

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: A Copy-specific Analysis of
Research Items by W. B. Yeats, J. M. Synge, and Lady Gregory
in the Archive of Frank Fay, Irish Actor and Theatre Director
(1870-1931)

Vol. I – Text

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PhD Thesis – 2022

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Declaration:

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at any other university, and that it is entirely my own work.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Fay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

Matthew Fay

Abstract

This thesis aims to develop an in-depth understanding of a specific type of marginalia through the analysis of the marks made by two actors in their books. While critics have demonstrated ways of using an author's drafts and corrections for purposes of scholarly editing, the significance of annotation by actors is an under-explored area. Actors' marginalia open a window upon the relationship between the author and actors in the creation of the theatrical event. Through the study of these marks, we can critically evaluate the contribution of actors to the composition of the text through the creation of performance variations, while, at the same time, better understand the ways in which traditions of performance were mobilised for a particular historical context.

The authors of the marginalia in this study are two actors who founded and managed the amateur acting troupe which became the first Abbey Theatre company, responsible for producing premières of key works by W. B. Yeats, J. M. Synge and Lady Gregory from 1902 to 1908. Frank Fay was an actor and teacher of speech to whom Yeats dedicated the first edition of *The King's Threshold*. Willie Fay performed the chief comic roles in Synge's plays of contemporary Irish life, and wrote an autobiography, *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre* in the 1930s. The annotation in Frank Fay's first editions of plays by Yeats, Synge and Lady Gregory is the principal documentary source for this research, augmented by Willie Fay's own copy of his autobiography, extensively revised for an unknown purpose. Fay's unpublished correspondence with Yeats provides further contemporary witness. As Frank Fay observed, the plays of the Irish revival were unlike contemporary commercial drama, and his actor's annotations demonstrate the process of finding methods from the classical past and the contemporary *avant garde* to present them effectively to different theatre audiences. This thesis shows that the performances of the Abbey were adaptations of European theatrical traditions in an Irish context, and it uses a new archive of documentary evidence to do so.

Chapter One uses Frank Fay's markings on *The King's Threshold*, Yeats's verse drama of Irish history, as evidence for critically evaluating the actor's contribution to the textual development of the play. Fay's correspondence with Yeats demonstrates specific examples of Fay's learning which appear in Yeats's articles and essays without acknowledgement,

suggesting the influence of Fay on Yeats's dramatic writing. Chapters Two, Three, and Four explore the Fays' relationship with J. M. Synge from different perspectives. One strand analyses the creation of a performance style for Synge's controversial version of naturalism in his one-act plays; another element evaluates the contribution of these documents to debates about the editing of Synge's three-act drama, *The Well of the Saints*; a third considers the role of Synge in the legacy of the Fays. Chapter Five compares two early versions of Lady Gregory's *The White Cockade* (1905) to discover the impact of performance on versions of the text. In Chapter Six, Frank Fay's marks on Lady Gregory's *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* are used to trace the deteriorating relationship between the authors and actor-producers in the years following the opening of the Abbey Theatre.

This thesis discusses questions of editing and textual transmission in the creation of scholarly editions. While the role of actors and stage managers has been widely debated in the textual criticism of Elizabethan plays, it has not received significant attention in the modern era. Should actors be considered as co-creators of the text, or as being responsible solely for the performance through interpreting the primary creator's work for the stage? Following critical evaluation of the role of the actors in the composition of the plays studied here, this thesis stops short of claiming that the actors, in this case the Fays, are the co-authors of the dramatic text. Finally, the Fay versions of the text are demonstrated as being adaptive of the text, rather than constitutive of it. Actor's copies are analogous to the theatre prompt-book and are aspects of the banked text, which can act as a matrix for future performances and are a valuable point of reference for scholarly editions.

Acknowledgements

My first acknowledgement is to Frank and Willie Fay, my great grandfather and great-great uncle, whose courage and imagination helped bring the Abbey Theatre into being. Gerard Fay, my grandfather, promoted the Fays' legacy through in print, while my father, Stephen Fay, introduced me to the Fay archive and made it available to me for study.

Next, I would like to thank my supervisors Professor Warwick Gould and Dr. Andrew Nash. Professor Gould has been unstintingly generous with his knowledge of Yeats, formed over decades of dedicated research, the fruits of which are manifest in his many articles and books, as well as his editorship of *Yeats Annual*. He has been a close and exacting reader of my drafts, and my thesis is the better for his thoroughness and insight. My second supervisor, Dr. Nash, came on board at a difficult moment. His calm manner has been a balm to feelings of doubt or anxiety such as occasionally arise, while his perceptive comments have prompted further thought and thus fed back into the work.

I would like to thank the following individuals who have given advice, encouragement, or practical support: Bernard O'Donoghue, my undergraduate tutor, who has retained an interest in my progress long after duty required him to; Lauren Arrington, Matthew Campbell and Susan O'Keefe, directors of the Yeats Summer School in Sligo in 2018; Cynthia Johnson, Christopher Ohge, Olivia Baskerville, and the administrative staff at the Institute of English Studies; Campaspe Lloyd Jacob, a regular encourager of the work; John Stokes; and Colin Smythe, the publisher, who unearthed Willie Fay's copy of *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre*. I would like to thank librarians at the following institutions: Senate House Library, the British Library, the National Library of Ireland, Trinity College Dublin, the National University of Ireland in Galway, and the University of Reading. I would like to thank the Abbey Theatre for providing me with complimentary tickets to a performance in June 2019.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my family and friends for their unfailing support. This includes my mother, who helped me fund my research, and my wife, Rosanna, who has been a perceptive reader and loving partner throughout my writing.

Dedication

To Stephen Fay, my father, who made his final exit before this thesis was complete,
but not before he provided the spark

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Abbreviations

W.B. Yeats:

- CL1, 2, 3, 4, 5 *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats: Volume I, 1865-1895*, ed. by John Kelly and Eric Domville; *Volume II, 1896-1900*, ed. by Warwick Gould, John Kelly, and Deirdre Toomey; *Volume III, 1901-1904*, *Volume IV, 1905-1907*, and *Volume V: 1908-1910*, ed. by John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, 1997, 1994, 2005, 2018).
- CL *InteLex* *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*, gen. ed. John Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press [InteLex Electronic Edition], 2002). Letters cited by accession number.
- CW1 *The Poems: A Second Edition*, ed. by Richard J. Finneran, (New York, Scribner, 1997).
- CW2 *The Plays*, ed. by David R. Clark and Rosalind E. Clark (New York: Scribner, 2001), vol. II of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*.
- CW3 *Autobiographies*, ed. by William H. O'Donnell and Douglas N. Archibald, assisted by J. Fraser Cocks III and Gretchen Schwenker (New York: Scribner, 1999), vol. III of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*.
- CW4 *Early Essays*, ed. by George Bornstein and Richard J. Finneran (New York: Scribner, 2007), vol. IV of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*.
- CW5 *Later Essays*, ed. by William H. O'Donnell, with assistance from Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux (New York: Scribner, 1994), vol. V of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*.
- CW7 *Letters to the New Island*, ed. by George Bornstein and High Witemeyer (London: Macmillan, 1989), vol. VII of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*.
- CW8 *The Irish Dramatic Movement*, ed. by Mary FitzGerald and Richard J. Finneran (New York: Scribner, 2003), vol. VIII of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*.
- CW9 *Early Articles and Reviews: Uncollected Articles, Reviews Written Between 1889 and 1900*, ed. by John P. Frayne and Madeleine Marchaterre (New York, London: Scribner, 2004), vol. IX of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*.
- CW10 *Later Articles and Reviews: Uncollected Articles, Reviews, and Radio Broadcasts Written after 1900*, ed. by Colton Johnson (New York: Scribner, 2000), vol. X of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*.
- E&I *Essays and Introductions* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1961).
- Ex *Explorations*, sel. Mrs W. B. Yeats (London: Macmillan, 1962; New York: Macmillan, 1963).

- VP *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957, cited from the corrected fourth printing, 1966).
- VPI *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Russell K. Alspach, assisted by Catharine C. Alspach (New York, London, Toronto: Macmillan, 1966).
- YA9 *Yeats Annual No. 9: Yeats and Women, A Special Number*, ed. by Deirdre Toomey, 2nd edn (1992; London: Macmillan, 1997).
- YA10 *Yeats Annual No. 10*, ed. by Warwick Gould (London: Macmillan, 1993).
- YA12 *Yeats Annual No. 12: That Accusing Eye: Yeats and his Readers*, ed. by Warwick Gould and Edna Longley (London: Macmillan, 1996).
- YA13 *Yeats Annual No. 13*, ed. by Warwick Gould (London: Macmillan, 1998).
- YA19 *Yeats Annual No. 19: A Special Edition: Yeats's Mask*, ed. by Warwick Gould and Margaret Mills Harper (London: Open Book Publishers, 2013).
- YA21 *Yeats Annual No. 21: Yeats's Legacies*, ed. by Warwick Gould (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2018).

Lady Gregory:

- Coole II *Cuchulain of Muirthemne: the story of the men of the Red Branch of Ulster*, arr. and trans. by Lady Gregory (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, Ltd, 1970), vol IV of *The Coole Edition of Lady Gregory's Writings*.
- Coole III *Gods and Fighting Men* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd., 1970), vol. III of *The Coole Edition of Lady Gregory's Writings*.
- Coole IV *Our Irish Theatre: A Chapter of Autobiography*, with a foreword by Roger McHugh (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd, 1972), vol. IV of *The Coole Edition of Lady Gregory's Writings*.
- Coole V, VI, VIII *The Collected Plays of Lady Gregory, Volume I, Comedies; Volume II, Tragedies & Tragic Comedies; Volume IV, Translations, Adaptations & Collaborations*, ed. by Ann Saddlemyer (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd, 1970, 1970, 1970, vols V, VI, and VIII of *The Coole Edition of Lady Gregory's Writings*.
- Coole IX *The Kiltartan Books (containing Kiltartan Poetry, History, and Wonder Books)*, with a foreword by Padraig Colum (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd, 1971, vol. IX of *The Coole Edition of Lady Gregory's Writings*.

- Coole XI *Poets and Dreamers*, with a foreword by T. R. Henn (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd, 1974), vol. XI of *The Coole Edition of Lady Gregory's Writings*.
- Coole XII *A Book of Saints and Wonders*, with a foreword by Edward Malins (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd, 1971), vol. XII of *The Coole Edition of Lady Gregory's Writings*.
- Coole XIII *Seventy Years: Being the Autobiography of Lady Gregory*, ed. by Colin Smythe (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, Ltd., 1974), vol. XIII of *The Coole Edition of Lady Gregory's Writings*.
- Coole XV *Journals, Volume II: 1925-1929*, ed. by Daniel F. Murphy (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd, 1978), vol XV of *The Coole Edition of Lady Gregory's Writings*.

J. M. Synge:

- Letters 1, 2 *The Collected Letters of John Millington Synge, Volume I: 1871-1907; Volume II: 1907-1909*, ed. by Ann Saddlemyer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983, 1984).
- Poems *J. M. Synge Collected Works*, gen ed. Robin Skelton, *Volume I: Poems*, ed. by Robin Skelton (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).
- Prose *Collected Works, Volume II: Prose*, ed. by Alan Price (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).
- Plays 1, 2 *Collected Works, Volume III: Plays, Book 1; Volume IV: Plays, Book 2*, ed. by Ann Saddlemyer (1968; repr. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd, 1982).

Abbey Theatre:

- W. Fay William G. Fay and Catherine Carswell, *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre Abbey Theatre* (London; Rich & Cowan, 1935).
- Towards a National Theatre *Towards a National Theatre: Dramatic Criticism of Frank Fay*, ed. by Robert Hogan (Dublin: Dolmen, 1970).
- Hogan II, III *The Modern Irish Drama: A Documentary History: Volume II: Laying the Foundations, 1902-1904; Volume III: The Abbey Theatre, The Years of Synge, 1905-1909*, ed. by Robert Hogan and James Kilroy (Dublin: Dolmen, 1976, 1978).
- Holloway *Joseph Holloway's Abbey Theatre, A Selection from his unpublished journal Impressions of a Dublin Playgoer*, ed. by Robert Hogan and Michael J. O'Neill (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967).
- Theatre Business *Theatre Business: The Correspondence of the First Abbey Theatre Directors: William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory and J. M. Synge*, ed. by Ann Saddlemyer (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd, 1982).

Introduction

'[E]ach reading is peculiar to its occasion, each can be at least partially recovered from the physical forms of the text, and the differences in readings constitute an informative history. What writers thought they were doing in writing texts, or printers and booksellers in designing and publishing them, or readers in making sense of them are issues which no history of the book can evade.'

D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (1986; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 19.

'When it became time for Ariel to leave the action of the play he turned and he ran up the stage, away from the audience. Now the stage was a lawn, and the lawn backed onto a lake. He ran across the grass and got to the edge of the lake, and he just kept running, because the director had had the foresight to put a plank walkway just underneath the surface of the water. So you have to imagine: it's become dusk, and quite a lot of the artificial lighting has come on, and back there in the gloom is the lake. And Ariel says his last words and he turns and runs and gets to the water and he runs and he goes splish, splash, splish, splash, right across the lake and into the enfolding dark, until one can only just hear his footsteps making these little splashes, and then ultimately his little figure disappeared from view. And at that moment, from the further shore, a firework rocket was ignited and just went whoosh into the sky and burst into lots of sparks. All the sparks went out one by one and Ariel had gone. Here's the thing: you can't *write* anything as good as that. When you look it up, it says, "Exit Ariel".'

Tom Stoppard, told to Hermione Lee, *Tom Stoppard: A Life* (London: Faber, 2020), 864-5.

The Fay archive contains the books and papers collected and created by Frank Fay, the Irish actor and co-founder in 1902 of the Irish National Theatre Society, out of which the Abbey Theatre grew. A significant section of the archive rests in the National Library of Ireland where it has been available to those shaping the narrative of the Irish Revival for the past sixty years. Like rhizomes, however, different archives can be demonstrated to have common roots. One robust shoot of the Fay papers has remained in family possession. Items such as the originals of Yeats's letters to Fay, which have been edited and published in *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*, under the general editorship of John Kelly, are of souvenir or trophy value. Some of Fay's replies have been published, but the majority have not, and these offer insights into the development of Yeats's aesthetic theory as it related to Irish theatre.¹ Materials from both ends of Fay's dramatic career are present, the unhappy later years represented by the printed ephemera of Fay's exile in William Poel, Allan Wilkie and

¹ *Letters to W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Richard J. Finneran, George Mills Harper, and William M. Murphy, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1977).

Alexander Marsh's Shakespeare Companies.² Alongside the letters and playbills is Fay's library of theatre books, including his annotated actor's copies of play texts. Often in heavily distressed condition, these books bear witness to an actor's life in rehearsal and performance. They include first editions by W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory and J. M. Synge, which gesture towards the original productions at the Abbey and its predecessors, such as Yeats's *The King's Threshold*, Synge's *Riders to the Sea* and *The Shadow of the Glen*, and Lady Gregory's translations of Molière. The marginalia in these copies provide material for investigation.³

Two principal fields of study come into play in the study of Fay's books. One, as the quotation from D. F. McKenzie at the head of this chapter suggests, is bibliographical and involves examining Fay's copies as textual states, unique versions of canonical play texts. The emphasis is on the text-as-event, rather than the Platonic conception of the book as vessel of the author's consciousness. In the 1980s, such speculations challenged the field of textual bibliography with its insistence on the recovery of final intention through recension and emendation.⁴ The editing of authoritative editions is traditionally the central preoccupation of textual scholarship, and this involves the seeking out of manuscripts and the comparison of editions. Textual emendation through annotation in Fay's copies of the Irish plays calls into question, or at least complicates, the notion of authorial final intention. Whence did these changes originate: in the mind of the author or in the collaborative space of rehearsal? What is their authority in terms of textual transmission?

The area of editing play texts has been critical in the field of textual criticism since at least the eighteenth century when scholars identified a need to address the state of the text of Shakespeare's works. A more methodical approach prevailed with the emergence of the

² William Poel (1852-1934), actor, director and author founded the Elizabethan Stage Society (1895) which was dedicated to reproducing as closely as possible Elizabethan theatrical conventions in the staging of Shakespeare; Frank Fay performed as one of the witches in Poel's production of *Macbeth* (1909); Marsh and Allan Wilkie (1878-1970), who were among the last of the actor-managers who toured home and abroad, were considered old-fashioned by the second decade of the twentieth century.

³ According to a recent study, marginalia are having 'a contemporary moment' (*Marginal Notes: Social Reading and the Literal Margins*, ed. by Patrick Spedding and Paul Tankard [London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2021], 9).

⁴ A.E. Housman provides an authoritative guide to the principles underlying emendation in textual criticism ('The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism', in *Selected Prose*, ed. by John Carter [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961], 131-50).

New Bibliography, developed at first through classical and biblical studies in the nineteenth century and then applied to Shakespeare and Elizabethan studies.⁵ Central to this line of study was the concept of the ideal copy, the reconstitution of an original work from existing documents. A text based on such a principle must of necessity be eclectic, and modern critics, such as Thorpe have argued 'eclectic texts are always dangerous'.⁶ In the 1980s a crisis in textual criticism manifested between those who remained focused on an intended work and those, such as McGann who used a historicist/materialist ontology to show a transaction between words and reader at certain moments. To the latter, the text is more like an event than the recovery of a lost original. Dramatic composition in general has become a model for the historicist approach to textual criticism. Stephen Orgel has noted 'how much the creation of a play is a collaborative process, with the author by no means at the center of the collaboration'.⁷

The Renaissance theatre has been at the centre of these debates in recent decades. The Fay archive contains a copy of an Everyman anthology of *Minor Elizabethan Drama*, much reprinted in the early twentieth century. It contains notes for a lecture by Frank Fay on a sub-genre he calls 'Domestic Drama', of which he notes, '[t]he large majority of Elizabethan plays which may be classed as domestic drama proper are anonymous', and if not anonymous, are often the product of joint authorship.⁸ For some, then, the Elizabethan theatre contradicts the assumptions grounded in a Romantic conception of literary production in ways that have implications for our approach to editing texts. This makes possible the argument that we do not own our intentions, that they are part of the larger cultural structures that govern us. Intention is a sub-plot in a larger story of social interactions.⁹ Building on the concept of the socialised text, genetic criticism or the genetic

⁵ New Bibliography as a reforming movement might be said to have begun when R. B. McKerrow coined the phrase 'copy-text' in his edition of Thomas Nashe, 2 vols (London: A. H. Bullen, 1904). The phrase, which describes the version that forms the base text of the edition, was popularised by W. W. Greg's essay 'The Rationale of Copy-Text' (*Studies in Bibliography*, 3 [1950-1951], 19-36). Fredson Bowers (1905-1991) took the idea further: the copy-text is the one that comes closest to the author's final intentions, with manuscript as the best, followed by proof-sheets, and then first edition.

⁶ James Thorpe, *Principles of Textual Criticism* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1972), 190.

⁷ Stephen Orgel, 'What is a Text?', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 24 (1981), 3-6 (3).

⁸ *Minor Elizabethan Drama*, ed. by Ashley Thorndike, 2 vols (London: Dent, 1910), I: *Tragedies*. Fay archive.

⁹ For others, the Elizabethan theatre does offer evidence of the special position of the author in the construction of literary work. See for example *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, gen. eds,

text considers the relation between the *avant texte* and the text. This also gives weight to the process of composition over the final result. The work of Sally Bushell indicates an interest in the creative process of a text in a way that focuses on the author's revision stages. She resists the depersonalisation of the text but argues that in the genesis of the text the author's role is partial.¹⁰

If intentionalist criticism has been in retreat in recent decades, a fightback is in process. G. Thomas Tanselle has sought to salvage the basic methodologies of New Bibliography while acknowledging other views.¹¹ In the field of literary studies, Warwick Gould has written of the 'Resurrection of the Author' made possible by a renewed focus on archival study. According to Gould, '[f]inal intention being Yeats's prevailing fiction, the resurrected self of his text requires that intention be preserved in some shape for form'.¹² This builds on Yeats's comment that the poet was 'never the bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast; he has been reborn as an idea, something intended, complete'.¹³ The idea of a definitive edition of works appealed to Yeats's ideal vision of the author as fully realised, 'complete'. Yet why should the author's 'operative fiction' constrain the editor? Gould suggests an answer in the 'penumbral documents', including correspondence between the writer and publisher, publisher's reader, and agent 'which confirm the *co-identity* of the "real life author" and the "author function"' in the published outcomes of the poet's activity.¹⁴ Final intention 'in some shape or form' may be said to accurately reveal the correspondences between biography and bibliography, while returning humanity to the process of textual transmission.¹⁵ Questions of authorship and social process flow beneath the surface of our work on interpreting archives, bursting forth

Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells; ed. by Stanley Wells and others, rev. edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), for an approach that sees a 'work' behind the textual events.

¹⁰ Sally Bushell, 'Intention Revisited: Towards an Anglo-American "Genetic Criticism"', *Text*, 17 (2005), 55-91 (66).

¹¹ According to Tanselle the distinction between historical documents and the 'real work ... hovering somehow behind the physical text' was indeed a valid one. Tanselle therefore defended the inheritance of New Bibliography (*A Rationale of Textual Criticism* [Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989], 14-15).

¹² Warwick Gould, 'W. B. Yeats and the Resurrection of the Author', *The Library: Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 16: 2 (June 1994), 101-34 (131).

¹³ 'A General Introduction for my Work', *E&I* 509, *CW* 5 204.

¹⁴ Gould's latest thoughts on intention and editing are found in 'Conflicted Legacies: Yeats's Intentions and Editorial Theory', *YA21*, 479-541 [540]).

¹⁵ Gould, 'Resurrection', 131.

occasionally, such as in the discussion of Fay's annotations of Synge's plays. Synge's early death at the age of 38 left a great many editorial questions unresolved, particularly those surrounding the authority of manuscripts related to specific theatrical occasions of performance. The tendency of Synge's editors to try and infer an authorial intention from Abbey Theatre manuscripts in which Synge's is but one of the hands making annotation, has been a prominent feature of the editing of these plays. The difficulty of locating a stable authority plays into the 'versioning' theory of editorial studies. On the other hand, to quote Gould again, 'the turmoil of late twentieth century editorial theory' must not blind us to 'the necessity of having carefully-compiled, accurate reading editions of final texts, if only as a stable point of departure for more specialized varieties of reading and scholarship.'¹⁶

What the study of Synge's and Yeats's manuscripts makes clear is that the question of authority does not end with publication. It might be helpful to give an example, not discussed in this thesis, from Fay's copy of Yeats's *On Baile's Strand*, published by A. H. Bullen in 1904 some nine months before the première at the Abbey Theatre. *On Baile's Strand*, called the 'finest of all Yeats's plays' by James Flannery, is a study in mythology and heroism.¹⁷ Early in the play, the merits of the characters Cuchulain and Concoibar are discussed by the servants Barach and Fintain – the Fool and the Wise Man who are comic recreations of their masters. Yeats himself has annotated Fay's copy with lines of dialogue that appear in the text as follows:

¹⁶ Gould, 'Conflicted Legacies', 491.

¹⁷ James Flannery, *W. B. Yeats and the Idea of a Theatre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), 307; hereafter cited as Flannery.

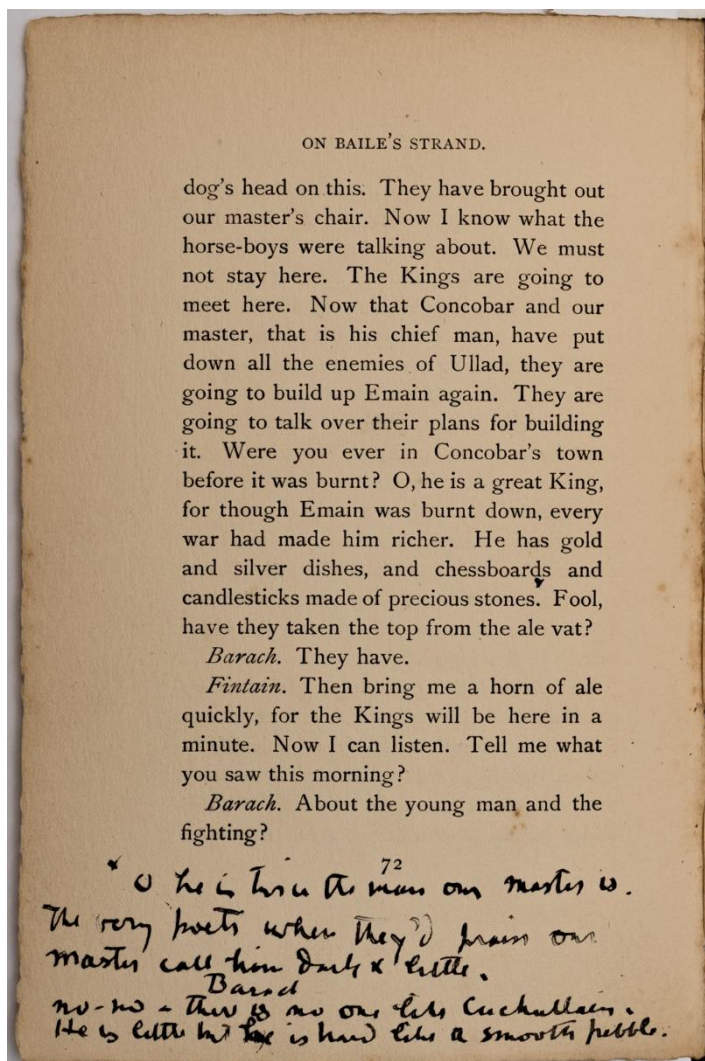


Plate 1. Frank Fay's copy of *The King's Threshold and On Baile's Strand: Being Volume Three of Plays for an Irish Theatre* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1904). Fay archive.

[Fintain] O he is twice the man our master is. The very poets when they'd praise our master call him dark & little.

[Barach] no-no - there is no one like Cuchullain [sic]. He is little but he is hard like a smooth pebble.

This example of annotation is atypical because it is in the hand of Yeats rather than Fay.

These added lines demonstrate the creative process involved in literary production, such as an authorial redrafting; readers might consider that this was prompted by a need arising in rehearsals after publication, or conceivably after a production. Yeats used rehearsals and performances to finesse his texts. For example, the experience of seeing his play *The Golden Helmet* performed persuaded him to turn it into *The Green Helmet* in verse: a similar process informed his work on *The Hour-Glass*. Recently, Christopher Morash has argued that Yeats

used the theatre, particularly when working with the Fay brothers, 'as a kind of workshop', with variant versions and revisions as evidence of this experimentation.¹⁸ Yeats's marginalia on Fay's copy apparently gesture towards this type of workshopping, but what, in editorial terms, is its authority? We search in vain for these lines in subsequent printings of *On Baile's Strand*, and yet here they are, witness to an active, although perhaps temporary, intention on Yeats's part.¹⁹

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The second quotation, by Tom Stoppard, which heads this chapter points toward a related phenomenon to the text-as-event, that is theatre-as-event. Like Yeats, Stoppard is an obsessive reviser of his work, for whom the published text is a 'placeholder' for future versions.²⁰ But, as Stoppard makes clear, the text is but one element in the theatrical experience. As his example of *The Tempest* suggests, setting, lighting, the arrangement of actors within the theatrical space, and sound all have a bearing on the audience's experience of text, indeed they are all aspects of the dramatic text. This raises the question, who is the author of the theatrical event? While Synge and Yeats were careful to stress the collaborative nature of theatrical composition, both also took advantage of prevailing ideas of authorship to place themselves at the centre of the event. In the field of feminist criticism, recent studies have challenged the marginalisation of actors in the official narratives of the composition of the text. In Synge studies for example, a line of criticism views the playwright as complicit in the promulgation of damaging national stereotypes. This same criticism argues that within the plays are 'forms of embodiment' in performance, such as the *keen*, which become sites of resistance against a colonial perspective.²¹ Meanwhile, the contributions of female actors to the composition of plays has been examined by Elizabeth Brewer Redwine. Redwine is motivated by a strong sense of grievance at what she sees as a

¹⁸ Christopher Morash, *Yeats on Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 29; hereafter cited as Morash, *Yeats*.

¹⁹ It should be understood that the archive is the creation of Frank Fay, but the staging of the plays of the early Abbey Theatre was the product of his and his brother William George Fay's (1872-1947) labour. Some of Willie's books survive also, the most important of which is his own copy of his autobiography, discussed below.

²⁰ Lee, *Tom Stoppard*, 832.

²¹ Hélène Lecossois, *Performance, Modernity, and the Plays of J. M. Synge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 5; hereafter cited as Lecossois. Lecossois associates Synge's theatre practice with 'the ethnographical desire to document the lives of putatively primitive people' (25).

historical belittling of significant creative contributions by female performers to the composition of plays in which they acted.²² This work extends the reappraisal of Adrian Frazier who begins his account of the early Abbey Theatre with the question ‘[t]o whom did the Abbey Theatre belong?’²³ Redwine builds on the archival research of James Pethica, who demonstrated through careful examination of manuscripts that Lady Gregory’s contribution to the writing of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* was much greater than previously thought and amounted to co-authorship.²⁴

Redwine’s focus on gender causes her to group the Fay brothers together with Yeats and Synge as beneficiaries of what she calls the ‘patriarchal inheritance of the way we define authorship’.²⁵ But it is possible to argue that the Fays have suffered a similar marginalisation, owing perhaps to class and religion rather than gender. Yeats’s condescending remarks about the brothers, whom he did not identify by name in his 1923 Nobel acceptance speech on the origins of the Irish national theatre, have set the tone for much scholarly evaluation of their role. James Flannery’s detailed study of staging at the early Abbey, *W. B. Yeats and the Idea of a Theatre*, concludes:

From the outset it should be made clear that, quite rightly, neither of the two Fays looms large in the overall context of twentieth-century theatre. Both were limited by their intellectual capacity, their educational background, their basic talent and their training in the theatre.²⁶

One of the goals of this thesis is to address the marginalisation of the Fays, and the other player-members of the National Theatre Society by examining the annotation in Fay’s copies of the Irish plays. Recent studies have credited the Fays with greater significance than previously. P. J. Mathews has singled out Frank Fay’s journalism as both a ‘new voice’, and one which attempted to move cultural thinking beyond the ethnic contest between the

²² Redwine argues that the role of female performance at the Abbey Theatre needs reconsideration because of the ‘historical bias’ towards male authorship at the expense of female performance (*Gender, Performance, and Authorship at the Abbey Theatre* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021], xiv).

²³ Adrian Frazier, *Behind the Scenes: Yeats, Horniman and the Battle for the Soul of the Abbey Theatre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), xiii; hereafter cited as Frazier.

²⁴ James Pethica, “‘Our Kathleen’: Yeats’s Collaboration with Lady Gregory in the Writing of *Cathleen ni Houlihan*’, *YA9*, 3-17. A study of the prefaces to the early editions of Yeats’s plays shows a characteristic movement to annex ownership of this co-authored text. In February 1903 a dedication to Lady Gregory read ‘we turned my dream into a little play’, while by October of the same year this had shifted to ‘I had a very vivid dream one night, and I made *Cathleen ni Houlihan* out of my dream’ (*VPI* 232; ‘Samhain 1903: An Irish National Theatre, *CW8* 33, *Ex* 116).

²⁵ Redwine, *Gender*, xiv.

²⁶ Flannery, *W. B. Yeats*, 176.

Anglo Irish and Irish Ireland.²⁷ R. F. Foster has argued that it was Frank Fay's call to arms in *The United Irishman* that spurred Yeats to write *Cathleen ni Houlihan* in 1901.²⁸ Yet Fay's journalism is of secondary importance to his creation of leading roles in Yeats's poetic tragedies and character parts in Synge's comedies, and to his role in training the actors and helping to define, along with his brother, the performance style.²⁹ A proper evaluation must dwell on the Fays' role in the staging of dramatic text.

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One consequence of a focus on marginalia is the inductive approach it implies. It happens that Frank Fay's annotations are spread across the plays of the triumvirate of the Abbey Theatre. Following on from this, the works of each writer become the subject of study alongside the amendments recorded by their theatrical interpreters. The plays of Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory in the first decade of the last century provide material for several books. Yet without losing focus, some understanding of the critical contexts applying to the writers individually, and collectively, is necessary if Fay's annotations are to be correctly understood.

One of the difficulties of writing about Yeats's career as a dramatist is the resistance of his complex involvements in theatre and playwriting to clear historical phases. A study of Yeats's forty-year engagement with theatre is well beyond the scope of this study, and the focus on the Fay brothers helpfully limits the scope of analysis to the years 1900 to 1908, but Yeats's reworking of plays throughout his career and his enduring concern with theatre theory tends to blur clear phases. That said, the meeting with Ezra Pound and the consequent discovery of Japanese Nō theatre was a decisive moment. Prior to this, Yeats's energies were engaged both in writing plays and in the daily running of the Abbey, what he would look back on ruefully as 'theatre business, management of men'.³⁰ Morash has

²⁷ Mathews cited Fay's review of the Irish Literary Theatre's production of *Diarmuid and Grania* in 1901 as support for his judgement (*Revival: The Abbey Theatre, Sinn Féin and the Co-operative Movement* [Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2004], 166).

²⁸ Foster writes that Yeats had written the play in response to the challenge posed by Fay's 'Griffithite nationalism' in *The United Irishman* (*W. B. Yeats: A Life*, 2 vols [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997-2004], I: *The Apprentice Mage, 1865-1914*, 259-60; hereafter cited as *Life 1* and 2).

²⁹ One exception to the belittling of the Fays as original theatre director/producers is Malcolm Kelsall's article 'Makers of a Modern Theatre: Frank and William Fay', *Theatre Research International*, 3.3 (1978), 188-99.

³⁰ VP 260.

described the Abbey as ‘a kind of workshop’ for Yeats during this period when he was learning his trade as a playwright through trial and error and after which he entered a phase of reflection and consolidation.³¹ During these years Yeats used theatre a means of testing philosophical ideas about matter and spirit, using the resources available to develop a way of thinking that was fundamentally theatrical, for example, in his preoccupation with mask as a dramatization of inner conflict.³² Flannery also suggests that Yeats is more important as a theorist than as a playwright.³³ Others make greater claims for his drama in performance, beginning with Katharine Worth’s study of Yeats as an Hiberno-European dramatist and forerunner of Beckett.³⁴ The integration of Yeats’s writings about theatre with his plays and his poetic persona is one of the characteristics of his engagement with drama. Morash considers his essay ‘The Tragic Theatre’ (1910) central as it was a reflection on his previous ten years’ work and looked forward, in its preoccupation with comedy and tragedy, to his theories of the Mask and thus to *A Vision* and his later poetry.³⁵ The period up to 1910, during which the Fays were integral to Yeats’s practice, is therefore a laboratory phase, during which Yeats’s apparent preoccupation with national drama masked, according to Morash, an opportunistic appropriation of the theatre for his own experiments in symbolic drama.³⁶

Other scholars take a more historicist approach to these years. Ben Levitas views Yeats’s work as co-founder of a specifically Irish theatre as part of a wider cultural movement.³⁷ He sees in Yeats’s aesthetic theories a political dimension, pointing out, for example, that his theories of comedy and tragedy provide him with a lens through which to

³¹ Morash, *Yeats*, 29.

³² Morash, *Yeats*, 157-63.

³³ Flannery, *W. B. Yeats*, xii.

³⁴ Worth made a plea for Yeats’s theatre to be restored to the repertory in the 1970s: ‘[r]itual is no longer alien to the modern theatre; Peter Brook and others have restored it to its central role’ (Katharine Worth, *The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett* [London: Athlone, 1978], 194; hereafter cited as Worth).

³⁵ Morash refers to ‘The Tragic Theatre’ and ‘The Theatre of Beauty (his lecture of 1911) as ‘two capstone essays’ which reflect on his learning from 1900 onwards and point the way towards his doctrine of the Mask (*Yeats*, 119).

³⁶ ‘It is probably accurate to say that Yeats’s engagement with Nationalism always carried other agendas with it’ (Morash, *Yeats*, 55).

³⁷ See Ben Levitas, *Theatre of Nation: Irish Drama and Cultural Nationalism, 1890-1916* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), and ‘A Temper of Misgiving: W. B. Yeats and the Ireland of Synge’s Time’, in *Uncertain Futures: Essays about the Irish Past for Roy Foster*, ed. by Senia Paseta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 110-22.

understand Irish politics. Yeats's observations on the writers of the Abbey led him to believe that 'those who come from Catholic Ireland have more reason than fantasy'.³⁸ He would develop this into a critique of Catholic education in Ireland in 'Draft Autobiography': '[t]he education given by the Catholic schools seems to me to be in all matters of general culture a substituting of pedantry for taste'.³⁹ Much of Yeats's thinking about culture, class and religion in Ireland developed out of his close working relationships with those of very different backgrounds from his own in the early years of the Irish theatre.

One strand of criticism of Yeats's drama focuses on its lifelong aversion to naturalism. Worth considers Yeats's symbolist dramas, *The Shadowy Waters* and *The Countess Cathleen*, in light of the influence of the European avant garde, such as Maurice Maeterlinck.⁴⁰ Bernard O'Donoghue considers it Yeats's 'bad luck' to have begun writing just as Ibsen, through Shaw, took a position of long-term dominance in the theatres of England and Ireland.⁴¹ Susan Cannon Harris analyses the Avenue Theatre season of 1894 which brought Yeats and Shaw together on the same bill to suggest that Shaw's embrace of Naturalism was hastened by the hostile audience reaction to Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire* and, even more so, John Todhunter's *A Comedy of Sighs*, both of which were rejected by critics and audiences for using the 'occult' to 'mythologise the New Woman's transgressive sexuality'.⁴² While Ireland developed its own distinctive formulations of naturalism, not least in the so-called peasant plays of the Abbey, it also maintained through Yeats a connection to a tradition of non-naturalistic drama that, while largely ignored in England, remained influential in France, not least in the work of the Comédie-Française.⁴³ One could argue, and Yeats did, that this tradition was more representative than naturalism

³⁸ To Florence Farr, 6 October 1905, *CL4* 203-5 (204).

³⁹ *CL4* 204n; *Memoirs: Autobiography – First Draft: Journal*, transcribed and edited by Denis Donoghue (London: Macmillan, 1972; New York: Macmillan, 1973), 187; hereafter cited as *Mem*.

⁴⁰ 'Yeats, Maeterlinck and Synge' in Worth, 140-58.

⁴¹ Bernard O'Donoghue, 'Yeats and the Drama', *The Cambridge Companion to W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Marjorie Howes and John Kelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 101-14 (102).

⁴² Susan Cannon Harris, *Irish Drama and the Other Revolutions: Playwrights, Sexual Politics and the International Left, 1892-1964* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 18, 12; hereafter cited as Harris.

⁴³ Harris sees the drama of Yeats and Todhunter as rejecting naturalism in favour of what she calls Idealism, which she associates with the Romantic theatre of the nineteenth century. By the *fin-de-siècle* this style had begun to be seen as 'identical with a denial of modern reality and therefore conservative', but in Ireland its conservatism was transformed by its connection to Shelleyan idealism and the socialism of William Morris (Harris, 21).

of the entire history of drama going back to Classical Greece, and including the theatres of the English and French Renaissance.⁴⁴ These would be matters of deep discussion, and occasional disagreement, in correspondence, between Frank Fay and Yeats, as the latter sought to justify his potentially unpopular approach to drama by historical example. Other recent scholarship, building on Worth, has sought to draw out Yeats's links to the European avant garde. Michael McAteer has argued that Yeats's stylised dramas, which have been associated with political conservatism, in fact have more in common with Ibsen's critique of bourgeois morality, and are therefore more revolutionary than previously thought.⁴⁵ Indeed, for McAteer, as Yeats's politics became more right wing, he continued to learn from the theatrical techniques of left-wing drama, as evidenced by similarities between Ernst Toller and Yeats's dramas *The Player Queen* and *The Words upon the Window-pane*, both of which use 'Expressionist techniques'.⁴⁶

On the other hand, the adoption of left-wing dramatic techniques did not imply any endorsement of leftist politics. Lauren Arrington has demonstrated that Yeats's enthusiasm for controversy in the 1930s led him to seek to stage *Coriolanus* at the Abbey in 'coloured shirts', a plan that was voted down by the theatre board.⁴⁷ Moreover, his later poetry suggests nostalgia for a type of acting, such as Sir Henry Irving's, which embodied passionate Romanticism and virtuosity and which was considered thoroughly old-fashioned and anti-modern at this point.⁴⁸ Yeats would ask in his late poem *A Nativity* '[w]hat brushes fly and moth aside? | Irving and his plume of pride'.⁴⁹ His view of Irving, a *bête noir* in the early 1900s, has undergone a transformation; from a vulgarian, he has become a romantic

⁴⁴ Yeats advised Fay to respond to criticism of his and his brother's work by attacking 'realistic stage management', by holding up as models 'the players of Phedre', and by affirming that '[w]e desire an extravagant, if you will unreal, rhetorical romantic art, allied in literature to the art on the one hand of Racine and [on] the other hand of Cervantes' (To Frank Fay, 28 August [1904], CL3 641-44 [642]).

⁴⁵ Michael McAteer, *Yeats and European Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 6.

⁴⁶ McAteer, 9.

⁴⁷ Yeats's insistence on 'coloured shirts' is reported in fellow board member Frank O'Connor's memoir. O'Connor writes that it was decided to go ahead with the production in Renaissance dress which 'saved a riot' but cost the theatre money in lost sales (*My Father's Son* [London: Macmillan, 1968], 161). Arrington points out that O'Connor refused to say what colour the shirts were, speculating that this was 'possibly an attempt to avoid implicating Yeats'. The fascist connotations were evident, however (Lauren Arrington, *W. B. Yeats, the Abbey Theatre, Censorship, and the Irish State* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010], 169; hereafter cited as Arrington).

⁴⁸ His nostalgia for an older style of acting is expressed repeatedly in his later poetry: '[b]ut actors lacking music | Do most excite my spleen' ('The Old Stone Cross', VP 598-99 [599]).

⁴⁹ VP 625.

hero. This late mood of nostalgia was extended in memory to Frank Fay, who Yeats recalled in an unpublished preface was of that 'school of Talma' which permits an actor to 'throw up an arm calling down the thunderbolts of heaven, instead of seeming to pick up pins from the floor'.⁵⁰

The years of his collaboration with Fay were years of education for Yeats, as is suggested by the intensive revision of *The King's Threshold*, *The Hour-Glass*, and *On Baile's Strand*. Workshopping is an apt description of the process of development of Yeats's plays in these years. The research that follows sheds further light on this period by considering what the Fay archive adds to our existing understanding of the composition and transmission of the texts of Yeats's plays.

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Synge remains a complex figure in the history of the Irish Revival: social, affable and without pretention, but nonetheless aloof and reserved. Yeats caught this doubleness when he wrote of the contrast between Synge's 'charming and modest manners' and his 'complete absorption in his own dream'.⁵¹ A sense of facing in two directions recurs in academic writing about Synge. Tim Robinson adds enigma in his characterisation of 'that double-natured and sphinx-like creature, Synge-on-Aran'.⁵² Among other paradoxes, Robinson gestures towards Synge's attraction-repulsion towards the peasants he met on Aran. Synge's fascination with the Aran islanders was in part an example of what Sinéad Garrigan Mattar calls 'Romantic Primitivism', which she defines as 'the writer's idealization' of a 'form of the primitive' that has little to do with realities of that existence.⁵³ Yet Synge was tormented by his exile from the community of islanders, even as he mixed with them. A similar push-pull would later characterise his relationships with the Abbey actors, including the Fays, but especially with Molly Allgood (stage name Maire O'Neill). Just as the speech of the islanders was the foundation of the dramatic idiom that came to be known, for its

⁵⁰ François Joseph Talma (1763-1826) was a French tragic actor, mentioned by Yeats in a late poem, 'A Nativity': '[w]hat hurries out the knave and dolt? | Talma and his thunderbolt' (VP 625); the reference to Fay's being of the 'school of Talma' is from 'An Introduction for My Plays', CW2 23-5 (24).

⁵¹ April 2 [1909] 'Journal' no 129, Mem 206; reprinted in 'The Death of Synge', CW3 378.

⁵² 'Introduction', J. M. Synge, *The Aran Islands*, ed. by Tim Robinson (1907; London: Penguin, 1992), xxxix.

⁵³ Sinéad Garrigan Mattar, *Primitivism, Science, and the Irish Revival* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 3; hereafter cited as Mattar.

distinctive lilt, as ‘Synge-song’, so much of his later work, including *The Playboy* and *Deirdre* drew on his relationship with Allgood. The Fay brothers were puzzled by Synge. They admired his talent and found him easy to work with – Willie Fay talked later of ‘a sort of pre-existing harmony’ between them in rehearsal – yet they were troubled, to put it no stronger, by his seeming relish for provocation.⁵⁴

Yeats had his own difficulties with Synge’s legacy after his death. Synge became, for his friend, an exemplar of his theory of the Mask, for which image certain of Synge’s characteristics required suppression. Ben Levitas points out that in Yeats’s commemorative essay ‘J. M. Synge and the Ireland of his Time’, Yeats focuses on *The Aran Islands* rather than *The Playboy* (despite acknowledging that the latter was his greatest work) since it was better suited to the image of Synge that the poet wished to present.⁵⁵ What Yeats calls Synge’s attitude of ‘mischievous wisdom’ troubled him as it did the Fays, although for different reasons.⁵⁶

One strand of critical response to Synge has condemned his appropriation of Irish cultural experience. Synge’s comment that *The Playboy* owed much to the conversation of the servant girls he overheard as they worked in the scullery invited accusations of voyeurism and cultural ventriloquism.⁵⁷ As Synge’s biographer W. J. Mc Cormack put it, his words ‘harrowed the ground for attacks on Synge’s innate decency’.⁵⁸ This critique was first advanced by Daniel Corkery in his early study *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* (1931). While acknowledging the classical austerity of *Riders to the Sea*, Corkery disliked the disinhibitedness of Synge’s characters, their lack of propriety. In retrospect, Seamus Deane has argued Corkery’s views are a more sophisticated version of the literary censorship demanded by the Irish Free State in its early years.⁵⁹ Corkery’s critique is identified as an elaborate version of the Griffithite moral panic that attended the first reviews of *The Shadow*

⁵⁴ W. Fay, 139.

⁵⁵ Levitas, ‘A Temper of Misgiving’, 114.

⁵⁶ ‘J. M. Synge and the Ireland of his Time’, CW4 226-47 (232).

⁵⁷ The comment derives from the Preface to the first edition of *The Playboy of the Western World* (Plays 2, [53]). A reference in *The Manchester Guardian’s* obituary (25 March 1909, 7), written by G. H. Mair (who later married Molly Allgood), and reprinted in *The Freeman’s Journal*, broadcast Synge’s statement more widely, to the disadvantage of his reputation in Ireland.

⁵⁸ W. J. Mc Cormack, *The Fool of the Family: A Life of J. M. Synge* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2000), 386; hereafter cited as Mc Cormack.

⁵⁹ Seamus Deane, *Small World: Ireland, 1798-2018* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 316-17.

of *the Glen* and *The Playboy*. The complexity of Synge's legacy is indicated by the ambivalence of critics such as Deane, who defends the writer against the Philistinism of some accusers, while reserving his own grounds of opposition. For Deane, Synge is guilty of evasiveness by dehistoricising the living culture of the west of Ireland in favour of a picturesque image of 'Celtic Eden'.⁶⁰ This has led to Deane himself being accused of sounding like 'an exceptionally frenzied D. P. Moran circa 1904'.⁶¹

The foregoing is a way of demonstrating that while the explosive potential of Synge's *The Playboy* on Irish cultural life has diminished over one hundred years, it has not been extinguished. Questions of authenticity and exploitation attend the representation of Irishness today once more. One way of approaching this question is to admit the reality of the difficulty. Willie Fay's personal copy of his own autobiography, marked up for a second edition, demonstrates his own concern with family legacy nowhere more clearly than in the section on the first performance of *The Shadow of the Glen*, where the intensity of the deletions and interpolations attests to the difficulty of attaining a sense of perspective even thirty years after events occurred. The chapter on *The Shadow of the Glen* that follows explores Willie Fay's annotations in detail, but it is sufficient to note now that the confused and contested reception of Synge's plays speak to his genius for probing the contradictions and insecurities of the cultural revival of his era. As another Protestant Irish provocateur had written, 'the nineteenth-century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in the glass'.⁶² Willie Fay's difficulty in safely distancing himself from the natives who revolted against *The Shadow of the Glen* caused him to remove this quotation, printed in the first edition, from his own copy of autobiography, which he marked up in pencil for a projected second edition.

Questions of ethnography are ever-present in Synge studies. Gregory Castle has placed Synge within the discourse of Imperial anthropology, although operating at an angle to the main narrative.⁶³ Mattar sees Synge's approach as productively ambiguous,

⁶⁰ Deane, *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature, 1890-1980* (London: Faber 1985), 19.

⁶¹ Roy Foster, 'Nations, yet again', a review of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, ed. by Seamus Deane, 3 vols (Derry: Field Day, 1991), *Times Literary Supplement*, 27 March 1992, 5-7 (5).

⁶² Oscar Wilde, 'The Preface', *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3.

⁶³ Gregory Castle, 'Irish Revivalism: Critical Trends and New Directions', *Literature Compass*, 8.5 (2011), 291-303.

combining philosophic Romanticism with a rigorous approach to contemporary debates in the comparative sciences of anthropology, philology, and ethnography.⁶⁴ More recently Christopher Collins engages with Synge's use of folklore and fairy beliefs, what he calls, after Raymond Williams, 'residual culture', to challenge the 'dominant culture' of bourgeois Catholicism.⁶⁵ Yet while ethnographic criticism often, though not always, seems to leave Synge in a position of complicity with the discourse of Empire, other approaches have sought to present him as a more radical or subversive figure.

Synge's early death and absence of a fully developed statement of his own aesthetic principles have made him, from Yeats onwards, an easy figure to appropriate. Recent attempts to squeeze Synge's varied output of plays, ethnography, and journalism into the categories of current critical discourse risk reducing the strangeness and complexity of his engagement with the Irish people and language. Contemporary critical debate has centred on whether he is best categorised as a late Romantic or placed in the vanguard of the revolt against tradition associated in music with Stravinsky and in painting with Picasso. Mary Burke describes his peasant drama as 'failed realism', and suggests he was an iconoclast, whose plays deliver the shock of the new; Seán Hewitt argues that he was a Socialist as well as Modernist, based on Synge's archival writings and engagement with the so-called Congested Districts of Ireland in articles and essays.⁶⁶ Shaun Richards sees an inheritance from the French theatrical avant garde in his essay on Synge and Alfred Jarry, whose puppets filled Yeats with a vision of societal collapse.⁶⁷ Nicholas Grene, however, warns against ignoring the sincerity of Synge's defence of his plays on the grounds of their authenticity, arguing that Synge developed an Irish form of naturalism.⁶⁸

The field of performance studies has focused attention on the acting of Synge's plays. Hélène Lecossois argues that different forms of theatrical embodiment can challenge the

⁶⁴ Mattar, 130-84.

⁶⁵ Christopher Collins, 'A Sort of Saint', *Theatre and Residual Culture: J. M. Synge and pre-Christian Ireland* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 173-200.

⁶⁶ Mary Burke, 'The Riot of Spring: Synge's "Failed Realism" and the Peasant Drama', in *A Handbook of Modern Irish Drama*, ed. by Nicholas Grene and Chris Morash (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 87-102; Seán Hewitt, *J. M. Synge: Nature, Politics, Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); hereafter cited as Hewitt.

⁶⁷ Shaun Richards, 'Synge and the "Savage God"', *Études Irlandaises*, 33.2 (2008), 21-30.

⁶⁸ Nicholas Grene, 'J. M. Synge: Late Romantic or Protomodernist?', *A History of Irish Modernism*, ed. by Gregory Castle and Patrick Bixby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

meanings that are conveyed by a dramatic narrative.⁶⁹ This brings the focus of discussion back to performance and the impact that actors' voices, bodies, and gestures can have on a play's meaning. The relationship between the Abbey playwrights and their collaborators has been questioned in Elizabeth Brewer Redwine's book on gender and authorship in the Abbey Theatre. In the chapters that follow, I will argue for an approach that balances the social and collaborative nature of theatrical performance, with Synge's authorial intentions in publication and production. Synge's and Fay's archives contain evidence demonstrating that rehearsals generated spontaneous debate about art, and discussion on political and religious subjects, with the participants playing out and arguing over contested representations of Irish life. In these discussions, what is striking is Synge's willingness to engage practically and sympathetically with religious opposition from elements of the cast. At the same time, his furious defence of his work's authenticity created a tension with the thinking of some of his artistic collaborators. The shades of opinion within the Abbey acting company preclude any binary opposition of actor-author, as the Fays' attempts to negotiate partisanship indicate. How these artistic struggles are viewed is shown to have an impact on the way that texts such as *The Well of the Saints* have been edited, with particular attention given to the attempts of Edward Synge, and, more recently, Nicholas Grene to expunge the influence of the actors from the published text. Here is where the combination of textual studies and performance studies becomes a productive methodology for examining the complexity of Synge's legacy.

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Lady Gregory was, over several decades, the Abbey Theatre's fixer, manager, and reliable provider of plays. Her gender and her class made her suitable, in the era she lived in, to work behind the scenes, and to enable others. A small example of this forms the basis for Lucy McDiarmid's discussion of poetic inheritance arising from the so-called peacock dinner, given by a younger generation of poets for William Scawen Blunt in 1914, but brokered by Lady Gregory, who did not herself attend.⁷⁰ As has been frequently observed, her life was one of service to her tenants in a spirit of Victorian paternalism, learned as a girl at Roxborough House, and honed by the example of her husband Sir William Gregory. Her

⁶⁹ Lecossois, 5.

⁷⁰ Lucy McDiarmid, *Poets and the Peacock Dinner: The Literary History of a Meal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 44.

experience as a Victorian adulteress, as lover of Blunt in 1882, was, McDiarmid argues, the making of her as a writer, as their shared moral concerns led to Lady Gregory's first published article.⁷¹ She also wrote love sonnets, some of which Blunt published under his own name.⁷² Like Synge, she was simplified and mythologised by Yeats as a figure of lonely Protestant discipline, but the publication of her diaries shows 'how intimate and knowledgeable' her contacts with the country people around Coole actually were.⁷³ Yeats also noted her 'knowledge of the country mind' was greater than anybody he had ever met.⁷⁴ However, such knowledge was not without its dangers, since it was associated in Yeats's mind with a less noble art: 'being a writer of comedy, her life as an artist has not shaken in her, as tragic art would have done, the conventional standards'.⁷⁵ He regretted privately that she could not quite defy the orthodoxies of polite society.

Her writing emerged from these relationships, aided by her knowledge of Irish. While her enthusiasm for folklore and her work as a collector have received modest scholarly attention, her correspondence with philologists, folklorists and anthropologists of the day has now been more widely acknowledged. Yet, according to Mattar, her plays are unscientific, assuming the 'noble sameness' of the civilised and primitive minds alike, sentimentalising the peasantry as an untamed wild community in opposition to the fractured world of modern capitalism.⁷⁶ Despite the rigour of her collecting of tales, hers is a colonialist perspective inheriting much of Matthew Arnold's Celticism. Her relations with the actors at the Abbey suggest something of this well-meaning paternalism. While her dealings with the company were generally diplomatic and respectful, she could be roused to rage if she felt her class position threatened. Redwine writes that 'Lady Gregory's anger is a bellwether for flare-ups about class, gender and Irishness in performance at the Abbey'.⁷⁷ As

⁷¹ Lady Gregory, 'Arabi and his Household', *The Times* (London), 23 October 1882, 4. Quoted in McDiarmid, 68.

⁷² Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *Love-Lyrics & Songs of Proteus* (London: William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, 1892).

⁷³ James Pethica, "'Uttering, Mastering it"? Yeats's Tower, Lady Gregory's Ballylee, and the Eviction of 1888, *YA21*, 213-67 (223).

⁷⁴ *VPI* 1296.

⁷⁵ *Mem* 257.

⁷⁶ Mattar, 185-239 (186).

⁷⁷ Redwine, *Gender*, xv.

relations with the Fays deteriorated she would remark to Yeats that ‘class distinctions’ and ‘Romanism’ made straightforward dealings with Willie Fay impossible.⁷⁸

Recent criticism has focused on Lady Gregory’s work as a folklorist rather than as a playwright. Yeats claimed that her great achievement was the creation of peasant speech, and that *The White Cockade*, her play about the failed attempt to establish James II as Irish king, was the fulfilment of the promise to create a national theatre of Irish dialect plays.⁷⁹ Yet similar tensions are at play in her drama as in her folklore. There is awkwardness in the juxtaposition of the speech of noble characters and peasants, as is suggested by the revisions to the play between opening and publication. Moreover, the heterogeneity of tone, veering between farcical comedy and tragedy, gestures towards the duality of Lady Gregory’s position as one who in James Knapp’s phrase is both ‘coloniser and colonised’.⁸⁰ Once more I suggest that in the rehearsal room the contradictions that Lady Gregory elegantly evades in her writing are exposed.

Lady Gregory’s translations of Molière have received even less attention. Relatively little is known about the circumstances which led to the Abbey Theatre producing *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* in 1906. No records survive which allow us to identify the French edition of Molière she used as the basis of her translation. A small cache of letters in the Fay archive from Jules Truffier, *Sociétaire* (player-shareholder) with the Comédie-Française helps clarify the picture regarding performance style. An exception to the prevailing critical neglect is an essay by Alexandra Poulain. She notes that Lady Gregory’s transformation of the French text begins with the stage directions that alter the market square setting of *Commedia dell’Arte* into the peasant interior familiar from the plays of Synge, Padraig Colum and Lady Gregory herself.⁸¹ Lady Gregory’s translation is a battle cry for Irish nationalism, her use of Kiltartan dialect insists on the propriety of Anglo-Irish speech as a legitimate mode of cultural expression.⁸² However, such an approach did not meet with universal approval,

⁷⁸ To W. B. Yeats, 3 January 1908. Berg. Quoted in Judith Hill, *Lady Gregory: An Irish Life* (2005; Cork: Collins Press, 2011), 269.

⁷⁹ CW3 325.

⁸⁰ James F. Knapp, ‘Irish Primitivism and Imperial Discourse: Lady Gregory’s Peasantry’, *Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature: Nationalism, Exoticism, Imperialism*, ed. by Jonathan Arac and Harriet Ritvo (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 287-303 (300).

⁸¹ Alexandra Poulain, ‘Lady Gregory s’en va t’en guerre : the Kiltartan Molière’, *Études Irlandaises*, 33.2 (2008), 78-85 (79).

⁸² Poulain, 81.

despite the popularity of the plays in performance. As he had with Synge, though with much less heat, Yeats intervened to defend Lady Gregory's updating of setting and character. 'The word translation', he wrote memorably, 'implies freedom. In vital translation ... a work of art does not go upon its travels; it is re-born in a strange land'.⁸³ In defending Lady Gregory, Yeats was in danger of contradicting his own theory. Lady Gregory's translation made the types of Molière into characters based on observation, her community of Galway tenants. Yet Yeats insisted that farce, like tragedy, is impersonal. It is not a genre of character, or local habitation, but gestures towards the universal.⁸⁴ This was in fact Frank Fay's objection to Lady Gregory's re-writing of Molière. He insisted on the universality of the characters of the *Commedia*, such as the Pantelone, the Harlequin, and suggested the production ought to recognise these vivid theatrical types, not attempt to bring them closer to contemporary Irish life.

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This thesis, then, analyses some plays of Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory in performance and in print and is led by the evidence of the Fay archive. In Chapter One, Yeats's revisions of the text of *The King's Threshold* are examined against the marginalia in Fay's copy. Theoretical and political motivations, changing over the twenty years that Fay was involved in the production, are evaluated in the textual emendments. Chapter Two focuses on how contemporary debates about acting might have played out in performances of *Riders to the Sea*. Broadly speaking, these discussions followed the introduction of naturalism into the theatre repertory, which required a new form of acting. Yet the question of whether Synge's plays were Naturalistic or were acted naturalistically remains complex. In Chapter Three, the Fays' concern with legacy is placed within the context of the opening performances of Synge's *The Shadow of the Glen*. This is the section of Willie Fay's autobiography that required the most substantial revision, and suggests the continuing controversy surrounding Synge's representation of Irish life. The focus shifts in Chapter Four to the editing of Synge's text, as alternative editions of *The Well of the Saints* are evaluated for their attitudes to authorship and intention in dramatic production. In Chapter Five, questions of genre and collaboration emerge in discussion of Lady Gregory's *The White*

⁸³ *Coolie VIII* 357.

⁸⁴ 'A farce and a tragedy are alike in this, that they are a moment of intense life' (CW8 60).

Cockade, while Chapter Six interrogates notions of cultural translation in text and performance through letters and printed editions associated with French and Irish productions of Molière. While the division of chapters favours Synge and Lady Gregory over Yeats, the poet remains a presiding spirit, not least because of his self-appointed position as leader of the theatre movement, chief theorist, and apologist for his colleagues. The thesis is, in part, a narrative of Yeats's experiments in philosophy, art, and nationality which were staged by a group of Dublin artisans and office workers. It is a narrative that ends for Yeats in the creation of a new theatrical and poetic vision; for the Fays, and for Frank Fay in particular, in disillusionment and exile; and for, Synge, death.

Chapter 1

‘Observe his warning “Be sure you don’t sing”¹: Frank Fay, Yeats, and the text in performance of *The King’s Threshold*.

Fay’s version of *The King’s Threshold* is found within a presentation copy of *Plays for an Irish Theatre vol. III* inscribed on the flyleaf by the author and dated March 1904. In the same month, the Irish players appeared before a distinguished audience in their second London season at the Royalty Theatre.² Interest in the return of the Irish company to the English capital was considerable, and spread beyond the intellectual elite to that readership represented by the middle-brow cultural journals that proliferated in the 1890s, such as Jerome K. Jerome’s *To-Day*.³ The paper had given the Irish players a serious review on 6 April 1904.⁴ The following week *To-Day* turned to the subject of verse-speaking on stage, suggesting that the Irish actors’ approach to speaking Yeats’s *The King’s Threshold* might teach English actors how to deliver verse in performance. On 13 April, the ‘Candid Playgoer’ reviewed Granville Barker’s production of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* at the Savoy Theatre, and was scathing about the standards of verse speaking in the company:

Shakespeare ... was not only a dramatist but a dramatic poet ... We require as Mr. W. B. Yeats sees, and as (many believe) the old Greeks saw, a kind of chant, or intonation, if the ear, as well as the dramatic sense is to be satisfied...I am quite certain that the Shakespearean play will never be a thing of beauty until our actors realise that words possess a musical, as highly as a dramatic, importance.⁵

On the 14th April, Frank Fay wrote to Yeats enclosing a copy of this review with the wry comment, ‘your views as to the necessity of musical words being spoken musically are in

¹ Fay directs Yeats to the report of a lesson by Edmond Gôt, Professor of Declamation at the Conservatoire in Paris, in an old issue of *Time* (Alb, ‘How to Make an Actor, No. I. A Lesson at the Conservatoire’, May 1879, 228-34 [230]). Fay’s extract from *Time* is included in the Fay papers at the National Library of Ireland (‘Unpublished talks and articles’, NLI MS 10,953), in one of five articles written for Yeats around 1902-3.

² The audience on 26 March 1904 included Bernard Shaw, J. M. Barrie, theatre patron Miss A. E. F. Horniman and prominent London dramatic critics Max Beerbohm, William Archer and A. B. Walkley (Hogan II, 103).

³ *To-Day* popularised and tamed some of the outrageousness associated with *The Yellow Book*, as Holbrook Jackson’s quotation from Richard Le Gallienne’s ‘The Bloom in Yellow’ indicates: “‘Who can ever forget meeting for the first time upon a hoarding Mr Dudley Hardy’s wonderful Yellow Girl, the pretty advance-guard of *To-Day*?’”, Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties* (London: Grant Richards, 1913), 54.

⁴ ‘The Passing Show...Ireland and the Play’, *To-Day*, 6 April 1904. Frank Fay had ‘passion and poetry, and wonderful eyes and voice of music’. The rest of the company also had ‘voices of music’ (264).

⁵ ‘The Candid Playgoer’, *To-Day*, 13 April 1904, 294.

danger of becoming popular.⁶ Verse speaking might seem a rather technical aspect of theatrical performance for a mainstream publication to stress in evaluating the production of a new play. However, influential voices had been complaining that Shakespeare was ill-served by contemporary English actors since the visit of the Comédie-Française enraptured London audiences in 1879. Matthew Arnold had argued for state subsidy for a British equivalent of the Comédie to protect and preserve the Elizabethan legacy from the deficiencies of the English stage.⁷ The specific issue of speech had been given greater prominence by W. B. Yeats's well-publicised lectures on 'Speaking to the Psaltery' in June and November 1902, a manifesto for a method of chanting verse in imitation of the practices of the Irish bards and ancient Greeks.⁸ From 1901 Frank Fay conducted an extensive correspondence with Yeats which covered many subjects as their collaboration developed, but the starting point was a concern with the correct relationship between the poet and the actor, especially in relation to the speaking of verse.⁹ In 1904, when Fay wrote to Yeats about the London reviews, the first phase of their discussions about the spoken word had finished. Fay no longer bombarded Yeats with letters, memoranda, and newspaper articles on the subject. After this first phase, a difference of emphasis had begun to emerge between the actor and the writer, for example over whether Florence Farr's experiments in speaking to music were properly categorised as song or speech. This conflict can be discerned in the wry tone of Fay's comment about popularity which accompanied the cutting from *To-Day*. Yeats was already beginning to construct a narrative in which Frank and his brother Willie Fay (who was responsible for directing the plays) were suitable for Irish drama in proportion to their lack of skill, their untutored naturalness. Yeats footnoted his reference to

⁶ To W. B. Yeats, 14 April 1904. Fay archive.

⁷ Arnold saw in the hitherto disreputable world of the theatre a potential for moral regeneration: '[w]e are at the end of a period, and have to deal with a new period on which we are entering; and prominent among these facts is the irresistibility of the theatre' ('The French Play in London', *The Nineteenth Century*, 6.30 [August 1879], 228-43; later reprinted in *Irish Essays* [London: Smith, Elder, 1882], 208-44 [232]).

⁸ 'Speaking to the Psaltery' was first printed in *The Monthly Review* in May 1902 and subsequently in book form in *Ideas of Good and Evil* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1903), *E&I* 13-27 (18), *CW4* 12-24 (16).

⁹ Gerard Fay notes, 'the passionate interest in the spoken word was the strongest link between Frank Fay and Yeats. It persisted through their quarrels of later years. It was their first link and almost their last, for it was not long before Frank Fay died that Yeats asked him to create a character in a private performance of one of his later Noh plays produced in the drawing room of 82 Merrion Square, Dublin' (*The Abbey Theatre* [London: Hollis & Carter, 1958], 30). Yeats moved out of Merrion Square in August 1928. There is no corroborating evidence that Frank Fay ever performed in *Plays for Dancers* or any of Yeats's Noh-influenced drama, nor that Yeats invited him to.

the Fay brothers' study of French acting in *Samhain* 1902, when it was reprinted in his *Collected Works* of 1908. He wrote at first that Willie Fay had 'gone' to the French players for his model, but corrected himself as follows:

An illusion, as he himself explained to me. He had never seen *Phèdre*. The players were quiet and natural, because they did not know what else to do. They had not learned to go wrong. – March 1908.¹⁰

This narrative suited Yeats's philosophy of the innate nobility of the Irish, set in pre-modern aspic, yet if Willie Fay had not seen *Phèdre*, Frank certainly had, writing that Yeats's original attribution of influence was 'quite correct. I saw de Max and Sara in *Phèdre*'.¹¹ Fay resented Yeats's attempt to represent a conscious aesthetic choice as something shaped by unconscious forces of race and culture.

Yeats's retrospective under-acknowledgement of the brothers is further suggested by a passage in 'An Introduction for My Plays', Yeats's last word on his dramatic career, written in 1937, when he recalls the impact of seeing Sarah Bernhardt performing on the development of his ideas about the importance of 'vivid words' in the theatre:

It seems that I was confirmed in this idea or found it when I first saw Sarah Bernhardt play in *Phèdre* and that it was I who converted the players, but I am old, I must have many false memories; perhaps I was Synge's convert.¹²

In fact, as I hope to show, he was neither the converter of the players, nor Synge's convert in this regard, but was converted or guided towards Bernhardt as a model for tragic acting by Frank Fay. This chapter, then, will explore the composition and transmission of *The King's Threshold* and the Fays' role in it, in the context of the changing political and artistic intentions of the author. It will examine the circumstances of performance and staging, and the light which Frank Fay's books and scripts shed on textual change in rehearsal and performance. The impact of audience reception on the performances will be investigated, and how that fed into textual transmission. We begin with a discussion of the correspondence between Frank Fay and Yeats on the theory and practice of verse speaking in the theatre, which will focus on the under-acknowledged contribution of the Fays to the

¹⁰ CW8 12.

¹¹ Fay's comment is a marginalium in his copy of Ernest A. Boyd's *The Contemporary Drama of Ireland* (Dublin and London: Talbot, Fisher Unwin, 1918), 41. Fay archive.

¹² The introduction was written in the summer of 1937 for Scribner's unpublished Dublin edition and reprinted in *E&I* 527-30, CW2 23-5 (23).

shaping of Yeats's ideas about the staging of his plays in the early years of their collaboration.

The Poet and the Actor

What, then, were the circumstances of *The King's Threshold's* composition? Yeats's earliest experiments with musical speech were intended to capture the religious aura of bardic art. He spoke of 'trance' and 'reverie' as moods created by a certain style of performance.¹³ The almost hypnotic power of the human voice to create communal emotion preoccupied the poet. As he wrote in his essay 'The Theatre, A Note':

...and in Ireland I have heard a red-haired orator repeat some bad political verses with a voice that went through one like flame, and made them seem the most beautiful verses in the world; but he has no practical knowledge of the stage, and probably despises it.¹⁴

He brought his concepts directly to bear on the narrative of *The King's Threshold*. He believed that the social structure of ancient Ireland was an imaginative community orchestrated by the lynchpin figure of the bard. The poet-figure in *The King's Threshold*, Seanchan, is therefore a representative of the Shelleyan view that poets were the unacknowledged 'legislators' of the world in defiance of temporal authority.¹⁵ The play's inciting incident is the exclusion of Seanchan from his rightful place at the King's table, putting at risk the social fabric. Yeats drew an analogy between the people of the past and those he wished to reach in the present: 'an uncorrupted and imaginative audience trained to listen by its passion for oratory'.¹⁶ The near-riot that accompanied the opening of *The Countess Cathleen* in 1899 might have suggested that an organic community of hearers was pure fantasy, yet Yeats was encouraged by the dissent: 'an audience with National feeling is alive, at the worst it is alive enough to quarrel with.'¹⁷ Yet by 1901 he despaired of the

¹³ VPI 1298.

¹⁴ This essay originally appeared in two parts: *The Dome*, April 1899 and January 1900 (CW8 147-51, 161-63). Both parts were reprinted as 'The Theatre' in *Ideas of Good and Evil* and later in *E&I* 165-70 (170), CW4 122-27 (126). John F. Taylor (1850-1902) was a barrister, journalist, and Yeats's 'red-haired orator'. Yeats noted later that when he spoke on Irish history or literature, 'it was a great event', and his delivery of 'some political verse by Thomas Davis' led the poet to imagine how 'great' the effect would be if dramatic verse were delivered with equal 'intensity and ... subtlety' (CW3 103).

¹⁵ P. B. Shelley, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Kenneth Neill Cameron (New York: Holt, Reinhardt and Winston, 1951), 485.

¹⁶ Irish Literary Theatre's mission statement, reprinted in *Coole IV*, 20.

¹⁷ 'Samhain: (1905)', CW8 83.

audience attracted by the Gaiety Theatre, where *Diarmuid and Grania* was produced in 1901, calling it 'a mob that knows neither literature nor art'.¹⁸ Yeats needed someone to help him bridge the gap between the audience in his imagination and the real theatregoers of Dublin.

Frank Fay had been a constructive critic of *Diarmuid and Grania* in his writings for *The United Irishman*, recognising that such a large venue made the kind of austere acting that Yeats sought very difficult to achieve.¹⁹ Also elusive was the rapport between performer and audience which was crucial to the Yeatsian aesthetic. Yeats had discovered the gap between theory and practice in theatre. His hopes for the acting of *The Countess Cathleen* to represent the musical speech of the bard were dashed when George Moore decided that Dorothy Paget, Yeats's choice to play the Countess, was too inexperienced for such a role.²⁰ Instead, May Whitty was chosen, who was a conventional actress of whose professionally learned diction Yeats would have disapproved. The need to compromise was suggested by Yeats's comment in *Beltaine* that 'the chief endeavour' with *The Countess Cathleen* has been to get it spoken 'with a sense of rhythm'.²¹

Fay's article in *The United Irishman* led to the beginning of a private correspondence with Yeats. One of his central preoccupations in these exchanges was Fay's need to be guided by the poet in the theatre. Frank Fay believed that the French theatre tradition owed its vitality to the instruction of actors by Molière and Racine, whose guidance was passed from actor to actor down to the present. In a letter of July 1901, Fay spoke of needing a poet to 'instruct' him on the way to speak the verse musically.²² Consequently, Fay assailed Yeats with questions about verse speaking and production, only regretting that Yeats wrote in English rather than Irish. He offered opinions of modern actors' speech but was anxious to know the poet's position.²³ Yeats avoided committing himself on the practice of actors with whom he was unfamiliar. He was reluctant to take on the role of tutor to Fay. After

¹⁸ To Lady Gregory, [mid-October 1901], CL3 117-18 (118).

¹⁹ 'The Irish Literary Theatre', *Towards a National Theatre*, 71-3 (72).

²⁰ Yeats explained to Paget that Moore would blame him if his choice of actress were held responsible for the failure of the production (To Dorothy Paget, [19 April 1899], CL2 395-6 [395]).

²¹ 'Beltaine: Plans and Methods (May 1899)', CW8 144.

²² To W. B. Yeats, 29 July 1901. Fay archive.

²³ To W. B. Yeats, 23 July 1901. Fay archive. Yeats answered Fay's question with another question in a lost letter, whose content must be inferred from Fay's reply [c. 28 July 1901]: how was verse delivered on the Restoration stage (CL3 96)? Fay replied that he had 'reason to believe that, by the actors of the Restoration, considerable attention was paid to the declamation of verse' (96n).

the company's production of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* in April 1902, which had been heavily criticised in some quarters, Fay solicited Yeats's opinion: 'I would like to ask you to point out what you consider our defects and errors of execution which you refer to in your note.'²⁴ Yeats, however, demurred.²⁵

Given that poet and actor were by now collaborators in the new Irish theatre movement, it fell to Fay to educate Yeats in the practicalities of acting. This he did through his letters and several untitled and undated articles, or memoranda, which are lodged with the Fay papers in the National Library of Ireland. Links between these articles and Yeats's published prose allow at least one of them to be dated to 1902. The rest appear to have been completed before the end of 1903. In a letter of 8 August [1903], Yeats wrote:

I send back to you all but one of the articles which you lent me. I am keeping that one for a little time, as I think it may be useful to me in getting Samhain together. You mentioned having one on Antoine's theatre. I would very much like to see it if you could spare it for a little.²⁶

After the production of Alice Milligan's *The Deliverance of Red Hugh* (1901) had brought the Fays to Yeats's attention, Frank Fay set his mind to finding for Yeats other examples of methods of acting which would be right for verse. Fay's own favourite actor was Constant Coquelin (1841-1909), whose performances of Molière he had reviewed in 1899.²⁷ Fay rhapsodised about Coquelin's comic ability, but he had reservations concerning his delivery of tragic verse, based on the French actor's performance in Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* where, in his view, Coquelin failed to deliver the lines 'with an adequate appreciation of their poetry'.²⁸ Fay's dramatic writing reveals a sense of the different techniques necessary for comedy and tragedy, in which he believed a form of declamation was essential in speech.²⁹ In tragic acting, it was essential to give full weight to the music of

²⁴ To W. B. Yeats, 11 April 1902. Fay archive.

²⁵ To F. J. Fay, 21 April 1902, CL3 175-77 (176).

²⁶ A fragment of the article on Antoine ('Article B') survives in NLI, Ms 10953. For Yeats's letter of 8 August, see CL3 413-14 (413).

²⁷ 'M. Coquelin in Dublin', *The United Irishman* 1 July 1899, reprinted in *Towards a National Theatre*, 15-17. 'I have nothing but praise for the way M. Coquelin and his company acquitted themselves in Molière' (17).

²⁸ *Towards a National Theatre*, 16.

²⁹ What is declamation? Yeats and Florence Farr used the term in connection with their experiments with the psaltery. Farr wrote in a 'Note Upon her Settings' (1907) that '[t]here is no more beautiful sound than the alternation of carolling or keening and a voice speaking in regulated declamation' (E&I 22). 'Regulated declamation' was a form of speech which did not sacrifice the inherent music of words to a separate melody, but nonetheless was fixed by a method of musical notation. Yeats

the verse, whereas in comedy a greater degree of naturalism was permissible. Fay's love of Coquelin's character acting perhaps goes some way to explaining his own success as an actor in Irish peasant comedy, but it is his ability to direct Yeats to examples of a method for tragedy that is of concern here. Fay thought that Sarah Bernhardt might prove a useful model for Yeats. In one of his memoranda, he commented on the widely held view among London critics (Shaw included) that French actors chanted their lines in singsong, sounding like street-hawkers, exchanging natural delivery for mannered declamation.³⁰ Fay did not dismiss such criticism, but he did not endorse it either. Instead, he wrote:

Bernhardt will be in London in June [1902] and will play Racine's *Phèdre*. If possible I shall try to get across; although it is probable I shall not succeed. But I hope you will go and see whether the method of the French actors in tragedy is not what you want. I remember Bernhardt in *Adrienne Lecouvreur* reciting the fable of the two pigeons in a way that I think would have pleased you.³¹

In *Samhain* (1902), Yeats wrote that he saw Sarah Bernhardt and Édouard De Max in *Phèdre* 'the other day' and describes their method as exactly that required for poetic drama. The performers were still for long periods and their 'gestures had a rhythmic progression'.³² Both De Max and Bernhardt had that quality of repose that Yeats had sought in actors since he first celebrated Florence Farr's performance in the Bedford Park production of *A Sicilian Idyll* in 1890. In fact, his description of the production echoes his earlier reviews of poetic drama with references to a chorus of 'white-robed men' who lent the scene 'the nobility of

believed in the application of this method to the lyrics in his plays and to revivals of Greek drama. Fay's use of the term suggested a theatrical perspective. His usage somewhat mirrored the sense common among theatre critics for whom declamation was synonymous with the old-fashioned delivery of actors on the eighteenth and nineteenth century stages before realism became the dominant mode of performance. Conventions of speech, gesture and bearing developed into a tradition for generations of actors, and a shared language between theatre audiences and actors. However, periodically this tradition would harden into dogma, at which point a Garrick, or a Kean would emerge to revive dramatic speech by introducing a more natural or colloquial approach ('Article A', Stokes II, 503). This oscillation between tradition and innovation Fay also observed in the history of the French stage, although the French had the advantage of the training of the Paris Conservatory which Fay believed was a bulwark protecting the actor against a lowering of taste driven by commerce. For Fay it was theatrical history, not musical theory, that provided the answers to Yeats's problem of poetic speech..

³⁰ Fay's memoranda to Yeats are reprinted in Stokes's 'The Non-Commercial Theatres in London and Paris in the Late Nineteenth Century and the Origins of the Irish Literary Theatre and its Successors', 2 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Reading, 1968), II, 488-530. The untitled articles are labelled by Stokes A-E. Fay's discussion of English critics' appreciation of French delivery comes in Article A, 488-509 (491); the two volumes of the thesis are hereafter cited as Stokes I and II.

³¹ 'Article D', in Stokes II, 521.

³² 'Samhain : 1902', *Ex* 87, *CW*8 12.

Greek sculpture, and an extraordinary reality and intensity'.³³ It is clear that the French company offered a model that approached Yeats's ideal theatre. It is also clear that Fay's interventions were significant. As John Stokes has pointed out, Bernhardt's many appearances in London over the previous twenty years had gone unremarked by Yeats; by the turn of the century her powers were in decline. Yeats's decision to draw attention to her method at this late stage is best explained as a belated appreciation, enabled by Fay's prompting.³⁴ As time went by, Yeats incorporated Fay's views into his own doctrines, until in 'An Introduction for My Plays' he could say that he introduced the players to Bernhardt, or perhaps that Synge introduced him, when it would be truer to say that it was the actor who converted the poet.

'Speaking to the Psaltery' (CW4 12-24).

Fay, then, sought guidance from the poet, while directing Yeats towards practical models of poetic acting. An area of potential disagreement between them emerged following Yeats's public lectures on speaking to the psaltery (a twelve-stringed instrument a little like a lyre). In this debate, Yeats concerned himself with musical theory, Fay with theatrical practice.

The lecture on 'Speaking to the Psaltery' indicates the importance Yeats attached to speech as a form of embodied language. He responded enthusiastically to Florence Farr giving to every line 'its full volume of sound' at the Bedford Park Clubhouse in 1890.³⁵ Rhythmic speech is incantatory, creating a trance-like state of wakefulness. Theatre drifts towards ritual when delivery is slowed down sufficiently. While rapid staccato dialogue gestures towards preoccupation with the surface of life, slow speech indicates a willingness to contemplate depth.³⁶ The difficulty is that a focus on the sound and rhythm of a line works, or can work, against the signifying function of language. As a poet in the theatre, Yeats needed dramatic utterance to be audible to the audience and intelligible. This was one of the absolute principles he shared with Frank Fay, and his criticism of Edward Gordon

³³ *Ibid.* Yeats had written approvingly of the 'white-robed chorus' when reviewing *A Sicilian Idyll* for *The Boston Pilot* (14 June 1890) and the 'semi-religious effect' of the burning incense, CW7 36.

³⁴ Stokes I, 353.

³⁵ 'The Poetic Drama, Some Interesting Attempts to Revive It in London – Dr Todhunter's Important Work in *The Poison Flower*', *Providence Sunday Journal*, CW7 111-16 (115).

³⁶ 'The Symbolism of Poetry', CW4 117.

Craig's production of *The Vikings* by Ibsen revolved around the failure of clever sets to compensate for inaudibility in poetic drama.³⁷ Yet the preoccupation with clarity potentially played against the lure of pure vocal sound.

