irish imagination, which Lady Gregory often employs with varying degrees of credibility. Hanrahan, of Hanrahan's Oath, is one, Cracked Mary and the ballad singer in The Rising of the Moon are others. The figure of McDonough, and the lilt and cadence of his speeches account for the unique tone of this play. He virtually dominates the play, while the two hags act as props, providing McDonough with a stage audience, and forwarding information. The artist, of course, is traditionally regarded as an individual figure, out of place in society. It may be that McDonough's prominence in the play implies this.

The Image is Lady Gregory's first three act comedy. As would be expected from this fact, it is more finely elaborated than the smaller plays, and in theme and substance is of more lasting significance. It suffers no abandonment of the touches of detail and speech of the earlier plays, but in The Image laughter is blended with elements both serious and touching. It is akin to both The Rising of the Moon and McDonough's Wife in its

seriousness and folk-orientation. The Image is a curious blend of satire and idealism, both a moving presentation of a vital aspect of life and a clever, unforced ridiculing of procrastinating talk.

The theme of The Image is a profound one, one virtually bound up with the Irish imagination and heart. Lady Gregory does not shrink from attempting to probe as well as to expose, and her probing is of a universal emotion. The theme of The Image is given in the Notes. It is the theme of the 'heart secret', a feeling or thought precious to the individual, lost in the attempt to communicate it.

> . . . I had but given a 'heart-secret' into the keeping of each of the persons of the play. . . And each of these images crumbled at the touch of reality, like a wick that has escaped the flame, and is touched by common air. And the more ecstatic the vision the more impossible its realisation until that time when, after the shadows of the earth the seer shall 'awake and be satisfied'.[58]

There is combined in those remarks something of fantasy, religion, of mysticism and of factual truth. They carry an implication of the necessity of living by the imagination, cherishing the dream and the transcendental. More than all the talk of the earlier plays, more than the verbal operation of the myth-making faculty, this theme is distinctively and definitively a theme of the Irish.

The Image has none of the simplicity of movement and structure of the earlier plays. It is a finely wrought

allegory as well as a precise satire. Two whales are found cast up on shore. The men of the village immediately realize that the oil from the whales will bring them much money. But a division arises among the people of the village about the use to which the money will be put. The argument continues for so long that they resolve it, only to discover that the men from a neighbouring village have taken the oil from one whale and the other has been washed away.

The writing of the play demonstrates Lady Gregory's almost spontaneous and undisciplined creativity:

> I meant to carry this out in the manner of Spreading the News or The Jackdaw, but the Image took the matter into its own hands, and whether for good or ill-luck, the three-act play has grown. I think I have not quite failed, yet it also is not what I set out to do.[59]

The difference with The Image is that Lady Gregory was unconsciously transported, not by some character who would not stay still after she had decided upon him, but by the idea of the play itself. Altogether this is an important distinction because it implies that individual constituents of the play, like character or dialogue, were in the creative process itself, under the jurisdiction of the theme. It accounts for the skill with which so serious and moving a picture is not allowed to be spoiled by sentimentality or entirely lost because of its neighbouring satire. Her attention in The Image is intellectually and emotionally, rather than situationally, engaged.

With the projected revenue from the sale of the whale oil the people decide to erect a statue of some 'big man'. The big man they decide upon is a person whom originally they have never heard of. His name is first proposed by Malachi, a Mountainy Man, a touched individual, who found the name on a bit of board washed upon the beach. By a process of mutual confusion, resulting from the desire to avoid any conflicts over the selection of partisan heroes, Malachi's man is selected; his name is Hugh O'Lorrha. They discover afterwards that O'Lorrha 'lived in no other place but in the Munster poet's lies.' He is a hero to none but the crazed Malachi:

Peggy: . . . It is right Malachi was quitting you, and it was wise. Any person to own a heart secret, it is best to hide it in the heart. Let the whole world draw near to question me, but I'll be wise this time. I'll say no word of Patrick Mahon, and no word of Hugh Peg O'Lorrha, that is maybe nearer to him than some that are walking this street. Oh, yes, oh yes, I'll be wary this time and I'll be wise, very wise. I'll be as wise as the man that didn't sell his dream![60]

At this point is is learned that the whales have been lost:

Mannion: The Connemara lads have the oil drawn from the one of them, and the other one was swept away with the spring tide.

Costello: For pity's sake! That cannot be true!

Mannion: It is true, too true to be put in the ballads.

Hosty: It is no mean blow to the place losing them; and to yourself, Thomas Coppinger,

and your grand statue swept away along with them.

Costello: Let you not fret, Thomas. There did no badness of misfortune ever come upon Ireland but someone was the better of it. You not to go shape the image, there is no person can say, it is to mis-shape it you did. Let you comfort yourself this time, for it is likely you would have failed doing the job.

Coppinger: I was thinking that myself, Darby. I do begin I'd have to follow it up, and the deer knows where might it leave me.

Mrs. Coppinger: We'll not be scarce of talk for the rest of our years anyway. For some do be telling the story was always in it, but we will be telling the story never was in it before and never will be in it at all!

(The band is heard quite close playing "O'Donnell Abu!" Mrs. Coppinger rushes in at door, looks out. Coppinger hides behind headstone. Hosty leaps the wall into Connacht. Costello hides at side of Peggy's house. Only Peter Mannion left in centre. Band quite close and shouts of Hi! for Hugh O'Lorrha!)[61]

From the loss of the whales and their image they have salvaged the talk. Lady Gregory gives an unusually detailed accounting of the characters of this play in the notes:

> . . . Brian Hosty's 'Image' was his native, passionately loved province of Connacht; but he boasted of it to some who could see its thorns and thistles with passionless eyes, looking over the mering wall. Mrs. Coppinger had her mind set upon America as a place where the joy of life would reach its summit, but that hope is clouded by the derision of one who has been there, and seen but the ugliness about him. Costello thought of an earth all peace, but when he spoke of peace 'they made themselves ready to war.' Thomas Coppinger dreamed of the great monument he would make to some great man, and old Peggy of one made

> beautiful through long memory and death; and Malchi of one who was beyond and above earthly life. And each of these images crumbled at the touch of reality, like a wick that has escaped the flame, and is touched by common air. And the more ecstatic the vision the more impossible its realisation until that time when, after the shadows of earth, the seer shall 'awake and be satisfied.'[62]

The heart-secret and the image, for they are one, are the properties of idealism and human escape. They are a part of the dream which colors each life. That Lady Gregory communicates so fragile and poetic an idea as this in a truly funny play, rich in the robustness of language and action of the Cloon plays, directly grounded in uncompromising dialect, is no mean achievement. She allows the play to operate on two levels, the level of allegory or interpretation, and the level of sheer satire. The combination of idealism and comedy is an effective one. It is a sensitive theme and a perceptive interpretation of Irish character. By the combination Lady Gregory attempts to demonstrate the principle of contradiction in two areas of Irish temperament. One is of course the image-myth-making faculty, the other is the very indulgence of imagination that nourishes such image building. The two are vitally involved, at times precariously complementary. Such a balance of idea and substance as is afforded by The Image is a sensitive achievement.

SECTION B: DIALOGUE

Attention has already been drawn to one of Lady Gregory's most valuable contributions to the Irish Dramatic Movement, a combination of her fluency in the dialect and her familiarity with the folklore of the Kiltartan region. The founders of that movement showed some concern over the choice of a dramatic medium and Yeats records a curious 'quarrel with public opinion' that led to the use of realistic folkspeech:

> . . . It was not, however, until I met in 1896 Lady Gregory, a member of an old Galway family, who had spent her life between two Galway houses, the house where she was born, the house into which she married, that such a theatre became possible. All about her lived a peasantry who told stories in a form of English which has much of its syntax from Gaelic, much of its vocabulary from Tudor English, but it was very slowly that we discovered in that speech of theirs our most powerful dramatic instrument, not indeed until she herself began to write.
> . . . . . .
>
> we were to find ourselves in a quarrel with public opinion that compelled us against our own will and the will of our players to become always more realistic, substituting dialect for verse, common speech for dialect.[63]

These statements record the decision to use dialect in the Movement and Lady Gregory's relevance to that decision. Her previous experience as a folklorist and student of the Irish speech was to have artistic application. By the resolve to record peasant life realistically, both in

thought and diction, Lady Gregory defined the range and tone of her drama. For Lady Gregory this was to be folk-drama, her comedies, little plays of rustic emotion or incident--the universal apprehended 'through the framework of Kiltartan'.[64] The determination to use dialect as a dramatic medium had inevitable implications. The commitment to the language of a class involved a commitment to the observation of a class. For her comedies this meant that diction itself would be a touchstone for the mores and attitudes of the people who were to serve as her dramatic subject. The resources of the dialect she espoused were fertile expression, flow, and imagery. Furthermore the language of the Irish and their use of it was so near a character trait in itself that its adoption in her comedies meant a drama in which dialogue, per se, would be primary. Una Ellis-Fermor indicates the central position of dialogue in Lady Gregory's works when she writes:

> . . . the comic dialogue is not, in the last analysis, merely a conversation piece, it is at once an image of the character out of which the eventual action comes and an essential part of the emotional process that leads to the action. These habits of thought and speech, once she had converted them to dialogue and subdued that dialogue to dramatic function, became an inseparable part of all her later technique. . .[65]

There are then two facets to a study of Lady Gregory's dialogue: 1. its contribution as dialogue to dramatic effect and 2. its relation to dialect.

Discussions of the Irish Dramatic Movement and of Lady Gregory in particular have unfailingly made reference to her phrase 'our incorrigible genius for myth-making'.[66] The relation of this aspect of the Irish temper to her own creations is the key to understanding the vital impulses of her creativity. As has been seen in the first section of this chapter on comedy, the 'incorrigible genius for myth-making' is both a verbal and an imaginative faculty. On a natural level it is represented in the characters' easy excitation and susceptibility to rumours and stories. Hyacinth Halvey, Bartley Fallon and the people of Cloon (cf. the Jackdaw) are its victims on this level. On the natural level the myth is usually nothing more than rumour or unfounded speculation. It is a result of a preoccupation with news and words in themselves, and its energies are those of talk itself. On the imaginative level it is more intimately connected with the life of the nation represented in the manufacture of heroes and the idealization of the past figures of Irish life. This myth-making is at once poetic and serious, in close association with the Irish body of folklore, and responsible for its simple but enduring beauty. In a lecture on the Irish Dramatic Movement delivered to the Royal Academy of Sweden Yeats, though he does not specifically mention 'the genius for myth-making', provides an insight into its imaginative operations:

> I have in Galway a little old tower, and when I climb to the top of it I can see at no great distance a green field where stood once the thatched cottage of a famous country beauty, the mistress of a small local landed proprietor. I have spoken to old men, and women who remembered her, though they all are dead now, and they spoke of her as the old men upon the wall of Troy spoke of Helen, nor did man and woman differ in their praise. One old woman of whose youth the neighbours cherished a scandalous tale said of her, 'I tremble all over when I think of her'; and there was another on the neighbouring mountain who said, 'The sun and the moon never shone on anybody so handsome, and her skin was so white that it looked blue, and she had two little blushes on her cheeks'. And there were men that told of the crowds that gathered to look at her upon a fair day, and of a man, 'who got his death swimming a river' that he might look at her. It was a song written by the Gaelic poet Raftery that brought her such great fame, and the cottages still sing it as when I was young.
>
> O star of light and O sun in harvest
> O amber hair, O my share of the world
> It is Mary Hynes, the calm and easy woman,
> Has beauty in her body and in her mind.
>
> It seemed as if the ancient world lay all about us with its freedom of imagination, its delight in good stories, in man's force and woman's beauty. . .[67]

There is obvious poetry in the 'genius for myth-making', with its 'delight in good stories, in man's force and woman's beauty' and the poetry is both romantic and idealistic. The expression of that beauty or suggestions of it may be found in Lady Gregory's dialogue, in its imagery, allusions, and movement. Dialogue has this double relation to the faculty of myth-making; it participates in it and provides its expression, both on the natural and imaginative level.

The humour of Lady Gregory's comedies is not subtle. It may be found in either extravagance of statement or a particularly effusive argumentative repartee. It may on occasion be situational, found in character's reactions to situations or to themselves. Still it is a broad humour. Dialogue is very important to this humour, contributing both incidentally and thematically. The theme of communication underscores many of Lady Gregory's comedies. The process of communication in itself becomes the comic invention. Hyacinth Halvey, The Jackdaw, Coats, The Bogie Men, The Workhouse Ward and Hanrahan's Oath all to some degree illustrate this. With her more socially oriented plays the 'hazards' of small town 'communication' provide much of the fun. The exuberance of the Cloon characters is the vehicle of their fantasies. It represents the native powers of their imagination and may be seen as the motive force of their 'myth-making'. The socially oriented comedies and even the more restricted and personal comedies are, if seen in relation to a common theme of communication, extensions of the logic of Irish speech. The operations of her social comedies particularly, may be seen as the aftermath of character's indulgence in undisciplined imagination and speech.

Speech, talk, the Word; communication is central in Lady Gregory's comedies. Hanrahan's Oath is a study in

the power of imagination and the adoration of the 'process' of communication. The unnatural and (as it happens) mistaken stoppage of speech on the part of Hanrahan excites shock and begets strange opinions in the lesser characters. Hanrahan, the poet and great talker, is a hero by virtue of the importance and regard for speech in the society that Lady Gregory depicts. He evolves from the poetic-idealism of the myth-making faculty, while those around him participate in this myth-making at the natural level. An intimation of the importance of speech which is the expression or representation of this faculty can be seen in Hanrahan's comments on 'the man' who could put speech under control:

Hanrahan: . . . The man that would make a gad for the tongue would be far beyond Alexander that laid one around all the kingdoms of the world![68]

Margaret Rooney, in describing Hanrahan, gives similar testimony:

Margaret Rooney: So he is a terror for telling stories, and it is yourself made your own profit by it. It is his gift of talk brought the harvesters that would live and die with him, to your house this five weeks past.[69]

Lady Gregory's ability to supply her characters with the energy and zest of a speech necessary for such reverence of the word, permitted her to develop a comedy that both superficially and thematically was supported by dialogue.

An examination of Spreading the News reveals that apart from Mrs. Tarpey's convenient deafness, most of the fun is in the dialogue and centers on problems in communication. The inability of the officious magistrate to 'tune in' and the townspeople's cunning in refusing to understand him is one such problem. Jo Muldoon the constable provides a contrast to the magistrate providing laconic exchanges to his inquiries. The magistrate's exchange with Mrs. Tarpey is the best example however:

Magistrate: (To Mrs. Tarpey) Do you know this town well, my good woman?

Mrs. Tarpey: (Holding out some apples.) A penny the half-dozen your honour.

Policeman: (Shouting) The gentleman is asking do you know the town. He's the new magistrate!

Mrs. Tarpey: (Rising and ducking.) Do I know the town? I do to be sure.

Magistrate: (Shouting) What is its chief business?

Mrs. Tarpey: Business is it? What business would the people here have but to be minding one another's business?

Magistrate: I mean what trade do they have?

Mrs. Tarpey: Not a trade. No trade at all but to be talking.

Magistrate: I shall learn nothing here.[70]

A Mrs. Tarpey who understands is more dangerous than a Mrs. Tarpey who does not understand. The directness of the latter part of this exchange demonstrates this. In Spreading the News characters exist on one another's

business, make a trade of talking and learn nothing. The sound of what is being said, rather than its sense and substance is what is really important. Is it actually the drama of self pity or the love of expression that moves Bartley Fallon to such utterances as:

> Bartley Fallon: Maybe its yourself will be buried in the graveyard of Cloonmara before me, Mary Fallon, and I myself that will be dying unbeknowns't some night, and no one ahear me. And the cat itself may be gone straying through the country, and the mice squealing over the quilt.[71]

The luxury of detail that swells into volubility is a trademark of speech that engenders itself:

> Jack Smith: She was delayed, with her washing; bleaching the clothes on the hedge she is, and she daren't leave them, with all the tinkers that do be passing to the fair. It isn't to the fair I came myself, but up to the Five Acre Meadow I'm going, where I have a contract for the hay. We'll get a share of it into tramps today.[72]

The humour of the plays is inseparable from their language and diction, manifested in dialogue.

The notes to Hanrahan's Oath tell of an early attempt at the play wherein:

> Mary Gillis was at the first given more of the argument and told him that--"To speak lets the bad blood out of you the same as to vomit, and leaves the soul clean," and "it is worse to have bad thoughts than bad words, and to be cursing and damming in the mind."[73]

Surely here is an indication that speech as such is to be regarded as something more than the conveyor of thought.

For her characters' speech has certain intrinsic properties that invest it with more than normal significance. Through speech Lady Gregory's characters achieve a comic catharsis. The catharsis may be healthful as that suggested by the notes to Hanrahan's Oath; it may be emotional as in the Workhouse Ward; it may be merely comic and dramatic as in Spreading the News. Hanrahan's Oath gives specific emphasis to the significance of speech. Hanrahan's 'plunge into silence' is more than the abdication of a faculty, it is the renunciation of a power:

> Hanrahan: It is that was my ruin! It would be better for me to be born without it, the same as a blessed sheep. It is the sin of the tongue is surely the blackest of all! 'A man that died with drink in him, the missioner was saying, the soul would sooner stop in torment a thousand years than come back to the body that made it so unclean. And surely my soul would think it worse that had it steered to the mouth of the burning mountain, that is said to be the door of hell!74

Even the curse Hanrahan places on Mary Gillis is significant:

> Hanrahan: . . . and it is good curses I'll be making and the first I'll put on is the curse of dumbness, for that is the last curse of all.75

Above the obvious level of this comedy is Lady Gregory's celebration of talk in Hanrahan the poet, who becomes a natural wonder. The virtuosity of his outpourings, observing no decorum save that of energy, is one of the play's main virtues:

> Hanrahan: To make silence in the roads for ever would be a better task than was ever done by Orpheus, and he playing harpstrings to his flocks.76

Hanrahan: My poor Feeney! He that wore out the night making still-whiskey would put courage into armies of men, and the hares of the mountain gathered around him looking on. I could cry down my eyes, he to be at this time in the black hole of a vessel you couldn't hardly go into head and heels, among rats and every class of ravenous thing. Have you ere a knife about you or a sword or a dagger, that you'll give it to me to do my penance, till I'll cut out the tongue from my head and bury it under the hill?[77]

Hanrahan: . . . I declare to honest goodness the coneys and the hares are ahead of most Christians on the road to heaven, where they have not the power to curse and damn, or to do mischief through flatteries and chatterings and coaxings and jestings and jokings and fables and mockeries and mumblings and grumblings and treacheries and false reports!. . . It is free I am now from the screechings and vain jabberings of the world that is all one nearly with the blessed silence of heaven.[78]

The comic idea of this play as related in the notes 'is how it would fare with a man forced to be silent'[79] and the situations that 'arise from his oath'[80]. In Hanrahan's Oath Lady Gregory communicates the excitement and magic of speech thus giving substance and a unique significance to the theme.

The Workhouse Ward indicates on a more realistic plane than Hanrahan's Oath the splendor of conversation and its social and personal importance:

Michael Miskell: Ah! what signifies tobacco. All I am craving is the talk.[81]

The speaker is Michael Miskell who rues the departure of his enemy Mike McInerney. The theme of this play is that

conversation, even though it be disguised as argument, is better than loneliness. Communication on an emotional level is its idea. Spreading the News may be the first drama of the Theatre of the Overheard. The pattern of such plays may be reduced to the proposition that what is half understood is more easily transmissable than that which has been completely comprehended, and that which is completely mistaken is self-transporting. The Workhouse Ward obviously does not belong in a category with Spreading the News. Like The Rising of the Moon communication in The Workhouse Ward symbolizes contact below the surface, below the noise of the talk. It implies a kinship of community or cause or of fellowship.

From these plays cited as examples it may be seen that the factor of speech and the theme of communication are of special importance to Lady Gregory's comedies. As a trait of Irish character and as a dramatic instrument, the talk of her characters has special meaning. The pace in many of her plays is equivalent to the movement of information (cf. The Jackdaw, Spreading the News). In others a static situation is energized with the dynamics of communication (cf. The Workhouse Ward, The Rising of the Moon). When the critical importance of dialogue is appreciated situation assumes a lesser role. Lady Gregory's comedies are intrinsically comedies of dialogue in the expansive sense that has been indicated. The speech of her

characters informs us of the broad sweep and disposition of the national temper and contributes insights into personal experience.

The area of dialogue still to be discussed is dialect. The 'genius for myth-making' that has been noted earlier in this chapter was seen to have two chief manifestations, the verbal and the imaginative. The dichotomy between the two is not as obvious when referred to the qualities of dialect found in Lady Gregory's plays. The poetic powers of the dialect, its allusions and images, its sharpness and energy, represent and embody the idealistic, romantic aspect of the myth-making faculty. J.M. Synge has in a Preface to The Playboy of the Western World told of the immediate importance and relevance of dialect to his writing.

> In writing The Playboy of the Western World, as in my other plays, I have used one or two words only, that I have not heard among the country people of Ireland, or spoken in my own nursery before I could read the newspapers. A certain number of phrases I employ I have heard also from herds and fishermen along the coast from Kerry to Mayo, or from beggar-women and ballad-singers nearer Dublin; and I am glad to acknowledge how much I owe to the folk-imagination of these fine people. . . . All art is a collaboration; and there is little doubt that in the happy ages of literature striking and beautiful phrases were as ready to the story-teller's or the playwright's hand as the rich cloaks and dresses of his time. . . . This matter, I think, is of importance, for in countries where the imagination of the people, and the language they use, is rich and living, it is possible for a writer to be rich and copious in his words, and at the same time to give the reality which is the root of all poetry a comprehensive and natural form. . . .

> In a good play every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or apple, and such speeches cannot be written by anyone who works among people who have shut their lips on poetry.[82]

Synge's was a decidedly more poetic sensibility and the accent of his writing is always more poetic than that of Lady Gregory. Yet his description of the resources of folk-life and language is not unlike what could be expected from Lady Gregory herself. She was aware of the resources of dialect and had a deeper fluency in the dialect of her region than any of her associates. The comedies reflect this. In fact in many senses they may be interpreted as dramatic organizations around a previously selected medium.

Before offering any discussion on the suitability of dialect as a dramatic medium, it may be helpful to indicate what precisely is meant by Lady Gregory's dialect by noting its common patterns, both of syntax and expression.

Syntactically the dialect found in Lady Gregory's plays is idiomatic. Some of its characteristics are inversions of the subject and predicate, frequent use of the infinitive, reiteration of phrases or words, frequent use of relatives. Other patterns which are not grammatical are her use of the material of folklore or folk learning, allusion, imagery and humour. The 'poetry' of Lady Gregory's plays is a 'poetry' that is derived from the

juxtaposition of speech patterns of the peasants and the formal context of a play. Though the contributing factors of this 'poetry' may be studied separately under headings such as allusion, imagery, folklore, they compose an imaginative unit. Particularly in the set speeches of the various plays they may be viewed as such. The rhetoric of the following provides a fine example:

> Hazel: That's the worst! I give you my oath I would not go miching from death or be in terror of the sharpness of his bones, and he coming as at the Flood to sweep the living world along with me, and leave no man on earth having penmanship to handle my deeds, or to put his own skin on my story![83]

This passage contains the rhetorical hyperbole typical of most of her good comic characters. It is rich in graphic allusions and imagery and has a flow that is admirable. Much of its strength, however, is derived from the idiomatic manner of expression--both grammatically and tonally. For instance the phrase 'in terror at the sharpness of his bones' has an unusual placement of the genitive, a noun (sharpness) where more familiar constructions would have an epithet. Similarly the frequent use of 'the' before all proper nouns imparts a distinct character to the allusion 'the Flood'. Dissection of this order cannot hope to explain such passages because Lady Gregory's skill in dialect and precision in reproducing it, is, as has been stated, intuitive, operating on a plane where grammar is forgotten. Hazel, of Coats, is full of rich expressions

that Lady Gregory undoubtedly borrowed directly from the peasantry.

> Hazel: I'll break the bail of the sun and moon before I'll give you leave to go brand me with strange names the same as you would tarbrand a sheep! I'll put yourself and your Tribune under the law of libel![84]

'The bail of the sun' is a very striking metaphor perfectly in tune with the volatile imagination of Hazel as he is enthused with his own verbosity. Declamations in Lady Gregory's play are important in illustrating her dependence on dialect and the power of humour or feeling that it may inspire.

> Hazel: To have no power of revenge after death! My strength to go nourish weeds and grass! A lie to be told and I living I could go lay my case before the courts. So I will too! I'll silence you! I'll learn you to have done with misspellings and with death notices! I'll hinder you bringing in Casserlys! I go take advice from the lawyer![85]

'My strength to go nourish weeds and grass'--the expression draws its vitality straight from the peasant imagination. And this is Lady Gregory's true forte in the use of dialect. She is able to communicate its life and spirit. She understands. With some of her comic characters there is a near perfect communication of mood and character achieved through her sense of dialect.