Yeats's experiments with notation attracted the attention of Frank Fay, eager to learn the correct relationship between actor and poet. Yeats had told Fay in mid-1901 about Farr's experiments in speaking to musical notes in imitation of the choruses of Greek tragedy, and Fay wrote back with enthusiasm, 'your description of what Miss Farr is to do has raised my expectations to a high pitch'.³⁸ He continued in respectful attitude: 'I myself have no objection to your views if we can get the right sort of chant'.³⁹ He even acquired a psaltery and announced his intention to 'do one or two pieces' to it at a night in January 1903 at the Celtic Literary Society called *Readings from Irish Poets and Prose Writers*.⁴⁰ Such endorsement appears to have been mainly lip-service. His real views emerged in a review of Yeats's lecture. In 'Mr Yeats's Lecture on the Psaltery', Fay began by asserting the existence of a tradition of rhythmical declamation in French theatre, adapted for the performance of classical tragedy. The tradition was guarded by the Comédie-Française and transmitted through the teaching of the Paris Conservatoire. Fay quoted for Yeats's benefit the memoirs of Jean Racine, as edited by his son, who wrote of his father's reputation as a master of 'declamation'.⁴¹ Fay's son, Gerard, wrote that Yeats was 'greatly impressed by the fact that Racine had taught a favourite actress according to some sort of regulative method equivalent to musical notation'.⁴² This actress was Champmeslé. Fay quotes Racine *films*:

Il lui faisoit d'abord comprendre les verse qu'elle avoit a dire, lui montrant les gestes, et lui dictoit les tons, que même il notoit.⁴³

[First of all, he made her understand the verses that she had to speak, he showed her the gestures, and dictated them all, even noting them down.]

³⁷ Yeats wrote verses for the Craig-Terry production at the Imperial Theatre (14 April to 15 May 1903), which he described as being 'spoken with great energy' but in a manner 'quite inaudible'. He told Edith Craig that a competition should be held offering 'so many hundreds' to anyone in the audience 'who could hear three lines together' (To Lady Gregory, [1 May 1903], CL3 351-53 [352, 353]).

³⁸ 29 July 1901.

³⁹ 26 April 1902.

⁴⁰ To W. B. Yeats, [20 November 1902]. Fay archive.

⁴¹ *Œuvres de Jean Racine, Vol. I*, ed. by Louis Racine (Paris: Lefèvre, 1837), 62.

⁴² Gerard Fay, 'W. B. Yeats, His Influence on the Irish Drama', *Rochdale Observer*, 11 February 1939, cutting tipped into his copy of *Collected Plays of W. B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1952). Fay archive.

⁴³ Fay, 'Article C', Stokes II, 513.

The key word here is 'notoit'. Racine noted down the pitch with which Champmeslé was to deliver the lines, indicating a system of rhythmical declamation analogous to music. Yeats must indeed have been excited to hear of an historical analogy for his own theory. Yet when Fay attended Yeats and Farr's lecture in Dublin in November 1902, he found he could not endorse Yeats's method. He wrote:

I know Mr Yeats protests against what Miss Farr does being called singing, but except in that one poem, I do not know by what other word it can be described. Most of what Miss Farr did is very similar to what one hears in the churches; she speaks on definite notes, and she seems to get the right notes; she speaks to a rhythm, but is it *the* rhythm?⁴⁴

Fay's concern is with the enforcement of a particular interpretation of the rhythm of a line. Such a practice was an encroachment on the actor's individuality and expressiveness, by which speech is made meaningful to the audience. This gestures towards the semantic function of language that Yeats played against in his focus on sound. Time and again in his letters he warns Yeats against chanting. Coquelin, he advised, 'protests strongly against chanting'.⁴⁵ On the other hand, it is worth bearing in mind that Fay's public comments on Yeats in *The United Irishman* are often more critical than in his private correspondence. A case in point was his strong criticism of Yeats's early drama:

The plays which Mr Yeats wishes to see on the stage of his 'Theatre of Art' remind me of exquisitely beautiful corpses. *The Countess Cathleen* and *The Land of Heart's Desire* are undoubtedly charming, aye, and moving too, but they do not inspire; they do not send men away filled with the desire for deeds.⁴⁶

In correspondence, Fay apologised to Yeats, saying that his criticism in print exaggerated his own view, and he implied that he had been under editorial pressure to take a strongly nationalist line in his article.⁴⁷ It could be argued that the same tendency is at play in his review of Yeats's lecture on speaking to the psaltery, that he is more sympathetic privately than he can express in public. However, the tone of Fay's review of the lecture suggests his

⁴⁴ *Towards a National Theatre*, 95-7 (95-6).

⁴⁵ 23 July 1901.

⁴⁶ 'Mr Yeats and the Stage', *The United Irishman*, 4 May 1901, reprinted in *Towards a National Theatre*, 50-53 (52).

⁴⁷ To Yeats, 11 April 1902. Considerable opposition to the Irish Literary Theatre was growing in the nationalist press in 1901. Writing of *Diarmuid and Grania*, *The Freeman's Journal* argued that the portrayal of folk heroes was of 'doubtful propriety', the opening salvo in what would become a familiar line of attack against the plays of Synge ('By the Way', 4, quoted in Robert Hogan and James Kilroy, *The Irish Literary Theatre, 1899-1901* [Dublin: Dolmen, 1975], 110).

reservations about Yeats's method are sincere since it strikes a note of sorrowful disappointment rather than the bombast of his earlier review.⁴⁸

In one specific case, Yeats used Fay's knowledge of theatrical history to lend weight to his theories. Arthur Symons observed a rehearsal of Yeats's lecture on speaking to the psaltery and reviewed it in the *Academy*.⁴⁹ He found Farr's performance 'mechanical', despite her beautiful voice, because the notations compelled her to attempt to imitate the poet's own natural inflexions.⁵⁰ Her reading lacked spontaneity. Yeats disagreed in reply to the Editor of *The Academy*, repeating his claims that personal interpretation of verse was not incompatible with a method that fixed the pitch by notation, and furthermore, that what was commonly thought of as Irish folk song was really a kind of regulated musical speech.⁵¹ He countered Symons's view that speech to musical notation inevitably drifts into chanting with an example from French theatre: '[i]t is said that "the song of Rachel" degenerated into "sing song" with the rest of her company, but that did not prove that her method of speaking verse was wrong'.⁵²

Here we see Yeats building on Fay's knowledge that Racine had taught his pupil by a method akin to musical notation. Mademoiselle Rachel (1820-58) was a statuesque tragedienne famous for her acting in French classical drama, especially Racine. In his memorandum to Yeats, Fay quoted from an article on the French stage which explains that Racine's ambition to reproduce the forms of the classical stage extended to speech, which it was believed the Greeks delivered in a 'half musical style of recitation'.⁵³ Fay then added, 'G. H. Lewes remarks that the *song* of Rachel became sing song in the rest of her company – *Actors and Acting*'.⁵⁴ Yeats used the example given by Fay in the context of his reply to Symons for two purposes: to support by historical analogy his view that musical speech is

⁴⁸ A later comment (1918) may be instructive here. Writing in the margins of Boyd's *The Contemporary Drama*, Fay glosses Yeats's wish to experiment with actors in the speaking of verse as follows: '[h]e didn't want it spoken but intoned and no audience would stand the monotony' (11).

⁴⁹ 'The Speaking of Verse', *The Academy*, 31 May 1902, 559.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ 'Speaking to Musial Notes', *The Academy*, 7 June 1902, 590-91 (591).

⁵² *CL3* 197.

⁵³ 'Article A', Stokes, II, 503. Fay quotes from an article by H. Barton Baker, 'The French Stage', in *Belgravia*, May 1878, 337-50 (341).

⁵⁴ G. H. Lewes, *On Actors and the Art of Acting* (London: Smith, Elder, 1875).

associated with the greatest artists, and to suggest that were it to drift towards intoning then that would represent a fault of execution rather than method.

In speaking of Mademoiselle Rachel in response to Symons, Yeats makes good use of Fay's learning to show that musical notation has a place within the tradition that Symons respected, the rhetorical speech of the Comédie-Française. Christopher Morash has written of a 'pattern' in Yeats's dealings with collaborators which certainly seems to apply here: 'enthusiasm, critique, and appropriation (usually followed by abandonment of its originator)'.⁵⁵ Appropriation in some degree typified Yeats's use of the contributions of Farr, the Fays, Charles Ricketts, and even Lady Gregory. Even as Fay questioned some of Yeats's claims for musical speech, his research was grist for the poet's public battle with detractors, even admiring ones, such as Arthur Symons. Fay did not believe notation was part of the tradition of what he called regulated speech at the Conservatoire: it had been used by Racine in desperation because Champmeslé was not considered a natural actress. Its use in that case, then, was exceptional and not a pretext for the present day.

Frank Fay and the History of the Stage

Frank Fay wrote at length to Yeats about the histories of both the French and English stages. He suggested, correctly, that Yeats had not made any detailed study of theatrical history. He wrote, he said, 'to place the position before you, because you have probably had neither the time nor the inclination to read up Theatrical history'.⁵⁶ Yeats in 1906 would write that he had 'but one art, that of speech'. Yet he admitted that 'for some purposes it will be necessary to divine the lineaments of a still older art, and re-create the regulated declamations that died out when music fell into its earliest elaborations.'⁵⁷ Music then, preoccupied him as much as speech. Morash has written that 'even at this early point' and throughout 'the ensuing years' Yeats was defining 'an apparently impossible balance ... to find a form of performed speech with the qualities of music that is, paradoxically, not music.'⁵⁸ Fay's hope was that theatrical history might provide its own examples of the quest for this 'impossible balance' without having to attempt to re-create a lost art of the Greeks.

⁵⁵ Morash, *Yeats*, 135.

⁵⁶ 23 July 1901.

⁵⁷ 'Literature and the Living Voice', *Ex* 218-9; *CW* 8 105.

⁵⁸ Morash, *Yeats*, 167-8.

According to his brother, Fay bought eighteenth century editions of French plays from the second-hand stalls on the quays of the Liffey, which had been discarded by language students at Trinity.⁵⁹ Traces of his collecting remain in the Fay archive, for example in his copy of a fourth edition of a *Life of Garrick* (1784). Fay quotes Thomas Davies to Yeats describing Garrick's acting as 'easy and familiar ... yet forcible', which shocked critics who had been used to vocal tricks calculated to 'entrap applause'.⁶⁰ Fay reported to Yeats how Garrick's approach superseded a more formal declamatory style associated with James Quin.⁶¹ Fay also wrote to Yeats of a passage in Molière's *L'Impromptu de Versailles* which burlesqued the bombastic acting of Montfluery.⁶² Like Garrick's, Molière's style was a reaction against mannered acting. Stokes has written that Fay's investigation into the French acting tradition tended to engage with the two opposites of 'sound' and 'sense'. He saw in theatrical history periods of the supremacy of sound, which fell into the 'overemphasis on melopoeia, on rhythm and vowel sound' which led to reaction and a breakthrough into naturalness and a freer style.⁶³ This focus on the oscillation in history between the music of speech and a greater naturalness must have caught the attention of Yeats in his search for the apparently impossible balance between music and speech.

Fay is at pains to argue to Yeats that the relevant authorities warn against chanting verse. His guide here is Constant Coquelin, whose book *L'Art de Dire le Monologue* he sent to Yeats with pages turned down (there is no evidence that Yeats read it). Coquelin's book is about verse speaking in theatre and steers a middle path between a swaggering old-fashioned diction associated with the alexandrines of French classical metre and the naturalism of the age of Zola. He begins with a question 'How do you speak verse? Like

⁵⁹ W. Fay, 10.

⁶⁰ Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, 2 vols. (1780; London, 1784), I, 40. Fay archive.

⁶¹ James Quin (1693-1766) was for much of his life 'always, and generally unfavourably, compared with Garrick' (article by Peter Thomson, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <doi.org.10.1093/ref:odnb/22962> [accessed 21 February 2021]).

⁶² In a review of *Cyrano de Bergerac* for *The United Irishman*, Fay covers similar ground. *Cyrano* is set in theatre based on the Hotel de Bourgogne in the Paris of Louis XIV, and Montfleury is represented. It was this theatre and its performers, famous for its productions of Corneille and Racine that Molière parodied in *L'Impromptu de Versailles* for over-dramatic acting ('M. Coquelin in Dublin', 2. 18, 1 July 1899, reprinted in *Towards a National Theatre*, 15-7 [16]).

⁶³ Stokes I, 319.

prose? Or singing it?' before answering 'I reply neither one nor the other'.⁶⁴ But he warned that verse should be spoken, not chanted, because the actor ought to 'charm' the audience, not 'send it to sleep'.⁶⁵ Verse should not be spoken like prose but should respect the 'general movement in the progression of the lines' related to rhyme. In sending Yeats these extracts, Fay is warning the poet against a too regulated, to use Symons' word, 'stereotyped' delivery.⁶⁶ He knew, as Coquelin did, that a chant would alienate a modern audience.

Fay placed these questions within the context of the contemporary as well as the historical stage. He summarised for Yeats a public debate between George Barlow, a minor English poet' and Sir Henry Irving, the foremost Shakespearean actor of the day.⁶⁷ At issue was whether French actors' performance of verse could serve as a model for English playing of Shakespeare. Barlow argued that English productions of Shakespeare might look sumptuous but were poorly acted in comparison with French productions of Molière, Racine and Corneille. His view qualified the praise lavished on Irving for restoring and enhancing the reputation of Shakespeare through his productions at the Lyceum with Ellen Terry in the 1890s. Barlow contrasted the discipline and training of the French actors, who both respected the sense of the verse (its 'dramatic music') and its sound ('syllabic music'). This they combined with stillness, ceding focus to the speaker rather than busily moving about the stage. He concluded provocatively that '[t]here is much of Shakespeare which would be magnificent were it not delivered for massacre and mutilation to the tender mercies of the actors of the Lyceum'.⁶⁸ Fay endorsed Barlow's view owing to his loyalty to the formal method of the Conservatoire, such as its rules of breath control, and rigorous observance of the caesura. His own training of the Irish actors was based on this tradition, as is suggested by his attempts to acquire William Archer's special report on the methods of teaching of the

⁶⁴ Coquelin cadet et ainé, *L'Art de Dire le Monologue* (Paris, 1884), quoted in Frank Fay's 'typescript and handwritten talks and papers on aspects of theatre history' (NLI MS 10953, transcribed as 'Article A', Stokes II, 488-509 [504]).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *The Academy*, 31 May 1902, 559.

⁶⁷ Fay describes Barlow as 'some poet' who 'accused' Irving of not knowing how to deliver verse (Stokes I, 499). The original article was 'Talent and Genius on the Stage' (*The Contemporary Review*, 62.321 [September 1892], 385-94).

⁶⁸ Barlow, 'Talent', 389.

French Conservatoire which was prepared for the opening of the new Academy of Dramatic Art in London in 1904.⁶⁹

Fay was always concerned, however, by the reputation of the French actors for mannered acting and chanting. How could their method be correct if it struck English critics as so artificial? He reports to Yeats Irving's reply to Barlow, which argues that the case for declaiming Shakespeare is based on a wish to bring back outdated traditions. Irving asserts that the tradition of Garrick, of which Fay approves, emphasised naturalness over the 'dull, declaiming Quin', whose acting, Irving argues, Garrick made to seem old-fashioned.⁷⁰ French verse, with its alexandrines and rhyme, demands, says Irving, a more formal delivery quite unsuited to English blank verse. The correspondence continued with a further trenchant riposte from Barlow. He countered Irving's claim that to recite Shakespeare like Racine was 'burglary', by asserting that the French recitation of verse was not 'sing-song', but one that combined 'appreciation of musical rhythm' with respect for the sense of the verse.⁷¹ Fay was thereby reassured that Shaw's comparison of the declamation of the tragedians of the Comédie to the 'bawling' of street hawkers was exaggerated.⁷² He wrote to Yeats that Barlow's reply 'shattered' Irving.⁷³ Fay's dislike of Irving, like Yeats's, would have been partly prompted by national concerns. Both men loathed the commercial stage of London and its impact on the Elizabethan dramatic heritage. Both felt that Irish drama could draw productively on the Elizabethan legacy while bypassing what they saw as its vulgar interpretation in London. For both, also, the French tradition offered an alternative, and a corrective to the English.⁷⁴ Yet what Fay offered Yeats went beyond

⁶⁹ To William Archer, 23 August [1904], CL3 639-40 (640). The first drama school in England, the Academy of Dramatic Art was opened by Herbert Beerbohm Tree at His Majesty's Theatre on 25 April 1904.

⁷⁰ Sir Henry Irving, 'Some Misconceptions about the Stage' (*The Nineteenth Century*, 62.190 [October 1892], 670-6 [672]).

⁷¹ Barlow, 'Mr Irving and the English Drama' (*The New Review*, 7.43 [December 1892], 655-65 [661]).

⁷² Shaw took aim at Jean Mounet-Sully, the leading tragedian of the Comédie-Française, who was the epitome of 'the worst declamatory horrors of that institution', and whose delivery amounted to 'monotonously bawling [his] phrases like street cries' (*Our Theatre in the Nineties*, 3 vols [London: Constable, 1931], I, 166).

⁷³ *Our Theatres in the Nineties*, I, 257; Stokes II, 499.

⁷⁴ Yeats's dramaturgy in the 1890s was influenced by the French theatrical avant garde, as shown by his review of a performance of Auguste Villiers de l'Isle Adam's *Axël*, which he reviewed in the April 1894 number of *The Bookman* ('A Symbolical Drama in Paris', CW9 234-7). Fay's doctrine of acting was inspired by the French actors, whom he saw at the Gaiety Theatre in touring productions, which he reviewed for *The United Irishman* from 1899-1901.

material for the nationalist cultural revival. He was offering Yeats a way of exploring what Morash calls the 'fault line' between speech and music, that grounded the conceptual in the historical and the practical.⁷⁵

Yeats's wish to 'divine the lineaments' of a lost art of speech was arguably rendered unnecessary by Frank Fay's adaptation of the training of the French actors to the performance of plays of Irish dialect. Stokes has written that 'the tradition of the Conservatoire actors was by a remarkable imaginative transference carried on by the working men and women of the Irish National Theatre Society'.⁷⁶ What effect did Fay's correspondence and memoranda have on Yeats's dramaturgy, in particular his statements on verse speaking?

The evidence for this is in the subtle shifts in Yeats's rhetoric between 'The Reform of the Theatre' (1903) and 'The Play, the Player and the Scene', printed in *Samhain* in 1904. His statements in the former lecture placed the utmost importance on the speaking of verse: '[a]n actor should understand how to so discriminate cadence from cadence, and to so cherish the musical lineaments of verse or prose that he delights the ear with a continually varied music'.⁷⁷ By 1904, however, Yeats had adopted many of the elements implied in Fay's analysis of theatre history in terms of sound and sense. He denied that he wished to send audiences to sleep: 'I have been told that I desire a monotonous chant, but that is not true'.⁷⁸ Moreover, he was now able to confidently distinguish between the kind of recitation practiced by Florence Farr's reading to a psaltery and general dramatic utterance. From this point onwards pitched incantatory speech became one of several styles of delivery used by the company for special effects. Yeats came closest to hearing his bardic ideal of harmonious speech to 'murmuring wires' from the Angel in his *The Hour-Glass*, in which Maire Nic Shiubhlaigh spoke on 'pure notes written out beforehand and carefully rehearsed'.⁷⁹ Yeats wrote in 1904:

Even now, when one wishes to make the voice immortal and passionless, as in the Angel's part in my *Hour-Glass*, one finds it desirable for the player to speak upon pure musical notes, written out beforehand and carefully rehearsed. On one occasion when I heard the Angel's part spoken in this

⁷⁵ Morash, *Yeats*, 167.

⁷⁶ Stokes I, 329.

⁷⁷ Ex 108, CW8 27.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ 'Speaking to the Psaltery', CW4 13; 'The Play, The Player, and the Scene', Ex 174, CW8 75

way with entire success, the contrast between the crystalline quality of the pure notes and the more confused and passionate speaking of the Wise Man was a new dramatic effect of great value.⁸⁰

This created an otherworldly effect in keeping with the character, noted by Joseph Holloway, who praised the actress's 'measured delivery'.⁸¹ A similar effect was employed for the chorus of women in the second version of *On Baile's Strand*, performed on tour in late 1905 and in Dublin in 1906. In both cases, as with Alee's lyric in *The Countess Cathleen*, the use of chanting works to evoke supernatural presence. It becomes one of a range of verbal styles. Yeats acknowledged that his dream of a bardic drama, or a sung drama of the ancient Greeks was almost dead in 1904:

It is possible, barely so, but still possible, that some day we may write musical notes as did the Greeks, it seems, for a whole play, and make our actors speak upon them – not sing but speak.⁸²

The clue here is in the tone: it may be 'possible' but it is certainly difficult and subject to a significant deferral to 'some day'. Instead, in the present, a daydream has been replaced by a living theatre, which mobilises very different kinds of speech for dramatic rather than melodic or harmonic effect.

It might reasonably be pointed out that Yeats's concern with poetry as speech was growing at this point independently of Frank Fay's enthusiastic auto-didacticism. He was drawn to the theatre because of his increasing conviction that poetry was a kind of performed speech (even if that performance is only implicit). We know across all genres he delighted in the demotic from 1900 onwards. By 1905 he could write to John Quinn, the American lawyer, of his revisions to *The Shadowy Waters* that 'It has become a simple passionate play. ... I believe more strongly every day that the element of strength in poetic language is common idiom, just as the element of strength in poetic construction is common passion.' In the same letter he delighted in having got 'creaking shoes' and 'liquorice-root' into what had been 'a very abstract passage'.⁸³ Yet it is surely not fanciful to suppose that Fay's advice grounded in his reading of theatre history, rather than abstraction, had an effect. There is pride in Yeats's celebration of the juxtaposition between the Wise Man's 'confused and passionate' speaking and the Angel's 'immortal and passionless' voice; Yeats

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Holloway, 22.

⁸² *Ex* 174, CW8 75.

⁸³ To John Quinn, 16 September 1905, *CL4* 177-79 (179).

presents the contrast as something positive, a valuable effect.⁸⁴ Yeats is now exhibiting the same flexibility and tolerance as Frank Fay, whose sense of theatre history suggested an oscillation between sound and sense in verse speaking.

Annotations to the Fay copy of *The King's Threshold*

The Hour-Glass established contrasting styles of verbal utterance as a feature of the Irish players' performance style, while emphasising minimalism in décor and restraint in gesture. Yeats was delighted and wrote to John Quinn in March 1903, '[e]verything seemed remote, naïve spiritual, & the attention, liberated from irrelevant distractions, was occupied as it cannot be on an ordinary stage with what was said & done.'⁸⁵ In its early performances, *The Hour-Glass* offered a compromise between the naturalism of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* and an avant-garde stylised aesthetic. *The Hour-Glass* would become, as Catherine Phillips notes, 'vital' to Yeats's 'development as a dramatist', yielding opportunities for him to experiment, in collaboration with Gordon Craig, with scenery, costumes (including masks) and lighting in the years after the Fays had left the Abbey.⁸⁶ As Warwick Gould has shown, Yeats continued to tinker with the text – notwithstanding his re-writing of it in a mixed version of verse and prose between 1910 and 1912 – right up until the abortive Scribner edition of the 1930s.⁸⁷ This reinforces the narrative of ceaseless textual revision of which the Fay copy of *The King's Threshold*, as well as his copies of *The Hour-Glass* and *On Baile's Strand*, are part. After *The Hour-Glass*, Yeats returned to poetic drama, writing *The King's Threshold* in spring and early summer 1903. Still searching for a method that combined dignity with passion, Yeats told Fay, 'I want the whole opening of the play done in a grave statuesque way as if it were a Greek play.'⁸⁸ The play opened in October 1903 at the Molesworth Hall with

⁸⁴ Ex 174, CW8 75.

⁸⁵ To John Quinn, 20 March [1903], CL3 333-35 (333).

⁸⁶ W. B. Yeats, *The Hour-Glass, Manuscript Materials*, ed. by Catherine Phillips (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), xxxv.

⁸⁷ Warwick Gould, 'No Right Poem ["I was going the road one day"]', YA10, 92-107. The essay deals with afterlife in print of a song intended to be sung by the Wise Man's pupils on one or two occasions in the play. Based on a reworking by Yeats of an Irish ballad translated by Lady Gregory this is one of several songs in his one-act prose dramas of 1901-3. *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, *The Pot of Broth* and *The Hour-Glass* all contain lyrics inserted within the dialogue. These lyrics were, in the case of those in *The Pot of Broth* and *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, set to music, lending themselves to chanted or declaimed delivery. In *The Bounty of Sweden* (1923), Yeats wrote that his '*Hour-Glass* in its prose form' was 'characteristic' of his first ambition' to 'bring the imagination and speech of the country, all that poetical tradition descended from the Middle Ages to the people of a town' (Ex 570, CW3 417).

⁸⁸ To F. J. Fay, [14 August 1903], CL3 417.

costumes by Miss Horniman. It was revived in Dublin in April 1905, in what was advertised as a revised version.⁸⁹

Frank Fay's changes to the text, in pencil, date from the brief rehearsal following the London tour in March 1904 and before a special performance, or *conversazione*, for Yeats and Stephen Gwynn in Dublin on 26th April.⁹⁰ Fay's annotations comprise twenty separate marks, or occasions, of marginalia. Some are as simple as abbreviated stage directions indicating the position a character takes up relative to the audience or to other characters. Others are minor changes to dialogue, generally speeches involving or delivered by Seanchan, the main character whom Fay interpreted in all performances during 1904-1906. There is one major piece of re-writing: the tense encounter between Seanchan and his fiancée Fedelm. These changes scribbled down without punctuation, with 't's uncrossed and 'i's undotted, were made in haste. As Yeats told Quinn, 'I am over here [Dublin] attending rehearsals...and I am taking the opportunity of going through it line by line with William Fay.'⁹¹

The annotations will be described in more detail, before being selectively analysed. An appendix contains a full transcription of all marginalia (Appendix A). Once the annotations in the Fay copy have been critically evaluated, the same process will be applied to changes recorded in the Abbey theatre prompt copy for the April 1905 revival, held in the University of Ireland, Galway. Briefly, Fay's involvement in the revivals of 1921 and 1922 will be considered.

Describing the Annotations

⁸⁹ Declan Kiely refers to an advertisement for 'THE KING'S THRESHOLD (a revised version)', in the *Irish Times*, 25 April 1905, 5, (W. B. Yeats, *The King's Threshold, Manuscript Materials*, ed. by Declan Kiely [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005], xlviii; hereafter cited as Kiely, *KT*).

⁹⁰ Gwynn, a journalist and author, later to be MP for Galway City, was Honorary Secretary of the London Irish Literary Society and an influential supporter of the National Theatre.

⁹¹ To John Quinn, 15 April 1904, *CL3* 580-81 (580). Yeats went through the play with Willie rather than Frank because he was the director. We may speculate that Willie contributed to the process of revision, since collaboration is the norm in theatre practice.

The King's Threshold dates from a period when Yeats's energies were fully engaged in theatre. It revolves around a poet, Seanchan, who asserts 'the ancient right of poets' by starving himself on the steps of the royal palace.⁹² At one point, the Lord Chamberlain appears in official robes to persuade Seanchan to abandon his defiance of authority.

Seanchan replies:

Shake your coat
Where little jewels gleam on it, and say
A herdsman, sitting where the pigs had trampled,
Made up a song about enchanted kings,...
And children by the hearth caught up the song
And murmured it, until the tailors heard it.⁹³

In Fay's copy the second line is changed by the removal of the definite article. The line 'the little jewels gleam on it' is thus brought into alignment with future printed editions, by the crossing-out of 'the' in the phrase 'the little jewels'.⁹⁴ None of the other intermediate states of the text contain this change, indicating it is an authorial correction first made in rehearsal and recalled in the final preparations for the printing of *Poems, 1899-1905*.

A new cue-line for another of Seanchan's excoriations of the state and its functionaries, beginning '[y]es, yes, go to the hurley, go to the hurley' (*VPI* 293, l. 594) is written by Fay in the margin. It reads:

cue he is looking at us⁹⁵

On the next page, an interlinear annotation changes another line where Seanchan is relating to the women of the palace. The line 'for they had little ears as thirsty as are yours' is changed to,

they'd little ears as thirsty as your ears⁹⁶

Unlike the earlier change ('the little jewels'), this one does appear in an intermediate state where an authorial correction was made in proof (Berg H (1) 8^r). The correction is in Yeats's hand, indicating that he was still bringing the printed text into line with the performance text at a late stage. Later, when Seanchan accuses the palace women of moral

⁹² *VPI* 275, l. 308, 291, l. 543.

⁹³ *VPI* 290, ll. 528-35

⁹⁴ Appendix A, 8.

⁹⁵ See Appendix A, 9.

⁹⁶ *VPI* 294, l. 602, Appendix A, 10.

contamination, he remembers an occasion when the Princesses's mother was blessed by a leper. Fay's copy has, 'and he lifted his hand and blessed her hand'. This is changed by Fay to:

he lifted up his hand and blessed her hand⁹⁷

Declan Kiely finds this detail is borrowed from *Sancan the Bard*, a verse play in rhyming couplets by Edwin Ellis, a dramatic poet with whom Yeats collaborated on *The Works of William Blake* (1893).⁹⁸ Ellis included a speech in which Seanchan tells the Princess about her grandmother's meeting with begging lepers:

Long years ago I saw thy granddam girl:
She sat upon a bank one summer's day,
Then came three lepers asking her the way.
She told them, and her hand she waved and showed;
The lepers saw, and passed upon their road.
Your hand has still some evil taint of this.⁹⁹

In Yeats's version, it is the Princesses' mother who was supposed to have been tainted. On page forty-eight of Fay's copy, another of Seanchan's arias of rage is altered by Fay. As he widens his accusation, the poet announces: '[t]here are no sound hands among you. No sound hands.'¹⁰⁰ Fay changes this to:

[t]here's no sound hand among you. No sound hand.¹⁰¹

In the same speech he demands: 'I would know why you have brought me leper's wine?' In Fay's copy this is amended to:

And wherefore have you brought me leper's wine?¹⁰²

A more substantial change to the 1904 text removes Seanchan's final speech on page sixty-one and Fedelm's speech on page sixty-two and associated stage directions, replacing them with:

[*Seanchan*] Begone from me
There's treachery in those arms and in that voice
They're all against me[.] Why did you linger here [?]

⁹⁷ *VPI* 296, l. 638, Appendix A, 11.

⁹⁸ Kiely, *KT*, xxxi.

⁹⁹ Edwin Ellis, *Sancan the Bard* (London: Ward & Downey, 1895), Act IV, 30.

¹⁰⁰ *VPI* 297, l. 648, variant noted.

¹⁰¹ *VPI* 297, l. 648, Appendix A, 12.

¹⁰² *VPI* 297, l. 652, Appendix A, 12.

How long must I endure the sight of you[?]
 — — [Fedelm] Seanchan[!]
 [Seanchan] Go where you will
 So it be out of sight and out of mind[.]
 I cast you from me like an old torn cap
 A broken shoe, a glove without a finger
 A crooked penny, whatever is most worthless[.]
 — — [Fedelm] do not drive me from you
 What did I say. [m]y dove of the woods [?] I was about
 To curse you
 It was all frenzy[.] I'll unsay it all
 But you must go away[.]¹⁰³

Analysing the Annotations

One of the adjustments Yeats makes to the speeches of Seanchan in the revisions in Fay's copy is the introduction of abbreviations of verb forms which in a previous version were written in full. Thus 'there are no sound hands' is abbreviated to 'there's no sound hand among you' and 'for they had little ears as thirsty as yours' becomes 'they'd little ears as thirsty as your ears'. These changes render Seanchan's speech more natural, less conventionally poetic. At the same time that the speeches are brought into line with ordinary speech, they are shortened to render them more forceful. The very formal, 'I would know why you have brought me leper's wine' is more concise: 'and wherefore have you brought me leper's wine' though the adoption of the conscious archaism 'wherefore' rather plays against colloquialism. Similarly, Yeats uses repetition to musical effect, altering the rather dull line, 'For they had little ears as thirsty as yours' into 'they'd little ears as thirsty as your ears'. The section where Seanchan extends his accusation of contamination among the court by saying 'there are no sound hands among you. No sound hands' becomes stronger as 'there's no sound hand among you. No sound hand'. The longer change is also full of this stronger and more natural rhythmic language. Seanchan's 1904 lines to Fedelm read thus:

I swear an oath
 Upon the holy tree that I'll not eat
 Until the King restore the right of the poets.
 O Sun and Moon and all things that have strength
 Become my strength that I may put a curse
 On all things that would have me break this oath.

¹⁰³ This insert varies slightly from the revised text in *VPI* 305, ll. 792-798, but certainly represents an authorial correction. See Appendix A, 14-15.

It becomes:

Begone from me!
 There's treachery in those arms and in that voice.
 They're all against me. Why do you linger there?
 How long must I endure the sight of you?

The abbreviations favouring natural speech ('there's...they're') are again present. The use of questions in revision creates a powerful rhetoric of disgust.

The traditional way of explaining these changes is to point to a hardening in Yeats's attitudes, which some critics have associated with his reading of Nietzsche.¹⁰⁴ In a letter to George Russell written at this juncture he reconsiders his poetic drama of the 1890s critically, finding it sentimental and even 'unmanly'.¹⁰⁵ Using the Nietzschean phrase he urges AE, 'let us have no emotion, however abstract, in which there is not athletic joy'.¹⁰⁶ Another more productive way of looking at these changes is to relate them back to Yeats's advocacy for the spoken word over the written word. The small changes to the text – the archaism, the syntactic changes, the musical effects – belong to a period when Yeats wrote:

Let us get back in everything to the spoken word, even though we have to speak our lyrics to the psaltery or the harp, for, as A.E. says, we have begun to forget that literature is but recorded speech, and even when we write with care we have begun 'to write with elaboration what could never be spoken'. But when we go back to speech let us see that it is the idiom either of those who have rejected, or those who have never learned, the base idioms of the newspapers.¹⁰⁷

Spoken language in this sense is performative. It is pure symbol, and the poet is Adam naming the world. *The King's Threshold* is intimately concerned with the power of the spoken word from the opening lines when King Guaire welcomes the poet-students who

¹⁰⁴ The influence of Nietzsche on English-speaking artists, including Yeats, in the early part of the twentieth century has been widely explored. David Thatcher has carefully examined Yeats's annotations to a copy of *Selections* from Nietzsche, edited by Thomas Common (London: Grant Richards, 1901). He concluded that Yeats accepted the theory of the Übermensch, 'mythically as a symbol of value' rather than as a literal truth. See *Nietzsche in England, 1890-1910* (Toronto University Press, 1970), 152-61 (161). Some recent scholarship has suggested the influence of Nietzsche on Yeats has been exaggerated and fails to account for the significant influence of Christian mystic Joachim of Fiore on the development of Yeats's supposedly Nietzschean thought. See Warwick Gould and Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, revised edition, 2001), 221-98.

¹⁰⁵ To George Russell (AE), [April 1904], CL3 576-78 (577).

¹⁰⁶ CL3 578.

¹⁰⁷ Ex 95, CW8 18.

‘understand ... how to mingle words and notes together’, to the story that a ‘herdsman ... [m]ade up song about enchanted kings’ which inspired the tailors who made the royal garments ‘[w]here the little jewels gleam’.¹⁰⁸ In the play the power of speech makes or remakes the world. Yeats knows that speech dies with the breath, unlike print, but it is only through speech that language can gesture towards the immanence that Yeats wishes us to understand lies behind the phenomenal world. The living speech of the actor, or bard vibrates with spiritual presence that the dead world of books lacks. Willie Fay would look back on this period as one in which Yeats’s experience of working with the Abbey company shaped the development of his poetic style. Writing of the weakness of *The Countess Cathleen* Fay argued that ‘Mr Yeats’s verse ... was not so speakable then as in his later plays ... Later he made *On Baile’s Strand* as easy to speak as any of Shakespeare’s plays.’¹⁰⁹ If we think of Yeats’s poetry as a ‘kind of performed speech’ from this point onwards, then ‘theatre in performance is his most paradigmatic form’.¹¹⁰

Lady Gregory made a significant contribution to *The King’s Threshold*’s complex evolution. Just before the rehearsal on 15 April, at which the annotations were in probability created, Lady Gregory wrote to Yeats:

I was thinking about Fedelm, he might say she is no longer his own, a part of himself she is only one of the reasoners, the chattering people of the market place with sacks of reasons ready to strew before creatures according to their kind – That would hurt her and bring her to her knees – I wish you had no fighting to do but only beautiful lines –¹¹¹

Written on 8 April, just a few days before the rehearsal for the Irish Literary Society *conversazione*, the letter precisely outlines the changes Yeats made to the scene in Fay’s copy and in subsequent printed editions. Lady Gregory writes that Seanchan might say Fedlem is ‘no longer his own’. This becomes ‘[b]egone from me’. She suggests he describe her as ‘one of the chattering people of the market place’, which influences the commonplace language Yeats uses in his rejection of her ‘an old torn cap | A broken shoe, a glove without a finger’. Finally, she says ‘that would bring her to her knees’. The accompanying stage direction

¹⁰⁸ *VPI* 257, l. 5, 290, ll. 529-36.

¹⁰⁹ W. Fay, 111.

¹¹⁰ Morash, *Yeats*, 167.

¹¹¹ To W. B. Yeats [9 April 1904], Berg 4297. The ‘fighting’ may be a reference to the schism within the Society. This originated with the departures of Dudley Digges and Marie Quinn over Synge’s *In the Shadow of the Glen* but had had a more recent eruption with the expulsion of P. J. Kelly from the Society on 6 April for breaking a rule about performing with rival companies.

reads, 'Fedelm has sunk down in the ground while he says this, and crouches at his feet'.¹¹² . If the changes to Fay's copy were made at the rehearsal in Dublin on 15 April, then a timeline indicating the causal link between Lady Gregory's advice and Yeats's revision, suggested by Declan Kiely in his edition of the play, and indicating the speed at which Yeats was working, reads as follows: Lady Gregory writes to Yeats (8 April), Yeats revises the scene (8-15 April), Frank Fay records the revision (15 April).¹¹³

Yeats acknowledged Lady Gregory's contribution in grafting peasant idiom onto his heightened poetry in works such as *The Celtic Twilight* and *Cathleen ni Houlihan*. Here her role extends to adding psychological realism to dramatic action. Advising Yeats, she suggests that by humiliating Fedelm Seanchan will 'bring her to her knees'. Lady Gregory is as a woman explaining the effectiveness of emotional cruelty in subjugating a woman. Cave has suggested that Frank Fay struggled to portray Seanchan sympathetically.¹¹⁴ We might speculate that this owed something to the lack of a character development in the construction. Lady Gregory's suggestion remedies this. As McAteer has argued the character of Seanchan mirrors Yeats's alienation from the modern world of newspapers and the printing press; yet to succeed dramatically he must live beyond abstraction.¹¹⁵ It may be that the cruelty of Seanchan's behaviour towards his lover only emphasises the audience's impatience with him, but his behaviour, according to Lady Gregory, is based on recognisable human psychology and is therefore understandable. Yeats wished his Irish heroes to be fully human in performance. This distinguished them from the characters in his avowedly symbolic first version of *The Shadowy Waters*. As he wrote:

[The Shadowy Waters] is almost religious, it [is] more ritual than human story. It is deliberately without human characters. 'Cuchullain' or 'The King's Threshold' are the other side of the halfpenny.¹¹⁶

As Willie Fay argued, Yeats's changes to *The King's Threshold* made it more speakable. In making it easier for actors, Yeats attempted to move his verse into the realm of

¹¹² VPI 305, 786e, variant noted.

¹¹³ Kiely writes in his Introduction, 'it seems that Yeats acted on Lady Gregory's advice to strengthen this scene and in doing so intensified Seanchan's rejection with specific physical examples of 'whatever is most worthless' (xliv).

¹¹⁴ Richard Cave, 'Staging *The King's Threshold*', YA13, 158-75 (161).

¹¹⁵ McAteer argues for example that Seanchan's 'descent into madness' at the end of the play 'is a measure of how alienated' he has become from his community (*Yeats and European Drama* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], 59).

¹¹⁶ To Frank Fay, [20 January 1904], CL3 526-28 (527-8).

performed speech, which as the narrative of the play argues, once had the power to make society, and, it is implied, may do again. It is an irony that Yeats insisted that the plays of the national theatre be good enough to be read, and therefore published, since at one level, he disavowed the printed word.¹¹⁷ This movement towards the spoken word was hastened by his work with a theatre company, by the debates he engaged in with Frank Fay and others about performed speech, and by his insistence that the central characters of his plays behave in ways which were recognisably human.

Revisions of 1905

If Seanchan behaved in ways that were human in revision, the overall effect was still far from modern naturalism. What appealed to Yeats about the Fay company's production of Russell's *Deirdre* in 1902 was its repudiation of conventional acting: '[i]n *'Deirdre'* a dim dreamlike play they acted without "business" of any kind. They simply stood still in decorative attitudes & spoke'.¹¹⁸ Such a method had the advantage of disciplining the audience's attention on the poet's words, as well as answering a deeply held conviction of both men that passionate utterance be combined with physical repose. By simplifying acting, as Yeats put it in 'The Reform of the Theatre' the 'movements the eye sees' were substituted with 'the nobler movements the heart sees'.¹¹⁹ Yet the company's reasons for adopting this sculptural acting were partly driven by practicality: amateurs would be more likely to succeed if they aimed at simplicity not subtlety, if dramatists avoided costume periods, changes of scenery, fight scenes, or plays with too many characters.¹²⁰

This approach was noted with partial approval by William Archer on the group's second visit to London (1904): while praising the absence of 'the vices of the professional', Archer focused his criticism on what he described as the actors' 'sing-song' delivery, which he thought inappropriate for blank verse.¹²¹ Here he was developing a line of criticism he had begun in 1902. Yeats's insistence on musical speech was antithetical to the delivery of

¹¹⁷ Yeats asserted that a play could not be worth acting if it was not worth reading ('Samhain 1902', *Ex* 92, *CW8* 16).

¹¹⁸ To Henry Newbolt, 5 April [1902], *CL3* 169.

¹¹⁹ *Ex* 109, *CW8* 27.

¹²⁰ *Towards a National Theatre*, 76-77.

¹²¹ *The World*, 29 March 1904, 552.

blank verse which must be based on character and action, he argued.¹²² As with the earlier arguments of George Barlow and Henry Irving, Archer's point echoes the actor-knight's view that the musical delivery of the French stage is unsuitable for tragedy in English verse. He singled out Frank Fay in his criticism owing to Fay's making no distinction between Seanchan's manner in his 'sane utterances and in the delirium of his exhaustion'.¹²³ Archer's critique indicated his preference for realistic acting, suited to the English stage, but Yeats did not want acting as it was recognised generally; he wanted an austere passion, and beautiful speaking. In this respect, it is not surprising that the one actor Archer excluded from his critique was Willie Fay, who played the Mayor. Yeats's theory of comedy, not yet developed at this point in his career, would associate the Abbey players' successes with objectivity, the creation of character based on observation, rather than imagination. Roy Foster has written that the revised *The King's Threshold* portrays the Mayor as 'a United Ireland League politician'.¹²⁴ It is therefore possible that while Frank Fay's emphasis on the spoken word lent Seanchan an austere dignity, his brother dramatized an absence of nobility in his caricature of bourgeois politicians.

The annotations in Fay's presentation copy of the text concern only the part of Seanchan, since this was the role that Fay was playing. But other sources indicate that the performance text was altered beyond Seanchan's part.¹²⁵ Kiely shows that the revised text of April 1905 incorporates revisions made by Yeats in collaboration with Lady Gregory in March 1905.¹²⁶ A revised typescript, associated with the revival at the Abbey in April 1905, incorporates these changes.¹²⁷ According to Foster the changes to the play at this point make it 'more of a political satire'.¹²⁸ McAteer also argues for the centrality of the Mayor to the effect of the play. Alternating flattery and menace, the Mayor represents the material interests of the community at large, threatened by Seanchan's stance.¹²⁹ He is insincere in his

¹²² 'Sing-singing and song-singing', William Archer, *Morning Leader*, 7 June 1902, 4.

¹²³ *The World*, 552.

¹²⁴ *Life* 1, 334.

¹²⁵ First, Yeats told John Quinn that he had gone through the play 'line by line' with William Fay on 15 April. Secondly, in the same letter, Yeats spoke of changes to the 'bit about the Mayor of Kinvara', a section unaltered in Fay's copy, CL3 580.

¹²⁶ Kiely, *KT*, xlvi.

¹²⁷ Abbey Theatre. *The King's Threshold*. 25 April 1905 [script]. The Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at the National University of Ireland, Galway, 0012_PS_001.

¹²⁸ *Life* 1, 334.

¹²⁹ McAteer, *Yeats*, 58.

concern for Seanchan and highlights the estrangement of the poet from the state. The Fays' marks on the 1905 typescript tend to develop the broader comedy that Yeats wanted in this scene through adding comic repetition to the speeches. The first revision in Fay's hand on typescript occurs after the Mayor's entrance when he mutters the words "'Chief Poet', 'Ireland', 'townsman', 'grazing land'", under his breath, running through his speech in advance, and inadvertently advertising his insincerity.¹³⁰ This line pre-dated the revisions of April 1904, but Fay adds a third repetition of it in pencil, a change which is taken up in subsequent printed editions.¹³¹ This change broadens the satire, repetition in threes being a convention of physical and verbal comedy, and telegraphs to the audience that the Mayor is a ridiculous figure, a buffoon not to be taken seriously. A further change is the addition of a third repetition of the word '[h]ush!' with which the Mayor tries to quiet the cripples prior to beginning his speech.¹³² The triple repetition punctures the dignity of the Mayor by showing him to be flustered. Yeats and Fay are transforming the rather flat handling of the Mayor in the early version of the play by making him a properly comic character – the dim, but self-important petty government official, a type that would have been instantly recognisable to a Dublin audience. This development shifts the play in the direction of tragi-comedy, a genre that Yeats associated with Shakespeare, as well as giving him the opportunity to hone his contrasting use of dramatic prose and verse in his plays.

It was not only the Mayor's part that was expanded in 1904/05, the two cripples' roles were also developed, while Seanchan's two servants Cian and Brian were streamlined into one. McAteer argues that the cripples personify the spiritual corruption into which the community has sunk in expelling the poet from the court.¹³³ At the end of this re-written episode, a series of simple lyrics are chanted rhythmically by the cripples, the Mayor and Brian. The stage direction in *Poems 1899-1905* indicates how these lines are to be spoken:

[Brian speaking at the same time with Mayor...First Cripple speaking at same time as Second Cripple and Mayor and Brian, who have begun again]¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Abbey Theatre, 0012_PS_001, 13; *VPI* 269, ll. 203, 205.

¹³¹ *VPI* 269 ll. 207-8.

¹³² Abbey Theatre, 13; *VPI* 271, l. 234.

¹³³ McAteer, *Yeats*, 59.

¹³⁴ *VPI* 280, directions after l. 348, 361a.

Yeats wrote to Quinn that the scene now ‘works itself up into a lively tumult of voices which are suddenly silenced by the entrance of the Court’.¹³⁵ The cacophony provides comic relief from the growing dramatic tension and helps justify Seanchan’s obduracy to the audience. Given that the lyrics were clearly supposed to be chanted, to rise to song, they satisfied Yeats’s wish for a total theatre, which combined music, decorative rather than naturalistic stage design, with acting and poetry. He would write that he had learned that ‘the finest poetry comes logically out of the fundamental stage action’.¹³⁶ Here the degeneration of the cripples, the revolt of Seanchan’s servant, and the hypocrisy of the Mayor reach a pitch of passion that drives them into song. Just as, encouraged by the Fays, Yeats used musical speech dramatically in the character of the Angel in *The Hour-Glass* to represent purity, here it was used to suggest the spiritual corruption of the community against which Seanchan’s revolt is directed.

Introducing short lyrics to the Mayor’s scene revives the tradition in Elizabethan plays of bringing a ‘lyric measure’ into dialogue in a comic or pathetic context, as Shakespeare used them.¹³⁷ It also offered him an opportunity to introduce peasant dialect into the play. The Mayor’s contempt for Seanchan rises into song in the typescript, which is altered by Fay as shown below:

in
 What good is Λ a poet?
 money
 Has he ~~gold~~ in a stocking
 Or cider
 A ~~keg~~ in the cellar
 Or flitches
 A ~~fitch~~ in the chimney
 Or anything anywhere but his own idleness?¹³⁸

Fay’s alterations reinforce the flavour of dialect, ‘what good is in a poet?’ representing peasant speech more fully than ‘what good is a poet?’. This verse was subsequently not recorded in printed editions after 1911, perhaps because it was considered a performance-specific alteration. The changes to the 1905 copy indicate in Yeats a hunger for deeper satire as a foil for the passion of tragedy. In addition, dramatic prose provided opportunities for a

¹³⁵ CL3 580.

¹³⁶ To Arthur Symons, 10 September [1905], CL4 175-6 (176).

¹³⁷ VPI 1296.

¹³⁸ VPI 281, ll. 376a-e.

type of acting that was more familiar to audiences and critics. The frantic revision between 1903-5 and the fact that Yeats in the 1920s was still tinkering with the play indicates that theatrical literature must be seen as basically collaborative in nature. The question of authority arises because of the number of hands, including Lady Gregory's and Fay's, on the manuscripts. Yeats's eagerness to sift and evaluate performance changes in subsequent editions could indicate a desire to re-take control of his text, to suppress the theatrical production, replacing it with an independent literary text.¹³⁹ However, Yeats's published versions, unlike Ben Jonson's, were not radically different from those performed, which perhaps indicates the significant degree of Yeats's involvement in these early productions.

Revisions of 1920-22

Frank Fay returned to the Abbey only intermittently after 1908, performing the Wise Man in *The Hour-Glass* (1925) and Seanchan in *The King's Threshold* (1921-22). We cannot know why he chose to re-enact these roles so long after his first performances. It is possible that he wished to restate his claim to be co-founder of the national theatre. Yet his voice, always his greatest strength as an actor, had declined as a result of years working in the large houses of England.¹⁴⁰ His years on the road had, moreover, confirmed him in his hostility towards playwrights. Annotations to his copy of Louis Calvert's *Problems of the Actor* (1909) imply that Fay now believed the purpose of the theatre was to support the actor and his or her connection with the audience. 'The whole art of the dramatist', he wrote, was to compose parts that give the actor 'great opportunities' and which 'place heavy demands on him'.¹⁴¹ He seems to have felt increasingly that the 1870s offered a golden age of acting. Significantly, this was also a period when dramatists had little influence.

¹³⁹ Stephen Orgel argues that for Ben Jonson publication of his plays was '[t]he only way ... to assert his authority over the text' through presenting versions radically different from those staged ('What is a Text?', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 26 [1981], 3-6 [4]).

¹⁴⁰ Robert Hogan concludes his introductory remarks to his selection of Fay's dramatic criticism by reporting Holloway's view that Fay became 'a bit cracked on the bard and even mannered in his speech' (*Towards a National Theatre*, 12).

¹⁴¹ Louis Calvert, *Problems of the Actor* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1918), 251. Fay archive. Calvert (1859-1923) was a tragic actor in the Romantic or declamatory style. Fay likens him to other well-known actors of the day as belonging to a tradition of acting dubbed 'pompous and conventional' by naturalist critics (to Yeats, 29 July 1901. Fay archive).

Lennox Robinson, the theatre manager, suggested a revival of *The King's Threshold*. The play had new relevance because the death by hunger strike of Terence MacSwiney, the Mayor of Cork, seemed to mirror Seanchan's revolt against authority. Yeats, who had by this point moved in the direction of drawing-room theatre and *Nō*, agreed on condition that they act a new ending. *The King's Threshold* was unfinished business because Yeats had always intended to end the play tragically but had been persuaded by Lady Gregory to write the play as a comedy.¹⁴² A production of the play was also an opportunity to align the theatre with popular nationalist sentiment since hunger strike had been taken up as a weapon of protest by Sinn Féin. In the longer term, it paved the way for state subsidy by positioning the theatre as a national institution.¹⁴³ Kiely argues that the 'growing sense' in Ireland that 'sacrifice was an ennobling force' played into the revival.¹⁴⁴

Both Fay and Yeats then had reasons to return to *The King's Threshold*. Beyond lingering dissatisfaction with the comic ending on Yeats's part, the chief prompt to revision seems to have been external: the needs of the theatre and the timeliness of the story. There is little evidence that Fay and Yeats collaborated on this production, from which, in any case, Yeats remained at arm's length during his sojourn at Oxford in November 1921. However, contemporary resonance was highlighted in his revision. We know for instance that Seanchan dies at the conclusion and that he instructs his followers to lay him, after death, on the mountainside, 'with uncovered face'.¹⁴⁵ This not only identifies him with the Irish landscape and the legendary Queen Maeve, but it symbolically re-enacts MacSwiney's lying in state in Cork after his death.¹⁴⁶ The closing tableau presents Seanchan held aloft to the audience as the Oldest Pupil presents poetic images of darkness and 'worsening' times.¹⁴⁷ It is death and sacrifice that offers hope, echoing Seanchan's belief that [t]he man that dies has the chief part of the story'.¹⁴⁸ This tableau gestures backwards to an earlier occasion when the Abbey was named the Mechanics Institute, involving the funeral of a nationalist hero

¹⁴² *VPI* 316.

¹⁴³ Lauren Arrington argues that despite the public position of Yeats that play selection reflected the ideals of pure art, some works were chosen 'whose production was judged to appeal to the temper of audiences' (Arrington, 10).

¹⁴⁴ Kiely, *KT*, li.

¹⁴⁵ *VPI* 309, l. 861.

¹⁴⁶ Frazier, xv-xviii.

¹⁴⁷ 'A New Ending for *The King's Threshold*', *Seven Poems and a Fragment* (Dundrum: Cuala Press, 1922), 18-22; *VPI* 312, l. 902

¹⁴⁸ *VPI* 309, l. 851.

and exile, returned in death from America in 1861. The traditional veneration of political martyrs is powerfully channelled in the image of Seanchan, with his face uncovered on his bier.

A small document in the Abbey Theatre digital archive gestures towards a theatrical realisation of this mythical final tableau – Seanchan’s dead face uncovered. It is a lighting cue for the drop scene at the end of the play.¹⁴⁹ It reads:

Amber Flood O.P
 Amber 1st batten } $\frac{3}{4}$ Dim
 Amber floats }
 Side lights full

O.P must mean ‘Oldest Pupil’ who speaks the play’s final words. The lighting here is suggestive of the twilight of the gods, underlining the apocalyptic tenor of the poetry. When taken together, tableau, poetry and lighting not only create a powerful final curtain, but they also highlight the limits of Yeats’s elitist art and the adoption of a more visceral appeal to the nationalist imagination from the author of *Cathleen ni Houlihan*.

Lighting interested both Fay and Yeats. Yet the limitations of the early rig at the Abbey, without spotlights and special effects, were in keeping with the aesthetic of minimalism prescribed in *Samhain*. In between the early productions and these later ones, Yeats had experimented with Craig’s screens. A sketch survives for a set of *The King’s Threshold* in 1910, which notes the position of the lights relative to the three doors of the King’s palace, stating that the doors should be ‘in shadow’ while the rest of the stage is ‘bright’.¹⁵⁰ Yeats seems to be experimenting with angles of light and pools of shadow under the influence of Craig’s approach to design. Fay also seems to have approved of the use of shade for effect, since he wrote in praise to William Poel, mentioning the dappled lighting of his *Merchant of Venice* which left ‘part of an actor’s face in shadow’ and part ‘in the light’,

¹⁴⁹ The Abbey Theatre. *The King’s Threshold*. 25 April 1905 [Stage Management]. The Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at the National University of Ireland, Galway. The document is incorrectly dated 1905. The Oldest and Youngest Pupils are identified by the actors ‘Nagle’ and ‘Carolan’, who performed in the 1922 revival. The document is intriguing for another reason: it appears to be in the hand of Frank Fay, suggesting his involvement in the 1922 revival might have extended beyond acting into stage management.

¹⁵⁰ This sketch with typescript annotations is reproduced in Cave, ‘Staging’, Plate V.

unlike 'arid modern stage lighting which chases the shadow'.¹⁵¹ This description recalls Fay's familiarity with avant garde staging, which inspired the use of gauze washed with limelight in the 1902 production of *Deirdre* by Russell.

Footlights were another casualty of the doctrine of minimalism, being associated with the tired conventions of the Victorian stage. Yet the lighting cue for the final curtain in 1921 indicates 'Amber floats', or footlights. The lighting plot also indicates the colour and intensity of the general light accompanying the curtain cues. Yeats warned against coloured streams of light in *Samhain*, yet here an 'Amber flood' bathed the actors. We can infer something about the quality of lighting on stage from the directions since lamp power influences colour in stage lighting. As power decreases, the tungsten, or carbon filament in a bulb will produce increasing percentages of orange light as compared to the nearly white light emitted at full power. This is known as amber drift.¹⁵² Reducing the power to '3/4 dim' would therefore create an orange effect in lighting as well as a sombre shadowy tone. This creation of atmosphere through lighting appears to contradict Yeats's opinion, given in the lecture 'The Theatre of Beauty' (1911) and repeated in 'The Poet and the Actress' that anything that conceals the reality of the stage and the actor's body should be avoided.¹⁵³ The production of 1921 abjures in practice the stern minimalism of Yeats's version of Nō drama. The use of footlights and coloured streams of light, added to the patriotic semiotics of a dead hero lying 'face uncovered' suggest a flexibility in theatre practice that we might miss if we took Yeats's dramatic manifestos entirely literally. Yeats's final intention for *The Hour-Glass* honours both popular and elite audiences, since his 1922 edition of *Plays in Prose and Verse* contains both prose and verse versions. This amplifies his comments in Craig's journal *The*

¹⁵¹ Undated letter from Fay to Poel, quoted in Robert Speaight, *William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival* (London: William Heinemann, 1954), 139-40.

¹⁵² J. Michael Gillette, *Designing with Light: An Introduction to Stage Lighting* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2003), 10. Gerard Fay has written: 'Yeats was always fascinated by lighting, but very little was ever done at the Abbey to satisfy his ambitions. The first lighting was designed by Willie Fay and installed under his supervision. It was perfectly simple standard stage lighting as used in almost every theatre at the time, the only difference between one house and another being the intensity of light available: there were, of course, no moveable spotlights for following players around the stage because ... they would have offended against the very foundations of Abbey acting' (*The Abbey Theatre*, 89).

¹⁵³ 'The Poet and the Actress: A Dialogue', unpublished, transcribed from typescript and printed in David R. Clark, *W. B. Yeats and the Theatre of Desolate Reality*, 2nd edn (1969; Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America, 1993), 170-86.

Mask, in which Yeats wrote that he preferred the verse version of *The Hour-Glass* for himself and his friends but allowed the old prose version to be toured in the provinces.¹⁵⁴

This acknowledgement of division was also a recognition of the limited audience for his 'unpopular theatre', and the continuing usefulness of theatrical forms tested by experience.¹⁵⁵ The rewriting of *The King's Threshold* is mirrored in a production that seeks to evoke the 'simple emotions' that 'unite all men'.¹⁵⁶ In practice, this meant making Yeats more digestible to popular audiences, whether by stressing character development in Seanchan, or broadening the comedy elsewhere.

Conclusion

What, then, does Fay's copy of Yeats's 1904 *The King's Threshold* reveal about the genesis of its composition and circumstances of production? How does the history of the play in revision suggest the enmeshment, despite their differing agendas, of Fay and Yeats? Fay's letters to Yeats indicate the moderating effect he had on Yeats's more doctrinaire statements about the delivery of verse. Yeats's ideas of poetic speech derived from an imaginative engagement with Irish history and literature, which led him to Florence Farr and the psalter. Fay understood that a new way of delivering verse was needed and that contemporary English models were hopelessly unsuited to the 'world of vast sentiments, quite incompatible with hurried action' which Yeats projected in poetry.¹⁵⁷ But where Yeats sought to stereotype delivery by using notation, Fay used his research into the French theatre to identify a method that paid full respect to the music of the verse while allowing for the expressiveness of the individual actor. He was able to reach this position through his faith in the methods of the Paris Conservatory and the tradition of the Comédie-Française. His study of the differing styles of French stars, such as Sarah Bernhardt and Constant Coquelin, convinced him that actors of genius were permitted considerable latitude in the interpretation of the verse because they were grounded in the tradition of the Conservatoire. This allowed Yeats to ground his theory in practical theatre history, leading him to reject his

¹⁵⁴ 'A Preface to the New Version', first published in *The Mask* (April 1913), *VPI* 577.

¹⁵⁵ 'A People's Theatre', *CW8* 131.

¹⁵⁶ 'A People's Theatre', *CW8* 133.

¹⁵⁷ To Clement Shorter, 31 [March 1904], *CL3* 560-61 (561).

own prescription for dramatic verse to be delivered in the style of the ancient Greeks in favour of a range of methods that combined choric delivery with passionate individual utterance.

Fay's research in French theatre gave Yeats ammunition to defend his theories in public. When Arthur Symons attacked Florence Farr's delivery as 'mechanical', Yeats defended his method using the precedent of Rachel where faulty delivery was the result of poor execution rather than misguided theory. His description of the acting of Bernhardt in *Phèdre* in Samhain in 1902 powerfully illustrated his wish for an ideal theatre. Yet a pattern emerges of Yeats's reluctance to acknowledge his occasions of indebtedness to collaborators. This is true not just of the Fays but of Lady Gregory, whose co-authorship of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* he did not recognise publicly.

Fay looked backwards to the theatrical traditions of the nineteenth century, while Yeats embraced a kind of aristocratic theatrical minimalism. Fay sought employment with the last actor managers who still toured Shakespeare and melodrama in the years before and during the First World War because he felt they kept a valid tradition alive. However, despite their differences in outlook, at moments of political opportunity, such as 1921, they could still work together. Like Fay, Yeats retained a weakness for heroic acting. He wrote in 1937 that Fay was of that 'school of Talma', which permits an actor to 'throw an arm calling down thunderbolts'.¹⁵⁸ At this late stage, Yeats's memories were pervaded with nostalgia. His persona of the 'Old Man' in *The Death of Cuchulain* recalled the unperformed prologue for *The King's Threshold* in 1903, which would have been spoken by Willie Fay. This character also affirms himself 'the son of Talma', recalling Fay's early articles to Yeats on French theatre, which included information on Talma.¹⁵⁹ There is here some element of imaginary recuperation of the historical schism with the Fays, a reaching for a unity of opposites. This late gesture is foreshadowed by the production of *The King's Threshold* in 1921, in which, for all his avowed elitism, Yeats uses popular theatrical forms, or allows his interpreters to do so, for dramatic effect. The evidence of the archives reveals a more

¹⁵⁸ 'An Introduction for my Plays', CW2 24. See also Yeats's late poem *A Nativity*, which mentions 'Talma and his thunderbolts' (VP 625).

¹⁵⁹ When the Old Man describes himself as 'out of fashion and out of date like the antiquated romantic stuff the thing is made of' and 'the son of Talma', he could be describing Frank Fay in his later years (VPI 1051, ll. e-h).

complex picture of Yeats's enmeshment in popular theatre, than his trenchant prose suggests.

Chapter 2

Publishing and Performance: Frank Fay's Annotations to J. M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea*.

Charles Elkin Mathews published *Riders to the Sea*, along with *The Shadow of the Glen*, as a one-volume paperback around 8 May 1905. Advertised as number 24 in the Vigo Cabinet series, it took its place alongside books by writers such as John Masefield and W. B. Yeats as part of Mathews's project dedicated to publishing poetry cheaply.¹ In deciding to publish the two one-act plays, rather than *The Aran Islands*, which he was also offered, Mathews was building on Synge's growing reputation as a dramatist, while adhering to the logic of format since it would not be possible to put a book of the length of *The Aran Islands* into the Vigo Cabinet Series.² The gap in time between first contact with Mathews in December 1903 and publication in 1905 gave the author the opportunity to incorporate revisions suggested by the first performances of *Riders to the Sea* in Dublin in February 1904. These revisions, recorded on his copy of *Riders to the Sea* in *Samhain* (September 1903), the journal in which the play first appeared, will be examined in detail.³ Synge's book-form debut was a success: the first edition of 1,000 copies sold out yielding total receipts of £35.11.3, of which Synge's share was £3.11.3.⁴ By 1911, six thousand copies of three editions had been printed, but Mathews's ownership of the rights to these plays proved a stumbling block to bringing out a single volume of collected plays during the playwright's lifetime.⁵

Mathews probably used the version of the text that had been printed in *Samhain*, Yeats's theatre review, as his printer's copy, and he or his printer certainly saw Synge's own copy, since the author's holograph annotations were incorporated into the new edition. Three editions, the *Samhain* text, the Vigo text (1905) and the most recent version, edited by

¹ James G. Nelson, 'The Vigo Cabinet Series', *Elkin Mathews: Publisher to Yeats, Joyce, Pound* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 55-64; hereafter cited as Mathews.

² Mathews's doubts over *The Aran Islands*, widely shared by his fellow London publishers, emerge in a letter to W. B. Yeats, Synge's principal sponsor in London: 'I think I did hint to Mr Dermot Freyer that I was a bit doubtful about issuing the Aran book this year ... I find the Aran MS. very attractive but think it should come on later ...' (To W. B. Yeats, 19 July 1904, quoted in CL3 617n).

³ *Riders to the Sea* was first published in *Samhain*: 1903, 25-33; hereafter cited as the *Samhain* text. It was next published in the Vigo Cabinet series alongside *The Shadow of the Glen* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1905), 37-63; hereafter cited as the Vigo text. A second edition followed in 1907. Also significant is the text as edited in *Plays 1*.

⁴ Nelson, 268n.

⁵ Sidgwick & Jackson proposed publishing a collected edition of the plays in Britain, but Mathews was unwilling to allow the texts to which he held rights to be included 'unless the terms were exceedingly generous' (Nelson, 108).

Ann Saddlemeyer, which was published in 1968 as part of Oxford University Press's collected edition in four volumes, are the only ones that touch significantly on the textual development of the play.⁶ The former two were overseen by the author, while the latter benefits from a full scholarly apparatus, including the range of manuscripts. The oversight of the author and the approach of editors to the text forms one part of the narrative that follows. Synge's relationship with his actors and directors, Willie and Frank Fay, forms a separate, but complementary strand of discussion. Frank Fay's personal annotated copy of the Vigo text of *Riders to the Sea* contains meticulously recorded stage business and actor's positions associated with the first productions of the play. His marginalia bring us closer to the text-as-performance by revealing original stage positions and movements. In the 1930s, Willie Fay's theatrical journalism was collected as *Merely Players*, a 'how-to' guide for amateur actors. In this text Fay writes that a play, properly considered, consists of 'words entirely surrounded by action', as an island is by water.⁷ Indeed, Fay goes on to add, if the play is 'a little action drowned by words, it is nearly always a poor play, except in the case of a dramatist like Mr Shaw'.⁸ In the matter of action and words, and despite his rich prose dialect, Synge is not Shaw.

Stage Plot and Properties (Annotations to the Vigo text, 1905)

Fay's copies of *Samhain* and the Vigo text have annotations and clarifications of staging that gesture towards the staging and *mise en scène* of the original performances. Lines in pencil describe the stage plot: the door, table, dresser, fireplace and stools, together with the walls, windows, doors and backcloth. By 1904 these were the familiar outlines of the Irish cottage interior adapted for the stage, building on a set of dramatic expectations for *mise en scène* created for Douglas Hyde's dramatization in Irish of the folk tale *Casadh an tSugain*. Hyde's play gave Dublin 'its first sight of the open hearth' in 1901.⁹ Yeats and Lady

⁶ This overview of printed editions ignores vol. I of *The Works of John M. Synge* (Dublin: Maunsell, 1910). Reset from the revised Vigo Cabinet Series text (1907), the 1910 version offers no significant variants. Questions of textual transmission aside, however, this edition of Synge ranks among the most important, not least as a result of the combustible mixture of economic and artistic factors that shaped it. See Warwick Gould, 'Contested Districts: Synge's Textual Self', in *The Culture of Collected Editions: Authorship, Reputation and the Canon*, ed. by Andrew Nash (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 128-56.

⁷ W. G. Fay, *Merely Players* (London: Rich & Cowan, 1932), 72; hereafter cited as *Merely Players*.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Mícheál O'hAodha, *The Abbey – Then and Now* (Dublin: The Abbey Theatre, 1969), 13.

Gregory's *Cathleen ni Houlihan* and Yeats's farce *The Pot of Broth* (both 1902) used similar scenic elements, and also borrowed from Hyde the trope of 'the stranger in the house'.¹⁰ In this scenario, the impulse to dramatic action was the disturber-figure, associated with the supernatural, whose entry into the cottage should be read as a contest between material and spiritual forces in contemporary Ireland.¹¹ Critics have noted how such conflict is often focused spatially on the door as a threshold or liminal zone between the cyclical time and supernatural agency of the landscape and the clock-based temporality of the cottage.¹² Both *The Shadow of the Glen* and *Riders to the Sea* extend this scenography with, in the case of the latter, adaptations specific to Aran, notably the spinning-wheel that Synge comments on in his literature of his travels. The wheel, with its connotations of fate and destiny, has, over the years, become a theatrical cliché, considered a degraded image of the Irish peasantry.¹³ Of course, Synge's plays, during his short lifetime, would provoke similar controversy from Irish Irelanders who objected to what they considered to be the negative stereotypes of Irish life.

Synge, then, built on the established one-act play model in *Riders to the Sea*. He made good use of the threshold as a personified force of foreboding in the mysterious stage direction '[t]he door which Nora half closed behind her is blown open by a gust of wind'.¹⁴ Although published before *The Aran Islands*, *Riders to the Sea* was written later, and the traces of the supernatural in the everyday that illumine the former narrative are strongly felt in dramatic presentation also. Synge's set makes use of twin doors – one outward-facing and one inward: the kitchen door to the interior and the front door. The stage thus becomes a

¹⁰ Yeats arguably invented this Revival archetype in *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894).

¹¹ The disturber figure of the Irish stage is related to 'An Guragach Uasal' or the 'Noble Enchanter' of folklore. Lady Gregory's translation of the traditional Gaelic ballad on this figure was adapted by Yeats for the song of the pupils in *The Hour-Glass*, which includes the line 'I met with a man that is no right man'. Warwick Gould tells us that 'no right' in this sense means 'supernatural', 'uncanny', 'insane' ('No Right Poem ["I was going down the road one day"]', YA10, 92-110 [107]). In the song the 'Noble Enchanter' seduces the wife of the speaker, which gestures toward the action of the Tramp in *The Shadow of the Glen*.

¹² Richard Allen Cave, 'On the Siting of Doors and Windows: Aesthetics, Ideology and Irish Stage Design' in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama*, ed. by Shaun Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 93-109.

¹³ Garry Hynes, director of the cycle of Synge plays presented by Druid Theatre in 2005, was reluctant to include the wheel in *Riders to the Sea* on these grounds. However, she reflected that its use in action of the play was integral, so she retained it ('Director's Commentary', *DruidSynge* [DVD]. Directed by G. Hynes, Dublin: Wildfire Films, 2007).

¹⁴ *Plays* 1, 5.

zone of contest between the forces of modernity and the traditional rhythms of island life, a battle that is both historical and, in the minds of the characters, a psychological burden which, dramatically, lends tension and grandeur to the small domestic actions that punctuate the play.

The shift from professional to amateur actors, from English to Irish, was another consequence of Hyde's *Casadh an tSugán*, which, drawing on the nationalist enthusiasm of Maud Gonne's *Inghinidhe na hÉirann*, a branch of the Irish language movement, broadened the theatre movement beyond its Anglo-Irish origins. The success of Hyde's play, directed by Willie Fay, suggested a new direction for the theatre revival, one which would eclipse the attempt to create a national drama of the Irish heroic age in verse as the dominant strain of theatrical activity. As Christopher Morash has noted, by 1911, the Abbey company had reused more or less this same cottage interior set sixteen times.¹⁵

The controversy occasioned by the perceived negative embodiments of Ireland was heightened by the heavy emphasis on not only realistic sets, but artefacts that were either entirely authentic products of Aran or clever copies of them. The latter contributed to an expectation among audiences of seeing their idealised projections of Ireland manifested. Yet for the actors and for Synge, the collaborative effort to find appropriate props expressed a shared commitment to nationality that united all wings of the movement. Lady Gregory was pressed into service to find a spinning wheel in Gort; Synge wrote to Galway for samples of cloth and negotiated unsuccessfully with contacts on Aran for the purchase of pampooties; while actors scoured the markets and fairs of Dublin for props.¹⁶ This project was galvanised by the unpaid passion of all collaborators, as Frank Fay's letter of 1907 makes clear. Indicating that amateur enthusiasm can only ever be a temporary condition in creative collaborations, Fay writes from a perspective of waning enthusiasm: '[i]n an antique shop on Stephen's Green ... they have a set of iron-rimmed noggins at 7/6 each. ... A couple

¹⁵ Christopher Morash, *A History of the Irish Theatre, 1601-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 121.

¹⁶ Lady Gregory told Yeats she and Synge were struggling with props and costumes. She was negotiating with a convent for a spinning wheel and dying flannel with correct colour ('madder') for the petticoats worn by the women as shawls (To W. B. Yeats, 25 February 1904, quoted in *Coole XIII*, 414-15). Synge wrote to W. F. Trench, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, who was teaching at Queen's College, Galway, thanking him for samples of cloth (To W. F. Trench [15 February 1904], *Letters 1*, 76-7).

of years ago, I'd have bought one of them for the theatre.'¹⁷ Iron-rimmed vessels for drinking or eating were common in the west of Ireland until alternatives made of tin or earthenware superseded them in the early twentieth century.¹⁸ Once ubiquitous, they are now extremely rare, their very ordinariness being an enemy to historic preservation. Noggins were staved vessels about the size of a small bucket; they could be hooped with iron or wood. Synge refers to the latter in *The Aran Islands* where he speaks of 'tiny wooden barrels' as an example of an everyday article that lends life on the islands 'something of the artistic beauty of medieval life'.¹⁹ It is suggestive that in Dublin, Frank Fay found noggins in what he describes 'an antique shop', suggesting that they were considered outdated kitchenware by this period: Dublin audiences would therefore have experienced the objects on stage in *Riders to the Sea* as superannuated. Nonetheless, in as much as they were functional objects, of a sort that might be used onstage, they added to the sense of ordinariness, of daily activity, encouraging thereby the audience's absorption in the fictional world represented.

Lessons in the painstaking pursuit of naturalism informed the later career of Willie Fay, who cautioned would-be producers against adopting a generic approach to cottage interiors: a cottage in Somerset differed entirely from one in the Scottish Highlands or from a thatched cottage in the west of Ireland.²⁰ When the company toured the larger theatres of cities in England, Scotland and Wales on its first properly national tour of Britain in 1906, it reduced the openings of the proscenium arches to a width of seventeen feet because the theatres in Britain were shaped by the imperatives of the Victorian theatre of spectacle, which suited the grand vista more than an intimate interior.²¹ So pervasive was the cottage interior that when he came to write *The Playboy of the Western World*, Synge altered his

¹⁷ 28 June 1907. TCD MS 4424-26/353.

¹⁸ See Claudia Kinmonth, 'Knowing our Noggins: Rare Irish Wooden Vessels Rediscovered', *Folk Life*, 55.1 (2017), 46-52 < doi: 10.1080/04308778.2017.1319139 >. Kinmonth's illustrated article highlights three different types of noggin in common use: iron-hooped, wooden-hooped, and those made on a lath using a single block of unseasoned wood. A robust and durable item whatever its form, one stave was left longer to form an upright handle, and the noggin was typically stored upside down on the cottage dresser. Kinmonth also points out that the word 'noggin' is closely related to 'naggin' a word still used to describe a measure, or amount of spirit.

¹⁹ 'The Aran Islands', *Prose*, 58-9.

²⁰ *Merely Players*, 60.

²¹ Michael Booth's history of Victorian theatre emphasises the role of spectacle in the commercial drama of the nineteenth century, above all in melodrama and the pantomime, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre, 1850-1910* (London: Routledge, 1981).

original plan to set his opening act in a ploughed field as he was unable to visualise side wings suitable to a wild setting.²²

The first pencil marks on Fay's copy of the *Vigo* text are a stage plot, which includes both the hand props and furniture needed to perform a play and a set of stage directions governing the actions of Cathleen at the play's opening. The plot, indeed all the annotations, are included in full image plus transcription form in Appendix B. They are as follows:

Dresser R. Chair at fire L[,] chair LC at back[,] | Spinning wheel C at back in front of window[,] | Boards standing at back RC. Piece of new rope | hanging at back R[,] | Pot oven, flour, basin. | 2 cakes, bundle corded (shirt + plain stocking)[,] | Knife on dresser. Turf, stick, coat hanging up[.] | Tobacco in pouch + purse for Bartley in drawer | of dresser. Tongs Table (kitchen) C. Board + | sail (stretcher)[.] | Cup of water on dresser[,] cloths | on dresser. Oil skins + clothes hanging beside | LD at back, also shawl. Wool for wheel. | [corders]. Wood pail form in front of dresser | NB Turn wheel from L to R[.]²³

A similar attention to detail applied to the costumes which are described in Frank Fay's hand in pencil on the half-title page of the *Vigo* edition:

Bartley[.] Homespun breeches[,] 2 sleeved waist | coats, skin pampooties, tam o'shanter hat
Man[.] Homespun breeches, scarf, boreen, | tam o shanter, blue stockings, pam- | pooties |
Man. Homespun breeches, scarf, tam, jersey, pampooties[.]²⁴

Synge observed that the simple everyday objects belonging to the islanders had a special charm deriving from their 'almost personal character'.²⁵ He especially remembered sitting before a 'great turf fire' and listening to stories as a girl 'span the wheel' at his side.²⁶ Yet the meticulous care taken with domestic details was not a straightforward commitment to an aesthetic of realism. Instead, an idea of transfigured realism drawn from his reading of Hegel and Marx asserted the independence of objective existence from subjective.²⁷ For Synge, the objective world had its own integrity inaccessible to the imagination of the artist or mystic; subjective experience, such as spiritual or poetic states of mind, equally real,

²² *Coolie IV*, 114-15.

²³ Appendix B, 18.

²⁴ Appendix B, 17.

²⁵ *Prose*, 58.

²⁶ *Prose*, 48n.

²⁷ The relevant passage from Synge's Notebooks is quoted by Mary King, 'Transfigured Realism simply asserts objective existence as separate from and independent of subjective existence. But it asserts neither that any one mode of this existence is in reality that which it seems, nor that the connexions among its modes are objectively that which they seem' (*The Drama of J. M. Synge* [London: Fourth Estate, 1985], 105).

existed in dialectic relationship with the objective pole.²⁸ This concern with the dignity and strangeness of the material world is at the root not only of his careful descriptions of objects in *The Aran Islands*.²⁹ It extends to the staging of *Riders to the Sea*, where in the matter of props, the author had good reason for 'insisting on realism'.³⁰ Nicholas Grene asks readers to imagine the items on a stage-manager's list and includes a dozen or so of the items pencilled in by Fay. Fay's list tells us where the items are to be found on set – in the dresser drawer, hanging up at the back on a nail, in front of dresser. The additional detail in Fay's list does not add greatly to what is already known but helps us visualise a set decorated with functional props of poverty, yet still suggestive of the clutter of family life in a small space.

This sense of the connection between the people and the objects they use is developed in the play by Cathleen, described by one critic as 'the mistress of the house', if not the matriarch, whose natural skills as a storyteller give detail about the items, tethering them to this family and this cottage.³¹ The new rope, for example, was 'brought in Connemara' and Cathleen hung it up on a nail by the door, 'this morning' to stop the 'pig with the black feet' from eating it.³² The 'white boards' are the 'finest white boards you'd find in Connemara'.³³ The stick that Cathleen commands Nora to fetch is 'the stick Michael brought from Connemara', while the man who sold them the knife they use to cut the black

²⁸ The episode where Synge dreams that he is drawn by spiritual forces which he associates with Aran into a whirling dance, suggests an initiatory trampling of the ego. Yet when he comes to himself and looks out of the window, the sea and the landscape were quite unaffected by his turmoil: 'the moon was glittering across the bay, and there was no sound anywhere on the island' ('The Aran Islands', *Prose*, 100).

²⁹ W. J. Mc Cormack reveals the importance of Synge's French and German travels to his intellectual development and discusses them in relation to his writings about the Aran Islands (Mc Cormack, 193-217).

³⁰ Nicholas Grene, *Synge: A Critical Study of the Plays* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 42.

³¹ Judith Leder, 'Synge's *Riders to the Sea*: Island as Cultural Battleground', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 36.2 (Summer 1990), 207-22 (209).

³² *Plays* 1, 9.

³³ *Ibid.* White boards indicated proper burial and so provided comfort to grieving families within the community. Mc Cormack, in *The Fool of the Family*, suggests Aseneath Nicholson's *Annals of the Famine in Ireland* (New York: E. French, 1951) as the historical source for the reference to white boards. If so, this complicates the idea that *Riders to the Sea* represents native experience 'magically' transferred to the stage (246). The play was mediated through Synge's reading and involved displacement across history. Nicholson relates the story of a fisherwoman who was required to prove a man washed ashore and buried without a coffin was her husband. 'She bought a white coffin and took it to the spot with her own hands, she dug him from his grave, and proved him by a leather button she had sewed upon some part of his clothes' (*Annals*, 159).

string on the bindle told them that it would take someone seven days to walk from Galway to Donegal.³⁴ The props are carefully woven into the narrative to highlight the sense of connection that existed, or was perceived by Synge to exist, between the people and everyday objects on the island. The subjective world and its objective counterpart may be separate but the relationships between them are mysterious and resonant.³⁵

No effort, then, was spared to source authentic props. A similar concern extended to acting. Frank Fay went to the Irish World Fair in 1907 and saw an exhibition of Irish industry involving spinning. He asked Synge, 'would it not be well to get Molly [Allgood] a few lessons, or that she should see enough of it to get the action?'³⁶

The authenticity of the props and set, represented in Fay's detailed stage plot, feeds into the continuing critical debate about whether it is accurate to describe Synge's drama as naturalistic.³⁷ The current critical consensus is that Synge's concern with realistic props does not equate to realism as it was understood at the time. Brenna Katz Clarke notes that while in some 'peasant plays' performed at the Abbey, the kitchen setting provides a sense of the familiar, Synge's setting has a rather different, and paradoxically estranging effect in *Riders to the Sea*.³⁸ This is because the specificity of props such as the noggin, now superannuated in Dublin, emphasises the gulf in experience between the city dweller and islander. She builds on the work of Bernard Beckerman who writes: '[f]or the Dublin audience that first watched *Riders to the Sea* in 1904, the world of the Aran Islands was remote, and, if not exotic, at least strange. Despite the play's naturalism, it was a naturalism of the unfamiliar'.³⁹ A 'naturalism of the unfamiliar' is an evocative description of Synge's method in the play, which points simultaneously in different directions.⁴⁰

³⁴ *Plays 1*, 15.