The speech of characters is often the mainstay of her plays, both in the sense that the plots are concerned with 'communication' and that characters take on their unique reality as embodiments of their imaginative and direct

language.

Sometimes exactness of imitation is all Lady Gregory requires, as in The Bogie Men when Darby is explaining to Taig his mother's henpecking and insulting ways with him.

> Darby: It is the way I went down; my mother used to be faulting me and I not being the equal of him. Tormenting and picking at me and shouting me on the road. "You thraneen," she'd say, "you little trifle of a son' you stumbling over the threshold as if in slumber, and Timothy being as swift as a bee!"[86]

The peasant perspective on life, the unsophisticated but highly descriptive interpretations of people and things, emerges from Taig's outpourings:

> Taig: It is you will be fit but to blow the bellows, my mother would say, the time Dermot will be forging gold. I let on the book to have gone astray on me at the last. Why would I go crush and bruise myself under a weight of learning, and there being one in the family well able to take my cost and my support whatever way it might go? Dermot that would feel my keep no more that the lake would feel the weight of the duck.[87]

The chimney sweeps think in terms of their own environment and the imagery they use is drawn from it--'feel my keep no more tha the lake would feel the weight of the duck.'

The imagery of Lady Gregory's comedies is full of natural reference and 'folk' allusions. Damer's explosion of love for gold is imaginative, direct, and natural.

> Damer: Gold! My darling it is! From the hollows of the world to the heights of the world there is no grander thing to be found. My bone and my marrow! Let me have the full of my arms of it and I'll not ask the flowers of field or fallow or the dancing of the Easter sun![88]

Proverbial wisdom too is a part of the mosaic Lady Gregory constructs from dialect and peasant learning. Even when characters are not actually using a proverb to score a point, they sound as if they are.

Damer: There was a king out in Foreign went astray through the same sin. His people that made a mockery of him after his death, filling up his jaws with rendered gold. Believe me, any person goes coveting after riches puts himself under a bad master.

Staffy: That is a master I'd be willing to engage with, he to give me my victuals and my ease.

Damer: In my opinion it was to keep temptation from our path the gold of the world was covered under rocks and in the depths of the streams. Believe me it is best leave it where it is, and not to meddle with the Almighty.[89]

Proverbs such as 'any person goes coveting after riches puts himself under a bad master' abound in Lady Gregory's works. The quotation above provides also an excellent example of the simplicity of the imagery which she derived from the peasantry. The imagery is more dependent upon its effect than its picture--'the gold of the world was covered under rocks and in the depths of the streams.' The thin line that separates dialect from rhetoric is difficult to find. The very habit of heaping up adjectives and nouns, that is characteristic of her characters in stress, is a motif of her dialogue:

Mrs. Fallon: And it's hard I earned you, slaving, slaving--and you grumbling, and sighing, and coughing, and discontented, and the priest wore out anointing you, with all the times you threatened to die![90]

Repetition and extreme over-elaboration are carry-overs from peasant speech. The description of Kitty Keary, followed by that of Bartley Fallon in Spreading the News, is humourous in the detail of its over-elaboration:

> Mrs. Fallon: And if it was for any sort of a fine handsome woman, but for a little fistful of a woman like Kitty Keary, that's not four feet high hardly, and not three teeth in her head unless she got new ones! May God reward you, Bartley Fallon, for the black treachery in your heart and the wickedness in your mind, and the red blood of poor Jack Smith, that is wet upon your hand![91]

Apart from the obvious relish of details it will be noticed that the fine concrete mind of Mrs. Fallon omits nothing that can contribute to the urgency and power of her diatribe. The last phrase 'that is wet upon your hand!' is a subtle addition. Much of the humour of these plays lies in quaint or exuberant descriptions and in the innocent yet damming sense of comparison that is typical of folk people.

> Jack Smith: (Trying to free himself.) Let me at him! Isn't he the pleasant sort of a scarecrow for any woman to be crossing the ocean with! It's back from the docks of New York he'd be turned (trying to rush at him again), with a lie in his mouth and treachery in his heart and another man's wife by his side, and he passing her off as his own! Let me at him can't you.
> (Makes another rush, but is held back.)[92]

Folklore and folk wisdom permeate the plays but nowhere are they more in evidence than in The Full Moon where the plot is an extension of the characters' superstition and fear.

The situation of The Full Moon is a 'folk' situation in this sense, that such a play would be impossible in any other context. This is true less obviously for many of Lady Gregory's comedies, particularly because of her reliance on materials that are directly drawn from that context. The construction, the manner, the tone of speech, and the thoughts that speech veils are, as has been stated, an imaginative unit from which Lady Gregory draws comic observations on life in a peasant setting. It is at once her limitation and her strength.

Lady Gregory's use of songs is outside the pale of this discussion. Yet the use of songs in The Rising of the Moon is relevant in that it illustrates once again her dependence on the whole body of verbal experience she found in the regions of County Galway. The songs belong to the traditions of Ireland; its battles, defeats and triumphs. They serve as cues to the collective mind exciting moods and passions by their strong associations with the dramatic life of Ireland. The ballad singer, by his singing, by the suggestions of his songs is able to awaken the latent patriotism of the sergeant. The dramatic use of song is one of Lady Gregory's finest accomplishments. But her debt to their sources is clear. Dialogue and dialect are inseparable facets of the same creative experience.

CHAPTER THREE

SECTION A: TRAGIC-COMEDY

From the information scattered throughout Lady Gregory's notes to her various plays one may gather an impression of her creative process. As was demonstrated in Chapter II she possessed the ability to be stimulated, creatively, by fragments of experience--incidents of common occurrence, odd pieces of memory, or a curiosity about people. Her treatment of the material of folk-history, either glimpsed through conversations with the peasantry or drawn from the records of legend or song, reveals an extension of this ability. The degree of her reaction to excitements of her sensibility varied, and was indeterminate in character. Scenes which at one point, for example, were to be the seeds of a tragedy became material for a comedy:

> The idea of this play first came to me as tragedy. I kept seeing as in a picture people sitting by the roadside, and a girl passing to the market, gay and fearless. And then I saw her passing by the same place at evening, her head hanging, the heads of others turned from her, because of some sudden story that had risen out of a chance word, and had snatched away her good name.
> But comedy and not tragedy was wanted at our theatre to put beside the high poetic work. . . .[1]

These 'fragments of experience' seem merely to have triggered energies, the form and shape of which became the responsibility of another area of her imagination. This area was 'the desire for experiment,' a desire 'like fire

in the blood,' that led her to attempt new forms and styles and to pit her ingenuity against the arbitrary restrictions of structure. There are, then, two components of her creativity, the first a sensitivity to 'broken' experience, and the second an experimental curiosity especially concerned with form and economy. The interaction of these components is forcibly illustrated in her treatment of folk-history material.

In the notes to The Deliverer, the third play in the tragic-comedies of the Folk-History Plays, are recountings of a number of incidents, unrelated except by a common association with the Irish statesman, Parnell. It might be valuable to quote them in full:

> I used to say in defence of friends of mine, who were attacked for wild acts, and Mr. Yeats borrowed my saying, that Moses was of no use to his people until he had killed an Egyptian. Then I began to say in relation to a "gran fitiuto" of later days that some who had turned upon their leader would have their forty years of walking the sand. More lately in Kiltartan, I was told by one who had been present at the last meeting held by that deserted leader, how those who had crowded to him before had left him by order and how fiery his words were and how white was his face. And it was said "The ancient Jews turned against Moses in the same way."
> It was at a Feis, a Festival at Spiddal on Galway Bay in honour of the Irish language about ten years ago, and after it I wrote:
> "In the evening there were people waiting round the door to hear the songs and the pipes again. An old man among them was speaking with many gestures, his voice rising, and a crowd gathering about him. Tha se beo, tha se beo--he is living, he is living, I heard him say over and over again. I asked what he was saying and was told: He says that Parnell is alive yet.

> I was pushed away from him by the crowd to where a policeman was looking on. He says that Parnell is alive still, I said, 'There are many say that he answered. And after all no one ever saw the body that was buried.' I remember a visit of M. Paul Bourget to Coole and his being excited and moved by the tragic wasted face of one of the last photographs of Mr. Parnell, that he could not leave it but carried it about the house. I had already written on the back of that portrait this verse from an old ballad:
>
> Oh, I have dreamed a dreary dream
> Beyond the Isle of Skye
> I saw a dead man win a fight
> And I saw that man was I![2]

That The Deliverer should be classified as 'folk-history' is questionable, if these notes give a full account of its initial urging. The notes are not a record of sources, nor do they fix upon any particular 'historical' episode. Rather they convey some generality of impressions, from Lady Gregory herself, from a friend, or from a peasant. It is obvious that Lady Gregory is not primarily interested in history, as conventionally understood, for subject matter. In The Deliverer she dramatizes Moses' rejection by the Jews and implies a strong parallel with Parnell's betrayal at the hands of the Irish. How indeed she does 'use' history or folk-history will be seen further on.

How did she use the incidents recorded in the notes? Never unresponsive to any encounter, she heard a person in Kiltartan make a comparison--"the ancient Jews turned against Moses in the same way". From this chance comment evolved the allegory for The Deliverer. From her

own previous writing, which was itself prompted by an incident at a festival, she found the beginning of the final scene of the play:

Dan's Wife: Look! He is living yet. He is passing!

Dan: It is but his ghost. He is vanished from us.[3]

The little verse on Parnell's photograph, quoted above, indicates her sympathy and understanding of the man, and thus clarifies her treatment of the people's desertion of him in the play.

These are, of course, her recorded observations which the critic can take only as the initial conscious promoters of her ideas. As remarked earlier they serve merely to trigger her instincts, or to provide the original impetus for her writing. Their importance as valid historical documents or sources is negligible.

Though the initial dramatic idea for The Deliverers arose from general musings about people's capacity for betrayal the actual desertion of Parnell by his followers was taken from history. The idea was a satiric one, or rather Lady Gregory treated the idea from a satiric point of view. The Deliverer is not a play about Parnell, the man. Had the figure of Parnell been more predominant the play would more likely have been tragic. Her deliberate selection and dramatization of the lower characters indicates the subordinate importance of 'historical' material as such, and the greater importance

of the human activity which surrounds and is responsible for the incident.

The satire is directed at the people who turned from Parnell, at their stupidity and vicious changeability. The idea achieves its universality in stages, proceeding from the allegorical to the particular to the general. This may be best illustrated by a diagram:

ALLEGORY:	PARTICULAR:	UNIVERSAL:
King's Nurseling	Parnell	Any leader
Moses		
Ard, Dan, Malachi and their wives	Parnell's followers among the people	People generally

How is such a satire created? Within the play itself, Lady Gregory has presented one character, Malachi, whose opinion and comment are a norm. The norm figure in any satire acts as a point of constant and reliable reference against which the audience may measure the actions and values of other characters. The discrepancy between his mode of conduct and that of the other characters is a measure of their wickedness or folly. The norm figure is necessary therefore as a comment on other characters and as a stable reference in a world of confused values. Malachi's knowledge of human nature, is in itself, a satiric comment on the fickleness and malice of other characters. Malachi

is the recognizable and stable standard by which we measure the folly and harshness of the others. However, the moral context of this play is so lucid (there is no confused pattern of values, such as may be found in other satires) that Malachi, as a norm, is not really essential. So obvious are the values this play upholds that they need not be signposted. The satire is sustained chiefly by the use of allegory.

The allegory of Moses' desertion by the Jews applied to Parnell's desertion by his Irish followers presents a background to the action which is important. The use of allegory gives the necessary distance to the action of the play. This distance is sufficient to permit the unfolding of the bitter story of desertion while, at the same time, retaining the sympathy of the audience. The fact that the play is an allegory, that Moses is Parnell, that Dan and Ard are his followers, keeps an audience interested in both the action and speeches of the allegorical characters and the more recent and significant context of the Parnell tragedy. The striking power of the satire is increased by these two levels of meaning. The transition from one level to the other imparts a grim edge to an already bitter story. The use of the specific allegory of Moses and the Jews is very important. Moses suffered as Parnell suffered the inevitable loneliness of command, the burden of responsibility that separates the leader from his

people. The choice of allegory is good because its figures and story resemble the figures and story of Parnell's desertion. The satiric element of the play arises from the implied criticism of the secondary figures. The allegory also permits a modest use of irony. The irony, of course, comes with the interpretation or recognition of the main characters as representative of others associated with and including Parnell. The satiric thrust of the play, or at least the main thrust is confined to the particular stage of the drama. Its power is only fully realized in its Irish setting.

One of the defects of The Deliverer is its total grimness and darkness. It is a play without humour. Its chief satiric instrument is hard irony. Satire, whose weapons are humour and laughter, whose arsenal is sarcasm, ridicule, hyperbole and irony, strides forth virtually unarmed. If, then, The Deliverer contains manifest deficiencies they seem to result from Lady Gregory's abandonment of her usual tolerant detachment. This is certainly not to say that satire is, or should be all 'sweetness and light' or that there is no place for gravity in the conduct of a serious and poignant theme; merely that bitterness of tone cannot compensate for the wholesale neglect of satiric machinery.

Structurally The Deliverer is a simple play. The rise and fall of the action is represented in the balanced

flow of feeling for and against the King's Nurseling. Characters are confined in their development to representation of clear and defined ideas or ideals. Thus the King's Nurseling is honesty and innocence. The steward is a cruel and oppressive official. This does not imply that characters are types--there is no type of King's Nurseling--but that the selectivity involved in their construction is synonymous with that in building types. In a play of feeling like The Deliverer such strict reservation is unfortunate. Characters are drawn so reservedly that identification with them is inhibited. The subordination of character to theme in this special limiting manner is a characteristic of satire. Satire is usually the pursuit of ideas. If it 'hounds' individuals, it hounds them for what they represent. The applied nature of satire demonstrates itself in its support of certain values and its condemnation of others. Character is therefore not primary. Lady Gregory's realization of the position of character in relation to theme or genre was theoretically correct, but in the economy that too cautiously and skimpily enfolds theme she erred. Her sin is one of degree. The play is neat but it is also simple, it contains nothing superfluous but neither does it use character and situation to full potential.

The Canavans is not a dark play like The Deliverer. Characters are more plastic, and are imbued with

that garrulity which is Lady Gregory's surest link with vitality. It is, like The Deliverer, a satire, but the satire is the product of richer associations, freerer ideas, and a more generous indulgence. The mood of the play, as Lady Gregory felt it, is recorded in her notes which have already been quoted in a previous chapter. It was written 'in one of those moments of light-heartedness' seemingly 'remote and inexplicable'. The Canavans is one of her most secure comedies, secure in the mature balance between structure and content, comedy and character. As a folk-history it is not overburdened with detail nor cramped by 'the mental furniture of another period'. Physically the characters are in sixteenth century Ireland, psychologically they are contemporary. Her sources are not those of official scholarship yet her use of the material she found congenial is powerful and competent. Having resolved to be satiric she sharpened the image of the satiric 'vice' by a judicious choice of setting. She herself explained:

> The desire possessing Peter Canavan to be on the safe side, on the side of the strongest, is not bounded by any century or kept within the borders of any country, though it jumps to light more aggressively in one which, like Ireland, has been tilted between two loyalties through so many generations.[4]

The setting lends emphasis. Moreover such official materials as she did use, for example the epithets given Queen Elizabeth, are taken from the writings of the time. They

are blended unobtrusively with the imaginative portions of the play. Captain Headley's magniloquent apostrophes to the Queen fit the pattern of humourous satire as naturally as if they had been Lady Gregory's own inventions.

In The Canavans Lady Gregory seemed alive to the use of character as an instrument of satire. Peter Canavan's 'desire to be on the safe side', a desire that defines his type character, plummets him to the depths of folly. Canavan represents a reprehensible quality, and it is the quality that Lady Gregory scourges. So strongly defined are the motivations of the characters in this play that they may be classified as Jonsonian 'humours'. The 'humour' is a strongly defined pattern of conduct, or a preoccupation with a single desire or idea. The classic example of 'humours' characters are to be found in Jonson's plays such as The Alchemist, Volpone, and Every Man in his Humour. The Prologues to Jonson's plays provide a quick acquaintance with what he means by 'humours'. This quotation is from the Prologue to The Alchemist:

> Our scene is London, 'cause we would make knowne,
> No countries mirth is better then our owne.
> No clime breeds better matter, for your whore,
> Bawd, squire, imposter, many persons more,
> Whose manners now call'd humors, feed the stage:
> And which have still beene subject, for the rage
> And spleene of comick-writers.[5]

It is, however, in the Prologue to Every Man in His Humour that Jonson suggests a less distinctly vile classification of humours and in his account of Every Man provides a

description of comedy not remote from Lady Gregory's practices:

> But deedes, and language, such as men doe use:
> And persons, such as Comedie would chuse,
> When she would shew an Image of the times,
> And sport with humane follies, not with crimes.
> Except, we make 'hem such by loving still
> Our popular errors, when we know th' are ill.
> I mean such errors, as you'll all confesse
> By laughing at them, they deserve no lesse:[6]

Lady Gregory certainly depicts a society less 'soiled' than Jonson's, less viciously sophisticated, less criminal. Yet Jonson's immersion in the language of 'punk' and 'bawd', his thorough-going understanding of the London low life, his reliance on observation rather than as he would put it 'Fancy' does suggest at least a communion of spirit with Lady Gregory. A brief comparison of certain techniques of Jonson and of Lady Gregory would prove revealing.

Peter Canavan's humour, for example, exists in vital association with his stupidity and obscure sense of advantage. Master Matthew, Captain Bobadill, Drugger and Dapper are his literary ancestors. There is no indication that Lady Gregory had an important familiarity with Jonson. Yet, in the notes to Hanrahan's Oath she does make some reference to him, one of her few references to any author outside the Abbey. With Jonson the 'humours' characters existed for exploitation by the knaves. The knaves, like Mosca, the Alchemist, and Brainworm are in some respects the opposites of the gulls. The humour of the gulls places them

in a situation advantageous to the knaves. Jonson's organization is obvious, one set of characters invites action by another set. In The Canavans there is an analagous situation. The humours of the characters place them in contrast or conflict. They are, in other words, intrinsically dramatic. Antony Canavan believes he will not die until his reputation is great:

> Antony: It is the way it was. It is in the prophecy I will not die until such time as my name is up. My name being down, I have no fear of death but it is for ever I might live; And so whatever danger there is to face, I am safe facing it.7

Antony's guaranteed security puts him in direct dramatic contrast to his brother Peter. The characters interlock organically because of the traits they represent. The balance and blend of types is skilful and is an example of a method of economy that is not merely reduction of content or over-simplification. It is a mature development in Lady Gregory's technical skill. Captain Headley admires the queen; this blind admiration provides the means for forwarding the plot when it allows Antony's escape from prison. Antony's impersonation of the Queen leads to other subtle developments in the plot, executed without any question of strained plausibility. The play achieves a maximum exploitation of character within the context of its satiric intent. Economy characterizes the structure of the play.

Of The White Cockade, Lady Gregory was pleased to note, J.M. Synge had said its 'method had made the writing of historical drama again possible'.[8] What Synge intended by this generous compliment is obviously important in a discussion of the playwright's craft and her use of historical material. Returning again to Lady Gregory's notes one finds rather extensive impressions of the two main characters, James and Sarsfield; impressions drawn she says from 'Connacht Raftery', and 'wise old neighbours, who sit in wide chimney nooks by turf fires and to whom I go to look for knowledge of many things'.[9] The play reveals her acceptance of their wisdom, since her characters are faithful to the portraits drawn from their living memory. Yet a method of historical drama cannot be reduced to a reverence for the accuracy of folk memory. Near the end of her notes she makes an explicit qualification of folk wisdom:

> In these days when so much of the printed history we were taught as children is being cast out by scholars, we must refill the vessel by calling in tradition, or if need be our own imaginations.[10]

She is evidently willing to rely on tradition if tradition can refill the vessel, but, if not, she is not reluctant to have recourse to her imagination. Moreover, there is a purpose for folk-history drama. Against the background of this purpose the selection and manipulation of sources is secondary. Lady Gregory's historical drama is an attempt,

however modest, to relate to the national consciousness; this is revealed in the statement that 'we must refill the vessel' of history, whose authority, now challenged by scholars, is being sapped of its power for young minds. The decaying sense of history, and it may be believed that by history Lady Gregory meant both official history and folk history, must be restored. If her drama was to make a significant contribution to this purpose Lady Gregory had to capture some of the urgency and relevance of history, its 'present' power. Synge himself is seen to have wrestled with the same problem and his solution was essentially the same as Lady Gregory's, though superior in scope:

> Given the almost overwhelmingly traditional history and the nature of his material, Synge solved his problem of how to create from it by dealing with his characters as people, by choosing to emphasize all that was most human in them instead of all that was most traditional.[11]

This quotation gives only a partial account of how Synge utilized folk-history material, yet it is an account that coincides in essence with Lady Gregory's use of the same material. Her characters are not the heroes or the monsters of history but a train of simple people in the progress of great events. The White Cockade is unique among the three plays that make up the folk-history series in that it centers action on figures of genuine stature--King James II and Patrick Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan. Yet their stature

does not impede the presentation of actions and emotions common to all people, namely James's weakness and vindictiveness and Sarsfield's bravery and magnanimity.

The play contains one of Lady Gregory's most effective scenes, built up entirely out of a contrast of characters, presenting vividly believable and deep feelings. The sensitive portrayal of emotion is the source of Lady Gregory's finest achievements. The Rising of the Moon, The Gaol Gate, Dervorgilla, McDonough's Wife are the obvious examples of such success. While The White Cockade cannot claim equal status with these plays, yet the scene to which attention was drawn gives a fine illustration of her method in the more unified and even performances of better works. Sarsfield, impersonating the King, assumes the qualities a king should have, acts as a king should act, and impresses all with a latent force of character that confirms his regality. The irony is inescapable and deep. James, travelling incognito acts as James always acts, convincing his audience of the shallowness of his character. By assuming each other's roles Sarsfield and James both find positions in which they can act in perfect accordance with their natures. Sarsfield speaks in language befitting the dignity of his nature:

Sarsfield: Now, if I were King--

Matt: Sure you are King yet, for all I did to destroy you, God forgive me!

Sarsfield: That is true--yes, yes, I am a King tonight, even though I may not be one tomorrow.

Owen: (Who has been listening eagerly.) It must be a wonderful thing to be a King!

Sarsfield: Wonderful, indeed--if he have the heart of a King--to be the son and grandson and great-grandson of Kings, the chosen and anointed of God. To have that royal blood, like the water of the palace fountain, it keeps breaking, ever breaking from the common earth, starting up as if to reach the skies. How else would those who are not noble know when they meet it what is royal blood.[12]

The Williamite soldiers join the cause of James after mere contact with Sarsfield acting as the king. The scene is hardly characterized by subtlety. Sarsfield is eager, almost boyish, while James is sullen and uncooperative throughout. Incidents like the soldiers joining Sarsfield because they think him James are conducted in an almost naive manner:

Second Williamite: It is easy to see among these three which of them is King.

Second Williamite: The Dutchman would not have those thoughts for Ireland.

Mrs. Keller: It's not from the wind he got it. Mouth of ivy and heart of holly. That is what you would look for in a King.

Sarsfield: If she is in trouble or in sorrow, this sweetheart who trusts him, that trouble, God forgive him, brings him a sort of joy! To go out, to call his men, to give out shouts because the time has come to show what her strong lover can do for her--to go hungry that she may be fed; to go tired that her dear feet my tread safely; to die, it may be, at the last for her with such glory that the name he leaves with her

is better than any living love, because he had been faithful, faithful, faithful!

First Williamite: (Putting down musket.) I give up the Dutchman's pay. This man is the best.

Second Williamite: He is the best. It is good to join him.

Owen: I will follow him by every hard road and every rough road through the whole world.

Matt: I will never drink another drop till he has come to his rights! I would sooner shrivel up like a bunch of seaweed!

Mrs. Kelleher: It is what I was often saying, the desire of every heart is the rightful King.

First Williamite: We will follow you! We will send our comrades away when they come, or we will turn them to you!

Second Williamite: We will fight for you five times better than we ever fought for the Dutchman. We will not let so much as a scratch on one belonging to you--even that lean-jawed little priest at the end of the table. (Points at James.)[13]

The characters are lacking in depth and shading, as the above passages, particularly the exchanges of the mercenaries, demonstrate. Lady Gregory, though she recognizes the intrinsic conflict, does much to damage its power by leaving nothing to suggestion, by over-presentation. The more celebrated passage in The Rising of the Moon where the sergeant's latent patriotism conquers his sense of duty is a much more subtle exercise in character and is, as a result, more plausible and powerful.