³⁵ See Mc Cormack, 199.

³⁶ To J. M. Synge, 28 June 1907, TCD MS 4424-26/383.

³⁷ Many critics have argued for the influence of the French 1890s milieu on Synge's plays. Most have tended to favour symbolist influences rather than naturalistic ones. For example, Katharine Worth traces the influence of Maeterlinck on Synge; more recently, Shaun Richards has argued for the influence of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* (1896) and the *acte gratuit* on *The Playboy* ('Synge and the Savage God', *Études Irlandaises*, 33.2 [2008], 21-30).

³⁸ Brenna Katz Clarke, *The Emergence of the Irish Peasant Play at the Abbey Theatre* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1975), 60.

³⁹ Bernard Beckerman, *Dynamics of Drama* (New York: Knopf, 1970), 137-38, quoted in Clarke, 60.

⁴⁰ Hélène Lecossois is a more recent advocate of the position that 'Synge's fastidious quest' to find authentic items, such as the spinning wheel, for the stage gestures not towards some ideal of

Other approaches have tended to stress Synge's modernity and his embrace of non-naturalistic theatrical forms. Susan Cannon Harris points out Synge's influence on the epic theatre of Brecht, whose *Senor Carrer's Rifles* was loosely based on *Riders to the Sea*.⁴¹ Harris points out that Maurya's passivity over her son's death, her refusal to emote, frustrates the audience's desire to identify with the character, since hers is not a conventionally maternal response. For Brecht, identification of audience with protagonist was typical of bourgeois theatre. His *Verfremdungseffekt* placed the audience in the position of social critics and led to revolution rather than the strengthening of the status quo. According to Harris what Synge achieves in *Riders to the Sea* is a paradox. The play is naturalistic drama, yet it works in sympathy with Brecht's epic theatre. Brecht found this useful because it enabled him to use actors trained in realism to perform in a play based on Synge's and produce a similar effect as his own company. Synge's realism therefore has a non-naturalistic effect. This is the peculiar alchemy of his theatre. It was reproduced in the acting, which while full of naturalistic actions had nonetheless something disembodied about it. As William Archer, the English critic, wrote: '[e]ven in speaking prose, they sing phrase after phrase to the same slow tune'.⁴² Fay deplored singing or chanting verse or prose on stage, but the careful, measured delivery, and the more musical cadences natural to the Irish voice might have sounded like chanting to Archer. Their passivity onstage, too, irked Archer, who noted that 'they are apt to slip about the stage like people in a sick room'.⁴³ Archer had been thrilled by the first tour of London in 1903 largely because the simplicity of the players boosted his critique of much commercial stage acting. Yet his comments in 1904 indicate the shadow of disillusionment. He could not quite reconcile himself to performers who seemed not to inhabit their roles fully.

Yet the writer and performers were not eschewing naturalism as is shown by the enormous care that was devoted to ensuring the authenticity of props and costumes.

ethnographic objectivity, but is in fact infected with 'modernity', with ideas of commodification. This is part of a strand of argument which likens Synge's plays in performance to the anthropological tableau of African native tribes at the Irish World Fair of 1907 (Lecossois, 27-8).

⁴¹ 'Mobilising Maurya', Harris, 135-68 (150). For a consideration of the wider influence of German language and literature on Synge's career as a dramatist, see Anthony Roche, 'Synge, Brecht and the Hiberno-German Connection', in *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, 10.1/2 (Spring/Fall 2004), 9-32.

⁴² *The World*, 29 March 1904, 551-2 (552).

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Naturalism was a corollary of nationalism; the idea that the props and costumes were authentic to the region of the west of Ireland was revolutionary in political and theatrical terms because no-one had put the real life of this community and the objects they used on stage before. Politically, Synge declared that the people of Ireland were worthy of theatrical representation, who had, in the past, been caricatured as the stage Irishman of Boucicault and even less flattering dramatic clichés. But dramatically, the novelty was even more startling. Synge's insistence on authentic props and costumes aligned him with the revolution of André Antoine's Théâtre-Libre (1888-94), which brought into the theatrical sphere the realism of Zola in the literary. However, as modern critics have suggested, the pre-modern community Synge found on Aran, from which he was excluded, meant that his fastidious attempts at realism had a very different effect from those of Antoine.⁴⁴

Antoine's company first visited London in 1889 to perform at the Royalty Theatre for a short season. Interest in the company focused on its reputation for producing new plays with scandalous subject matter, but, as the performance of Hennique's *La Mort du Duc d'Enghien*, an historical drama of the Napoleonic wars, demonstrated, it was the production style that was really revolutionary. Antoine wrote that:

The council of war in the third act, illuminated only by the lanterns placed on the table, created an effect so new and unexpected that everyone is talking about it. Moreover, I had the great good fortune to discover a costumier with an admirable collection of authentic costumes which he loans to no one but painters.⁴⁵

William Archer commented:

The picture presented to the eyes is perfect in its sombre reality ... We see the actors' faces only fitfully, as the candle-light happens to fall upon them.⁴⁶

This was bold and shocking in an English context where the clever machinery of stage presentation had assumed the major role and was not to be usurped; the pictorial had replaced the dramatic values. Synge's audiences were not shocked by the peasant settings, but by the pagan vitality and anti-clericalism of the plays. This was partly owing to the influence of the Parisian *avant garde* on Synge's intellectual development. Synge's Preface to

⁴⁴ Lecossois, 27.

⁴⁵ André Antoine, *Memories of the Théâtre-Libre*, trans. by Marvin A. Carlson, ed. by H. D. Albright (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1964), 94; first published as *Mes Souvenirs sur Théâtre-Libre* (Paris: [s.l.], 1921).

⁴⁶ William Archer, *The World*, 13 February 1889, quoted in John Stokes, *Resistible Theatres, Enterprise and Experiment in the late Nineteenth Century* (London: Paul Elek, 1972), 122.

The Playboy in 1907, with its references to Mallarmé and Huysmans and Ibsen and Zola, indicates his cognisance of both naturalist and symbolist movements.⁴⁷ His exposure to the intellectual milieu of 1890s Paris justifies his being seen as part of the European theatre tradition. Yet Synge's preoccupation was also with the creation of a vernacular national literature. Theatrically, this concern with language was mirrored in a concern with verisimilitude in acting and scenography:

All art is a collaboration and I have no doubt that in the happy ages of literature striking and beautiful phrases were as ready to the storyteller's or the playwright's hand as the rich cloaks and dresses of his time.⁴⁸

Whether or not we consider Synge to be naturalistic, then, depends to a degree on the lens through which we view him. From a European perspective, perhaps, he is *avant garde*, gesturing towards modernist forms, but in its representational style, from sets and costumes to props, his theatre was also revolutionary because of its realistic *mise en scène* and recognisable characters.

Fay's Annotations to the Opening

Critics have noted the atmosphere of foreboding that each of Synge's short plays opens with.⁴⁹ *Riders to the Sea* begins with Cathleen kneading dough, taking the pot oven off the fire, returning to the table, bringing the cake to the oven, the oven to the fire, and returning to dust the table. This is, for sure, a 'valid representation of life', calling for a style of acting that is naturalistic.⁵⁰ This it received, as *The Freeman's Journal* noted, in the performances of Emma Vernon (Cathleen) and Sarah Allgood (Nora) both of whom wept impressively when they identified the bundle of clothes as their brother's.⁵¹ Characteristically, however, a charged tension pervades the everyday actions of spinning and baking. This is due to the duality of the objects and activities themselves: bread's

⁴⁷ *Plays 2*, 53-4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ In addition to editing *Prose*, Alan Price wrote *Synge and Anglo-Irish Drama* (London: Methuen, 1961); hereafter cited as Price, *Anglo-Irish Drama*. Price divides the play into 'four movements', suggesting a symphonic structure. The first 'movement', which he calls 'exposition', he describes as 'mood – near normal, subdued, apprehensive; method – mainly naturalistic' (*Anglo-Irish Drama*, 181); Mc Cormack writes of the 'highly charged moment of stasis' that exists at the opening of every one of Synge's plays (23).

⁵⁰ Price, *Anglo-Irish Drama*, 182.

⁵¹ *The Freeman's Journal*, 27 February 1904, notes that 'nothing could excel the naturalness of Miss Vernon's weeping, and she undoubtedly won her way to the sympathy of the audience' (5).

symbolic connotations with the Eucharist were sharply portrayed in Gerry Hynes's production when a cross was deliberately slashed in the dough as part of these introductory moments, an elaboration on the action of the first performances. The action of a knife also suggests violence and death and foreshadows the necessity to cut through the 'black knot' which secures the packaging containing the clothing of their brother.⁵² The spinning-wheel's symbolic associations have already been alluded to. Fay's elaboration of the stage directions printed in the Vigo text adds to the action expected of Emma Vernon (Cathleen). Here are Synge's directions:

Cathleen, a girl of about twenty, finishes kneading cake, and puts it down in the pot-oven by the fire; then wipes her hands and begins to spin at the wheel.⁵³

Here are the production directions, which are busier and more naturalistic:

Kathleen finishes kneading cake, takes cloth from the table, goes to fire, lifts off oven, goes back to table, brings cake and puts it in oven, lifts oven on to fire with cloth, + puts turf on oven. Takes cloth back to table, wipes hands, dusts + cleans table, then leaves cloth on dresser R, goes to wheel and spins back to audience.⁵⁴

The performance directions are self-explanatory, but they confirm that the dramatic method at the start is naturalistic, aimed perhaps at suggesting that existence on Aran is so hard that Cathleen 'cannot pause for a minute' between baking and spinning.⁵⁵

It has been debated whether *Riders to the Sea* can be properly labelled a tragedy, although such generic discussions have perhaps fallen out of fashion, as literary studies have become less interested in questions of literary value and more focused on theoretical approaches to the text.⁵⁶ Calling the play tragedy when it is so highly focused in its action, and when it neglects the stages of hubris and hamartia, has been disputed.⁵⁷ James Joyce argued the play had no Greek echoes.⁵⁸ The play, however, evinces a steadily thickening atmosphere of doom leading to a wake and oddly passive acceptance of fate by the tragic

⁵² *Plays 1*, 15.

⁵³ *Plays 1*, 5.

⁵⁴ Appendix B, 19.

⁵⁵ Price, *Anglo-Irish Drama*, 182.

⁵⁶ Ronan McDonald, *Tragedy and Irish Literature: Synge, O'Casey and Beckett* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 7.

⁵⁷ Price includes it in his chapter called 'Tragedies' alongside *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (*Anglo-Irish Drama*, 181-216), but acknowledges other views, namely Darrell Figgis, *Studies and Appreciations* (London: Dent, 1912).

⁵⁸ Joyce's response to *Riders to the Sea* is noted in McDonald, *Tragedy*, 42.

heroine, Old Maurya. Some of the changes to the text appear to be aimed at further telescoping the action of an already concise drama.

A black ink bracket on Fay's copy of the Vigo text coupled with a pencil note 'in', perhaps for 'insert', suggests a significant change to the text immediately following Nora's entry with the explosive bundle of clothes. This artefact is central in plot terms because it sets in motion the tragic arc. In the printed edition, Cathleen asks Nora if she thinks the priest will forbid Bartley (the remaining son) from risking the seas given the likelihood of his brother's death. Nora replies that the priest will not, and the pair discuss the inhospitable weather: '[t]here's a great roaring in the west'.⁵⁹ Dialogue serves to convey danger. But in Fay's text this section is cut:

in

CATHLEEN (*looking out anxiously*). Did you ask him would he stop Bartley going this day with the horses to the Galway fair?
 NORA. "I won't stop him," says he, "but let you not be afraid. Herself does be saying prayers half through the night, and the Almighty God won't leave her destitute," says he, "with no son living." (Looks out of window)
 CATHLEEN. Is the sea bad by the white rocks, Nora?
 NORA. Middling bad, God help us. There's a great roaring in the west, and it's worse it'll be getting when the tide's turned to the wind.⁶⁰

Instead of talk, Nora asks Cathleen '[s]hall I open it now[?]', meaning the bundle of clothes.⁶¹ Following on from the stage direction of the wind blowing open the door to the cottage, this interrogative arguably achieves more dramatically than the preceding dialogue by maintaining the audience's focus on the physical object representing disaster: the bundle.

This seems to be a significant performance-related change justified on dramatic grounds. It telescopes the dilemma surrounding the bundle and what should be done with it: opened now or later, how and where concealed. The package is an unwelcome and troublingly inaccessible emissary from reality, as the 'black knot' that secures it suggests. Within this atmospheric thickening of anxiety, the focus is on action – a mode of

⁵⁹ *Plays 1*, 7.

⁶⁰ Appendix B, 20.

⁶¹ *Plays 1*, 7.

concealment of evidence from Maurya. Fay's annotations suggest alternative strategies for hiding it – in the turf loft or in the turf basket.⁶² The former is a storage space under the thatch, above the fire-place, the latter is a woven basket that serves as an intermediate stage between loft and fire. Organising sufficient fuel for the fire and ensuring it was kept alight at all times was an important domestic duty. Old Maurya implies that she finds Cathleen's behaviour suspicious when she says, her first words in the play, '[i]sn't it turf enough you have for this day and evening?'⁶³ Fay's pencil and ink marginalia suggest different solutions in performance. The turf loft requires a ladder, referred to in the text and is a safer hiding place. The reasons for these two performance versions are unknown, but we might speculate that the construction of a turf loft as part of a set may have overstretched the resources of company or venue, particularly on tour, creating the necessity for a simplified version of the text that could be used where required. This is in itself an example of the vulnerability of authorial stage directions to the circumstances of theatrical reality. It also suggests the sense that theatre is an event rather than the presentation of literary text and the script is more provisional than, say, the musical score.⁶⁴

The cut to the dialogue preceding the concealment of the bundle is, then, fully justified on aesthetic grounds, but there is another possible explanation: censorship. The young priest who is the subject of the sisters' conversation is another envoy from the modern world, as his age suggests, and a threat to the traditional life of Aran. Judith Leder comments that the 'priest is the voice of the modern urban world'.⁶⁵ He is presented here as foolish and callow, naively reassuring Nora that "'God won't leave her destitute'", referring to Old Maurya, "'with no son living'".⁶⁶ Audiences might perceive an anti-clerical presentation here. At issue is the representation of both the personnel of the Catholic Church and of the orthodoxy, or otherwise of the islanders. Questioning the appetite of the acting company for further controversy, we can ask whether this might be a political cut.

⁶² Appendix B, 21.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ The first of Tom Stoppard's lectures at Oxford as Cameron Mackintosh Chair of Contemporary Theatre in October 2017, is summarised by his biographer: '[t]he act of writing is as insulated as writing a sonnet ... But once a play is in rehearsal, this entire sense of self-sufficiency is "blown away like a dandelion seed". From then on ... [e]verything is to with physics: loudness, quietness, brightness and time. More than once, "I've added a couple of words to an exit speech because the door was too far away"' (Hermione Lee, *Tom Stoppard: A Life* [Faber and Faber, 2020], 838-9).

⁶⁵ Leder, 214.

⁶⁶ *Prose*, 5.

Actors are much closer to audiences than writers, generally, and certainly in the case of the Irish Revival. The contemporary press suggests a certain disquiet with Synge's representation of the level of piety among the Irish. Reviewing *The Well of the Saints*, Synge's next play, in *The Freeman's Journal*, the writer saw in Maurya's passive acceptance of Bartley's fate a betrayal of the Irish:

To begin with, [Synge] knows nothing of Irish peasant religion. The widow in *Riders to the Sea*, who consoles herself with the thought that her prayers to Providence may cease, leaves off her praying just when the Irish peasant's prayers would really begin.⁶⁷

On balance, it seems more likely that the cut was made on artistic grounds than on political ones. However, the unpopularity of Synge's negative representations of the Irish worried the actors, who occupied a different social position from the lofty privilege of the Anglo-Irish triumvirate of playwrights. To the extent that they occupied a middle ground between the Irish Ireland sympathies of the audience and the more rarefied air breathed by Synge, occasional censorship remains a reasonable hypothesis.

Old Maurya's entry

The entry of the Old Mother brings a contrary, critical energy to the scene. She leaves the organisation of the home to Cathleen and Nora, yet her dominance is clear in the girls' reactions to her. The existence of twin hiding places for the bundle (and the possibility that in performance the turf loft was unfeasible) leads to changes in the action in Fay's copy. If Cathleen has no need of a ladder, then she does not throw the turf down to Nora to put around the fire, as happens in the printed text. Instead, she puts the turf around the fire herself as she tells her mother that Bartley will require bread for his journey. Such actions are both natural and exhibit subterfuge, since Cathleen is at pains to explain her apparent neglect of the fire, which is in fact occasioned by her interest in finding somewhere to hide the bundle of recovered clothes. This dramatic irony lends depth to the exchanges between mother and children. Nora too must be given a new role: in Fay's copy she moves to the outer door, to observe the weather and await Bartley's return.

Changes to the stage directions emphasise character differences between Nora and Cathleen. Nora is charged with bringing into the cottage the deadly bundle, but Fay

⁶⁷ 'Irish National Theatre, Mr Synge's New Play', *The Freeman's Journal*, 6 February 1905, 5, reprinted in Hogan III, 18-19.

changes the line '[s]hall I open it now?' to '[w]ill *you* not open it now?' (my emphasis), suggesting a wish to defer to her older sister.⁶⁸ Nora's position at the door suggests a possibly abstracted air. Some critics have seen her as 'unthinking', for example in telling her mother that the priest cannot stop Bartley and he is bent on going.⁶⁹ Others have suggested her dramatic function is 'echo and exposition'.⁷⁰ The door is a liminal space in Synge and looking out of it she is able to bring news from the outer world. 'He is coming now and he in a hurry', she warns her mother and sister, as Bartley arrives.⁷¹ Yet another perspective sees Nora as evidence of Synge's dramatization of the social pressures that worked against the achievement of a spiritual idyll on Aran. *The Aran Islands* has been accused of Romantic atavism, but according to some, Synge's awareness of the encroachments of modernity and the pressures of social change prevents him from romanticising island life.⁷² In both non-fiction book and play, the precarious economics of a traditional existence force negotiation with modernity. Judith Leder has argued that Nora represents this modernising tendency and that the play dramatizes a cultural battleground.⁷³ In this reading the authority Nora gives to the young priest demonstrates her allegiance to a code different from her mother. According to Leder, she longs to leave the islands and is one of the daughters who in Synge's words 'go away also' to escape the fate of bearing children who will die at sea.⁷⁴ Changes to Fay's copy, add to the number of times Nora is directed to go to, or look out of, the external door.⁷⁵ Not only does she report on Bartley's approach, she also later tells him that hooker is 'passing the green head'.⁷⁶ Later she goes again to the threshold to listen for her mother's return.⁷⁷ This pattern of movement underlines her distance from both the practicality of her sister and the fatalism of her mother. The stage directions, old and new, suggest that she is on the margins of the cottage, with one foot out of the door.

⁶⁸ Appendix B, 6.

⁶⁹ Price, *Anglo-Irish Drama*, 182.

⁷⁰ Leder, 214.

⁷¹ *Prose*, 7.

⁷² Sean Hewitt writes that Synge avoids 'Romantic atavism by distinguishing the spiritual idyll from the physical world' (Hewitt, 46).

⁷³ Leder, 222.

⁷⁴ *Prose*, 108.

⁷⁵ Appendix B, 22, 25, 27.

⁷⁶ *Plays 1*, 11.

⁷⁷ *Plays 1*, 17.

Once Cathleen has returned to the wheel and Nora is at the door, Old Maurya takes up a position at a stool by the fire, from which she barely moves, rendered immobile by age and suffering. Symbolically, her closeness to the hearth suggests her embodiment of Aran tradition. When Bartley seeks her approval for his journey across the sea, he crosses to her explaining that '[t]his is the one boat going for two weeks ... and the fair will be a good fair for horses', but she is unyielding.⁷⁸ This section of the play, is, as Price has observed, 'a battle of wills' between Old Maurya and her son, a point underscored by the positions of the characters. Old Maurya is rooted to the hearth, Bartley mainly upstage behind the table, Cathleen spinning, and Nora fetching the rope or reporting on the progress of the boat.

Dramatic tension is a function of a clash of wills, but Synge's prose still gestures towards a sense of mystery. However, one example of atmospheric dialect is cut in Fay's copy. One of Nora's tasks is to fetch the rope for Bartley to fashion a halter. Typically, she cannot locate it and is directed by Cathleen:

Give it him, Nora; it's on a nail by the white boards. [I hung it up this morning, for the pig with the black feet was eating it.]⁷⁹

Fay's brackets would seem to indicate a performance cut, not incorporated by Synge into the second edition of the Vigo text in 1907. Cathleen's words carry into the scene a mythopoetic allusion, since pigs had a central place in Irish mythology, as Declan Kiberd has pointed out. The addition of 'black feet' adds an ominous aspect to the already suggestive image of porcine consumption. Contrasting the black of the pig with the white of the coffin boards indicates a two-tone world where colour signifies death. The pig was sacred to both the moon-goddess and the death-goddess and was an eater of corpses.⁸⁰ Moreover, this very animal is, according to Bartley, to be sold to the jobber for slaughter, making the dramatic and folkloric references 'mutually reinforcing'.⁸¹ Building on a previous hypothesis, the short cut telescopes the action, allowing silence to replace talk for the purpose of building up suspense. It is natural that Synge, still a novice playwright, would not yet be fully aware of

⁷⁸ *Plays 1*, 9.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*; the square brackets are Fay's pen addition (see Appendix B, 8).

⁸⁰ Tradition dictated that the family sacrifice a pig on the Feast of St. Martin (11 November, when the play was set according to an early draft). The failure of the family to do this would have been seen as transgressive, tempting punishment, according to Declan Kiberd (*Synge and the Irish Language* [London: Macmillan, 1979], 165).

⁸¹ Kiberd, 166.

the way that dramatic action (and inaction) can affect an audience: of the way that a play is an island of words in a sea of action.⁸² There is also an interpretation that suggests censorship. An early version of Yeats's *The Hour-Glass* has a line reading 'the pig is fattening well' spoken by the Wise Man's wife Bridget.⁸³ In a later edition the line was changed to 'the linen is bleaching white'.⁸⁴ Unlikely as it might seem, the changing of two references to pigs spoken by women in two plays close in time and performed by the same company, might suggest a squeamishness about references considered unsuitable to post-Victorian theatre audiences, particularly those who idealised Irish womanhood. It seems more likely, however, that the reference to the pig with the black feet underscored the theme of impending death with a symbolism considered heavy handed, and so it was cut.

The Wake

Old Maurya's vision of the riders to the sea brings with it a sense of the wondrous, and leads to the return of Bartley, borne in on a board. Suffused with the uncanny and the supernatural, especially in the moment when Maurya seems to summon the body of Bartley, pointing to the cottage door before it opens, it nonetheless continues to root actions in social reality. Early in the scene, Cathleen manages to get Maurya out of the cottage so that she and Nora can examine the bundle of clothes. As has been demonstrated, audiences were touched by the natural grief the girls evinced on deducing that the clothes were Michael's.⁸⁵ Maurya's return occasions a significant tableau as she tells her daughters of her vision of her shoeless son Michael riding a grey pony behind his brother. Synge's printed directions place Cathleen and Nora at the old woman's feet as she relates her vision, creating an image of regression as the girls embody an infantile relation to the mother; in Fay's pencil annotations, it seems that while Cathleen is indeed 'at Maurya's feet', at least during a portion of the tale, Nora stands behind her mother's chair, looking out at the audience.⁸⁶ This tableau makes more use of stage optics, utilising different levels to visual effect, but it also allows us to see the effect of the story on Nora's face: I suggest this conveys a sense of trance, or reverie, as Nora and Maurya both live the vision of the riders in their

⁸² *Merely Players*, 72.

⁸³ *VPI* 622.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ See above, n51.

⁸⁶ Appendix B, 24.

imaginations. This sense of immanence registered in the still tableau of trance, invites the audience to observe the spirituality woven into the islanders' lives. Moreover, in looking not at her mother, but beyond, Nora reinforces her sense that she is perhaps looking beyond the traditional life towards a modern future.

As the visionary tableau of mother and daughters suggests, the later stages of Synge's play arc from the naturalistic to the epic or mythological, or rather, the natural feeds the epic in a mysterious way. As Bartley is delivered dead to the cottage, a domestic drama enlarges into a communal act of mourning. Synge's eye for verisimilitude ensures that the red petticoats of the observers show the authentic hue, but the sense of wider communion is inescapable. As Maurya shares memories of her lost sons, a keen (the traditional lament for the dead) starts up, first outside and then brought within the house. Fay's copy includes the Gaelic incantation:

Ta se imighthe uaim!
Go deo! Go deo! Go deo!⁸⁷

Aside from the Irish Literary Theatre's production of Hyde's folk play in 1901, this was the first time Irish had been heard in the theatre in Dublin. Researching the play, Willie Fay had taken the actors to visit a woman in Gardiner Street, born in the west but living in the Dublin slums. Maire Nic Shiubhlaigh, the Abbey actress, brings out the almost eerily overlapping temporalities involved in this occasion:

It was strangely moving to see this old figure standing at the window of a crumbling tenement, looking over a city street, singing. She seemed to forget we were there.⁸⁸

This same sense of obliviousness characterises the tableau of mother and daughters just before Bartley is brought back. The image in Gardiner Street almost unbearably records the cultural loss involved in the migration from the regions of the west to the metropolis. The Abbey's role in creating the national identity of the nation yet to be born begins in bringing the historical essence of Ireland into the modern seat of political consciousness in Dublin, thereby establishing a relationship between two different systems. As Mc Cormack writes,

⁸⁷ Appendix B, 26.

⁸⁸ Maire Nic Shiubhlaigh, *The Splendid Years* (Dublin: Duffy, 1955), 55.

'the lament for Maurya's son becomes in the performance of the keen the lament for a lost language'.⁸⁹

The estranged realism of the ending has already been noted. It was this that alerted Brecht to the revolutionary uses to which a creative misreading of the play could be put. It is key to recognise that the strangeness did not of itself indicate any departure from naturalism, at least as far as character was concerned. Maurya might access a maternal archetype in her last speeches, but her characterisation was still based on observation. In 1907, Frank Fay took Molly and Sally Allgood (by then playing Cathleen and Maurya in stock revivals of the play) to see a Mrs Dunne at Glencree in County Wicklow. Fay wrote to Synge:

I find her interesting to talk to. She always says 'afeard' and has Mrs Quickly's and Old Maurya's way of putting in irrelevancies when she is telling her story.⁹⁰

'Afeard' does not occur in *Riders to the Sea*, but is prominent in *The Shadow of the Glen*, where Nora tells the tramp she was 'afeard' to lay out the body of her husband because of the 'black curse' he put on her that morning.⁹¹ But it is a dialectical marker separating the authentic language of the people from the more formal Anglicised usage of the young priest, reported as telling Nora not to be 'afraid'.⁹² It appears from Fay's letter that Old Maurya's digressive speech has both Shakespearean parallels and yet is based on observation from life. Synge was not consciously creating an archetypal heroine; he was presenting a recognisable Irishwoman, whose life was distorted by unimaginable suffering. Yet so compelling was the portrait that she became almost immediately emblematic of human loss.

Acting and Synge's *Riders to the Sea*

Synge's dramatic *oeuvre* had echoes of the intentions of radicals and revolutionaries of the French theatrical *avant garde*, a dimension that should not be occluded by overemphasising the context of the Irish Revival. André Antoine was one influence. Antoine's intention to bring realism to the stage was frequently confused with morbidity

⁸⁹ Mc Cormack, 249.

⁹⁰ To Synge, 28 June 1907, TCD MS 4424-26/353.

⁹¹ *Plays 1*, 35.

⁹² *Plays 1*, 5.

and the same accusation was levelled at Synge.⁹³ The *denouement* of *Riders to the Sea* called for a collective keen. Initially, the result, according to Joseph Holloway, was shocking: many in the audience ‘could not endure the painful horror’ and left the theatre.⁹⁴ From their first reading of the play in 1903, the actors recognised the dramatic potential of the bringing in of Bartley’s corpse at the conclusion. Lady Gregory wrote to Synge that ‘Willie Fay is longing to act the poor drowned man in it. He knows he could make the audience shiver by the way he would hang his head over the side of the table’.⁹⁵ A stage direction in ink indicates that the corpse should be brought in feet first to increase the tension still further.⁹⁶ These effects seem crafted to bring a dark verisimilitude to the performance of the play.

Frank Fay though disapproved of Antoine and considered him responsible for the poor quality of much modern acting. For a teacher of elocution who believed in clarity of diction as the foundation of acting, the slang and occasional incoherence of speech associated with productions of Théâtre-Libre was unacceptable. One of Fay’s theatrical heroes was William Poel, the English actor and producer. Poel contrasted, to Fay’s delight, the acting of the Abbey company in Synge with that of Antoine’s company whom he had seen in London.⁹⁷ The difference was that the Irish recognised the limits of naturalistic acting. Poel wrote:

What I mean about your acting not being ‘amateurish’ is this that you all of you show technical skill and understand the art of impersonation, of standing still, of listening, of playing up to each other, of getting on and off the stage. Now when I saw Antoine’s Company over here they *were* amateurs, probably by intention, under the mistaken idea that being realistic it was fine art. But to speak slovenly and without inflection of voice, to stand in any position you fancy just because it is done so in real life, forgetting that the picture frame or *l’optique de theatre* [sic] makes real movement seem unnatural from the auditorium. This sort of art which one so often finds outside of the professional stage and which I have the greatest dislike for was never for a moment to be detected in the performance I saw at the Abbey Theatre.⁹⁸

⁹³ Arthur Clery called it ‘ghastly’ in *The Leader*; *The Independent* found it ‘dreadfully doleful’; *The Irish Times*, ‘repulsive’. For *The United Irishman*, it ‘lacked sunshine’ (reviews quoted in Hogan II, 116-17).

⁹⁴ Holloway, 35.

⁹⁵ To J. M. Synge, [29 March 1903], *Theatre Business*, 42-3 (43).

⁹⁶ Appendix B, 27.

⁹⁷ William Poel (1852-1934) attempted to rescue Shakespeare from Victorian sentimentality by restoring the original conventions of performance in the 1880s and ‘90s and then throughout a career that lasted well into the 1920s. Described as trying to ‘popularise Shakespeare by methods that were anything but popular’, he was something of a cult figure, and one by whom Fay was greatly impressed (Robert Speight, *William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival* [London: Heinemann, 1954], 165).

⁹⁸ Written after Poel had seen *The Playboy* on a visit to Dublin 1907, the letter is quoted in Fay’s unpublished lecture entitled ‘Dramatic Art: some hints for actors and producers’ [1923]. The text for

Poel's comments on the performance of *The Playboy* remained with Fay and were repeated by him in an unpublished talk on acting delivered in the early 1920s. Poel confirmed Fay in his prejudice against Antoine, which was lifelong and surprisingly implacable. Where he expressed admiration of performers like Ellen Terry, Sibyl Thorndike and Constant Coquelin, and even softened towards Sir Henry Irving, Fay considered Antoine without charity. Unfairly perhaps, Fay blamed Antoine for the break in the tradition of acting at around the end of the nineteenth century, in England as well as France, one aspect of which was a hostility to the traditional training of actors. Antoine was thought to consider traditional methods of actor training to produce rhetorical statues unsuited to modern plays. He may well have thought so, with reason. There is also plenty of evidence that he modified his views as his career progressed.⁹⁹ Fay could not see beyond the vandalism he perceived in the sweeping away of tradition and he blamed that on Antoine. It should be noted that the grounds for Poel's comparison are technical primarily; no questions of doctrine are raised, which raises the possibility of a distinction between Antoine's ideas and his methods in Fay's mind.

Synge's plays succeeded on the stage in no small measure because of the brothers Fay's grasp on the realities of the theatre. This is made clear in Poel's informed comments. Those realities encompassed playwright, player and audience, between whom *Riders to the Sea* brought out 'a strong accord'.¹⁰⁰ This grasp of reality eschewed any doctrinaire application of theory to acting: it was naturalistic, but only up to a point; it also built proudly upon traditional practice. As Synge's play straddled the epic and the intimate, so the acting was both realistic and artificial.

Publishing Synge (1905)

the talk rests in the National Library of Ireland, MS 10,953, as does the letter, dated 27 November 1907 (MS 10, 952).

⁹⁹ Rebutting the depiction of Antoine as only a naturalist, Patti Peete Gillespie points out that as director of the Paris Odéon (1906-14), Antoine developed his aesthetic theories, which were insufficient to represent the great variety of plays he produced ('Antoine at the Odéon', *Educational Theatre Journal*, 23.3 [Oct., 1971], 277-88). Wishing to educate the Parisian public in its dramatic heritage, he adopted a flexible style that could not 'be adequately described as naturalistic' (288).

¹⁰⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 10 April 1907, 12.

Yeats introduced Synge in *Samhain* as an important recruit to the theatre movement, but for him to be of use, it was necessary to get his words into print in book form.¹⁰¹ Negotiations between playwright and his eventual publisher, Charles Elkin Mathews, were long and complicated. Critics have generally dismissed the changes between the *Samhain* text and the Vigo text as minor and unworthy of attention, unlike the differences of the periodical version of *The Shadow of the Glen* from that printed in book form, which are considered more substantive.¹⁰² The revised text of *Riders to the Sea* does however contain changes of significance for interpreting Synge's purpose in dramatizing his experiences on Aran. These will be discussed below. Following this, some readings selected by Saddlemyer in her 1968 edition of the text will be analysed and her method in selecting variants from the range of available sources without regard for textual descent will be challenged. Commentators have also noticed the small changes in punctuation that distinguish the *Samhain* text from the Vigo version.¹⁰³ These changes, which Saddlemyer appears to regard as arbitrary, are in fact material to Synge's purpose and must be considered, in the absence of other evidence, to be authorial corrections.¹⁰⁴

As well as the aforementioned changes to punctuation, there are significant changes to dialogue in the Vigo text, which are incorporated from ink annotations to Synge's own copy of the *Samhain* text in the National Library of Ireland.¹⁰⁵ In the first edition, Bartley intends to go 'this day to Connemara', but in the second version, it is 'with the horses to Galway fair'.¹⁰⁶ Later the same character expresses his determination to go to the 'good fair'; in the Vigo text this becomes 'a good fair for horses'.¹⁰⁷ This is a very rare substantive correction. The early mention of horses foreshadows Maurya's vision of her missing son Michael on horseback. As a symbol, it resonates with biblical connotations of death (the pale

¹⁰¹ Yeats wrote in *Samhain* that 'Mr Synge is a new writer and a creation of our movement' (CW8 25). The necessity of finding a book publisher for Synge is suggested in Nelson's study of Elkin Mathews (100).

¹⁰² See H. W. Parke's *John Millington Synge 1871-1909: A Catalogue of an Exhibition Held at Trinity College Library on the Fiftieth Anniversary of his Death* (Dublin: Dolmen, 1959), 31.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Saddlemyer explains that she has paid 'far more attention to ... variants than may at first appear necessary', owing to Synge's youthful failure 'to take full responsibility for printing and proof-reading' (*Plays 1*, xxx).

¹⁰⁵ NLI MS 4, 340.

¹⁰⁶ *Plays 1*, 5.

¹⁰⁷ *Plays 1*, 9.

horse of the 'Book of Revelation'). Moreover, it reminds the audience of the precarious economy of the islands: Maurya may plead with her son to refrain from taking to the sea because 'what is the price of a thousand horses against a son where there is one son only?'¹⁰⁸ But as Susan Cannon Harris has pointed out, she hasn't got a thousand horses and her inability to provide material security for her family forces her sons to risk their lives in pursuit of livelihood.¹⁰⁹ As with so much of the imagery in *Riders to the Sea*, the mention of horses combines naturalism, a fidelity to the detail of life on Aran, with mythic significance.

A second category of textual changes improves the dialect spoken by the characters. The writer changes the past tense of a few verb forms from standard English into Hiberno-English. When Maurya enters, absorbed by her vision of Michael on horseback, she recalls the time a neighbour 'saw the dead man with the child in his arms'. In the Vigo text, this is changed to 'the day Bride Dara seen the dead man'.¹¹⁰ On the next page, 'I saw two women' becomes 'I seen two women', while Cathleen's demand that her mother 'tell what you've seen' becomes 'tell what you seen'. Synge was refining his instrument in these small changes, still working the speech he had heard and seen written into a dramatic prose that combined reality with richness and joy. The changes, moreover, stress the importance of verisimilitude to Synge, in matters of dialect as much as in the case of stage props.

A similar impulse can be detected in the changes to punctuation. Like Shaw, Synge punctuated for rhythm and to represent as accurately as possible the distinctive musical speech of the Aran islanders.¹¹¹ A small example of this is demonstrated in different versions of the same speech in *Samhain* and the Vigo text. In the *Samhain* text, Maurya greets Bartley's departure for Galway with the words:

He's gone now, God spare us, and we'll not see him again. He's gone now and when the black night is falling I'll have no son left me in the world.¹¹²

In the Vigo text, an extra comma is added after 'now', becoming:

He's gone now, God spare us, and we'll not see him again. He's gone now, and when the black night is falling I'll have no son left me in the world.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Harris, 154.

¹¹⁰ *Plays 1*, 19.

¹¹¹ *Plays 1*, xxx.

¹¹² *Plays 1*, 11.

This may be a small change, but it marks a metrical pause, the function of which is to make a momentary check on the rhythm and focus attention on the words that follow Maurya's prophetic utterance. In creating Hiberno-Irish speech as dramatic idiom, Synge used punctuation to regulate the actors' delivery, shaping their speech to the rhythms he had heard on Aran. In a much quoted passage of her memoirs, Maire Nic Shiubhlaigh, the actress who created the role of Nora in *The Shadow of the Glen*, speaks of the difficulty for an actor of delivering Synge's prose-poetry: 'I found I had to break the sentences – which were uncommonly long – into sections, chanting them slowly at first, then quickly as I became more familiar with the words'.¹¹³ Adding commas was one method the author used to break up his long sentences to guide the actor in reproducing the distinctive lilt he wished them to adopt.

Saddlemyer follows all Synge's substantive revisions in her edition of the play. She also follows his explicit revisions to punctuation. One set of changes Synge made to the Vigo text was to reduce the frequency of the use of ellipsis as a brake on the pace of delivery. Nine occasions of ellipsis in the *Samhain* text are reduced to two in Vigo. Having seen the play in performance, we may deduce, Synge considered these directed pauses unnecessary as a dramatic effect. In a speech with two three-dot pauses, both of which are crossed out in Synge's copy, Maurya remembers the dreadful day when her husband and son were drowned; the suggestion is that they destroy the rhythm of Maurya's trance-like recollection. However, towards the end of the play, Saddlemyer restores cut ellipses where she feels they improve the rhythm. Three times she restores ellipses in Maurya's final speech, following Synge's draft typescripts as opposed to the Vigo edition.¹¹⁴ This is typical of Saddlemyer's approach to editing the play: she reserves to herself the selection of best reading rather than following the example of the Vigo text that, in the absence of other evidence, should, or could, have been overseen by Synge.

Sometimes Saddlemyer wrongly attributes occasions of punctuation to the Vigo text. In two of Nora's speeches, Saddlemyer adds commas. One is when Nora asks Cathleen 'and how long would a man take, and he floating[?]' and again, just after she has identified

¹¹³ Nic Shiubhlaigh, 43.

¹¹⁴ After the stage direction '[bending her head] ...'; the comment about Bartley, that he will have 'a deep grave surely ...'; and the rhetorical question, 'what more can we want than that? ...' (*Plays 1*, 27).

Michael by his clothing, 'and what will herself say when she hears this story, and Bartley on the sea[?]' . On both occasions the notes say that she is following the Vigo text in supplying commas to modulate the rhythm, but she is mistaken, as Fay's copy of this version has no commas at either point (and neither do copies of the 1905 version in the British Library or the Special Collections department of Senate House Library). However, Saddlemyer says that she is following the Vigo text in including commas here. Elsewhere, Cathleen realizes that the mass production of clothing makes identifying Michael from his clothes a hopeless task, '[t]he Lord spare us, Nora; it's a queer hard thing to say if it's his they are surely[?]' .¹¹⁵ Saddlemyer's 1968 text changes the semi-colon to an exclamation mark ('[t]he Lord spare us, Nora!') changing the intonation from thoughtful to alarmed, which seems to make no sense in context. There is no explanation for the change in the notes. A page later, Synge does change a very similar construction to exclamation: 'The Son of God spare us, Nora[.], becomes 'The Son of God spare us, Nora!' . This is at a moment of emotional intensity as Maurya recalls the horrifying vision of her dead son, so the change is justified. It is tempting to think, in the absence of any other explanation, that Saddlemyer mistakes the first example for the second.

Even where Saddlemyer correctly alters the punctuation, she does so for questionable reasons. In Maurya's final speech she ritually recites a litany of the names of the dead, '[m]ay the Almighty God have mercy on ... the souls of Sheamus, and Patch, and Stephen, and Shawn (*bending her head*)' .¹¹⁶ In the notes, Saddlemyer writes '*Samhain* and Berg and Box File E TSS. include commas after "Sheamus" and "Stephen", which seem to destroy the rhythm' .¹¹⁷ So she cuts the commas, which appear in the Vigo text, and her version reads '... the souls of Sheamus and Patch, and Stephen and Shawn' .¹¹⁸ Saddlemyer justifies this change by reference to the TSS states and to the improved rhythm given by the grouping of Sheamus and Patch and Stephen and Shawn. In fact, the second edition of the Vigo text (1907) agrees with Saddlemyer's changes, punctuating the line as follows:

... and on the souls of Sheamus and Patch, and Stephen and Shawn (*bending her head*) ...¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ *Plays 1*, 11.

¹¹⁶ *Plays 1*, 27.

¹¹⁷ *Plays 1*, 26.

¹¹⁸ *Plays 1*, 27.

¹¹⁹ Vigo Cabinet, *Second Edition*, 1907, 63.

Yet Saddlemyer does not mention the different printings but refers only to the TSS states. The printing is more important because it can be taken as evidence of an authorial change to the printed text, suggesting Synge's continuing concern for verisimilitude in his rendering of Hiberno-Irish.

Saddlemyer suggests that the Vigo text is an unreliable guide to Synge's intentions because inexperience led him not to take 'full responsibility' for the printing and proof reading of the edition.¹²⁰ Yet in her introduction to *Plays 2* she writes 'Synge's punctuation is scrupulously followed wherever possible in order to indicate his suggested rhythms'.¹²¹ She might reasonably protest that these skills were present to a greater degree in his later works than his earlier, but, even so, she underestimates Synge's oversight of the publication of *Riders to the Sea* and confidence with which he managed a steep learning curve in preparing his work for the press. Moreover, she disregards the likelihood that he was involved in the revision of the Vigo text for the second edition in 1907.

Synge's copy of *Samhain* is evidence that he revised his text post-publication and post-production. The revisions are incorporated into the second edition. There are also changes to punctuation between the two editions that lie outside the holograph annotations to *Samhain* but are suggestive of the author's hand. The metrical pause, a comma, added to Maurya's gloomy response to Bartley's exit, 'he's gone now, and when the black night is falling I'll have no son left me in the world', is an example of how Synge's speeches are crafted to regulate the rhythm of delivery. The implication is that Synge's engagement with the publication process was more active than has been acknowledged.

Other evidence suggests that Synge educated himself quickly in the cultural politics of publishing. He had originally wanted Elkin Mathews to publish *The Tinker's Wedding* alongside *Riders to the Sea* and *The Shadow of the Glen*. When Mathews queried the absence of the third manuscript on 20 January 1905, Synge's reply shows how he had absorbed the lessons of the controversy over the reception of *The Shadow of the Glen* – he withdrew the play on the grounds that 'it would hinder the sale of the book in Ireland' because of the unflattering portrait of a priest, which was likely to 'displease a good many of our Dublin

¹²⁰ *Plays 1*, xxx.

¹²¹ *Plays 2*, xxxiii.

friends'.¹²² Synge also showed shrewdness in choosing to reject Yeats's offer of a preface for the plays, pointing out that Yeats had promised a preface for the Dublin edition of *The Well of the Saints*, which was already being planned, and had already spoken favourably in *Samhain*. He wished to avoid accusations of 'log-rolling'.¹²³ It is true that Synge lacked Yeats's confidence in dealing with publishers and that Elkin Mathews's interest in Synge depended initially on recommendations by Yeats and John Masefield.¹²⁴ Synge was treated by Yeats as a 'recruit' in the Irish movement, albeit to the 'officers' mess' not to the ranks of 'foot-scholars'.¹²⁵ He nonetheless understood that Elkin Mathews offered an opportunity for him to establish himself independently of his famous friend and to launch his career as a writer. Given the material evidence of textual revision and focus provided by having seen his works performed, the revised second edition of the Vigo text of *Riders to the Sea* is a reliable guide to Synge's intended punctuation.

Conclusion

Close study of Synge's and Frank Fay's personal copies of *Riders to the Sea* illustrates the dramatic priorities of the writer and the methods employed by the director and voice coach to realise them. It suggests areas of strain or conflict between the wishes of the author and the demands of performers, for example in the need for censorship where Synge's anti-clericalism might alienate audience. However, much more strongly, it indicates the accord that existed between Synge and the performers and the determination of the latter to interpret the play in a way that befitted its style.

Synge cared about the punctuation of his plays because he recognised it could be used as system for imposing a rhythm on the delivery of the speeches, in the interests of verisimilitude or naturalness of delivery, much as he wished to find the bowls and tumblers that would appear on stage in Aran. In making changes to punctuation, Synge was

¹²² *Theatre Business*, 48n.

¹²³ *Letters 1*, 107.

¹²⁴ After several publishers rejected the manuscript of *The Aran Islands*, Lady Gregory admitted, 'we have made a bad start with the M.S.S' (To J. M. Synge, Dec 13 [1903], *Theatre Business*, 45-6 [45]). She gave it to John Masefield to read and he took it to Elkin Matthews, his publisher. Masefield told Matthews how good the book was, how he and his friends would all 'push it in the press' and that 'Yeats would write an introduction' (To Lady Gregory, Dec 11 [1903], *Theatre Business*, 47-8 [47]). Elkin Matthews agreed to publish, but a year went by before he contacted Synge again. It would be the plays, not *The Aran Islands*, he published.

¹²⁵ Mc Cormack, 257.

broadening to the issue of rhythm the changes to verb form ('seen' for 'saw') he made between periodical and first book publications of *Riders to the Sea*. The changes made to his copy of *Samhain* and tiny revisions to punctuation suggest that some critical evaluations have exaggerated his early inattention to the published editions of his texts. Moreover, they suggest the high value he placed on a system of regulated rhythmic delivery of dramatic speech.

The playing style of the Society in Synge's drama combined realism and stylised effect in ways that challenged contemporary audiences. Synge's aesthetic doctrine shaped the production style: his stage directions and his use of dialect insisted upon lifelike rendering. Yet the spiritual and mythic aspects of the drama required an acting attuned to dimensions beyond the quotidian, to emotions of archaic, tragic scope. Here Fay sought inspiration in the training of the traditional French tragedian, tempering the naturalism demanded by the drama's roots in life and folk activity. The combination of small, detailed actions that Fay pencilled into his copy of the text and the mythopoetic connotations of the drama created a strangeness within a naturalistic texture. The Fays utilised a heightened realism for the acting of these productions, analogous to the transfigured realism Synge writes of in his notebooks.

Fay's copy of *Riders to the Sea* shows how complicated the business of staging a new play was. The double annotation of the Vigo text, in black ink and pencil, strongly hints that sections of the play were cut for purposes we can only speculate at, but which may well include some form of censorship.¹²⁶ This cutting appears likely to be associated with the play's existence as part of the Abbey Theatre's touring repertory from 1906 onwards, if only because it is found in a copy of the play published in 1905, after the play's first performances. One of the fascinating features of the reception of the play is the speed with which it became a classic. Frank Fay loved what he saw as its austerity, its uncompromising

¹²⁶ Ben Levitas explores the issue of censorship and self-censure in Synge's work in 'Censorship and Self-censure in the Plays of J. M. Synge', *Synge and His Influences: Centenary Essays from the Synge Summer School*, ed. by Patrick Lonergan (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2011), 33-54; hereafter cited as Levitas, 'Censorship'. He argues that in forbidding production of Synge's *The Tinker's Wedding*, Yeats and Lady Gregory acted according to 'cultural pragmatics' somewhat undermining their determination to resist the 'agitprop imperatives' of the radical nationalists (35). Lauren Arrington makes a similar point; Yeats was prepared to sacrifice the freedom of the artist when he saw a chance to ensure the 'longevity' of the theatrical enterprise (Arrington, 14).

bleakness, which he contrasted favourably with Maeterlinck's dreaminess. For Fay, it was, despite its preoccupation with female mourning, a play with masculine energy.¹²⁷ From the first, he considered it 'a masterpiece'.¹²⁸ Its fascination for theatre directors has endured from Brecht onward: Garry Hynes of Druid Theatre found it the most difficult of Synge's plays to direct for her cycle of Synge's plays in 2005, because of the combination of detailed realism and its epic quality. It made, she believed, great demands on actors, but it was a great discovery for her.¹²⁹ Equally, the publication of the play in the Vigo series of belles-lettres in 1905 prepared the ground for Synge as a canonical author, whose works would be handsomely bound in four volumes a year after his death.¹³⁰ Fay's copy of the text indicates the care that went into creating a detailed naturalistic texture for a playwright who had discovered, in the Irish language of the west, a strange poetic beauty that made an appeal to the advocates for an Irish drama. What the production of *Riders to the Sea* and Synge's changes to the second edition of the Vigo text both indicate is a determination to utilise the Anglo-Irish vernacular as the medium of a national identity, animated by Irish players who based, where possible, their movements on living example.¹³¹ In doing so, Synge was creating a dramatic and a literary canon from a living speech.

¹²⁷ Fay compared *Riders to the Sea* favourably with Maeterlinck's *Interior*, directed at the Abbey by Iden Payne, the English director imposed on the Fays by Miss Horniman and Yeats. In 1907, Fay told Synge that *Interior* was 'somewhat effeminate; it needs your hardness' ('Monday' [March 1907], TCD MS 4424-26/586).

¹²⁸ To Joseph Holloway, 1 March 1904, the Fay papers (MS 10 ,952).

¹²⁹ 'Director's Commentary', *DruidSynge* [DVD]. Directed by G. Hynes, Dublin: Wildfire Films, 2007.

¹³⁰ Synge's one-act plays were published alongside Yeats's esoteric tales *The Tables of the Law* and *The Adoration of the Magi* (1904) in the Vigo Cabinet Series. John Masefield's popular *Ballads* (1910) was another in the series; Masefield's recommendation was instrumental in securing Synge a contract with Elkin Mathews (James G. Nelson, 'Elkin Mathews' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://0-doi-org.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/53207>> [accessed 20 November 2019]).

¹³¹ Seamus Deane argues that Anglo Irish has not the authority to 'register the specific historical experience of the Irish people', and points to other writers who have addressed the question, such as Thomas MacDonagh's *Literature in Ireland: Studies Irish and Anglo-Irish* (1916), and Daniel Corkery's *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* (1931) (Small World: Ireland 1798-2018 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021], loc. 8770. Kindle ebook).

Chapter 3

Questions of reception, legacy, and performance: The Fays, and Synge's *The Shadow of the Glen*.

Willie Fay (1872-1947) outlived Frank (1870-1931) by nearly twenty years, allowing a space for reflection on the achievements of his career. His account of the brothers' role in the origins of the Irish National Theatre, *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre*, was published by the London firm Rich & Cowan in 1935. Manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland contain notes towards a second edition that can be dated internally to 1947, the year of Willie Fay's death. These notes suggest an abiding concern with his own, and Frank's, legacy, as well as a dissatisfaction with the narrative presented to readers and posterity in the first edition.¹

Rich & Cowan specialised in literary publishing. The firm's aim was to publish literature fairly cheaply. War and imperial memoirs featured heavily among non-fiction titles; lightweight fiction made up the majority of the list.² Rich & Cowan also published mainstream literary criticism, and *G. K.'s*, an anthology of writings from Chesterton's weekly journal. The copy of *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre* annotated by Willie Fay bears the livery of the Times Book Club in the form of a sticker on the inside back cover: 'The Times Book Club |42 Wigmore St| London W1'. Book Clubs were a twentieth century method of book marketing which bypassed bookshops altogether. Established in 1905, the Times Book Club was a circulation-boosting device: subscribers to the newspaper were entitled to borrow books from the club or purchase them at a large discount.³ In fact, the journey of this copy from book club to the present is shrouded in a degree of uncertainty, as it was not bequeathed to Gerard Fay by his father, Frank, unlike with the rest of the archive.⁴

¹ A4 notebook with pencil script, 'Notes towards a second edition of *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre*', NLI MS 5982.

² The evidence of Rich & Cowan's output is taken from 32 pages of publisher's advertisements at the end of Harold Weston, *Form in Literature: A Theory of Technique and Construction* (London: Rich & Cowan, 1934).

³ Jonathan Rose, 'Modernity and Print I: Britain 1890-1970', in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. by Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 342-53 (347).

⁴ Unlike the other Fay-owned texts used in this thesis Willie Fay's copy of *W. Fay* was not bequeathed by Frank Fay to his son Gerard. It was purchased in the 1970s by Colin Smythe, publisher, bookseller and bibliographer, in New York. Its passage to America is a matter of speculation. A nephew of the Fay brothers called William Patrick Fay was Irish Ambassador to Washington D.C. from 1964 until his sudden death in 1969 (Michael Kennedy, 'Fay, William Patrick Ignatius', *Dictionary of Irish Biography* <<https://dib.cambridge.org/>> [accessed 12 April 2021]). In the absence of other evidence, a reasonable guess is that William Patrick inherited the book from his uncle in 1947 and that due to his

The Fays of the Abbey Theatre is divided into three sections. Willie Fay's years at the Abbey occupy the central section, framed by his apprenticeship in professional theatre in Ireland and England in the 1890s, and his later career as an actor and producer based in London. By far the most extensively annotated section concerns Fay's attempt to understand the reception afforded *The Shadow in the Glen*, or *In the Shadow of the Glen* as it was first called, in 1903.⁵ Scoring through much of the printed text, adding marginal interpolations, these changes are suggestive of more than stylistic polishing. Instead, they indicate an ambivalence about that first performance of Synge's play, and its political consequences, and a need to reconsider his own contribution to the official history. Roy Foster has written that the production of *The Shadow of the Glen* represented a turning point for the Fays, putting them on a path directly contrary to that of Arthur Griffiths, who was until this point an important ally of the theatre. *The Shadow of the Glen* was a decisive moment in the history of the dramatic movement in Ireland, and for the career of the Fays.⁶

The Actor and the Writer

By the 1930s when *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre* was published, political and dramatic circumstances were very different from when the Abbey Theatre began. The Abbey had contributed to the construction of an Irish national cultural identity, laying the ground for the formation of the new state in 1922. Yeats saw the founding of the Abbey in the context of the wider movement of summoning the Irish race into historical existence as a nation. He wrote in 'Literature and the Living Voice' that '[w]herever the old imaginative life lingers it must be stirred to more life ...and in Ireland this is the work, it may be, of the Gaelic movement.'⁷ By the Gaelic movement Yeats meant the whole movement around Gaelic language, culture and sport, which is distinct from his own mission to reinvigorate the communal will of the Irish by invoking a sense of the Irish people as they were expressed 'primordially' in legendary history. Yet the two movements surely shared a common aim:

unexpected death while posted to Washington, his possessions remained to be distributed in America.

⁵ The play was called *In the Shadow of the Glen* in periodical publication (*Samhain*, 1904), and at the time of its first production, but soon the initial preposition was dropped. The advantage of concision cannot entirely make up for the sense supplied by 'in' that 'the shadow of the glen' is a state of mind as much as a physical setting, and one that actively shapes the characters' lives.

⁶ Roy Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890-1923* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), 84.

⁷ 'Literature and the Living Voice', *Ex* 208-9, CW8 99.

the assertion of independent nationhood.⁸ The Free State acknowledged the role of the Abbey's role in the Celtic Renaissance by subsidising it from 1925. Tensions between the government and the artistic directorate continued and are written into the Abbey Theatre Minute books of the period.⁹ Yeats often sought to rally support for the theatre in torpid times by igniting controversy. In 1934, he voiced his perception of a 'slackening of activity amongst Irish dramatists' and proposed 'regular productions of contemporary continental plays' as a remedy.¹⁰ In part this was a response to the challenge posed by the Gate Theatre under Hilton Edwards and Míchéal MacLiammóir, but it was also the re-statement of a long-held ambition to produce his choice of European folk and symbolist drama. Opposing Yeats's proposal, a younger generation of writers now sought a national platform for their dramatic work, such as Sean O'Faoláin and Frank O'Connor.¹¹ Both insisted that Irish theatre must be a vehicle for Irish writers, and if new writers were not available, which they disputed, then revivals of modern Irish classics must be performed to inspire the next generation.

O'Connor and O'Faoláin were both Catholic writers who instinctively repudiated the Irish Ireland ideology that was dominant under the administration of Éamon de Valera. Fighting for a National Theatre that was open to outside influences, O'Connor was a supporter of the appointment of Hugh Hunt as Manager of the Abbey in the mid-1930s, despite Hunt's English identity.¹² However, while respectful of Yeats's continuing leadership of the Abbey Theatre, both wished to discourage his enthusiasm for productions of a contemporary European art theatre character, such as Pirandello. Aesthetically, O'Connor and O'Faoláin were realist writers, for whom the local, the empirical were

⁸ Denis Donoghue writes of the relationship between the Gaelic Revival and Yeats's cultural nationalism in his *Irish Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9-34.

⁹ For a detailed examination of the politics of compromise at the Abbey see Arrington, 168-70.

¹⁰ *The Daily Express*, 31 December 1934, quoted in *The Abbey Theatre: Interviews and Recollections*, ed. by E. H. Mikhail (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble, 1988), 149 n. 3. Hereafter cited as Mikhail, *The Abbey Theatre*.

¹¹ Yeats admired O'Connor's translations from Gaelic, basing his late poem 'The Curse of Cromwell' in part on an English version of Aogán Ó Rathaile's poem, translated as 'Last Lines' by O'Connor (Michael Cade-Stewart, 'Mask and Robe: Yeats's *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936) and *New Poems* (1938)', *YA19*, 221-58 [224]).

¹² One reason O'Connor approved of Hunt was his administrative efficiency; another was his willingness to increase the number of new plays produced. Hugh Hunt was first invited by Yeats to become director of plays in 1935. He had been artistic director of the Old Vic in London. He left the theatre in 1938 (Mikhail, *The Abbey Theatre*, 153, 54). But Hunt was resented because he was not Irish.

bulwarks against the self-sufficiency and atavistic visions of a Gaelic Arcadia that was officially sanctioned.¹³ Hailing from Cork, a city with strong oceanic links, O'Connor was outward-looking, rejecting the inward ideology of the new Free State. The mid-century publication *The Bell*, edited by O'Faoláin, provided another platform for Irish writers seeking to make connections beyond borders, including with cultural figures of both traditions in Northern Ireland.¹⁴ Wishing to root national literature in the ordinary, O'Faoláin occupied ground between the Irish Irelanders and Yeats's anti-realist aesthetic. He regretted the loss of 'intimacy' and the focus on the quotidian in writing and performance. Arguing for a return to naturalism in theatre, he wrote nostalgically of the former 'Abbey ... when ... for example, the actors were encouraged to wear heavy countrymen's boots during the day so as to develop the typical countryman's walk'.¹⁵ He had witnessed a production of Lennox Robinson's play *Patriots* at the Cork Opera House; it had been a formative moment in artistic and political terms.¹⁶ Nearly a decade earlier, Robinson had himself been 'galvanised' by the Abbey players visit to Cork, suggesting a lineage of acting style in danger of extinction in the 1930s.¹⁷

Alongside debates about the repertory, the question of acting and the Abbey tradition was raised. Realists like O'Connor detested the virtuoso performer (a figure with whom Yeats had some sympathy). Writing of Abbey actors of the 1920s, he criticised the 'Connemara [sic] girls' in a production of *The Playboy* and their 'permanent waves'.¹⁸ The actors had not only 'gone to seed', but tellingly, 'had shot up to several times their natural height'.¹⁹ The Abbey tradition was based on observation and understatement. Adding to the debate in 1946, Gabriel Fallon, the Abbey actor, argued that O'Connor's demand for naturalistic acting was a betrayal of the Abbey acting tradition established by Frank and

¹³ Roy Foster suggests that the progressive, inclusive politics of the revolutionary generation of 1916 was betrayed by the conservative nationalism of the Free State which was won by their efforts. Foster mentions O'Connor and O'Faoláin in this context (Foster, *Vivid Faces*, 301).

¹⁴ Nicholas Allen discusses *The Bell* (1940-54) in his rewriting of Irish literary history from a coastal perspective in *Irish Literature of the Coast: Seatangled* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). 'At the Ebb Tide, Literary Cultures and Mid-Century Ireland', explores the work of journals and small presses in bypassing the interlocking hierarchies of gender, class, and religion in Ireland (102-27).

¹⁵ 'Thoughts on the Abbey Theatre' (1938), in Mikhail, *The Abbey Theatre*, 147-49 (148).

¹⁶ Foster, *Vivid Faces*, 95.

¹⁷ Foster, *Vivid Faces*, 94.

¹⁸ O'Connor misnamed them; the play is set in Mayo.

¹⁹ Mikhail, *The Abbey Theatre*, 150.

Willie Fay. Moreover, it rested on a misapprehension that Synge was a realist writer: 'there are many, like myself, who would refuse to accept the label of "realist" for Synge'.²⁰ The debate about Synge and verisimilitude, which had been first ignited in 1903, continued to burn.

Fallon's criticism of realist aesthetics was also a defence of the role of the actor. For James Agate, an English critic quoted by Fallon, the fashionable figure of the 'Art Director', of whom Edward Gordon Craig was still the epitome in English-speaking theatre, threatened the 'total demolition' of the actor.²¹ Agate identified Arthur Symons as the father of the 'Art Director', pointing to Symons's criticism of the 'intrusive little personality of the actor' in his essay 'An Apology for Puppets', first published in book form some twenty years before Agate's broadside.²² While Yeats had collaborated with Craig in 1903, and later in 1910, he had always been wary of Craig's dismissal of the actor.²³ Agate, described as 'a fascinating mixture of the intellectual and the philistine', looked back to the era of Wilde and the 1890s, not least in his nostalgia for Bernhardt, whose *Pelléas* he wrote had 'moved' him to the 'top of any possible aesthetic bent'.²⁴ Yet the supremacy of the actor advocated by Agate appeared to depend on the subjugation of the writer. The argument that great acting flourished when there was a scarcity of new dramatists was addressed by Fallon in his article. Fallon quotes Harley Granville Barker, the English playwright and manager: '[w]ith the actor in the ascendant the contemporary drama is generally lifeless'. He is reported by Fallon as believing that the collaboration between the actor and the writer is 'less an alliance than a rivalry', although Fallon points out that both Shakespeare and Molière were actors.²⁵

²⁰ Gabriel Fallon, 'Virtuosity in the Theatre', *The Irish Monthly*, 74.877 (July 1946), 303-10 (309).

²¹ James Agate (1877-1947), drama critic of *The Sunday Times* from 1923 until his death, was a prolific writer aspired to the role of diarist of his era, publishing nine volumes under the title *Ego*. His biographers wrote that 'he never lost the sense of himself as a character bestriding his own stage' ('Agate, James Evershed', Ivor Brown and Marc Brodie, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <doi: 10.1093/ref.odnb/30346> [accessed 3 March 2022]). Agate's thinking about acting comes from *Buzz, Buzz!* (London: Collins, 1918), 47.

²² Arthur Symons, *Plays, Acting, Music* (London: Constable, 1909), 3-8 (3).

²³ 'The Play, the Player, and the Scene', CW8 78.

²⁴ Agate, *Buzz Buzz!*, 46; the description of Agate is taken from Brown and Brodie's ODNB article.

²⁵ The quotation attributed by Fallon to Granville Barker is untraced (Fallon, 304). However, similar ideas are expressed in *The Exemplary Theatre* (Boston: Little Brown, 1922). Granville Barker writes of 'a crisis in the training and preparation of actors' caused by the ascendancy of realist dramatists at the end of the nineteenth century and the death of the virtuoso actor (77).

A political slant is given to the lament for virtuosity in acting by St John Ervine, himself playwright and sometime Abbey director (1915-16), whose memoir *The Theatre in My Time* was published by Rich & Cowan in 1934. Ervine wrote nostalgically of Victorian theatre organisation. While admitting that the actor manager often cast weaker actors so as to appear to advantage in comparison, he writes:

In wakeful moments of the night, a fear crosses my mind that the actor-managers were in the right more often than I supposed and that the exploitation of personality is an important part of what we call "theatre".²⁶

A Fabian socialist before the first World War, Ervine was a devotee of Shaw and Ibsen in his playwriting, so the weight he gives to actor managers might appear surprising. However, a complex personal history, his involvement in the Great War, and an increasingly visceral dislike to the Free State hardened his politics into a reactionary cast in the 1930s. He was also, temperamentally, a dictator, as his short reign as Abbey Theatre manager (1915-16) demonstrated.²⁷ By the 1930s his politics were reactionary, as his sympathy towards the virtuosic acting attests. Gabriel Fallon identifies Yeats with virtuosic acting and the example of Frank Fay by remembering that *The King's Threshold* was dedicated to Fay for 'beautiful speaking' that could not have been described as naturalistic. Fallon then quotes the Yeats of the 1930s:

For actors lacking music
Do most excite my spleen
They say it is more human
To shuffle, grunt and groan
Not knowing what unearthly stuff
Rounds a mighty scene.²⁸

Mounting a defence of a tradition of acting all but lost to the Abbey, but without which poetic drama (arguably including Synge) could not be acted, Fallon writes that Frank Fay in later years was 'looked upon by many of his younger colleagues as an actor who suffered

²⁶ St John Ervine, *The Theatre in My Time* (London: Rich & Cowan, 1933), 175.

²⁷ Fr. Dawson Byrne's early history of the dramatic movement describes Ervine's tenure as 'a reign of terror', firmly taking the actors' side in a dispute about rehearsing while on tour (Dawson Byrne, *The Story of Ireland's National Theatre: The Abbey Theatre* [Dublin and Cork: Talbot, 1929], 111). On the other hand, Byrne's account is certainly not definitive ('at once eclectic and unbalanced' [*The Observer*, undated cutting pasted into Brigit Fay's copy. Fay archive.]).

²⁸ 'The Old Stone Cross', *VP* 598-99. Flannery argues that Frank Fay could have been of 'considerable help' to Yeats in his continuing theatrical explorations after 1908 because of their ideas about theatre were complementary (Flannery, 237).

from too much virtuosity.²⁹ Fallon is making the case for an histrionic intensity that he sees as an occluded part of the history of the Abbey Theatre and which gestures towards Fay and Yeats's earliest experiments with forms of symbolist acting in non-commercial theatrical experiments. By the 1930s the practical opportunities for reviving this type of acting were limited, but Fallon, like Agate, wishes for it not to be forgotten, if only to provide contemporary actors and writers with a broader sense of the varied acting styles that had been developed to produce the original Abbey repertory.

Yeats's politics of the 1930s and Ervine's militant Unionism were equally out of touch with the democratic, realist impulses of O'Connor and O'Faoláin. Yeats came to accept that the type of acting he liked would never be popular, and his later poems are suffused with heroic gestures taken from the stage: for example, 'Talma and his thunderbolt' and 'Irving and his plume of pride' in his poem *A Nativity*.³⁰ Distinguishing between actors of passion, acting out of personality and instinct, and character actors, acting from observation, Yeats's preoccupation with images of passion was not only a focus of his later years. Writing in 'Four Years: 1887-1891', he recalled W. E. Henley, an early mentor, whose passion was a 'quality of soul, personified again and again'.³¹ James Flannery has argued that 'Yeats did not draw his images of passion from the world of literature but from observing on the stage actors such as Henry Irving'.³² He adds that the emotional actor is 'like a great athlete, singer, dancer, or political leader'.³³

While Frank Fay was associated by Fallon with virtuosity in acting, a quality associated with the past, Willie Fay's talent lay in a contrary direction:

Aristocracy was abolished in the Little Theatre, where democracy prevailed. The value of teamwork was first manifested to English playgoers by the Irish Players from the Abbey Theatre, Dublin and the effect on the public was instantaneous and almost sensational.³⁴

The 'little theatre' movement is a largely forgotten chapter in twentieth century theatrical history. Ronald Schuchard's study of Yeats's and Florence Farr's attempts to revive the ancient arts of speech on stage through various clubs and societies in London is one

²⁹ Fallon, 308.

³⁰ *VP* 625.

³¹ *Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan, 1956), 125; hereafter cited as *Au*; CW3 121.

³² Flannery, 195.

³³ Flannery, 194.

³⁴ Ervine, 158.

exception to this neglect.³⁵ He traces a network of enthusiasts from London to Dublin who opposed both the commercialism of the English stage and the naturalism of social realists such as Ibsen. Yeats's wishful conviction that 'the hour of convention and decoration and ceremony' was 'coming again' in the theatre was the spur to much of this activity.³⁶ On the other hand, Shaw and Granville Barker's tenure at the Court (1904-07) advanced an alternative tradition of naturalism in revivals of Shakespeare and Greek tragedy.³⁷ Ervine's attribution of the abolition of democracy in the theatre to the Irish Players from the Abbey Theatre appears overly emphatic in this context: democratizing forces were afoot elsewhere in the 1890s, whose ultimate origin was to be found in the theatres of Paris and Norway. Yet the Abbey was important in its linking of community, new writing and repertory. This would provide a practical model for not only Annie Horniman's Gaiety Theatre in Manchester from 1908, but for similar theatres at Birmingham, Liverpool, Leeds, Oxford and Glasgow in the years that followed. Willie Fay applied his influence directly to the Birmingham Repertory Theatre where he was a director from 1926-29.³⁸ Within the historiography of the Abbey, Synge was a vital figure because of his creation of the genre of peasant drama, which sustained the Irish National Theatre through its early years and justified its existence as a people's theatre. Willie Fay's autobiography was a part of this historicizing process. Yet peasant drama, so-called, was not always a unifying phenomenon, nor Synge an emollient figure, as Fay's revisions to his memoir imply.

Annotations to Willie Fay's copy of *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre*

³⁵ *The Last Minstrels: Yeats and the Revival of the Bardic Arts* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

³⁶ Ex 180, CW3 79.

³⁷ Schuchard's study contains a detailed description of the unlikely collaboration of Florence Farr and Harley Granville Barker on a production of Gilbert Murray's translation of *Hippolytus* (Court Theatre 1904). Quite rightly, he presents it as a collision of competing dramatic philosophies. Barker's naturalism governed the production except for Farr's direction of the Chorus which attempted to reconstruct the original ritual sense of performance through rhythmical utterance and stylized movement. These creative tensions were present in less obviously antagonistic form at the Abbey also (Schuchard, 151-90)

³⁸ Byrne, 168.

Fay's copy of his autobiography is, as I have shown, a book club copy. Divided into three sections, with a forward and a postscript, it was co-authored with Catherine Carswell, the drama critic of *The Glasgow Herald*. Carswell suggests that her involvement was designed to remedy deficiencies in Willie Fay's literary style.³⁹ Unlike Frank Fay, Willie Fay's letters reveal a prose style that was functional but inelegant. The introduction of Carswell is an additional stage in the transmission of the text from manuscript to printed book. Carswell makes Willie Fay presentable for the literary reader, collaborating on the creation of the persona of 'a gay toiler' – the jobbing actor, or strolling player, who thought 'no labour too great or too humble for [his] calling'.⁴⁰ The creation of a self-deprecating persona belies Fay's concern to challenge the official history which viewed the Abbey as the creation of Yeats and Lady Gregory. The occasion of Fay's annotations to the book club copy is uncertain. It is possible that they were made for a second edition, but references to a missing 'script' suggests that the physical book may have been used in tandem with typescript in a series of lectures or radio broadcasts. A pencil addition at the end of a chapter on the Irish National Theatre Society anticipates events in 1904, ending 'and of these we shall speak next week'.⁴¹

Repurposing his book for alternative media, Fay's revisions could have been shaped by the conventions of form; for example, limited time might dictate concision. However, some of the changes suggest second thoughts and a wish to reclaim or refashion both the narrative persona and the account of events. Fay's annotations are unevenly distributed through the text. The final part concerning his career after the Abbey is untouched, suggesting that whatever the occasion of the text's reuse, its scope was limited to his career up to his departure from the Abbey. Beginning with an account of Willie's upbringing as the son of an Irish civil servant, the narrative advances to his and Frank's early experiences as playgoers in Dublin. While Frank submitted to bourgeois expectation by finding work as

³⁹ Carswell writes that James Bridie, the Scottish playwright, read Fay's manuscript and recommended it be rewritten ('Postscript', W. Fay, [v]).

⁴⁰ W. Fay, [vi].

⁴¹ W. Fay, 150. Fay archive. Gerard Fay wrote that his uncle (Willie) never returned to Ireland after 1908, except 'once in the 1920s to be interviewed for the job of first director of Radio Éireann' ('The Abbey Theatre', reprinted in Mikhail, *The Abbey Theatre, 199-202* [200]). It is possible that the annotations were made for a series of radio programmes to be broadcast in Ireland. Addressing an Irish audience might have prompted Fay to revise his book, published in London for British readership.

a clerk, Willie rebelled, joining J. W. Lacy's theatre company in a tour of the towns of rural Ireland as an 'advance agent'.⁴² This section of the story is annotated with sentences linking passages of the text, small summaries, suggesting the importance of Willie Fay's peculiar theatrical education to his later achievements in the Irish theatre. The annotation 'and so I became a professional', for example, gestures toward the importance of Willie's practical experience within the amateur theatrical milieu of the Irish Revival and the authority it lent to his management of strong personalities within the company.⁴³

By far the greatest number of annotations cover the pages concerned with the creation of the Irish theatre and its early productions. Of these, the episode of *The Shadow of the Glen* is the most intensively annotated. The condition of a plate accompanying these reflections is particularly noteworthy as it is distressed, almost unhinged, torn and heavily creased. It pictures Willie Fay in role as 'The Tramp' in *The Shadow of the Glen*.

⁴² W. Fay, 42.

⁴³ W. Fay, 43. Fay archive.

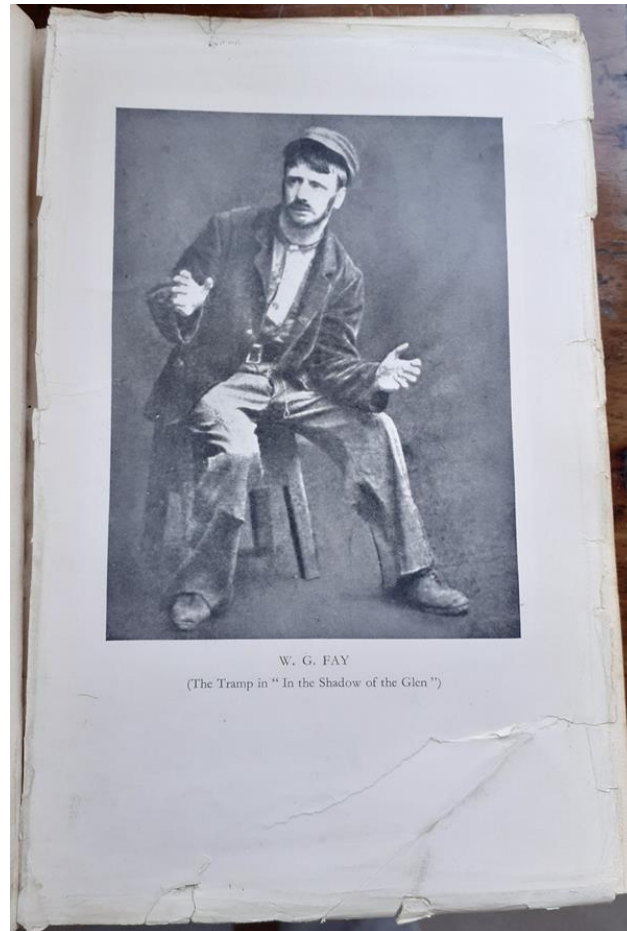


Plate 2. Image of Plate inserted into section recounting the production of *The Shadow of the Glen* in 1903. The caption reads 'W. G. FAY | (The Tramp in "In the Shadow of the Glen")'.
Fay archive.

The condition of this plate speaks of heavy use and is matched by the intense annotation on the pages surrounding it. Why should the breezy persona created by Carswell-Fay come under pressure at exactly this point in the narrative: the encounter of Fays, Synge and Dublin audience?

We will return to Fay's creation of Synge's Tramp and other characters, but for now the question arises of what the physical condition of the book might reveal about Fay's thinking thirty years after the events described. The text into which the plate is inserted concerns the reception of the play by its first audience.

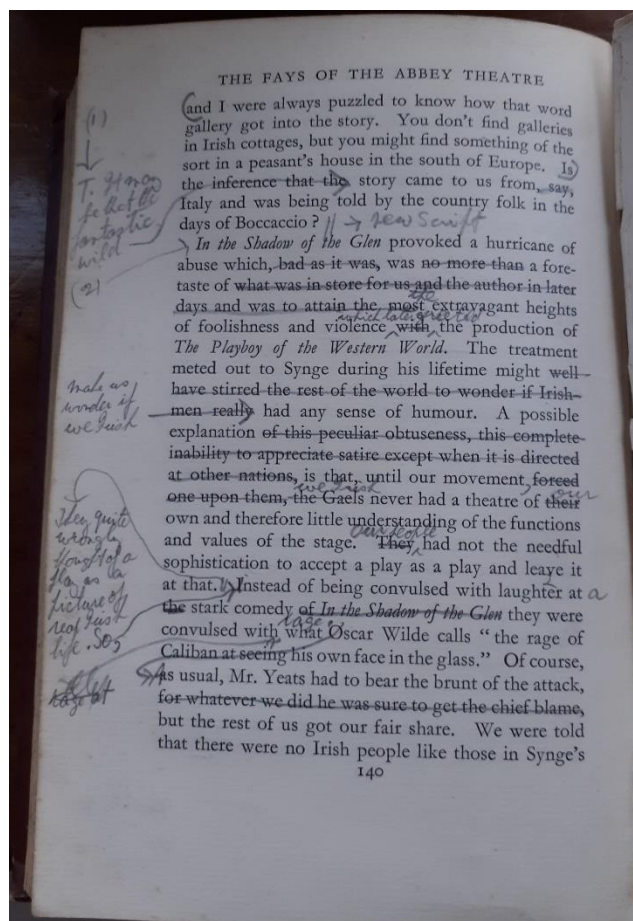


Plate 3. Page intensively annotated in the hand of Wille Fay for an unknown purpose. The text concerns the reception of *The Shadow of the Glen*. Fay archive.

The textual cuts, marginalia and examples of reworking go beyond stylistic or organisational imperatives and create a new version of the narrative. They could indicate Fay's retrospective preoccupation with Synge, suggesting turbulent and complex feelings that threaten the happy-go-lucky persona of the 'gay toiler'.⁴⁴ Until this point, Fay has presented himself as having acquired the rudiments of theatrical know-how to support a career as

⁴⁴ W. Fay, [vi].

actor and producer. His experiences were rough and his approach to theatre workmanlike, as much technical as theoretical. His ability to help George Russell complete the final act of *Deirdre* was as a result of his practical experience as a 'play doctor'.⁴⁵ He admits that the literary activities of the Irish Revival had passed him by and that 'poetry' was not his strong point. So far, so straightforward: but Synge's drama upset him, disrupted his sense of what a play was and of the role of an actor in relation to it.

Fay shows that the playwright emerged unexpectedly – none of the actors in 1903 knew him – and was considered Yeats's discovery. *The Shadow of the Glen* was 'a peasant play' but surprisingly accomplished for a novice playwright. The Fays set themselves to realise Synge's vision, as they had Yeats's and Russell's. The first difficulty was the dialect, which resisted natural speech rhythms, instead requiring 'a kind of lilt' for effective delivery.⁴⁶ Always following the playwright's wishes, Fay discovered gratefully that Synge could picture the distribution of actors within a scene and could give clear directions. His patience and decisiveness also contrasted with Yeats's constant interruptions in rehearsal.⁴⁷ The main source of originality though was in the play itself. It had none of the romance or sentiment of earlier peasant comedies, but was instead 'the first of the modern Irish realistic plays'.⁴⁸ Fay reports a conversation that suggests Synge's comparative method of recording folklore. The writer followed Henri d'Arbois de Jubainville in checking the stories he heard on Aran against similar versions in other countries.⁴⁹ For example, Fay cites the violent ending of the source story of *The Shadow of the Glen* where the husband 'took a stick', went into the bedroom, saw the adulterous pair 'lying together' and hit the lover 'a blow with his stick so that the blood leapt up and hit the gallery'.⁵⁰ He then says:

Synge and I were always puzzled to know how that word gallery got into the story. You don't find galleries in Irish cottages, but you might find something of the sort in a peasant's house in the south of Europe.⁵¹

One might speculate that Fay's interest was in the *mise en scène* suggested by 'gallery', whereas Synge's was more concerned with the transmission of folktales across Europe. In

⁴⁵ 'Notes towards a second edition of *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre*', Fay Papers, NLI MS 5981.

⁴⁶ W. Fay, 138.

⁴⁷ Flannery, 183.

⁴⁸ W. Fay, 137.

⁴⁹ Mattar, 169.

⁵⁰ *Prose*, 72.

⁵¹ W. Fay, 140.

any case, their conversation suggested the literary antecedents of the tale, which, Fay argues, ought to have precluded the audience from taking it too literally as a representation of Irish life.