It has been noted throughout this chapter that Lady Gregory's treatment of character is uncertain, that

both her manner of treatment and purpose of treatment is inconsistent. The dialogue in The White Cockade is sometimes stilted by Sarsfield's attempts at rhetoric. Much of character in Lady Gregory is dependent on language. Though she is not a poet she is capable of fine speeches. There seems to be a tendency in The White Cockade to fall back on speech to fill a gap left by meagre development of character. Actually character in Lady Gregory is basically static. If James begins a coward we can expect him to continue one. If Sarsfield is a hero, he will be a hero from the beginning to the end of the play. The limits and motivations of characters are defined in broad patterns. They are fixed for a given, predetermined representation; they never surprise. As a result they either do not convince, or become boring because of their simplicity. The Williamites in The White Cockade are obviously meant to be tokens of the influence of Sarsfield, much as Owen is a token of the common person caught up in the war. Here the characters suffer from the over simple treatment they receive.

She is more successful when the treatment becomes comic. The scene in which James is found in a barrel, an essentially farcical one, is more within her scope. Here the language is real, the turns of phrase both humorous and natural. The soldiers about to drink the King's health open a barrel, supposedly filled with wine, only to find in it

the 'little Priest'.

First Williamite: (Taking out bayonet) Here let me at it! (Knocks head off barrel; Carter giving short groans at every stroke.)

Carter: Oh! be gentle.

First Williamite: Never fear I have no mind to spill it. (Takes off top.) (The King stands up pale and shaking. His cloak has fallen off and chain and order are displayed.)

First Williamite: It is the little priest!

Second Williamite: Is he King yet? Or fairy?

Matt: (Looking in.) Would anyone, now, believe that he has drunk the barrel dry?

First Williamite: I wish I had been in his place.

Mrs. Kelleher: It is trying to desert he was. That's as clear as a whistle.

Owen: The traitor! Wanting to desert the King!

Matt: But will anyone tell me now, what in the wide world did he do with all the wine?

Lady: Is not that a very strange coffin, a very strange coffin to have put about a King?

Mrs. Kelleher: Here is King James!
(They all turn to right. Sarsfield comes in. He stands still.)

Owen: Deserting your Majesty, he was!

Matt: Making away in my barrel!

First Williamite: Having drunk all the wine!

Mrs. Kelleher: Let a goat cross the threshold, and he'll make for the altar!

Sarsfield: (Taking off his hat.) Your Majesty!

James:	I wish, General Sarsfield, you would control this dangerous rabble.
All:	Sarsfield!
Mrs. Kelleher:	Who are you at all?
Sarsfield:	I am Patrick Sarsfield, a poor soldier of King James.
Mrs. Kelleher:	And where, in the name of mercy, is King James?
Sarsfield:	You are in His Majesty's presence. (He goes to help James out of the barrel.)
All together:	That his Majesty!
Mrs. Kelleher:	It seems to me we have a wisp in place of a broom.
Owen:	Misfortune on the fools that helped him!
First Williamite:	It is for him we gave up William?
Matt:	And that I myself gave up drink![14]

The humour arises more from the situation than from any significant insights into character. Matt's final comment 'And that I myself gave up drink' indicates the type of humour Lady Gregory wrings from the situation. The absence of wine, the surprise of the revelation that the 'little priest' is James, and the laments that each has sacrificed something to follow James are each funny in themselves, yet Lady Gregory makes very little effort to link the humour organically with the play or to use it as an instrument for providing significant insight into character.

The White Cockade is an imaginative elaboration of an historical incident, chiefly characterized by the

satirization of King James and glorification of Sarsfield. The tone of the play is uneven, because of an unsteady alternation of serious and farcical scenes. These scenes are incidental. They do not forward action or offer any real contribution or fresh notion of character. Though The White Cockade is more thoroughly historical than either The Canavans or The Deliverer it is not, as has been shown, a drama of sources; a drama which argues an interpretation of history or a showcase of historical data.

SECTION B: TRAGEDY

It is not surprising that Lady Gregory, who gave herself to such meticulous documentation of her plays, should have also left some record of her opinions on the more abstract questions of drama. Her concern in writing tragedy is, as she indicates in the notes to Damer's Gold, with showing 'humanity in the grip of circumstance, of fate':

> Once in that grip you know what the end will be. You may let your hero kick or struggle, but he is in the claws all the time, it is a mere question as to how nearly you will let him escape, and when you will allow the pounce. Fate itself is the protagonist, your actor cannot carry much character, it is out of place. You do not want to know the character of a wrestler you see trying his strength at a show.[15]

These comments constitute an interesting theory of tragedy, interesting in its emphasis on structure and fate (a somewhat Greek orientation), rather than on character. Tragedy is pictured as providing a scale for the measurement of strength, the strength of humanity, not of an individual. Characterization, which, as has been discussed in the previous section, holds such an important place in post-Renaissance tragedy, is relegated, by implication, to comparative insignificance. She sees tragedy as a static (humanity in the grip of circumstance) and deterministic ('but he is in the claws all the time') situation. The

drama of tragedy must then be in the exposition of the grip and the timing of the pounce.

It will be the business of the ensuing analysis to determine not only her fidelity to these sparing suggestions, but their merit and validity as sketches of dramatic criticism. In preparation for such judgements, however, a brief inquiry into the sources of her tragic works is necessary.

The materials for Grania, Kincora, and Dervogilla were obtained from traditional folk-history. A confidence in the living imagination of the people, and a sensitivity to the power and grandeur of their heroes, guided her to tap the resources of legend and myth. In so doing she was to impress upon these plays a quality that is unique in the poetry and force of their appeal. She writes herself of the decision to rely on folk history:

> For to have a real success and to come into the life of the country, one must touch a real and eternal emotion, and history comes only next to religion in our country. And although the realism of our young writers is taking the place of fantasy and romance in the cities, I still hope to see a little season given up every year to plays on history and in sequence at the Abbey. . . .[16]

One should note the accents of these sentences, 'real and eternal emotion', and 'realism' taking the place of fantasy and romance'. Nor should the concern for relating the theatre to the people, which was her permanent ambition, be disregarded. The desire for a people's theatre may not

have been such a dream, if its success is indicated by an anecdote she relates concerning the production of Kincora:

> An old farmer came up all the way from Kincora, the present Killaloe, to see it, and I heard he went away sad at the tragic ending. He said, "Brian should not to have married that woman. He should have been content with a nice, quiet girl from his own district."[17]

The material held automatic interest and relevance. Rooted in the minds of the people were the stories of Ireland's heroes and villains, representing a conscious and imaginative tradition. The extraction of the energy and mystery of folk figures from that tradition, the evocation of its creative spirit, was in effect a collaboration with the generations of the Irish race. This collaboration almost genetically determined the tone and substance of her serious plays.

Grania is a difficult play to interpret if approached, as a tragedy, with the conventional tape measures of literary criticism. It embodies, more than either Kincora or Dervogilla, her concept of tragedy, already referred to, and pursues an existence on the fringe of an Irish legend.

> If I have held but lightly to the legend, it is not because I did not know it, for in Gods and Fighting Men I have put together and rejected many versions. For the present play I have taken but enough of the fable on which to set, as on a sod of grass, the three lovers, one of whom had to die.[18]

Furthermore a 'fascination for things difficult' led her

to write this three act play with only three characters--Finn, leader of the Fianna, Grania, young and beautiful daughter of the King of Ireland, and Diarmuid, close friend of Finn, great lover, and great warrior.

Grania has come to Finn to be married. On the night before their wedding, Diarmuid brings marriage gifts commissioned by Finn for Grania. Grania immediately recognizes him as one she had fallen in love with a long time ago--the man she had never met but loved from a distance. Circumstances lead Grania to reveal inadvertently her love for Diarmuid to Finn. Finn accuses Diarmuid of treachery, and Diarmuid and Grania leave. Before departing, Diarmuid professes his loyalty to the unbelieving Finn and promises that he will not become Grania's lover. As a token of his loyalty he pledges to send to his leader each month an unbroken loaf of bread. For seven years they wander the countryside, living as companions, not lovers. Diarmuid has kept his pledge to Finn, until roused to jealousy, by seeing Grania in the embrace of the King of Foreign, he at last becomes her lover. Later Finn disguised as a beggar, arrives at their hovel, and discovers them quarrelling. By clever taunting he contrives to send Diarmuid to his death. Finn reveals himself, but Grania, repentant of their recent quarrel, remains faithful to Diarmuid and refuses to succumb to the pleadings of the still love-sick Finn. Diarmuid returns mortally wounded. His dying words

are outpourings of his remorse for the violation of the pledge to his friend. Shocked and deeply hurt by his inattention to her in his last moments, Grania determines that his profession of love was a sham, and turns to a now cold Finn to take her as wife. Grania and Finn exit together.

Edward Storer has raised objections to the psychology of the characters--Grania's changes of mind, Diarmuid's acting out of character, and Finn's final renunciation of passion:

> One does not know how much of the story of her play Lady Gregory owes to history, and how much is the fruit of her own invention, but the plot of Grania, as she has written it, is essentially an undramatic one, containing as it does a romantic improbability of the first order. . . . We are faced with the idea of a lover who is true to a promise given to his rival rather than to his beloved. In pursuance of his quixotic devotion to his fixed idea he wanders about Ireland for seven years in companionship with Grania, who, however, does not live with him as his wife. It is only when, after these seven years of his wandering, his jealousy is awakened through seeing another man make love to his companion that he openly declares himself Grania's lover. . . . Then the rest of the drama hangs upon changes of mind on the part of the characters that are so arbitrary that we cannot believe in them. The lifelong devotion of Grania to Diarmuid, which has survived the seven year's wandering in the wild places of Ireland, is dissipated in a moment at the death bed of Diarmuid, who addresses his dying words to Finn instead of to his wife.[19]

Storer's remarks seemingly ignore the not strictly human quality of the characters in Grania (i.e., they are 'fantastic' or 'romantic'); as well his criticism of the psychology of

these characters is a misrepresentation of Lady Gregory's objectives (cf. remarks on tragedy). They are useful, however, as a rebuttal of them will uncover the basic premises of this tragedy.

An attempt to account for Grania by the traditional criteria of tragedy is simply irrelevant. In Grania the gravity or seriousness associated with tragedy is obviously in evidence. It is not generated by characterization but rather is a result of the stature of a legendary figure. Lady Gregory is, at least in this play, true to her strictures about character in tragedy. There is, for instance, little if any introspection in the play, and actions are conducted on a plane of broad and bare, often unexplained, simplicity. The mere sight of Diarmuid, for example, is sufficient to have Grania renounce Finn, and Diarmuid's reaction to her is equally uncomplicated. Finn's adoption of a course of seven long years of jealousy is not meant to be taken as a piece of realism. The sending of the unbroken loaves of bread is yet another piece of fanciful invention. The characters in this play are not natural or human in the manner of the characters of Shakespeare, Sophocles, or O'Neill. They partake of a different existence. One may perhaps regard their apparent simplicity as a token of Lady Gregory's notions of tragedy. A more adequate account would see them in a context of plausibility supplied by the background of

folk-history. The stature of characters, so necessary for tragedy, is not, as we have seen in Grania, a function of characterization, but a result of the raw presentation of folk heroes. The intellectual background of an age is the context for art. The larger conceptions of life and death, and the dominant philosophies and ethics of a period, set a code for the action of a character, and the acceptance or nonacceptance of that code are signals for his ruin or salvation. However, while this context provides us with a rationale for action, it does not fully explain the height of tragedy. The tragic importance transcends the limitations of a given rationale for action.

Lady Gregory is outside such descriptions altogether. She does not place her plays in the context of a code of ethics, however significant, but rather nourishes characters from the broad and rich substance of folk-history material. The background of her plays is thus of primary significance. It is responsible for the height of her tragedies. The tragedy of Grania lies in the magnificence of all three characters, the significance they hold for people. The long, sad seven years, during which honour vies with love, assume almost epic proportions, not associated with characters of more realistic drama. The figures in this play are cloaked with a special and unique importance, a blend of fantasy and myth. The dramatic logic of the play, too, is derived from context and background. The

vacillations of Grania, the improbability of Diarmuid, the vagaries of Finn, while valid objections to a more realistic play, are irrelevant within that context.

There is yet another reason why Storer's objections do not apply, a reason directly associated with Lady Gregory's definition of tragedy. Character, it will be remembered, she regarded as out of place in tragedy. One came to see tragedy, to witness the strength of humanity, to see humanity in the grip of circumstance, of fate. She has written in the notes to this play:

> Yet where Love itself, with its shadow Jealousy, is the true protagonist I could not feel that more (characters) were needed.[20]

Love is the protaganist in Grania. It is the force which grips all three characters. It is an unchallengeable force. Grania, Finn, and Diarmuid, all without volition, submit to it and it moves them to actions which they, themselves, cannot perhaps understand. The conflict love creates is triangular, an agony born of adherence to commitments under pressure from love:

Finn: I knew enough of the heat of love in my time, and I am very glad to have done with it now, and to be safe from its torments and its whip and its scourge.

Grania: We do not take it up of ourselves but it sweeps us away before it, and asks no leave. When that blast comes upon us, we are but feathers whirled before it with the dust.[21]

Finn: It is not a great wonder the candle you lighted not to have been quenched in all that time? But the light in your grey eyes is my desire for ever, and I am pulled here and there over hills and through hollows. For my life was as if cut in two halves on that night that put me to and fro; and the half that was full and flowing was put behind me, and it has been on the ebb since then. But you and I together could have changed the world entirely, and put a curb upon the spring tide, and bound the seven elements with our strength.[22]

. . . . . .

Finn: For we three have been these seven years as if alone in the world; and it was the cruelty and the malice of love made its sport with us, when we thought it was our own way we were taking, driving us here and there, knocking you in between us, like the ball between two goals, and the hurlers being out of sight and beyond the boundaries of the world.[23]

Fate is Love and all three characters are completely consumed by its arbitrary influence. In summary, Grania is an imaginative narrative of romantically magnificent characters, embroiled in a triangular conflict of Love.

> Dervorgilla was a red-haired woman, and it was she put the great curse on Ireland, bringing in the English through MacMurrough, that she went to from O'Rourke. It was to Henry the Second MacMurrough went, and he sent Strongbow, and they stopped in Ireland ever since. But who knows but another race might be worse, such as the Spaniards, that were scattered along the whole coast of Connacht at the time of the Armada? And the laws are good enough. I heard it said the English will be dug out of their graves one day for the sake of their law. As to Dervorgilla, she was not brought away by force, she went to MacMurrough herself. For there are men in the world that have a coaxing way, and sometimes women are weak.[24]

Dervorgilla is an excellent choice for heroine. The responsibility for bringing the English to Ireland makes her

a key figure in Irish history. In this play Lady Gregory moves away from the atmosphere of Grania. The story told of Dervorgilla is in great part dependent on the character of the old woman. As a heroine she is very human and the suffering of the play is centered intensely on the remorse and guilt the old woman feels. For forty years Dervorgilla has been living in an Abbey at Mellifont, hoping by prayer and by charity to atone for the evil she has brought upon her country. Her true identity remains unknown in the province, the countryfolk think of her only as a holy and kindly benefactress. She presides at a local tournament in the company of her two loyal servants, Flann and his wife Mona, who are aware of her secret. On the outskirts of the tournament are discovered a troop of English soldiers. A minstrel appears singing songs of the past and ballads of Diarmuid and Dervorgilla. Fearful because of a dream that she will be discovered, Dervorgilla sends Flann out with money to the minstrel so that he will cease his songs. By this time the singer has left the local people and has gone to the English. When Flann overcomes him he is entertaining the soldiers. Annoyed by his interference with their sport the soldiers kill Flann. Distracted by grief at the death of her husband, Mona blurts out her mistress' secret. On this knowledge the children, who have competed in the tournament, return their prizes to Dervorgilla.

The play is in one act, very tautly constructed, and contains a number of touches and inventions that make it one of Lady Gregory's best. The opening scene shows Flann and Mona preparing for the arrival of Dervorgilla, and establishes neatly a portrait of the old lady. She is shown as having a great reputation:

Flann: There is no occasion for her to be fretting or lonesome, and the way her name is up through the whole of the province.

Mona: Why wouldn't it be up, after the way she fed old and young through the bad times, giving means and cattle to those the English had robbed.

Flann: It is royal she is in giving as in race. Look at all the weight of gold the Abbey got from her, and the golden vessels upon the high altar.

Mona: No wonder the people to be saying she will surely get the name of a saint; the darling queen-woman of the Abbey of Mellifont.[25]

Our sympathies are immediately drawn to her as a character. Dervorgilla herself expresses the terrible concern over her guilt and the longing for peace. This concern is the motivating force of the story:

Dervorgilla: I can go in peace if I know I have left peace after me, and content, but sometimes I am afraid. I had a dream last night, a troublesome dream--What is that? I hear a cry.[26]

There follows a scene wherein Mamie, a young girl, brings in the body of a dead crane shot by an English bowman. It drips blood on the lady's cloak. It is a skilful piece of

stagecraft for it immediately shifts Dervorgilla's attention once again to her responsibility:

Dervorgilla: (Looking at cloak which Mona is wiping.) It has brought to my mind other blood that was spilled, and that I, I myself, have to answer for.[27]

Her good deeds and a half-lifetime of repentance do not give her confidence in forgiveness.

Mona: Indeed and surely you have made it up with God. Surely you are forgiven and well forgiven! It is God Himself will open to you the gate of heaven!

Dervorgilla: But the people, the people; will they ever forgive what I have done!

Dervorgilla emerges from these passages as a character worthy of our respect and sympathy. She is not presented as trying to escape her responsibility, merely attempting to sincerely and fully make atonement. She is strong enough to both bear the guilt and to try desperately to erase it. Nor is she a victim of pride. Referring to her great charities she says 'Thank God I have leave yet to be a giver of gifts'.[29]

The songmaker, a poet, is a figure of some extra significance. He is not supernatural yet he enjoys a power above the figures of Mona and Flann, perhaps because of his link with the wisdom of the poets. In a twist of irony that generates remarkable feeling Dervorgilla actually moves him to sing the song of herself. She reprimands him for his uncharitable stories about Diarmuid and then in an

effort to please her, for she has been kind, he attempts to justify Diarmuid. The irony is painful:

Songmaker: I'll make out a case for him. I can tell out what led King Diarmuid into his sin and his treachery; and that is the thing that brings all mischief into the world, the changeable wagging nature of a woman. (Sings)--

. . . . . .

The rat in the larder, the fire in the thatch
The guest to be fattening, the children famished;
If 't was Diarmuid's call that brought in the Gall
Let the weight of it fall upon Dervorgilla![30]

The song following upon her terrible dream causes her to fret unreasonably. Her worry intensifies.

Dervorgilla: The dream of the night was true. It is coming true. My sin is remembered--I shall be known--I saw it all--they stooped to pick up stones--there was no forgiveness when they knew me to be Dervorgilla.[31]

Flann attempts to comfort her with these wide words:

Flann: . . . And if they should see you now itself, how would they know those holy withered cheeks to belong to the lovely lady that set kings fighting in her bloom.[32]

The chance song of the minstrel then causes her to send Flann to have him leave the province. During his absence she fully recounts her guilt and does not attempt to avoid the responsibility for it. A cry is heard and Flann is discovered killed by the English. This shocks Mona who inadvertently reveals the secret. Dervorgilla responds in a last tragic speech.

Dervorgilla: . . . (The young men have all gone. Mamie comes in as if to lay down her gift, but draws back. Dervorgilla turns to her.) . . . do not separate yourself from your companions for my sake. For there is little of my life but is spent, and there has come upon me this day all the pain of the world and its anguish, seeing and knowing that a deed once done has no undoing, and the lasting trouble my unfaithfulness has brought upon you and your children for ever. (Mamie lays down her necklace and goes away sadly.) There is kindness in your unkindness, not leaving me to go and face Michael and the Scales of Judgement wrapped in comfortable words, and the praises of the poor, and the lulling of psalms, but from the swift, unflinching, terrible judgement of the young![33]

Dervorgilla is a splendid creation. Lady Gregory presents her as a scrupulous judge of herself. Both proud and strong, her refusal to accept the tokens of forgiveness, 'the praises of the poor, the lulling of psalms', as remission, and her keen perception of herself are qualities of tragic depth. She is presented under pressure from her own conscience, and does not ease that pressure by shrinking from it. She is not self-pitying or sentimental. The hard and bitter scene at the end of the play, she accepts. She finds in the 'unkindness, kindness', for she sees the 'swift, unflinching, terrible judgement of the young' as an equitable punishment for her crime.

The play is dramatically strong. Flann and Mona are good characters; their fidelity to Dervorgilla, and especially Mona's insistence on Dervorgilla's innocence, even after Flann's death, accounts for our ready acceptance

of the heroine. They provide, as well, a contrast with the depth and singularity of Dervorgilla, and are the agents of our original impressions of her. The action moves almost organically, the inventions of the crane, the dream, and Flann's death, contributing, along with irony, to the build-up of feeling at the last moment. The speeches, some of which have been cited, and the language, are fittingly poetic, and never artificial. There is no problem of plausibility. Even Malone, at times Lady Gregory's sharpest critic, has remarked of Dervorgilla:

> No audience could remain unmoved as the tragedy of the unhappy Queen unfolds itself; there is strength, power, and nobility in it which will bear comparison with similar plays by Ibsen, Strindberg, or Hauptmann.[34]

Kincora was the first folk-history play written by Lady Gregory. Her own report of its reception by the Irish public is enthusiastic:

> It went well with our audience. There was some enthusiasm for it, being the first historical play we had produced.[35]

Kincora is wedded more closely to history, than either Grania or Dervorgilla. The play revolves on the attempt of King Brian to establish in Ireland a universal peace, and to make Ireland a country of pride and culture. The movement of armies and the deposition of kings leads Elizabeth Coxhead to class it as an epic. This is a tenable thesis as much of the action is concerned with epic materials. However, interest in the play itself is not completely

explained by its historical elements. This is rather a product of the two main characters, Brian and Gormlieth. The historical action is the extension of the interplay between these two or between Brian and the other leaders included in the story. The shifting, unsatisfied queen is a strong and determined figure, immersed in personal ambition and pride. Brian is decked with the garb of heroes, being both warrior and statesman.

The play shows Brian's disappointment both in peace and love (the former, we are induced to believe, being more important), and in the impossibility of achieving a Utopia. Lady Gregory seems undecided in this play--undecided whether the material of history is to be, in itself, the locus of the drama, or whether it is to function as a backdrop for the human drama. The result is a vacillation between two themes, Brian's ambitions and Ireland's 'ambition'. In the later plays, which have already been discussed, she turned more to the 'use' of history for effects; exploiting it for atmosphere, setting, and dimension, permitting its 'facts' less and less direct attention. Grania and Dervorgilla are both more imaginative than Kincora.

Still, Brian, even if regarded as an experimental figure, is interesting. His ambitions are as has been said, idealistic and inextricably involved with Ireland. Ireland is important in the play as it is a part of Brian's life

force. Brian is involved in a struggle between love and duty. This conflict is not explored, as it is, for example, in Anthony and Cleopatra, rather it is merely presented with its tragic consequence.

Brian is passive; he has no flaw of character. He improves rather than destroys himself. It is written in the 'book of Fate' that he will be slain in the battle of Clontarf with the Danes, and will then find eternal peace, the real peace towards which he has been striving. Gormlieth is merely the practical instrument of the execution of this fate. She does not stir his ambition as Lady MacBeth does the yearnings of MacBeth; she merely brings about, against his will, certain actions that he resigns himself to.

The Gaol Gate is a little play, of one act with only three characters. It demonstrates vividly Lady Gregory's mastery of the one-act form as well as her mature sensitivity to character and feeling. It is the story of the hanging of a man seen through the reactions of his wife and mother (the nature of the crime is not directly stated in the play, though we know a shot was fired). An etude of commiseration, it is drama not of action but of emotion, reflected in the postulates of peasant existence.