The suggestion that Fay was thrown into confusion by the press and public reaction to *The Shadow of the Glen* rests in part upon the material traces in the book club copy of his autobiography. Fay notes that the play received a ‘hurricane of abuse’ from the audience, but that this was ‘no more than a foretaste of what was in store for the author and for us in later days’. Linking the reception of the one-act play with *The Playboy*, Fay speculates on the cause of the passionate reaction, which he characterises as ‘foolishness’. Reflecting on Synge’s enemies, he writes:

The treatment meted out to Synge during his lifetime might ~~well have stirred the rest of the world to wonder if Irishmen really~~ [make us wonder if we Irish] had any sense of humour.⁵²

The deletions are Fay’s, while the square brackets indicate his marginal interpolations. Fay continues:

A possible explanation ~~of this obtuseness, this complete inability to appreciate satire except when it is directed at other nations,~~ is that, until our movement ~~forced one upon them,~~ the Gaels [we Irish] never had a theatre of ~~their~~ [our] own and therefore very little understanding of the functions and values of the stage.⁵³

Fay exhibits contrary motions here. The original text, beneath the deletions, is a forceful statement of disdain for Irish Ireland opposition to the play and the idealisation of Gaelic customs, language, manners and morality that underwrote it. Fay does not name Arthur Griffiths at this point, but later he refers to the leaking by a member of the company of the script which led to ‘Griffiths playing us a particularly dirty trick’ by attacking the play pre-performance.⁵⁴ Attacking plays without having seen them had also characterised clerical opposition to Yeats’s *The Countess Cathleen* in 1899. Griffith’s foul play was the conclusion of a bitter row within the theatre movement and the nationalist press about the purpose and direction of the National Theatre Society. This row is occluded in Fay’s account, which is one of the main charges against the book as an unbiased record of events. The unity that existed between *The United Irishman* and the National Theatre Society in 1902 had proved

⁵² W. Fay, 140. Fay archive.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ W. Fay, 141.

fragile, and Willie Fay's opposition to producing Padraic Colum's *The Saxon Shilling* was used as evidence of backsliding by Maud Gonne. At issue was whether or not the National Theatre was prepared to align itself with the aims of the Gaelic League; Fay's refusal of Colum, and the determination to produce Synge suggested that it would not. Fay's frustration with defectors and traitors makes itself felt in his critical language towards the 'Gaels'. Calling opponents 'obtuse' suggests a willful blindness. His use of the term 'Gaels' suggests the political nature of the protest and the impatience with any art that was not straightforward propaganda. Writing about *The Playboy*, Sean Hewitt notes that the Irish Ireland movement's concern to circumscribe Irish identity in line with late Victorian morality was mocked by Synge.⁵⁵ On the other hand, the Celtic Revival of Yeats and Lady Gregory was also criticised by Synge for an idealisation of the Irish past. Synge wrote to Stephen McKenna in January 1904:

I do not believe in the possibility of a 'purely fantastic, unmodern, ideal, spring-dayish, Cuchulainoid National Theatre', because no drama – that is to hold its public – can grow out of anything but the fundamental realities of life which are neither modern or unmodern, and, as I see them, are rarely fantastic or spring-dayish.⁵⁶

In fact, Synge's attack was both satiric and multifaceted as he opposed both Celtic and Gaelic revivals in his work.

However, Fay's deletions and the interpolations in revision suggest a different perspective. His deletion of the word 'Gael' depoliticises the conflict. Instead he refers to 'we Irish' using a national instead of a racial epithet. In writing 'we Irish never had a theatre of our own', he shifts the blame for the hostility to Synge, subtly, onto Britain, which denied the Irish native expression and forced its own theatre onto them. Fay's rewriting of his text is also a rewriting of history in sympathy with the beleaguered Irish nation; any deficiencies in its attitude to art are an understandable by-product of its unfortunate history. Looking at original and revised versions on the same page, Fay seems torn, like the facing plate, between his desire to blame the audience and to understand it.

Fay continues:

~~They~~ [our people] had not the needful sophistication to accept a play as a play and leave it at that. [They quite wrongly thought of a play as picture of real Irish life. So,] ~~I~~nstead of being convulsed

⁵⁵ Hewitt, 171.

⁵⁶ To Stephen MacKenna, 28 January [1904], *Letters 1*, 74-6 (74).

with laughter at [a] the stark comedy of *In the Shadow of the Glen* they were convulsed with rage [...] with what Oscar Wilde calls “the rage of Caliban at seeing his own face in the glass”.⁵⁷

This time ‘the Gaels’ become ‘our people’, the community out of which the Abbey grew and to which it is answerable. The urge to objectify is replaced by the need to identify. Once more history is to blame – it prevents them from enjoying a wild comedy. Fay’s reference to Wilde aligns him squarely with the Yeats-Synge position on the protestors and looks ahead to the rows over *The Playboy*.⁵⁸ In that play, the image of the mirror is used both by Synge and by commentators. Christy Mahon admires himself in the glass after he has successfully talked himself into the regard of the Mayo girls, to the horror of the same critics who disliked *The Shadow of the Glen*.⁵⁹ In the play, Christy sees not so much a reflection of himself as he is, but an image of what he might become. Christopher Murray argues that drama in Ireland is a two-way mirror, both recording social conditions and, beyond, an imaginary dream of possibility.⁶⁰ One of Synge’s defenders in 1907, Patrick Kenny, the journalist, recognised that Synge was holding up a mirror to an incipient nation. He wrote that ‘it is as if we looked in the mirror for the first time and found ourselves hideous’.⁶¹ Synge was claiming for his satire precedent in the comedies of Molière. There were ‘several sides to *The Playboy*’, he wrote, of which ‘Pat’ (Kenny) had noticed some ‘in his own way’.⁶² Synge, Kenny, and Fay all pick up the idea of the mirror as a figure for the relationship between possibility and actuality in Irish theatre. Unlike Hamlet’s mirror, Irish dramatists’ glass reflects not nature, but rather a contested historical process in which the subjectivity of a subjugated people was being painfully realised. Yet the identification of the people with

⁵⁷ W. Fay, 140. Fay archive.

⁵⁸ Wilde wrote that ‘[t]he nineteenth century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass’ while ‘[t]he nineteenth century dislike of Romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in a glass’ (‘The Preface’, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], [3]).

⁵⁹ At the opening of Act II Christy washes his face at the looking glass, commenting ‘[d]idn’t I know rightly I was handsome?’ (*Plays* 2, 95).

⁶⁰ Christopher Murray, *Twentieth-Century Irish Drama: Mirror Up to Nation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 9.

⁶¹ Patrick Kenny (1862-1944), ‘Pat’, journalist and editor of *The Irish Peasant* from 1903-1905, a journal which took ‘a more sanguine and relaxed view of [Ireland’s possibilities] than Moran’s *Leader* (Foster, *Vivid Faces*, 167). He considered *The Playboy* ‘an accurate representation of the frustration of Connacht life’ (Patrick Maume, *Dictionary of Irish Biography* < <https://dib.cambridge.org/> [accessed 20 April 2021]). Like Fay, he saw Synge’s play as a mirror up to nation (‘That Dreadful Play’, *Irish Times*, Wednesday 30 January 1907. Fay archive).

⁶² To the Editor of the *Irish Times*, 31 January 1907, reprinted in the *Evening Telegraph* (Dublin). Fay archive.

Shakespeare's uncouth native, Caliban, is cut in Fay's revision. Synge's satire skewers the native, colonised peoples. Thirty years later, Fay's reconsideration of this sentence indicates the colonised/coloniser paradigm still required careful handling.

Reading these revisions, it is tempting to consider Fay is simply moderating his language in the cause of diplomacy. His criticism of the objectors to Synge is entirely understandable given the sufferings of the actors in 1903 and, far more strikingly, in 1907. Neither is he wrong to lampoon the absurdity of criticising a play sight unseen, or of claiming the unspotted virtue of all Irish women. It is probable that his second thoughts derive from a perspective of reconciliation, whereby differences of opinion are supervised by events in an historical process – in this case the founding of an Irish state. He may also have considered it personally unprofitable to inflame old arguments. While claiming he had no interest in his political reputation, his book attests to his concern with his legacy as a founder of the Abbey Theatre, and perhaps he considered that the politics and the legacy were not entirely separable. Perhaps too, the annotations are indicative of a genuine ambivalence towards Synge. Following the failure of *The Well of the Saints* with audiences, Fay reported a conversation with Synge in which the author determined to provoke the audience with his next play:

He could not forgive the crass ignorance, the malevolence with which *The Well of the Saints* had been received. He had given of his best in good faith, and offence had been taken where no offence had been intended. "Very well then", he said to me bitterly one night, "the next play I write I will make sure will annoy them."⁶³

In truth, Fay found such obstinacy hard to fathom or to justify. The lesson he had learned during his apprenticeship on the roads and in the villages and towns of Ireland was that the audience is always right and must never be alienated.⁶⁴ Fay's learned populism was in conflict with his admiration for Synge's originality as a dramatist. The heavily annotated and distressed pages of his autobiography attest to the fracturing of his carefully curated breezy persona, which struggles under the pressure of conflicting feelings. Ironically, this disruption adds authenticity to what is otherwise a somewhat 'self-serving' account of the founding of the Abbey.⁶⁵ In suggesting the strain that original works of art can place on

⁶³ W. Fay, 211.

⁶⁴ W. Fay, 93.

⁶⁵ See Diarmaid Ferriter's biographical article on Willie Fay < <https://dib.cambridge.org/> > [accessed 6 May 2021].

their interpreters, Fay gives an insight into the competing priorities of theatrical performance, as well as the divided loyalty of the performer.

Frank Fay's Annotations to *The Shadow of the Glen*

Occupying the margins of *The Shadow of the Glen* in the Vigo Cabinet Series edition of the play, Frank Fay's pencil annotations gesture towards performances of the play between 1903-1907. By the latter date, the play had been produced tens, if not hundreds of times, in Dublin, around Ireland, and in the United Kingdom. The annotations are in black ink and pencil, suggesting, as with *Riders to the Sea*, different occasions of use. In pencil on the half-title page Fay has followed his own pattern of detailing the costume of the male characters:

Dan White moleskin trousers, shirt, belt grey wig

Dara Grey tailed coat and vest, trouser, hat, whip + boots beard [illustration of face with beard in pencil]

Tramp. Corduroy coat, torn trousers, cap red shirt + shoes, black scrubby beard, hat with peak[.]⁶⁶

Arms outspread, seated on a stool, the plate of Willie Fay as the Tramp in *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre* (see above, Plate 2) both alludes to the setting of *The Shadow of the Glen* and escapes any specific episode from the play. Fay's gesture may be pleading, or expansive, but his expression is serious, devoid of the comic grin of the Beggarman in Yeats's *The Pot of Broth*. The torn trousers, the unkempt beard, the peaked hat indicate an outdoor life, yet the expression is sober, suggesting some difficulty, or, at any rate, distance, from comedy. Synge's Tramp participates in the existential angst of Nora, or at least is cognisant with it.

In the Fay papers a notebook survives containing reviews of Willie Fay's acting, extracted from the United Kingdom press by his brother Frank. The extracts, obviously selected for their endorsement of Fay's acting, come from a wide variety of publications, from the *Liverpool Courier* to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and cover the range of roles. Among the commonest adjectives used to describe Willie Fay's impersonation were 'delicate', 'subtle', 'humanistic'.⁶⁷ There is a refinement in his performances that struck one reviewer as far removed from 'the stage beggar of stage Irishman'. Writing of the beggar in *The Pot of Broth*, he writes, 'this beggarman has the grace, the subtlety, the sympathetic manner of the most ardent diplomatist'.⁶⁸ This is the beggar as aristocrat of the highway. Another review

⁶⁶ Appendix C, 28.

⁶⁷ Fay Papers, extracts from the United Kingdom press copied by Frank Fay, MS 5, 975.

⁶⁸ *Morning Post*, 4 May 1903 (MS 5, 975).

suggests that Fay's tramps are 'touched with high romance'.⁶⁹ The picture in *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre*, suggests he approached Synge's tramp somewhat differently. A review of his Bartley in *Riders to the Sea* notes his playing of the 'lad that is drowned' with 'a strange air of detachment that had extraordinary value'.⁷⁰ His expression in the plate suggests a seriousness, a sense of social alienation and of a kind of heroism.

Fay's portrayal of the Tramp contrasts with the traditional stage Irishman of English stage invention. As Willie Fay observed, the lack of a dramatic tradition in Ireland opened the field to representations of the Irish from an English perspective. According to Sean O'Faoláin these were inevitably shaped by a combination of English political opinion and current literary taste.⁷¹ Irish writers for the stage created Irish characters with English consumption in mind, in the knowledge that English audiences might not sympathise with Irish characters, as Sheridan wrote to Maria Edgeworth, persuading her to re-write one of her plays as a novel.⁷² Sheridan's own fictional immigrant in *The Rivals*, Lucius O'Trigger, is a broadly drawn comic type. Stephen Gwynn thought that Maria Edgeworth's Gaelic characters were limited:

Sir Walter [Scott] laughed at many of the personages whom he created ... But we never lose the sense that these are his own people. Maria Edgeworth loved Ireland and loved the mere Irish, as an Englishman may love and understand Italians. And yet that hardly expresses it fully. When Meredith draws Italians, he is neither consciously nor sub-consciously the superior race.⁷³

The same criticism would be levelled at Synge and Yeats by Frank Hugh O'Donnell, who questioned whether members of the Ascendancy class could create realistic portrayals of Irish life.⁷⁴ The idea of the stage Irishman was caricatured by Shaw whose own Tim

⁶⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, 28 November 1907 (MS 5, 975).

⁷⁰ *Daily Dispatch* (Manchester), 25 April 1906 (MS 5, 975).

⁷¹ Review of G. C. Duggan, *The Stage Irishman* (Dublin: Talbot, 1937) in *The Spectator*, 4 June 1937, 26.

⁷² Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 249, quoted in Brenna Katz Clarke, *The Emergence of the Irish Peasant Play at the Abbey Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), 72.

⁷³ Stephen Gwynn, *Irish Literature and Drama in the English Language* (London and Edinburgh: Nelson, 1936), 55.

⁷⁴ Frank Hugh O'Donnell, Irish MP and journalist, specialist in litigation and disputation, attacked Synge and Yeats in a pamphlet called *The Stage Irishman of the Pseudo-Celtic Drama* (London: John Long, 1904), 9. In later life, Yeats dictated a 12-page account of O'Donnell's character and machinations to George Yeats for use in *Dramatis Personae*, but decided not to publish. He wrote that O'Donnell was 'a peculiar manifestation of the stage Irishman', a type that 'invariably claims descent from the military exiles of the 17th century'. There is no doubt that Yeats considered O'Donnell's claims to such a lineage bogus, but it is intriguing that he applies to O'Donnell the same label (stage

Haffigan, in *John Bull's Other Island* is a Scot who exploits the 'top-o-the-morning' stereotype of the Irishman for financial gain.⁷⁵ Synge's tramp is more artist-aristocrat (and therefore perhaps more Protestant) than merry-hearted cliché.

Wild nature, the glen, and its shadows, lie beyond the cottage setting with its hearth and simple furnishings. The dynamics of the drama arise from the symbolic juxtaposition of the settled life of the cottage with Nora's inner world realised through her descriptions of the glen. As Hewitt has suggested, the 'clock hanging at back', mentioned in Frank Fay's property plot, represents 'visible, mechanised time', which is constantly contrasted by Synge with a fluid sense of time, conceived of as flux.⁷⁶ Between these dimensions stands the door, sited in the back wall facing the auditorium, not 'at the other end' of the kitchen from the bed, but right next to it, as the printed text states.⁷⁷ Synge's original stage directions again – as with *Riders to the Sea* – suffer alteration in rehearsal. Pencil drawings in Fay's copy of Yeats's *The Hour-Glass* show the positioning of the door in the middle of back wall.⁷⁸ Given that only the Fool and the Angel used this entrance in Yeats's play, its association with the supernatural as opposed to the rational was established visually. Here, too, the door facing the audience emphasises the threshold crossed by the disturber figure, Willie Fay's Tramp.

Removing the bed on which Dan lies from the side wall of the set and placing it at the back, next to the door, gives it a prominent position around which the characters move. It represents Dan's dominance of the cottage, even in death, and his blocking of the escape promised by the door.⁷⁹ One of the episodes of extravagant comedy is Dan's profane resurrection. This section is strengthened by having Dan upstage centre in full view of the audience but directly behind Nora and Michael. Small practical changes gesture towards

Irishman) that O'Donnell placed on him, suggesting its convenience as short cut description of inauthenticity in art and politics (CL2 709).

⁷⁵ *John Bull's Other Island* (London: Constable, 1931), 89, was first produced by the Vedrenne-Barker management at the Court Theatre in November 1904.

⁷⁶ Hewitt, 103-4.

⁷⁷ *Plays 1*, 33.

⁷⁸ *The Hour-Glass, Cathleen ni Houlihan, The Pot of Broth, Being Plays for an Irish Theatre*, II (London: A. H. Bullen, 1904). Fay archive. Where the stage direction reads 'the Fool comes in', Fay writes 'C' (4).

⁷⁹ A modern response to staging *The Shadow of the Glen* followed the Fay's solution to an extent. Like them Garry Hynes also placed the bed in the centre in her *DruidSynge*, but downstage not upstage. With the back of his head facing the audience, and the stage on a rake, the only part of Dan visible to the audience is his feet (*DruidSynge* [DVD]. Directed by G. Hynes, Dublin: Wildfire Films, 2007).

Willie Fay's working relationship with Synge and the 'harmony' that existed between them as collaborators.⁸⁰ Moreover, it suggests again the sense of performance as an event governed by its own conventions. In this case, the reinforcing of certain themes of the play visually in the physical distribution of actors and furniture onstage, as well as the optics of theatre, whereby the action should be visible from all parts of the auditorium.

Scene i. Nora and the Tramp (*Plays 1*, 35-4)

In the same manner as *Riders to the Sea*, the play begins with a moment of charged stillness. In low lighting, Nora is alone on stage. Fay writes:

Candle lighted on table; Nora lights another candle on dresser and brings it to table. [H]olds it up + looks at Dan, puts candle on table, goes to dresser + brings 2 cups + saucers + spoons to table.⁸¹

Just as simple actions resonated with mythic meanings in the opening moments of *Riders to the Sea* (the cutting of a cross on the cake; the spinning wheel), so here the natural action of lighting a candle at evening resonates with symbolic significance given the presence of body, barefoot lying under a sheet.⁸² The detail of the cups and saucers indicates that Nora is expecting someone, but not a crowd. Would the audience have recognised a difference in the peasant cottage of *The Shadow of the Glen* from the Aran interior of the other one-act play? Certainly, the costumes of the characters here had not the exotic features of the Islanders. The props too would have been mass-manufactured rather than hand-made. Fay's property plot lists glasses, sugar bowl with sugar, tea caddy with tea, kettle, teapot, candles, matches and of course the clock as items to be placed on stage. Communal and pre-modern, the peasants on Aran contrast with those in the Wicklow of *The Shadow of the Glen*. The mass-produced props, like the clock on the wall symbolise a society more atomised, more materialistic than existed in the west.⁸³ Into this setting steps the Tramp, whose knock on the door Nora answers. Maurice Bourgeois, Synge's first biographer, described the Tramp as 'expressive of poetic revolt against settled existence'.⁸⁴ Yet the Tramp is delicate, even

⁸⁰ W. Fay, 139.

⁸¹ Appendix C, 30.

⁸² In the film of the *DruidSynge* production the opening images are of the hearth, the kettle, the rain at the window and the feet of the dead man, suggesting a mixture of foreboding and incongruity appropriate to a tragi-comedy.

⁸³ Hewitt makes this point about overlapping temporalities in his chapter on Synge's one-act plays (Hewitt, 81-109 [98]).

⁸⁴ Maurice Bourgeois, *John Millington Synge and the Irish Theatre* (London: Constable, 1913), 151.

hesitant on entry. In this he is not unlike Christy Mahon in the early stages of *The Playboy*: both characters are outsiders who are transformed, enlarged even, by talking.⁸⁵

As with the props, the actions in this early section of the play are small and naturalistic. The Tramp enters, pays his respects to the dead householder, sits down and talks to Nora, who also sits. Later, Nora begins to prepare the tea anticipating Michael's entrance. She fills the kettle and crosses to the fire. Something of the idea behind the Fays' approach to directing Synge can be gleaned from remarks that Frank Fay made about a production of *The Merchant of Venice* in a letter to the director, William Poel. First of all on lighting, he writes:

It was a delight to have part of the actor's face in shadow and part in light, instead of the arid modern stage lighting which chases the shadow.⁸⁶

We know from Joseph Holloway that the Fays experimented with lighting the stage purely by candlelight for dramatic effect (as Antoine had).⁸⁷ While we cannot be sure this was the case with *The Shadow of the Glen*, we can be confident that the atmospheric possibilities of lighting were exploited. Fay continues (to Poel):

I liked too to see the people standing in a *circle* talking, and the absence of the absurd "dressing the stage" and "crossing" as is customary. The stage was nevertheless full of beautiful and seemingly unprepared pictures. You have also, thank goodness, got rid of the practice of people standing several feet away and declaiming at each other when commonsense directs the opposite.⁸⁸

Recalling Sean O'Faoláin's lament for the loss of 'intimacy' in the Abbey performances, we might speculate that if an Abbey tradition of acting did exist, and if it was invented by the Fays, intimacy might be one of its defining characteristics. The stage directions in Fay's copy which have the Tramp just sitting on a stool listening to Nora who sits at a table talking may seem unremarkable, but their simplicity was something new in theatre, as the reviews of the London productions of 1903-4 suggest. Similarly, the occasional sacrifice of clearly visible facial expression to natural stage groupings that is implied in Fay's comments about actors talking in a circle, suggests a preoccupation with realism over theatrical convention.

⁸⁵ Seamus Deane, 'Synge and Heroism', *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature 1880-1980* (London: Faber, 1985), 51-62 (58).

⁸⁶ To W. Poel, [undated], quoted in full in Robert Speaight, *William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival* (London: Heinemann, 1954), 139.

⁸⁷ Holloway describes 'an experiment' at the end of act II of Lady Gregory's *The White Cockade* when the stage was lit only by candlelight (Holloway, 64).

⁸⁸ Speaight, 139.

Leaning over Dan's body at the back of the stage, the Tramp and Nora must have been seen only in profile by the audience, but the naturalism of the action made up for the loss of visibility. Furthermore, in criticising 'crossing' Fay is making a technical point about modern stage management. Writing in *The United Irishman* in 1902, Fay quotes Arthur Symons on this point:

If you look into the actors' prompt-book, the most frequent direction which you will find is this 'cross stage to right' ... whenever the action seems to flag or the dialogue to become weak and wordy, you must 'cross stage to right' ... We have heard so much of the "action" of a play that the stage manager in England seems to imagine that dramatic action is literally a movement of people across the stage, even if for no reason than for movement's sake.⁸⁹

Fay quotes Symons approvingly. Synge's dialogue is far from 'weak and wordy', and one consequence of the characters simply sitting down and talking is to foreground the dialogue as dramatic action. Working in Dublin quite independently, the Fays were reaching some of the same conclusions about producing new plays as Stanislavski and Nemirovich-Danchenko at the Moscow Art Theatre.

Scene ii. Dan and Tramp (*Plays 1*, 41-45)

Synge's realism is fantastical, born of his field trips to Aran and his reading in European literature and its folk tradition. Synge's observations on Aran led him to conclude that the people there made 'no distinction between the natural and the supernatural'.⁹⁰ Synge identified with the figure of the Tramp as a natural aristocrat, the equivalent in folk society to the artist in the civilised world. He signed his letters to Molly Allgood, 'your old Tramp'. Like the artist, the tramp is a liminal figure, who has 'drifted out from the ordinary people of the villages', just as the artist is the 'poorest' but most gifted son of the middle class family.⁹¹ Synge's accounts of tramps are animistic: there is no separation between human figure and natural world:

⁸⁹ The extract is from the essay entitled 'Crossing Stage to Right' (*Plays, Acting and Music*, 165-68 [165]). Fay incorporates Symons's text in 'Irish Acting', an article published in *The United Irishman*, November 1902, and reprinted in *Towards a National Theatre*, 97-101 (99). Fay, of course, read Symons' article in periodical publication, not in book form. Symons writes of the importance of 'regulated' movement in poetic drama but admits that 'you cannot act Ibsen in quite the same way' (165). Yeats traced his dramatic doctrine to a twin conviction: one that was for 'vivid words' and against 'irrelevant movement' ('An Introduction for My Plays', *E&I*, 527, CW2 23).

⁹⁰ *Prose*, 128.

⁹¹ *Prose*, 203.

I have met an old [vagrant] who ... believes he was a hundred years old last Michaelmas ... Though now alone he has been married several times and reared children of whom he knows no more than a swallow knows of broods that have flown to the south.⁹²

There is a romanticism in these observations, but a ferocity too. The same vagrant married an old woman of eighty-five when he was ninety, but quarreled with her and 'beat her with his stick' and left her.⁹³ Synge's comments look forward to the quarrels of Mary and Martin Doull in *The Well of the Saints*, while here the Tramp is gentler. It is the Tramp's animism, his nature-worship, that aligns him with Nora and against the materialists, Dan and Michael. His characterisation owes as much to Synge's reading among contemporary European scholars and scientists as to his observations on Aran and in Wicklow. In fact, Synge's remark, in *The Aran Islands*, that the inhabitants of Inisheer do not distinguish between fact and magic is a direct translation of a line in one of Anatole Le Braz's books on Breton folklore, which Synge read in 1897 before visiting Aran, according to Sinead Garrigan Mattar.⁹⁴ This mixture of observation and academic research informs Synge's characterisation in *The Shadow of the Glen*. Just before Nora leaves the cottage, the Tramp asks for a needle and thread, saying 'there's great safety in a needle', which refers to the ancient belief in sacredness of iron, as well as to the useful sharpness of the object.⁹⁵ Synge remarks elsewhere that '[i]ron is common talisman among barbarians', adding that a belief in the 'sanctity of the instrument of toil' was a 'folk belief' common in Brittany.⁹⁶ Mattar notes that 'the assiduity with which Synge checked his comparative interpretations ... is a far cry from Yeats's half-remembered references to books once read'.⁹⁷ These echoes and

⁹² *Prose*, 195.

⁹³ *Prose*, 203.

⁹⁴ Mattar, 162. Synge attended lectures in Paris by Anatole Le Braz, the Breton folklorist and writer, in spring 1897, after which he read his books: *Au Pays des Pardons*, *Vielles Histoires du Pays Breton*, and *Le Légende de la Mort chez les Bretons Armoricaains*. Le Braz was calling attention to 'the fact that the language and ancient customs of [his] native province were rapidly disappearing' (David H. Greene and Edward M. Stephens, *J. M. Synge, 1871-1909* [New York: Macmillan, 1959], 64). Mattar traces the reading in the new comparative sciences of Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Synge, drawing conclusions about how it shapes or is reflected in their work, particularly as it relates to ideas of the primitive. Of the three, Synge approached the science on its own terms, acknowledging the importance in his unpublished autobiography of his reading of Darwin on his intellectual development. Mattar concludes that for Synge 'science showed that our origin and our end was in a ditch – Synge's imaginative embrace of this idea was key to the modernism of his art' (184).

⁹⁵ *Plays 1*, 41.

⁹⁶ *Prose*, 80.

⁹⁷ Mattar, 169. Yeats's seeming casualness in referring to other authors is more strategic than Mattar implies. For example, Mattar argues that Synge engages with the work of cultural anthropologist Sir James Frazer on its own terms while Yeats does not. As Warwick Gould has shown in his essay on

premonitions suggest the complex relationship of source and inspiration existing between Synge's observations, his ethnographic reading, and his plays.

Frank Fay's annotations are sparing at this point, indicating perhaps the Tramp's petrified response to the apparition of the old man brought back to life. Movement is in any case more restricted in these Abbey productions than was customary in theatre of the time. Some tentative observations are possible. The Tramp's terror as well as being explained in supernatural terms, is also a rational response to the shock of seeing a dead man come to life. Fay's stage directions reinforce Synge's: 'trembling', the Tramp 'X front to L table', circling round the awakened and bad tempered old man, rather than approaching directly; keeping the table between them at all times. Dan demands whisky, and the Tramp's trembling hand shakes as he pours it, creating a vignette of stage business: '*bus. hand trembles, noise of bottle on tumbler*'. Action, then, reinforces the sense of the Tramp's supernatural terror. When he gives Dan the glass, the Tramp 'comes behind table', sensibly keeping the board between them again. Dan is the while sitting up in bed. His anger and bitterness are deeply etched. Fay adds 'loudly' to the stage direction 'crying out impatiently' for whisky, in a mimickry of wake traditions to which alcohol is central.⁹⁸ The remainder of the scene concerns preparations for the return of the lovers, the main one being Dan's need for the blackthorn stick with which he intends to beat his wife. Fay crosses out 'cupboard' as the hiding place for the stick and replaces it with 'up R'.⁹⁹ Quite why it should be necessary to change Synge's stage direction is unclear, unless the dresser cupboard was not large enough to accommodate the stick which the Tramp fetches from 'the west corner by the wall'. Next the Tramp is told to listen for the return of the lovers and 'X to Door Left Centre'. He has been pressed into service by Dan, and despite his questioning Dan's

Yeats's reading of Frazer, Yeats read idiosyncratically to confirm his own ideas rather than as 'a fresh impressionable reader, or (much less) a careful scholar'. In essence, he read 'Frazer *contra* Frazer' ('Frazer, Yeats and the Reconsecration of Folklore', in *Sir James Frazer and the Literary Imagination: Essays in Affinity and Influence*, ed. by Robert Fraser [Houndmills and London: Macmillan, 1990], 121-153 [121]).

⁹⁸ Appendix C, 33. Oona Fawley sees the play as a 'sobering commentary' on the centrality of alcohol to male agency and power, particularly in the ending which shows Dan and Michael sharing a drink, apparently unconcerned with the departure of Nora. The Tramp's mysticism and sensitivity seem to exclude him from these rituals of masculinity (Oona Fawley, '*The Shadow of the Glen and Riders to the Sea*', in *The Cambridge Companion to J. M. Synge*, ed. by P. J. Mathews [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009], 15-27).

⁹⁹ Appendix C, 33.

description of his wife as 'a bad woman in the house', he seems content to play along, taking his place by the fire stitching as Nora and Michael return.

Scene iii. Nora, Michael and the Tramp; Nora and Michael (*Plays 1*, 45-53)

Just before Nora and Michael re-enter the cottage, Fay has written 'pause' in the margin, a rare direction of tempo in this or any of the texts annotated by the actor.¹⁰⁰ This marks a significant change of mood, from exuberant comedy to more sombre feelings appropriate to a wake. It also signals a generic shift – from comic folk tale to psychological realism. One element in this change are the small naturalistic actions performed by Nora into which the marginalia give us some insight. Nora had put the kettle on the fire to boil before gathering her shawl and leaving to meet Michael outside. At this point, a pencil annotation suggestive of stage management reads '[s]end kettle to be put on fire in dressing room'.¹⁰¹ The implication is that it was important to the producers that the illusion of tea-making appeared as real as possible. A boiling kettle was therefore pre-set at the fire. When Nora 'goes to the table + takes mug' and then 'X to fire + fills kettle' she is filling a kettle already full of recently boiled water – at a running time of 23 minutes in entirety, the water would still have been hot when Nora came to pour the tea.¹⁰² Now, on returning, she 'goes to table + puts tea in pot' from the caddy listed among the properties. These little actions of crossing to the fire, handling pot and kettle are dictated by the needs of the action, not by a producer's need for the actors to move restlessly. They accompany the talk of the Tramp and Michael of the unmanageable sheep that escape in all directions, indicating Michael's incompetence as a farmer.

As Nora crosses back to the fire, she joins the talk, contrasting Michael's sheep with the productive and individually recognisable sheep of the shepherd who had befriended her and then gone mad and died before the action begins. As Tim Robinson has noted, 'sheep are everywhere in the dialogue of the play', a testament to the author's knowledge of 'the great sheep glens of Wicklow', and another argument for the play's authenticity.¹⁰³ Nora's small actions and the addition of recently boiled water to mimic the action of the fire create a realistic texture counterpointing the increasingly gloomy talk. They create a sense of the

¹⁰⁰ Appendix C, 34.

¹⁰¹ Appendix C, 31.

¹⁰² Appendix C, 32,38.

¹⁰³ *The Aran Islands*, ed. by Tim Robinson (London: Penguin Twentieth Century Classics, 1992), xxviii.

littleness of everyday life, of the expectations that society had of women to act as servants within the domestic realm which partly fuels Nora's dissatisfaction. This section of the play contains Nora's famously depressing description of the view from her door.

Nora [*taking the stocking with money from her pocket, and putting it on the table*]. I do be thinking in the long nights it was a big fool I was that time, Michael Dara, for what good is a bit of a farm with cows on it, and sheep on the back hills, when you do be sitting, looking out from a door the like of that door, and seeing nothing but the mists rolling down the bog, and the mists again, and they rolling up the bog, and hearing nothing but the wind crying out in the bits of broken trees were left from the great storm, and the streams roaring with the rain.¹⁰⁴

The speech reveals the importance of rhythm in Synge's language, though as Yeats acknowledged 'perhaps no Irishman had ever that exact rhythm in his voice'.¹⁰⁵ Stephen Gwynn states more forcefully that 'it was never realistic dialogue' and adds that Synge's interest was in the beggars and roving folk, not 'the peasants proper who have house and holding and are fixed to the soil'.¹⁰⁶ Nicholas Grene traces in detail the evolution of Synge's dramatic idiom from notebook to stage, drawing attention to its basis in his deep knowledge of the Irish language.¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless, the repetition, the insistence on pictorial speech can on occasion come close to self-parody.

The theatrical manuscripts suggest that all attempts were made to ground Synge's rich speech in realistic action. The apparatus of *The Collected Works* indicates a typescript which places Nora's putting the money on the table later and has her instead speaking 'with her tea in her hand' and putting down the cup untouched at its end and swaying herself at her stool.¹⁰⁸ It is not clear whether this was a performance variant or an early draft. Fay's annotation does not alter the existing stage direction, but he adds one when Nora speaks of 'a door the like of that door', writing 'points to Door Left Centre', a visual underlining of the deictic reference to the threshold and the grim view beyond it. The rhythm of the speech, the little actions that lead up to it, and the alternative stagings all suggest the importance of this moment, a psychological climax to the drama in which Nora's despair is made plain. Synge grafts onto his folktale source a drama based in psychological realism and paves the way for Nora's elopement with the Tramp who has witnessed the events of the play. It is

¹⁰⁴ *Plays 1*, 49.

¹⁰⁵ *Plays 1*, 64.

¹⁰⁶ Gwynn, 162.

¹⁰⁷ See *Synge: A Critical Study of the Plays* (London: Macmillan, 1975).

¹⁰⁸ *Plays 1*, 48.

possible to understand the contemporary critics who damned the play as ‘an evil compound of Ibsen and Boucicault’, even as we realise it is something quite new in national drama.¹⁰⁹

The props are deftly selected to symbolise characterisation and theme. Nora’s untouched tea, abandoned in her grief, is matched with the money that she places on the table and which Michael eagerly counts. The coins and notes in the stocking represent a kind of dowry for Michael, which she handles ‘listlessly’, but which he places into piles before announcing ‘[t]hat’s three pounds we have now, Nora Burke’.¹¹⁰ Here is the corollary to Nora’s preparation of the tea things: just as that indicated her absorption in the everyday, so counting the money suggests Michael’s materialism. The question is how consciously the Fays developed a method of playing that ran parallel to, or was inspired by the experiments in naturalism pioneered by Antoine in Europe. Michael Kelsall writes that ‘the careful rehearsal of Arthur Sinclair’s [playing Michael] laying down the money on the table in *The Shadow of the Glen*’ suggests ‘a Stanislavski exercise’.¹¹¹ His source here is an unpublished extract from Joseph Holloway’s journal (Holloway was a regular attendee of rehearsals of Abbey productions). Kelsall identifies as characteristic of the Fay approach to playing ‘an inwardness ... indicative of their attention to psychological truth’.¹¹² It might be more helpful, however, to compare the Fays’ approach with Antoine’s naturalism, which they knew of and had seen by 1904, rather than Stanislavski’s naturalistic method, which was not widely known in Dublin in the early twentieth century, although the Fays would be spectators at a production by the Moscow Art Theatre when they toured America in 1908.¹¹³

Scene iv. Dan, Nora, Michael and the Tramp (*Plays 1*, 53-57)

The final section of the play begins with Dan’s leaping from the bed and brandishing his blackthorn with intent. As has been shown, the positioning of the door by the bed cuts

¹⁰⁹ Untraced review is quoted in W. Fay, 141.

¹¹⁰ *Plays 1*, 50.

¹¹¹ Michael Kelsall, ‘Makers of a Modern Theatre: Frank and William Fay’, in *Theatre Research International*, 3.3 (1978), 188-99 (194).

¹¹² Kelsall, 192.

¹¹³ Though Frank Fay does write to W. J. Lawrence from New York, quoting a review of Stanislavski’s company in a newspaper he refers to as *The Globe* (11 May 1908, MS 10, 952). Fay’s transcription mentions that the Russian players are compared with the Irish players in that ‘when they have anything to say on the stage they say it sitting facing each other or standing in natural attitudes’. This is important evidence of the simultaneous development of distinctive forms of naturalism in different countries.

off an obvious line of retreat for Michael, and associates Dan with the door. Deictic references, as mentioned, abound in this section of the play. Dan demands that Nora leave by 'that door'. Mary King has argued that Dan is himself a 'door', but one that 'shuts and imprisons' rather than allowing passage.¹¹⁴ The moment that Dan awakes is an opportunity for visual pantomime:

DAN BURKE sits up noiselessly from under the sheet, with his hand to his face. His white hair is sticking round his head.¹¹⁵

Nora and Michael, facing the audience, are oblivious to Dan's ironic resurrection, though the audience are not. Yet this stage direction is cancelled in Fay's pencil, suggesting an alternative staging.¹¹⁶ Instead of a tense theatrical tableau with Dan rising gradually, he violently springs to life immediately after Michael suggests an optimistic future for himself and Nora. In eschewing an extended moment of visual comedy, alluding to the villain of pantomime, the stage management keeps the focus on the pathos of Nora's reflections on mortality as well as making Dan's awakening, accompanied one imagines by an exclamation, more of a shock to those onstage. This change enhances the dignity of Nora's existential angst at the expense of humour.

Michael, not Nora, is the immediate focus for Dan's ire, although this perspective shifts as the scene develops. Instead of crossing himself and retreating across the room in fear, Fay's annotation has Michael jumping up wildly, taking up his chair and using it to keep Dan off.¹¹⁷ This is an altogether more vigorous gesture, recognising the immediate danger that Dan presents rather than the passive, religious response of backing away and crossing himself. It is not, as with the Tramp, a supernatural horror that grips Michael, but a guilty conscience and the imperative of fight or flight. A memorable stage picture suggests Dan's complete command of the scene. Fay has shown the positions of the actors with Dan upstage and the Tramp downstage:

	Dan	
Nora		Michael
Tramp		

¹¹⁴ Mary King, *The Drama of J. M. Synge* (London: Fourth Estate, 1985), 80.

¹¹⁵ *Plays 1*, 51.

¹¹⁶ Appendix C, 35.

¹¹⁷ Appendix C, 36.

A vivid tableau is created apparently artlessly, but in fact as a result of a number of decisions, such as having the bed at the back of the stage, next to the door, and the table in the centre of the room, with the Tramp over on the right by the hearth.¹¹⁸ For a moment the next move is uncertain and the possibility of violence hangs in the air in accordance with the folktale narrative. Yet here Dan instead demands that Nora leave the house and predicts a lonely and degrading death for her on the roads. Nora is still standing facing Dan, that is with her back to the audience, when she delivers her tirade: 'What way will yourself be that day, Daniel Burke?'¹¹⁹ Fay's letter to Poel, praising his bravery in having his actors stand in a circle and talk, without crossing or dressing the stage, makes sense of this direction.¹²⁰ Once more, Dan points at the door demanding she leave. This time, the Tramp walks over to the door painting an idealised picture of the life on the roads:

We'll be going now, lady of the house – the rain is falling, but the air is kind and maybe it'll be a grand morning by the grace of God.¹²¹

Nora's disillusioned response refutes any romantic idealisation of the life of a Tramp as a pastoral of the noble savage:

What good is a grand morning when I'm destroyed surely, and I going out to get my death walking the roads?¹²²

The sense of inwardness, of harmony in the staging is exemplified by Nora's departure. Synge's stage direction reads: 'Nora gathers a few things into her shawl' before turning at the door to continue addressing Dan. One can imagine how a different type of actress might exploit this exit for its histrionic potential, but Fay cancels Synge's stage direction. In performance, she simply 'takes shawl from R of door L C and goes to door'.¹²³ Her exit has the simplicity, the dignity, the focus on her inner psychological state that pervades the characterisation and the production throughout.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Plays 1*, 55.

¹²⁰ See Speaight, 139-40.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Appendix C, 37.

¹²⁴ It also recalls the exit of Coquelin in *Tartuffe*, which Arthur Symons described admiringly in the article 'Crossing Stage to Right': '[a]gain in *Tartuffe*, when at the end the hypocrite is led off to prison, Coquelin simply turns his back on the audience ... and walks straight off, giving you no more than a glimpse of a convulsed face' (Symons, 166). Frank Fay reviewed the Coquelin company in Molière's

Conclusion

The Fays of the Abbey Theatre was published long after the Irish Revival had ended. Its reception in Ireland evoked a nostalgic sense of battles fought and conflicts, if not resolved, attenuated in intensity. In *The Dublin Magazine* Thomas G. Keohler evaluated the achievement of the Fays:

The sceptic may say that if the brothers Fay had not been there, others would have stepped in ... but there were no others in Dublin then.¹²⁵

Keohler was a member of Fay's troupe since 1901 to 1903, and the National Theatre Society until 1905, and was a signatory to the letter on behalf of the players accepting Miss Horniman's offer of a theatre in 1904. He was an occasional performer, including in *The King's Threshold* at the Royalty Theatre in London. His papers include an unpublished assessment of Yeats's and Lady Gregory's management of the Abbey which states:

They professedly do not seek to give the public the play that it wants. They only produce those [plays] that they themselves approve of ... If Yeats could only forget for a while his "theories" ... and think as he did in his earlier days, more of Ireland and her needs, we should have much more hope of the future of the Abbey Theatre.¹²⁶

Keohler furthermore regretted the cruel tragedy of the Fays' 'exile' that seemed almost a 'banishment'. But he views such vicissitudes with equanimity. The reviewer in *The Irish Book Lover* picked on one detail: Synge's reported determination to annoy the audience after the failure of *The Well of the Saints*. 'H. J. J.' believes that the origin of *The Playboy* in pique:

[t]ends to confound defenders of this play [*The Playboy*] and to uphold those who continue to protest against its inclusion in the repertory of the National Theatre.¹²⁷

While it might seem surprising that opposition to *The Playboy* survived into the 1930s, this reviewer shows just how resilient opposition to Synge's play remained.

But the battles were not entirely complete. Yeats's hopes for a second Irish Revival in the 1930s were centred around what Denis Donoghue has called his 'authoritarian rage'

play for *The United Irishman* in July 1899, writing that 'there is no straining after absurd new readings' (*Towards a National Theatre*, 17.)

¹²⁵ 'T. G. K' [Thomas Goodwin Keohler], *The Dublin Magazine* (October – December 1935), 88-90 (90).

¹²⁶ A handwritten note in the Keohler papers (NLI) (quoted by Liz Evers, 'Keohler, Thomas Goodwin', *Dictionary of Irish Biography* < <https://dib.cambridge.org/> >) [Accessed 10 May 2021]).

¹²⁷ 'H. J. J.', *The Irish Book Lover*, XXIII.6 (November – December 1935), 150.

and he looked increasingly to Italy for models of government.¹²⁸ His isolation was matched by another, very different figure, St John Ervine, whose reactionary politics sought a dramatic correlative in nostalgia for the autocratic actor managers of the Victorian period, who could sweep their audience away with virtuosity. Willie Fay too worried about the impact of the cinema on theatre, believing that the survival of drama depended on an embrace of theatricality. But Fay's annotations to his copy of *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre* demonstrate most clearly that in his own mind the battle between the audience, the actor and the writer was still being fought. The balance between the autonomy of the artist and the responsibility of the arts to the community was not easily struck in Ireland. It seems that publication of his memoirs did not bring closure to the matter for Fay, but that it continued to be debated by him in margins and notebooks until his death.

¹²⁸ Donoghue, 3.

Chapter 4

Unfinished business: Frank Fay's annotations to *The Well of the Saints*.

This chapter will follow the transmission of the text of *The Well of the Saints* in print and evaluate the main editions to appear since J. M. Synge's death. The play is Synge's unfinished business because manuscript sources attest to his dissatisfaction with the version originally staged at the Abbey Theatre in 1905 and his subsequent alterations of it.¹ However, the issue of the authority of these manuscript changes is not straightforward since Synge did not live to oversee a final version of the text in a collected works. In the words of Edward H. Synge, who edited the Allen & Unwin edition of 1932, 'it is difficult to say' which of the changes were intended 'for acting purposes only.'² The existence of revision suggests his dissatisfaction, while the absence of a final version denies his changes full authority, putting editors of his work in a bind.

The question of authority has often centred on the acceptability of the theatrical manuscripts as documents of authorial intention. However, as I aim to show, critics' attempts to separate 'authorial' from 'theatrical' revisions have been frustrated from the Renaissance up to the present. The dramatic text, as D. F. McKenzie has said, is 'notoriously unstable' – a constituent part of 'the theatrical occasion', not its totality.³ The sources of dramatic production are 'the dramatist, director, designer, composer, technicians', its interpreters are the 'body, voice, costume, props, set, lights'.⁴ Willie Fay, in 1932, wrote that a play was an 'island of words in a sea of action'.⁵ More recently, Tom Stoppard has written that a play text is 'not a piano score', but a document that invites directorial intervention.⁶ Despite some critics' assumptions to the contrary, *The Well of the Saints* was directed by W. G. Fay, not the author, although Synge was a presence at rehearsals.⁷

¹ Synge wrote to his German translator that he had rewritten and 'improved' a portion of the third act (To Max Meyerfeld, 17 August 1908, *Letters* 2, 183-4 [184]).

² John M. Synge, *Plays*, ed. by Edward H. Synge (London: Allen & Unwin, 1932), 348; hereafter cited as E. Synge ed.

³ D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (1986; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 40-1; hereafter cited as McKenzie.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Willie Fay, *Merely Players* (London: Rich & Cowan, 1932), 72.

⁶ Hermione Lee, *Tom Stoppard: A Life* (London: Faber, 2020), 832.

⁷ A recent monograph by Hélène Lecossois is typical in this respect. Arguing that Synge's plays participate in the 'agenda of modernity' despite apparently looking backwards, Lecossois mentions

Frank Fay's copy of the 1907 Maunsel text is an intermediate state gesturing towards the play-in-performance or rehearsal.⁸ As a record of performance, it is material to a study of the textual development of the play and takes its place in the genealogy of versions, printed and manuscript, that make up this unfinished masterpiece. In the following pages, I will consider Frank Fay's annotations and their significance for understanding the artistic and political pressures that shaped the first production of the play. After this, I will analyse and evaluate the editors' judgements over Synge's post-production revisions and consider the question of what an authoritative text of the unfinished play might look like.

Mise en Scène (1905 and 1908)

A starting point for reconstructing the original production is Yeats's preface to A. H. Bullen's first edition, published in December 1905. Written in February 1905, while the play was in rehearsal, Yeats began by recalling his first meeting with Synge in Paris, and then described the scenery created for the first performances, which were then in rehearsal. He wrote:

[w]e are rehearsing *The Well of the Saints*, and are painting for it decorative scenery, mountains in one or two flat colours and without detail, ash-trees and red salleys with something of recurring pattern in their woven boughs.⁹

Yeats's description of the production's visual aesthetic aligns it with his own preference for simplicity and harmony in stage scenery, and with his dislike of naturalistic scenography. He knew that a decorative approach to design risked appearing amateurish to those familiar with the polish of the commercial theatre, but he believed that audiences would come to

Synge's strong desire for authenticity in performance 'when he started to write *and direct* his plays' (my italics; Lecossois, 18, 25). Counter-evidence comes from Maire Nic Shiubhlaigh, the National Theatre's leading actress until 1905. She is clear throughout her account that the Fays had full control both of acting and *mise en scène* of all plays performed (Nic Shiubhlaigh, 43). Miss Horniman, writing from a very different perspective, objected to 'the Fay system' of production (quoted in James Flannery, *Miss Annie F. Horniman and the Abbey Theatre* [Dublin: Dolmen, 1970], 21; hereafter cited as Flannery, *Horniman*). It was to break his control that she recommended the appointment of an English artistic director in 1906.

⁸ The principal texts under discussion are: the first edition, *The Well of the Saints* by J. M. Synge: *Being Plays for an Irish Theatre*, vol. IV (London: A. H. Bullen, 1905), hereafter cited as the 1905 text; the version in the second volume of *The Works of John M. Synge*, 4 vols, ed. by George Roberts (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., 1910); Ann Saddlemeyer's edition in *Plays 1* (1968); and *The Well of the Saints*, ed. by Nicholas Grene (Washington D. C.: Catholic University of America Press; Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd, 1982), hereafter cited as Grene ed. Fay's copy is part of *The Well of the Saints* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1907), which follows the first edition, but without Yeats's preface.

⁹ *Plays 1*, 68.

appreciate a new artistic approach in time. A contrasting comment on the scenery of the 1905 production of *The Well of the Saints* comes from Joseph Holloway:

The scenery is novel ... The red flame-like trees for sidewings, and the red glow of light arising from behind a stone wall on to the back cloth give the opening and closing scene the effect of a 'demon scene' in a pantomime so far was the scene removed from nature, while the second scene – a harmony in grey resembling a Whistler 'Nocturne' – was more peculiar than convincing. The entire background being one work of unrelieved grey reflected a double shadow of each performer and had a very distracting effect on the vision.¹⁰

Holloway's view mocks the idealising approach of Yeats, but in some ways, it reinforces the poet's doctrine. Holloway's chief impression is of a scene 'removed from nature', which reminds us of Yeats's comment in *Samhain* that where décor is concerned, 'illusion is impossible and should not be attempted'.¹¹ Again, Yeats returns to this theme in his prefaces and essays. Mass and detail can only be given to tree wings by painted light and shadow which contradicts the real light; a background full of forms and colours will overwhelm the players whose movements should be clearly visible.¹² Moreover, the musical language that Holloway uses and his reference to the harmonies of colour and Whistler's Nocturnes suggest the mingling of music, poetry and art that struck Yeats when he saw and reviewed John Todhunter's *A Comedy of Sighs* at the Bedford Park Clubhouse in the early 1890s.¹³ Holloway's lack of sympathy with the design of Synge's play signals a more general hostility to the aesthetic doctrines and practices that Yeats was seeking to establish at the new Abbey Theatre.

The justification for substituting the visual realism of *Riders to the Sea* and *The Shadow of the Glen* for the decorative mounting of *The Well of the Saints* is also textual, based on the play's atemporal setting. Like *The Countess Cathleen*, set in Ireland 'in old times', the relationship of setting and character to history is indeterminate.¹⁴ Yeats's and Synge's Celtic Revival settings partly gestured towards lost aristocratic values and a nostalgia for the weakening power of the Ascendancy, but Synge's ironic satire was harder-edged and involved a critique of his own romantic idealisation of the Irish past. In design terms,

¹⁰ Joseph Holloway, *A Dublin Playgoer's Impressions*, 3 February 1905, NLI MS., quoted in Grene ed., 22-3.

¹¹ CW8 77.

¹² VPI 1300.

¹³ CW7 79.

¹⁴ VPI 3.

however, the play's indeterminate setting was an opportunity for Yeats when he took over the 1908 production. Yeats approached Charles Ricketts, a designer long identified by the poet as a potential ally and collaborator, to produce a new backdrop for the play.¹⁵ A photograph of Arthur Sinclair as Martin Doul contains a portion of it:



Plate 4. Arthur Sinclair as Martin Doul in *The Well of the Saints* (1908). Image courtesy of Colin Smythe.

¹⁵ Charles Ricketts (1866-1931), artist, was a 'hearer and heartener' of Yeats's work in London and Dublin from the 1890s onward (VP 266). The artistic and theatrical context of his early friendship with Yeats is well covered by Ronald Schuchard in 'Yeats and London Theatre Societies', *Review of English Studies*, 29.116 (November 1978), 415-66. Ricketts also met and recorded his impressions of Synge in *Self Portrait*, compiled from his letters and journals by T. Sturge Moore and edited by Cecil Lewis (London: Peter Davies 1939), 127. As well as helping Yeats with the scenery for *The Well of the Saints*, he designed sets and costumes for a production of Yeats's *The King's Threshold* in London (1914). See J. G. P. Delaney's article in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, < <https://0-doi-org.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/35746> > [accessed 24 December 2019].

The darker and lighter tones suggest the uncertain light of dusk or dawn, perhaps the 'grey twilight' of dewy 'morn' found in the *envoi* to *The Celtic Twilight* in 1893.¹⁶ Yeats's difficulty was to reconcile the realistic and fantasy elements of the setting. The play is full of specific geographical references to the east of Ireland and yet an argument could be made for setting it any time from the Middle Ages through to the end of the eighteenth century. His solution was to reach back – through Ricketts – to the generic landscape scenery he had considered for his own *The Countess Cathleen* in 1899. Then, writing to *The Daily Chronicle*, he argued his preference for a scenery that combined generalised historical appropriateness with a lack of specific detail. He wanted 'vague forms upon a dim backcloth' that avoided only the most 'staring [glaring] anachronism'.¹⁷ A similar principle seems to have shaped the design of *The Well of the Saints* in 1908. Yeats wrote to Synge:

He [Ricketts] ... has now had plenty of experience having staged *Salome*, *Florentine Tragedy*, *Aphrodite against Artemis*, *Electra* (for Mrs Campbell) & *Attila*. He wants the execution of the designs to be as vague as possible. Seaghan, he says, should first paint it all in & then sponge over the details. It should all be very low in tone — lower than anything he ever did. Where he wants to darken he should glaze with size or scumble it over. ... He is to use blue & violet in the shadows as well as brown & make the base of the stones & tree trunks green as if moss grows where they touch the ground. The scene would be improved by a green floor cloth green at the borders smudgy green ... Everything moss grown.¹⁸

Yeats is clearly anxious that Seaghan (Sean Barlow – the company carpenter) may lack the sophistication to represent what Ricketts intends. The language Yeats uses reminds the reader of that used to envisage *The Countess Cathleen* in 1899: execution needs to be 'vague' and 'low in tone'; it should be dark and shadowy, 'smudgy green'. The poet was content to prescribe a backcloth that denoted in the most general terms, first, Ireland, and then, an indeterminate historical period, and which could be quickly forgotten once the play began. The resulting design was a success, at least to Holloway, who remarked to Yeats that he liked it. He added that it reminded him of Siberia, to which Yeats replied that it was

¹⁶ *Mythologies*, ed. by Warwick Gould and Deirdre Toomey (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2005), 93.

¹⁷ Yeats intervened in a public row between George Moore and William Archer about the scenery for his as-yet unproduced *The Countess Cathleen*. Archer's position was that lavish Celtic settings would be required, while Moore angrily rejected such claims, arguing for an austere (and inexpensive) *mise en scène*. Yeats's letter to the Editor of *The Daily Chronicle*, 27 January 1899 lent toward Moore, but not entirely. It is reprinted in *CL2* 347-51 (348). The row is covered in the notes.

¹⁸ To Synge, Monday [20 April 1908], in *Theatre Business*, 275-6 (276).

supposed to give the idea of desolation.¹⁹ Despite the unwelcoming atmosphere of loneliness, the design of 1908, under Yeats's direction, softened the *mise en scène* creating an image that could appeal to a theatrical conservative, such as Joseph Holloway. Sentimentality extended to the production as a whole which Holloway, enjoyed for its poetic qualities and its suppression of the roughness and sensuality which had characterised Willie Fay's version.²⁰

Act I (*Plays 1*, 71-101)

In Box E among Synge's typescripts at Trinity College, is a handwritten overview of the structure of the play. It describes the opening scene between Mary and Martin as 'exposition of characters and psychics'.²¹ The meaning of 'psychics' is unclear, although Nicholas Grene suggests that Synge refers to the necessity of presenting 'the psychological situation of blind people'.²² Martin is, in Fay's copy, 'C' when he delivers his opening remarks, which Synge tells us is near the centre of 'the low loose wall' where there is a gap between the stones.²³ The characters' disability is implied in the stage directions, in which the characters 'grope in on left and pass over to stones on right where they sit'. As they speak, we witness them attempt to orient themselves in the space using the compensatory senses of smell and feeling, turning their faces to the sun before sitting on tree stumps. The hesitancy and inwardness of focus that the Irish actors brought to poetic drama was very well suited to a realistic portrayal of the condition of the blind.²⁴ Economy of movement, part of the dramatic doctrine of the Irish National Theatre Society, reached an apogee here. Yeats would recall that 'it was certainly a day of triumph when the first act of *The Well of the Saints* held its audience though the two persons sat side by side under a stone cross from start to finish.'²⁵

¹⁹ Holloway, 111.

²⁰ Holloway wrote that 'the wild beast nature of "Martin Doull" was artistically kept in check, and it made him a far more agreeable personage. W. G. Fay made him a very repulsive old man overwhelmed in sensuality ... The play was lifted out of reality into the realm of fancy where it should have been from the first' (Holloway, 111).

²¹ *Plays 1*, 264.

²² Nicholas Grene, *Synge: A Critical Study of the Plays* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 113; hereafter cited as Grene, *Synge*.

²³ Appendix D, 40.

²⁴ Mary King, *The Drama of J. M. Synge* (London: Fourth Estate, 1985), 106.

²⁵ CW2 25. There is no indication of a stone cross in Fay's stage plot, nor does Synge's first stage direction mention it. It had an existence in earlier drafts, where Martin is described as 'putting his

When Timmy 'runs up before the others to tell the news' of the Saint's approach, Synge's stage direction reads, 'Martin Doul stops working and looks at him'.²⁶ Fay crosses out 'looks at him' and replaces it with 'turns his head towards him'.²⁷ Many years later, Fay quoted Ellen Terry to support a point in a lecture on acting: she had written '[i]f I were a teacher I would impress on young actors never to move a finger or turn the eye without being quite certain that the movement or the glance tells something.'²⁸ Martin's distinctive gesture of turning his head to Timmy is effective because it is realistic, suggesting the way blind people turn their whole head to aid stereoscopic hearing, but also because, occurring at the first mention of the Saint's approach, it underlines a significant point in the plot. It is an example of movement that, in Terry's phrase 'tells something'.

Timmy the smith's entry marks a shift from 'exposition' to 'comedy' in Synge's draft scheme.²⁹ Timmy is described in a note in Synge's hand as 'a good-natured, naïve, busy-body with a hot temper', someone always 'telling queer things' and the lot of them 'nothing at all'.³⁰ When Timmy finally reveals that the wonder to come is the holy water brought by 'a saint of the Almighty God', Fay cuts the reference replacing it with 'a man the likes of the saints of God'. This is one of several such alterations in Act I. When Molly Byrne mocks Martin whom she has just dressed in the Saint's cloak, she addresses him saying, 'and you a saint of the Almighty God'. This is changed in Fay's copy to 'a holy man'.³¹ Cruelly admiring her joke, Molly says, 'Isn't that a fine holy-looking saint, Timmy the smith?' Here 'saint' is changed to 'man'.³² It seems probable that some self-censorship is involved in these changes, a softening of language that might be considered blasphemous. Yeats, however,

hands on the stone cross and turning his face to the sun' (*Plays 1*, 70). W. J. Mc Cormack discusses the importance of early church architecture to Synge (Mc Cormack, 274-6). At some later stage, the stone cross was cut, perhaps because it was difficult to represent realistically on stage, or because it was simply too powerful a symbol. It is curious that Yeats is so specific about its presence, but he says elsewhere that after so long he has 'many false memories' (*CW2* 23).

²⁶ As Synge says in his notes to Fay, Timmy is a 'busybody' (*Plays 1*, xxiii).

²⁷ Appendix D, 41.

²⁸ Fay later lectured on the importance of stillness from non-speakers on stage ('Dramatic Art: Some hints for actors and producers', NLI MS 10,952). He quoted Ellen Terry's autobiography *The Story of My Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1908) on the 'value' of stillness to the actor (70). Fay's citing of theatrical tradition shows that restraint of movement was an artistic choice and not simply a happy accident.

²⁹ *Plays 1*, 264.

³⁰ *Plays 1*, xxiii.

³¹ Appendix D, 42.

³² Appendix D, 43.

objected to the 'Almighty Gods' not on the grounds that they 'might shock people' but because the frequent repetitions 'weary the ear'.³³ Yeats added, to Synge, that 'Fay told me that you gave him leave to cross out what he will, but though he is very anxious to reduce the number of the God Almighty he does not like to do it himself. He wants you to do it.'³⁴ Fay then wished to avoid responsibility for altering the literary text, particularly if such alterations could be construed as bowdlerising changes. He was possibly reluctant to exacerbate tensions between the actors and the writers of the movement. Yeats's shifting of the ground from religious offence to stylistic preference may well be rhetorical strategy, choosing a safer position from which to argue for change.³⁵ Lauren Arrington has argued that Yeats and Lady Gregory's uncompromising public position on artistic autonomy was combined with a more pragmatic private practice. Before performance *The Playboy* manuscript was subjected to cuts to eliminate 'bad language' and 'violent oaths', while after the furore of opening, Lady Gregory recommended further cuts to which Synge acquiesced.³⁶

The sections from here to the end of the act are labelled 'tragic' by Synge.³⁷ The movement of each of the acts is from comedy to tragedy.³⁸ Molly Byrne is a 'vulgar and vacant character' and her mockery is first comic and then cruel as our sympathies shift to the perspective of the blind people.³⁹ The climax of the act is the curing of Martin and Mary by the Saint, an event which Synge chooses not to stage. Concentrating on the behaviour of the village gossips allows the audience to observe the difference between their behaviour when left to themselves and when the Saint is present, reinforcing Synge's ironic presentation of the spiritual life of the villagers.⁴⁰ Timmy suggests how different his materialist perspective is from the Saint's, calling him 'a fine brave man, if it wasn't for the fasting'. The ironic

³³ To J. M. Synge, 21 August [1904], reprinted in *CL3* 635-9 (636).

³⁴ *CL3* 636-7.

³⁵ Ben Levitas writes that Yeats and Lady Gregory censored Synge's *The Tinker's Wedding*: '[i]maging audience outrage, they had to adopt a shared taboo; if anyone was to be gagged it was the playwright not the Priest' (Levitas, 'Censorship', 33-54 [35]).

³⁶ *Coole IV*, 80. See also Arrington, 8.

³⁷ *Plays 1*, 264.

³⁸ Grene ed., 26.

³⁹ Grene, *Synge*, 114.

⁴⁰ Synge wrote to Fay that 'a marked difference of voice and bearing should be felt when the Saint goes into the church and the people are left to themselves' (*Plays 1*, xxiii). Throughout, Synge presents the faith of the villagers as little more than superstition, suggesting that Catholicism has simply replaced earlier beliefs, with Saints instead of Faery lore.

presentation of the villagers also encompasses the moment when the blind can see. Synge uses stage directions to subvert what onlookers expect to be a joyous event. When Martin is in the church receiving his cure, Mary – as Fay’s copy indicates – moves from her position on the tree stump up towards the church doors where she kneels and prays.⁴¹ In her place, Molly Byrne, the fine young woman, sits. In his excitement, Martin confuses the girl with his wife, praising her lavishly, indeed lasciviously, to the chagrin of Mary. The cruel delight of the people who taunt Martin and his painful scene of recognition with his wife fully justify Frank Fay’s observation that Synge was not a ‘kindly’ dramatist.⁴²

Act II (*Plays 1*, 103-23)

Holloway’s description of the set for Act II as being like a ‘Whistler nocturne’ helps us visualise a shadowy and vague background.⁴³ The colourful autumn reds of the trees in the first act are replaced by the darkness of late winter, in which Martin and Mary have ‘awakened into the community of the sighted’.⁴⁴ This darkening of the play’s colour palette might seem surprising given the miracle of sight restored, but Synge’s point, as King indicates, is that the couple find themselves ‘doubly alienated’ now, separated from each other and having to work for food and a ‘corner to sleep’.⁴⁵ The mutable world of nature in Act I is replaced by the ‘hard world of objectivity’, with its forge, the broken wheels and the boarded well.⁴⁶ The only sound is the ‘hammering’ from the forge.⁴⁷ Synge’s notes stipulate that the early exchanges between Timmy and Martin be played for comedy. The contrast between Timmy’s industry and Martin’s indolence partly achieves this. Martin’s hyperbolic language, using the verb ‘destroyed’ to describe the bodily fatigue that will follow chopping wood for the forge, adds to the effect.⁴⁸ Hélène Lecossois suggests the repetition of the verb ‘destroyed’ to indicate the body’s ‘weaknesses, failings, needs and desires’ is used both for

⁴¹ Appendix D, 44.

⁴² To Joseph Holloway, NLI MS 4455, quoted in Hogan III, 18.

⁴³ *A Dublin Playgoer’s Impressions*, NLI MS, quoted in Grene ed., 22.

⁴⁴ King, 116.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Appendix D, 45.

⁴⁸ *Plays 1*, 264. Grene remarks that Martin appears as the ‘traditional comic beggar, lazy, cowardly and vindictive’ in these early exchanges. Timmy, in contrast, ‘bustles about the forge, hardly paying any attention to Martin’s gloomy complaints’ (Grene, *Synge*, 117).

comic effect and more seriously as a criticism of the effects of the 'ruthless disciplinarian force of capitalist modernity' on the Irish labour force.⁴⁹

Grene adds that these exchanges are 'preparatory', hinting at Martin and Mary Doul's second loss of sight.⁵⁰ Synge wrote to Meyerfeld explaining the post-production addition of the words '[d]ark day is it?' to Timmy's speech correcting Martin's description of the weather: 'I made this addition when the play was performed to emphasise the situation'.⁵¹ The situation is the encroaching return to blindness of Martin and Mary, and Timmy's querying of Martin's description of the day as 'dark' signals this for the audience. It is a good example of the way the needs of an audience emerge during production and feed back into the development of the text. The changes to Fay's copy – and the prompt copy – suggest that some in the audience might have been slow to realise that Martin's blindness was returning, leading to the addition of the line 'dark day, is it?'.⁵²

Fay's annotation also gives us a concrete visual image of Martin's verbal abuse of Timmy the smith. Following his prediction that labour would 'destroy' him, Martin launches an attack on Timmy for ordering him to take off his coat and cut more firewood. The images Martin reaches for derive from Synge's experiences in Aran, where the writer observed women 'plucking feathers from live ducks and geese', a cruelty of which Martin accuses Timmy.⁵³ The printed stage directions tell us that '[h]e begins taking off his coat' and that 'he tucks up his sleeves', but Fay strengthens these gestures with the pencil annotation, 'throws coat L' which adds to the picture of frustration and bitterness.⁵⁴ Grene writes of this speech that a characteristic of the beggar is the tendency to curse for 'his private solace', suggesting that the throwing of the coat is a ritualised accompaniment to invective rather than the result of spontaneous emotion.⁵⁵ Again, Synge presents the idleness of the beggar as an occasion for comedy. Laziness, and the incapacity for prolonged labour were elements of the colonial representation of the Irish, and the audience is invited

⁴⁹ Lecossois, 182.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* The surname 'Doul' is derived from the Irish 'dall' meaning 'blind', not from 'dhoul' meaning devil.

⁵¹ Timmy's line '[t]he day's not dark since the clouds broke in the east' is preceded by '[d]ark day is it?' written in pencil, in Fay's copy of the 1905 version (*Plays 1*, 106).

⁵² Appendix D, 47.

⁵³ *Prose*, 163; *Plays 1*, 105.

⁵⁴ Appendix D, 46.

⁵⁵ Grene, *Synge*, 118.

to enjoy Martin's hatred of labour, although whether they would have been so inclined is doubtful.⁵⁶

The scene pivots from comedy to what Synge describes as 'traPoetical' with Molly Byrne's entry, and a change Fay makes to the text indicates a wish to render this dramatic shift more emphatic.⁵⁷ In the printed text (1905), Martin first notes Molly's approach and pauses, causing Timmy to comment '[o]n what is it you're gaping, Martin Dou?'. In Fay's copy an additional stage direction is written in pencil, '[Timmy] comes out with pot hooks which he puts on tree trunk'.⁵⁸ The pot hooks are the product of the smith's labour and symbolically represent Martin's alienation as a worker for meagre wages in the local economy. They also stand for Timmy's hopes for marriage to Molly, since he is 'making a power of things you do have when you're setting with a wife' in preparation for the return of the Saint who will wed them. Synge's props often combine their role in the plot with symbolic resonance. Yet there is another aspect to this new stage direction. The Abbey Theatre prompt-book cuts the original stage direction applying to Martin, along with Timmy's following line. If we put these cuts together with Fay's added stage direction, we arrive at a new version of the text which may not exist in any printed or manuscript form, but which may accurately reflect what was performed:

TIMMY That's a lie you're telling, yet it's little I care which one of you was driving the other, and let you walk back here I'm saying to your work. [*Exit to forge – Fay stage direction*]
MARTIN [*turning round*] I'm coming surely. [*goes up C – Fay stage direction*]
 ~~[He stops and looks out right, going a step or two towards Timmy – cut prompt-book]~~
 [TIMMY comes out with pot hooks which he puts on tree trunk – *Fay stage direction*]
TIMMY ~~On what is it you're gaping, Martin Dou? – [cut prompt-book]~~
MARTIN There's a person walking above ... It's Molly Byrne I'm thinking, coming down with her can.⁵⁹

The new version replaces speech with action and silence, Timmy's 'on what is it you're gaping' with his placing of the pot hooks on the tree trunk, and the silent movement of Martin reluctantly returning to his post. Frank Fay would much later tell an audience of amateur performers that theatre spectators really start listening when the actors stop

⁵⁶ Lecossois, 182.

⁵⁷ It seems likely Synge here meant 'tra[gic]Poetical' rather than 'tra[ditional]Poetical' given the narrative arc in each act from comedy to tragedy, whereas the whole play could be, or might not be, described as traditional.

⁵⁸ Appendix D, 48.

⁵⁹ Appendix D, 48.

speaking.⁶⁰ This pause concentrates the audience's attention on the important information they need to know – Molly's entry and the shift in dramatic cadence it involves (what Synge describes as the 'love current'). The exploitation of exits and entrances for dramatic effect also reflects Yeats's view that Synge was the prisoner of his own eloquence. Yeats wrote in 1937, in 'An Introduction for My Plays', that he felt sometimes that the realistic action of the play worked against the necessary slowing that was a condition of reverie and the turning-inward of the imagination that he believed was indispensable in poetic drama.⁶¹ Whether Yeats came to this realisation through Fay's production or was confirmed in his own pre-existing view by it is debateable. Marjorie Howes has argued the style of acting that induced reverie in spectators was seen as a pre-condition of using the theatre to build a nation in Yeats's early theatre writing.⁶² Yet it was not until he saw Fay's company that the poet felt his ideas could be realised in practice: 'I came away with my head on fire' after seeing them, he recalled.⁶³

A Textual Dispute

The Well of the Saints is unique among Synge's works in its unfinished state. While all Synge's plays are incomplete in the sense that he did not live to revise them in a collected works, this play alone was extensively revised for the stage after the first edition appeared. Writing to Meyerfeld in summer 1905, Synge explained that some of the cuts and stage

⁶⁰ Fay writes in an unpublished article, "'an audience only begins to listen when you stop talking" – says Miss Gertrude Kingston. Therefore be careful to pause whenever you want the audience to concentrate its attention' (Article C, NLI MS 10,953). Gertrude Kingston (1866-1937) was born Gertrude Angela Hohnstamm and began acting professionally to support herself and her husband, a captain in the East Surrey regiment who died in 1899. Her Little Theatre, in the Adelphi, London, inherited the artistic goals of Barker and Vedrenne's seasons at the Court. In its first year, Kingston created roles in Aristophanes's *Lysistrata* and played Madame Arcadina in Chekhov's *The Seagull* (Kate Steedman, 'Kingston, Gertrude', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://0-doi-org.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/57056>> [accessed 3 January, 2020]). Yeats and Kingston discussed the Abbey's taking the theatre for advent 1910, but his enthusiasm was overmatched by Lady Gregory's caution and the plan came to nothing (To Lady Gregory, 7 April 1910, CL5 768-70). For the influence of the Abbey Theatre on the English repertory movement see James Moran, 'Pound, Yeats and the Regional Repertory Theatre', in *Regional Modernisms*, ed. by James Moran and Neal Alexander (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 83-103.

⁶¹ '[T]here are scenes in *The Well of the Saints* which seem to me over-rich in words' (CW2 23-5, 25).

⁶² Marjorie Howes, *Yeats's Nations: Gender, Class and Irishness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 72, 200n.

⁶³ CW3 331.

alterations made in *The Well of the Saints* were 'very unimportant', made because he felt the speeches 'spoke more lightly without the words I cut out'.⁶⁴

One passage in Act II led to conflict between Synge and members of the company about his representation of Irish priests. Timmy mocks Martin when his estranged wife crosses the stage without looking at him. The 1905 edition reading is as follows:

TIMMY [jeeringly]. Looking on your face is it? And she after going by with her head turned the way you'd see a priest going where there'd be a drunken man in the side ditch talking with a girl.⁶⁵

Saddlemyer selects a different reading of this speech in the 1968 collected works:

TIMMY [jeeringly]. Looking on your face is it? And she after going by with her head turned the way you'd see a sainted lady going where there'd be drunken people in the side ditch singing to themselves.⁶⁶

What lies behind the substitution of 'sainted lady' for 'priest going by'? It was the actress Maire Garvey, whose political sympathies were towards Irish Ireland, who objected to the 'priest going by' as an unsympathetic and dishonest representation of the priesthood.⁶⁷ A letter from Synge to Frank Fay (July 1904) in response to the objection stresses that the scene was based on his own observation in Galway:

Tell Miss G. – or whoever it may be – that what I write of Irish country life I know to be true and I most emphatically will not change a syllable of it because A. B. or C. may think they know better than I do.⁶⁸

Joseph Holloway, an observer of rehearsals, reiterated the objection, urging Fay to use 'all' his 'power' to have 'certain passages, such as that about the priest and the pair in the ditch ... erased from *The Well of the Saints*'.⁶⁹ Fay replied to Holloway that he had already spoken to Synge on the matter, but that Synge was implacable and would not alter it.⁷⁰ Nonetheless,

⁶⁴ To Max Myerfeld, 19 November 1905, *Letters 1*, 137-8 (138). Authority for these minor changes comes from Synge's personal copy of the 1905 edition, held among his papers at Trinity College, with a microfilm copy in the National Library of Ireland.

⁶⁵ Grene ed., 57. Grene, as will be seen, selects the 1905 reading.

⁶⁶ *Plays 1*, 106, variant noted.

⁶⁷ Mary Garvey (d. 1946), also known as Maire ni Garbhaigh, was an original member of the National Theatre Society, resigning when the Abbey became a limited liability company in 1905. She married George Roberts (*Theatre Business*, [60n]).

⁶⁸ To Frank Fay, [?1 July 1904], *Letters 1*, 90-2 (90).

⁶⁹ To Frank Fay, 11 January 1905, NLI MS 4455, reprinted in Hogan III, 16.

⁷⁰ To Joseph Holloway, 14 January 1905. NLI MS 4455, reprinted in Hogan III, 16-18 (17).

the intermediate manuscripts of 1905-8 strongly suggest that line was changed and that intense pressure on the author resulted in an alteration that Synge had previously refused.

The incident suggests the role of the Fays as mediators between company and the directorship of the Abbey Theatre as well as foreshadowing the riots over *The Playboy*. Also at issue is the authority of the altered line. Saddlemyer accepts the revised version with 'the sainted lady', but Grene takes a different view.⁷¹ While accepting Synge's manuscript amendments to his copy of the 1905 edition in *all other cases*, here he prefers the printed 1905 version. He explains:

When Synge was first tackled about this line, he refused point-blank to alter it ... It was only at the dress-rehearsal stage after more complaints, that it was changed ... Although this [changed] version is recorded in Synge's own hand both in the prompt-book and in his copy of the first edition, it has been rejected in the present text as a forced bowdlerization.⁷²

Despite the evidence of Synge's own hand, Grene chooses not to believe that Synge changed his mind freely. A larger discussion of Grene's judgement here follows below; for now, it is sufficient to note that the editor puts himself in the position of the posthumous defender of Synge's integrity against the Philistines and bigots who surrounded him. Grene thus takes ownership of the text and bypasses an awkward historical conflict. Ben Levitas has recently argued that Synge came willingly to incorporate an element of self-censure into his later work to balance 'the presumptions of artistic imagination'.⁷³

Not only the Revivalist but the critic of Revivalism, Synge increasingly dramatized tensions between the artist and society on the stage, presenting a sophisticated and dialectical approach to contested realities. Despite the frustration and bitterness that he sometimes felt towards his audience, he endeavoured in the plays to balance the subjective visions of his artist-beggars against continuing power of structures like the priesthood.⁷⁴ It is, therefore, quite likely that he would have agreed to a change that avoided offence, following the principle of picking one's battles, especially with an audience as sensitive to offence as the Abbey Theatre faithful had proved to be. Grene implicitly considers such considerations unworthy of the artist, but they suggest a scenario whereby such

⁷¹ *Plays 1*, 106.

⁷² Grene ed., 28.

⁷³ Levitas, 'Censorship', 41.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

compromises, whether for a particular performance or a particular edition, are necessary, while not implying that such changes are authoritative in all future cases unless subsequently endorsed as such.

Molly Byrne and Martin Doul

Fay's annotations to the scene between Martin Doul and Molly Byrne, the 'fine looking girl with fair hair', tend to clarify the dramatic situation for the audience. When Molly reminds Martin that it is not Timmy the smith's 'lies' he is making love to 'this day', Fay changes Martin's reply from 'it is not, and the Lord forgive us all' to 'it is not, but with the good looks of yourself'.⁷⁵ Synge mentioned this change in a five-page typescript that accompanied a letter to Max Meyerfeld in July 1905, noting that he had 'altered the text here' in parenthesis.⁷⁶ Martin moves towards Molly after she mockingly asks him, 'was it up at the still you were at the fall of night?', that is drinking whisky. Fay writes that Martin 'rises and crosses' on the line that follows.⁷⁷ This movement can be read alongside another, when he admits he is making love to her good looks, and Synge tells us that '*he passes behind her and comes near her left*', as signalling Martin's attempt to draw Molly into his inner world of dream and myth. The latter movement in particular, making full use of the gap between the well and the back wall, seems a serpentine movement implying insinuation.

The love-scene skilfully combines character, action and poetry, and the staging supports it. Naturalistic actions, such as chopping wood and drawing water from a well to fill a can, are combined with, or counterpointed by, poetry. Yeats remembers Synge's line 'a starved ass braying in the yard' as a 'tragic sentence', the acting of which he believed required 'convention as much as a blank verse line'.⁷⁸ The opening exchanges combine Martin's coaxing with Molly's mockery and sharp rebuffs, but gradually, the strength of

⁷⁵ Appendix D, 51.

⁷⁶ Meyerfeld had written on 27 July 1905, 'I do not find the greatest difficulty in the use of strange and obsolete words but in the construction of the sentences'. Synge replied with a scene rewritten in full in standard English. This was the scene between Molly and Martin (31 July 1905, *Letters 1*, 118-9; *Plays 1*, 272-4 [273] contains a reprinting of Synge's transcript).

⁷⁷ Appendix D, 50.

⁷⁸ CW2 24. In their notes, Clark and Clark, attribute this phrase to Michael Flaherty in *The Playboy of the Western World* ('an old braying jackass strayed upon the rocks' [CW2 823]), but Yeats is thinking of *The Well of the Saints*, where Martin Doul compares gaining his sight to the disappointment of a child dreaming of 'speckled horses' and then waking up and hearing 'the starved ass braying in the yard' (*Plays 1*, 113).

Martin's vision has an effect on Molly, and she is 'part mesmerized' by him. After he 'rises and crosses' to tell Molly that he has not been drinking but dreaming of 'her walk', Molly rebuffs him and he moves away 'R of Molly'.⁷⁹ When he admits he is making love to her good looks, he is knocked back again and told that it is a 'queer thing' when a man who is 'a pitiful show' talks of love to a young girl. He then 'bends over her' as he compares her beauty to a 'high lamp, [which] would drag in the ships out of the sea', leading her to command 'keep off from me' and Synge to add '*shrinking away from him*' in the directions. The more she resists the greater Martin's insistence she accompany him along 'the little path through the trees'. This is too much for Molly, who cries out to Timmy for help and the little scene ends in confusion and Martin is attacked.

While any reconstruction of the staging must necessarily be speculative, one might suggest that the acting and stage management here combines naturalism with the 'convention' that Yeats claims is essential to the acting of poetic drama.⁸⁰ The long speeches require long moments of stillness as Martin imaginatively recreates for Molly's benefit, the inner world of the blind. This subjective vision forces itself upon Molly, who seems momentarily confused.⁸¹ The movement on stage oscillates between natural action and heightened lyricism. If Martin moves towards Molly, and bends over her, he also breaks away, as if in reverie ('R of Molly', 'X R'), signalling to the audience that it is the powerful vision of Molly he conjured up in his blindness that is the real source of inspiration, not the 'white, handsome girl' standing in front of him. Some critics have apprehended something disembodied in Martin's attempted seduction. King suggests that Molly is justified in rejecting Martin and that her calling on Timmy is not an expression of prim morality but 'in some respects ... must be seen as an opting for life', since there is something regressive and fantastical about Martin's appeal.⁸² This interpretation suggests again a more complex interplay between contested realities than a simple endorsement of Martin's insight of the

⁷⁹ Appendix D, 51.

⁸⁰ CW2 24.

⁸¹ A recent production makes very clear the confused dynamics of Martin's interaction with Molly. *DruidSynge*, all six of Synge's plays, performed as a cycle by the Druid Theatre Company in 2005, has a 1930s setting. The actress playing Molly is almost hypnotised by Martin's eloquence and begins to follow him as in a trance. The spell is only broken when he attempts physically to abduct her (*DruidSynge*. [DVD]. Directed by G. Hynes, Dublin: Wildfire Films, 2007).

⁸² King, 119.

outcast and a condemnation of Molly's bourgeois expectations. What does Martin have to offer Molly, after all?

Levitas has a broader perspective on the dynamics at play in this scene, suggesting that Molly's rejection of Martin's inner world is an allegory of the fraught relationship between Synge and the Abbey audience. In this reading Synge is the artist preaching liberation in glorious eloquence (his freedom underwritten by his privileged background), while Molly is the Dublin audience (shaped by the material realities of work and susceptible to the power of church), resisting seduction.⁸³ While such a reading might be considered overly reliant on hindsight, several critics observe that Synge's approach to drama is dialectical: there is a pervading ambiguity in his attitude to incommensurate values and traditions.⁸⁴ To Levitas, Synge is 'an anticipator of Brecht' and *The Well of the Saints* is 'a fable of alienation'.⁸⁵

Act III (*Plays 1*, 124-151)

The entrance to the church, the stone wall, the gap within it, and the tree trunks of Act I return, but with a difference: the gap is filled with branches.⁸⁶ Symbolically, the closure of the gap suggests the loss of innocence that Martin and Mary possessed before being given their sight. The pair come on separately. The two tree stumps, which were adjacent in Act I, are now further apart, so that when the pair sit down, they are visually isolated. One change Fay makes to the printed directions is to have each character come on from the same side of the stage, the left, rather than having Martin enter from the right. Intuitively this seems right: both are seeking refuge from the same communal life and its values.

The tentativeness of their entry in Act I is again evident, with added hurt on Mary's part from having to witness her husband's attempted seduction of Molly. Martin has lost his power of orienting himself in space; now sounds fill him with 'terror and dread'. Mary takes full advantage of the moral superiority granted her by Martin's wandering in the

⁸³ Levitas, 'Censorship', 43.

⁸⁴ Lecossois argues that the whole topic of Synge's relationship with modernity is 'best approached dialectically' since his plays 'simultaneously participate in and critique the agenda of modernity' (Lecossois, 18-19).

⁸⁵ Levitas, 'Censorship', 41.

⁸⁶ Appendix D, 52.

comic exchanges that follow. Each competes to insult the other more provocatively. As so often with Synge, it is the woman who is the powerful character, as Molly shows Martin that her new knowledge of objective fact can be reconciled with her former confidence through seeing in old age the potential for beauty. Martin follows suit and imagines himself growing a magnificent grey beard. This triumph is not an escapist fantasy but built on an engagement with mutability and reconnects Martin and Mary emotionally. Fay writes next to Martin's speech beginning 'great times from this day', in which he looks forward to a future not simply defined by decay, that he 'sits beside her'.⁸⁷

Synge's 1908 Emendations Collated Against the Marginalia of Fay's Copy

The build-up to, and consequences of, the second cure were revised by Synge before the 1908 revival, leading him to write in August that he had 'improved a portion of the third act'.⁸⁸ A typescript of the reworked section, heavily annotated, survives among his papers at Trinity College, while a second and later typescript is attached to the Abbey Theatre prompt copy.⁸⁹ Grene incorporates typescript from the prompt-book, while Saddlemyer uses the earlier version held at Trinity.⁹⁰ A version of the revised third act was also published in 1932 in Edward H. Synge's edition. The playwright's nephew explained that the changes were 'principally additional dialogue for the minor characters'.⁹¹ Grene elaborates: '[Synge's] aim in the revisions was to add depth and clarity to both the Saint's arguments and Martin's and to orchestrate the reactions of the people'.⁹² Nowhere, however, have the changes to the text been discussed in depth or compared with Frank Fay's acting copy.

Once the blind couple's attempt to hide from the Saint has been thwarted, they are led down by the villagers, with Martin protesting, to the astonishment of Timmy, that they

⁸⁷ How he sits beside her, given the distance between their tree stumps is something of a mystery. If Mary sits at the back near the wall, Martin could sit beside her on the wall; he could also sit on the ground; Appendix D, 53.

⁸⁸ To Max Meyerfeld, 17 August 1908, *Letters 2*, 183-4 (183).

⁸⁹ *Plays 1*, 262; Grene ed., 27.

⁹⁰ *Letters 2*, 184n; Grene ed., 27.

⁹¹ E. Synge ed, 349. Edward Synge noted the presence of other slighter alterations elsewhere in the prompt copy in his uncle's hand but decided not to include them because they 'were made for acting purposes only' (349). Edward Hutchinson Synge ('Hutchie', 1890-1957) was one of Synge's beneficiaries; he 'began to assert claims as a literary executor after the conclusion of the Great War' (Mc Cormack, 402).

⁹² Grene ed., 19.

would prefer not to be cured a second time.⁹³ This sets up the clash between what Grene calls the ‘two worlds of imagination’ in the play, namely the Douls’ subjective and sensual vision and the Saint’s Platonic idea of the visible world as corresponding to the spiritual.⁹⁴ Sensitivity to religious offence among the cast and theatre followers has already been noted, and this seems to be behind some of the marginalia adjacent to this episode in Fay’s copy. For example, Martin tells the Saint to mind his own business: in the 1905 text this reads ‘walk on your own way, and be fasting, or praying, or doing anything that you will, but leave us here in our peace’, while in the revised typescripts it is ‘let you be walking on and leaving us in our peace’. A faint exclamation mark in the margin of Fay’s copy suggests a wry response to Martin’s dismissal of religious authority. Fay would certainly not have objected to Martin’s words himself, but he may have recognised that some might take offence at Synge’s mocking, through the character of Martin, of the asceticism associated with Catholic Saints. The revised version in the prompt-book suggests that Synge made a strategic compromise here to avoid religious offence, as he had elsewhere.

As Edward Synge noted in his edition of 1932, the changes to the text frequently gesture towards greater participation by minor characters. Generally taking the form of interjections arising from the arguments of Martin and the Saint, they heighten the drama by enabling the villagers to provide choric amplification for the public disagreement. The Fay copy indicates that this strategy of giving short lines to minor characters had another purpose, that of breaking up some of the longer speeches, and injecting pace. After Martin commits the sacrilegious act of striking the can out of the Saint’s hand, he utterly repudiates communal life and the Saint’s authority. Fay’s pencil annotations twice interrupt this speech with comments from the people. The first occurs just before Martin begins speaking, with the pencil interpolation ‘*People* Oh glory look what he’s done’, and later in the same speech, ‘*People* oh isn’t he a terror!’.⁹⁵ Grene’s notes indicate similar marginalia occur in the prompt-book, but he does not incorporate this or similar changes unless they are also found in

⁹³ Katharine Worth suggests that in the latter part of the play Mary Doul is a passive figure, ‘willing to follow the strongest persuasion’, while her husband, in refusing healing on her behalf, is guilty of ‘tyranny’, which sets up in the stage audience ‘some hostility to him’ (Worth, 132). The audience knows, however, that Mary Doul fears a repeat of the miracle of Act I, so it seems reasonable of Martin to speak for both of them.

⁹⁴ Grene ed., 20.

⁹⁵ Appendix D, 55, 56.

Synge's holograph annotations to his copy of the 1905 text. Like Edward Synge, Grene takes a conservative approach to the prompt-book, excluding those changes that he considers merely theatrical. Synge's revision makes the character of the Saint more sympathetic, adding depth to his character and viewpoint. A small added stage direction adds a kindlier gesture to the Saint's persuasion: [coming close to MARTIN DOUL and putting his hand on his shoulder]. Martin's reply rejects the Saint's association of asceticism and revelation:

Ah, its ourselves had finer sights than the like of them [the Saints], I'm telling you, when we were sitting a while back hearing the birds and bees humming in every weed of the ditch, or when we'd be smelling the sweet beautiful smells **do be** rising warm nights [*Saint draws back from him*] and **hearing a late thrush**, maybe, or the swift flying things **do be** racing in the air ...⁹⁶

The repetition of 'do be' adds authentic detail to the Irish dialect, a characteristic of Synge's revision here and elsewhere.⁹⁷ His interpolation of the clause referencing the 'late thrush' introduces a bird famous for the sweetness of its song; it recurs in Synge's evocations of natural beauty in *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, which was composed concurrently. There Naisi asks Deirdre if her sweet voice makes the 'thrushes bear a grudge against the heavens'.⁹⁸ This language echoes also Synge's translations into Irish dialect of the sonnets of Petrarch, where the poet laments the death of Laura. Synge's translation reads '[w]hat a grudge I am bearing the Heavens that are after taking her'.⁹⁹ The motif of the thrush therefore draws a line between Martin and his noble tragic heroes Naisi and Deirdre, foreshadowing perhaps Martin's death on the lonely roads onto which he is driven by the oppressive authority of priest and congregation. Also notable is the added stage direction indicating the withdrawal of the Saint's friendly arm on Martin's shoulder. Martin's sensual evocation of nature is based on the sense of smell, not eye or ear. From the Saint's perspective the twin senses of sight and sound offer what Lecossois calls 'unsullied access' to the word of God, whereas

⁹⁶ Grene ed, 75. Changes to the 1905 edition are in bold. Saddlemyer ignores the prompt-book and therefore misses some of the revision of the speech.

⁹⁷ There is a similar attention to the texture of dialect in Synge's revision of *Riders to the Sea*. For example, in *Samhain* (1903) Maurya tells how she 'saw two women, three women ...' coming in to perform the keens for her son; but in 1905 Synge had changed this to she '*seen* two women' (emphasis added) more accurately mirroring the speech he observed on Aran (*Plays 1*, 21).

⁹⁸ *Plays 2*, 207.

⁹⁹ *Poems*, 91.

smell partakes of sinfulness and the body.¹⁰⁰ It is as if Martin's sensuality of vision causes the Saint to flinch physically, heightening the drama of the confrontation.

Grene points out that the interruptions of the people are fairly neutral to begin with, but that as Martin decisively rejects the Saint's offer of sight, they become more aggressive.¹⁰¹ For example, Synge distributed new lines among the crowd, such as 'that's it, that's it. Come forward till we drop him in the pool beyond'. The sketches of stage positions that Fay draws in his copy reinforce a sense of Martin's being at bay, surrounded by Timmy, Mat and 'man'. At the end, as Martin 'turns defiantly' towards the villagers, Fay shows that he and Mary have moved downstage right, with their tormentors ranged in half crescent upstage and opposite, reinforcing the isolation of the blind couple and the strength of their oppressors.¹⁰² The increasing hostility of the people's reaction to Martin in revision suggests the influence of *The Playboy* on Synge's revision. King writes that neither the villagers in *The Playboy* nor the people here can tolerate very much of the outcast's imaginative 'reality'.¹⁰³ The violence of the villagers who beat and then attempt to lynch Christy Mahon before burning him with a lighted sod finds an echo in the threat of explicit violence and menace in the strengthened dialogue and stage directions of the revised version of *The Well of the Saints*.

Editing and Authorial Intention

Two opposing theories govern bibliographical enquiry, according to D. F. McKenzie in his influential *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*.¹⁰⁴ In the first, the book is a 'sacred but expressive form, one whose medium gives transparent access to the essential meaning'; the counter-tradition asserts that 'all reported information must suffer what the telecommunications engineers call "transmission loss"'.¹⁰⁵ Both perspectives have existed since literary culture grew up alongside orality.¹⁰⁶ Not only do these viewpoints underwrite bibliographical enquiry, they can also be usefully considered in relation to non-books, such

¹⁰⁰ Lecossois, 43.

¹⁰¹ Grene ed., 20.

¹⁰² Appendix D, 57.

¹⁰³ King, 128.

¹⁰⁴ McKenzie explores some of the ways that these two ideas have played out in a variety of contexts in 'The broken phial: non-book texts' in McKenzie, 31-55.

¹⁰⁵ McKenzie, 32.

¹⁰⁶ McKenzie gives the example of Plato 'having it both ways' since his matter/spirit duality anticipates the first perspective, while his narrative account of the tortuous process whereby Socrates's speech became the book *Symposium* speaks to 'transmission loss' (33).

as maps and theatrical performances, which can be treated as texts even though the one does not contain language as usually defined and the other leaves no material trace.

Within this scheme, McKenzie's chapter 'The broken phial: non-book texts' strongly supports the idea that the author is an often-inscrutable, ultimately limiting focus for investigation into the meaning of a text.¹⁰⁷ The nature of language itself, defined as 'a verbal sign system' preceding and governing intention, regulates meaning.¹⁰⁸ For McKenzie, authorial revision of texts further complicates the notion of fixity of interpretation, since a text no longer has a single point of origin but changes over time.¹⁰⁹ While the role of the author is acknowledged, he or she remains situated in a sociological context in which meaning is created in historically specific ways that change through time. Attempts by editors of modern texts by authors such as James Joyce to draw from the full range of draft materials in ways not accessible to editions produced in the authors' lifetime are viewed sceptically. McKenzie points out that Joyce's exploitation of the expressive features of book publication lend his 1922 edition of *Ulysses* a specificity that makes up for incompleteness and which presents a more authentic version of the text than 'critical and synoptic' editions of the novel prepared in the 1980s.¹¹⁰ Authorial intention, then, is historically specific and the idea of final intention no longer 'compels universal assent'.¹¹¹

By selecting Joyce as his example of modern authorship, McKenzie acknowledges he has chosen one who 'of all authors would put the medium of the book to work'.¹¹² But there is another view, namely that revision can result in an intensification of intention over time. In certain cases, such as Yeats for example, the mining of the vast archives of proofs and correspondence between authors, agents and publishers' readers can result in editions that view the text as a social product but within an intentionalist framework. Warwick Gould

¹⁰⁷ The increasing importance given to the reader in literary studies led to a discrediting of the book-as-sacred-object theory. Barthes wrote that the figure of the author was central to the 'sacralization' of the book since the author stands in the same relation to the book as the father to the child or God to the world (Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text: Essays Selected and Translated by Stephen Heath* [London: Fontana, 1977], 144).

¹⁰⁸ McKenzie, 34.

¹⁰⁹ McKenzie, 36.

¹¹⁰ McKenzie, 57. For an account of the well-publicised row among textual critics following the publication of Hans Walter Gebler's 3 volume synoptic edition of *Ulysses* in 1984, see Geert Lernout, 'Controversial Editions: Hans Walter Gabler's "Ulysses"' in *Text*, 16 (2006), 229-41.

¹¹¹ McKenzie, 37.

¹¹² McKenzie, 58.

has suggested that final intention cannot be disregarded in the case of Yeats, not least because the poet himself viewed his oeuvre in terms of the search for a permanent, settled text, however illusory that goal might have proved to be. Where final intention is not accessible, such as is the case when an author dies before a definitive edition can be produced, then his or her last recorded intention must be accepted as final.¹¹³ An approach which mines the publisher's archives and relevant correspondence to create a fuller picture of intention can therefore steer a course between the 'operative fiction' of final intention and the idea of the text as a social product.¹¹⁴

The Editing of Synge

One focus of this study is to investigate certain controversial editorial judgements in the editions of *The Well of the Saints* that have appeared in the years since Synge's death. From 1909 onwards, editors and textual critics have necessarily assumed responsibility for the representation of the text, approaching the task in different ways. George Roberts, Synge's first posthumous publisher, did not engage at all with the question of different versions of the text. As Warwick Gould has shown, Roberts was less interested in tracking down lost variants than in exploiting the commercial possibilities opened up by Synge's early death.¹¹⁵ Demand for Synge's *Works* exceeded supply, and the initial publication quickly became a five-volume Library edition (1911), and an eight-volume Pocket edition (1912), as Synge was 'layered' for the market.¹¹⁶ It seems likely that Roberts was unaware of a revised third act, but may have known of it and decided the changes were insufficiently substantial to justify resetting the text. He was, however, in following the first edition, representing a version of the play in which he himself had acted (as Timmy the smith). To Yeats's fury, he chose to include in the *Collected Works* Synge's journalism for *The Manchester Guardian*, which Yeats judged to be harmful to Synge's literary reputation, but which

¹¹³ Warwick Gould, 'W. B. Yeats and the Resurrection of the Author', in *The Library: Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 6.16 (1994), 101-134; hereafter cited as Gould, 'Yeats'. Gould argues the version of authorial intention used by Richard Finneran to justify the ordering of his version of Yeats's collected poems (*Poems: A New Edition* [1983]) is contradicted by the evidence of archives, such as Macmillan's in the British Library, which present a fuller picture of the poet's intention (128).

¹¹⁴ Gould, 'Yeats', 102.

¹¹⁵ Gould speculates on the differing motives of Roberts and Yeats in their attempts to shape Synge's legacy through print in 'Contested Districts: Synge's Textual Self', in *The Culture of Collected Editions*, ed. by Andrew Nash (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), 128-56 (145); hereafter cited as Gould, 'Contested'.

¹¹⁶ Gould, 'Contested', 132.

Roberts required principally for reasons of format, that is to bulk-out one of the volumes.¹¹⁷ Roberts's concern as editor, then, was with immediate commercial success rather than deeper questions of Synge's intention or legacy.

Saddlemeyer brings to her edition the full range of manuscripts in the Synge collection at Trinity College, Dublin. This includes his notebooks, his correspondence with translators and publishers, and his typescript drafts of his plays. In relying on Synge's private papers and the 1905 printed edition of the play as her sources, Saddlemeyer ignores the prompt-book altogether. She does include variants from Edward Synge's 1932 edition as notes, but this was an imperfect transmission of the prompt-book and is no substitute for the original document. Bypassing the theatrical documents in favour of the author's rough drafts, Saddlemeyer might be said to have been influenced by the tradition of bibliography developed by W. W. Greg and Fredson Bowers from their studies of early modern play texts. In twentieth-century textual scholarship the Greg/Bowers approach has been broadly influential well beyond early modern drama. Saddlemeyer's assumption seems to be that bypassing the prompt-book and using Synge's rough draft as copy guarantees authorial agency and literary quality. This position derives from Greg and Bowers's conception of authorial 'foul papers', or rough draft, as preceding the theatrical prompt copy and therefore lying closer to the author's intention. Bowers defined foul papers as 'the author's last complete draft in a shape satisfactory to him to be transferred to a fair copy'.¹¹⁸ Greg's similar definition has foul papers as 'representing the play more or less as the author intended it to stand, but not itself clear or tidy enough to serve as a prompt-book'.¹¹⁹ One implication of this position, explicitly formulated by Greg, is that the prompt-copy is a corruption in transmission of the author's intention. On the other hand, while he does consult the prompt-book, Edward Synge makes clear his dissatisfaction with it since it contains corrections whose authority cannot be confidently asserted to be authorial.¹²⁰ Yet, the prompt-book is a treasure of performance-specific changes, an accretion of details and modifications following on the play's exposure to audiences, many of which, moreover, are

¹¹⁷ Gould, 'Contested', 140.

¹¹⁸ Bowers, *On Editing Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Dramatists* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 13

¹¹⁹ Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio: Its Bibliographical and Textual History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 106.

¹²⁰ E. Synge ed., 349.

acknowledged to be in the author's hand. As a category, 'foul papers' has been challenged in recent years by Paul Werstine who argues that Greg went well beyond acceptable inference in deriving it from early modern theatrical documents, which cannot support a strict taxonomy of author/playhouse version.¹²¹ Other scholars, however, such as Grace Ioppolo, and Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor's Oxford Shakespeare, do build theories based on an acceptance of Greg's concept of foul papers.¹²²

Nicholas Grene presents the most intriguing edition of *The Well of the Saints*. Grene went back, in 1982, to the prompt-copy on the grounds that the omission of this document undermined Saddlemyer's edition. He found that the new version of the third act attached to the theatrical copy was later than the author's rough draft held at Trinity. There were also annotations throughout the text, revisions of the 1905 printed version, some in Synge's hand. He considered the typescript rewriting of Act III to be Synge's last recorded intention and so followed it. The holograph annotations throughout the text placed him in a bind since he could not be certain Synge would have endorsed them in a final edition. He decided therefore to include only those that Synge also included as marginalia in his 1905 copy of the play. This cross-referencing provided a benchmark of intentionality for Grene, guarding against the over-specificity of the prompt-book. Such an approach might appear judicious. However, in one case Grene spied a 'forced bowdlerisation'. This was the example of Timmy the Smith's line about the priest passing by the drunken couple cavorting in a ditch. Using the full range of documentation, including author/actor correspondence which suggested that Synge opposed this change firmly, Grene opted to return the text to its 1905 embodiment. Yet the evidence here is ambiguous since Synge changed the line in his own copy of the 1905 text from 'priest going by' to 'sainted lady', precisely the emendation he opposed in correspondence. This surely is evidence of an intention subsequent to his 1904 letter to Frank Fay that first addressed the question. Is Grene, then, ignoring Synge's last

¹²¹ Paul Werstine, *Early Modern Playhouse Manuscripts and the Editing of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 221; hereafter cited as Werstine.

¹²² Among the scholars that have built on Greg's scholarship in different ways, and who would oppose Werstine's view, are Andrew Gurr who has written that 'Shakespeare and his company were in the habit of trimming and redrafting his scripts for use on the stage quite drastically' (Gurr ed., *The First Quarto of King Henry V* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], ix), and Grace Ioppolo whose view that 'playhouse scribes could and did regularise the text' suggests the existence of a separate rough draft, revised for the prompt-book (*Dramatists and their Manuscripts in the Age of Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton and Heywood: Authorship, Authority and the Playhouse* [London and New York: Routledge, 2006], 8).

recorded intention when it falls outside his own convictions regarding the relationship between Synge and his actors? Or does Synge's holograph emendation in this case indicate his willingness to alter the text for a specific theatrical occasion, but not his endorsement of it in all subsequent versions of the text? Such a question cannot be answered definitively. Grene opts to include the 'sainted lady' reading as a variant, which, it could be argued, is a reasonable operation of editorial judgement. On the other hand, Synge's own inclusion of the change in his copy of the 1905 text makes this a marginal call, since it provides ground for considering this an authorial correction.

Conclusion

Grene, as I have shown, believed Synge to have been a prisoner of the aggressively philistine elements within the company, and retrospectively sought to protect him from his actors. Edward Synge viewed the prompt-book with suspicion, and Saddlemyer ignored it.¹²³ The prompt-book is the bible of the performance version of the text. It contains in many cases, certainly in the Abbey's examples, hands other than the author. Its purpose is to prompt efficient accurate playing, not reading. Yet the critic might ask, if not for acting purposes, what is a play for? One answer to this is that the prompt-book provides a banked text, a compendium of versions, legible in typescript and marginalia, to be drawn upon for future performance texts or publishers' editions. It is, in this conception, the matrix from which future versions, print and stage, are derived. Since one cannot always be certain which readings represent the author's final intention, selection and judgement by editors is necessary. Grene's decision to exclude what he considered the bowdlerised text is justified, although open to challenge, as I have shown. The absence of final intention, and the ambiguous evidence relating to last recorded intention, means that any edition of Synge must be eclectic. No benchmark text can be produced against which variants can be collated, as in a variorum edition. Yet it is essential that the prompt-book is accorded proper place as respectable source for literary editions of the text as well as for future performances. Whether or not foul papers is a legitimate category, and there is no consensus here, the prompt-book is a multitudinous resource, tracing the development of the text in performance, and containing within it the author's intention, as well as what might be called

¹²³ E. Synge ed., 348.

a sociology of the text. In the absence of an author-supervised collected works, it must be the principal source for a modern printed edition.

What does Fay's copy add to this discussion? Grene's edition cannot be said to have consulted all theatrical documents, because it did not know of Fay's copy of the play. Many of the changes to Synge's own copy are replicated in Fay's copy, suggesting performance-specific emendation. On the question of the 'priest/sainted lady' debate, Fay does not alter the 1905 text which referred to the priest, the version Synge did change under pressure. This could be an oversight, or it could suggest Fay's preference for the original reading, putting him in the same camp as Grene. There is plenty of evidence that Fay disliked censorship on religious grounds, although he thought it was sometimes necessary. He reluctantly informed Yeats in 1902 that he did not believe a revival of *Land of Heart's Desire* would be possible in Dublin on account of the reference to Christ crucified as a 'tortured thing'.¹²⁴ It was clear that he personally had no objection to blasphemy. Similarly, writing to Holloway about *The Well of the Saints*, Fay demanded that Synge be granted the same latitude as Shakespeare, whose Othello could say '[b]e sure you prove my love a whore'. Fay wrote that Synge must be allowed to spread his feathers, even if they splash us now and then.¹²⁵ Comparison of the copies of actor and author leads to an odd reversal whereby author changes his text in manuscript, while actor does not. This perhaps suggests Synge's willingness to allow his text to be changed for expediency's sake, without necessarily endorsing such change in all circumstances, while in Fay's case, it suggests his independence from the views of his colleagues in the cast, and his belief in Synge's importance as a playwright and his right to develop his talent free from censorship.

¹²⁴ To Yeats, 9 February 1903. [Fay archive] 'Both my brother and I wish as much as you do to act "The Land of Heart's Desire" but Digges doesn't like the idea at all and for all I know there may be others of his way of thinking'. The expression 'tortured thing' to describe a crucifix is uttered by the 'Child' in the play (CW2 75).

¹²⁵ Fay defended Synge to Holloway in January 1905, reprinted in Hogan III, 16-18 (17,18).

Chapter 5

The White Cockade (1905): questions of genre and folk history

The White Cockade was first published on 29 December 1905 in a copyright edition of fifty copies on cream paper by John Quinn in New York together with *The Travelling Man*. It was subtitled 'A Comedy'. This version preceded the first commercial edition, published in the Abbey Theatre Series (No. 8) by Maunsel & Co., in February 1906. Subsequent editions, including *Irish Folk History Plays* (1912), and Volume II of the Coole edition of the *Collected Plays* (1971) closely follow the commercial edition, although with the addition of 'Notes and Music' in 1912.¹ Robert Gregory, the set and costume designer for the Abbey Theatre production on 9 December 1905, is the dedicatee of the commercial edition, which also contains an epigraph, 'I saw a vision through my sleep last night', attributed to a Jacobite ballad.² The copyright edition contains no dedication.

A small gulf of two months separated publication of the copyright and trade editions of *The White Cockade*. The gap between the editions was slightly longer than that between the corresponding versions of *Kincora*, Lady Gregory's folk history play which opened in Dublin in March 1905. This delay could have been caused by Lady Gregory's desire to revise the version of the text published in New York, or the opportunity for revision might have been an unintended consequence of the necessity to hurry out an American edition in case of piracy.³ There are significant differences between the two versions. Whether the revisions in the commercial edition of February 1906 represent the text as it was first performed in Dublin on 9 December, or a text altered post-production by the author, is uncertain.

¹ *Irish Folk History Plays, Second Series, The Tragic-Comedies* (London and New York: Putman, 1912); Coole VI.

² Lady Gregory included a chapter on 'Jacobite Ballads' in Coole XI. They follow 'a common formula', beginning with a personification of Ireland as 'a beautiful woman' who 'makes ... her lament for the loss of her Stuart lover' (58). In *The White Cockade* II.II., Patrick Sarsfield says, while 'looking at James', 'to be a King is to be a lover – a good lover of a beautiful sweetheart' (Coole VI, 242).

³ There is a comparison with the publication of *Kincora* (1905), where the order of publication is reversed: the commercial edition was published first preceding the copyright version by a month (April-May 1905). One interpretation of the reversal is that in the case of *Kincora* the copyright edition was an afterthought and thus a hasty necessity, whereas John Quinn's proper planning when *The White Cockade* was ready took account of the possibility of piracy (Colin Smythe, 'Chronology' in *Lady Gregory Fifty Years After*, ed. by Ann Saddlemyer and Colin Smythe [Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd, 1987], 4; hereafter Saddlemyer and Smythe).

As I will argue, the emendations certainly represent improvements made possible by the play's testing by actors in front of an audience.⁴ Frank Fay's copy of the copyright edition (number two of thirty) does not contain marginalia in his hand, or holograph marks of any kind unlike his editions of Yeats and Synge. The copy in the archive therefore lacks holograph evidence of Fay's involvement in the production commented upon elsewhere in this thesis.

The differences between the two versions of *The White Cockade* have been ignored in the preparation of the only critical edition of the play, published in Volume VI of the Coole edition of Lady Gregory's works. Although Frank Fay's copy of the copyright edition was seen by Colin Smythe, publisher of the Coole edition, the version published by him does not contain variants.⁵ These differences, then, speak to Lady Gregory's creative process and are suggestive of the influence of performance, and the needs of the actor, on the text. While they do not indicate major alterations in construction, they do reflect changes to speeches and, notably, to the play's ending.

Dramatic and historical context

The White Cockade was rehearsed in October 1905 and opened on 9 December. The newly constituted Irish National Theatre Company had toured London, Cambridge and Oxford in November. These tour dates came at the end of a period of traumatic upheaval for the Irish National Theatre Society.⁶ The only surviving original player-members were

⁴ A presentation copy of the copyright edition survives in the Fay archive, inscribed to 'F. J. Fay from his friend A Gregory'.

⁵ Private correspondence, tipped into Fay's copy and dating from 1968, confirms this.

⁶ The decision to establish a limited liability company was made at a shareholders' meeting in September 1905 and had profound implications for the relationships within Abbey Theatre. It is clear that Yeats's motivation in pursuing this change was to centralise control of artistic and business policy. He wrote to John Quinn on 16 September, '[i]f all goes well, Synge and Lady Gregory and I will have everything in our hands, indeed the only practical limitation to our authority will be caused by the necessity of some sort of a permanent business committee in Dublin' (*CL InteleX*, 217). The abandonment of the co-operative principle within the company led to secession. Frank and Willie Fay were quite happy to sacrifice democracy in the theatre if greater professionalism were to be the result. Willie Fay wrote to Yeats that he always 'knew quite well' that in the theatre there could be 'no democracy' (letter dated 5 June 1905 [NLI MS 13,068], reprinted in Hogan III, 36-38 [36]). The Business Committee mentioned by Yeats does not appear to have provided any check on the directors' authority if it was set up at all. It had been George Russell's idea originally but was probably quietly forgotten after Russell's resignation on October 24, 1905. Frank Fay shared Yeats's doubts about the value of such a committee (Frank Fay to Synge, 14 September 1905, quoted in Hogan III, 38).

now the Fays, Emma Vernon and Udolphus Wright; all the rest were among the secessionists disillusioned with the reorganisation. The loss of actors threatened to leave the theatre short-handed until, under pressure from Lady Gregory, Maire Nic Shiubhlaigh agreed to wait until the completion of *The White Cockade* before departing.⁷ This enabled the production to go ahead, although it seems possible that an unhappy atmosphere prevailed backstage. *The White Cockade*, then, was a play which took as its subject an epic conflict for political control of Ireland, and which had as its backdrop a battle for cultural leadership of the theatre in Ireland.

The White Cockade was the second folk history play written by Lady Gregory, following *Kincora* (first performed on 25 March 1905). Her move from comedies of rural life to longer history plays was self-prompted by a 'desire for experiment'.⁸ It fulfilled her desire to write plays that might form part of an alternative history curriculum for Irish youth, one based on her belief that religion and history pre-eminently stirred the popular imagination.⁹ This led her to the story which lies behind *The White Cockade* – the chaotic aftermath of the Battle of the Boyne. Writing to Padraig Colum in January 1906 at the tail-end of the secessionist disputes, Lady Gregory defended her leadership of the national theatre movement. *Contra* the secessionists, Lady Gregory argued that the Abbey, despite Synge, was still a theatre of the people and listed those plays that made it 'nearer being one'.¹⁰ She included *The White Cockade* and *Kincora*, alongside Yeats's dramatizations of Irish mythology and *Riders to the Sea*, but not *The Shadow of the Glen*.

By choosing to write a play with Patrick Sarsfield, the third Earl of Lucan, as hero, Lady Gregory was dramatizing the life of one of Ireland's great hero-martyrs. Lady Gregory might have been familiar with John Todhunter's *Life of Patrick Sarsfield* written for 'The New

⁷ Nic Shiubhlaigh, , 73.

⁸ *Coole IV*, 57-8.

⁹ Lady Gregory explicitly connects history and religion as the great subjects of Irish folk literature in *Poets and Dreamers*. In her chapter on the blind, itinerant poet Anthony Raftery (1779-1835), she writes that his work often combines religion and politics and that these two with the addition of history 'grow on one stem in Ireland an eternal trefoil' (*Coole XI*, 20). History as understood by Lady Gregory compassed not only the events of recent centuries, but the myths of an heroic age described in the Medieval MSS that were the source material for her prose work *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* (*Coole II*).

¹⁰ To Padraig Colum, 9 January 1906, reprinted in *Theatre Business*, 104-6 (105).

Irish Library Series' in 1895.¹¹ Barry O'Brien, a journalist and author associated with the Irish Literary Society, wrote an introduction:

The name of Sarsfield is not only a household word in every Irish home, but his memory is revered wherever his deeds are known, and patriotism and valour are prized. Struggling under immense difficulties, and thwarted at every turn by incompetent superiors, he redeemed the honour of his country, and vindicated the gallantry of his race.¹²

However, it is clear from her notes that her principal sources of the play were the folk ballads such as those she collected in *Poets and Dreamers*, and a sketch in Irish, *Rig Seumas*, by Douglas Hyde that she translated for *The Weekly Freeman* in 1903.¹³

Sarsfield was an appealing character for Lady Gregory not only because of his patriotic credentials, but because he was a victim of faithlessness inside his camp. As another contemporary biographer put it, 'the tragic thing, for Irish readers at least, is that his courage and his ability were always denied the opportunity to be employed to their uttermost in the service of Ireland'.¹⁴ This made him a candidate for treatment not only in heroic, but ironic mode, suiting Lady Gregory's purpose of representing herself and Yeats as fighting not only the English but those she described in her letter to Colum as 'ones neighbours', those who opposed the artistic policy of the Abbey Theatre, including those who had recently departed.¹⁵

¹¹ John Todhunter, *Life of Patrick Sarsfield Earl of Lucan* (London: Fisher Unwin; Dublin: Sealy, Bryers & Walker, 1895). Todhunter (1839-1916) was an important influence on the development of Yeats's ideas about theatre and dramatic art. As a writer of poetic dramas which used classical methods in pursuit of simplicity and grace, Yeats understood the importance of Todhunter's work as a counterblast to the prevailing fashion for overblown spectacle in theatre. Yeats wrote of Todhunter's *Helena of Troas*, produced in 1886, that its 'sonorous verse, united to the white robed chorus, and the solemnity of burning incense, produced a semi-religious effect new to the modern stage' (CW7 32). The principles of simplicity and harmony that Yeats found here and in the production of *A Sicilian Idyll* at the Bedford Park Clubhouse (1890) helped guide him in the struggles to create a theatre in Ireland.

¹² *Life of Patrick Sarsfield*, vi. O'Brien (1847-1918) was commissioned by Fisher Unwin to write, from a manuscript provided by the publisher, a history of Ireland for children, *Ireland* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1897). Chapter 5 covers Sarsfield (165-90).

¹³ This 'little sketch' about King James appeared in the Christmas number, see Hogan III, 33. The folk and ballad sources for the play are explained in Lady Gregory's note (*Coole VI*, 301-3).

¹⁴ This biographer was Stephen Gwynn, MP, President of the London Irish Literary Society, an influential early supporter of the National Theatre Society. His thoughts on Sarsfield's career would have been available to Lady Gregory in periodical form in *Macmillan's Magazine*, 1 November 1902, 447-56 (455), or in a collection of lectures published as *Studies in Irish History, 1649-1775*, ed. by Barry O'Brien (London and Dublin: Macmillan; Brown & Nolan, 1903), 251-88. Gwynn's original lecture, titled 'Sarsfield' and printed under the same title in periodical format, was delivered to the History Class of the Irish Literary Society (London).

¹⁵ *Theatre Business*, 104.

Todhunter's biography was published in 'The New Irish Library' series, under the editorship of Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, one of the founders of *The Nation* in 1842.¹⁶ Yeats had suggested to Duffy a list of projected titles for this series, intending Lady Wilde to write the biography of Sarsfield as the third volume of the series.¹⁷ In the event, Yeats's influence was entirely occluded by Gavan Duffy and Todhunter was commissioned instead. Duffy's appointment as editor exposed a rift in the leadership of the Irish Revival, since Yeats had assumed he would occupy the role. As the 1890s progressed, the fissures within the movement exposed by 'The New Irish Library' affair widened, as Yeats distanced himself from the literature of popular nationalism in favour of a more esoteric mixture of folklore and mysticism. In the early 1890s, Yeats had aligned himself with *The Nation* in his poem, first published in 1892, 'To Ireland in the Coming Times', in which the young poet asks to be accounted one with 'Davis, Mangan, Ferguson'.¹⁸ However, in his essay 'What is Popular Poetry?' he argues that "'popular poetry" never came from the people at all', signalling a shift towards an artistic doctrine that sought to marry the 'art of the coteries' with 'the art of the people'.¹⁹

Lady Gregory was aware, too, of the need to distinguish the work of the Abbey from the popular patriotic nationalism of plays like *Sarsfield* by James W. Whitbread which opened to great enthusiasm in the press and with the public in December 1904.²⁰ In

¹⁶ Sir Charles Gavan Duffy (1816-1903). The battle for control of 'The New Irish Library' series, published by Fisher Unwin, was part of a struggle for leadership of the Irish cultural revival in the 1890s. Yeats gives his version of this conflict, in which he represents himself as the leader of the younger nationalists, and Gavan Duffy of the older generation, in *Autobiographies* (CW3 187-8). Yeats was outmanoeuvred by Duffy, who, supported by T.W. Rolleston, managed to persuade Unwin to agree to his sole editorship as a condition of the publishing scheme (CL1 329n). Defeated in his bid for editorship, Yeats shifted his ground to oppose Duffy's choices of topic and the books' literary quality. In a letter to the editor of *The Leader* in August 1900, Yeats recalled that he disagreed with Duffy's attempt to lend poetry 'an accidental and fleeting popularity by uniting it with politics and economics' (26 August 1900, CL2 562-9 [564]).

¹⁷ In a letter to Charles Gavan Duffy, [week ending 23 July 1892], Yeats writes, '[f]or the third volume [O'Leary] suggests that Lady Wilde be asked to take up again the book on Sarsfield that had been projected for her (CL1 304-5 [305]). The *Life of Patrick Sarsfield* would be published as volume VII, with Todhunter writing in place of Lady Wilde.

¹⁸ VP 138.

¹⁹ E&I 5, 11; CW4 7, 10.

²⁰ The dress rehearsal for the plays on the bill of the opening night of the Abbey Theatre (*Spreading the News* and *On Baile's Strand*) took place on the same day as *Sarsfield* opened at the Queen's Theatre, 26 December 1904. *Sarsfield* was reviewed the following day, when *The Freeman's Journal* found the plot and characterisation of this popular melodrama to be conventional: historical conflict is sublimated into romance and intrigue. A comic sub-plot features the rapparee, a figure modelled on examples in

establishing a gulf between her dramatic writing and what she and Yeats characterised as 'buffoonery and easy sentiment' in drama, she decided to write *The White Cockade* as sharp comedy, rather than a sentimental tragedy.²¹ Despite Sarsfield's demise, the play humorously treated the aftermath of the Battle of the Boyne, in which James II ignominiously fled for safety. In *The Kiltartan History Book*, published in 1909, Lady Gregory recorded the folkloric view that 'James the Second was a coward'.²² In using this observation to guide her characterisation, Lady Gregory followed the ballad tradition of Irish literature trusting to the authenticity of the myths and legends of the people. It also gave scope to the Abbey actors' comic gifts: Arthur Sinclair as James was praised for his 'comical gestures and 'undignified attitude'.²³ Representing James II, the 'bright Stuart', as ridiculous and cowardly caused offence among some nationalists, even close to home. For example, W. A. Henderson, the Secretary of the Abbey, disliked the ending, where James II is discovered hiding in a barrel.²⁴ Henderson was Protestant; his disapproval is therefore a reminder that the Abbey could be considered irreligious from both Protestant and Catholic standpoints. Yeats himself felt the influence of Synge in Lady Gregory's dramatization. Writing to Florence Farr, Yeats called *The White Cockade* 'a beautiful, laughing, joyful extravagant and yet altogether true phantasy', using approving adjectives that he habitually used to describe Synge's comedy.²⁵ Yeats's increasing sense of polarisation in Irish society

Boucicault, a vehicle for the leading comedy actor. The production by the J. Kennedy Miller Combination was a 'remarkable success' and met with 'enthusiastic audiences'. Ironically, on the same page as this review, the opening of the Abbey Theatre was announced with statements of policy taken from Yeats's *Samhain* (1904), including his observation that 'the modern theatre has died away to what it is because the writers have thought of their audiences instead of their subject' (*The Freeman's Journal*, 27 December 1904, 6, quoting CW8 68).

²¹ *Coole IV*, 20.

²² *Coole IX*, 89.

²³ *The Freeman's Journal*, 11 December 1905, 6.

²⁴ Synge writes to Lady Gregory (30 August 1906, *Theatre Business*, 146-7) hoping that Henderson 'will not take fright at us' (146). He continues: 'he still thinks it was a terrible thing for Yeats to suggest that Irish people should sell their souls, and for you to put his sacred majesty James II into a barrel!'. While Synge enjoyed Henderson's conservatism, Yeats was provoked by it. For example, Henderson preferred the first version of *Kincora* (1905) to the second revised one (1909) prompting Yeats to an angry reaction. In his unpublished journal, he reflected 'this was folly and rudeness. Anger with stupidity is the most exhausting of emotions' (*Mem*, 167).

²⁵ To Florence Farr, 6 October 1905 (*CL Intelix* 232). Writing of Synge's *The Well of the Saints*, a few months earlier, he referred to Synge in the context of 'the only literature of the Irish country-people' which is 'their songs full often of *extravagant* love, and their stories of kings and of king's children' (emphasis added); placing him within a literary tradition characterised by vivid speech, Yeats writes of 'abundant, resonant living laughing speech' (*E&I* 301, 303; *CW4* 219-20, 218). Synge's work was 'of

led him, disturbingly, to see in Lady Gregory and Synge's artistic approach a pervading Anglo-Irish remoteness and control, whereas the aesthetics of William Boyle and Colum apparently reflected their inferior Catholic origins. Synge, on the other hand, was reported by Lady Gregory as having said that her 'method' had made the 'writing of historical drama again possible' (my emphasis).²⁶ By 'method' Synge perhaps referred to Lady Gregory's comic presentation of historical narrative and the opportunities this opened up for the use of Irish dialect. As ever, the Fays shuttled between the actors and the directors. Christopher Fitz Simon's analysis of late nineteenth century Dublin theatre posits two traditions of acting – that developed by the Fays for the acting of Yeats's theatre of art, and the popular tradition of the J. Kennedy Miller Company, professional, slick, artistically conservative and crowd-pleasing. The Fays were a bridge between the two traditions, the popular and artistic, which developed – or in the case of the latter, barely survived – in isolation until the 1920s when Yeats and Lady Gregory accepted a subvention from the Irish state.²⁷

Lady Gregory's method was to distance herself from her material through comedy, but this approach seems to have been challenged in rehearsal and modified in costume design. According to Joseph Holloway, Lady Gregory and Frank Fay clashed. Holloway implies that the ground of disagreement was nothing more than Fay's reluctance to take instruction from Lady Gregory.²⁸ Frank Fay, he says, of one particular rehearsal, 'was in one of his moods ... Mr Fay is like a bear with a sore head when out of temper'.²⁹ While Fay's sensitivity to criticism seems undeniable, it is worth noting the ground of dispute as reported by Holloway. Fay told Lady Gregory that the way she wanted a passage from Act II, Scene I performed or managed was "'out of the mood of the role'" and adding that if she wished to make "Sarsfield" a comic part he would play it as such'.³⁰

the real life of Ireland', yet as 'fantastical as Cervantes' ('J. M. Synge and the Ireland of His Time', *E&I* 326; *CW4* 236).

²⁶ *Coole VI*, 303.

²⁷ Christopher Fitz Simon's examination of nineteenth century Dublin theatre reveals a living tradition of melodrama at the Queen's Theatre and stands as a corrective to Yeats and Lady Gregory's assertion that no native Irish drama existed prior to the Irish Literary Theatre (*Buffoonery and Easy Sentiment: Popular Irish Plays in the Decade Prior to the Opening of the Abbey Theatre* [Dublin: Carysfort, 2011], 67, 116).

²⁸ Holloway, 25.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

The 'mood' of the role; disapproval of comic acting in Sarsfield's character – these comments suggest that Fay saw Sarsfield, as written, as a tragic part and disliked the heterogeneity of Lady Gregory's approach to staging. While Fay liked *Kincora*, some of his later comments about Lady Gregory's dramatic oeuvre indicate discontent.³¹ James Flannery has suggested that Fay's sulkiness in rehearsal with Lady Gregory indicates his unwillingness to take direction from anyone other than his brother.³² Looked at in the light of later comments, it also might reflect frustration with her delight in whimsy and her inability or refusal to look for 'salt' and roughness in her presentation of Irish life, those qualities Yeats said were necessary to 'sting' the writer into 'tragedy'.³³

There is other evidence which suggests that in the staging of *The White Cockade* much thought was given to the balance between comedy and tragedy. The only sketch of Robert Gregory's costume design surviving is an image of Lady Dereen, the play's half-mad Catholic aristocrat. This character was pitiful: her lands gifted to Charles I, her hopes for the return of a Catholic monarchy about to be dashed. Richard Allen Cave writes that *The White Cockade* was Lady Gregory's first attempt at a 'period' play and not some remote saga world.³⁴ Using eighteenth-century attire, presented the designer with 'the great temptation' of 'overdressing it', of 'seeking to provoke laughter by exaggeration, pushing the style of the play towards caricature and farce'.³⁵ Gregory's skilful design, Cave argues, avoided this by gesturing towards period while avoiding exaggeration, adopting instead a costume of 'grace and restraint' which recognises that Lady Dereen is a complex figure, both ridiculous and pitiful.³⁶

³¹ 'In my innocent days I used to like [*Kincora*]', Letter to Maire Garvey, 6 March 1909, reprinted in Hogan III, 307.

³² Flannery, , 182-3 (182).

³³ The phrase is Yeats's and is applied to Synge in 'J. M. Synge and the Ireland of his Time': 'He loves all that ... is salt in the mouth ... all that stings into life the sense of tragedy' (*E&I* 311-42 [327]).

³⁴ Richard Allen Cave, 'Robert Gregory: Artist and Stage Designer', in Saddleymer and Smythe 347-400 (390).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.* One other piece of costume design has survived in the reviews of the first production. Arthur Sinclair's appearance as James was noted for its verisimilitude. Willie Fay wrote to Yeats shortly before the opening of the publicity postcards which showed 'McDonnell' (Sinclair) as King James, 'and very well he looks' (TCD 4424-26/213). The Dublin *Evening Mail* noted that 'Mr Sinclair was worth coming a long way to gaze at, for his resemblance to the portraits of the Stuart King was quite startling, while his changes of expression from terror to relief ... could scarcely have been better' (11 December 1905, 4).

It appears then, that the original conception of Lady Gregory's play in broadly comic terms was in part modified and challenged in the process of staging. The direction of modification seems to be towards the tragic. If so, one further fact is intriguing. The copyright edition published by Quinn at the end of 1905 is subtitled, 'A Comedy'. However, the 'later' Abbey Theatre Series edition has had the subtitle relegated to the half-title page, while the cover reads 'The White Cockade by Lady Gregory'. When the play was next published (1912), it was in a collection subtitled 'Tragic-Comedies'. Allowing for the possibility that the sub-titles fell within the publisher's purlieu, this suggests a move away from broad comedy towards a darker, more bittersweet vision. Whether this is in fact the case is one of the questions we can put to the textual revisions of *The White Cockade*.

Lady Gregory's Revisions to Act II Scene I (*Coole VI*, 228-33)

The main textual revisions between the two editions of December 1905 and February 1906 are to speeches by the characters of Sarsfield and James II. Except for very minor changes, Act I is untouched.³⁷ The Irish dialect spoken by Matt Kelleher, his wife, identified only as Mrs Kelleher, and their son Owen is unchanged as are the speeches of Lady Dereen. When inventing folk characters in comic mode Lady Gregory was confident. Dramatizing the aristocrats and landowners of official history, for whom Galway dialect was inappropriate, she required a different idiom. This was one of several difficulties Lady Gregory faced with folk drama. Another was how to distil from the mass of history a dramatic narrative.³⁸

The audience first encounters Sarsfield after the Battle of the Boyne. He wears the white cockade, symbol of the Jacobite cause, and plots how to regain the lost initiative from William of Orange. James II appears distracted. He is richly dressed and, as soon becomes obvious, as vain as he is cowardly. *The Freeman's Journal* wrote: 'Lady Gregory has not spared James in the least. Her object, indeed, seems to have been to show how useless a task

³⁷ There are two changes. Mrs Kelleher's 'It's hard getting butter out of a dog's mouth. A wren in the fist is better than a crane on loan' (copyright edition), is printed in the commercial version with the order of the sentences reversed (*Coole VI*, 222). The French Sailors' song is given in the Abbey Theatre Series: 'Madame si vous voulez danser/Vite je vous prie de commencer/Avec l'air des Francais/Avec l'air de la Coeur', (*Coole VI*, 224), whereas the stage direction that announces the entry of the Sailors in the earlier edition omits any reference to their song.

³⁸ Lady Gregory recalled the difficulties she had in construction and composition, linking them to the 'mass of material' and her need to keep 'too closely to history' (*Coole VI*, 286).

it was fighting for one so worthless'.³⁹ While Sarsfield is absent, James and his factotum undermine his strategy for recovery. James says:

I would prefer to be elsewhere. It is all very well for those who have a taste for fighting ... I had it once myself ... when I was a boy. But it has gone from me now with the taste for unripe apples.⁴⁰

In the later text this is changed to 'green apples'.⁴¹ Apples, in Celtic mythology, often symbolise fruitfulness, or fertility. James, however, is an emblem of potential unfulfilled, of a figure unable or unwilling to endure the burdens placed upon them by the people. As the Williamite forces approach, James yields to terror, clinging to Sarsfield who offers his ears the protection of the rich cloak dropped in panic.

Sarsfield's commanding personality and loyalty are performative, designed to model the behaviour of a King in battle. Whereas Carter, the King's Secretary, sees the King's safety as an end in itself, Sarsfield says:

A soldier does not know the word danger. Whatever word called the King from the battle, I am certain it was not the word danger but victory. He heard something we could not hear, he saw something we could not see ...⁴²

In the commercial edition this speech becomes:

Danger! Who says that? Who said it at the Boyne? Was it you drove the King from the battle? Bad advisers! Bad advisers! He who says "danger" is a bad adviser.

Terse, exclamatory speech, seasoned with repetition, replaces an almost philosophical attitude. Sarsfield's anger is palpable, as is his importunate and restless energy. Carter then says that Sarsfield and he are both ordinary men and cannot understand the perspectives of kingship. Sarsfield: '[m]aybe so ... myself, what is myself? This Irish dust ... (*Touches his breast*). A spark from some godmother star ...'. In the commercial version, this is changed:

You and I – may be – this dust (*striking himself*) – that dust of yours – has the King's livery made us of the one baking? No, no; there is some leaven in this dough. (*To the King*). Rouse yourself, sir, put your hand to the work.

Again, the changes strengthen Sarsfield's response. The original 'what is myself?' is an almost metaphysical speculation. In the revision, he compares his quality to Carter's and

³⁹ *The Freeman's Journal*, 11 December 1905, 6.

⁴⁰ Copyright edition, 21.

⁴¹ A taste for green apples seems to have been proverbial. Here it appears to denote a childish or temporary craving outgrown. The change from 'unripe' to 'green' apples is likely to have been a simple verbal alteration.

⁴² Copyright edition, 20.

finds the latter's to be deficient. Sarsfield's metaphor is homely: his speech demotic rather than poetic. The tender gesture of the early version '[t]ouches his breast' is replaced by the more vigorous 'striking himself', while he speaks firmly to the King urging action over lassitude. Anything speculative, reflective, speaking of self-absorption is cut, replaced with the plain speaking of a soldier.

When the King tells Sarsfield to abandon his plan to muster at Clonmel, proposing instead his own removal to France and the further scattering of Stuart forces, Sarsfield protests '[i]s Ireland nothing to your Majesty?'. In revision, this becomes 'are they, sir, [the King's orders] what is best for Ireland?' Not for the last time, Sarsfield is confronted with the absurdity of James as a credible king of Ireland. The mode of address is more formal, the addition of 'sir' allowing for sarcasm. Told to obey orders he takes refuge in fatalism, 'is not a feather in a hat as good a cry as another?' This adds to our sense of Sarsfield as a frustrated figure, whose capacities are wasted by his circumstances. Stephen Gwynn wrote of Sarsfield that 'the tragic thing, for Irish readers at least, is that [Sarsfield's] courage and his ability were always denied the opportunity to be employed to their uttermost in the service of Ireland'.⁴³

Part of the change to Sarsfield's character involves cutting speeches that do emerge logically from the dramatic action. In the copyright edition, Sarsfield is resigned and decides to follow James's orders:

Yes, I will follow them. I have given my word. Have I not lighted my wisp for the King? Is not a bunch of feathers, a King in a song, as good a cry as another? – as the Connacht hag's basket, the Munster hag's speckled cow? (*Stoops to take up map and rolls it up.*) And one thing only that is lasting, lasting, behind them all, the call of our own country, the lasting cry of luckless Ireland. I shall know that well enough on the day when my wisp is quenched.

This speech is repeated verbatim just before Sarsfield's final exit in Act III. Repetition draws attention to a static quality to the drama. In revision there is no reiteration, but variation instead. The original is noteworthy for its range of literary and historical reference. The list for which Sarsfield might have, or has, 'lit his wisp' reflects Lady Gregory's learning and research.⁴⁴ 'A bunch of feathers, a king in a song, the Connacht hag's speckled basket, the

⁴³ Gwynn, 'Sarsfield', 455.

⁴⁴ Sarsfield's use of the metaphor of burning straw ('lighted my wisp') recalls a vein of imagery Yeats used throughout his poetry. *Straminis Deflagratio*, literally 'the burning of straw', is used by Yeats to refer both to political revolution and to individuals inclined to excessive passion or hatred, a

Munster hag's speckled cow' contains much that suggests the author's sources and inspiration. The references to 'feathers' and the 'king in the song' are clear: the feathers are the white cockade of the title, emblem of the French army, whereas the Williamites wore green, well before that became the national colour of Ireland.⁴⁵ These references suggest the folk origins of Lady Gregory's Sarsfield.

References to the 'hag's basket' and the 'speckled cow' are also folk in origin, but suggest an earlier, heroic, phase of Irish history, one familiar to readers from Lady Gregory's translations of the literature of the Fianna. Chronicling the warring tribes of Ireland's four counties, she tells the tale of the King of Connacht who led a raid on Munster where the 'hornless bull of the Munster hag and the two speckled cows' were taken in revenge for an earlier incursion.⁴⁶ Lady Gregory's tragic interpretation of Irish history asserts that an 'innate love of dissention' continually undermined attempts at unity in a pattern that repeated from the Middle Ages through to the modern day.⁴⁷ This gloomy truth is leavened by the paradoxical view that the very dissention that disunites provides the conditions for self-transcending heroic action. This self-overcoming is, too, presented as definingly Celtic.⁴⁸

In the commercial edition, Sarsfield's reply is shorter:

characteristic Yeats viewed with ambivalence (W. B. Yeats, *Mythologies*, ed. by Warwick Gould and Deirdre Toomey [Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005], 413n29; hereafter cited as *Myth 2005*) Yeats refers to a cosmic incendiary in 1891 ('until God burn Nature with a kiss', *VP* 126-28 [128]). The seam of imagery surfaces in Yeats and Lady Gregory's co-authored play, *The Unicorn from the Stars*, in which Frank Fay performed the role of Martin Hearne who destroys the golden coach with the words 'it is with this flame I will begin the work of destruction. All nature destroys and laughs' (*VPI* 691). Memorably, Yeats applied to Robert Gregory, killed in World War I, a version of the image as poetic consolation for his early death: 'Some burn damp faggots, others may consume | The entire combustible world in one small room | As though dried straw' (*VP* 323-28 [327]).

⁴⁵ John Todhunter writes that William of Orange ordered his troops to wear 'green sprigs' in their hats to distinguish them from the Irish, who wore the cockade (*Life of Patrick Sarsfield*, 58). He adds that green became the national colour only in the 'days of the United Irishmen' in the eighteenth century.

⁴⁶ Lady Gregory, *Gods and Fighting Men: The Story of the Tuatha de Danaan and of the Fianna of Ireland* (London: John Murray, 1904), 107.

⁴⁷ Maureen S. G. Hawkins, 'Ascendancy Nationalism, Feminist Nationalism, and Stagecraft in Lady Gregory's Revision of *Kincora*', in *Irish Writers and Politics*, ed. by Okifumi Komesu and Masaru Sekine (Gerrards Cross: Smythe, 1989), 94-108, 98, 322n.

⁴⁸ This particular reference to folklore recurs at a climactic moment in Lady Gregory's tragedy *Dervorgilla*. The heroine is consigned to infamy as the Irish beauty for whose love the English were first enjoined to battle in Ireland. She asserts finally, her agency in the elopement that led to this outcome, despite its impact on her reputation in folk history. She asks, '[w]ill the generations think better of me, thinking me to have been taken as prey, like the Connacht hag's basket, or the Munster hag's speckled cow?' (*Coole VI*, 107).

Just so, just so, we have sworn. – He is our King – we have taken the oath. Well, is not a feather in a hat as good a cry as another? A feather in a hat, a King in a song:

The darling Caesar of the Gael,
The great Cuchulain of the war!

Instead of the reference to the myths of the Fianna we are given two lines of the ballad that gives the play its title: *The White Cockade*. The breadth of imagery in the early version, incorporating Irish folk literature and ballads, is reduced to the cap badge and the song, both already established as motifs. Again, terseness and repetition are used as devices indicating exasperation. The change here is consistent with the earlier revisions in strengthening Sarsfield's character as a frustrated subaltern, emphasising the gulf between his ability and the role he is forced to play. The shorter speech is more rhetorical and elliptical. It holds a little back, whereas the former one is too much a statement of character. Lady Gregory appears to have decided to sacrifice allusion for consistency of dramatic speech, a change that suggests the example or experience of rehearsal, although other factors may also be influential. One is the opinion of her fellow director Synge, who read the play in draft and commented that 'the language seemed a bit too figurative once or twice – in Sarsfield's part especially I think – but a few strokes of the blue pencil would put that all right'.⁴⁹

Act II Scene II (Coole VI, 233-45).

According to one biographer, this is the best scene Lady Gregory wrote.⁵⁰ Its central action is Sarsfield's impersonation of King James and attempt to persuade the Williamite forces to help him escape. Set in the pub kitchen of act one, the initial action involves a pair of unwelcome Williamite soldiers who are determined to billet men on the inn. When the King arrives after midnight, in flight after the Battle of the Boyne, Sarsfield gambles on the soldiers' ignorance of James's appearance to assume his role. As the real King sits huddled with his face averted, Sarsfield tries to persuade the Williamites to help the King escape. But, as Coxhead points out, he is also appealing to James, attempting to rouse in the King something of his own heroic spirit.⁵¹ He is on the point of persuading the soldiers when the

⁴⁹ To Lady Gregory, 20 August 1905, reprinted in *Theatre Business*, 76-7 (76).

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Coxhead, *Lady Gregory: A Literary Portrait* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 99.

⁵¹ Coxhead, 99.

Lady Dereen recognises the real James from her youth at Court; the whole troop of Williamites descend and the King and Sarsfield take refuge in the Kellehers' cellar.

Aside from Sarsfield, the theme of loyalty and faithlessness is best represented in the Lady Dereen. Lady Dereen's distress is expressed in a language that echoes the folk ballads collected in *Poets and Dreamers*. The scene opens with her grief at the news that James has met with defeat at the Boyne. She cries out in distress, '[t]he people without a lord but the God of glory! Where is he? Where is my royal Stuart?' The author writes in her note that her interest in this episode was piqued when she heard a line in a poem she had taken down from the country people: 'my heart leaps up with my bright Stuart!'⁵² Looking back on *The White Cockade*, Lady Gregory recalled the opinion of John Masefield, the English poet and supporter of the Abbey, who told her that Lady Dereen is 'like a character in a ballad'.⁵³

One change suggests that theatricality, stage-sense, influenced revision in minor ways. In the copyright edition four Williamite soldiers enter the inn and declare they will stay and rendezvous there with the Newry troop. The later version, however, reduces the soldiers to two with the remainder as voices-off. The effect of this is to split the Williamite threat into immediate and potential. The First Williamite tells his colleagues '[h]ere, you lads, go and spread yourselves here and there through the town ... I will fire two shots when you are wanted'. The audience's knowledge of the offstage threat raises the tension on stage, while the reduction in the number of soldiers declutters the scene.

The entry of the King, Sarsfield and Carter is also strengthened in revision. In both versions Matt is so excited at the arrival of the King that he forgets he is supposed to be keeping it secret and ceremoniously greets James at the inn door. The suspicions of the soldiers are aroused: they raise their weapons. In the copyright version, James hides behind Sarsfield:

JAMES (going behind Sarsfield and pushing him forward). Do not let them see who I am?

(Sarsfield comes forward. Williamites hold muskets aimed)

SARFIELD Back! Put down your muskets!

⁵² *Coole VI*, 303.

⁵³ Journal entry, 15 May 1930, *Coole XV*, 517. The letter from Masefield is one of several that Lady Gregory consults after seeing the 1930 revival of *The White Cockade*. It was written in October 1905.

In the revised version, the changes Lady Gregory made to the Williamites' entrance allow her to add the threat of the return of the soldiers elsewhere in the town. The signal for that is two shots. As the soldiers raise their rifles there is a new stage direction:

(They raise their muskets. SARFIELD rushes past JAMES, seizes the muskets when they are raising so that they are pointed at his own body.)

SARFIELD: Fire! Yes, here I am! Call back your comrades to bury the King!

This is a much stronger and more dramatic gesture than that in the copyright version. The moment Sarsfield assumes the role of king, he also challenges the soldiers to kill him. In the earlier version, he simply steps forward and says to the soldiers '[h]ave you found your king?' Although there is no evidence that Lady Gregory intended to suggest a parallel between Sarsfield and the early Christian saint Sebastian, the visual image of the soldier drawing the aim of the muskets towards himself echoes the popular image from Renaissance art of St Sebastian tied to a tree and pierced with arrows. Both St Sebastian and Sarsfield were soldiers, and both were evangelists, for the Christian God on the one hand, and for a united Ireland under Catholic monarchy on the other. Moreover, in early modern Italy, the image of St Sebastian pierced was used to help supplicants endure the plague, since Sebastian, however unlikely it sounds, survived his many wounds, having been revived by St Irene. St Sebastian is then an image of suffering and survival through faith, which makes him a useful analogue for the Irish revolutionary hero of history, who provides comfort to nationalists during difficult times.⁵⁴

In the copyright version, the dramatic temperature is lower. Sarsfield-as-king is calm, unruffled, nonchalant. In the revised version the scene is a confrontation. The soldiers say they have orders to take the King 'dead or alive', whereas the earlier version only gives them authority to capture him. An even bigger change concerns Sarsfield's manner as King. In the second version, he is furious:

SARFIELD. Back, back put down your muskets! Damn you! Are these Dutch manners?

FIRST WILLIAMITE. You are our prisoner. We must call our troop.

SARFIELD (*pushing them back angrily*). Dutch manners! I swear I will not go to prison on an empty stomach! Supper, host, supper! Is a man to be sent empty to his death, even if he be a king.

The earlier version has the soldiers polite and awed by the fact of the King, who is gracious in response. In the latter, the treatment is less respectful, provoking Sarsfield/King to fury,

⁵⁴ To the Editor, *The London Review of Books*, 43.21, 4 November 2021.

which is itself diversionary and represents him as a commanding personality. Sarsfield is performing kingship self-consciously, both in order to awe and impress the soldiers and to instruct James. When the soldiers threaten again to call reinforcements, Sarsfield repeats the exclamation 'Dutch manners!', contrasting, one supposes, the uncouth treatment he is receiving with the *politesse de princes* associated with the French, his supporters. This is an extremely clever sleight of hand by Sarsfield, who deftly puts the soldiers on the defensive and turns attention from the historical consequences of his capture to the immediate domestic necessity of 'beef ... and bread'. The audience's enjoyment of this moment is enhanced by the force of Sarsfield and his sudden and dramatic seizure of the initiative, which obtrudes in the revision.

Lady Gregory deftly handles dramatic tension, ramping it up as Sarsfield acts the King's part, then just as quickly bringing it down, as Matt prostrates himself before the mock-King. 'O forgive, forgive', he pleads, blaming himself for the bungled entry of the King and his companions, before adding, 'Take my life! O take my life!'. Sarsfield stays in role, dismissing him roughly and asking Mary Kelleher for drinks. Now begins Sarsfield's attempt to persuade the Williamites to let the King escape. He flatters their bravery in battle and wishes all were on one side. The soldiers say they wish to be on the winning side.

Sarsfield replies:

The winning side – which is it? We think we know, but heaven and hell know better. Ups and downs as with this knife (*balances it on his fingers*). Ups and downs. Winning and losing are in the course of nature and there's no use in crying.

This is the revised speech, which exchanges the more emphatic 'heaven and hell' for 'eternity' in the earlier version and omits from the copyright edition the lines 'as Sunday follows Saturday and as the sun follows rain'. Following Synge's instructions, these changes make the speech less figurative, and continue Sarsfield's performance of the king as common man. In an article on games in Lady Gregory's work, Jason Willwerscheid demonstrates the many different types of game in her writings: card games (*Twenty-Five*), horse races (*On the Racecourse*), games of chess (*Gods and Fighting Men*) and, in *The White Cockade*, jacks. In these plays he argues that she uses games as both a structuring element and a symbol for the fantasy of theatre itself. Such an approach suggests a comic attitude ('there's no use in crying') to victory or defeat. According to Willwerscheid, Lady Gregory's plays criticise war, a species of 'game' justified by the idea of the 'fair fight', which as she

points out in *The Kiltartan History Book* is never as fair as it seems: 'the English never won a battle in Ireland in fair fight, but getting spies and setting the peoples against each other'.⁵⁵

This leads into another key passage, in which Sarsfield questions whether the winner is the one who is buried in a 'figured monument' with 'angels' tears in marble'. Instead, he says:

Or maybe he is the winner who has none of these, who but writes his name in the book of the people. I would like my name set in clean letters in the book of the people.

Lady Gregory's 'book of the people' is a mixture of historical, religious, and political lore traceable to the culture of minstrelsy that once existed in Ireland, and still survived in the cottages of the rural dwellers of west and southern Ireland.⁵⁶ It is associated in the writings of Lady Gregory and Yeats with Anthony Raftery. Yeats first wrote of Raftery in his story of 1899, 'Dust hath closed Helen's Eye', later re-published in his expanded edition of *The Celtic Twilight* in 1902. The article traces the symbiotic relationship of the people with the poet and likens it to a more famous (and academically respectable) oral culture: that of the farmers and shepherds of ancient Greece to 'that Greek world that set beauty by the fountain of things'.⁵⁷ It seems likely, since Yeats's research into Raftery precedes *Poets and Dreamers* that Lady Gregory took the idea of the book of the people from him. Yeats went on to write about Raftery in 'Literature and the Living Voice' (1906) which begins with a memory of the August 1902 Gaelic League *Feis* held at Raftery's grave and attended by Yeats, Lady Gregory, Douglas Hyde, Edward Martyn, and Jack B. Yeats, as well as John Quinn. In the essay Yeats recalled the memorial to Raftery, paid for by Lady Gregory and others, that was unveiled and blessed in August 1900.⁵⁸ The oral culture that Raftery represented also

⁵⁵ *Coole IX*, 91; Jason Willwerscheid, 'Critiquing Cultures of Agonism: Games in Lady Gregory's Plays and Translations', *New Hibernia Review*, 18.2 (Summer 2014), 42-56 (43).

⁵⁶ In *Poets and Dreamers*, Lady Gregory's writes disapprovingly of Raftery's allusion to Greek myth, which, she writes, left 'unkindled' his hearers who preferred Irish history and legend (*Coole XI*, 27). In *Dervorgilla*, the singer says that Dervorgilla will never be forgiven by the people for her crime of bringing the English to Ireland. 'Let the weight of it fall on Dervorgilla!' sings the poet (*Coole VI*, 105). In *McDonough's Wife* the piper ends by asserting, 'It is the story of the burying of McDonough's Wife will be written in the book of the people' (*Coole VI*, 125).

⁵⁷ Yeats's research took him to Ballylee, where he spoke to locals about Mary Hynes, the subject of a poem by Raftery that Yeats admired. For Yeats the world of Raftery was analogous to the Greek world of Homer. In his article 'Dust hath closed Helen's Eye', he likens the *sidhe*, the Irish fairies, to the Greek gods (*Myth 2005* 14-20).

⁵⁸ Yeats's essay is reprinted in *Ex* 202-224, CW8 94-108; Lady Gregory's account of the 'Red-Letter Day' in Killeenan, 'Raftery's Grave', appeared in *An Claidheamh Solus* on 8 September 1900. *The Galway Observer* of 1 September 1900 reported Yeats's 'masterly oration' and noted that Douglas Hyde

excluded, or at least preceded, the mass culture of modernity, of the printing press, distinguishing the minstrel from the actor. The former stops his tale to cry "'This is what I, Raftery, wrote down in the book of the people'"'.⁵⁹ The precious Gaelic literary inheritance encompassed, as Yeats would put it in March 1902, 'the hut' and 'the castle' but excluded 'the new art without breeding or ancestry', that is the art of the middle-class.⁶⁰ It honours the responsibility Lady Gregory felt to her stewardship of her estate with the sympathies she felt for the people and their sufferings at the hands of the English.

The inscription 'Raifteiri' on the headstone Lady Gregory commissioned may be evoked in Sarsfield's wish to set his name in 'clean letters' in the book of the people. Ironically, despite his references to writing and 'clean letters', the book of the people is an oral testament, the gift of poets who conveyed the truths of God to, and chronicled the times for, the people. This speech is unaltered in revision: whatever Lady Gregory felt compelled to alter in Sarsfield's syntax and vocabulary, she was happy with how she conveyed the idea of the book of the people as ultimate arbiter of fame. As if taking up her cue, Mary Kelleher turns to James, who is keeping a low profile. Mistaking his 'downhearted' look as prompted by concern for Sarsfield-as-king's capture, she offers folk wisdom that might have come from the mouth of Raftery: although things appear bleak, they might 'change'. There follows a characteristic listing, or scattering, of proverbs which emphasise that even seemingly invincible forces are subject to accident and reversal. Mrs Kelleher adds, 'There's more music than the pipes. The darkest hour is before the dawn. Every spring morning has a back head. It's a good horse that never stumbles. The help of God is nearer than the door.' Of course, in attempting to cheer James by appealing to the operation of the laws of chance, or fortune, Mrs Kelleher does not know, as the audience does, that it is James's poor generalship that has handed victory to the Dutchman.

Sarsfield proceeds to outline an imaginary future to the soldiers: the King escapes, rides by the aid of the moon, gathers his men at Clonmel, steals into the Gap of the Oaks and

spoke in Irish (reception noted in *CL2* 565n). The connection of the book of the people with Raftery would cause Yeats to write, much later, in the poem 'Coole Park & Ballylee, 1931', 'Whatever's written in what poets name | The book of the people ...' (*VP* 492).

⁵⁹ *Ex* 215; *CW8* 103.

⁶⁰ *E&I* 10; *CW4* 10.

seizes William of Orange where he is making secret camp.⁶¹ In the copyright version, Sarsfield uses the figurative language which Lady Gregory so often cuts in revision: '[a] shout ... the King! Sarsfield! Ireland! ... before there is time for a mouse to squeak we have carried off the prize', while the commercial edition has instead of the image of the mouse-squeak the more literal, 'before there is time to pull a trigger'. No sooner has Sarsfield spun a utopia with words, the different future manifests as a possible reality for the Williamites. 'The King will win yet. I would never believe that he ran from the Boyne'. Almost casually, the men exchange loyalties: the Stuart is now 'the King'. Lady Gregory demonstrates the almost mystical power of the book of the people allied to the performance of aristocratic dignity and grace to unite the factions of Ireland, to bring together those whom politics has divided, but who share a deeper loyalty to the imaginative cultures of the heroic age.

Next Sarsfield addresses James himself, over the heads of the soldiers. He is 'striving to rouse in James something of his own heroic spirit, begging him to stay and make another stand instead of fleeing to France'.⁶² Owen, the Kelleher's son, inspired by Sarsfield's performance, says 'O it must be wonderful to be a King'. Sarsfield replies with a romantic paean to aristocratic lineage, to noble blood coming from 'far off'. Lady Gregory uses the image of the fountain to illustrate her point: 'some source so high that, like the water of his palace fountain, it keeps breaking, ever breaking away from the common earth, starting up as if to reach the skies'. This is the spirit of courage and panache that Sarsfield wishes James to inhabit. Sarsfield continues using the traditional image of the nation as beautiful woman and the King as lover. The King does all, not for himself, but for 'his dear lady', for her he 'holds his head high', keeps his 'hands clean' and shows 'courtesy to all'. His speech rises to a crescendo as he imagines the glory of blood sacrifice for his lady, 'the name he leaves with her is better than any living love, because he is faithful, faithful, faithful'. Not only does the personification of Ireland hark back to the poetic formulas of the Jacobite ballads, translated

⁶¹ Sarsfield was remembered as a daring and ingenious soldier not a military strategist. In *The Kiltartan History Book*, an example of the 'book of the people' genre, Lady Gregory writes of the time Sarsfield 'turned the shoes on his horse' while being pursued, so that the English would think he had gone down another road (*Coole IX*, 89). Stephen Gwynn characterises Sarsfield's famous coup in capturing and destroying an enemy artillery convoy during the Limerick siege as the work of a 'dashing soldier not a great general' (*Macmillan's Magazine*, 1 November 1902, 450). Lady Gregory is typically, more interested in the portrait of Sarsfield in folk history, pointing out that tradition has it that he is descended from Conall Cearnach, the warrior friend of Cuchulain in the Red Branch cycle of mythology (*Coole XI*, 72).

⁶² Coxhead, 99.

by Lady Gregory in *Poets and Dreamers*, it also suggests the Old Woman of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* transformed by the faith of the people into a 'young girl' with the 'walk of a queen'.⁶³

Sarsfield's performance as James is the emotional climax of the play. Lady Gregory mobilises her knowledge of folklore, her translations of ballads and her love of Raftery to inspire a rhetoric which momentarily unties all the warring factions of Ireland and engages the next generation, represented by Owen. Yet the irony is that such visions of wholeness are seemingly inevitably dashed by history and the forces of politics. The concord dissolves as, first, Lady Dereen recognises the true James from his 'unlucky hand' and then the Newry troop descend on the inn and, far from galloping through the night, James and his men have to hide themselves in the Kellehers' cellar.

Act III (Coole VI, 246-54)

Act III opens on the pier at Dungannon, a conduit between the French ship moored in the harbour and the inn of the previous act. Returning to see *The White Cockade* a second time, Holloway recollected the Abbey's history of 'artistic experiments' especially as applied to the question of theatrical decor.⁶⁴ Noting that striking effects had often been achieved by simple means, Holloway comments on the mysterious atmosphere produced by Robert Gregory's scene painting: a sense of 'limitless expanse' is created by 'the dark blue backcloth with pale limelight thrown on it from the front in Act III'.⁶⁵ The poetic effect is heightened by the 'formation of a speck of yellow introduced into the colouring from the lamp's flickering ray as it twinkles suspended from the beacon post'.

Set at night on a pier at Duncannon, the third act shifts closer to the King's fugitive escape, despite the presence of troops loyal to William. The opposition is now split: those soldiers who heard Sarsfield's rhetoric in Act II have become James's active supporters. Owen, the Kellehers' son, is also roused out of his apathy. His mother is amazed that her son 'that would never stir from the hearth' is taking 'such hardship'. Owen, bearing fife and

⁶³ *VPI* 231.

⁶⁴ Holloway, 64.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Holloway reports that Lady Gregory glowed with 'motherly pride' when her son's designs were praised by him (65).

drum, has been infected with the idea of the book of the people, telling his mother, 'you will hear no story of me but a story you would like to be listening to'.

James is mistaken by the Williamite soldiers for a 'little priest' and his demand that he be rowed out to the waiting ship because he is King are greeted with disbelief and laughter. The fantasy created by Sarsfield is so successful that the real James appears incredible. One of the soldiers says he would as much believe James to be the King as that he was Patrick Sarsfield. Owen adds '*That Patrick Sarsfield?*' The scene rises to a comic crescendo as the soldiers join hands to hoist James aloft as if in a mock throne. As they pepper him with insults, he protests. The raillery comes to a stop with the entrance of Lady Dereen who is keening. In the revised version James is given the line 'let me down, traitors!'. This sharp juxtaposition of comedy with pathos is a feature of the play and often involves Lady Dereen. Here the carnivalesque mockery of James is interrupted by the tragic figure of a ruined woman whose dream of a united Ireland is dead. Her grief is accompanied by sung lines from a Jacobite ballad, 'Ochone, Ochone, my pleasant Stuart, | Ochone, heart-secret of the Gael'.

Sarsfield returns still under the delusion that he has persuaded James to make another stand, while James prevaricates, excuses himself and returns to the inn, on the pretext of picking up some important documents he left there. The action now hurries to the comic denouement, the arresting of the sailors attempting to transport a wine butt, in which James has hidden, onto the French ship. Despite protests from the King's Secretary, the butt is opened, and a bedraggled James revealed to all. As has been pointed out, this episode derives again from folk history, available to Lady Gregory from Douglas Hyde's short play, published in the Christmas 1903 number of *The Weekly Freeman*.⁶⁶ Comedy returns as James threatens to punish those who 'stopped' the barrel, those who 'tilted it up' and those who 'opened it' at some unspecified future date. In the copyright version, this is followed by a line of Sarsfield's: 'I will see you to the boat, Sir. As for myself, I will stay in Ireland'. This is cut in the commercial edition, so that Owen's gesture of disgust in throwing off the cockade follows straight after James's exit. Not only are Sarsfield's words redundant – as he remains on stage following James's departure – this cut also focuses attention on Owen's return to cynical apathy after momentary patriotic enthusiasm. This helps illuminate dramatically

⁶⁶ Hogan III, 33.

Lady Gregory's greater point that political and personal failures destroy the dream of nationality that alone can inspire the peasants to action.

All now is anti-climax: the dream has died. Sarsfield tears the feathers from his cockade and scatters them, asking who or what James is, before settling on 'thief'. James has 'stolen away ... he has stolen our faith'. Mrs Kelleher remarks that Sarsfield is now the same as Owen, who has thrown off the King's livery. This wakes Sarsfield from his trance; he buckles his sword, to the astonishment of Mrs Kelleher, who asks, 'why would you go spending yourself for the like of *that* of a king?' Sarsfield replies:

Why, why? Who can say? What is holding me? Habit, custom ... this high-named dust (*touching his breast*) ... that godmother star ... the cloud of witnesses ... Maybe the call of some old angry father of mine that fought two thousand years ago for a bad master! (*He picks up his gloves*).⁶⁷

This is the speech as recorded in the copyright edition. In the commercial edition, the 'high-named dust' and 'godmother star' references are cut as is the gesture that comes between. These details are repetitions from an earlier speech of Sarsfield's where he compares himself to James's servant, Carter, also cut in revision. In the newer version '[h]abit and custom' is followed by '[w]hat is it the priests say? – the cloud of witnesses'. Here Lady Gregory again places Sarsfield in the Irish folk tradition, which combines religion and history. The 'cloud of witnesses' is not only a biblical reference: the idea of a supernatural host cheering on the pure at heart from beyond the grave has resonance in the stories of the people. In her *Book of Saints and Wonders*, Lady Gregory writes of a dispute between the King of Munster and the 'saint of the Gael', Mochaemhog, over ownership of a beautiful meadow, which is settled when the King has a vision of a cloud of witnesses, including St Patrick.⁶⁸ The cloud is part of the semi-pagan, semi-religious popular tradition in which Yeats and Lady Gregory saw potential for an authentic movement of national renewal.⁶⁹ Mary Lou Kohfeldt Stevenson

⁶⁷ Copyright edition, 51.

⁶⁸ *Coole XII*, 92-3 (93).

⁶⁹ In Yeats's story 'The Crucifixion of the Outcast' in *The Secret Rose*, a monastery of the order of 'White Friars' crucify a 'gleeman' who sings against them (*Myth 2005*, 99-105). To criticism that his representation of the monks indicated anti-Catholic bias, Yeats responded with authorities that demonstrated the mingling of Paganism and Christianity in the early Church in Ireland (*CL2* 100-1). It was from this interwoven tradition that the 'cloud of witnesses' took shape. In his Preface to *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, Yeats wrote of the storytellers of Ireland who 'created, for learned and unlearned alike, a communion of heroes, a cloud of stalwart witnesses' (*Coole II*, 13). For Yeats and Lady Gregory, then, early Irish Christianity could not entirely be separated from pagan mythology, so that the 'cloud of witnesses', although a Christian concept originally, is in no way alien from the folk tradition.

has suggested that Lady Gregory developed an idea of a sustaining cloud of witnesses during a spiritual and medical crisis in her adolescence.⁷⁰ This leaves the other references to 'the godmother star' and the 'angry old father'. The former seems to relate to folk cosmology. In Lady Gregory's wonder play *The Image* (1910), an old midwife, Peggy Mahon, a repository of Galway lore, tells another character, '[i]t is God puts you into the world and brings you out of it, and beyond that there is a woman in the stars does all'.⁷¹ The reference to the 'angry old father' also alludes to the ballad tradition, specifically to the legendary last words of the Gaelic poet Aogán Ó Rathaille, or Egan O'Rahilly, whose death-bed poem contains the words:

I will follow the beloved among heroes to the grave,
Those princes under whom were my ancestors before the death of Christ.⁷²

It may be that Lady Gregory's lines allude also to Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen*, first published in 1892, and of course, performed as part of the opening season of the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899:

But first sit down and rest yourself awhile
For my old fathers served your fathers, lady
Longer than books can tell⁷³

In Yeats's play the lines are spoken by a country woman, Mary, to the Countess, and speak of feudal ties of service. Applied to Sarsfield, they indicate his subject-bond to James. These few lines, then, contain a range of reference to folk sources, but, shorn of poetic elaboration, maintain dramatic momentum.

⁷⁰ Mary Lou Kohfeldt Stevenson, 'The Cloud of Witnesses', in Saddlemyer and Smythe, 56-69 (64).

⁷¹ Lady Gregory, *The Image* (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., 1910), 26-7. Fay archive.

⁷² *The Poems of Egan O'Rahilly*, ed. by Patrick Dineen (London: David Nutt, 1900), 117. Lady Gregory quotes Egan O'Rahilly (i.e. Aogán Ó Rathaille c.1670-1726), the father of the *Aislinghe*, whose 'The Brightness of Brightness' presents Ireland's occupation by the English in allegorical form as the imprisonment by enchantment of a beautiful woman by a Saxon lover (*Coole XI*, 58). Yeats's late poem 'The Curse of Cromwell' borrows from translations of the Gaelic poet and includes the line '[h]is fathers served their fathers before Christ was crucified' (*VP* 580-1). The same line is cited in Yeats's *Commentary* on his poem *A Parnellite at Parnell's Funeral*, published in 1934. Yeats outlines his scheme of Ireland's tragic history in four sections. Describing 'the Battle of the Boyne' as the second section, and the first of which he has knowledge, he writes that during the upheavals of Cromwellian and later post-Williamite plantations, the peasantry were 'at the base of the social structure' and largely unaffected by change, while 'the Gaelic bards sang of the banished Catholic aristocracy which had provided them with patronage: "My fathers served their fathers before Christ was crucified" sang one of the most famous [i.e., Ó Rathaille]' (*VP* 833).