It is not heroic drama and is therefore at a far remove from the three plays considered above. The hero, if the play can be said to have one, is of course the son,

but he does not appear in the play. The two women receive a letter from the prison, but not being able to read it go there themselves, believing it will give them permission to see Denis Cahel. They are under the impression that he is ill and it is only when the Gatekeeper reads the letter that they are informed of his death. They assume at first that he had died as a result of a 'great cough and a cold.' The revelation of his death is suffering enough. Mary Cahel, the mother, cries out in grief:

Mary Cahel: There is lasting kindness in Heaven when no kindness is found on earth. There will surely be mercy found for him, and not in the hard judgement of men! But my boy that was best in the world, that never rose a hair of my head, to have died with his name under blemish, and left a great shame to his child! Better for him to have killed the whole world than to give any witness at all![36]

The word had been given round that Denis Cahel had turned informer on his comrades. The sting of such a deed, the blight it would leave to his child, is almost more awful than the death itself. Mary Cushin, his wife, gives expression to the fear that it shall leave her husband's name forever sullied:

Mary Cushin: . . . . But my grief to be blackened in the time of the blackening of the rushes! Your name never to rise up again in the growing time of the year![37]

The figure of the Gatekeeper is in striking counter point to the two grief-stricken women:

Gatekeeper: Those that break the law must be made an example of. Why would they be laid out like a well behaved man? A long rope and a short burying, that is the order for a man that is hanged.[38]

When the Gatekeeper in the quotation above reveals that Denis has been hanged, and has not died of illness, it brings an exclamation of anger from his wife:

Mary Cushin: A man that was hanged! O Denis, was it they that made an end of you and not the great God at all? His curse and my own curse upon them that did not let you die on the pillow! The curse of God be fulfilled that was on them before they were born! My curse upon them that brought harm on you, and on Terry Fury that fired the shot![39]

The news that Denis has not informed follows immediately. The play ends on Mary Cahel's exultant outburst of pride in her son's integrity:

Mary Cahel: Are there any people in the streets at all till I call on them to come hither? Did they ever hear in Galway such a thing to be done, a man to die for his neighbour? . . . . I will stoop on a stick through half a hundred years, I will never be tired with praising! Come hither, Mary Cushin, till we'll shout it through the roads, Denis Cahel died for his neighbour![40]

The mood this tragedy conveys is a curious blend of grief and joy which is expertly calculated and achieved by the gradual unfolding of information to the women. The levels of excitement in this play, first the concern over Denis's cold, then the knowledge of his death, followed by the knowledge that his death has been by hanging, and finally the revelation that he did not inform, develop in a crescendo

pattern. The organic and natural movement of these situations, the quality of realism, are rare and high achievements. Malone comments:

> The Gaol Gate has all the tragic intensity of Riders to the Sea, reaching a climax in the triumphant 'caoin' of grief and joy with which the mother greets the news of her son's fidelity till death. All the elements of doubt and uncertainty, pity and helplessness, are combined in this little play to make it one of the great tragic experiences of the modern theatre.[41]

These four plays (Grania, Kincora, Dervorgilla, and The Gaol Gate) are the substance of Lady Gregory's efforts at tragedy. That the effort is distinctive does not require their acceptance as fully successful. Understanding Lady Gregory's penchant for experiment, the range of content and structure they manifest is not surprising. Since they are distinctive and variable their evaluation must be conducted on a somewhat ad hoc basis. The criterion of an Aristotelian description does not apply to them, nor indeed do most of the familiar concepts of tragedy. They must be approached directly, and put to the universal test of effectiveness on their own terms.

The three folk-histories are alike in their reliance on legendary, heroic figures and the energizing power of popular myths. Miss Ellis-Fermor has written with admirable perspicacity on the major failing of Grania:

> To feel the full effect of that story it must be read in its place in the Finn legend, for it is the character of Finn that supports the story and gives significance to what is actually only one

> episode in a heroic tale. For Finn passes, in the course of the saga, from a young man, beautiful, the bravest among men and the most irresistible to women, to become, in this episode, an old, grey-haired king, obstinate and vengeful, defeated in love by the younger Diarmuid. . . . Much of this must necessarily be lost when a part of the saga is shaped into a play. We cannot ask that a play should reproduce the epic quality of the original, for this was leisured and non-dramatic in method. Lady Gregory. . . . has lost much of the poetic power in the story and has lost it, it seems, by a too nice attention to dramatic technique and a disregard for those more fundamental elements of drama, passion, tension of situation and absolute harmony between character and conduct. She has hampered herself needlessly at the beginning by limiting her character list to the three main people, and in doing so, has shorn away the great heroic background from which they all sprang.[42]

The limitation of character, with its consequent limitation of scene, action and variety, destroys pace and saps interest.

In Dervorgilla she remedies this flaw. There are several other characters, a greater variety of action, and a more detailed concentration on the presentation of a single character. The character of Dervorgilla, her stature, is not solely a result of background. It develops through contrast with and report by lesser figures, as well as through the picture of the rigid and honest determination she herself portrays. The plot has less fantasy than Grania, and while we may maintain the plausibility of Grania theoretically, its romantic overtones are at times too emphatic for an audience or reader to accept without irritation.

Kincora has a magnificent sweep of action, too magnificent a sweep. The rush of action and the heroic scale are distracting to the drama of Brian himself.

The Gaol Gate is poignant where Grania and Kincora are possibly impressive. It seems that when Lady Gregory unites her sympathy to the plight of these peasant characters, when the drama is on a more realistic plane, she has a surer instinct for the proper emotion.

Generally considered her tragedies are an uneven performance; Grania and Kincora being overloaded or overwhelmed by their background, Dervorgilla and The Gaol Gate successful in the selection of incidents and situations that are expressive of the dignity and emotion of tragedy. Only Kincora lacks the technical neatness she exhibits throughout the other three plays, and all have a high standard of language, poetic without losing the flavour of the natural. The lack of a central hero in all but Dervorgilla does not, as expected, necessarily dissipate our sympathies, which are engaged by a more general presentation of situations.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

Comedy and Folk-History have been the areas of Lady Gregory's drama under discussion, and it is now appropriate to conclude this survey with some remarks on her creativity and achievement within this range. Her development is a spotty one, chiefly confined to specific successes within each of these categories. Her plays are successful when they have, as a core, some directly apprehended emotion, communicated through realistic portrayal of character. It was the main tenet of the chapter on comedy that Lady Gregory realized her potential only when she moved from a comedy centered in situation to one more directly bearing on character and emotion. The studies of Folk-History support this. The White Cockade is most impressive in those scenes between James and Sarsfield when an audience warms to the real presence of an emotion. The more famous scene of James' emergence from the barrel is much more a routine matter. Lady Gregory's fascination for legend and the romantic side of the Irish imagination, at first displayed in individual characters, such as McDonough and Cracked Mary, dominated her imagination in the writing of the tragedies of the Folk-History Series. But it was not viable material until blended with real emotion and real life. Grania is a major attempt to

exploit such material, yet the three figures of this play, with the awful immobility of their passions, are remote and stillborn. Dervorgilla has a locus of real emotion which vitalizes and complements the otherwise static background. Even Lady Gregory's marked facility with dialect and speech is little more than a stage trick till wedded to the purposeful expression of deeply felt emotion as in the magnificent speeches of The Gaol Gate and the simple exchanges of The Rising of the Moon. Emotion is the substance of Lady Gregory's dramatic achievement.

Intellectually, many of Lady Gregory's plays are like many of her characters, barren. Her development is not marked by ideas in motion but by an increasing technical competence in league with the presentation of direct emotion. Much of her simplicity is in an intellectual domain. The Image is probably her most complex play and it is complex precisely because of its intellectual reference. It has a rumour of philosophy and more than a whisper of her own interpretation of an aspect of the Irish life and temperament. Too often, however, an audience is amused rather than excited. Too often delightful scenes of confusion and talk are all that a play has to offer. Much may be said of the underlying technical competence of Spreading the News; the phrase that most adequately defines it and others of its breed is 'sheer fun'. Comedy demands a background of ideas, an interpretation of life, as much as does any form of

literature or art. Lady Gregory does not supply one. What is the intellectual content of Damer's Gold? Intellectual content may be defined as a play's interpretative potential. The interpretation of Damer's Gold and many other plays is an exercise on the obvious and the static. Too much has been sacrificed for the charming portrait of the simple life. If an attempt is made at excusing such a sacrifice by arguing that it was Lady Gregory's intention to so limit herself, or that she felt that such simplicity was a dramatic asset, then the criticism becomes one of herself rather than her plays. Literature must operate from a base of ideas, be they religious, aesthetic, philosophic, critical or social. Lady Gregory's drama has no such base. She is more narrowly concerned with the ambitions of the Irish Dramatic Movement and with her own notions of peasant life.

Her plays are deficient in the noble carrying force of great literature. Curiously enough, they are so because of the superiority of her faculty of observation over her faculty of imagination. It is true to say that while she was very sensitive to experience, she was also bounded by it. Her reactions to experience were both controlled and predictable, and solely on a conscious level. As a diary of creative experience the notes to the plays constitute a slender volume. They speak not of an evolving sensibility, or of the artist's growth through

experience, but of a folklorist's novel attention to unsuspected potential in sources. They document an unswerving fealty to a corpus of wisdom and poetry awaiting the formative influence of art. As a document their importance may be twofold. Firstly, they bear witness to the sustained resolution of the Irish Dramatic Movement to produce a distinct theatre by harmonizing art and the national life. Secondly, and more particularly, in the case of Lady Gregory, they demonstrate her associative reflex, which however useful in the synthesis of disparate incidents, does not exert a formative discipline.

The numerous anecdotes, impressions, and incidents cited indicate an alert and sensitive observer. But there is a prejudice in her observations. The prejudice lies in her belief that the 'wisdom and poetry' of the people is fixed and determinate, that it is in itself adequate for art. And so in each instance she unlocks some truth. The life of the peasants presents itself as a series of axioms. In this sense her observation fails. Regardless of the incidental character of her experiences and their random suggestibility, she is not insightful. They do not forward a fresh perspective on life, nor in a significant sense do they widen an existent one. They serve her as guides to the already constituted wisdom of the people, to the capture of their unique

psychology and opinions.

This one point provides the basis for a full appraisal of Lady Gregory's achievement. When the acceptance of observed details and the submission to already established values is applied to light works she is most successful. The comedies, which are generally regarded as her best works, could never have been written without her eye for detail and ear for speech. Yet how little do they embody thought, or, in most instances forward themes that transcend the action.

Her most moving plays are the smaller ones, such as The Gaol Gate, The Rising of the Moon, The Workhouse Ward, and McDonough's Wife. In these plays she moves away from the situational and surface life of the 'Cloon' comedies, and the distance of her 'unfamiliar' tragedies, to a plane of pure and direct emotion. Lady Gregory is capable of capturing moments of life that are rich in their very human quality; the sergeant's awakened sympathy or the friendship of two quarrelling beggars are unerring dramatic portraits. The skill with which she communicates her sure instincts into such emotions, within the one act structure, is of a high order. Basically she is content with the picture and feeling of life these plays afford. They are not built as much on characterization, if characterization is regarded as individual dramatic identity, as on the interaction between characters and the concentrated

tension of her limited situations (as was discussed earlier in reference to The Gaol Gate). Organic and compressed, the suddenness and simplicity of dramatic statement compensates for any thematic familiarity. In these plays she excels in the powerful presentation of people, conditioned by a way of life to a pattern of suffering and acceptance, sympathy and understanding. These people, somehow, are never really individualized, but are specific (as opposed to individual) expressions of a general or universal psychology.

McDonough's Wife is unmistakably an Irish story. The pride and skill of McDonough transcend more literal conceptions of 'realism'. There is a zest, a lift, in the glimpse of that strange joy, and a pleasureable acquiescence to the unfamiliar logic that creates it. The flicker of splendor in this play is a rare touch. Similarly The Workhouse Ward is a distinctly Irish play. All its identification marks are Irish--garrulity, temper, rhetoric--but it is Irish in an even more significant sense. The rationale of the drama--the logic of its theme and implied psychology--is peculiarly Irish. If not the quarrelling itself, the very mode of quarrel is a distinct and unique national characteristic. And this is Lady Gregory's forte, the intuitive, quick perception into the feelings and psychology of her people. She may lack the capacity to use this perception for the projection of strong and grand images of

the individual, but as an artist of the general mind and mood, she is perhaps unsurpassed. With Yeats in 1898 she had written the following statement in the hope of obtaining guarantees of money for the theatre:

> Our statement--it seems now a little pompous--began:
> "We propose to have performed in Dublin, in the spring of every year certain Celtic and Irish plays, which whatever be their degree of excellence will be written with a high ambition, and so to build up a Celtic and Irish school of dramatic literature. We hope to find in Ireland an uncorrupted and imaginative audience trained to listen by its passion for oratory, and believe that our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure for us a tolerant welcome, and that freedom to experiment which is not found in theatres of England, and without which no new movements in art or literature can succeed. We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism. We are confident of the support of all Irish people, who are weary of misrepresentation, in carrying out a work that is outside all the political questions that divide us."[1]

It was an attempt at cultural nationalism. The dramas of the Irish Theatre were to be distinct, free to experiment, free from alien traditions. They were to capitalize on the resources of dialect for diction, and Irish story-telling and legend for subject matter. Educational in the manner of all literature, the Irish Dramatic Movement differed only in that its founders set out more consciously with this ambition, and proceeded more vigorously, as if to rescue their country from the contamination of foreign sources:

"ADVICE TO PLAYWRIGHTS WHO ARE SENDING PLAYS TO THE ABBEY, DUBLIN

> The Abbey Theatre is a subsidised theatre with an educational object. It will, therefore, be useless as a rule to send it plays intended as popular entertainments and that alone, or originally written for performance by some popular actor at the popular theatres.[2]

Lady Gregory was an asset to the project for more reasons than her intensely practical nature. She had spent many years gathering folklore and stories of the Irish peasantry, and had also gained facility in the idioms, patterns, and accents of the Kiltartan speech. This background was to be of immense assistance to her in her own work and as well a great contribution to the work of Yeats and other writers. The extent of her scholarship and her closeness to peasant life meant that she had a greater direct relation to the ideals of the movement than any other of the founders.