⁷³ *The Countess Cathleen*, *VPI* 19.

In the copyright edition, this is not quite the end of the play. The Lady Dereen and Mrs Kelleher agree that Sarsfield is mad to continue to follow James. Lady Dereen is under the misapprehension that James is dead. Sarsfield has one final speech before his exit. He admits that maybe he is mad, but that his fate commands him. He is resigned to the probability of failure but sees his duty calling him to fight on. The audience's final image is the rather pathetic one of a defeated, but determined Sarsfield, putting on his hat and taking cakes from Mrs Kelleher to take with him to Limerick, where he expects to find 'empty plates'.

The commercial edition cuts this speech completely. Instead, the final image is of Lady Dereen and Mrs Kelleher, after Sarsfield's exit for Limerick, musing on the foolishness of his making a stand in a lost cause:

LADY (to MRS KELLEHER). Is not that a very foolish man to go on fighting for a dead king?

MRS KELLEHER (tapping her forehead). Indeed, I think there's rats in the loft!

LADY (tapping her forehead). That is it, that is it – we wise ones know it. Fighting for a dead king! Ha! Ha! Ha! Poor Patrick Sarsfield is very, very mad!

In making this change Lady Gregory returns the play to comedy, an exuberant, almost unhinged, humour. Were the play a tragedy, it might be called *Sarsfield* and conclude with Sarsfield's heroic resolution to continue in the service of 'a bad master'. But Lady Gregory chooses to leave the audience with Sarsfield as seen through the eyes of Lady Dereen and Mrs Kelleher. To them his actions are absurd – to follow a coward like James makes a mockery of heroism. This change creates a tragi-comic ending.

Yeats felt the relationship between his plays and those of his co-directors to be complementary. The 'comedies and tragi-comedies' of Lady Gregory and Synge were 'heightened' by being played alongside Yeats's early poetic tragedies, while his plays benefitted from 'being mixed into the circumstance of the world' by the 'circumstantial art of comedy'.⁷⁴ He continued to be pre-occupied with the balancing of disparate elements in drama, writing in *The Tragic Theatre* (1910) that Shakespeare is 'always a writer of tragi-comedy' who uses comic episodes to define the character of tragic heroes.⁷⁵ His purely comic characters, Falstaff for example or Henry V, are 'passionless', while, in tragic

⁷⁴ Preface to *Poems, 1899-1905*, reprinted in *VPI* 1293.

⁷⁵ 'The Tragic Theatre', dated August 1910; first published in *The Mask: A Quarterly Illustrated Journal of the Art of the Theatre* (Florence) 3 (October 1910); *E&I* 238-46 (240); *CW4* 174-79 (175).

moments, character is forgotten as the speaker becomes the mouthpiece of humanity.⁷⁶ In Shakespeare's tragi-comedies the tragic and the comic are not equally balanced antitheses – the comic is there to deepen the tragic effect by contrast and to allow the audience a brief slackening of tension.⁷⁷ Despite publishing a volume of plays identified by the label 'Tragic-Comedies' in 1912, Lady Gregory seems to have left no theory of tragi-comedy. Her approach to it is based, as I have shown, on folk tradition rather than models drawn from the history of the stage (at least prior to her engagement with Molière). It is more intuitive than doctrinaire, and her gift for comedy seems to have influenced her attitude to the disappointments and betrayals of Irish history. In her notes on *The Canavans*, another tragi-comedy first produced in December 1906, Lady Gregory reflects that the play now seems to her to have been written 'without logical plan', but in one of those 'moments of light-heartedness'.⁷⁸

Conclusion

This chapter began by suggesting that the revisions to *The White Cockade* darkened the mood of the play; it ended with a discussion of Yeats's idea of tragicomedy and Shakespeare. Yeats came to believe that comedy was almost defined by its attitude to character: the more particular the character, the closer to comedy. By this definition the changes to Lady Gregory's play seem not to have darkened the mood but brought it closer to comedy, since the revisions make Sarsfield more the bluff soldier of fortune won over to the Irish cause, whereas in the earlier version he seemed more of a compendium of quotations from the folk and ballad traditions. Such contradictions might suggest Lady Gregory's delight in heterogeneity, or her difficulty in mapping the occurrences of history to her own preference for laughter on stage. Yeats saw tragicomedy as being tragic first and

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ When he was setting up a national theatre and defining himself as a playwright, Yeats at first suggested that Shakespeare was a bad influence on Irish playwrights on the grounds that Shakespeare's habit of changing the scene regularly led to a diffuseness of action when copied by less experienced writers in a different theatrical context ('Samhain, 1901', *CW8* 6). On the other hand, Shakespeare became a useful defence against demands for a propagandist theatre which idealised Ireland, often using the traditional iconography of pure womanhood. In 1903 Yeats pointed out that '[t]he plays of Shakespeare had to be performed on the south side of the Thames because the Corporation of London considered all plays immoral' ('Samhain, 1903', *CW8* 29). Moreover, Yeats was open about learning 'construction' from the 'masters', suggesting that the Shakespearean example of sub-plotting may well have influenced the structure of *On Baile's Strand*, with its framing scenes involving the Blind Man and Fool (*CW8* 8).

⁷⁸ *Coole VI*, 298.

comic second, with the lighter moments providing respite from the darker. Lady Gregory viewed her role as playwright as providing comic counterpoint to Yeats's demanding poetic dramas. Yet a sense remains that Lady Gregory recategorized her play as 'tragic-comedy' in 1912 partly in response to Yeats's developing theories of comedy and tragedy.

Perhaps the more pressing question is why an event in Irish history – the Battle of the Boyne – inscribed within the book of the people, and by Yeats, as a disaster for the nationalist cause should be considered suitable for comic treatment at all. Lady Gregory's change to the ending of the play, closing with the image of Mrs Kelleher and Lady Dereen laughing at Sarsfield seems to leave the last word with comedy, with Sarsfield a pitiful or ridiculous figure. One way of looking at these changes is to see in them the working through of Lady Gregory's anomalous position within the politics of late nineteenth century Ireland. She was both supporter of Irish independence and a Protestant landowner with strong links to the centre of the British Empire. In James Knapp's phrase she was 'both colonizer and colonized'.⁷⁹ Most recent studies of Lady Gregory's works have tended to focus on her autobiographical writings or her comments on her translations of Gaelic poetry as ways of exploring these contradictions.⁸⁰ It is fifty years since Ann Saddlemyer wrote in defence of her plays, and the modern consensus, if one can be identified, would seem to see in her work as a folklorist and literary translator her most convincing contribution to the Literary Revival. Yet the same complexities that led her to offer support to forces resisting English rule in Ireland, while sometimes reinscribing a colonial perspective in her representations of the people, play out in her drama.

The folk tradition is based on a literary canon, originating in folklore, that places an organic community against the law, the reason, the Enlightenment of the British Empire.⁸¹ It is based on a unity among the people that appeared to transcend religious affiliation or family background. The moments in the play when Owen Kelleher and Sarsfield cite the

⁷⁹ James Knapp, 'Irish Primitivism and Imperial Discourse: Lady Gregory's Peasantry' in *Macropolis of Nineteenth Century Literature: Nationalism, Exoticism, Imperialism*, ed. by Jonathan Arac and Harriet Ritvo (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 287-303 (300).

⁸⁰ Mattar's chapter 'Lady Gregory: The Primitive Picturesque' in Mattar, 186-239, shares Knapp's focus on her works of folklore and her translations from the Irish.

⁸¹ Hélène Lecossois writes of 'subjugated forms of knowledge' and 'alternative epistemologies' associated with folklore and oral tradition in Ireland which were viewed by the English as evidence of 'superstition, ignorance and backwardness' (Lecossois, 188).

same ballads celebrating Cuchulain stress that despite differences in birth and class both can partake in an imagined community.⁸² Tragicomedy in Lady Gregory's plays could be seen as a response to the necessity of identifying with a genuine popular nationalist movement, while at the same time distancing herself from the levelling implications of such a move. Her generic negotiations were aesthetic strategies to manage a political, or social difficulty. In this scenario, comedy is that which contains the forces of social change by distancing the viewer from the tragedy of, for example, Sarsfield's betrayal by James. Yeats's letter to Florence Farr which comments on the difference between the Abbey Theatre's writers of peasant genre plays from the 'leisured class' and those from the bourgeois and Catholic classes, makes exactly this point. The former group is distinguished by its ability to dominate its material, and the strategy of dominance is comic distance.⁸³

The Fays' hostility to this may have been aesthetic or political. At one stage, Frank Fay appealed to Synge to write a play of '98, in the vein of *Cathleen ni Houlihan*.⁸⁴ Fay's enthusiasm for political theatre waned quickly, however. His objections were more likely to do with characterisation and stage business, which as a performer would have affected him closely. He would have wanted Sarsfield to have been simpler and more human, to enable a naturalistic performance. It seems likely that some of the changes to the character of Sarsfield made by Lady Gregory move in this direction. Yet the perspective of folk history seems to have encouraged Lady Gregory to add burlesque elements to the portrayal of the noble characters, taking what would have been a tragic character and reframing it in comic mode. Add to this Frank Fay's sensitivity to condescension, and his gloomy attitude in rehearsal comes closer to explanation. It may be that Lady Gregory's ideas about tragicomedy were not fully conscious, that her sense of the proper tone for her history plays was partly shaped by forces relating to the specific complexities of the Literary Revival in

⁸² This perspective draws strength from the growing authority of anthropology and its related disciplines in the nineteenth century, which emphasised the unity of folk motifs across cultures, making it possible to juxtapose Wordsworth's peasant with African or Polynesian rites (Knapp, 288).

⁸³ To Florence Farr, 6 October 1905, *CL Intellex* 232.

⁸⁴ Frank Fay argued for plays aimed at attracting a popular audience at prices they could afford. He wrote to Synge in 1904 advocating sixpenny seats and plays that might hook native theatregoers who could then be encouraged to develop their tastes in 'the Drama' (TCD MS 4424-26/587). Synge was unconvinced, replying that he had nothing against historical plays but that 'strong good dramas only will bring us people who are interested in drama, and they are, after all, the people we must have' (*Letters* 1, 81-3 [82]).

Ireland. Or it may be that she was entirely aware of the difficulties of her position and a heterogeneity of approach was her deliberate artistic response.

Chapter 6

Bringing the Comédie-Française to Abbey Street: *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*.

W. B. Yeats announced the acquisition of the stage 'business' for Lady Gregory's adaptation *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* in a note in *The Arrow*, the organ of the Abbey Theatre, previewing the productions for autumn and winter 1906/7.¹ The practical arrangements for bringing the director's copy from the Théâtre-Français to Abbey Street fell to Frank Fay, who arranged it through Jules Truffier, a *Sociétaire* (or player-member) of the French state theatre. Any expectation that the announcement might have raised among readers of a radically different performance of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* from the première in April 1906 consequent upon the incorporation of this business was immediately undercut by Yeats's note:

We had not this 'business' in time for our first production of the play, but it does not greatly differ from that invented by Mr. William Fay.²

The Doctor in Spite of Himself was Lady Gregory's translation of *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* by Molière, first performed in Dublin on 16 April 1906 and revived on Saturday 10 November of the same year.³ It was the first of three translations from the French by Lady Gregory produced at the Abbey between 1906 and 1909, all of which benefitted from the stage business of the Comédie-Française.⁴ A fragment of her typescript held at the Berg Collection indicates in a holograph marginalium that these adaptations were matters of duty to her: '[t]he circumstances of our theatre have forced me to write comedy'.⁵

The scope and nature of the relationship between the Abbey and the Comédie-Française has generally been overlooked in the (scant) critical literature on Lady Gregory's translations of Molière (1906-09).⁶ Frank Fay's collection of correspondence and books

¹ *The Arrow*, 20 October 1906 – [NOTES], CW8 180.

² *Ibid.*

³ Molière [Jean-Baptiste Poquelin] (1622-73).

⁴ She did not use the director's copy, or *Édition de la Comédie-Française* of *Le Médecin Malgré Lui/Les Précieuses Ridicules* (Paris: Librairie Universelle, [n.d]). Fay archive. Hereafter cited as *Édition de la Comédie-Française*. This text was not acquired by the National Theatre Society until after the opening performances of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* in April 1906.

⁵ 'Molière. [The doctor in spite of himself, translated by Lady Gregory]. Typescript of beginning, n.d. (2p)', The Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

⁶ Mary Fitzgerald, 'Four French Comedies: Lady Gregory's Translations of Molière', in *Lady Gregory, Fifty Years After*, ed. by Ann Saddlemyer and Colin Smythe (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd, 1987), 291-306. Hereafter cited as Saddlemyer and Smythe; Alexandra Poulin, 'Lady Gregory s'en va t'en

provides a new basis for investigating this relationship. As a nationalist and critically-lauded institution, the Comédie-Française provided an aesthetic and organisational model for the Abbey. At the same time, influential theatre practitioners in France were beginning to question the authority of the French national theatre's interpretations of the classical repertory, especially Molière, and these controversies did not go unnoticed by Yeats and Fay.⁷ It was at this moment that Frank Fay began a correspondence with Jules Truffier, which is tipped into the front cover of Fay's copy of *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*. This short correspondence, of which only Truffier's letters in French survive, provides a useful insight into Fay's thinking about acting, *mise-en-scène* and the example of the Comédie-Française. A translation of the six letters, composed between 1906 and 1927, is included as Appendix F. Complementing this and gesturing towards the production of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* at the Abbey in October 1906, is Fay's copy of Lady Gregory's *The Kiltartan Molière* with extensive annotations in pencil and black pen (Appendix E).⁸

As translator, Lady Gregory is central to the productions of Molière between 1906 and 1909. As well as assessing the influence of theatrical tradition in the productions by the Abbey Theatre of Molière's three farces, *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*, *The Rogueries of Scapin*, and *The Miser*, I will analyse and evaluate Lady Gregory's translations from the French, particularly her choice of the Kiltartan idiom as her English dialect. As Alexandra Poulin has shown, the adoption of Irish speech patterns is the first step in the production process,

guerre: the *Kiltartan Molière*', *Études Irlandaises*, 33.2 (2008), 55-89; Lady Gregory's own brief account in *Coole IV*, 60.

⁷ The Comédie-Française's traditional performance style was increasingly controversial in the early twentieth century. Two of its foremost critics were André Antoine (1858-1943) and Jacques Copeau (1879-1949). Antoine founded Théâtre-Libre (1886), developing theatrical naturalism in performance. Frank Fay wrote to Yeats that 'like a bull, his virile reformation ran amok in the popular china shop' ('Unpublished lectures and articles by Frank Fay', MS NLI 10951-2). From 1906-14, he was Director of the Odéon in Paris, applying his theories to works by Molière, Racine and others. Copeau was a non-naturalistic actor and theatre director, who came to public attention as Director of Théâtre Vieux Colombier in Paris (1913-17). Frank Fay referred to Copeau's productions of Molière, in a late letter to Thomas MacGreevy as 'freak shows' (19 March 1928, TCD 4424-6, 8128/3/5).

⁸ The items from the Fay archive that inform discussion here are: Fay's copy of Lady Gregory's *The Kiltartan Molière* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1910), containing annotated play texts of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*, *The Rogueries of Scapin*, and *The Miser*; the *Edition de la Comédie-Française*, annotated with 'theatrical clarifications' by Jules Truffier, in green limp leather binding; finally, four autograph letters from Jules Truffier, to Frank Fay, written over a period of twenty years (1906-27), one letter written by Laurent Max on behalf of Truffier (1907) and one signed 'Balacourt', an employee of the Comédie-Française.

shaping as it does the approach to scenography.⁹ As always, the aesthetic judgements of the Abbey's productions took place against a background noise of debate and contested narratives about the proper representation of Irishness on stage. Although intentionally less provocative to nationalist feeling than Synge's controversial dramatic *oeuvre*, Lady Gregory's Molière nonetheless found itself caught up in criticism of the artistic policy of the Abbey, from both unionist and nationalist points of view. Lady Gregory wrote wearily in 1906 that the theatre was the object of 'slanders' from both sides: from the beginning 'it has been said of us that we never play but in Irish, that our Theatre is "something done for the Roman Catholics", that it has been "got up by the Irish Parliamentary Party ...," that we have a special fee of fifty pounds for anybody from Trinity College who wishes to hire the Theatre.'¹⁰

The Comédie-Française and Nationalism

Lady Gregory's words gesture towards the contested question of who the national theatre was for.¹¹ Questions of authentic representation of Irish people and life recurred in discussion of cultural productions. The power of the theatre and, increasingly, its utility in social terms were commonplaces among English reformers and cultural critics such as William Archer and Matthew Arnold. While England, and particularly London, had its own theatrical ecology, its influence spread to Dublin, partly through the Irish capital's dependence on touring productions from abroad, and partly through the penetration of English cultural periodicals and newspapers in the Irish market. A reference point for debates about the social role of theatre in England (and by extension, Ireland) was the visit of the Comédie-Française to London in 1879. The visit suggested the power of the theatre to excite all classes, and amazed onlookers by the range and quality of the drama performed. Notably, 'a fresh bill was issued every day' and the visit lasted forty-three days.¹² Yet this was only the tip of the iceberg: the *repertoire courant*, the roster of plays that could be performed at a moment's notice, ran to over 100. Inevitably, amid the excitement, some home thoughts turned to the implications of the French success for the English stage.

⁹ Poulain, 79

¹⁰ Coole V, 254-55.

¹¹ This debate continued after the civil war and the Treaty, as Arrington shows.

¹² Francisque Sarcey, 'The Comédie Française', *The Nineteenth Century*, 6.29 (July 1879), 182-200 (182).

The first conclusion was that the theatre had unique potential to bring people together. Matthew Arnold expressed it memorably: ‘the theatre is irresistible; organise the theatre!’¹³ William Archer argued that as ‘pietistic scruples’ in England about the stage weakened, the attention of the middle-classes turned to the theatre and a desire for serious drama grew.¹⁴ Here the Comédie-Française excelled: the *repertoire courante* offered not only the classical drama of the seventeenth century, but contemporary plays by Hugo, Augier, Dumas *frs*. Archer wrote in 1895 that ‘no institution unites all classes as [theatre] does’.¹⁵ Another result of the visit of the Comédie-Française was a renewed interest in England’s national dramatist. In the 1890s the Shakespeare revival under Ellen Terry and Henry Irving at the Lyceum was under way. Irving harnessed existing enthusiasm: the New Shakespeare Society had been formed in 1874. During its heyday, Irving’s Lyceum became a *de facto* national theatre, especially in its hugely lucrative tours of America in the 1890s, where it represented English culture abroad.¹⁶ The idea of the theatre as a form of national cultural capital was reinforced by the arrival of the Comédie-Française in 1879. While there were elements in the English press that complained of the immorality of the Comédie-Française’s latter-day repertoire, there was a wider acceptance that the French theatre offered cultural guidance and the hope of cultivation. This was a significant change in attitudes to theatre. One index of this change was the permission given in 1879 for the French to stage their repertoire entirely free from interference by the Lord Chamberlain. This was despite the censorship of English plays with similar content and subject matter. Ramos Gay quotes Georges d’Heilly, the archivist of the Comédie-Française, who refers to the Gaiety Theatre as a “‘French embassy’” upon which limitless performing powers had been bequeathed.¹⁷ Gay

¹³ Matthew Arnold, ‘The French Play in London’, *The Nineteenth Century*, 6.30 (August 1879), 228-43 (243).

¹⁴ William Archer, *Henry Irving: Actor and Manager* (London: Field & Tuer, 1895), 104.

¹⁵ Archer, 29.

¹⁶ Irving and Ellen Terry toured America with productions from the Lyceum’s repertory in 1885, 1888, and 1893. Increasingly, these tours were essential to the financial health of the company: the production of *Faust* alone earned £9,000 in 1888. After one triumphant performance of *The Merchant of Venice* at the Military Academy of West Point, Irving announced at the final curtain that ‘the joybells are ringing in London tonight, for the first time the British have captured West Point’ (Michael Holroyd, *A Strange Eventful History: The Dramatic Lives of Ellen Terry, Henry Irving and their Remarkable Families* [London: Chatto and Windus, 2008], 190).

¹⁷ Ignacio Ramos Gay, ‘The Comédie-Française in London (1879) and the call for an English National Theatre’, *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, 345 (2013), 5-16 (8), < <https://www.cairn.info/revue-de-litterature-comparee-2013-1-page-5.htm> > [accessed 3 June 2020].

adds that this reflects a concept of the French company as ‘an unrivalled role model, one which subordinated morals to art’.¹⁸

Arnold stresses that the dramatic tradition of England easily matches, in fact outstrips, France’s.¹⁹ All that is to be envied is the latter’s organisation, its aesthetic bureaucracy. Indeed, the *laissez faire* attitude to performance of Shakespeare in England is thrown into relief by the careful transmission of traditions of staging and acting from one generation to the next, guaranteed by the Comédie’s ensemble. One has only to consider the irony that the French publishing industry could support an edition of Molière with the *annotations et éclaircissements scéniques* of the Comédie-Française. No such edition of England’s national dramatist could be offered in the nineteenth-century because no company or theatre had a corresponding monopoly of performances of Shakespeare. This was the situation Arnold wished to address by establishing a national theatre in England at Drury Lane.

England and France were both powerful, self-confident nation states, with actors to boast of. Ireland was not yet a nation state, but a rewriting of official texts of Irish history and identity was beginning, along with attempts to create a modern literature in Anglo-Irish. Audiences saw in the visits of the Comédie-Française to Dublin a way of performing that seemed a contrast to the English stage. Whereas the English actors seemed embarrassed by extravagant expressions of emotion, the visiting French actors committed fully to laughter or rage. As Mary Colum noted, ‘the traditions of the house of Molière and the strolling players whose heirs they were clung to them’.²⁰ Moreover, an affinity was perceived between the French and the Irish styles of speech: ‘the Comédie-Française ... was supposed to be the type that native Irish players could take for a model’.²¹ When Mary Colum writes ‘supposed to’, it was partly Frank Fay, through his columns in *The United Irishman*, and his training of Irish actors, who shaped this expectation. Yeats saw the Fay company performing in *Deirdre* by George Russell, recognising at once the artistic similarity between Bernhardt’s ensemble, which he saw in London in mid-1902, and the Irish actors.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Arnold writes of the ‘inherent defects of French dramatic poetry’ particularly when compared with Shakespeare (‘The French Play in London’, 235).

²⁰ Mary Colum, *Life and the Dream* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1947), 96.

²¹ *Ibid.*

He wrote in *Samhain* (1902) that, having seen Sarah Bernhardt and Édouard de Max in *Phèdre*, he ‘understood’ where the Fays had gone for their model.²² Whereas Arnold saw the French stage as a rival tradition to be outdone, in Ireland it was enabling as a model of theatrical practice, at a time when de-anglicising Irish culture was an essential prelude to political independence.

Frank Fay’s enthusiasm for the visiting French companies was supported by a programme of reading, focusing on the art of speech on the French stage. He recognised that there were no plays on the English stage similar to the poetic dramas of Russell and Yeats and so cast around for a method of acting them.²³ The French actors had a style sufficiently removed from the histrionic approach of the English to be workable. Hence its adoption was a matter of necessity. Nonetheless, the surprise, to London audiences, of the performances given by the Irish National Theatre Society, was heightened by the un-English manner of interpretation.²⁴ The French style opened up for Dublin audiences a way of interpreting plays that resisted Anglo Saxon ideas of good breeding, while combining robust performance with discipline. Such was the enthusiasm for the Comédie-Française that, according to Mary Colum, ‘it was passed around that the real name of the great French actor Coquelin was Coglan, and that his family had originated in Limerick’.²⁵

Perhaps parallels between the house of Molière and the infant dramatic movement in Dublin were overstated. François Sarcy, the French journalist and critic, spoke from the stage of the Gaiety Theatre in London in 1879. Like Arnold, he argued that the strength of the Comédie-Française lay in its organisation. The bureaucracy of the institution was itself a successful reconciliation on a symbolic level of the conflicts of French history. The ensemble principle, whereby there were no stars in the company, but shareholders (or *Sociétaires*), represented republicanism, the democratic overthrow of despotism. However, the idea of subvention, the state subsidy which guaranteed its finances, originated in the patronage of Louis XIV, and so was monarchical in essence. Since the French Revolution these elements in French society had at times erupted into open conflict, but in theatrical terms this conflict

²² ‘*Samhain*: 1902’, CW8 12.

²³ Ernest Boyd, *The Contemporary Drama of Ireland* (Dublin: Talbot, 1918), 40. Fay archive.

²⁴ See Max Beerbohm, ‘Some Irish Plays and Players’, *The Saturday Review*, 9 April 1904, 455-7; William Archer, ‘Irish Plays at the Royalty’, *The World*, 29 March 1904, 551-2.

²⁵ Colum, 96.

is productive.²⁶ Sarcey argues that it is by the 'action and counteraction of these two principles ... that this great institution, the Comédie-Française has been formed'.²⁷

If Sarcey was right and the Comédie-Française was a symbol of national unity in diversity, then in the Abbey Theatre political contradictions seemed to threaten the existence of the theatre. Within the Irish National Theatre Society, the democratic principle was represented by the original organisation of cooperative player-members. It extended to the ensemble approach to performance, since the Fays borrowed from the French the idea that even the minor parts were important and must be interpreted with care and skill.²⁸ The monarchical principle of patronage was found in Miss Horniman's financial control. The Englishwoman's generosity allowed Yeats and Lady Gregory the freedom to produce plays on non-commercial grounds, but it came at a significant cost. Miss Horniman was opposed to the performance of nationalist politics on stage. Hence the principle of subvention and ensemble on the Irish stage gestured not to a productive conflict but towards the paradox of a national theatre in a country that was governed from London. The complex political position of the Abbey Theatre as a cultural institution attempting to define a national identity in the language of its oppressor, put the Irish theatre in a different category from the Comédie-Française. This in turn led to Yeats's double facing comment that the theatre 'had now the business' of the Comédie-Française, but that it was not really different from that invented by W. G. Fay. Yeats's endorsement of the French players was conditional and qualified, at least where comedy was concerned; Fay's enthusiasm was more whole-hearted.

²⁶ Contemporary interest in the Comédie-Française is reflected in periodical publications of the time. W. F. Apthorpe ('Paris Theatres and Concerts I: The Comédie-Française and the Odéon', *Scribner's Magazine* [January 1892], 3-25), Alb ('How to Make an Actor', *Time*, 1 [1892], 228-34), and 'The French Stage', *Belgravia* (May 1878), 385-94, were all cited by Frank Fay in his memoranda prepared for W. B. Yeats and held in the National Library of Ireland. These were referenced by Yeats in a letter of August 1903: 'I send back to you all but one of the articles which you lent me' (CL3 413-14 [413]).

²⁷ Sarcey, 186.

²⁸ Boyd, 41. Fay archive.

Lady Gregory and Molière

The popularity of comedy with audiences in Dublin partly explains the choice of Molière as the first foreign dramatist to be performed at the Abbey. Willie Fay insisted that any foreign masterpiece 'must be comedy' given the thinness of the company in the wake of the schism caused by the adoption of limited liability status in 1905.²⁹ But why Molière and why *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*? Yeats had Molière in mind for the company as early as the opening night of the Abbey in December 1904.³⁰ He believed that Molière wrote before the historical rupture that separated the worlds of imagination and action. Modern audiences were separated from the authentic existence of their ancestors in the countryside and modern drama tended to be superficial and excitable. He found Ibsen preoccupied with the 'average man' of the modern city.³¹ Maeterlinck was no better, a purveyor of spiritual ennui, highlighting the exhaustion and defeat of the beleaguered artist. Molière, like the Irish folktales Yeats collected with Lady Gregory, was of the past, but a past that gestured towards a desirable future. Molière's audience was 'not unlike' the audiences still found in west of Ireland listening to singers and storytellers.³² The art of the future would be rural not urban; it would be extravagant and non-realistic. Molière was all this, as Yeats explained in *Samhain*.

I had Molière with me on my way to America, and as I read I seemed to be at home in Ireland listening to that conversation of the people which is so full of riches because so full of leisure, or to those old stories of the folk which were made by men who believed so much in the soul, and so little in anything else, that they were never entirely certain that the earth was solid under the foot-sole.³³

In 1905, he wrote to Synge suggesting Molière and mentioning a 'fine eighteenth century English translation' proposed by Miss Horniman.³⁴ Lady Gregory wrote in her memoir:

²⁹ W. Fay, 193.

³⁰ Kelly and Schuchard refer to a published interview in the Dublin *Evening Mail* (31 December 1904, 4), announcing Yeats's intention to produce 'an English version of a Molière play, and Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*' (CL3 691n).

³¹ 'Samhain: 1904 – The Play, The Player, and the Scene', CW8 68-79 (71).

³² 'Beltaine: May 1899 – The Theatre', CW8 147-51 (148).

³³ CW8 71-2.

³⁴ 15 August [1905], in *Theatre Business*, 74-5 (75).

We wanted to put on some of Molière's plays. They seemed akin to our own. But when one translation after another was tried, it did not seem to carry, to 'go across the footlights'. So I tried putting one into our own Kiltartan dialect, *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*, and it went very well.³⁵

Questions of textual transmission arise at this point. Which version of Molière in French did Lady Gregory use to translate from? Given her education, it seems a reasonable hypothesis that Lady Gregory translated *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* from the French. Learning French as a girl would have been part of a normal middle- or upper-class nineteenth-century education. However, discovering which edition she worked from, and whether it was purchased in Paris or elsewhere, is not possible at present. Editions of Molière in French were abundant at the close of the nineteenth century, as were editions of Shakespeare in English, and Lady Gregory's published letters and journals give no answers. Nor is there any indication in the catalogue of W. B. Yeats's library whether Yeats's multi-volume copy of Molière's works in French carries a Lady Gregory bookplate.³⁶ However, if we take a nineteenth-century French language version of *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* and compare it with Lady Gregory's Kiltartan translation, the similarities are striking. The episode in which the servants of Geronte beat Sganarelle for denying he is a doctor contains the following stage direction in Yeats's French language edition published by Garnier Frères:

(Ici il pose la bouteille à terre, et, Valère se baissant pour le sauler, comme il croit que c'est à dessein de la prendre, il a met de l'autre côté; ensuite de quoi; Lucas faisant la même chose, il la reprend et la tient contre son estomac, avec divers gestes qui font un jeu de theatre).³⁷

Lady Gregory translates this as:

³⁵ Coole IV, 60.

³⁶ Yeats's copy is *Oeuvres Complètes de Molière, accompagnée de notes tirées de tous les commentateurs avec des remarques nouvelles par M. Felix Lemaistre, 3 vols., nouvelle édition* (Paris: Garnier, Frères [19??], no. 1344 in Wayne K. Chapman, *The Yeats Library Catalogue* (Clemson, SC: Clemson University Press, 2011). The library of P. S. O'Hegarty, Irish civil servant and nationalist (1879-1955), in the University of Kansas gives some indication of the kind of editions of Molière that an educated Irishman might have owned or consulted in the early twentieth century. Two in particular stand out: an *Oeuvres Complètes* from 1871 in one volume 'imprimée sur celles de 1679 et 1682' with notes explaining archaic vocabulary and coloured plates representing the main character in each play (Paris: Laplan) [O'H. D211]; and a dual French-English version from 1732 printed in London by John Watts in eight volumes. Volume II contains *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*. The apparatus of each version has attractions for the translator. O'Hegarty's ownership of a 1732 edition of *L'École des Femmes* in this series [O'H B1415 item 2] reminds us of the ubiquity in the nineteenth century and beyond of survivals from the world of eighteenth-century publishing in second-hand circulation.

³⁷ 'Le Médecin Malgré Lui', in *Oeuvres Complètes de Molière, Tome Second*, 216 < [University of Toronto - John M. Kelly Library : Internet Archive](#) > [accessed 29 January 2021].

(Sganarelle puts down bottle on the ground. Valere bows to salute him, and he thinking it is with a design to take it away puts it on the other side. Lucas also bowing, Sganarelle takes it up again and holds it close to his body, which makes 'un jeu de theatre').³⁸

The version in translation replicates closely the distribution of clauses within the stage direction, even leaving untranslated the summative description of this activity as a 'jeu de theatre', suggesting Lady Gregory did indeed translate from the French. The stage direction indicates the influence of Italian comedy on the tradition of Molière. Operating on a level of the non-verbal, the comedy works by confounding the artificial conventions of the Court with the natural bodily appetites of the countryman.

This leads us to consider the implications of the first part of Lady Gregory's terse description of the circumstances surrounding her translation: that 'when one translation after another was tried, it did not seem to carry, to "go across the footlights"'.³⁹ Cross-reference with Yeats's letter to Synge of August 1905, leads us to the 'fine eighteenth century' translation proposed by Miss Horniman. An outline of nineteenth-century scholarship available to Yeats and Lady Gregory reveals that the play was imitated in English by

Lacy in *The Dumb Lady or the Farrier* made a Physician (1672); by Mrs Centlivre in *Love's Contributions*, 1703; by Henry Fielding in a 'ballad farce' called *The Mock Doctor or the Dumb Lady Cured*, (1732); and by George Wood in *The Irish Doctor or the Dumb Lady Cured*, (1844).⁴⁰

Of these candidates, the most probable is Fielding's *The Mock Doctor* because of its obvious literary provenance.⁴¹ Be that as it may, it was rejected. A version without songs and a more literal translation would have been the version in vol. II of *The Select Comedies of Mr. de Molière* (London: Watts, 1732). According to Joseph Tucker this version was a reading edition, which explains why, if tried at the Abbey, it did not 'act'.⁴² George Wood's Irish version is also intriguing, not least because of its use of Irishisms throughout. It is very

³⁸ *The Kiltartan Molière*, 115-6.

³⁹ *Coole IV*, 60.

⁴⁰ F. Carroll Brewster, *Molière in Outline* (Philadelphia: J. M. Goldy, 1885), 146, <www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Molière_in_Outline> [accessed 29 January 2021]. Fielding's *The Mock Doctor* was first published in London by J. Watts in 1732. A 'ballad farce' incorporated a greater number of songs into the narrative than was customary.

⁴¹ A word should be said here for an alternative candidate, Watts's 1732 dual French-English edition, which was still available in nineteenth century Ireland (fn. 36).

⁴² 'Eighteenth Century Translations of Molière', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 3.1 (March 1942), 83-105 (93).

unlikely that Yeats or Lady Gregory knew of this version, which anticipates *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* by half a century. Nonetheless, its existence indicates her play had an antecedent in the popular theatre of Dublin and that her idea of educating and entertaining an audience with a popular version of a foreign classic was neither original nor unprecedented.⁴³

Producing Molière was doubtless also a 'prestige-oriented choice'.⁴⁴ Moreover, a sympathy between Lady Gregory and the French dramatist was noticed by George Bernard Shaw who argued that the former had the 'gift of Molière' for dialogue.⁴⁵ Alexandra Poulin has argued that Molière's comedies often place a rebellious younger generation against entrenched seniors, playing on the idea of 'the emancipation of the younger generation from the unjust tyranny of fathers'.⁴⁶ In this way, apparently harmless comedy still gestured towards politics and the situation of Ireland and England.

Lady Gregory skips forward, in her memoir, to the reception of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*, noting that 'it went very well', and adding that the chief part, Sganarelle, could hardly have been played 'better in any theatre', but that the players' 'genius' did not suit so well the 'sentimental and artificial young lovers'. The tone of condescension is obtrusive, yet the reception suggests such limitations did not affect the audience's enjoyment, accurate representation of the gentry being perhaps of more concern to Lady Gregory than her audience. Reviewers noted the continuities between Molière's comedy and Lady Gregory's. Shaw gestured towards this affinity when he praised Lady Gregory's 'natural gift for writing dialogue'.⁴⁷ Translation became a synergy, as Lady Gregory imitated in her own

⁴³ A copy of Wood's play held in the library of the University of California and digitized by the Hathi Trust indicates the cultural significance of *The Irish Doctor in America* (George Wood, *The Irish Doctor or the dumb lady cured* (London: Lacy [185?] <HathiTrust Digital Library> [accessed 29 January 2021]). *The Irish Doctor* was produced on Broadway in 1856 and popular acting editions served amateur theatricals in the U.S. thereafter.

⁴⁴ Poulain, 81.

⁴⁵ 'Shaw on Lady Gregory', in *Shaw, Lady Gregory and the Abbey: A Correspondence and a Record*, ed. by Dan H. Laurence and Nicholas Grene (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd, 1993), 62-64 (64).

⁴⁶ Poulain, 81.

⁴⁷ *The Evening Telegraph* (Dublin) noted that 'peals of laughter testified to the risibility of the farce' (17 April 1906, 6). An experienced cast was also praised, with Willie Fay's Sganarelle singled out. *The Evening Mail's* critic also witnessed the delighted response of the audience: 'a continual roar of laughter' greeted the play's 'queer situations and rollicking humour' (17 April, 5). Willie Fay himself recalled that the audience laughed so hard he nearly forgot his lines and that the common quality of

work some of Molière's technical skill with dialogue. In *Hyacinth Halvey*, Lady Gregory uses for the first time a type of polyphonic patterning in dialogue which is typical of Molière.⁴⁸

Yet despite the chorus of approval, there were dissenting voices. Arthur Clery wrote as 'Chanel' in *The Leader*, one of a number of prominent newspapers owned and edited by Irish-Irelanders, that supported more or less hard-line Irish-Ireland positions.⁴⁹ Recently, Gregory Castle has attempted to correct stereotypical interpretations of the Irish Revival movements by 'underscoring their complexity', viewing both Anglo-Irish and Irish-Ireland factions as pursuing the same goal by different means.⁵⁰ The latter position was represented by a correspondent in *Sinn Féin*, a weekly journal, who raised the idea of the social role of drama: it must avoid the temptations of the 'aesthetic cult'. Its business was to embody an inspiring vision of nationality, as Shakespeare and Corneille had.⁵¹ This was an implied criticism of the artistic policy of the Abbey Theatre. Nonetheless, one might therefore have expected Arthur Clery to welcome the translation of Molière at the Abbey in pedagogic terms, but he was worried by Lady Gregory's dialect version. In an article entitled, provocatively, 'A Deserted Abbey', and despite not having read *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*, he doubted that the Abbey's production faithfully represented Molière. He believed that 'the "low comedy," or broad farce' of the production was inauthentic, although he was unsure whether the blame lay with Lady Gregory's translation or 'the actors'. He was shocked by the coarseness of language and action, which led him to judge the evening 'a failure'. He even speculated that Lady Gregory might have deliberately misrepresented Molière in order

the laughter was that it was not 'sophisticated' but had 'the frankness ... of a child's laughter' (W. Fay, 196).

⁴⁸ *Hyacinth Halvey* was composed at the same time as *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*. Molière's influence can be traced in the patterning of the dialogue between Fardy and Hyacinth where phrases are repeated polyphonically (*Coole V*, 39-40).

⁴⁹ *The Leader* (1900-1936) founded and edited by D. P. Moran, challenged the Revivalist literature of O'Grady, Yeats, and Russell, offering a coarser Gaelic nationalism, which was at base sectarian. Moran's ideology was characterised by editorial abuse and vitriol towards those of whom it disapproved, notably W. B. Yeats and the Abbey Theatre (Deirdre Toomey, 'Moran's Collar: Yeats and Irish Ireland', *YA12*, 45-83 [48]). Toomey describes Clery as 'a highly committed Irish Irelander', who nonetheless wrote a 'short but respectful' review of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* in 1902 (63).

⁵⁰ Gregory Castle's evaluation of the critical reception of the literature of the Irish Revival finds that accusations of complicity on the part of the Anglo-Irish Revivalists are exaggerated ('Irish Revivalism: Critical Trends and New Directions', *Literature Compass*, 8.5 [2011], 291-303). Castle associates Clery with Gaelic organisations like the Athletic Association (GAA) and the Gaelic League which promoted an ethic of national self-help in discreet fields of activity (301).

⁵¹ 'Nationality in Drama', *Sinn Féin*, 23 January 1909, 3.

to 'show the superiority' of her own comedy *Hyacinth Halvey* which was 'a hundred times better'.⁵²

Although relatively isolated, this was an important criticism as it touched on a sensitive issue: the authenticity of Abbey Theatre's cultural translations. Here, however, it is not only the Irish peasant that has been misrepresented but the French national dramatist, Molière. Clery's criticism of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* was that it debased and degraded where it should inspire and uplift. Molière is great literature therefore he must promote values of refinement and noble ideals. This is his value to the Irish national movement: as an example, in the same way that the Comédie-Française was an example of a theatrical institution. But this kind of approach was rejected by Yeats as falsification and sentimentality. He wrote in the *The Arrow* that the 'coarseness and simplicity' of Molière was indispensable.⁵³ When similar criticism was voiced over Lady Gregory's adaptation of *The Miser* in 1909, Yeats commented privately:

The reviews of *The Miser* in papers today – an article in Thursday's *Sinn Fein* – showed the old dislike of farce and dialect. Written by men who are essentially parvenus in intellectual things, they shudder a little at all that is not obviously refined. It is the objection to the word 'shift' in new form. ... None of these people can get out their heads the idea that we are exaggerating the farce of Molière. We really reduce it.⁵⁴

The reference to 'intellectual parvenus' suggests a simmering class antagonism. The splits in Revival aesthetics are exposed in Yeats's comment, between the nationalists who would protest *The Playboy* and those for whom its carnivalesque comedy was itself an act in defiance of authority. Yeats's journal entry aligns Lady Gregory's Molière with Synge's controversial masterpiece in ways that will be seen to be significant.

But was Yeats correct in saying that Lady Gregory reduced the farce in Molière? Her changes to the original of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* certainly suggest this. While her translation sticks to the characters' speeches syntactically, a whole subplot in Act II concerning Sganarelle's attempt to seduce the wet-nurse, Jacqueline, is cut. A flavour of the

⁵² 'The Deserted Abbey', *The Leader*, 28 April 1906 (151), quoted in CW8 282n. Yeats had written in *The Arrow* (20 October 1906) that 'one of the Dublin papers' had been 'shocked at the roughness and simplicity of the play' (CW8 180).

⁵³ CW8 180.

⁵⁴ *Mem*, 141.

suggestive dialogue that Lady Gregory omits in her version, comes when Sganarelle is left alone with the nurse. In the *Edition de la Comédie-Française* this reads:

Peste! Le joli meuble que voilà! (*Haut.*) Ah! Nourrice! Charmante Nourrice! Ma Le Médecin est la très humble esclave de votre nourricerie, et je voudrais bien être le poupon fortuné qui têtât le lait de vos bonnes grâces.⁵⁵

[Plague! This is a pretty household! (*Aloud.*) Ah Wet-nurse! Charming wet-nurse! My doctoring is the very humble slave of your nursery and I would gladly be the lucky baby to suckle the milk of your good graces.]

The omission of this passage is in keeping with Lady Gregory's tendency to bowdlerise or euphemise passages of enthusiastic double entendre. Lady Gregory follows Henry Fielding's example here in cutting any reference to the sexual attractiveness of the maid in the landowner's household. The mock doctor's concern, in a ludicrous interpolated scene, is to test his wife's fidelity by attempting unsuccessfully to cuckold himself. Curbing this humour was inevitable given the hostility of many to what, in Yeats's words, was 'not obviously refined'. Lady Gregory's practice of keeping close to Molière cannot extend to his bawdy, yet Fay's stage directions (imported from the *Edition de la Comédie-Française*) go some way towards making up this loss. Hence perhaps, Clery's objection to the 'low comedy' air of the production. In a similar way to Synge, Lady Gregory's dialect Molière aims at *épater la bourgeoisie*, but with a difference. Lady Gregory's self-censorship of Sganarelle was also self-preservation, indicating her more practical approach to playwriting in a culture where idealism co-existed with the prudery of those who were 'parvenus in intellectual things'.

Truffier's Letters to Fay (1906-7).

Who, then, was Jules Truffier and what was his involvement with the production? Truffier enjoyed a successful career as actor with the Comédie-Française stretching from 1875 until his retirement in 1913, after which he took up a position as *Honorary Sociétaire* (1922) and Professor of Declamation at the Conservatoire in Paris. It was perhaps his status as a *Moliériste* that led him to reply to an approach from the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. On the other hand, Truffier already had an established role as the ambassador of the Comédie-Française to fledgling dramatic movements in nations struggling to define their identity in the modern world.⁵⁶ Perhaps this explains why he was deputed to liaise with the Irish. The

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Truffier contributed to theatre education in Greece in the early twentieth century. Inspired by reverence for classical Greek art and pity for modern Greece's oppression by the Ottoman Empire, the

engagement of the Comédie-Française in the theatre movements of smaller European nations was an element of cultural diplomacy aimed indirectly at increasing the geo-political influence of France at a time of alliances and rivalries among the Great Powers of Europe.⁵⁷

In the early letters to Fay, it is clear that Truffier is not quite *au fait* with the significance of the Abbey as a part of the Irish Revival, as he refers to an English academic and his wife as Fay's 'compatriots'.⁵⁸ Such a gaffe is useful reminder of the parochialism of the Abbey on the world theatrical stage at this point. Truffier was a theatrical conservative, a staunch defender of the tradition of acting handed down from generation to generation right back to Molière and his actors. As has been mentioned already, this tradition was under challenge from not only Antoine, but from Jacques Copeau and his later followers. A flavour of Truffier's rhetorical style is given in an article on the 'Performance of the Repertoire' for a literary journal in 1920. Truffier begins by asserting the indispensability of tradition in the face of assaults on it by aesthetes and adherents of naturalism:

Les plus fameux artistes invoqués parfois pour n'avoir relevé que de la seule inspiration, s'être affranchis de la loi commune des études préparatoires de la tradition, étaient, au contraire, des fervents de la méthode et du respect traditionaliste.⁵⁹

[The most famous actors have been held up sometimes for not having considered anything valuable except inspiration, to have freed themselves from the commonly held law of the preparatory training of the tradition, on the contrary they back up the enthusiasts for the method and the respecters of tradition.]

French Minister of Fine Arts sent Truffier to Athens in January 1903. Initially asked to run a theatre showcasing French classical theatre, Truffier focused his efforts on training Greek actors at the Conservatory of Athens, introducing a three-year curriculum based on the Paris Conservatoire. He stayed for two months and his visit, closely monitored in the French press, was considered a success. On his return to France, he wrote about his experience (*Athènes et la Comédie-Française* [Paris: Stock, 1905]), advising the Greeks that 'diction was the probity of Dramatic Art' and recommending idealism rather than realism as a guiding aesthetic principal, because 'Greek art will never be realistic, pursuing only the sublime goal: the apotheosis of human beauty'. Quoted in 'Jules Truffier in Athens: A Glorious Mission' a paper presented to the symposium 'France-Greece Relations: The Theatre of the 1860s to the Present Day', organised by the French Institute of Greece and the Department of Theatre Studies, National University of Athens (May 2014), <[Grèce Hebdo - Les débuts de l'éducation théâtrale en Grèce : premières écoles dramatiques et relations gréco-françaises \(grecehebdo.gr\)](http://grecehebdo.com)> [accessed 11 February 2021]. These statements of dramatic principle would have been endorsed by Frank Fay.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Appendix F, 78.

⁵⁹ Jules Truffier, 'Molière A La Comédie-Française', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 57 (June 1920), 864-90 (864).

This was a riposte to those who preached spontaneity and naturalness of performance as a value above limitations placed on the actor by knowledge of acting conventions related to speech and gesture. It is very close to Frank Fay's often expressed view that the very different styles of artists like Sarah Bernhardt and Constant Coquelin were acceptable because both were products of a traditional training and acknowledged its benefit.

The imbalance in prestige and experience between Fay and Truffier is apparent in the correspondence. At one point, in 1907, an assistant of Truffier's replies on his behalf, and the transactions which secure the director's copies of *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* and *Les Fourberies de Scapin* are delegated to officials.⁶⁰ Truffier was a working actor and director and scribbles 'in haste' on the top of his first letter to Fay.⁶¹ That Fay kept these letters until his death suggests how he valued his contact with a leading member of what he called elsewhere 'the greatest acting company in the world'.⁶²

Truffier's first letter is dated 1 July 1906. It post-dates the opening of Lady Gregory's translation of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* by two months, raising the question of whether those in charge at the Abbey Theatre always intended to consult the Comédie-Française, or not. It is possible that Arthur Clery's criticism in *The Leader* led to a nervousness in some quarters – most likely among the actors – and therefore a need to demonstrate the authenticity of their interpretation of Molière. There certainly seems no obvious reason why this stage business could not have been acquired at an earlier date. This theory fits with a sensitivity within the Abbey to accusations from the nationalist press of immorality or blasphemy in its choice of plays.⁶³ If so, it might have been the Fays who would have urged

⁶⁰ No record of the purchase of the director's copy of *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* by Fay survives, but M. Balacourt sent him the 'mise-en-scène de *Les Fourberies de Scapin*' at a cost of forty francs on 15 March 1907; Appendix F, 80.

⁶¹ Jules Truffier (b. Paris 1856-1943), entered the Comédie-Française in 1875 and became *Sociétaire* in 1888. Truffier entered the Paris Conservatoire and graduated at age seventeen with the prize for Comedy. Like Frank Fay, he combined acting with a passion for the study of theatre history, being described in his official biography as 'well read'. He avoided the pitfalls of 'cabotinage' or 'showing off', remaining simple and accessible in performance ('Jules Truffier', biographical note, published in the *Édition de la Comédie-Française*, vii-viii).

⁶² 'The Unpublished Lectures and Articles of Frank Fay', NLI 10, 951-2: 'Julia Bartel and Lambert fils ... were members of the greatest company in the world the Comédie-Française founded in 1680 by Louis XIV in which Molière's company was amalgamated with two other Paris companies.'

⁶³ Comparing the prompt copy of *The Well of the Saints* with Fay's actor's copy demonstrates that Synge emended the comparison of Mary Doul pretending not to see her husband in Act II to a priest ignoring drunken behaviour between a man and a woman in 'a side ditch' (*Plays 1*, 107).

contact with the French. This would also explain Yeats's lukewarm welcome of the director's copy in *The Arrow*. So much, however, is speculation.

Truffier's letter offers guidance on the performance of the play. He refers to the appearance of Sganarelle ('he does or doesn't have a beard. We adapt the text accordingly') and gives advice on the costume of a doctor. He explains the character of Geronte to Fay, who played him: 'Geronte is a fine old man who is quite credulous'. He tells Fay that at the start of the second act 'Geronte *stands* between Lucas and Jacqueline and *they do not walk about*; they stay in one place'.⁶⁴ The advice is brief, as the explanation 'en hote' suggests, and practical, as of one actor addressing another. It suggests, of course, Fay's willingness to be guided by the Comédie-Française in matters of performance detail.

The second letter, written in early 1907 seems to have been prompted by Fay's request for the director's copy of *The Pleaders* by Racine. Truffier tells Fay it is unavailable, but directs him to Lily Frazer, the wife of James Frazer of *The Golden Bough*, to whom it had been lent.⁶⁵ The October 1906 issue of *The Arrow* had advertised a production of *The Pleaders* 'a comedy in five acts by Racine' as being due for performance at the Abbey on 19 January 1907, one of several classical masterpieces whose production was planned but subsequently aborted. The reasons for the cancellation may be guessed at: the involvement of the company in preparations for the delayed production of *The Playboy*, the introduction by Yeats of his revised version of *The Shadowy Waters* into the repertory after the note of 20 October. Perhaps the debates about the Europeanisation of the repertory which took place between the Directors in December 1906 might also have led to the postponement of ambitious attempts to look abroad for material.⁶⁶ Aside from this disappointment, Truffier

Correspondence between Frank Fay and Synge indicates that the change was made owing to the religious sensitivities of the company (To Fay, ?1 July 1904, *Letters* 1, 90-2).

⁶⁴ Appendix F, 77-8. The command to 'stay in one place' intriguingly parallels an observation in Arthur Symons essay 'Crossing Stage to Right', published in *Plays, Acting, Music* (London: Constable, 1909). The main thrust of Symons's essay was the English producers insisted on restless movement on stage. Symons, and the Fays, wanted stillness and reverie.

⁶⁵ Appendix F, 78-9. Truffier tells Fay that Racine's comedy is 'to be performed in Cambridge shortly'. Lily Frazer had 'seen it performed three weeks ago' in Paris, that is just before Christmas 1906. Lily, Lady Frazer (first married name 'Grove', 1854/5-1941) enjoyed a brief career as a writer, publishing a book on the history of dance in 1895 (Robert Ackerman, article in *ODNB*, <<https://0-doi-org.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/66458>>) [accessed 23 July 2020].

⁶⁶ The abortive schedule of foreign masterpieces indicated the outcome of a disagreement over artistic policy among the directors of the Abbey. Yeats had proposed in December 1906 widening the theatre's aims to incorporate the performance of the best continental drama, past and present.

offers little in another short letter besides a flowery valediction: 'I consider it a charming tribute to our dramatic literature, this touching desire that you have to perform our great classics of the seventeenth century. They will remain for us the masters of all periods.'⁶⁷

Thereafter, there is silence until 1922 when Truffier wrote again to Fay, who appears not to have known that Truffier had officially retired from the Comédie-Française.

The occasion for Truffier's late letter is unknown. Fay no longer needed advice on performance, but he was still hungry for contact from an actor of eminence. In fact, Fay's letter might be described as a fan letter since he asks Truffier for a photograph of himself (Truffier doesn't have any). But the letter does give an insight into the sense of ensemble within the Comédie-Française as of a kind of living priesthood. Describing the celebrations of Molière's tercentenary in 1922, Truffier writes:

I had the pleasure of organising the finest (I think) of the festivities: that in the Caryatids Room in the Louvre, where we celebrated the most momentous date in Molière's career 24 October 1658, when Molière performed for the first time before Louis the Fourteenth, aged 20, surrounded by the court.⁶⁸

The drama of the occasion is vivid in Truffier's account, and the sense of jeopardy, the insecurity of the actor dependent on influential approval:

If Molière had not been approved that day, he would have returned to the provinces the next day and we might never have heard of him again.

Fay requests information about the memoirs of Jean Mounet-Sully, a tragedian of the nineteenth century, and Truffier supplies them. Mounet-Sully represented an ideal of heroic acting for Fay.⁶⁹ Equally at home in the tragic repertory – playing Oedipus and Hamlet – as in the Romantic genre typified by his performance in *Marion Delome* by Victor Hugo, Mounet-Sully reveals Fay's preference for an acting style that is bold, popular and

Having produced *The Well of the Saints* in January 1906, The Deutsches Theatre in Berlin, under the directorship of Max Reinhardt offered a contemporary model of the kind of municipal theatre Yeats envisaged (*Theatre Business*, 81). Synge opposed the idea, arguing as Yeats had in the 1890s that a national literary theatre must be an Irish literary theatre (*Theatre Business*, 175-80 for relevant correspondence). The Fays supported Yeats – Willie Fay wrote to the poet that he believed 'the Greek play [*Antigone*] would help us' (18 August 1906, in *Letters to W. B. Yeats I*, ed. by Richard Finneran et al [London: Macmillan, 1977], 187). There was a need to keep pace with the ambitions of actors like Sarah Allgood for challenging parts.

⁶⁷ Appendix F, 79.

⁶⁸ Appendix F, 81.

⁶⁹ Fay subsequently acquired Mounet-Sully's memoirs in periodical format and a copy survives in his library (*Souvenirs d'un Tragedien*, published in *Je Suis Tout*, a French literary journal).

expressive. Fay had written to Yeats in 1901 that Mounet-Sully had ‘a fine voice’ but ‘no diction’ attributing this to his lack of formal training.⁷⁰ Yet Sully’s memoir makes clear that he had trained at the Conservatoire before entering the Comédie-Française.

Fay’s love of old-fashioned acting helps explain some of the tensions at the heart of the Abbey Theatre towards the end of the Fays’ employment there. It is best expressed by Willie Fay, in a typescript article held in the National Library of Ireland. Fay writes:

The power of arousing an audience has become less and less since the passing of the great actor-managers, and since dramatists began using the theatre as a lecture hall for polemics instead of a place for acting. Today it needs a very good play, with a star actor in it, to get four curtains at the end, and those very polite ones, yet I can remember a matinee performance of “Sir Walter Raleigh”, with Lewis Waller playing Raleigh, when he got thirteen curtains at the end of the first act – the audience standing up to applaud.⁷¹

The ideal actor for Frank Fay was both popular and accomplished in the classical repertory and the heart of the theatrical experience was the connection between actor and audience. The writer’s role was to facilitate that connection. Lewis Waller, in Willie Fay’s formulation, is an English version of Mounet-Sully.⁷²

Truffier’s last letter to Fay is the most detailed and most revealing of the aesthetic values of the Comédie-Française. It appears from internal evidence to have been written in 1927.⁷³ The letter allows the reader to infer much of what was distinctive about the performance tradition Truffier represented, a tradition applied to Corneille, Racine and Molière. The first principle is that performance should show the ‘character’s *soul*’, the ‘inside’, not ‘the exterior’.⁷⁴ What lies beneath this comment is the conviction that it is only through observing the conventions of drama, taught by the Conservatoire, that the essence of the character can be released. ‘The great artist’, Fay wrote elsewhere, ‘knows what he can do within limits’. In other words, restraint based on knowledge of tradition, is an essential

⁷⁰ To Yeats, 29 July 1901. Fay archive.

⁷¹ Willie Fay, unpublished MS ‘A Spot of Acting’, NLI 5981.

⁷² Lewis Waller was ‘the foremost Edwardian heroic actor’, but his critical reputation suffered because of his popularity in sentimental drama, despite his skill as a Shakespearean actor (article in *ODNB* by Victor Emeljanow <<https://0-doi-org.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/36708>> [accessed 12 October 2020]).

⁷³ Dating is suggested by the following comment: ‘...the mentality of the seventeenth-century had absolutely nothing in common with that of our *post-war contemporaries* (1927)!!’

⁷⁴ Appendix F, 82.

corollary of truth or passion. This recalls Yeats words to Mrs Patrick Campbell in 1901 and gestures towards a unity of perspective that embraces poet, actor and tradition:

To be impassioned and yet to have a perfect self-possession, to have a precision so absolute that the slightest inflection of voice, the slightest rhythm of sound or emotion plucks the heart-strings.⁷⁵

The second principle is that Molière's new comedies *Le Tartuffe, ou L'imposteur* (and *Le Misanthrope*) should be played as comedies not tragedies. Writing in the journal *Les Deux Mondes*, Truffier explains that since Goethe and his 'romantic followers' gravity has become a fashionable interpretation of Molière.⁷⁶ Truffier asserts the indivisibility of Molière from the theatrical and cultural practices of his time. Molière wrote many *comedies-ballets* (a hybrid form involving verbal, musical and choreographic elements), yet these have been almost entirely ignored by critics and directors. Jim Carmody has written that '[s]ince tragedy as a genre has traditionally been seen as representing a higher level of aesthetic and indeed moral achievement, scholars have tended to privilege the more serious darker aspects of Molière's drama'.⁷⁷ Truffier saw that this was true for directors also. He argues that Molière is best understood as a writer of vivid parts for actors, not as a purveyor of literary truths, or ethical statements. The hunger for moral seriousness in drama was partly behind Arthur Clery's dislike of the Abbey's Molière, yet Truffier's letters indicate that Lady Gregory's translations were true to the traditional performances of the French playwright.

In the same journal article mentioned above Truffier argued for the importance of diction in performing the classic repertory:

L'ancien langage, avec ses tours différentes des nôtres, ses fréquentes incisives, exige une diction ferme, nette dégagée de tout vice de prononciaion. Les habitudes nonchalantes du parler moderne ne tendent qu'à altérer la délicatesse et le caractère de l'émission, à dénaturer le son des voyelles, à amorir l'accentuation des consonnes.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ To Mrs Patrick Campbell, [c. 19 November 1901], *CL3* 122.

⁷⁶ Truffier wrote to Fay that 'it seems that every half century we wish to introduce a supposedly new spirit into the performance of the most famous works. Ever since Goethe and his followers, we thought we had to do this in respect of the tradition of Molière. This led to a reorientation of our playing of Molière from genial comedy towards seriousness, or even tragedy!' (To Fay, [1927]. Fay archive). Sarcey had argued that the distinctive mark of the Comédie-Française was that it united tradition to a 'wise spirit' of innovation ('The Comédie-Française', 199).

⁷⁷ Jim Carmody, *Rereading Molière: Mise en Scène from Antione to Vitez* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 10. See also the Introduction to Ronan McDonald's *Tragedy and Irish Literature: Synge, O'Casey and Beckett* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002) for a useful discussion of the central importance of tragedy in the western tradition.

⁷⁸ 'Molière at the Comédie-Française', 864.

[The former language, with its different turns of phrase from ours and its frequent subclauses, demands confident, clear diction free of any flaws of pronunciation. The casual habits of the modern way of talking only tend to distort the delicacy and character of the utterance, to adulterate the sound of vowels and to muffle the accentuation of consonants].

Truffier agrees with Fay that clarity of speech is undervalued in modern productions of Molière: “[g]abbling” is widespread, I note with regret!”. This leads Truffier to criticise André Antoine for being ‘somewhat to blame for the incoherence that now prevails in the performance of our classical masterpieces’.⁷⁹ Antoine advocated a looser approach to diction based on natural speech. Just as Truffier attacked Antoine for debasing the classics, Antoine claimed that the Comédie-Française was incapable of doing justice to the modern plays that the taste of the contemporary audience demanded. For example, reviewing Henri Becque’s *Les Parisiennes* at the Comédie-Française in 1890, Antoine criticised its old-fashioned style, citing the attempt to perform a ‘play of observation’ based on real life using the rhetoric and elevated style of the classics. The problem was that Becque’s characters ‘have voices like ours’: they slur words and use ‘familiar turns’.⁸⁰ Therefore they sounded ridiculous when spoken with the artificial diction of the classically trained actor.

When he was appointed to the Paris Odéon in 1906, Antoine found himself with the chance to apply his theories to the classics. The results provoked a sensation. He was the first to set the first act of *Le Tartuffe* in Orgon’s garden (1907) rather than following the seventeenth-century ideas of theatrical decorum which indicated a single drawing room set for the entire drama. This experiment led one critic to hope for ‘a revolution in the staging of our classic drama’.⁸¹ While Antoine did not insist upon the slurred speech of the Théâtre-Libre in the acting of Molière, his whole approach was a challenge to the formality and ceremony of the Comédie-Française’s method.

⁷⁹ Appendix F, 83.

⁸⁰ André Antoine, *Memories of the Théâtre-Libre*, trans. by Marvin A. Carlson (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1964), 151. Performing a work of naturalism in a traditional way, the actors in *Les Parisiennes* addressed themselves to the audience when they were really speaking to each other (147).

⁸¹ Antoine produced *Le Tartuffe* at the Odéon in 1907. Writing in *Les Annales du Théâtre et de la Musique*, Edourd Stoullig described in detail the changing *mise-en-scène* (Paris: Librairie Paul Ollendorf, 1908, 186-9). He hoped that a ‘revolution’ would ensue in drama (187). Changing the traditional setting by locating scenes outdoors led to the ‘impression of real life being lived’. Antoine rendered a ‘host of absurd traditions’ obsolete (188).

The obvious conclusion that different acting styles are required for the classical repertoire and the modern one is not lost on Truffier. But he claims elsewhere that the classically trained actor can play modern characters, while the untrained actor cannot act the classical repertory. Actors like Antoine endeavoured to 'reduce to the "trivial naturalism" of our modern-day lives broad panoramas that were not conceived for little narrow-minded actors without physical means'.⁸² The whole impetus of the movement towards realism was to challenge the boundaries of the traditional style, to try and make comprehensible to a modern audience the actions of the characters of Molière by rendering them from within a theatrical genre which twentieth century spectators recognised as real. To do so was to belittle the classical masterpieces.

What emerges from the letters is a culture war between traditionalists and reformers over the performance of France's theatrical canon. This conflict, like similar ones in Dublin and London, suggests the importance of theatre in its social aspect as a way of representing both the canonical literature of the nation and as a way of representing the people. The battle between Antoine and Truffier would be relocated to Dublin as a tension between the approaches of Yeats and Lady Gregory on the one hand, and the Fays on the other, to an Anglo-Irish Molière. It is a mark of the way that theatrical debates from one country mutate and become complex as they cross national borders that the traditionalist position occupied by Truffier in France is Fay's in Dublin, while Yeats and Lady Gregory move towards the radical reformist aesthetic of Antoine.

Fay's annotations to *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*

Fay's annotations translate and then transfer the *annotations et éclaircissements scéniques* ('annotations and theatrical clarifications') of Jules Truffier onto the text of Lady Gregory's translation. These *éclaircissements scéniques* are the 'traditional business', referred to by Yeats in his note of 1906.⁸³

Lady Gregory's three translations of Molière are collected under the title *The Kiltartan Molière*, published by Maunsel in Dublin in October 1910. The title indicates the importance of the Hiberno-English dialect, in other words the Irishness, of her versions. It formed part

⁸² Appendix F, 83.

⁸³ CW8 180.

of an emerging genre of nationalist publications: *The Kiltartan History Book*, Lady Gregory's collection of Irish folk history, had been published the previous year with illustrations by her son Robert. It would be followed, also in 1910, by *The Kiltartan Wonder Book*. 'Kiltartan' became a trademark indicating the hand of Lady Gregory across genres. Fay's annotations therefore post-date the production of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* by four years. This distances them from production, but Yeats's declaration in October 1906 that the play incorporated all the traditional business of the Comédie-Française suggests the majority are production-specific. Why Fay bothered to annotate the edition so long after the production is hard to say. It created a theatrical souvenir, but also represented a statement of faith in a particular performance tradition. That he copied extensive annotations onto a copy of a play suggests at the very least the significance to him of the conjunction of himself, Molière, the Comédie-Française and Lady Gregory.

Fay's annotations in black ink

Fay's annotations are in both black ink and pencil. The black ink changes are limited to the first ten pages of the text, whereas the pencil emendations run throughout the text and through the other two translations in *The Kiltartan Molière*. Underneath the half-title page of the first of the translations, *The Miser*, Fay has written in black ink 'with the traditional business &c from Comédie-Française'.⁸⁴ This 'business' is the matter of the pencil annotations and it is noteworthy that it is equally intensive in the plays Fay did not perform in at the Abbey – *The Miser* and *The Rogueries of Scapin* – as it is in *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*. Fay must therefore have had access to the *Editions de la Comédie-Française* for all three plays, although only that for *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* survives in his collection. It raises the question of how involved he was in rehearsals and other preparations for productions which he would not appear in, owing to the Fays' departure from the Abbey in 1908.

Here is the opening speech of the woodcutter, Sganarelle, to his wife Martine (Hibernicised to Martha by Lady Gregory) showing the changes made by Fay in black ink:

Sganarelle. I tell you I will not do it or any other thing. ~~It is I~~ myself will give out orders, ~~I tell you~~, and will have the upper hand.

Martha. And I tell you it is I myself will be uppermost!⁸⁵ [deletions in black ink – Frank Fay]

⁸⁴ Appendix E, 62.

⁸⁵ *Coole VIII*, 27, Appendix E, 64.

Lady Gregory's is a close translation of the French with the addition of Kiltartan applied to the syntax and vocabulary. The syntactical inversion of the Kiltartan idiom present in '[i]t is I myself' is a typical artificiality of Lady Gregory's style. It seems to be this that Fay objects to: he cuts it here, as he does the two instances of 'myself', another Gaelic usage. The repetition of 'I tell you' adds an Irish lilt to the line, which Fay also removes.⁸⁶ On the same page, Lady Gregory's Sganarelle boasts of his knowledge of Latin: 'Aristotle was surely right the time he said a woman to be worse in the house than the devil!'. Again, Fay emends the text: 'Aristotle was surely right when he said a woman is worse in the house than the devil'. Here the Irish syntax is in the 'to be' instead of the English subordinate 'when'. Fay here does not cut the Hiberno-English, he re-writes the line in standard English. This pattern is repeated across the first ten pages of the text (see Plate 1, below) as Fay cuts and rewrites the text, shearing it of Irish grammar and syntax. For example, the 'so's and 'sure's that litter the text are removed, as in Martha's reply to Sganarelle '[s]ure you haven't the sense of an ass'.⁸⁷ And Irish lexis is altered or omitted altogether, so Sganarelle's naming of Martha as his 'sky-woman' is cut and Martha's reference to their 'little one-eens' is formalised to 'little ones'.⁸⁸ Fay seems to have objected to Lady Gregory's use of dialect in translation.

⁸⁶ In a letter to W. J. Lawrence of April 1908, Fay objects to Lady Gregory's 'ballad metre dialect' (7 April 1908, Fay Papers NLI 10951-2).

⁸⁷ *Coole VIII*, 27, Appendix E, 65.

⁸⁸ Appendix E, 66.

THE DOCTOR IN SPITE
OF HIMSELF

ACT I.

SCENE: ~~A cottage kitchen.~~ ¹ Sganarelle and
Martha come in quarrelling. ~~from house~~ ^R

² Sganarelle. I tell you I will not do it or any
other thing. ~~It is I myself~~ will give out orders,
~~I tell you,~~ and will have the upper hand.

Martha. And I tell you it is I ~~myself~~ will
be uppermost! I made no promise the day I
married you to put up with your pranks and
your tricks.

Sganarelle. Well ~~now~~, isn't a wife the great
torment! Aristotle was surely right ~~the time~~ ^{when}
he said a woman ~~to be~~ ^{is} worse in the house than
the devil! ^{R L}

Martha. Will you look ~~now~~ at this great
scholar with his fool talk of an Aristotle!

Sganarelle. ~~So~~ I am, ~~too~~, a great scholar.
Where now would you find any other cutter

Plate 5. Page from Fay's copy of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*, showing the first page of text with annotation in black ink and pencil. The Fay archive.

Did these annotations relate to the performances in 1906 or were they what Fay wanted in retrospect, after 1910, when he made the changes? Did he and his brother produce a version different from Lady Gregory's text? Is a conflict in rehearsal suggested by

Fay's annotations? We have seen already that there was a historic nervousness among the actors regarding the reception of material that might be considered blasphemous or immoral by the audience. While neither would appear to apply in this case, we have to reckon with the dislike of farce and popular entertainments by the Catholic church. Paula M. Kane notes that the Catholic church tended to approve of art which upheld the social order and that it hated popular culture such as that represented (in America) by 'vaudeville, nickelodeon and dime novels'.⁸⁹ Given that Arthur Clery had condemned the production of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* as a 'music hall sketch', there are grounds to suspect that the Irish-Irelanders of the press might have objected to the Abbey Molière.⁹⁰ This opposition would of course have been intensified by the representation of Molière's peasant characters as Irish, as they were in Lady Gregory's translation. While Frank Fay may well have been influenced by Irish Ireland's opposition to the mixture of dialect and farce, he had, as we shall see, other reasons to distance himself from a Hiberno-English dialect version of Molière. These are aesthetic rather than moral.

Fay's annotations in pencil

The pencil annotations are intensive throughout Fay's copy of *The Kiltartan Molière*. In the case of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*, their family resemblance to the *annotations et éclaircissements scéniques* by Jules Truffier has already been noted. They provide new evidence for the dramatic realisation of Lady Gregory's translations of Molière and material for inferring the aesthetic values that underpinned them. The first marks that Fay makes cancel Lady Gregory's setting of the play in a country kitchen interior and replace it with the traditional town square setting of the *Commedia dell'arte*.⁹¹

Lady Gregory's first stage direction reads, 'A cottage kitchen. Sganarelle and Martha come in quarrelling'. Fay has crossed out the 'cottage kitchen' and added the pencil interpolation, 'from house R'.⁹² On the previous page he draws a set as printed in the *Edition de la Comédie-Française*. This change seems similar in intent to the removal by Fay of Lady Gregory's Kiltartan dialect. Lacking contemporary evidence about the production, we

⁸⁹ Paula M. Kane, "'Staging a Lie": Boston Catholics and the New Irish Drama', in *Religion and Irish Identity*, ed. by Patrick O'Sullivan (Leicester; Leicester University Press, 1996), 111-145 (127).

⁹⁰ CW8 252n.

⁹¹ Appendix E, 63.

⁹² Appendix E, 64.

cannot establish which set the audience saw. However, it is clear that a pattern of hostility from Fay towards the dialect translation and the *mise-en-scène* it implies, is suggested. The setting that Fay prefers has the neighbour's house at one side, an open space at centre with a forest backdrop suggesting Sganarelle's occupation. Molière's play was based on *Le Fagotier*, an earlier farce which has not survived. According to Brander Matthews, the earlier play was 'probably' a comedy of masks, with a set consisting of an open square with the dwelling of the heroine's father on one side or other'.⁹³ The setting Fay prefers is the traditional Comédie-Française set which gestures towards the play's origins in the world of *Commedia dell'arte*.⁹⁴ Any sense of this original *mise-en-scène* is lost in Lady Gregory's adaptation.

Some of the traditional business improves upon and sharpens Lady Gregory's stage directions. Molière introduces slapstick comedy into supposedly formal encounters between characters for comic effect. In Act II, Sganarelle is introduced to Geronte, who has decided to marry his daughter to a rich old man, regardless of the love she bears to young Léandre, shortly after donning the mantle of the doctor. In Lady Gregory's version, he beats Geronte (of higher social rank) with a stick because he assumes he (Geronte) must be lying when he says he is not a doctor, but in the version in Fay's text the action is more specific: he takes Geronte's *own cane* and beats him with it, before apologising profusely when he realises his mistake – Geronte for his own part is so overwhelmed by his respect for the title 'doctor' that he excuses the extraordinary indignity of allowing himself to be beaten publicly.⁹⁵ This change is small, but it suggests the importance of action in farce. In *Commedia dell'arte* the characters must be able to 'turn on a sixpence', constantly be on their toes in order to survive 'the twists and turns' that fate throws at them.⁹⁶ They must be alive to the potential opportunities offered by objects and spaces and actors around them. Sganarelle's actions, in keeping with the traditions of Italian comedy, have no 'psychological explanation', but they do have a theatrical one – in each case the character is 'performing in the moment', making

⁹³ Brander Matthews, *Molière His Life and Works* (1910; New York: Russell and Russell, 1972), 226.

⁹⁴ Some modern theatrical reformers wished to perform Molière in a highly physicalised manner informed by the *mise-en-scène* of *Commedia*. Copeau's *treteau nu* proposed a bare raised platform with steps like the trestle theatre associated with masks. His production of *Les Fourberies de Scapin* was 'ruthlessly lit like a boxing ring ... it recaptured the spirit of *Commedia dell'arte* without any laborious imitations of the past,' Michel Saint-Denis (*Theatre: The Recovery of Style* [London: Heinemann, 1960], 22).

⁹⁵ Appendix E, 69.

⁹⁶ Mark Evans, *Jacques Copeau* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 94.

use of an object belonging to another and turning it back on him in an improvised moment of slapstick, which also reverses established social hierarchy and behaviour.⁹⁷ Chastising violently a figure of higher social standing, Sganarelle becomes, in the context of the Revival stage, an Irishman defying authority, metaphorically colonial authority. Many of Molière's farces place a rebellious younger generation in opposition to entrenched and stubborn seniors.⁹⁸ This plays on the Oedipal position of Ireland vis-à-vis England.

The heart of *Commedia dell'arte* is in physical action. However, in her translation, the level of stage detail is determined by her source in the French. Much more is supplied in the stage directions Fay adds to the text, based on the director's copy. When Valere and Lucas return to tell Geronte, in Act II, Scene I, that they have secured the services of Sganarelle, each one physically turns the elderly Geronte to him to gain his attention.⁹⁹ This creates a bit of repeated business, typical of the genre, where the servants' eagerness to please their master tips over into a physicality that reverses the hierarchy within the household. The stock character in *Commedia dell'arte* is always balanced precariously between triumph and disaster. Sganarelle therefore improvises wildly to remain in character as the doctor. Much of this business is supplied in the stage directions. Latin phrases are added to Molière's text when Sganarelle wishes to establish his learning: Geronte's daughter Lucy becomes '*Lucinde, Lucinda, Lucindus, Lucindum*' in the faux-doctor's nomination.¹⁰⁰ He cites Hippocrates as an authority for the wearing of hats indoors, persuading Geronte to cover himself.¹⁰¹ He risks ruin by groping Lucas's wife, and then turns the tables on him by suggesting only the villainous are jealous of their wives.

Once the faux consultation of Lucy begins, Sganarelle plays on a knife-edge of risk and believability. Several chairs, including an armchair (not in Lady Gregory's translation) are brought into play. Sganarelle seats himself in the armchair, providing the audience with a visual symbol of his assumed status. He procrastinates and delays, gesturing to Jacqueline, the nurse, to distract the patient while he quizzes the father; then, instead of diagnosing the cause of the malady, he simply describes it. The farce relies on pace and rhythm, as

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Poulain, 81.

⁹⁹ Appendix E, 68.

¹⁰⁰ Appendix E, 70. These Latin phrases are not in Molière's text, but are part of the 'tradition of the actor' supplied by the director's copy.

¹⁰¹ Appendix E, 69.

Sganarelle begins to talk Latin-influenced gibberish. The humour relies on movements supplied by Fay:

[Sganarelle] [c]rosses extreme R, then extreme L, speaking with great volubility. When he says 'et casus' he throws himself into the armchair which falls on him. Lucy and Geronte rise, all hurry to Sganarelle. Then Lucas and Valere raise the armchair. Sganarelle sits repeating 'et casus'.¹⁰²

There follows again the mixture of catastrophe and recovery, of physical improvisation and verbal ingenuity. It is in the stage business every bit as much as the text that the character is established and the effect of the comedy is felt. For Copeau, this aspect of Molière is borrowed from the Italian tradition. He lamented modern actors' physical awkwardness, their avoidance of kneeling because they might damage their trousers.¹⁰³ The spirit of *Commedia dell'arte* is in the 'the movement', just as it is in 'certain comic scenes of Shakespeare'.¹⁰⁴ There was no need for elaborate or realistic *mise-en-scène* because the text contains all the necessary prompts for the actors' movement. Fay did not go this far, but he did insist on a certain convention in the performance of farce. Finally, Sganarelle's luck runs out: he is discovered to have encouraged Lucy and the apparently penniless Leandré to elope and is bound over. Lucas, who has a grudge against Sganarelle on account of his wife, pinions him in the armchair that had previously symbolised his high status. Now Sganarelle kneels before Geronte and begs for a beating instead of a hanging.¹⁰⁵ The play is resolved by the reappearance, *deus ex machina*, of Lucy and Leandre complete with documents showing Leandre's new-found wealth and a comic ending is secured in the teeth of probability.

The changes Fay makes to the text, or rather his addition of stage business, shift its centre of gravity back towards the traditional performance of Molière's farce by the Comédie-Française. In so doing, Fay resists Antoine's attempts to inflect French classical drama with a naturalist aesthetic. He continues the practice of finding in the dramatic idiom of the French state theatre a performance style that could be adapted to theatre in an Irish context. In 1902, it had been the statuesque pose and rhythmic gestures of Sarah Bernhardt allied to the trick of self-effacement of non-speaking actors on stage that had inspired the

¹⁰² Appendix E, 72.

¹⁰³ Jacques Copeau, *Texts on Theatre* ed. and trans. by John Rudlin and Norman H. Paul (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 148.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Appendix E, 74.

approach of the actors to George (AE) Russell's *Deirdre*. Now it was not French tragedy but the conventions of French farce and their antecedents in Commedia dell'arte that the Abbey Theatre borrowed in staging *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*. In the former case, statuesque acting allied to verse drama had an esoteric appeal, while in the latter case, the combination of farce and dialect created a form of popular drama that some critics found hard to equate with the Abbey's stated appeal to educate the cultural tastes of the people.

The Art of Translation

'In vital translation, and I believe that our translations are vital, a work of art does not go upon its travels; it is reborn in a strange land'.¹⁰⁶

This statement comes from 'A Note by W. B. Yeats in the "Abbey Theatre Programme", Feb. 25, 1909' reprinted in Lady Gregory's *The Kiltartan Molière*. It is strikingly expressed and raises as many questions as it answers. 'Our translations' could refer simply to Lady Gregory's translations from the French, but it could also include translations from the Irish, such as Hyde's *Casadh an t'Sugan*, or even the peasant comedies of Synge and Lady Gregory based on Gaelic speaking Irish rural dwellers. There is the striking personification of a work of art and its peregrinations or lack of them. Above all there is the sense of alienation ('strange land') involved, and an implication that the work of art must die to be reborn. We should attend to Yeats's metaphor because it alerts us to the idea of translation as a transformation implying struggle.¹⁰⁷ Yeats's language of death and rebirth denies the notion

¹⁰⁶ 'A Note by W. B. Yeats in the "Abbey Theatre Programme," Feb. 25, 1909', *Coole VIII*, 353-8 (357).

¹⁰⁷ Yeats was beginning in 1909 to introduce into his dramatic criticism the idea of 'The Mask', though in a private and speculative sense. He noted in his journal, published in 1972, which overlaps almost exactly with the note on *The Miser* (January 26-28, 1909), that '[t]here is a relation between discipline and the theatre' ('journal entry 34', *Mem* 151). 'The Mask' is both a constraint and theatrical convention. In a subsequent note, he distinguishes between the masks of comedy, tragedy and farce. His description of the mask of tragedy is that it is 'allied' to the 'figures of Egyptian temples', a description that recalls the *mise-en-scène* of the Egyptian plays, *The Shrine of the Golden Hawk* and *The Beloved of Hathor*, revived at Victoria Hall in 1902, which he discussed with Frank Fay (Fay to Yeats, 15 April and Yeats to Fay 21 April 1902, *CL3* 175-77, 177n). The mask of comedy bifurcates into the 'individual' mask of 'comedy' and the 'grotesque' mask of farce ('journal entry 36', *Mem* 152-3). Reaching towards systematisation, Yeats links the three masks to the 'three classes' in which he argues the three dramatic genres originate: farce, comedy and tragedy correspond to the 'people, the middle class and the aristocracy' ('journal entry 37', *Mem* 153). This theatrical discussion of the mask looks forward to the unpublished dialogue 'The Poet and the Actress', written in 1916. We should, though, be wary of applying readings of 'The Mask' as it appears in *A Vision* back into texts before *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1917), as such approaches are anachronistic (Warwick Gould, 'The Mask before *The Mask*', *YA19*, 3-47, [5]). Yeats's note on *The Miser* explores the humour of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* and whether it is correctly categorised as comedy or farce. On this question, Yeats reaches a different conclusion from Fay.

of an easy commerce between languages, the idea that the thoughts and expression of a genius like Molière supervenes the language it is composed in, and can be poured, as it were, from the container of the host to the target language without mishap. Instead, he posits originality and estrangement, gesturing toward some modern theories of translation. In her study of Lady Gregory and translation, Alexandra Poulain quotes Antoine Vitez, a French theatre director, who argues that translation is always set within a field of political forces and it can ever be seen as existing autonomously. Translation and theatre directing are very similar: both are acts of interpretation.¹⁰⁸

In understanding what Lady Gregory is attempting in her translations of Molière, we would do well to follow Yeats and to ignore her own comments. In *Our Irish Theatre* she wrote that the English translations of Molière that were read and rehearsed by the actors were not judged to be dramatically effective and that, perceiving some common ground between the emerging canon of Irish plays and Molière, she resolved to translate the French dramatist herself. As I have shown, this simple statement is incomplete. It sounds as if Lady Gregory is attempting to efface her role as translator. Some sort of mystical affinity between writers across cultures is posited, for example, by others such as George Bernard Shaw. Shaw portrayed Lady Gregory as a kind of reincarnation of Molière in 1910. Speaking on behalf of the Abbey in London, he said '[n]o dramatist, living or dead, has shewn the peculiar, specific gift of the born playwright – the gift of Molière for instance – more unmistakably than Lady Gregory'.¹⁰⁹

This sense of the essential continuity of Lady Gregory's work with Molière's is perpetuated by some recent critical studies. Ann Saddlemyer suggests in her forward to *Coole VIII* that Lady Gregory's 'natural gift for writing dialogue' made her a sympathetic translator of Molière. Moreover, Molière's style of social satire was close to Lady Gregory's

¹⁰⁸ Antoine Vitez produced a celebrated tetralogy of plays by Molière on successive evenings at the Avignon Theatre Festival (1978). The plays were all performed on the same set, using the same props and furniture; the actors wore the same costumes for all four plays. By using the same scenography, Vitez broke with the realist-inspired practice of creating new scenery to express the unique features of each play. In this he was an inheritor of the self-consciously theatrical mode of Copeau rather than the naturalist aesthetic begun by Antoine (Carmody, *Rereading Molière*, 140-1). Poulain argues that Vitez's use of the French word 'traduire' implies both translation and direction: 'both are acts of interpretation', (79). Vitez sought to emphasise the partiality and artificiality of his production.

¹⁰⁹ Laurence and Grene, ed., *Shaw, Lady Gregory and the Abbey*, 63.

own in plays like *Hyacinth Halvey*.¹¹⁰ Mary Fitzgerald also takes at face value Lady Gregory's matter-of-fact statements about translating Molière. She points out that her translations are 'virtually verbatim reproductions of the originals'.¹¹¹ Her versions tell us something about 'her ability to subordinate herself to the mind of another writer'.¹¹² They were in any case 'accidents of history', owing to the clause in the patent agreement restricting the Abbey to performances of contemporary Irish dramas and continental masterpieces.¹¹³

Such breezy comments occlude the sheer strangeness of Lady Gregory's version of Molière. Take one of the speeches that Fay has altered in annotation:

Sganarelle: ~~So~~ I am, ~~too~~, a great scholar. Where now would you find any other cutter of scollops that has as much knowledge as myself? I that served a high-up doctor through the length of six years, and that knew the rudiments ~~and~~ [when I was] I a young boy. [deletions and interpolations: Frank Fay]¹¹⁴

In French, this speech reads:

Oui, habile homme: trouve-moi un faiseur de fagots que sache, comme moi, raisonner des choses, qui ait servi six ans un fameux Le Médecin, et qui ait su, dans son juene âge, son rudiement par coer.
Poeta! ... cujus ... singularis ...

Sganarelle's speech in French begins '[y]es, a skilful man:', which Lady Gregory translates as '[s]o I am, too, a great scholar', avoiding 'yes', which has no equivalent in Irish, for the Gaelic construction 'so I am' and adding the emphatic, 'too'. She translates 'fagots' as 'scollops', presumably based on the similarity in shape between the slim cuts of wood and the flattened scallop shape. This sounds like an Irish dialect term: it certainly is no direct translation of Molière. Finally, she avoids a subordinate clause by using the continuous present, 'and I a young boy', an example of Irish grammar. *Poeta ... cujus ... singularis* is a Latin parody intended to convey to the audience the extent of Sganarelle's knowledge of medical Latin. It is also a 'tradition d'acteur', not in Molière's original script but added to the director's copy. Lady Gregory does not include it, but Fay adds it in pencil.

An analysis of Lady Gregory's translation shows two things: the translation is close to the original in that each clause of the French is rendered by a clause in the English

¹¹⁰ *Coole VIII*, viii.

¹¹¹ 'Four French Comedies', 279.

¹¹² 'Four French Comedies', 278.

¹¹³ 'Four French Comedies', 277.

¹¹⁴ Appendix E, 64-5.

language. Secondly, the use of the Kiltartan dialect is striking. This is clear in the lexis and syntax. It is the same dialect used in her plays and would have been familiar to the Abbey audience. These are the features that Frank Fay objects to. Lady Gregory's translation is an interpretation in an analogous way to a theatre director's interpretation of a classic text. She turns Molière into folk drama. In doing so, she makes no attempt to efface the original context: the French names are unchanged. But, as Poulain suggests, the language tends to 'play against' the elements of foreignness in an attempt to domesticate the plays.¹¹⁵ For example, changing the traditional town square setting of the Italian comedy of masks for the 'cottage kitchen' is a bigger alteration than might initially appear. The cottage interior setting is a metonym for a whole *mise-en-scène* developed for a genre of contemporary Irish plays. In this context it is significant that Fay's annotation deletes it and replaces the original *Commedia dell' arte* setting.

Lady Gregory's use of Kiltartan in place of standard English is strategic in a political sense.¹¹⁶ Using Irish dialect means that her translation is a conversation between three languages and cultures – French, standard English and Hiberno-Irish. In his study of translation practices in Ireland Michael Cronin has pointed out that writing a literature in Hiberno-Irish is a way of allowing 'the target language, the language of the coloniser, to be colonised in its turn by the language of the colonised'.¹¹⁷ This explains the productive effect

¹¹⁵ Poulain, 79.

¹¹⁶ Recent criticism has claimed that Irish Revivalism has long been misunderstood as a movement. It was widely seen in the 1980s as a form of cultural nationalism that possessed a naïve and nostalgic view of the past desiring to preserve a pre-colonial Celtic heritage. More recently, there has been a movement to see the Anglo-Irish group of Revivalists as trying to correct historical misrepresentations and create productive images of national identity. Typical of this work, is Gregory Castle's 'Staging Ethnography: J. M. Synge's "The Playboy of the Western World" and the Problem of Cultural Translation', *Theatre Journal*, 49.3 (Oct. 1997), 265-86. Castle argues that despite the cultural legitimacy conferred upon him by his ethnographic research into the language and customs of the Aran islanders, Synge resisted the temptation to turn Ireland into a laboratory for imperialist anthropology. Instead, he enacted, or operated within, the oppressive structures of colonial/ethnographic authority in order to destabilize them through his *The Playboy*, the violent critical reception of which mirrored the conflicting structural positions within the play (271). In a more recent essay, Castle explains 'Synge was not representing an authentic Irish speech ... which is the anthropological gold standard; his Hiberno-English was, by contrast, a "new original", its authenticity bound up in the very performance that calls it into question,' ('Irish Revivalism', *Literature Compass*, 85 [2011], 291-303 [299]). Lady Gregory's cultural translations, although more complex because operating between three languages, can be read in light of Synge's approach.

¹¹⁷ Michael Cronin, *Translating Ireland: Translation, Languages, Cultures* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 141, quoted in Poulain, 80.

of her translations of the Cuchulain cycle into the Irish dialect in 1902. As Yeats would later explain, if she had not found the old stories, and finding them, had not developed Kiltartan dialect, then the past could not have been gathered for use in the present and future.¹¹⁸ Yet the three-way conversation of her version of Molière adds a whole new level of strangeness. It was one that Frank Fay struggled with. Fay's addition of the traditional business of the actor, in the line '*poeta ... cujus ... singularis*' suggests how embedded in French culture Molière's words were. Lady Gregory's use of a Hiberno-English inflection to English suggests a specifically Irish location and *mise-en-scène*. This combination is mildly bewildering and recalls Yeats's comment about a work of art waking up in a 'strange land'.

Fay attempts to solve the difficulty by erasing Lady Gregory's dialect, but this is problematic too, since it suggests that standard English is somehow politically neutral. The effectiveness of Lady Gregory's translation in a political sense, is that it foregrounds the political bias of standard English, which gains its power from seeming natural, a non-dialect. Fay's black-ink annotation emending Lady Gregory's text to return it to standard English peters out after ten pages. One wonders whether he might have been struck by the thought that in returning the English to its official state he was complicit in the fiction that standard English was somehow impartial. There is no evidence that he was, but it is striking that the annotation does stop abruptly. But Fay's complicity was not primarily with the English as colonisers. It was with the French as cultural custodians of Molière, and representatives of a tradition of acting in which he was invested. He wished to return Lady Gregory's Hiberno-English to standard English because the neutrality of the latter was useful in theatrical terms; it did not interfere with a traditional representation of Molière, as a showcase for the acting style and *mise-en-scène* of the Comédie-Française. The disadvantage of Kiltartan was that it appeared to demand a style of performance that clashed with the Frenchness of the piece and its development as a vehicle for actors. Fay's theatrical loyalties rendered him politically conservative, putting him, in an odd way, closer to Annie Horniman. Horniman wished the Abbey to produce foreign masterpieces but she deplored nationalism. Therefore, she disliked Lady Gregory's dialect translations and refused to allow them to tour England:

¹¹⁸ CW3 336.

[t]he absurdity of people with French names talking a brogue reminds me of the plays I saw in the seventies ... I will not countenance it [*The Doctor in Spite of Himself*] being brought to England on any pretext.¹¹⁹

Horniman's animus and her wish to protect an English public from the Abbey Molière indicates her understanding that Hiberno-English translation from French was an act of defiance directed at the heart of the Empire.

'As Far From the Life of Today as the Clown and Pantaloon of the Circus'¹²⁰

Just as Yeats felt that he had rediscovered Irish literature through Lady Gregory's translations of the Cuchulain cycle into Hiberno-English, he welcomed her adaptations of Molière. They were part of a canon-building process. He recognised that training a group of actors to perform masters from every great school of dramatic literature 'would be the work of years', but he hoped that it would be possible to play them 'confidently' and 'a little proudly' given that no English theatre had such freedom.¹²¹ This is a double liberty: from commerce and from the censor. Yeats foresaw pressure to perform realist dramas in the mode of Ibsen and was prepared to compromise and stage the better examples of a genre he himself disliked as part of a 'catholic' repertory. His preference was for plays from the 'Mediterranean': Greek tragedy and Molière.

Despite the success of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* with audiences, Yeats felt the need to defend Lady Gregory from allegations that she was distorting Molière. As we have already observed, modern theories of translation celebrate the idea that it is a battle or at least an interpretation, but Yeats perhaps felt forced to deny that they were unfaithful. He told readers who had been shocked by the 'roughness and simplicity' of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* that these qualities were not owing to the Kiltartan dialect but belonged to Molière.¹²² Yet opposition remained, and even grew. *The Irish Times* remarked of *The Miser*:

[i]t is not easy at times to associate certain phrases of the English, or rather Irish version with the polished grace of the author, and putting such sayings as "Shure it's yourself is looking grand" into the mouth of a French dame is hardly convincing.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Miss Horniman is quoted in Flannery, *Horniman*, 26.

¹²⁰ Yeats's Note, *Coole VIII*, 356

¹²¹ *The Arrow*, 20 October 1906 – [THE SEASON'S WORK], CW8 108-9 (109).

¹²² CW8 180.

¹²³ *The Irish Times*, 22 January 1909, 9, quoted in Hogan III, 274.

Some nationalists also really disliked Lady Gregory's dialect, even in her folk drama, feeling that it was an insufficiently dignified vehicle for the heroic figures and events of Irish history. This was easier to defend when Lady Gregory's sources were Irish manuscripts, but when it was Molière there was, as we have seen, a clash between the refusal to efface the Frenchness of the script and the Hiberno-Irish idiom. On the one hand, Lady Gregory's translations make no attempt to hide the historical background of Louis XIV's France, and on the other the language suggests the theatrical practice of the Irish peasant play.

Yeats confronted these difficulties in his note on *The Miser*, but before this he visited the Odéon in Paris and saw a production of *Les Fourberies de Scapin* in December 1908, probably directed by André Antoine. His letter to Lady Gregory describing the production delivers us back to the debates about performance which Truffier considers in his letters to Fay. Yeats compared the French production style with the Abbey's. He wrote that he disliked the French production because:

It seemed to me that a representation so traditional in its type as that at the Odéon has got too far from life, as we see it, to give the full natural pleasure of comedy. It was much more farcical than anything we have ever done.¹²⁴

What this means is that the French style is less naturalistic than the Abbey's performances. Yeats returned to this theme in his note on *The Miser*. Lady Gregory's dialect is itself a kind of stage-direction that enables the actors to base their performances 'more directly upon life' than would otherwise be possible. This gives them 'something to make up for the loss of that traditional way of playing Molière which the French actors inherit from his time, and can alone succeed in'.¹²⁵ Whereas Yeats had in private correspondence preferred the Irish actors to the French, in his note of 1909 he claims that only the French can act Molière traditionally. He wrote:

This traditional way, which is at once distinguished, and, so far as the comedies we have chosen go, more farcical than ours, has, for all its historical and artistic interest, the disadvantage of putting the characters, so different are the manners of today, almost as far from the life of today as the clown and pantaloone of the circus. Even in Paris an actor has here and there advocated the abandonment of tradition, that Mascarille, let us say, might be re-made nearer to modern life; but, as it is impossible to modernise the words, tradition is, no doubt essential in Paris.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ *Coole IV*, 60

¹²⁵ To Lady Gregory, 19 December 1908, *CL InteLex*, 1019.

¹²⁶ *Coole VIII*, 355-7.

Yeats explains the discomfort of the three-way conversation between French, English and Hiberno-English and attempts to disentangle them. Given that Hiberno-English is essential to the ongoing warfare with English colonising of Irish culture, it follows that a more natural approach to performing comedy is preferable too. Yeats acknowledges that this is an abandonment of the traditional way of playing Molière but sees it as more audience-friendly and therefore preferable.

Fay saw this and disagreed. For him, the association of Molière with the theatrical conventions of the seventeenth-century was non-negotiable. He marked the passage in pencil and added in the margin the following comment:

This is silly[.] Molière[']s characters are the stock characters of the Commedia dell'arte + have nothing to do with today[.] [T]hey are of the theatre[.] What has Mascarille to with "modern" life[?] They are theatrical types[.] full of theatrical effect.¹²⁷

Fay insists on the archetypal characterisation of French comedy. These characters were not traditional to France but borrowed from Italy, where they originated in the Middle Ages. Where Yeats insists on the primary legitimacy of the writer, in this case translator, to reconfigure the original, Fay insists on the distance of the theatrical spectacle from any reality, its dependence on dramatic convention. Mascarille was played by Molière in the original production of *Les Précieuses ridicules*. The character is connected by family relation to Sganarelle and to Brighella in *Commedia dell'arte* and beyond that to the *zanni* of Italian comedy. He is of the valets of the repertoire, who in France, gentrified, culminated in the character of Figaro. Yeats speaks disparagingly of the clown and pantaloone of the circus, but there is no reason to suspect that Fay would view the audience-pleasing nature of stock characters with similar disapproval. Indeed, the survival of ancient genealogies of comic type in the popular entertainments of the present was proof of the vitality of theatrical tradition in defiance of 'modern' life. In his later unpublished writings, Fay mourned the disappearance of theatrical traditions such as the Harlequinade of Pantomime, a staple of the Victorian theatre, in retreat in the post-World War I world. Fay recalls performing in Pantomime at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre where 'a brilliant old actress ... knew the

¹²⁷ Appendix E, 76.

traditions of the clown and harlequin and columbine and trained those who acted these parts'.¹²⁸ Fay averred that these conventions retained their popularity with children.

Yeats's comments suggest he reappraised Antoine in light of Lady Gregory's translation of Molière. The 'actor in Paris' who proposes an abandonment of tradition might well be Antoine. Indeed, it is hard to imagine who else Yeats might have in mind. This supposition is strengthened by Yeats's visit to the Paris Odéon in December 1908, since Antoine was appointed director there in 1906 with a self-imposed brief to challenge traditional staging of the classics. If Antoine was so revolutionary in his reappraisal of staging, it is strange that Yeats's comments about the production of *Les Fourberies de Scapin* seem to stress so strongly the traditional elements, such as the emphasis on farce, which strongly suggests a continuity with the traditions of the Comédie-Française rather than any radical approach. However further on in the letter he does comment on the acting in terms that suggest naturalism:

The acting was amazingly skilful and everything was expressive in the extreme. I notice one difference between this production and ours which almost shocked me so used am I to our own ways. There were cries of pain and real tears. Scapin cried when his master threatened him in the first act, and the old man, beaten by the supposed bully, was obviously very sore. I have always noticed with our people there is never real suffering even in tragedy.¹²⁹

It is unclear whether the 'cries of pain and real tears' are typical of French acting or were an innovation of Antoine's designed to mimic ordinary or realistic human behaviour. Yet it seems more likely that the 'real suffering' of the French players was a part of the tradition of French classical acting. Fay had himself noticed that French players revelled in opportunities for histrionic emotion, whereas English actors seemed embarrassed by feeling.¹³⁰ Yeats restates his oft-repeated view that Irish actors were unsuited to tragedy, which was, in his thinking, an unfortunate consequence of their class and religion, and one

¹²⁸ Untitled lecture on the traditions of English acting preserved in 'Lectures and Articles on the Theatre by Frank Fay' (NLI 10, 953).

¹²⁹ To Lady Gregory, 19 December 1908, *CL InteLex* 1019.

¹³⁰ Fay rarely missed an opportunity to criticize Sir Henry Irving, or to damn with faint praise: '[h]e was what was then called an intellectual actor. He did not, because he could not, produce an emotional storm in the theatre, as all great acting does' ('unpublished lectures and articles', NLI 10, 953). Michael Booth adds that in the later nineteenth century the displacement of the pit by the orchestra stalls, meant that the actor was confronted not by working class, or lower-middle class theatregoers but by 'row on row of well-dressed, well-bred, undemonstrative stallholders'. This reorganisation hastened a 'quieter style of acting', of exactly the kind Fay would have disapproved (*English Nineteenth Century Plays, vol. II* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969], 4).

reason why he was keen for Florence Darragh, the English actress, and then, Mrs Pat Campbell to join the Irish company.¹³¹ Whether Irish actors were suited to farce is a moot point, which Yeats sidesteps here by endorsing Lady Gregory's comic – not farcical – Molière. Farce might in theory require a more artificial style of acting, a more extravagant characterisation, whereas what Yeats came to define as comedy in his theatre essay of 1910 based character on observation of Irish character, which would be within the scope of his actors. The brash and emotional acting demanded by the characters of *Commedia dell' arte* would be, we might speculate, as far beyond their capacity as tragic performance. Yet eschewing farce could be seen to be a distortion of the traditional method of performing Molière. Fay writes that the characters are 'theatrical types, full of theatrical effect'. He seems to be advocating a method like that Yeats witnessed at the Odéon in 1908, of passionate pantomime.

It is striking that Yeats defends a naturalistic approach to the acting of Molière because he seems to be arguing against himself. Fay's advocacy of passionate acting would seem to be closer to Yeats's theory that farce, and tragedy overlapped and were in fact opposite to comedy not each other.¹³² Yeats's motivation for his self-contradiction would seem to be found in his conviction that Irish actors could not succeed in tragedy, and therefore could not mimic farcical emotion either. Furthermore, he will have wished to defend Lady Gregory's translation, which it was obvious required a performance in the same manner as her Irish comedies. Finally, the needs of the theatre as nation would have weighed with him. Hiberno-English was a cornerstone of the movement to redefine the English language in an Irish context. Elements of English culture attempted to deny or ridicule the legitimacy of Irish dramatic literature, and therefore rendering French canonical literature into Hiberno-English was an act of cultural defiance. Ironically, it was Fay who was closer to Yeats's theory in insisting on the artificiality of the characters of Molière, and

¹³¹ As he became absorbed in his system in the years following 1910, Yeats used the terms 'objective' and 'subjective' to describe personality in terms of the phases of the moon. Theatrically, he used them as synonyms for 'comedy' and 'tragedy' as in his comment that the Abbey actors possessed 'objectivity' in their impersonation, but not 'passion' which comes from 'lonely dreaming' and is the essence of tragedy ('A People's Theatre', *CW8* 127-28).

¹³² Morash writes that Yeats 'came to see tragedy and farce as more closely aligned than farce and comedy, in that both the tragic hero and the farcical character have that quality of excess that strips them of their individuality' (Morash, *Yeats*, 100).

in recommending an acting style to complement them, an unreal art more closely aligned to that of tragedy than comedy.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to situate two items from the Fay archive, Truffier's letters and Fay's annotations to Lady Gregory's play text, within a number of critical contexts: theatrical, cultural, linguistic and political. Previous critics have, with few exceptions, failed to notice the strangeness of Lady Gregory's translation of Molière, choosing instead to read her own statements, and those of her influential contemporary supporters, at face value. Unravelling the contexts of writing that apply to *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* involves acknowledging that the translation involves French, English and Hiberno-Irish. Domesticating a foreign setting, the dialect was the first step in the production process that seemed to extend the scenography of the peasant play to Molière.

This was controversial to various groups who felt Molière's reputation was being traduced by association with the Irish brogue. One of these was Annie Horniman, who refused to allow the play to tour alongside *The Playboy* in England in 1907. At the same time, opinion within the Revival movement was divided. Lady Gregory's colleagues, Synge and Yeats, were supportive, seeing that the translations were part of the Abbey's programme of nation building, but others within the movement deplored the coarseness of the humour of the piece. This group did not reject intellectualism but wished it to be in the service of national self-help, inspiring and uplifting and could not recognise this imperative in Lady Gregory's work.

Lady Gregory's engagement with Molière forced Yeats to reconsider his doctrine with regard to Antoine and the Comédie-Française. Writing to Fay in 1904 to advise him on replying to Moore's attack on non-realistic stage management, Yeats distanced the aesthetic doctrine of the Abbey from André Antoine's experiments with naturalism. He recognised the value of the Comédie-Française as an example of theatre praxis that could be applied to his own works of poetic drama. The more rhetorical style, where the actors were vehicles for the poet's words, facing the audience so that they might best be heard, limiting movement and ritualising gesture, favoured Yeats's drama. The players developed a somewhat more naturalistic version of this in their playing of Synge, whose style demanded

a mixture of realism and stylisation. By 1909, Yeats was interweaving notions of discipline and the theatre in the symbol of the mask. He seems to have defined *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* as an example of a theatre of comedy, where character is based on observation of real life. Adapting the classics to modern *mise-en-scène* in Paris, Antoine was naturalising Molière in an analogous manner to Lady Gregory. This led Yeats to re-evaluate his usefulness to the Abbey Theatre, finding in him an ally in the necessary business of transgression and defiance that Irish nation-building demanded.

Recent criticism of the Revival has focused on the ways that Synge and Lady Gregory's aesthetic provided a critical purchase on modernity.¹³³ One way in which Lady Gregory achieved this was by demonstrating that standard English was not inevitable. Instead, it was revealed to be the tool of empire, supervening over local dialects and imposing a necessary but distorting homogeneity. If Hiberno-Irish implied a local habitation, it also pointed towards a possible future where standard English, and the English, might be superseded in Ireland by another cultural and political identity.

Frank Fay disapproved of Lady Gregory's dialect precisely because of its impact on the production style of the play. Stressing the theatrical tradition behind the farce, Fay wished to see the broader profile characters of *Commedia dell'arte* in the staging of the production. He wanted the farcical energy of the play to be unleashed, that the audience might appreciate the full theatrical effect of the farce. In the language of Yeats's masks, he wished for the mask of farce, which was the mask of the people, of 'exaltation, moral force, labour'.¹³⁴

The question inevitably arises, was Fay justified in calling Yeats's wish to naturalise the performance of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* 'silly'? Should the Comédie Française's traditions have been followed more closely? It appears, firstly, that the production was a compromise between the traditional business acquired through Truffier and the Hiberno-Irish translation of Lady Gregory. Neither side was excluded from the production. Yet the wider question about performance persists. Fay's aesthetic demanded close adherence to the theatrical conventions of the seventeenth-century, modified in the tradition surrounding its performance in France in the subsequent centuries. This type of theatrical antiquarianism

¹³³ Castle, 'Irish Revivalism', 294.

¹³⁴ 'Journal entry 37', *Mem* 153.

had supporters in England, notably in William Poel's approach to Shakespearean production. It put the actor at the centre of the artistic process, which explains much of its appeal to Fay. On the other hand, this approach seemed increasingly old-fashioned in the years leading up to and following the First World War. Tradition was under attack in France, where it still had great authority. Modernity demanded new forms and a new freedom of interpreting the classics. The idea that a monopoly on the production of classic texts could exist was increasingly untenable. Although Fay was indisputably Yeats's teacher in the history of the French stage, Yeats, ironically, seems to have been more aware of contemporary developments, partly through his visits to Paris, such as his timely attendance at Antoine's *Les Fourberies de Scapin* in 1908. Fay's implacable opposition to Antoine was based on the reputation of Théâtre-Libre, which was indeed a jolt to the theatrical system, but the Antoine of the Odéon seems to have been a different proposition. Truffier made this point in his letter of 1927, when he wrote that in spite of Antoine's damaging effect on diction, he nonetheless had the greatest respect for his 'vast' *oeuvre*, and that, moreover, people were quick to take as definitive approaches to performance that were really experimental. Fay's archive contains a copy of Antoine's *Mes Souvenirs sur le Théâtre Antoine et sur L'Odéon*, clearly closely read, which could indicate he took a new interest in him towards the end of his life.¹³⁵

On closer inspection, Yeats's shift towards Antoine in 1909 does not represent any betrayal of his earlier criticism. It represents an understanding that different genres of play required different styles of acting, and a recognition that the resources at his disposal suggested comedy. Yeats was indeed more flexible in his adaptation of his theories to the needs of the present moment than might be expected. Defining *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* as comedy implied a naturalistic acting style, or at least one approaching it, as his cogitations on the essences of comedy and tragedy would demonstrate. In fact, it was during a rehearsal of *Les Fourberies de Scapin* that Yeats seems to have an epiphany about what was production-specific about tragedy and comedy.¹³⁶ Directing Molière seemed to

¹³⁵ *Mes Souvenirs sur le Théâtre Antoine et sur L'Odéon* (Paris: Grasset, 1928), [Fay archive].

¹³⁶ Yeats wrote that it was during a rehearsal of *Les Fourberies de Scapin* that he noticed how 'passionless' the performance was and recognised that while 'tragedy must always be a drowning and breaking of the dykes that separate man from man', that 'it is upon these dykes that comedy keeps house' ('The Tragic Theatre', *E&I* 238-45 [241], *CW4* 175-79 [176]). Farce is comedy without character, it is 'bound by incident alone'. The masks of tragedy are abstract and allied to decoration,

have hardened Yeats's conviction that comedy and tragedy required quite different production styles and provided impetus to his understanding of the unique demands that his own drama would require of performers and audiences in future. Yeats's engagement with Molière through Lady Gregory, coming at the end of his decade of close involvement with Irish theatre, crystallised his thinking about theatre; the results were published in his essay *The Tragic Theatre* and in his lecture *The Theatre of Beauty*, first given at Harvard in 1911. However, the impetus for his theory was arguably caused by misunderstanding Molière as a comic writer rather than an author of artificial farces. If so, this is another example of Yeats's genius for creative misinterpretation. On the other hand, Fay was a stickler: acting tradition was a link with theatres past, a guarantee of quality, and a bulwark against the egotism of the modern performer. He defended it.

while those of farce drive out thought in an excess of joy. Yeats perceives a connection between these masks and the moods of the three classes that created them: the aristocracy, the middle class and the people. In this scheme, farce is the mask of the people, the labouring class (*Mem* 152-3).

Conclusion

This thesis stands at the intersection of theatre and performance history, and the history of the book. It considers questions of authority and final intention in the composition of text. Exposing the dynamics of the relationship between author and actor, the thesis examines conflict and collaboration in the Irish theatrical revival. Both book and theatre history ask similar questions: about historical process, adaptation, and the relationship between author and text, or performance. The actor and, in recent times, the theatre director inhabit a middle ground between study and auditorium, and are part-author of the theatrical event, part-critic of the text. The Fay brothers occupied both roles and their marginalia provide a window on the—sometimes tortuous—process of bringing a play from page to stage and maintaining it there.

Two factors have been obstacles to assessing the Fays' contribution to the aesthetic achievements of the Abbey Theatre. Their own diffidence is one. Willie Fay's autobiography is vague about the Fays' artistic legacy. Frank's views are scattered throughout a lifetime's letters, unpublished talks, and articles. The second is that they lost the battle for control of the Abbey, and history is traditionally the preserve of victors. This thesis has investigated Frank Fay's books, especially those associated with Synge, Yeats, and Lady Gregory, to draw out the Fays' artistic doctrine and its legacy and to unravel the creative relationships at the heart of the project. This thesis has shown that Frank Fay's marginalia can be read as an adaptation of the literary text for the stage. Fay's approach was to transplant the best that was being done on the European stage and to adapt it for plays of Irish dialect and history.¹ The words of an earlier Irish playwright – once described by Willie Fay as the father of modern Irish drama – suggest the Fays' method.² Dion Boucicault wrote that 'rules are scattered about the stage and transmitted gipsy-like in our vagrant life from generation to generation'.³ Frank Fay's marginalia illuminate the process

¹ Malcolm Kelsall, 'Makers of a Modern Theatre: Frank and William Fay', *Theatre Research International*, 3.3 (1978), 188-99 (197).

² Willie Fay wrote that '[m]odern Irish drama reached its full glory with the Abbey Theatre, but it began with Dion Boucicault' (Unpublished typescript [March 1930], NLI MS 5, 981).

³ Quoted in Benjamin McArthur, *The Man who was Rip van Winkle: Joseph Jefferson and the Nineteenth Century American Theatre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 234.

by which the brothers Fay attempted to discover a method for staging new plays of Irish dialect.

Fay's marginalia to a copy of Yeats's *The King's Threshold* thicken—albeit slightly—the sense that the poet's early work for the Abbey involved collaborative composition. Declan Kiely has analysed the language of the play to suggest Lady Gregory's co-authorship at a lexical level, extending well beyond her acknowledged help with the original scenario.⁴ Moreover, the play was significantly altered after its first production (and publication) between 1903 and 1905. Kiely notes that '[t]here are few surviving manuscript materials of the revision between 1904 and 1906'.⁵ Fay's copy, then, adds to the scant evidence of textual transmission during this period. We now know that Yeats's revision of the scene between Seanchan and his lover Fedelm took place while Yeats was discussing with his leading actor his differing approaches to characterisation in *The Shadowy Waters* and *The King's Threshold*. Yeats told Fay that the former was 'deliberately without human characters' while *The King's Threshold* was 'the other side of the halfpenny'.⁶ The specific revisions to Seanchan's speeches to Fedelm in Fay's copy are, it might be inferred, part of Yeats's campaign to create a more human character with whom the audience could empathise.

Fay's copy of *The King's Threshold* is an actor's copy, so the greatest number of annotations concern the role he created, Seanchan the poet. These generally slight changes propel the verse in the direction of a speech that takes its images from the everyday, rather than the stock of conventional Victorian poetic imagery. The small changes in Fay's copy establish a field of imagery in the everyday, 'an old torn cap ... a glove without a finger', rather than in the cosmic, 'the holy tree', the 'sun and moon'.⁷ Fay's marginalia give

⁴ Kiely points to the use of the term 'mereings' in the line '[p]ull down old mereings and root custom up' (*VPI* 279, variant noted). Yeats does not use the term anywhere else in his poetry, and it only appears once in his prose in 'The Death of Hanrahan', first in the 1905 version, which Yeats revised with Lady Gregory's help. It is retained in all subsequent scholarly editions of the story (*Myth* 2005, 166, and 366n4). Kiely makes a strong case that 'it is most likely' that Brian's line of dialogue and possibly other dialogue are 'hers', based on the word's comparative frequency of occurrence in her work (*The King's Threshold, Manuscript Materials by W. B. Yeats*, ed. by Declan Kiely [Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005], xliii-xliv; hereafter cited as *Kiely KT*).

⁵ There is a typescript (NLI 21,505) that probably formed the text for the revival of the play at the Abbey in 1905, and Lady Gregory's copy of the A. H. Bullen edition (1905) with holograph emendations by Yeats and Lady Gregory herself (*Kiely KT*, xlviiii).

⁶ To Frank Fay, [20 January 1904], *CL3* 526-28 (527-8).

⁷ *VPI* 305.

examples in *The King's Threshold* of Yeats's growing preference for a poetry based on speech. 'I have but one art, that of speech', the poet wrote in 'Literature and the Living Voice', first published in 1906 (written in 1904).⁸ One reviewer argued that the Fedelm-Seanchan scene was the episode in which the play moved from rhetoric to lyricism, and when the audience's sympathies were fully engaged for the first time in Seanchan's tragedy, whereas until that point spectators had observed the character with detachment.⁹ The revisions Yeats made in April 1904 render this already powerful scene more dramatically effective.

Frank Fay had publicly urged Yeats to write for a popular audience from the first; his letters indicate a more nuanced position. Fay had in fact considerable sympathy with Yeats's programme for the reform of the theatre by the re-instatement of the poet-dramatist as playwright. Yet he feared that too theoretical an approach would result in monotonous delivery of verse and the subsequent alienation of audiences. Fay sought to introduce Yeats to a European theatrical tradition of acting. This would, he felt, support Yeats's promotion of verse drama and lend vital credibility to his theatrical manifestos. As John Stokes argues, in the matter of verse speaking Frank Fay was 'deeply committed to a more valid tradition' than Yeats, and 'act[ed] as tutor' to the poet.¹⁰ Extending the view of Stokes, this study has suggested that Yeats's articles in *Samhain* and *The Academy* depended to varying degrees on Frank Fay's learning, which Fay conveyed through his letters and unpublished articles.

The Fays have often been viewed as standard bearers for naturalism in Ireland. Early reviewers, such as Arthur Walkley, commented on the 'delightful effect of spontaneity' and 'artless impulsiveness' of the Irish players' performances.¹¹ Yeats confirmed this picture in 1908 when he added a footnote to his 1902 article in *Samhain*, claiming that the Fays practised stillness and restraint of gesture owing to their natural artlessness.¹² Annotations to an early history of the Abbey in the Fay archive contradict this

⁸ 'Literature and the Living Voice', CW8 105.

⁹ 'The King's Threshold', *The United Irishman*, 24 October 1903, 3.

¹⁰ John Stokes, 'The Non-Commercial Theatres in London and Paris in the Late Nineteenth Century and the Origins of the Irish Literary Theatre and its Successors', 2 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Reading, 1968), I, 315.

¹¹ 'The Irish National Theatre', *The Times Literary Supplement* (8 May 1903), reprinted in Hogan II, 60-63 (62).

¹² Yeats added this comment as the article was prepared for republication in his 1908 *Collected Works*. It quickly became official history, and was repeated in Ernest Boyd's *The Contemporary Drama of Ireland* (Dublin: Talbot; London: Fisher Unwin, 1918), 41. Fay contested this re-writing of history in the margin of his copy of Boyd's volume.

view. Frank Fay states clearly that the device whereby non-speaking actors efface themselves in stage grouping, in order that attention be directed on the speaker, was adapted from the method of the Coquelin company in *Tartuffe*.¹³ Simplicity was, he argued, an aesthetic choice not a manifestation of the unconscious nobility of the Irish folk.¹⁴

One of the notable features of the Fay archive is that it broadens the scope of our knowledge about the relationship between the Abbey and the Comédie-Française. Frank Fay's letters from Jules Truffier indicate that Fay was influenced by the orthodox position that classics of the Renaissance be performed as closely as possible to their original conditions. This in turn illuminates a disagreement between Fay and Yeats, revealed in Fay's marginalia. By 1906, the need to keep the newer professional actors of the Theatre Society supplied with strong parts contributed to a plan to perform European classics in translation as part of the repertory of the national theatre. This was resisted by Synge but supported by Yeats and the Fays. The plays of Molière, translated by Lady Gregory, were something of a compromise because it was felt that their humour and characterisation was compatible with the Abbey's existing repertory. But the margins of Fay's copy of Lady Gregory's translation suggest his reluctance to have these works confused with plays of Irish dialect. His copy of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* has ink deletions and changes removing Anglo-Irish dialect from the new version.

Annotations to his copy of *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* also suggest Fay's dislike of *mise en scène* designed to make the Abbey production look like a peasant drama with a kitchen setting. He wanted the original town square set followed. Similarly, he was dismissive of Yeats's justification for imposing the look and tone of Irish comedy on the production. Yeats argued that the French were bound by the original conventions because they could not modernise the text, but because Lady Gregory's was an adaptation of Molière, naturalistic acting and sets were acceptable, even necessary. Fay's annotation to Yeats's note, '[t]his is silly', highlights a rupture in relations between the Fays and the directorate that became decisively apparent in later 1907. Fay wished to see the play

¹³ Fay reviewed the production for *The United Irishman* on 1 July 1899 (*Towards a National Theatre*, 15-17).

¹⁴ In an unpublished lecture, Fay insisted that the artistic effects of the productions of Synge were the result of theatrical learning not innocence: *The Playboy* production achieved its effects 'not by breaking [theatrical convention] but by *knowing* it and *adapting* it to the kind of production we were acting' (NLI 10, 953).

performed according to the conventions of the Comédie-Française, which provided detailed guidance on the staging of *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*. For Yeats and Lady Gregory, rendering the plays of Molière into Irish dialect was an assertion of national identity. However, Fay's loyalty was to the training of the Paris Conservatory, and to the traditions of the actor.

The staging of Molière was significant for Yeats in a different way: it helped him formulate his doctrine of tragedy and comedy, as his essay 'The Tragic Theatre' makes plain. It was while rehearsing *The Rogueries of Scapin* that Yeats noticed that comic acting is an objective art based on observation, while tragic performance is subjective and passionate.¹⁵ This distinction influenced his thought beyond the theatre as he began to view Irish politics and history from the perspective of the tragic and the comic. In his scheme, Irish Catholic politicians were comedians, while Anglo-Irish leaders were associated with tragic isolation and passion. The Fay archive, then, demonstrates the contrasting artistic ambitions that Yeats and Fay had in the final years of their collaboration. Yeats used Molière to confirm his prejudices about the Abbey actors' limitations, while Fay hoped to show that Dublin was capable of supporting an acting company to rival the Comédie-Française. His dream remained unrealised.

Where was Synge in all of this? The playwright was more affable and easier for the actors to relate to, but his work remained mysterious. According to Fay, Synge dreaded the idea of a Yeats-Gregory dominated national theatre.¹⁶ Although a shy man, he was able to mix more naturally with actors. He was welcomed in the rehearsal room whereas Yeats and Lady Gregory were not. He was, as ever, his own man. The Fays attempted to represent Synge's Ireland naturalistically on stage, as the detailed lists of costumes and props on the blank leaves of Frank's Fay's copy of the Vigo Cabinet edition of Synge's one-act plays suggest. Yet, as critics have argued, the residual or vestigial nature of the culture represented by Synge lent this naturalism a haunted quality. Some have suggested that the Fays' acting highlighted a sense of estrangement from conventional reality in Synge's plays. Mary King, for example, has written that 'in Synge's time the actors assumed a gesture and held it, remaining immobile while they spoke, thus giving to movement a quality of stasis'.¹⁷

¹⁵ 'The Tragic Theatre', CW4 176.

¹⁶ 'Synge also wrote me a letter which at his request I burnt in which he said that a Yeats-Gregory theatre would be no use to anybody' (To W. J. Lawrence [1912], MS 10, 952/2/ii).

¹⁷ Mary King, *The Drama of J. M. Synge* (London: Fourth Estate, 1985), 107.

Upon this valid observation she builds an argument that Synge was a precursor of post-structuralism. Her better point is that Synge's approach to his material and the Fays' acting style was harmonious. Fay's insistence on stillness (derived, as we know from the Fay archive from the French players' production of *Tartuffe*) and restraint of gesture and movement did create a disembodied effect on observers. C. E. Montague compared this effect to Maeterlinck, suggesting that the performances were non-naturalistic (and the plays of Synge non-naturalistic).¹⁸

Observations such as this have led some to conclude that Synge's claims for authenticity in his representation of Irish life are misleading. The truth is more complicated. As I have shown, Synge's careful use of punctuation for rhythmic effect in the first edition of his one-act plays, was a type of stage direction, designed to indicate to an actor the distinctive rhythm or lilt of the lines. His concern, here and elsewhere, was to represent Aran speech patterns accurately. As Nicholas Grene has suggested, realism was important to Synge.¹⁹ This came across in David Greene and Edward Stephens's biography (1959) which shows just how many of the plots, and how much of the language of the early plays derive from his notebook transcriptions of the stories he heard on his travels.²⁰ Yeats puts it well:

As I reread *The Aran Islands* right through for the first time since he showed me the manuscript, I come to understand how much knowledge of the real life of Ireland went to the creation of a world which is yet as fantastic as the Spain of Cervantes.²¹

Ann Saddlemyer's decision to replace the punctuation overseen by the author in her edition of the play in 1968, in favour of a choice based on the range of manuscripts, denies today's actors – for whom her edition has been called definitive – the benefit of Synge's application of musical rhythm to his prose.²²

¹⁸ C. E. Montague, 'Good Acting', *Dramatic Values* (London: Methuen, 1911), 43-62 (52).

¹⁹ Nicholas Grene, 'J. M. Synge: Late Romantic or Protomodernist?' in *A History of Irish Modernism*, ed. by Gregory Castle and Patrick Bixby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 78-90 (82).

²⁰ Greene and Stephens trace the source of Synge's dialect to the letters written to him by the playwright's friends on Aran, Martin McDonough, his brother John, his father Patrick and his cousin Martin Flaherty. 'Old Mourteen', another friend, gave him words that were to come 'with slight modification' from the mouth of Michael James in *The Playboy* – 'a man who is not married is no better than an old jackass' (*J. M. Synge, 1871-1909* [New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959], 100, 106).

²¹ 'J. M. Synge and the Ireland of his Time', *CW4* 236.

²² This claim is based on the director's commentary in the additional material to the filmed performances of the Druid Theatre Company's Synge cycle of plays in 2005. Gerry Hynes, speaking

Synge's mixture of the naturalistic and the stylised complicated the reception of his plays from the first. *The Shadow of the Glen*, Synge's first performed piece, provoked a soon-to-be-familiar storm of abuse as spectators refused to acknowledge the version of Ireland presented on stage. As I have shown, Willie Fay's alterations to his public lectures, which were based on his autobiography suggest that the responsibility to present Synge for the first time was both a curse and a blessing. Originally Fay compared the fury of the Catholic audience to "the rage of Caliban at seeing his own face in the glass", quoting Oscar Wilde. Yet the association of the Irish with primitivism, implied in the quotation, and the English with civilisation, caused him to remove the allusion, indicating Fay's discomfort with it. In *The Actor and His Art*, Coquelin wrote that the aim of the actor was 'in a very general way ... to please'.²³ Synge made it increasingly difficult for actors to please, and Frank Fay knew, or feared, that plays like *The Playboy* threatened the independence of the actors, which depended on the pleasure of their audiences. Frank Fay preferred *Riders to the Sea*, as did many who objected to *The Playboy*, which he compared favourably to Maeterlinck's *Interior*.²⁴

Frank Fay's annotations suggest a preoccupation among the actors with deodorising Synge's text. From the 'God Almighty's' of *The Well of the Saints*, which Fay downgraded in revision, to the cutting of disparaging references to the 'young priest' in *Riders to the Sea*, Synge's blasphemy, and anti-clericalism, whether deliberate or not, created an awkward mood in the audience. Nor was it simply the actors who took on the role of censors: Lady Gregory cut out much of the coarser language in *The Playboy* following the initial riots. Her argument, and the Fays', was that risking the loss of sympathy from the audience was too high a price to pay for defending the freedom of authorial imagination. It is easy with hindsight to dismiss such views as Philistine, but every age has its own sense of public manners, and while the author may wish to challenge the social consensus, he or she must also find an audience.

about *The Playboy*, calls Saddlemyer's text 'the Bible' of the company (*DruidSynge* [DVD]. Directed by G. Hynes, Dublin: Wildfire Films, 2007).

²³ *L'Art et le Comédien* (Paris: Ollendorf, 1880). An American translation of this work was available from 1881 (*The Actor and His Art*, trans. by Abby Langdon Alger [Boston: Roberts Bros, 1881], 24)

²⁴ 'You know how much I like *Riders to the Sea*. Well I never appreciated it so much as since we have been at *Interior*. The latter is somewhat effeminate; it needs your hardness' (To J. M. Synge, Monday [11 March 1907], TCD MS 4424-26/586).

Yet Frank Fay's annotations can also be used to support a view that he supported Synge's freedom to offend. Here the relevant evidence is where an inference might be drawn from the absence of marginalia. As has been shown, there is critical disagreement over whether or not Synge's revision of 'the way you'd see a priest going by where there'd be drunken man' to the less provocative 'a sainted lady' in *The Well of the Saints* should be upheld as a preferred reading in modern scholarly editions.²⁵ Nicholas Grene argued that the change was a bowdlerisation forced on Synge by the cast. However, Ben Levitas has argued that alongside Synge's trenchant defence of his right to reproduce in his plays the things he heard and saw in his field trips to the west of Ireland – what might be called the realist defence – Synge was also, paradoxically, easy-going and tolerant of different viewpoints, even to the extent of allowing them space in his work.²⁶

If Levitas is right, allowing the original 'priest going by' to be softened to the 'sainted lady' might be an example of his humble attitude to differing views of reality. Synge himself observed that 'all art is collaboration', suggesting a flexible attitude to authorial autonomy at odds with his occasional defence of his dramatic texts as works of objective fact.²⁷ Levitas also suggests that Synge deliberately staged his plays as events to highlight social tensions in Ireland.²⁸ The drama that played itself out in the pit of the Abbey during the run of *The Playboy* in January 1907 was foreshadowed in the arguments in the rehearsal room over Synge's representation of the Irish as essentially pagan, and the clergy as corrupt. Fay's letters show that he first represented the cast's doubts about the 'priest going by' line to Synge. Later he supported Synge's right to offend. When he did so he employed historical analogy: bawdy in the theatre was long-established, and he exhorted Holloway to consider Shakespeare's obscenity before he judged Synge.²⁹ Fay used the existence of Elizabethan texts to justify Synge's coarse language and anti-clericalism. Could we therefore read Fay's failure to annotate his copy of *The Well of the Saints* with the new softer version of

²⁵ *Plays 1*, 106-7.

²⁶ 'If there is a process of "self-conquest" in Synge's work, it is in ceding control to undesirable elements rather than in assuming power over them' ('A Temper of Misgiving: W. B. Yeats and the Ireland of Synge's Time', in *Uncertain Futures: Essays about the Irish Past for Roy Foster*, ed. by Senia Paseta [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016], 110-22 [116]).

²⁷ *Plays 2*, 53.

²⁸ Levitas writes that *The Playboy* was 'a combined act of provocation and self-criticism' (Levitas, *Theatre*, 136).

²⁹ 'Read *King Lear*', Fay advises Holloway (letter, [1905], quoted in Hogan III, 18).

the line about the 'sainted lady' as an endorsement of the original (offensive) reading? It is a justifiable inference, but the evidence is inconclusive.

As Synge's works challenged actors, so they have challenged editors in the years following his death. The fearsome arguments over which pieces of his journalism were worthy of inclusion in the Maunsel *Collected Works* of 1910 introduced the theme of editors who justified their selections on the grounds of their knowledge of Synge and their access to his artistic intentions. The difficulties spring from Synge's early death and the inevitably incomplete intentions he bequeathed his editors regarding the shape and composition of future editions of his works. As I have discussed, some post-structuralist critics view the absence of evidence of final intention as no barrier to textual criticism.³⁰ Criticism which views the book as an event, as the result of a social interactions, can have the effect of removing the author from the process of textual transmission, relegating the justification of readings according to notions of authorial intention to the realm of idle speculation. More recently, Gould has considered the challenge that W. B. Yeats's own intentionalism poses to materialist ideas of textual transmission.³¹ Part of this relies on establishing a distinction between last recorded and final intention.

One other approach is the fluid text, which eschews the idea of the critical text in favour of adaptations, or versions of the text which provide material for comparative analysis. Occasions of variation between versions are called 'revision sites' upon which can be built hypothetical narratives of revision ('revision narratives').³² The goal of this method is to take advantage of the opportunities for interpretation that competing versions afford. Synge's alternative readings of Timmy the smith's description of Mary Doul snubbing her husband in Act II of *The Well of the Saints* constitute a revision site. Explanations for the change based on inference might be called revision narratives. The failure of Fay to include

³⁰ See D. F. McKenzie's *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (1986; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 18; Sally Bushell argues that the author's role in the genesis of the text is only partial ('Intention Revisited: Towards an Anglo-American "Genetic Criticism"', *Text*, 17 [2005], 55-91, [17]).

³¹ See Warwick Gould, 'Conflicted Legacies: Yeats's Intentions and Editorial Theory', *YA21*, 479-544. Gould argues that a compulsion to revise and a desire to make of his work 'something intended, complete' (CW5 204) were 'paradoxical intentions' which the editor of Yeats cannot ignore (480).

³² The terms 'revision site' and 'revision narrative' are part of the vocabulary of fluid text developed by John Bryant (*The Fluid Text: A Theory of Revision for Book and Screen* [Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2002], 148).

the revised version in his copy might warrant an inference that he disagreed with the change.

Yet as long as a reading text is required for those unfamiliar with the full history of Synge's work, some manner of editorial emendation is necessary. At this point, the distinction between last recorded and final intention is helpful as a means of discriminating between readings. Final intention in Synge's case will always remain elusive owing to his untimely death. Last recorded intention may be accessible through careful examination of the available documents. In the example from *The Well of the Saints*, Ann Saddlemyer selects the typescript revision ('sainted lady') seeming to contradict Synge's defence of his text on realist grounds ('tell Miss G ... that what I write of Irish country life I know to be true').³³ Grene prefers the original reading but is forced to ignore the annotation to Synge's copy of the printed edition which appears to be an authorial correction. A critical edition must emend the text in favour of one of the readings, relegating the other to footnote status, but which one is correct? Any edition of Synge's works is an eclectic edition, but a text that followed Synge's last recorded intention would select the 'sainted lady' revision, since evidence exists of revision in Synge's own hand, which corresponds to the prompt-book version. Last recorded intention can be uncovered by careful examination of all the relevant documentary witnesses. It remains an imperfect principle for emendation, but it has the virtue of returning the author to the process of textual transmission, while not ignoring the provisional and collaborative nature of theatrical performance.

The Fay archive and the marginalia of Frank Fay's play texts offer a new perspective on the brothers' troubled collaboration with Yeats and Lady Gregory. The Fays' conviction that they had been written out of Irish theatrical history, by the determination of Yeats and Lady Gregory to appropriate the movement for themselves, has been lent support over the years by several sources, starting with George Russell in 1914.³⁴ Frank Fay's correspondence with Yeats, considered in Chapter One, remains unpublished, but it suggests Fay possessed both a keen theatrical sensibility married to a belief in tradition, and provides evidence of

³³ To Frank Fay, original in Fay papers, NLI, reprinted in *Plays 1*, xxiv.

³⁴ See *Life 1*, 581n14, for a list of those who have advanced this position over the decades. Foster quotes Russell as writing in private correspondence of *Our Irish Theatre*, Lady Gregory's memoir, '[s]he centralises herself a great deal too much, and I think she gives too little credit to the Fays' (*Life 1*, 260).

the impact of that sensibility on Yeats's plays for the Abbey. The plays of Synge and Lady Gregory make very different demands on the theatre director from poetic drama, but a recognisable Fay style of production can be discerned across the theatrical genres. This has been defined as being at once 'in touch with the *avant garde* but striving always for classic status'.³⁵ Fay's marginalia meanwhile are best viewed as commentaries on the literary text, opening a window onto the process by which words on the page are adapted for the stage. To be reborn as performance, the literary text must be translated into the language and conventions of the theatre. Fay's annotations illuminate the mechanics of a process that is generally invisible. Beyond this, the marginalia are a record of the compromises made by the author for a particular occasion of performance, which may or may not be endorsed by him or her in future versions. Fay's adaptations are part of the banked text, a record of a range of variants and a valuable resource for future performance.

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³⁵ Kelsall, 198.

Fay archive (private collection)

A checklist of items in this archive is given as Appendix G of this thesis.

National Library of Ireland

Frank and W. G. Fay

MS 5, 974. News cuttings of articles by W. G. Fay on different aspects of the theatre.

MS 5, 981. Typescript copies of essays on the theatre by W. G. Fay.

MS 10, 950. Scripts associated with the Fays' acting companies, including works by W. B. Yeats, William Boyle, and Lady Gregory.

MS 10,952. Letters and other papers relating to Frank Fay and the theatre.

MS 10, 953. Typescript and handwritten drafts of talks and papers on the early history of the National Theatre Society, and other aspects of stage history, and on other theatrical topics.

MS 13, 617. Frank Fay's correspondence to and from Synge, Lady Gregory and Yeats.

Holloway

MS 4455. Letters to Joseph Holloway, including correspondence from Frank Fay.

Shiubhlaigh, Marie nic

MS 49, 752/37. Draft memoir recalling parts played in the early days of the National Theatre Society. Personal and theatrical reminiscences.

Yeats Papers

MS 21, 148. Printed copy of the 'Theatre Edition' of *The King's Threshold* (Stratford-on-Avon: Shakespeare Head Press, 1911) with Yeats's emendations in the King's part.

NLI, MS 30,251. Printed texts of *The King's Threshold* pasted onto sheets and with MS and TS revisions, unsigned and undated.

Synge Papers

MS 13, 670. Microfilm negative of Synge's copy of the text of *Riders to the Sea* printed in *Samhain* (1903), with holograph marginalia, and his copy of *The Well of the Saints* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1905), also with marginalia.

MS 16, 590. Draft of *The Playboy of the Western World*. TCD, MS 4424-26. Correspondence received, including letters from Frank Fay, John Todhunter and others.

University College Dublin

Curran Collection

Cur L. Correspondence of Mrs Helen Curran, formerly Helen Laird, Abbey actress, commenting on performances of the company in London and Dublin; letters from Frank Fay to Constantine Curran.

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Trinity College Dublin

MS 4424-4426. Correspondence from Synge to Frank Fay. Also includes Abbey Theatre business correspondence from both Fays to Yeats.

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Abbey Theatre prompt script of *The King's Threshold*, associated with 1905 revival. Fifty-two pages in typescripts with stage directions underlined in red.

Stage management document associated with 1905 production. Headed 'Curtain Cues'.

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Volume II Appendices

I.

Transcriptions and Photographic Reproductions

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II.

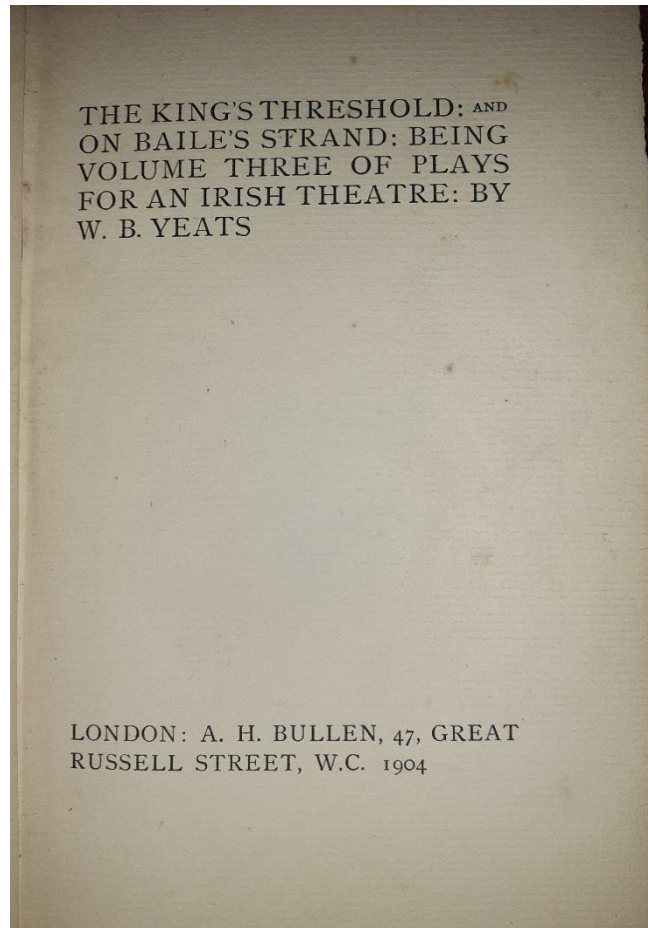
Bibliographical checklist of correspondence, books, and ephemera

Appendix G: Checklist of items in Fay Archive	85
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III.

Article accepted for forthcoming number (22) of Yeats Annual

Appendix H: "'He is hard like a smooth pebble": Yeats's Dramaturgy in <i>On Baile's Strand</i> and the Marginalia in Frank Fay's copy of <i>Plays for an Irish Theatre, Volume III</i>	95
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Appendix A

Headnote:

In Appendices A-E, 'L', 'R', 'C' are shorthand forms of the stage directions 'Left', 'Right', and 'Centre'; 'L2E' is 'Left Second Entrance'. Annotation is highlighted in bold, while print is shown in roman. Ink is represented in red; pencil in black. Fay uses Arabic numerals in a variety of ways: to direct attention from the text to a longer note in the page head or foot, to show the order characters enter a scene, or to number the exits on stage. *Kiely KT* is Declan Kiely's edition of the play (*Manuscript Materials* [Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005]). *KT 06* is the version of the text printed in Yeats's *Poems 1899-1905* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1906).

THE KING'S THRESHOLD: AND | ON BAILE'S STRAND: BEING
| VOLUME THREE OF PLAYS | FOR AN IRISH THEATRE: BY | W.
B. YEATS | LONDON: A. H. BULLEN, 47, GREAT | RUSSELL
STREET, W.C. 1904¹

¹ Fay's copy is a first edition, bound in original quarter green cloth and grey paper-covered boards with lettering label to spine. Corners a little bruised

and lettering label rubbed and worn, otherwise a good copy; end-papers slightly darkened and a little foxing throughout. Inscribed by the author on the front free end-paper: 'Frank Fay from WB Yeats March 1904'.

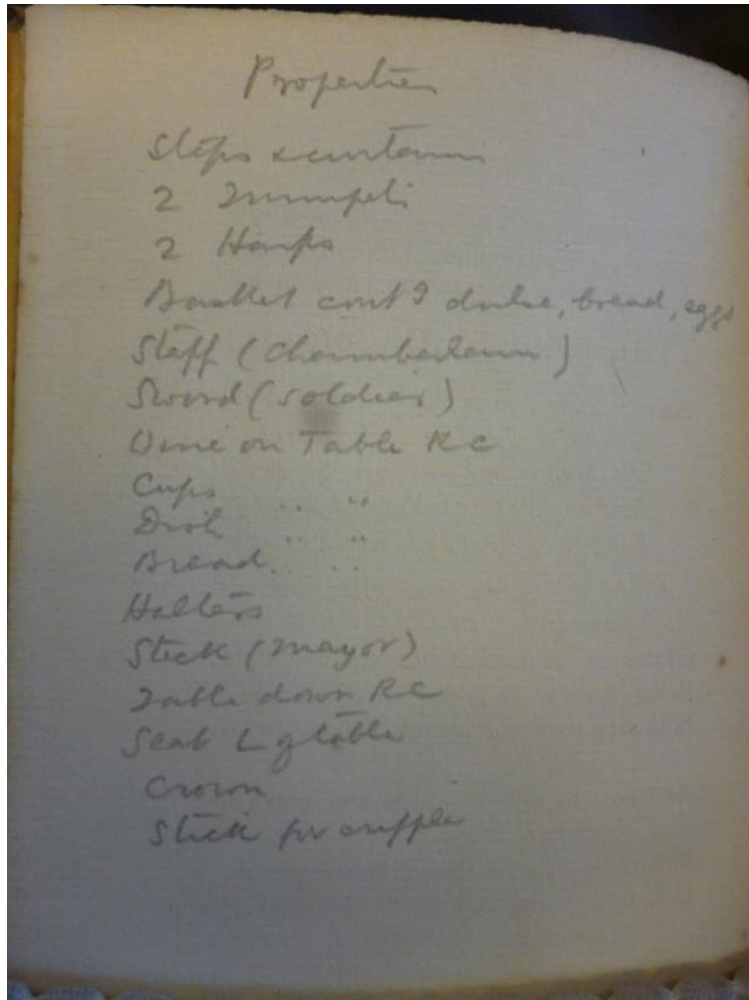


[photograph with pencil annotations]²

[Back row] G[eorge] Roberts, Miller, P[.]J[.] Kelly,
Fred[erick] Ryan, J[ames] Starkey, F[rank] Walker

[Front row] W[illiam] G[eorge] Fay, Mary Garvey,
Sara Allgood, Mary Walker, Helen Laird, P[draic]
Colum

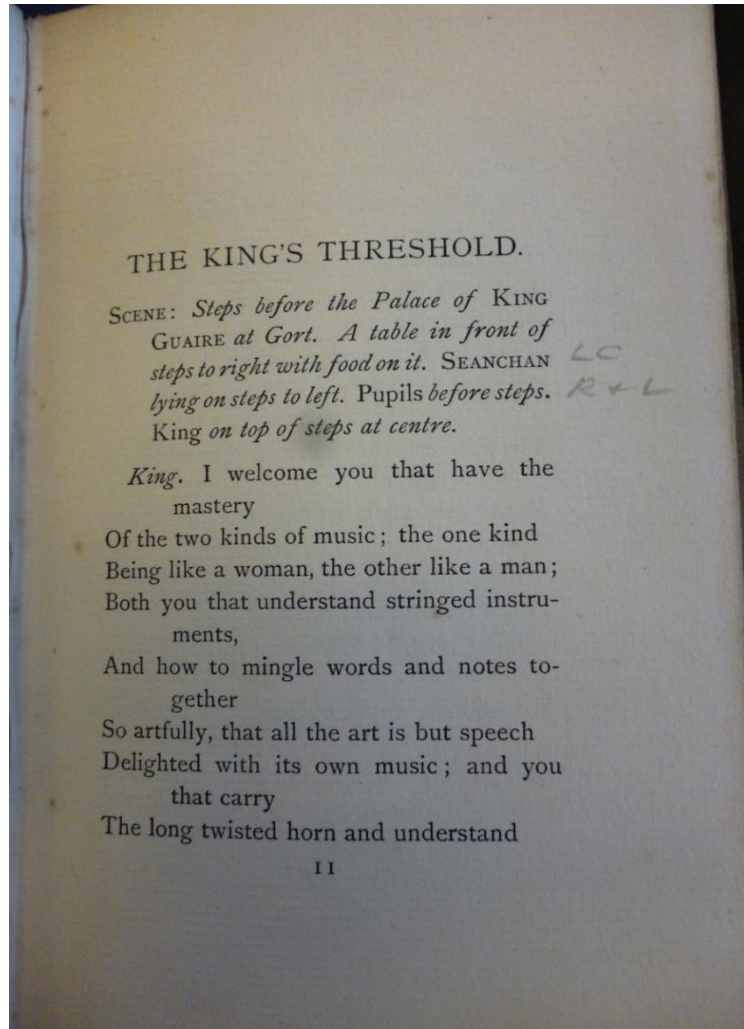
² Neatly mounted on the verso of the title-page is an original photograph of a group of the Abbey Theatre players, their identities provided in rather indistinct pencil notes around the margins in the hand of Fay.



Properties

Steps and curtains
 2 Trumpets
 2 Harps
 Basket cont[ainin]g dulce, bread, eggs
 Staff (Chamberlain)
 Sword (Soldier)
 Wine on table RC
 Cups [ditto]
 Dish [ditto]
 Bread [ditto]
 Halters
 Stick (mayor)
 Table down RC
 Seat L of table
 Crown
 Stick for cripple.³

³ The list occurs on a blank between the Prologue and Act One. In the hand of Frank Fay. Variants noted in NLI 21, 505, which was probably used as prompt copy for the 1906 revival at the Abbey. Not included in *VPI*.



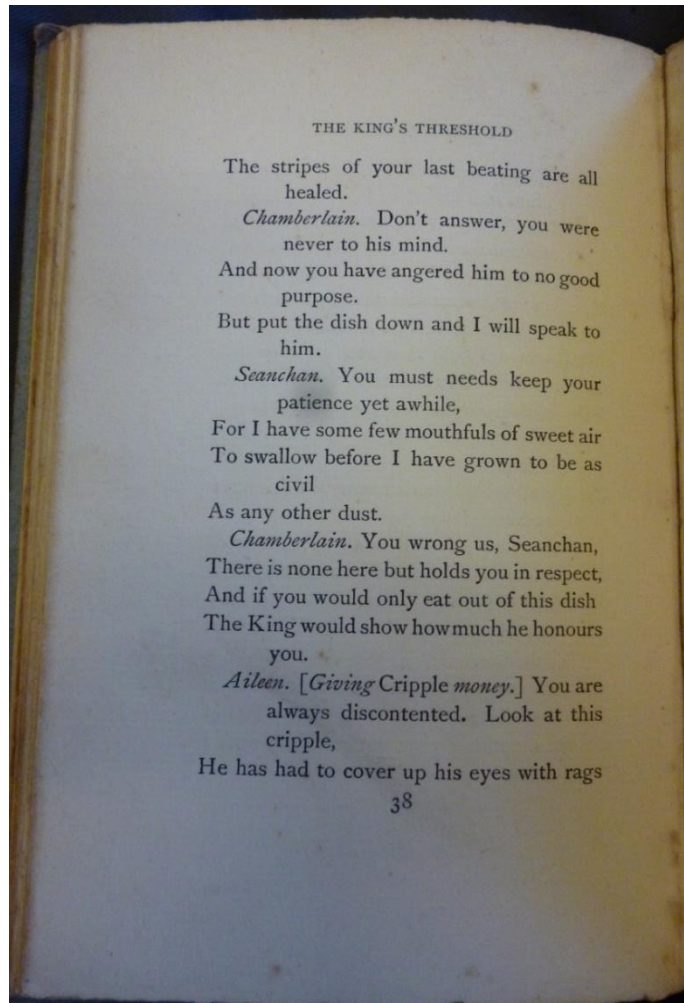
THE KING'S THRESHOLD.

SCENE :*Steps before the Palace of KING GUAIRE at Gort. A table in front of steps to right with food on it. SEANCHAN lying on steps to left. Pupils before steps. King on top of steps at centre.* LC R + L⁴

...

11.

⁴ These marks gesture to the positions of actors on stage. Similar marks appear on pages 17, 24, 25, 26, 62, 64.



THE KING'S THRESHOLD

...

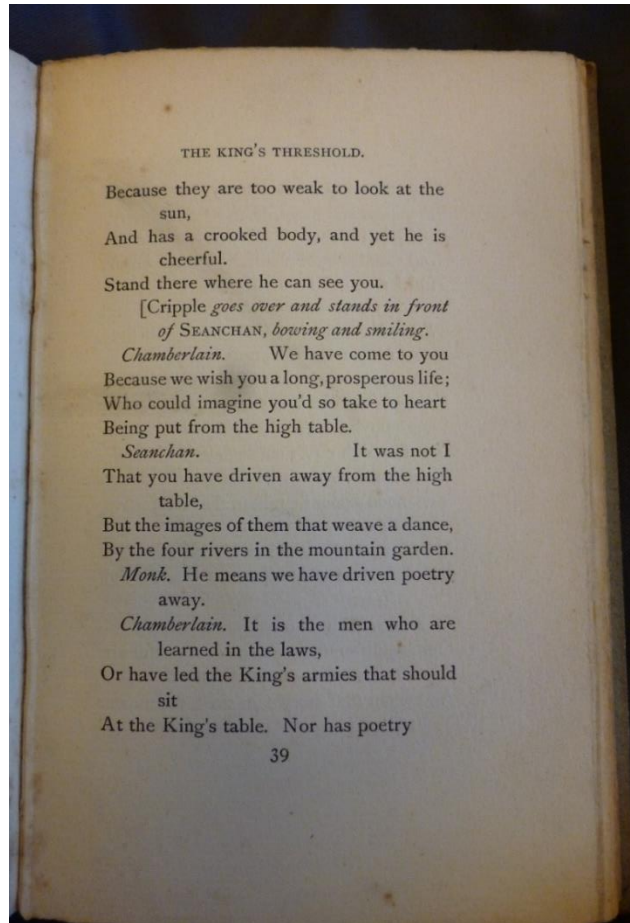
Aileen [*Giving Cripple money.*] You are
always discontented. Look at this
cripple,
He has had to cover up his eyes with rags⁵

...

38.

⁵ A dark smudge over Aileen's first speech suggests a pencil line made and then partially erased. Aileen's speech is listed as a variant in *VPI* 288, ll. 499a-e. It is cut

in *KT 06*, and absent from subsequent editions, in which she becomes Court Lady in the List of Characters, and First Girl in the text.



THE KING'S THRESHOLD

Because they are too weak to look at the
sun,

And has a crooked body, and yet he is
cheerful.

Stand there where he can see you.

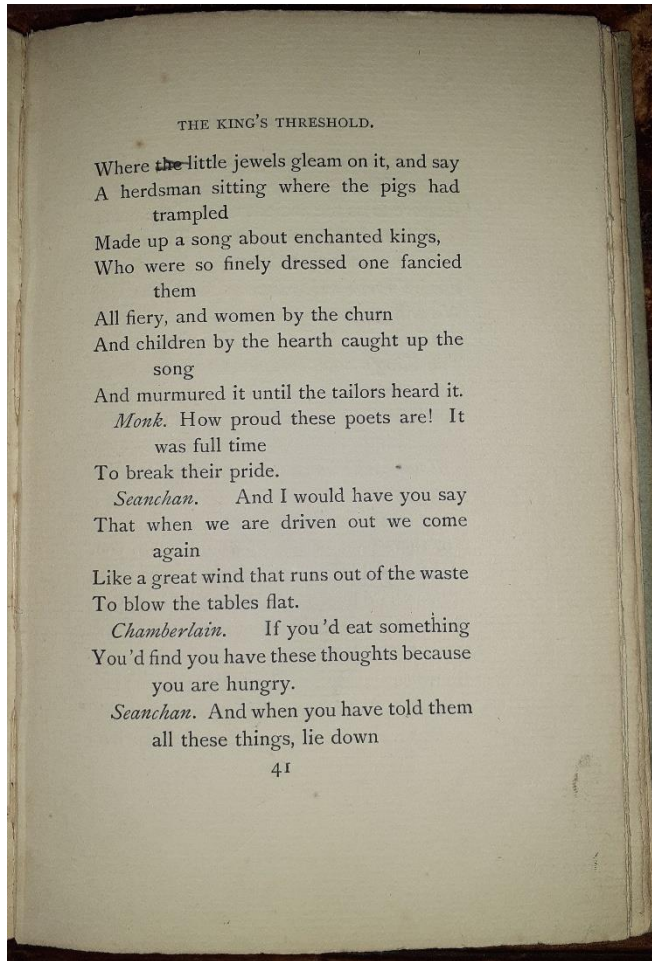
*[Cripple goes over and stands in front
of SEANCHAN, bowing and smiling.]*

Chamberlain. We have come to you
Because we wish you a long, prosperous life;
Who could imagine you'd so take to heart
Being put from the high table?⁶

...

⁶ A smudged line runs diagonally from top left of the page, '[b]ecause they are too weak', down to the Chamberlain's first speech; a second, possibly connected, line runs through the second line of the Chamberlain's speech, '[b]ecause we wish you

a long, prosperous life'. Both marks indicate a pencil crossing-out partially erased. It seems likely that it is part of the same abortive textual correction seen on page thirty-eight. A version of this deletion was incorporated into *KT 06*.



THE KING'S THRESHOLD

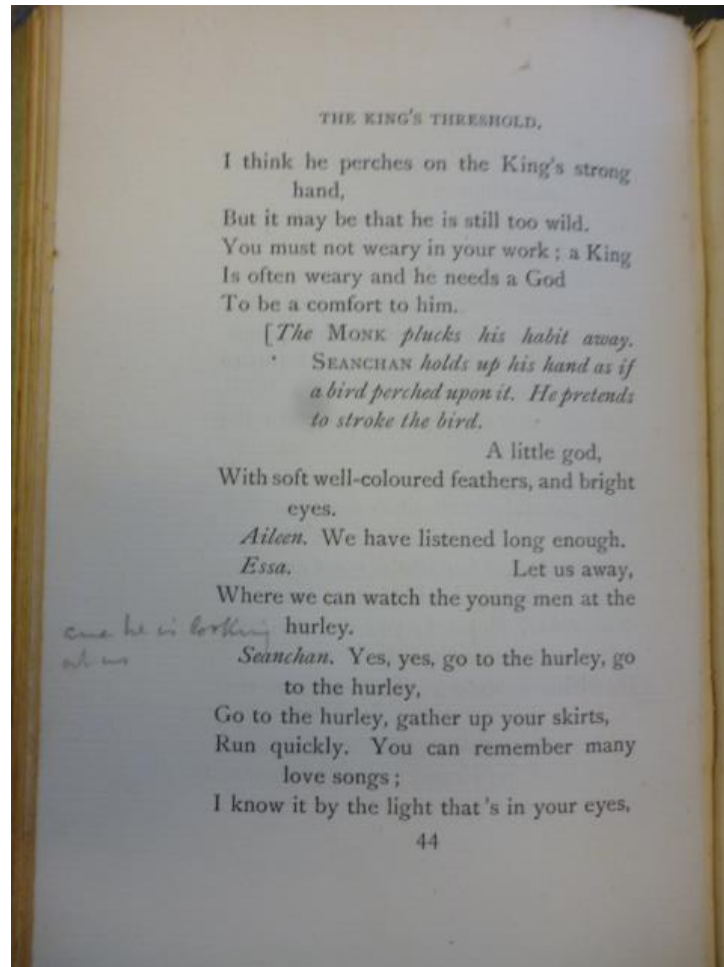
Where ~~the~~ little jewels gleam on it, and say
 A herdsman sitting where the pigs had
 trampled
 Made up a song about enchanted kings,
 Who were so finely dressed one fancied
 them
 All fiery, and women by the churn
 And children by the hearth caught up the
 song
 And murmured it until the tailors heard it.⁷

...

41

⁷ *VPI* reads: '...shake your coat | Where little jewels gleam on it, and say, | A herdsman... | Made up a song about enchanted kings...' (*VPI* 290, ll. 528-31). The change was not included in the printer's copy of *KT 06*, being a revision made in

proof (see Berg H(1), 7^r, in Kiely *KT* 475, l. 665). Nor was it in the prompt copy associated with the play's revival in 1906, NLI 21, 505.



THE KING'S THRESHOLD

...

Aileen. We have listened long enough.

Essa. Let us away,

Where we can watch the young men at the

**cue he is looking hurley
at at us**

Seanchan. Yes, yes, go to the hurley, go
to the hurley,

Go to the hurley, gather up your skirts,

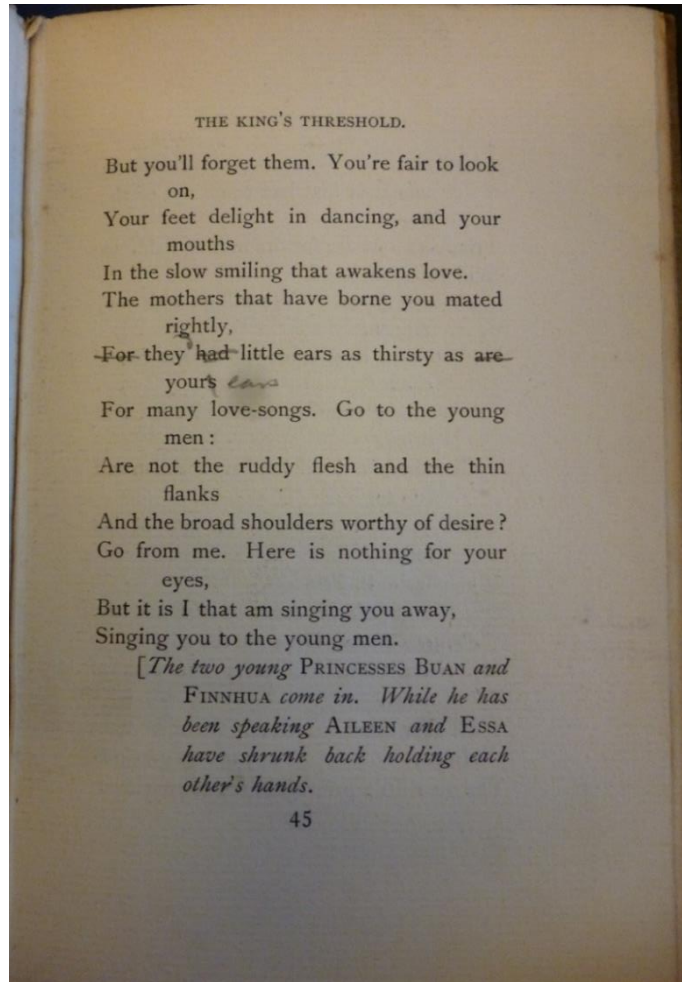
Run quickly.⁸

...

44

⁸ An authorial change in rehearsal is indicated here. Annotation gestures towards *KT 06* and *VPI 293-4*, ll. 592-595. *Aileen* and *Essa* become *First Girl* and *Second Girl* in revision. Fay's noting of cue line only repeats the Elizabethan practice of actors

receiving only their own speeches and the relevant cue line, or even word. This is evidence that Fay's was a working copy and not a trophy or souvenir copy.



THE KING'S THRESHOLD

But you'll forget them. You're fair to look
on.

Your feet delight in dancing, and your
mouths

In the slow smiling that awakens love.

The mothers that have borne you mated
rightly,

d

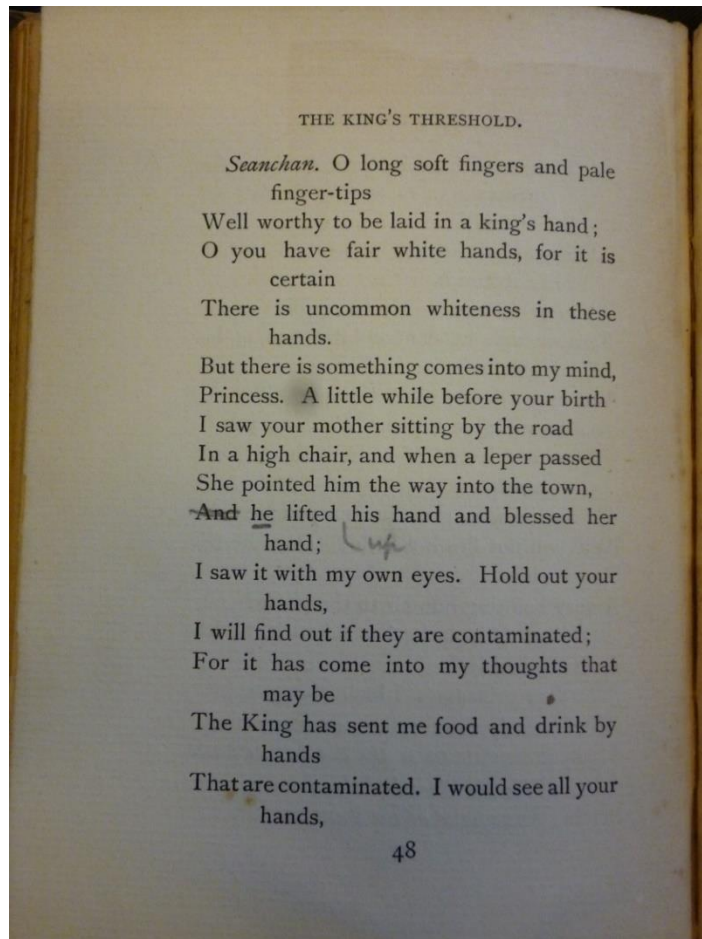
~~For they had~~ little ears as thirsty as are
yours **ears**

For many love-songs.⁹

...

⁹ It is in Frank Fay's hand and is an intermediate state to *KT 06*, where an authorial correction was made in proof (Berg H(1), 8^r, in Kiely *KT 481*, l. 756).

THE KING'S THRESHOLD

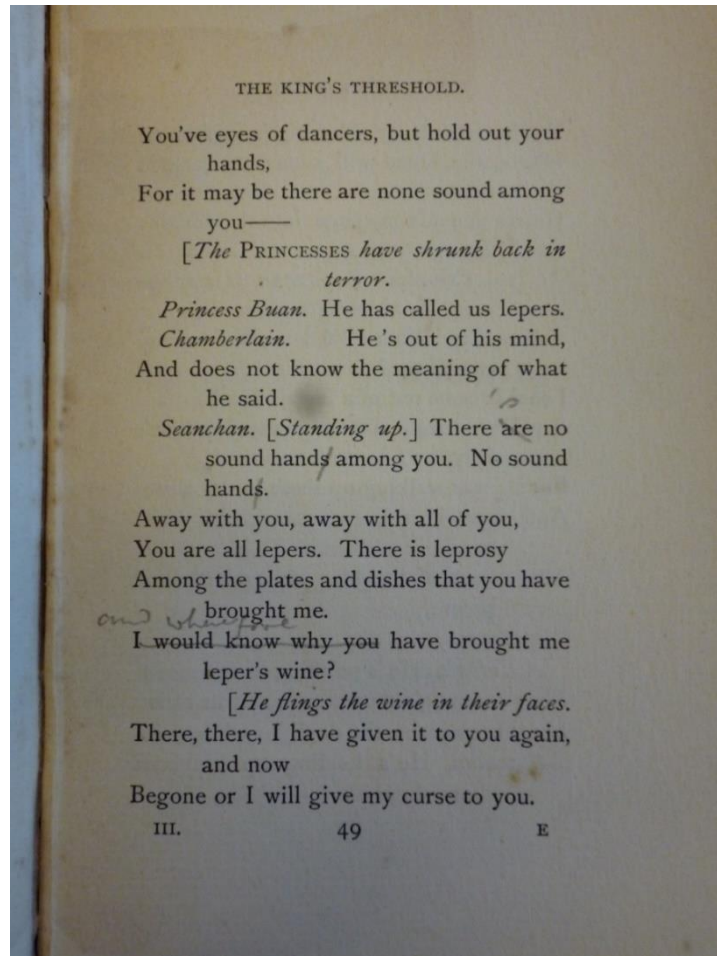


Seanchan. O long soft fingers and pale
 finger-tips
 Well worthy to be laid in a king's hand;
 O you have fair white hands, for it is
 certain
 There is uncommon whiteness in these
 hands.
 But there is something comes into my mind,
 Princess. A little while before your birth
 I saw your mother sitting by the road
 In a high chair, and when a leper passed
 She pointed him the way into the town,
 She pointed him the way into the town,
up
~~And he~~ lifted ^ his hand and blessed her
 hand;¹⁰

...