Before her involvement in the Abbey theatre Lady Gregory had not been indolent. She had edited her husband's biography in 1894:

> Then about the beginning of the century, she became interested in Gaelic, got instruction in the language from local teachers, started classes in Gaelic among her tenantry, worked hard in our National Library putting together translations of old sagas and making "Cuchulain of Muirthemne" (1902), "Gods and Fighting Men" (1904), and a lovely book, "Poets and Dreamers" (1903), which consists of translations of Douglas Hyde's little plays and bits of Kiltartan folklore. Later came "Saints and Wonders" (1907), "The Kiltartan History Book" (1909) and "Visions and Beliefs" (1920). But her place in Irish

> literature depends little on these books, important as some of them seem to us. Her place depends on her achievement as a dramatist.[3]

Her dramatic work was, from the beginning, spontaneous in character, and natural in setting, theme, and evolution. It has been recorded by herself and by the standard historians of the movement that her writing began almost unintentionally and indeed, perhaps, accompanied by a measure of surprise. Working with other writers, discussing theories, helping with dialect, at times writing a sentence or two, and finally entering into full collaboration with Yeats, she gradually unfolded her potential for dramatic work. Next she was adduced by necessity to write filler plays, little comic sketches, to place between the more substantial poetic works of Yeats and Synge. She responded to the demands for a balanced repertoire with flexibility and accomplishment. Having begun, so unconscious of her own powers, she continued until in volume (she wrote in all thirty-one plays) and popular appeal, she was one of the Abbey's most significant and successful playwrights.

In finding a testimony to the importance of Lady Gregory's person to the functioning of the Abbey let us refer to Malone:

> Her greatest work, and her most lasting achievement, however, is in that theatre which she did so much to establish. Of Lady Gregory more than any other single one of the four who founded the Theatre it may be said, the Irish Theatre is hers

> and she made it. Because not only did she provide the necessary organizing ability in the initial stages, but she also moulded its policy and its plays in ways that will be demonstrated in these pages from its very earliest days. She has been a Director of the Theatre from the first. . . .[4]

It is important to realize the enormous extent of her involvement in the Irish Theatre, and her contribution as full-time handmaiden and charlady of the Abbey. Her dedication was outstanding and it can be counted primary in the impulses that brought her more and more directly into its spiritual and creative renaissance.

FOOTNOTES

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER I

[1]Yeats, W.B., "The Irish Dramatic Movement", in Yeats, Selected Criticism, ed. Norman Jeffares (London, 1964), pp. 195-196.

[2]Notes to The Canavans, Irish Folk-History Plays, Second Series (London, 1912), p. 189.

[3]Ellis-Fermor, Una, The Irish Dramatic Movement (London, 1967), pp. 33-34.

[4]Gregory, Isabella Augusta, Our Irish Theatre (New York, 1965).

[5]Ibid., p. 89.

[6]Ibid., pp. 100-101.

[7]Lady Gregory's Journals, ed. Lennox Robinson (Dublin, 1946), p. 51.

[8]Cf. Notes to Damer's Gold, New Irish Comedies (London, 1913), p. 158, "I had been forced to write comedy because it was wanted for our theatre, to put on at the end of the verse plays."

[9]Saddlemyer, Ann, In Defence of Lady Gregory, Playwright (Dublin, 1966), p. 35. Miss Saddlemyer's quotation is recorded in her own notes as from an unpublished letter dated 26 November, 1906, in possession of Mrs. Yeats.

[10]Malone, A.E., The Irish Drama (London, 1929), p. 59.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER II, COMEDY

SECTION A

[1]Coxhead, Elizabeth, Lady Gregory, A Literary Portrait (London, 1961), pp. 65-73.

[2]Notes to Damer's Gold, op. cit., p. 158.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 159.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., p. 160.

[7]Ibid., pp. 160-161.

[8]Ibid., p. 161.

[9]Notes to The Canavans, op. cit., p. 189.

[10]Malone, The Irish Drama, op. cit., p. 60.

[11]Notes to Spreading the News, Lady Gregory: Selected Plays, chosen by Elizabeth Coxhead (London, 1962), p. 51.

[12]Notes to Hyacinth Halvey, Lady Gregory: Selected Plays, op. cit., p. 82.

[13]Notes to The Workhouse Ward, Lady Gregory: Selected Plays, op. cit., p. 95.

[14]Notes to Hanrahan's Oath, The Image and Other Plays (London, 1922), p. 134.

[15]Hyacinth Halvey, Lady Gregory: Selected Plays, op. cit., p.81.

[16]Coxhead, Lady Gregory, op. cit., p. 82.

[17]Hyacinth Halvey, op. cit., p. 55.

[18]Ibid., pp. 55-56.

[19]Ellis-Fermor, The Irish Dramatic Movement, op. cit., p. 145.

[20]Notes to The Full Moon, New Irish Comedies, op. cit., pp. 156-157.

[21]The Full Moon, op. cit., p. 47.

[22]Ibid., p. 55.

[23]Ibid., p. 59.

[24]The Jackdaw, Seven Short Plays (Dublin, 1911), pp. 106-107.

[25]Ibid., p. 131.

[26]Ibid., p. 120.

[27]Notes to The Jackdaw, op. cit., p. 206.

[28]Our Irish Theatre, op. cit., p. 90.

[29]The Bogie Men, Seven Short Plays, op. cit., p. 21.

[30]Ibid., p. 22.

[31]Ibid., pp. 22-23.

[32]Ibid., pp. 15-16.

[33]Ibid., pp. 6-7.

[34]Ibid., pp. 9-10.

[35]Coats, New Irish Comedies, op. cit., p. 68.

[36]Ibid., p. 86.

[37] Ibid., p. 87.

[38] Notes to Coats, op. cit., p. 158.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Damer's Gold, New Irish Comedies, op. cit., p. 92.

[41] Ibid., p. 102.

[42] Ibid., pp. 128-129.

[43] Ibid., p. 96.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., p. 102.

[46] Notes to The Workhouse Ward, op. cit., p. 95.

[47] The Workhouse Ward, op. cit., p. 85.

[48] Ibid., pp. 91-92.

[49] Our Irish Theatre, op. cit., p. 96.

[50] Ibid.

[51] The Rising of the Moon, Lady Gregory: Selected Plays; op. cit. p. 26.

[52] Ibid., p. 28.

[53] Ellis-Fermor, The Irish Dramatic Movement, op. cit., p. 40.

[54] Notes to McDonough's Wife, New Irish Comedies, op. cit. p. 164.

[55] McDonough's Wife, op. cit., p. 151.

[56] Ibid., pp. 153-154.

[57]Notes to McDonough's Wife, op. cit., p. 164.

[58]Notes to The Image, The Image and Other Plays (London, 1922), pp. 97-98.

[59]Ibid., pp. 99-100.

[60]The Image, op. cit., p. 94.

[61]Ibid., pp. 95-96.

[62]Notes to The Image, op. cit., pp. 97-98.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER II, COMEDY

SECTION B (DIALOGUE)

[63]"The Irish Dramatic Movement" in Yeats; Selected Criticism, op. cit., pp. 196-198.

[64]Saddlemyer, In Defence of Lady Gregory, op. cit., p. 33.

[65]Ellis-Fermor, The Irish Dramatic Movement, op. cit., p. 141.

[66]Notes to The Bogie Men, op. cit., p. 155.

[67]"The Irish Dramatic Movement" in Yeats; Selected Criticism, op. cit., pp. 196-197.

[68]Hanrahan's Oath, The Image and Other Plays, op. cit., p. 111.

[69]Ibid., p. 104.

[70]Spreading the News, op. cit., p. 36.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Ibid., p. 37.

[73]Notes to Hanrahan's Oath, op. cit., p. 134.

[74]Hanrahan's Oath, op. cit., pp. 110-111.

[75]Ibid., p. 133.

[76]Ibid., p. 112.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Ibid., pp. 116-117.

[79]Notes to Hanrahan's Oath, op. cit., p. 134.

[80]Ibid.

[81]The Workhouse Ward, op. cit., p. 91.

[82]Synge, J. Preface to The Playboy of the Western World, Collected Works IV, ed. Saddlemyer (London, 1968), pp. 54-55.

[83]Coats, op. cit., p. 31.

[84]Ibid., p. 84.

[85]Ibid.

[86]The Bogie Men, op. cit., p. 6.

[87]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[88]Damer's Gold, op. cit., p. 107.

[89]Ibid., p. 115.

[90]Spreading the News, op. cit., p. 48.

[91]Ibid., p. 49.

[92]Ibid., p. 50.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER III, FOLK HISTORY

SECTION A COMEDY

[1]Notes to Spreading the News, op. cit., p. 51.

[2]Notes to The Deliverer, Irish Folk-History Plays, Second Series, op. cit., pp. 195-196.

[3]The Deliverer, op. cit., p. 183.

[4]Notes to The Canavans, op. cit., p. 189.

[5]Prologue to The Alchemist, Ben Jonson, ed. C.H. Herford and Percy Simpson, Vol. V (Oxford, 1937), p. 294.

[6]Prologue to Every Man in His Humour, Ben Jonson, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 303.

[7]The Canavans, Irish Folk-History Plays, Second Series, op. cit., p. 13.

[8]Notes to The White Cockade, Lady Gregory; Selected Plays, op. cit., p. 173.

[9]Ibid., p. 171.

[10]Ibid., p. 173.

[11]Gerstenberger, Donna, John Millington Synge (New York, 1964), p. 97.

[12]The White Cockade, op. cit., p. 155.

[13]Ibid., pp. 156-157.

[14]Ibid., pp. 166-168.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER III, FOLK HISTORY

SECTION B TRAGEDY

[15]Notes to Damer's Gold, op. cit., pp. 158-159.

[16]Our Irish Theatre, op. cit., p. 91.

[17]Ibid., p. 92.

[18]Notes to Grania, Irish Folk-History Plays, First Series (London, 1912), p. 195.

[19]Storer, Edward, "Dramatists of Today", in Living Age, Vol. 218 (1914), pp. 335-336.

[20]Notes to Grania, op. cit., p. 195.

[21]Grania, Lady Gregory; Selected Plays, op. cit., p. 180.

[22]Ibid., pp. 205-206.

[23]Ibid., pp. 214-215.

[24]Notes to Dervorgilla, Lady Gregory; Selected Plays, op. cit., p. 127.

[25]Dervorgilla, op. cit., p. 109.

[26]Ibid., p. 111.

[27]Ibid., p. 112.

[28]Ibid., p. 113.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid., pp. 119-120.

[31]Ibid., p. 121.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid., p. 126.

[34]Malone, The Irish Drama, op. cit., p. 160.

[35]Our Irish Theatre, op. cit., p. 92.

[36]The Gael Gate, Lady Gregory; Selected Plays, op. cit. p. 102.

[37]Ibid., p. 103.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid., p. 104.

[40]Ibid., pp. 104-105.

[41]Malone, The Irish Drama, op. cit., p. 159.

[42]Ellis-Fermor, The Irish Dramatic Movement, op. cit., pp. 156-157.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER IV, CONCLUSION

[1]Our Irish Theatre, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

[2]Ibid., pp. 100-101.

[3]Lady Gregory's Journals, ed. Lennox Robinson (Dublin, 1946), Introduction to Chapter II, p. 51.

[4]Malone, The Irish Drama, op. cit., p. 59.

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