¹⁰ The interlinear annotation gestures towards later editions. *VPI* reads 'He lifted up his hand and blessed her hand' (*VPI* 296, l. 638).

THE KING'S THRESHOLD



...

's

Seanchan. [Standing up.] There [^]are no sound hands among you. No sound hands.

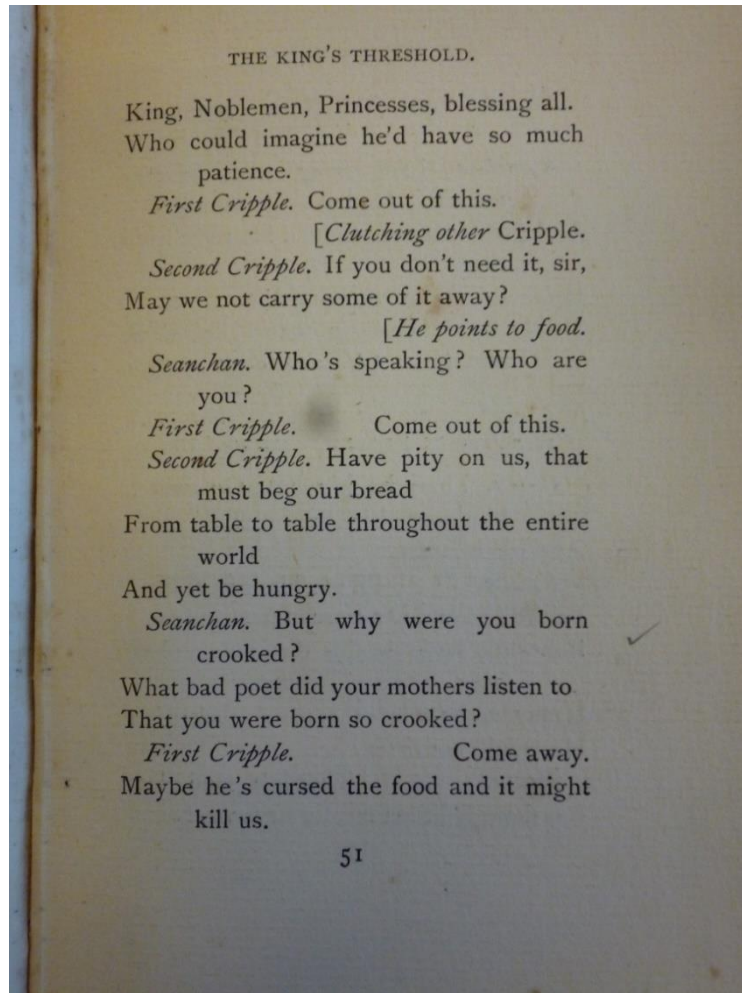
Away with you, away with all of you,
You are all lepers. There is leprosy
Among the plates and dishes that you have brought me.

and wherefore

~~I would know why~~ you have brought me lepers wine?¹¹

...

¹¹ Both the changes on this page are authorial corrections, gesturing towards *KT 06* revised either in proof (Berg H(1), 8^r), or present in printer's copy.



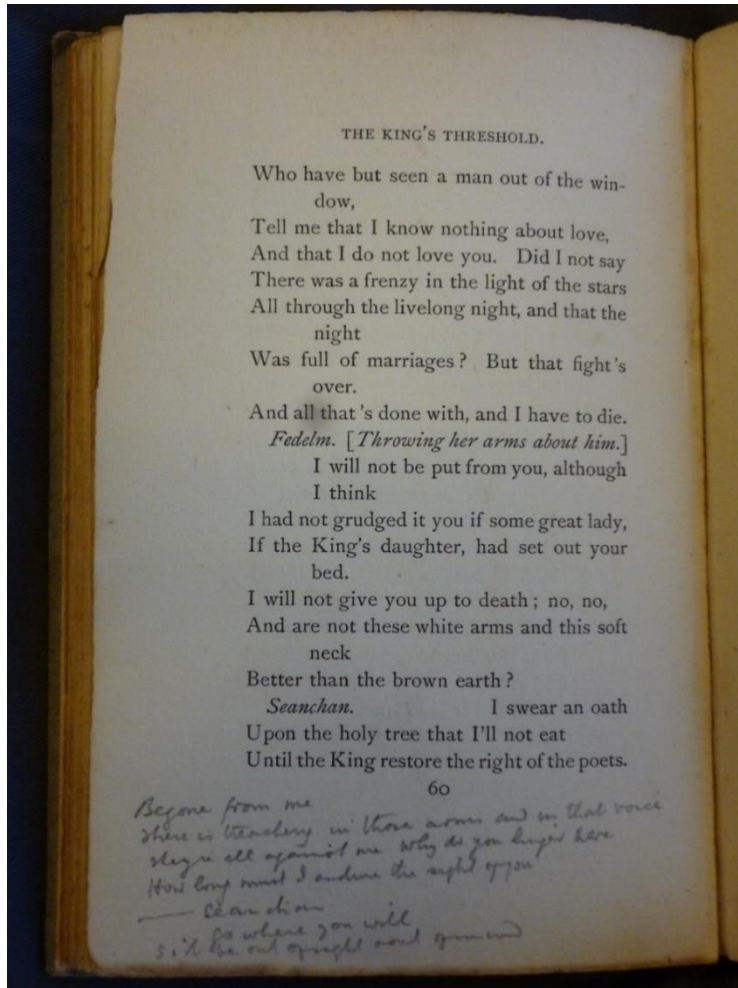
THE KING'S THRESHOLD

...

Seanchan. But why were you born
crooked? **[tick in margin]**¹²

...

¹² Tick in the margin next to Seanchan's first speech perhaps indicates that doubt existed whether a line was to be retained. If so, this version was approved. In *VPI* the line reads, 'But why were you born crooked?' (*VPI* 298, l. 675).



THE KING'S THRESHOLD

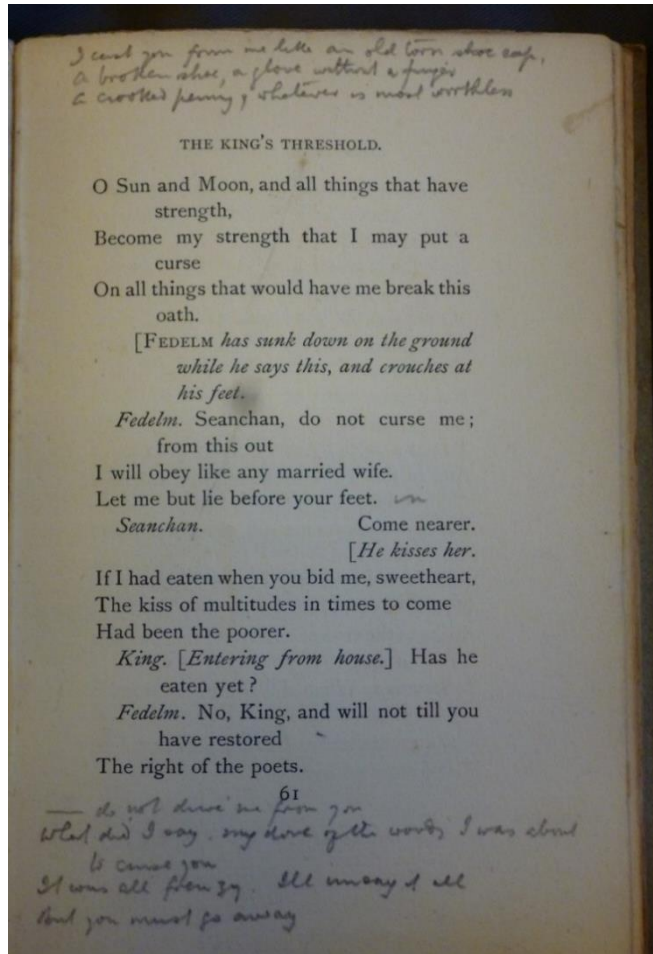
...

Begone from me[.]
There is treachery in those arms and in that voice[.]
They're all against me[.] [W]hy did you linger here[?]
How long must I endure the sight of you[?]
— — [Fedelm] Seanchan[!]
[Seanchan] Go where you will[.]
So it be out sight and out of mind[.]¹³

60

¹³ Annotation in Fay's hand. This is an intermediate state of the text towards *KT 06*. Punctuation and character names are supplied. Variation exists between Fay's

version and the *VPI*. 'There is treachery' becomes 'there's treachery'; 'Seanchan', 'O, Seachchan, Seanchan!' (*VPI* 305, ll. 787,790).



I cast you from me like an old torn shoe cap,
a broken shoe, a glove without a finger[,]
a crooked penny, whatever is most worthless[.]

THE KING'S THRESHOLD

...

— — [Fedelm] do not drive me from you[!] |
[Seanchan] What did I say. [m]y dove of the woods I was about
to curse you[.] |
It was all frenzy[.] I'll unsay it all |
But you must go away[.]¹⁴

61

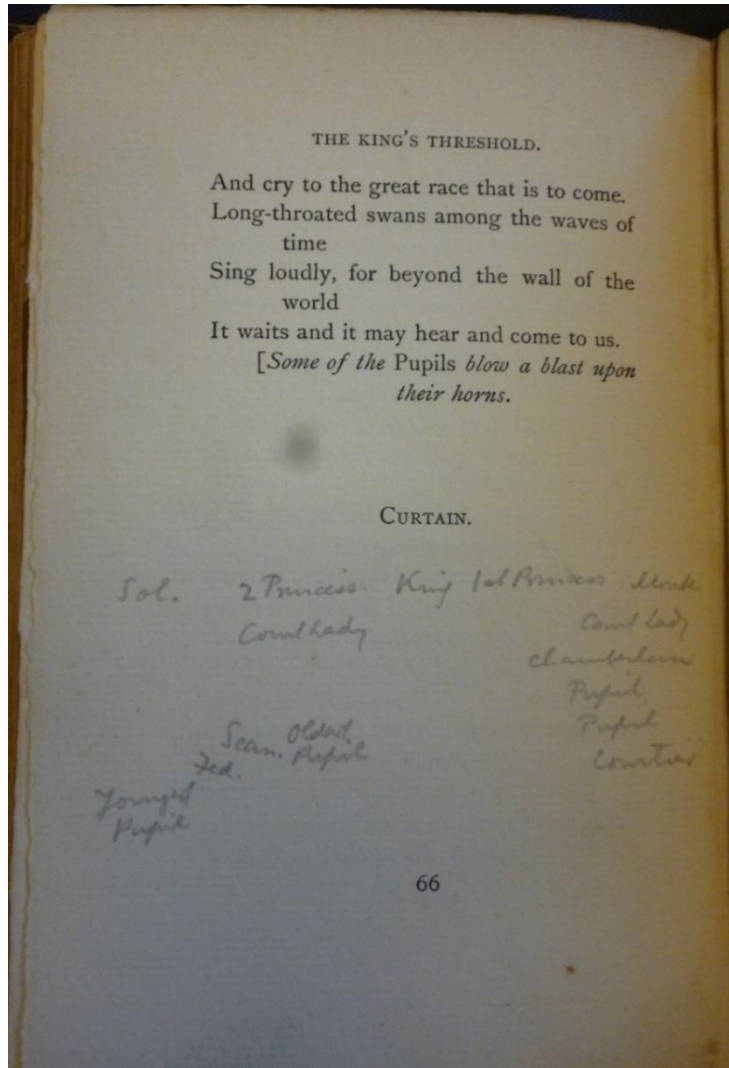
¹⁴ Slight variations in stage directions and text appear in this manuscript version and the version in *VPI*. Fay's has Fedelm say 'do not drive me from you' for the *VPI*'s '[o], do not drive me from you' (305, l. 795). Fay's has a full stop after 'what

did I say' rather than *VPI*'s question mark (305, l. 796). The annotation 'in' following Fedelm's first speech, which is an abbreviation of 'insert', indicates the position of the new dialogue relative to existing text

THE KING'S THRESHOLD

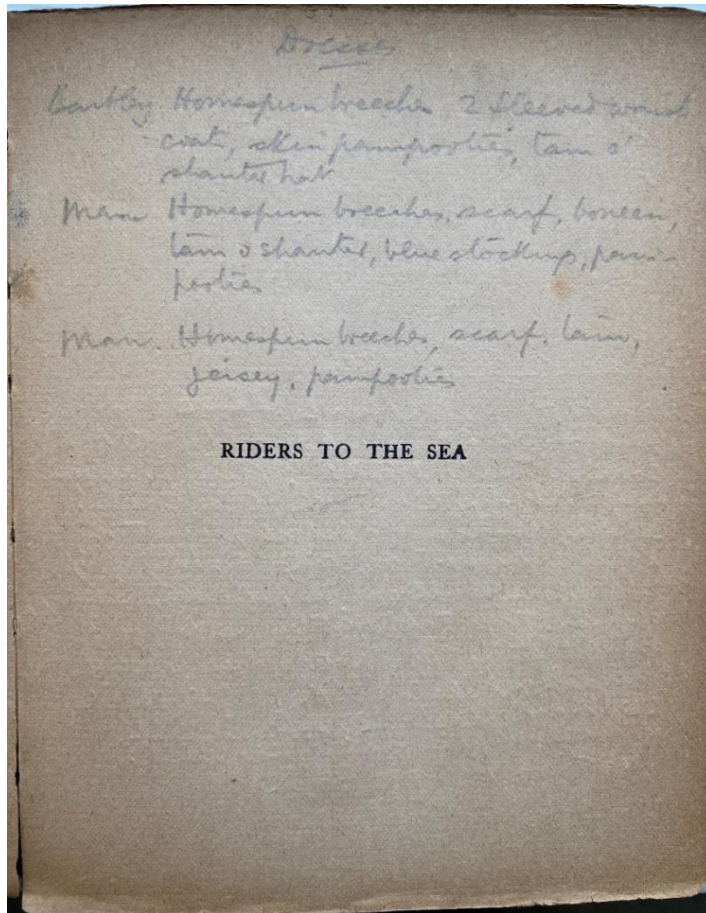
...

[impression of the distribution of the characters relative to the palace steps]¹⁵



¹⁵ This annotation foreshadows a sketch, not by Fay, in NLI 21,505, 50^r where the steps and the table and benches are represented also. It seems likely that the top

line of Fay's impression indicates those actors standing on the top step nearest the palace.



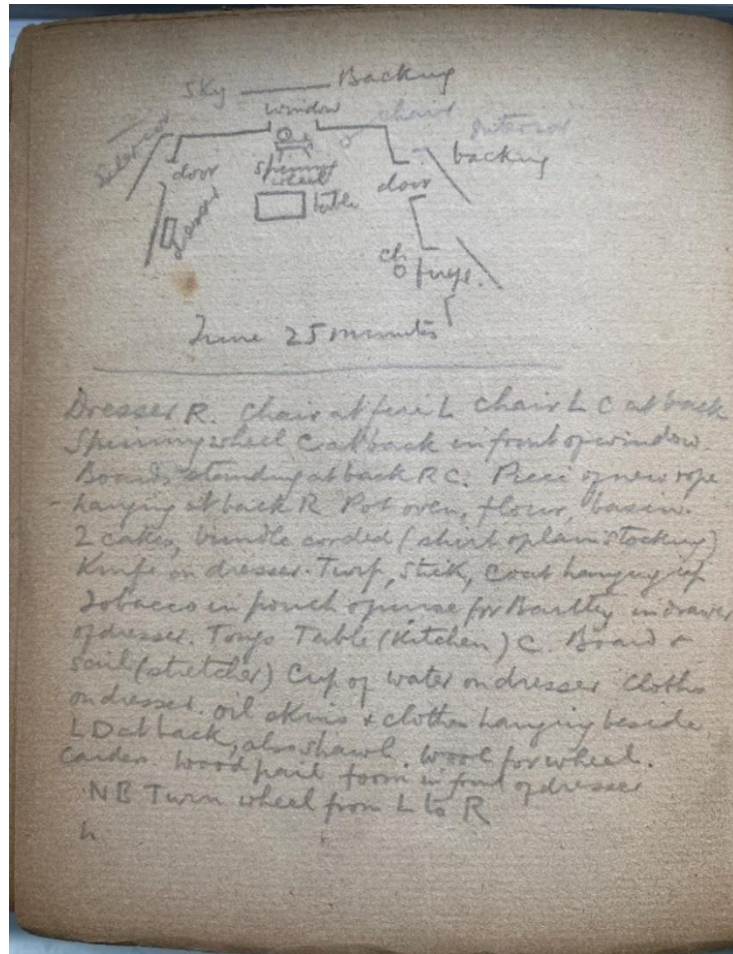
Appendix B

Headnote:

The text is taken from J. M. Synge, *The Shadow of the Glen and Riders to the Sea* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1905). Vigo Cabinet series n. 24. This is the first commercial edition of Synge's work in book form. It was reprinted in 1907 and 1911.

Dresses

- Bartley** Homespun breeches 2 sleeved waist
coats, skin pampooties, tam o'
shanter hat
- Man** Homespun breeches, scarf, boreen,
tam o' shanter, blue stockings, pam-
pooties
- Man.** Homespun breeches, scarf, tam,
jersey, pampooties



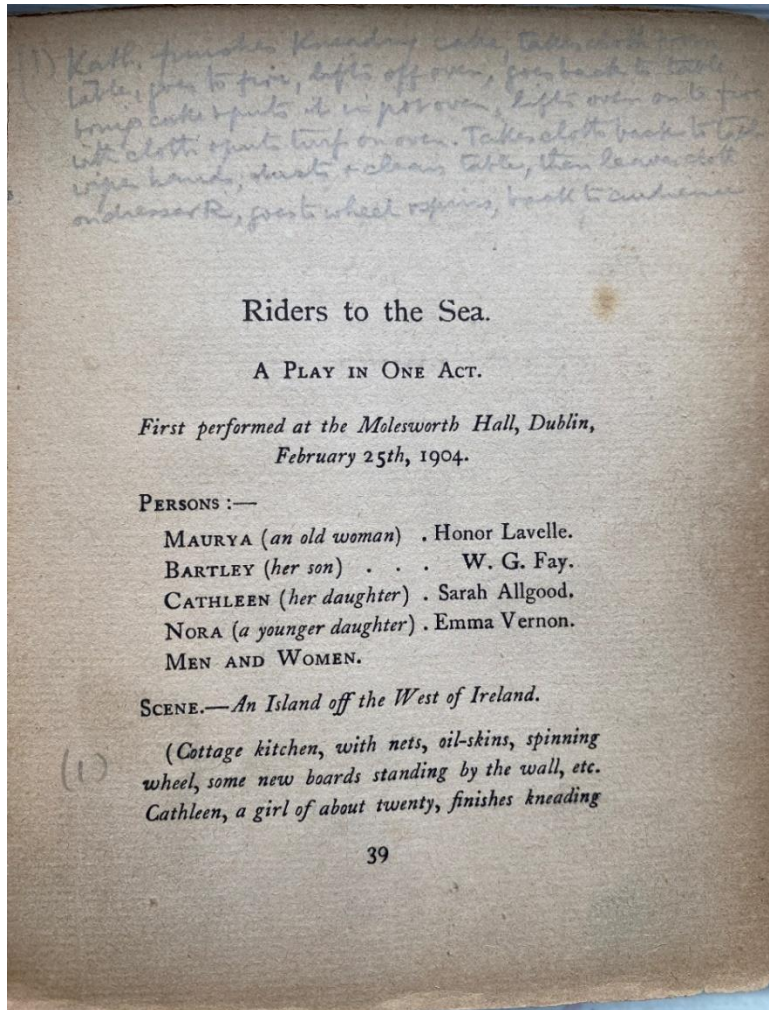
[drawing of stage plot]

Time 25 minutes

[stage directions at opening]¹⁶

¹⁶ Dresser R. Chair at fire L[,] chair LC at back[,] | Spinning wheel C at back in front of window[,] | Boards standing at back RC. Piece of new rope | hanging at back R[,] | Pot oven, flour, basin. | 2 cakes, bundle corded (shirt + plain stocking)[,]| Knife on dresser. Turf, stick, coat hanging up[.]| Tobacco in pouch + purse for Bartley in drawer | of dresser. Tonges

Table (kitchen) C. Board + | sail (stretcher)[.]| Cup of water on dresser[,] cloths | on dresser. Oil skins + clothes hanging beside | LD at back, also shawl. Wool for wheel. | [corders]. Wood pail form in front of dresser | NB Turn wheel from L to R

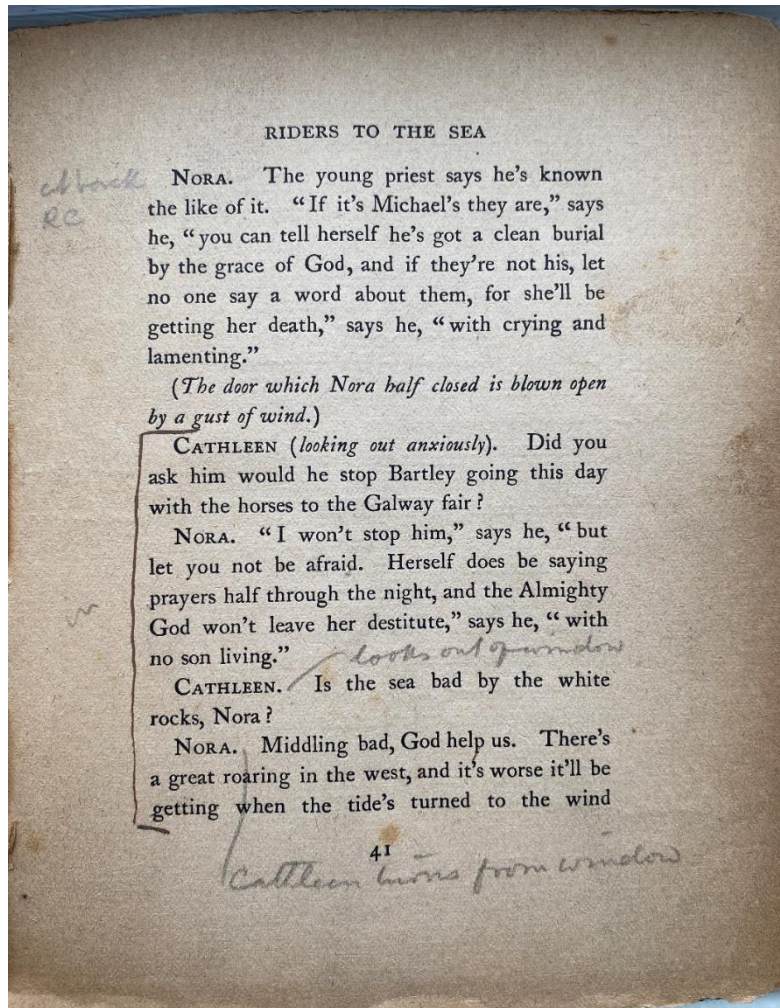


[(1) stage action preceding dialogue]¹⁷

39

¹⁷ Kath finishes kneading cake, takes cloth from the table, goes to fire, lifts off oven, goes back to table, brings cake and puts it in oven, lifts oven on to fire with cloth, + puts turf on oven. Takes cloth back to

table, wipes hands, dusts + cleans table, then leaves cloth on dresser R, goes to wheel + spins back to audience.



RIDERS TO THE SEA

at back RC

NORA. — The young priest says he's known the like of it. "If it's Michael's they are," says he, "you can tell herself he's got a clean burial by the grace of God, and if they're not his let no one say a word about them, for she'll be getting her death," says he, "with crying and lamenting."

(The door which Nora half closed behind her is blown open by a gust of wind.)

CATHLEEN (*looking out anxiously*). Did you ask him would he stop Bartley going this day with the horses to the Galway fair?

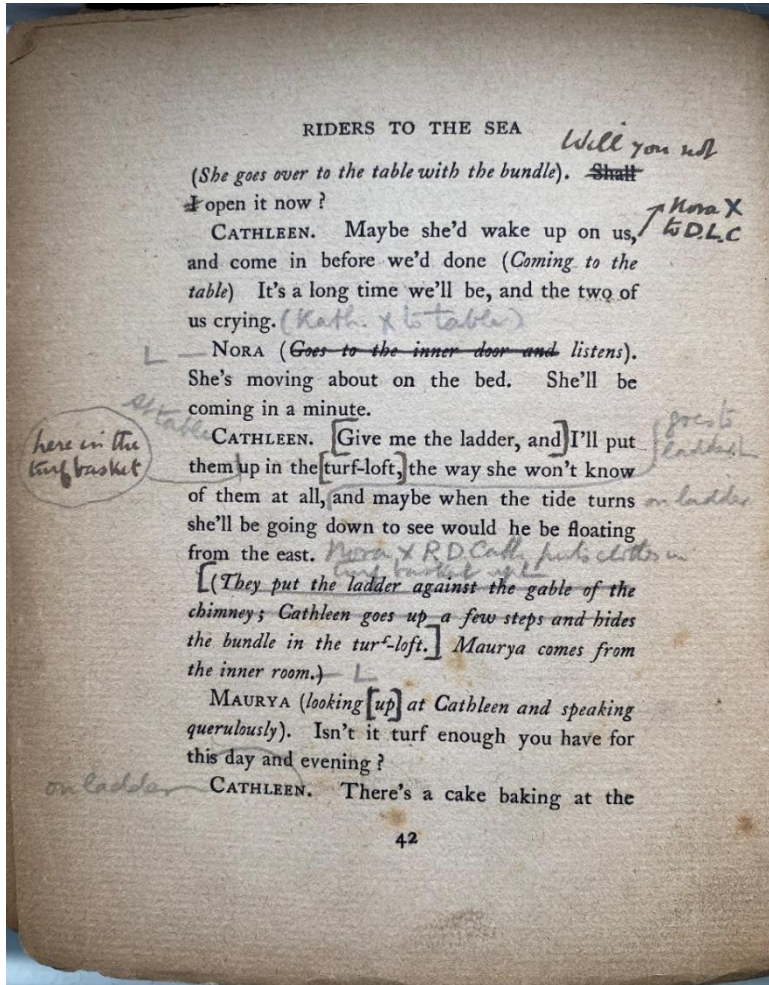
NORA. "I won't stop him," says he, "but let you not be afraid. Herself does be saying prayers half through the night, and the Almighty God won't leave her destitute," says he, "with no son living."

looks out of window
CATHLEEN. Is the sea bad by the white rocks, Nora?

NORA. Middling bad, God help us. There's a great roaring in the west, and it's worse it'll be getting when the tide's turned to the wind

Cathleen turns from window

RIDERS TO THE SEA



(She goes over to the table with the bundle). ~~Shall~~ **Will you not**
 open it now? **Nora X to D.L.C.**

CATHLEEN. Maybe she'd wake up on us, and come in before we'd done. (Coming to the table) It's a long time we'll be, and the two of us crying. **(Kath. X to table)**

L— NORA (~~Goes to the inner door and listens~~). She's moving about on the bed. She'll be coming in a minute.

at table CATHLEEN. [Give me the ladder, and] I'll put them up in the [turf-loft] the way she won't know **goes to ladder L** of them at all, ~~and maybe~~ when the tide turns she'll be going down to see would he be floating **on ladder** from the east. **Nora X RD Cath puts clothes in turf basket up L**

here in the turf basket

[(They put the ladder against the gable of the chimney; Cathleen goes up a few steps and hides the bundle in the turf-loft.] Maurya comes from the inner room.) — L

MAURYA (looking [up] at Cathleen and speaking querulously). — Isn't it turf enough you have for this day and evening?

on ladder — CATHLEEN. There's a cake baking at the

RIDERS TO THE SEA

fire for a short space (*throwing down the turf*),
and Bartley will want it when the tide turns if
he goes to Connemara. (*brings turf, puts it on fire returns to*
Nora picks up the turf and puts it round wheel
the pot-oven.) goes to R.D looks out

MAURYA (*sitting down on a stool at the fire.*)
He won't go this day with the wind rising from
the south and west. He won't go this day, for
the young priest will stop him surely.

at R.D. — NORA. He'll not stop him, mother, and I
heard Eamon Simon and Stephen Pheety and
Colum Shawn saying he would go.

MAURYA. Where is he itself?

NORA. He went down to see would there be
another boat sailing in the week, and I'm
thinking it won't be long till he's here now, for
the tide's turning at the green head, and the
hooker's tacking from the east.

looks out at window — CATHLEEN. I hear someone passing the big
stones. *comes forward R.C.*

NORA (*looking out*). He's coming now, and
he in a hurry.

RIDERS TO THE SEA

the fire for a short space (*throwing down turf*),
and Bartley will want it when the tide turns if
he goes to Connemara. (**brings turf, puts it on the fire returns to**

(Nora picks up the turf and puts it round wheel
the pot-oven). **goes to RD + looks out**

MAURYA (*Sitting down on a stool at the fire*) — L

...

at R.D. — NORA. He'll not stop him, mother, and I
heard Eamon Simon and Stephen Pheety and
Colum Shawn saying he would go.

...

looks out — CATHLEEN. I hear someone passing the big
at window stones.

NORA. (*looking out*). He's coming now, and
he in a hurry.

comes forward R.C.

RIDERS TO THE SEA

R.D.

BARTLEY (*comes in and looks round the room. Speaking sadly and quietly.*) Where is the bit of new rope, Cathleen, was bought in Connemara?

turns

CATHLEEN (~~coming down~~). Give it to him, Nora; it's on a nail by the white boards. **I** hung it up this morning, for the pig with the black feet was eating it. **I turns to wheel**

from nail

NORA (*giving him a rope*). Is that it, Bartley?

near R D

MAURYA. You'd do right to leave that rope,

Nora dusts Bartley, hanging by the boards (*Bartley takes the*

+ clears

rope). It will be wanting in this place, I'm

table

telling you, if Michael is washed up to-morrow morning, or next morning, or any morning in the week, for it's a deep grave we'll make him by the grace of God.

behind table C BARTLEY (*beginning to work with the rope*).

I've no halter ...

... and the fair will be a good fair for horses I heard them saying below. **X to Maurya**

...

RIDERS TO THE SEA

BARTLEY (*comes in and looks round the room. Speaking sadly and quietly.*) Where is the bit of new rope, Cathleen, was bought in Connemara?

turns CATHLEEN (~~coming down~~). Give it to him, Nora; it's on a nail by the white boards. **I** hung it up this morning, for the pig with the black feet was eating it. **I turns to wheel**

from nail near R D NORA (*giving him a rope*). Is that it, Bartley?

Nora dusts + clears table MAURYA. You'd do right to leave that rope, Bartley, hanging by the boards (*Bartley takes the rope*). It will be wanting in this place, I'm telling you, if Michael is washed up to-morrow morning, or the next morning, or any morning in the week, for it's a deep grave we'll make him by the grace of God.

behind table C BARTLEY (*beginning to work with the rope*). I've no halter the way I can ride down on the mare, and I must go now quickly. This is the one boat going for two weeks or beyond it, and the fair will be a good fair for horses I heard them saying below. **X to Maurya**

MAURYA. It a hard thing they'll be saying

RIDERS TO THE SEA

...

(They crouch down in front of the old woman at the fire.)

**behind
Maurya's
chair**

NORA. —Tell us what it is you seen.

MAURYA.—I went down to the spring well, and I stood there saying a prayer to myself. Then Bartley came along, and he riding on the red mare with the grey pony behind him *(she puts up her hands, as if to hide something from her eyes)*. The Son of God spare us, Nora!

....

RIDERS TO THE SEA

CATHLEEN *(coming to the fire)*. What is it ails you, at all?

MAURYA *(speaking very slowly)*. I've seen the fearfulest thing any person has seen, since the day Bride Dara seen the dead man with the child in his arms.

CATHLEEN and NORA. Uah.

(They crouch down in front of the old woman at the fire.)

*behind
Maurya's
chair* NORA. Tell us what it is you seen.

MAURYA. I went down to the spring well, and I stood there saying a prayer to myself. Then Bartley came along, and he riding on the red mare with the gray pony behind him *(she puts up her hands, as if to hide something from her eyes)*. The Son of God spare us, Nora!

CATHLEEN. What is it you seen?

MAURYA. I seen Michael himself.

CATHLEEN *(speaking softly)*. You did not, mother; It wasn't Michael you seen, for his body is after being found in the far north, and he's got a clean burial by the grace of God.

RIDERS TO THE SEA

a hard birth I had with every one of them and they coming to the world—and some of them were found and some of them were not found, but they're gone now the lot of them. . . There were Stephen, and Shawn, were lost in the great wind, and found after in the Bay of Gregory of the Golden Mouth, and carried up the two of them on one plank, and in by that door.

(She pauses for a moment, the girls start as if they heard something through the door that is half open behind them.)

(C) NORA *(in a whisper)*. Did you hear that, Cathleen? Did you hear a noise in the North-East?

L of Maurya CATHLEEN *(in a whisper)*. There's some one after crying out by the seashore. *Nora goes to RD*

MAURYA *(continues without hearing anything)*. There was Sheamus and his father, and his own father again, were lost in a dark night, and not a stick or sign was seen of them when the sun went up. There was Patch after was drowned out of a curagh that turned over. I was sitting

RIDERS TO THE SEA

...

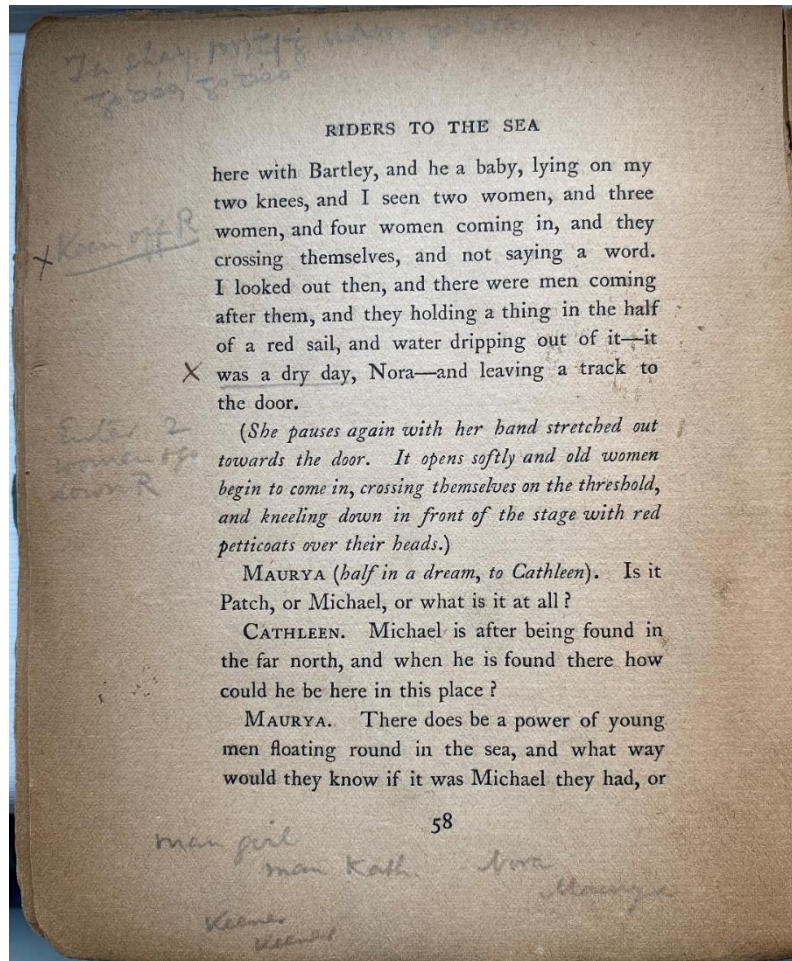
There were Stephen, and Shawn, were lost in the great wind, and found after in the Bay of Gregory of the Golden Mouth, and carried up the two of Nora XC them on one plank, and in by that door.

(She pauses for a moment, the girls start as if they heard something through the door that is half open behind them.)

(C) NORA *(in a whisper)*. —Did you hear that, Cathleen? Did you hear a noise in the North-East?

L of Maurya CATHLEEN *(in a whisper)*. —There's some one after crying out by the seashore. Nora goes to RD

...



[Irish language script representing the keen]¹⁸

RIDERS TO THE SEA

here with Bartley, and he a baby, lying on my two knees, and I saw two women, and three

X Keen off R women, and four women coming in, and they crossing themselves, and not saying a word.

I looked out then, and there were men coming after them, and they holding a thing in the half of a red sail, and water dripping out of it—it

X was a dry day, Nora—and leaving a track to the door.

Enter 2 women+ go down R *(She pauses again with her hand stretched out towards the door. It opens softly and old women begin to come in, crossing themselves on the threshold, and kneeling down in front of the stage with red petticoats over their heads.)*

...

man girl 58

man Kath. Nora

Maurya

Keener

Keener

¹⁸ "Ta se imighthe uaim! | Go deo! Go deo! Go deo!" ['He's gone away from me! Forever! Forever! Forever']

RIDERS TO THE SEA

another man like him, for when a man is nine days in the sea, and the wind blowing, it's hard set his own mother would be to say what man was in it.

CATHLEEN. It's Michael, God spare him, for they're after sending us a bit of his clothes from the far north.

(She reaches out and hands Maurya the clothes that belonged to Michael. Maurya stands up slowly, and takes them in her hands. Nora looks out.) R

X C
at back
NORA. They're carrying a thing among them and there's water dripping out of it and leaving a track by the big stones.

CATHLEEN *(in a whisper to the women who have come in)*. Is it Bartley it is?

ONE OF THE WOMEN. It is surely, God rest his soul.

(Two younger women come in and pull out the table. Then men carry in the body of Bartley, laid on a plank, with a bit of a sail over it, and lay it on the table.) feet first

RIDERS TO THE SEA

...

CATHLEEN. It's Michael, God spare him, for they're after sending us a bit of his clothes from the far north. gets

(She reaches out and hands Maurya the clothes that belonged to Michael. Maurya stands up slowly, and takes them in her hands. Nora looks out.) R

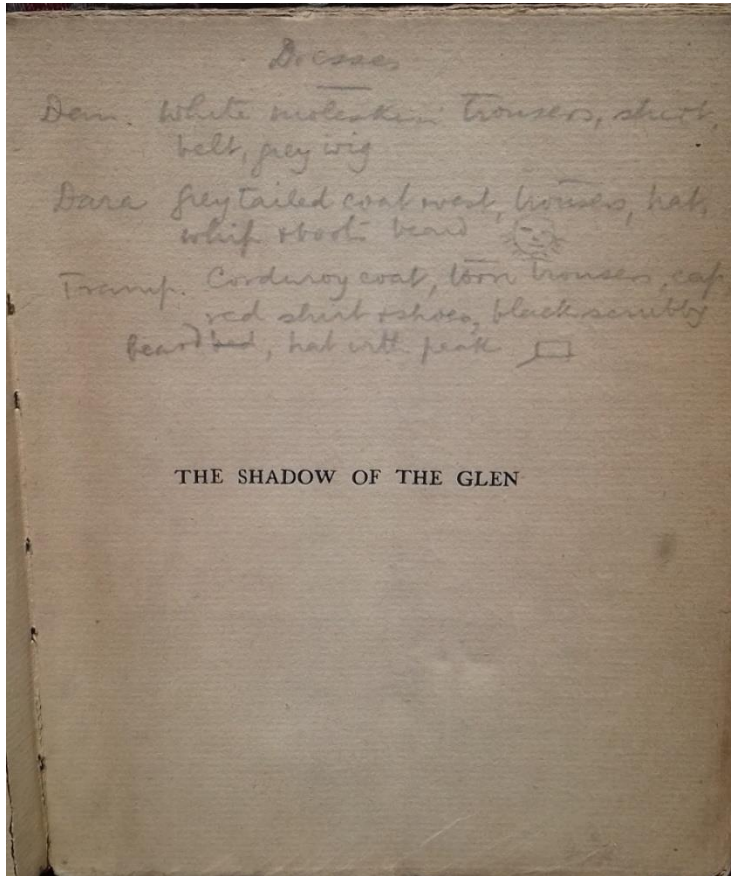
XC
at back

NORA. They're carrying a thing among them and there's water dripping out of it and leaving a track by the big stones.

CATHLEEN *(in a whisper to the women who have come in)*. Is it Bartley it is?

...

(Two younger women come in and pull out the table. Then men carry in the body of Bartley, laid on a plank, with a bit of sail over it, and lay it on the table.) feet first





Appendix C

Headnote:

Fay also annotated his copy of the play in *Samhain*. Where these annotations differ from the Vigo text they are indicated in footnotes.¹⁹

Dresses

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Dan | White moleskin trousers, short belt, grey wig |
| Dara | grey tailed coat + vest, trousers, hat, whip + boots beard  |
| Tramp | Corduroy coat, torn trousers, cap, red shirt + shoes, black scrubby beard bed, hat with peak  |

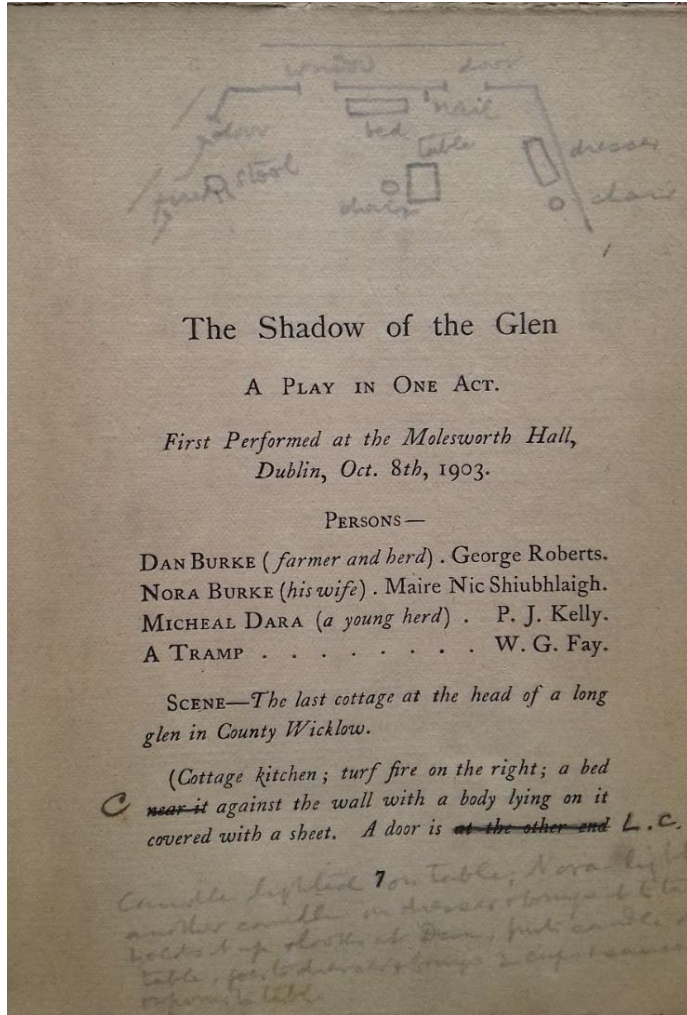
¹⁹ J. M. Synge, *The Shadow of the Glen and Riders to the Sea* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1905). Vigo Cabinet series no. 24. This is the first commercial edition of Synge's work in book form. It was reprinted several times.

Properties

Fireplace down R, fire lighted
 3 legged stool at fireplace
 Kettle at fireplace
 cupboard L (Dresser)
 bed at back of stage between door + window
 Table down stage L C
 chair R of table
 chair L below dresser
 shawl hung R of D. L. C.
 stocking with money (coin + 10 notes)
 pipes on table + tobacco
 3 glasses Stick up R
 sugar bowl with sugar
 bottle of whiskey stick (Michael)
 home made cake
 butter needle + thread (Nora)
 Knife blanket, sheet + pillow for bed
 teapot
 tea caddy with tea
 mug of water on table
 milk in jug
 2 candles in sticks (brass)
 matches
 clock hanging at back
 2 cups, 2 saucers, 2 spoons on dresser

Properties

Fireplace down R, fire lighted
 3 legged stool at fireplace
 Kettle at fireplace
 cupboard L (Dresser)
 bed at back of stage between door + window
 Table down stage LC
 chair R of table
 chair L below dresser
 shawl hung R of D. L. C.
 stocking with money (coin + 10 notes)
 pipes on table + tobacco
 3 glasses Stick up R
 sugar bowl with sugar
 bottle of whiskey stick (Michael)
 home made cake
 butter needle + thread (Nora)
 Knife blanket, sheet + pillow for bed
 teapot
 tea caddy with tea
 mug of water on table
 milk in jug
 2 candles in sticks (brass)
 Matches
 clock hanging at back
 2 cups, 2 saucers, 2 spoons on dresser



[stage plot, including entrances and exits and furniture]

...

(Cottage kitchen; turf fire on the right; a bed
 C ~~near it~~ against the wall with a body lying on it
 covered with a sheet. A door is ~~at the other end~~ L.C.
 Candle lighted on table;²⁰ Nora lights another candle on dresser
 and brings it to table. | holds it up and looks at Dan, puts candle
 on | table, goes to dresser + brings 2 cups + saucers + | spoons to table

²⁰ '[C]andle lighted on table when curtain rises[.] Nora lights other on dresser + brings it to table' (*Samhain*, pencil annotation, 34).

THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN

Rathvanna. I got drunk that night, I got drunk in the morning, and drunk the day after, —I was coming from the races beyond—and the third day they found Darcy. . . . Then I knew it was himself I was after hearing, and I wasn't afeard anymore.

NORA (*speaking sorrowfully and slowly*). God spare Darcy, he'ld always look in here and he passing up or passing down, and it's very lonesome I was after him a long while (*she looks over at the bed and lowers her voice, speaking very clearly*), and then I got happy again—if it's ever happy we are, stranger—for I got used to being lonesome.

(*A short pause; then she stands up.*)

NORA. Was there anyone on the last bit of the road, stranger, and you coming from Aughrim?

TRAMP. There was a young man with a drift of mountain ewes, and he running after them this way and that.

NORA (*with a half-smile*). Far down, stranger?

(*Send kettle to be put on fire in dressing room*)

15

THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN

...

NORA (*speaking sorrowfully and slowly*). God spare Darcy, he'ld always look in here and he passing up or passing down, and it's very lonesome I was after him a long while (*she looks over at the bed and lowers her voice, speaking very clearly*), and then I got happy again – if it's ever happy we are, stranger – for I got used to being lonesome.

gets up and X RC

(*A short pause; then she stands up*)

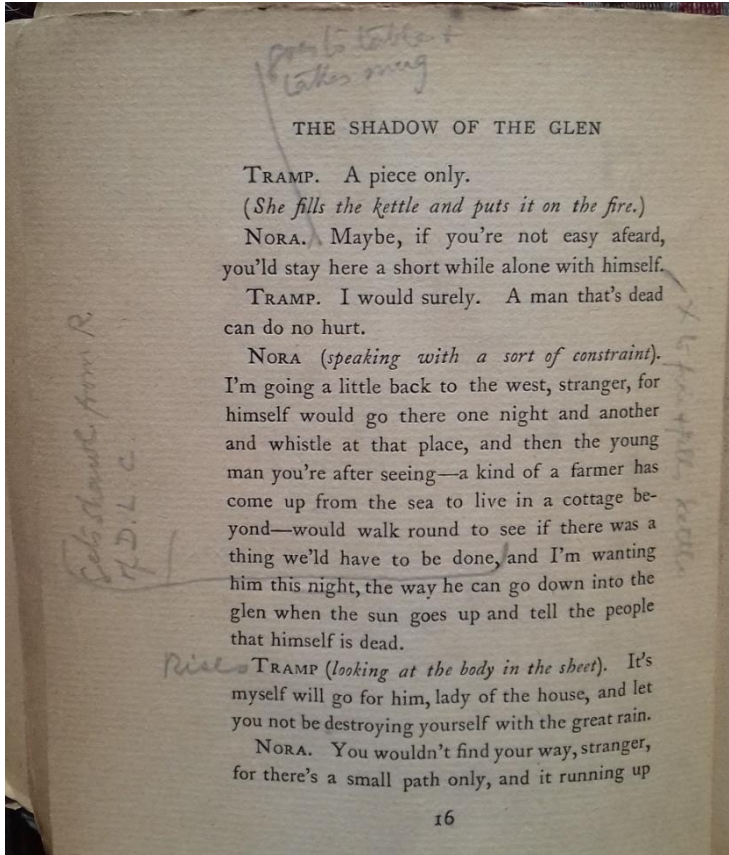
...

TRAMP. There was a young man with a drift of mountain ewes, and he running after them this way and that.

NORA (*with a half-smile*). Far down, stranger? **(Send kettle to be put on fire in dressing room.**²¹

15

²¹ 'See kettle of boiling water ready at fire R' (*Samhain*, pencil annotation, 37).



goes to table +
takes mug

THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN

...

NORA. Maybe, if you're not easily afeard, you'd stay here a short while alone with himself.

TRAMP. I would surely. A man that's dead can do no hurt.

NORA (*speaking with a sort of constraint*). I'm going a little back to the west, stranger, for himself would go there one night and another and whistle at that place, and then the young man you're after seeing - a kind of a farmer has come up from the sea to live in a cottage beyond - would walk round to see if here was a thing we'd have to be done, and I'm wanting him this night, the way he can go down into the glen when the sun goes up and tell the people that himself is dead.

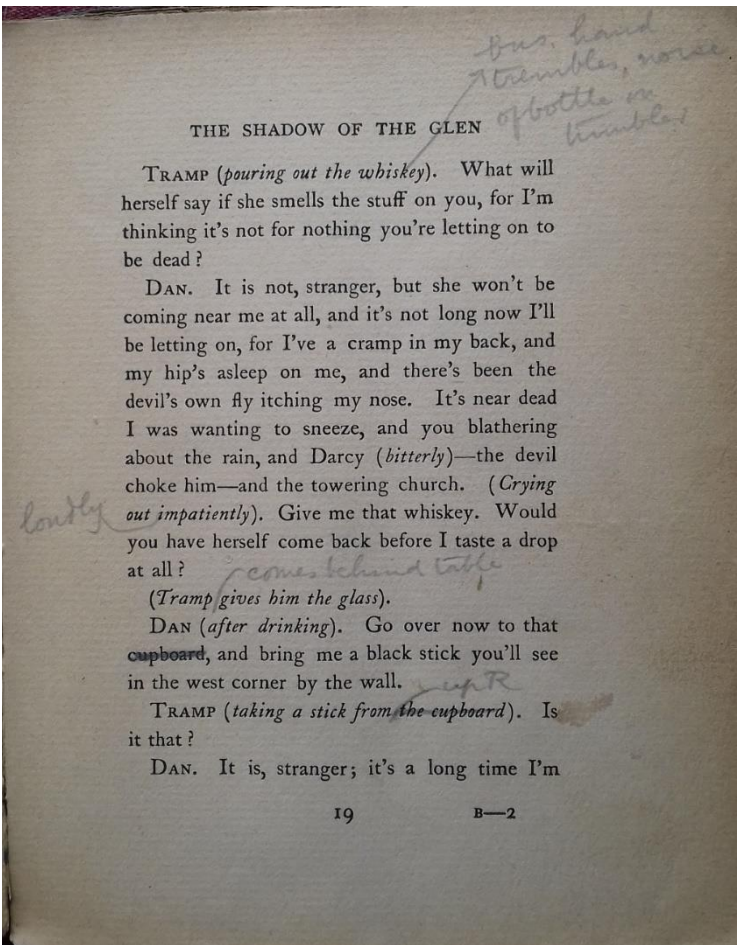
gets shawl from R
of D.L.C

X to fire + fills

Rises TRAMP (*looking at the body in the sheet*). It's myself will go for him, lady of the house, and let you not be destroying yourself with the great rain.

...

bus. hand
trembles, noise
of bottle on
tumbler



THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN

TRAMP (*pouring out the whiskey*). What will herself say if she smells the stuff on you, for I'm thinking it's not for nothing you're letting on to be dead?

DAN. It is not, stranger, but she won't be coming near me at all, and it's not long now I'll be letting on, for I've a cramp in my back, and my hip's asleep on me, and there's been the devil's own fly itching my nose. It's near dead I was wanting to sneeze, and you blathering about the rain, and Darcy (*bitterly*)—the devil choke him—and the towering church. (*Crying out impatiently*). Give me that whiskey. Would you have herself come back before I taste a drop at all?

(*Tramp gives him the glass*).

DAN (*after drinking*). Go over now to that cupboard, and bring me a black stick you'll see in the west corner by the wall.

TRAMP (*taking a stick from the cupboard*). Is it that?

DAN. It is, stranger; it's a long time I'm

THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN

TRAMP (*pouring out the whiskey*).

...

DAN. It is not, stranger, but she won't be coming near me at all, and it's not long now I'll be letting on, for I've a cramp in my back, and my hip's asleep on me, and there's been the devil's own fly itching my nose. It's near dead I was wanting to sneeze, and you blathering about the rain, and Darcy (*bitterly*)—the devil choke him—and the towering church. (*Crying*

loudly out impatiently). ...

comes behind table

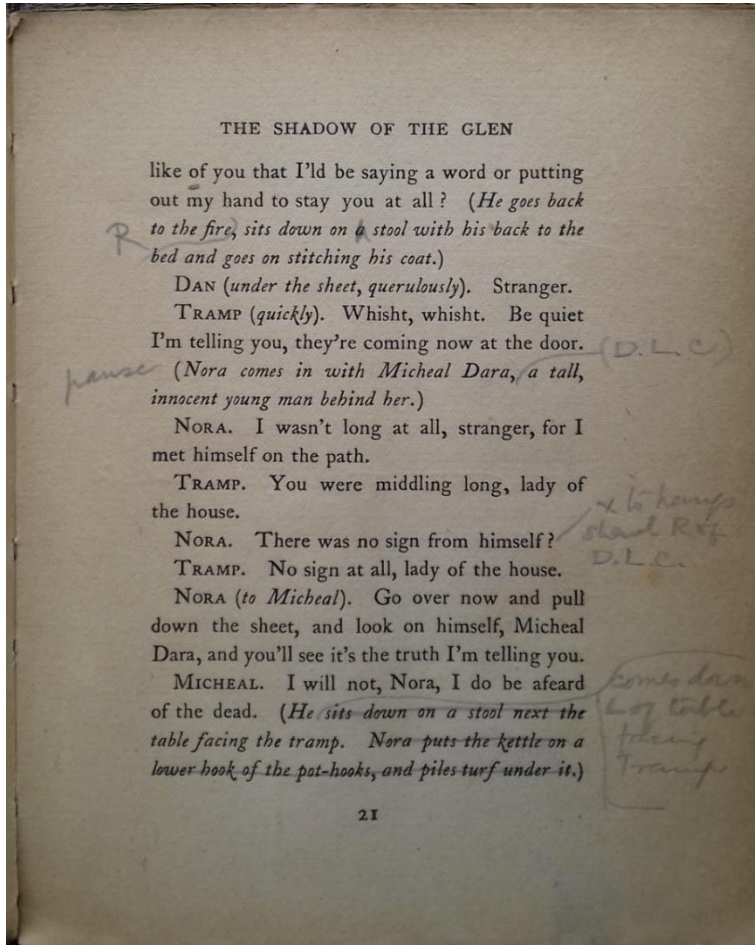
(*Tramp gives him the glass*).

DAN (*after drinking*). Go over now to that cupboard, and bring me a black stick you'll see in the west corner by the wall.

up R

TRAMP (*taking a stick from the cupboard*). Is it that?

...



THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN

like of you that I'd be saying a word or putting out my hand to stay you at all? *(He goes back to the fire, sits down on a stool with his back to the bed and goes on stitching his coat.)*
R

...

TRAMP *(quickly)*. Whisht, whisht. Be quiet I'm telling you, they're coming now at the door.
pause *(Nora comes in with Micheal Dara, a tall, innocent young man behind her.)* **(D. L. C.)**

...

NORA. There was no sign from himself?
TRAMP. No sign at all, lady of the house.

...

MICHEAL. I will not, Nora, I do be afeard of the dead. *(He sits down on a stool next the table facing the tramp. Nora puts the kettle on a lower hook of the pot hooks, and piles turf under it.)*

**X to hang up
Shawl R of
D.L.C.**

**comes down
L of table
facing Tramp**

THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN

would I marry you, Mike Dara? You'll be getting old and I'll be getting old, and in a little while I'm telling you, you'll be sitting up in your bed—the way himself was sitting—with a shake in your face, and your teeth falling, and the white hair sticking out round you like an old bush where sheep do be leaping a gap. *leppin'*

(Dan Burke sits up noiselessly from under the sheet, with his hand to his face. His white hair is sticking out round his head.)

NORA *(goes on slowly without hearing him)*. It's a pitiful thing to be getting old, but it's a queer thing surely. It's a queer thing to see an old man sitting up there in his bed with no teeth in him, and a rough word in his mouth, and his chin the way it would take the bark from the edge of an oak board you'd have building a door. . . . God forgive me, Micheal Dara, we'll all be getting old, but it's a queer thing surely. *(Dan sneezes)*

MICHEAL. It's too lonesome you are from living a long time with an old man, Nora, and

29

THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN

Michael

would I marry you, Mike Dara? You'll be getting old and I'll be getting old, and in a little while I'm telling you, you'll be sitting up in your bed – the way himself was sitting – with a shake in your face, and your teeth falling, and the white hair sticking out round you like an old bush where sheep do be leaping a gap. **leppin'**

(Dan Burke sits up noiselessly from under the sheet, with his hand to his face. His white hair is sticking out round his head.)

...

~~[Dan sneezes. Micheal looks towards bed, jumps up~~

MICHEAL. It's too lonesome you are from **+ rushes**

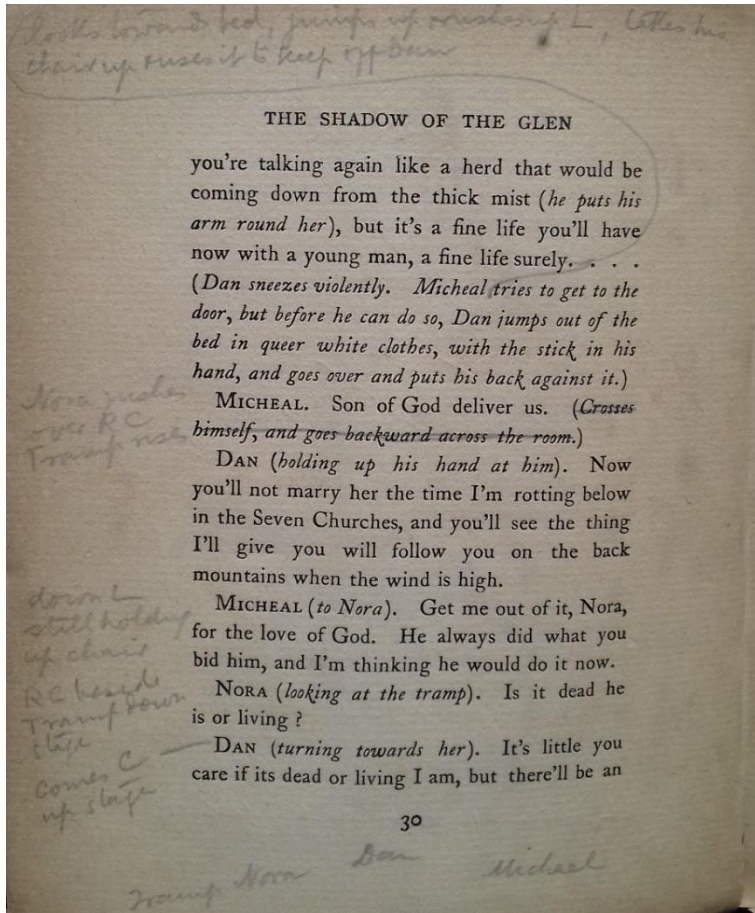
living a long time with an old man, Nora, and

~~up L, takes chair + uses it to keep off~~

Dan²²

29

²² Fay's pencil marks have been cancelled here.



looks towards bed, jumps up + rushes up L, takes his chair up + uses it to keep off Dan

THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN

you're talking again like a herd that would be coming down from the thick mist (*he puts his arm round her*), but it's a fine life you'll have now with a young man, a fine life surely ...
 (*Dan sneezes violently. Micheal tries to get to the door, but before he can do so, Dan jumps out of the bed in queer white clothes, with the stick in his hand, and goes over and puts his back against it.*)

Nora rushes MICHEAL. Son of God deliver us. (*Crosses over RC himself, and goes backward across the room.*)
Tramp rises

...
down L MICHEAL (*to Nora*). Get me out of it, Nora, **still holding** for the love of God. He always did what you **up chair** bid him, and I'm thinking he would do it now.
RC beside NORA (*looking at the tramp*). Is it dead he **Tramp down-** is or living?
stage DAN (*turning towards her*). It's little you **comes C** care if its dead or living I am but there'll be an **up stage**

30

Dan

Nora

Michael

Tramp

THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN

days are warm, and it's not from the like of them you'll be hearing a talk of getting old like Peggy Cavanagh, and losing the hair off you, and the light of your eyes, but it's fine songs you'll be hearing when the sun goes up, and there'll be no old fellow wheezing, the like of a sick sheep, close to your ear.

NORA. I'm thinking it's myself will be wheezing that time with lying down under the Heavens when the night is cold; but you've a fine bit of talk, stranger, and it's with yourself I'll go. *(She goes towards the door, then turns to Dan.)* You think it's a grand thing you're after doing with your letting on to be dead, **but what is it at all?** What way would a woman live in a lonesome place the like of this place, and she not making a talk with the men passing? And what way will yourself live from this day, with none to care you? What is it you'll have now but a black life, Daniel Burke, and it's not long, I'm telling you, till you'll be lying again under that sheet, and you dead surely.

35

c-2

THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN

...

NORA. I'm thinking it's myself will be wheezing that time with lying down under the heavens when the night is cold; but you've a fine bit of talk, stranger, and it's with yourself I'll go. *(She goes towards the door, then turns to Dan.)* You think it's a grand thing your after doing with you letting on to be dead, **but what is it at all?** What way would a woman live in a lonesome place the like of this place, and she not making a talk with the men passing? And what way will yourself live from this day, with none to care you?²³

...

35

²³ '[What way ... care you]' (*Samhain*, pencil brackets, 43).

THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN ^L

(She goes out with the Tramp. Micheal is slinking after them, but Dan stops him.)

DAN. Sit down now and take a little taste of the stuff, Micheal Dara. There's a great drouth on me, and the night is young.

MICHEAL *(coming back to the table)*. And it's very dry I am, surely, with the fear of death you put on me, and I after driving mountain ewes since the turn of the day. *sits L of table*

DAN *(throwing away his stick)*. I was thinking to strike you, Micheal Dara, but you're a quiet man, God help you, and I don't mind you at all.

(He pours out two glasses of whiskey, and gives one to Micheal).

DAN. Your good health, Micheal Dara.

MICHEAL. God reward you, Daniel Burke, and may you have a long life, and a quiet life, and good health with it.

(They drink.)

CURTAIN.

THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN

to L

(She goes out with the Tramp. Micheal is slinking after them, but Dan stops him.)

DAN. Sit down now and take a little taste of the stuff, Micheal Dara. There's a great drouth on me, and the night is young.

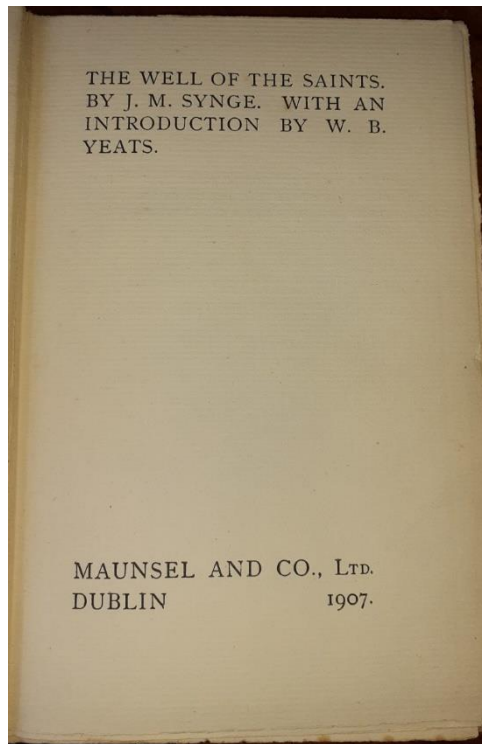
MICHEAL *(coming to the table)*. And it's very dry I am, surely, with the fear of death you put on me, and I after driving mountain ewes since the turn of the day. **Sits L of table**

DAN *(throwing away his stick)*. I was thinking to strike you, Micheal Dara, but you're a quiet man, God help you, and I don't mind you at all.

...

23 minutes

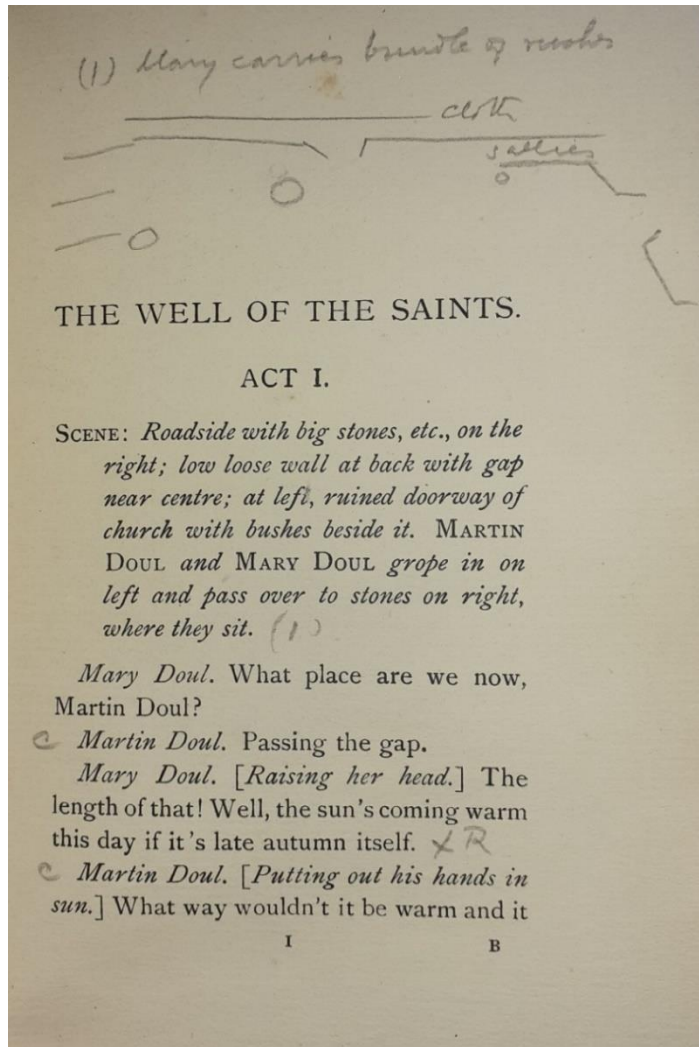
Appendix D



THE WELL OF THE SAINTS
BY J. M. SYNGE. WITH AN
INTRODUCTION BY W. B.
YEATS.²⁴

²⁴ Despite the Irish imprint, the book was printed by Charles Whittingham and Co (Chiswick Press, London). The sheets were in fact taken from the unsold edition of 1905 published in London by A. H. Bullen as part of his *Plays for an Irish Theatre Series* (6 vols, 1901-1906). The paper is heavy and cream-coloured and evokes a nostalgia for the pre-industrial age through untrimmed deckle edges and evident chain lines, both being deliberate

design choices which 'evoke the care and craft of paper-making by hand' (Clare Hutton, 'Toward a Modernism of the Book: From Dun Emer to Shakespeare and Company', in *A History of Irish Modernism*, ed. by Gregory Castle and Patrick Bixby [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019], 128-40 [134]).



(1) Mary carries bundle of rushes

[scenery plot at page head. Backcloth and tree wings are labelled ('sallies'). Circles represent tree trunks (p. 46 below)]²⁵

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

ACT I.

SCENE:

...

MARTIN DOUL and MARY DOUL grope in on left and pass over to stones on right, where they sit. (1)

...

C Martin DouL. Passing the gap.
Mary DouL. [Raising her head.] The length of that! Well, the sun's getting warm this day if it's late autumn itself. XR

C Martin DouL. [Putting out his hands in sun]. What way wouldn't it be warm and it

I B

²⁵ Synge's printed directions indicate 'stones where they sit', but Fay's property plot lists 'tree trunks'. *The Belfast Evening Telegraph* described 'flat

cloth and faint tints suggested surprising semblances of rugged lands and sombre skies' (6 February 1905, 5)

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

Martin. [*With his natural voice.*] I know it when Molly Byrne's walking in front, or when she's two perches, maybe, lagging behind, but it's few times I've heard you walking up the like of that, as if you'd met a thing wasn't right and you coming on the road.

Timmy. [*Hot and breathless, wiping his face.*] You've good ears, God bless you, if you're a liar itself, for I'm after walking up in great haste from hearing wonders in the fair.

Martin Doul. [*Rather contemptuously.*] You're always hearing queer wonderful things, and the lot of them nothing at all, but I'm thinking, this time, it's a strange thing surely, you'd be walking up before the turn of day, and not waiting below to look on them lepping, or dancing, or playing shows on the green of Clash.

Timmy. [*Huffed.*] I was coming to tell you it's in this place there'd be a bigger wonder done in a short while [MARTIN DOUL *stops working and looks at him*]²⁶, than *turns his head 8 towards him*

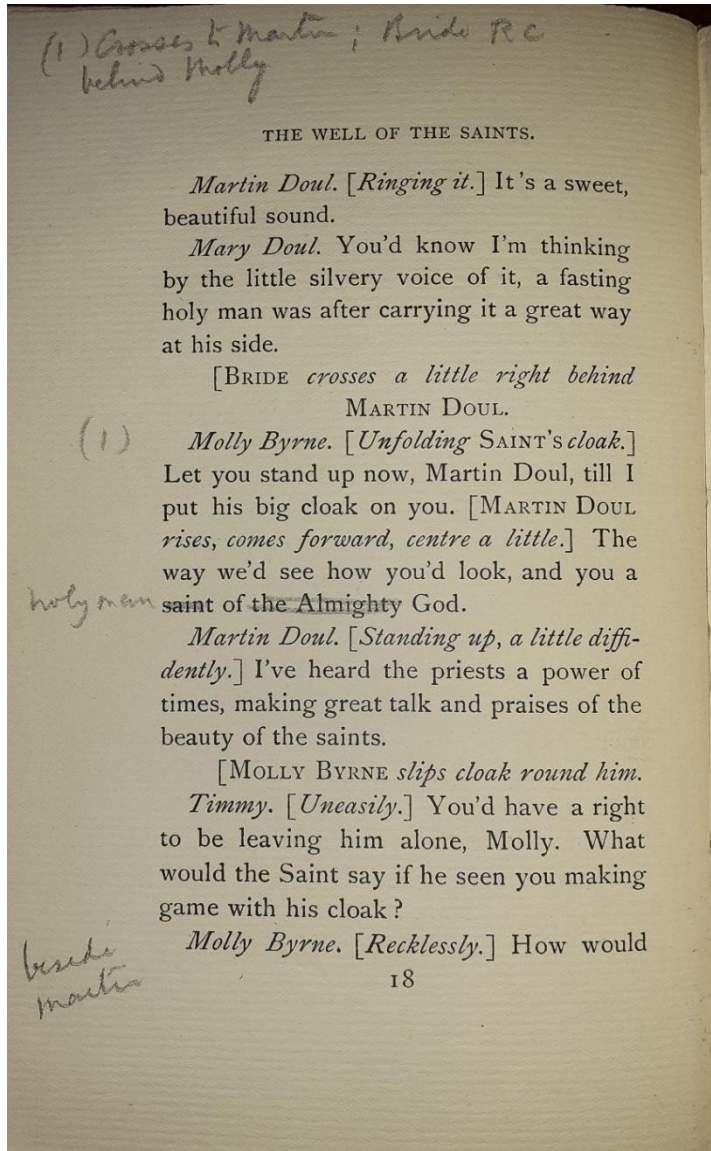
*seated
L of
Martin*

**seated
L of
Martin**

Timmy. [*Huffed.*] I was coming to tell you it's in this place there'd be a bigger wonder done in a short while [MARTIN DOUL *stops working and looks at him*]²⁶, than **turns his head 8 towards him**

²⁶ Fay indicates Timmy's position ('seated L of Martin') in the hinge margin. In the printed text Timmy sits down on entry, but Fay crosses out

the earlier direction. Whether he sits on a tree trunk or elsewhere (on the wall) is unclear.



(1) Crosses to Martin; Bride RC behind Molly

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

...

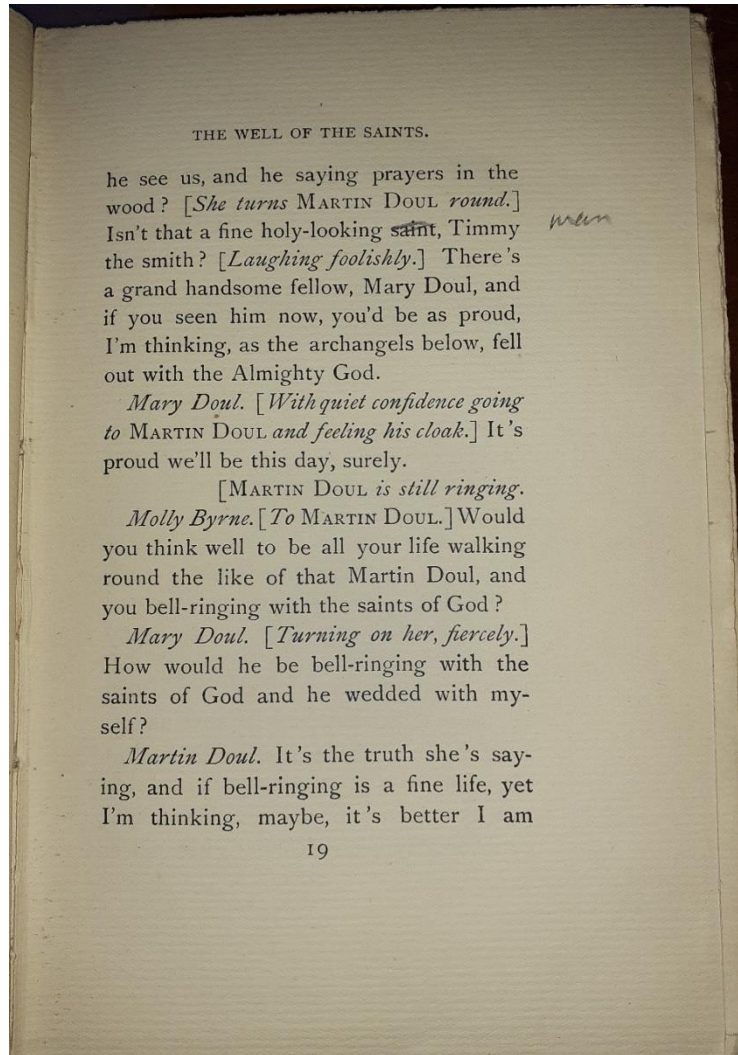
(1)

Molly Byrne. [*Unfolding SAINT'S cloak.*]

Let you stand up now, Martin Doul, till I put his big cloak on you ... The way we'd see how you'd look, and you a ~~saint~~ ^{holy man} of Almighty God.

...

Molly Byrne. [*Recklessly.*] How would

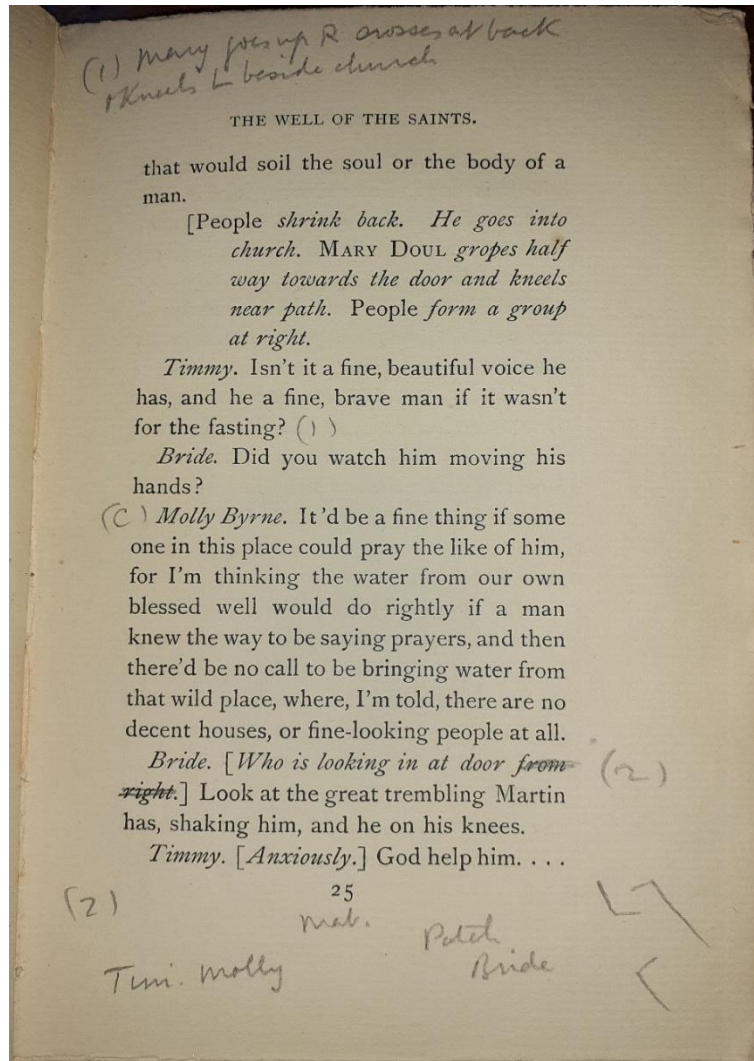


THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

he see us, and he saying prayers in the wood? [*She turns MARTIN DOUL round.*] Isn't that a fine holy-looking ~~saint~~, Timmy the smith?

man

...



(1) Mary goes up R crosses at back
+ kneels L beside church

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

...

Timmy. Isn't it a fine, beautiful voice he has, and he a fine, brave man if it wasn't for the fasting? (1)

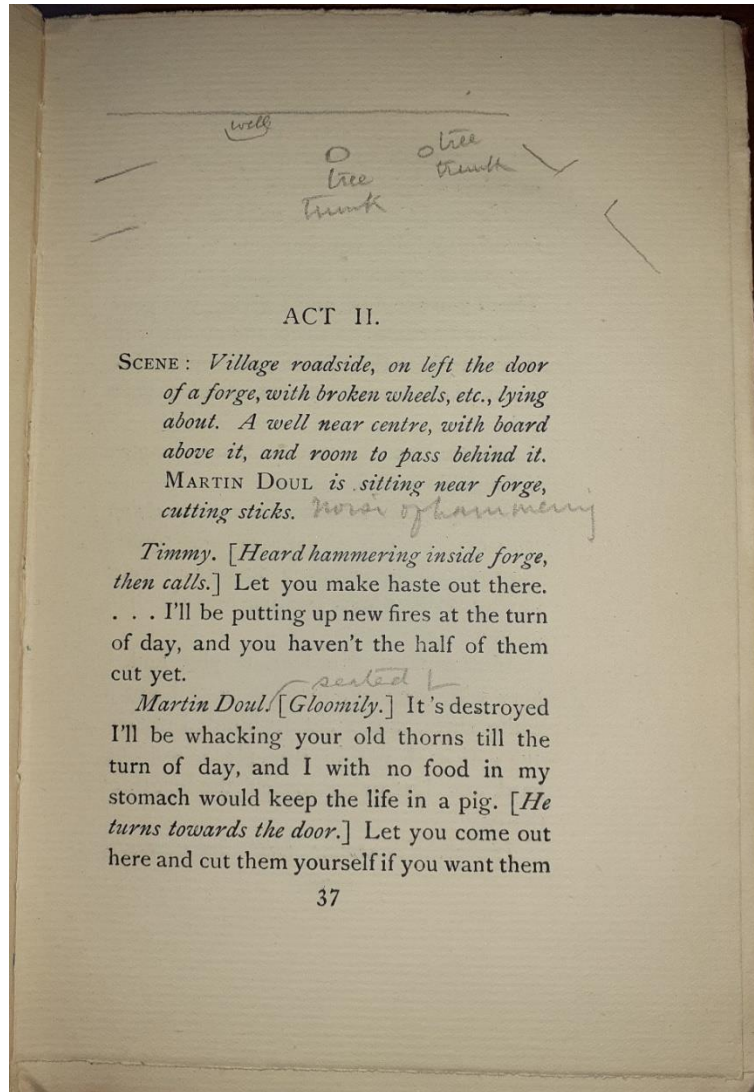
...

(C) Molly Byrne.

...

Bride. [Who is looking in at door ~~from~~ (2) ~~right~~.] Look at the great trembling Martin has, shaking him, and he on his knees.
[pencil number 2] 25

[sketch of the distribution of the characters relative to the doorway of the church in which Martin is receiving a cure]



[sketch of the set for Act II, Timmy's forge, and courtyard with well and tree trunks]

ACT II.

SCENE:

...

A well near centre, with board above it, and room to pass behind it.

MARTIN DOUL is sitting near forge, cutting sticks. **noise of hammering**

...

seated L

Martin DouL. ^ [*Gloomily.*] It's destroyed I'll be whacking your old thorns till the turn of day, and I with no food in my stomach would keep the life in a pig.

...

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

Working hard? [*He goes over to him.*] I'll teach you to work hard, Martin DouL. Strip off your coat now, and put a tuck in your sleeves, and cut the lot of them, while I'd rake the ashes from the forge, or I'll not put up with you another hour itself.

Martin DouL. [*Horrified.*] Would you have me getting my death sitting out in the black wintery air with no coat on me at all?

Timmy. [*With authority.*] Strip it off now, or walk down upon the road. *points R*

rise *Martin DouL.* [*Bitterly.*] Oh, God help me! [*He begins taking off his coat.*] I've heard tell you stripped the sheet from your wife and you putting her down into the grave, and that there isn't the like of you for plucking your living ducks, the short days, and leaving them running round in their skins, in the great rains and the cold. *throws coat L*

Timmy. [*Pulling over a big stick.*] Let

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

...

Timmy. [*With authority.*] Strip it off now, or walk down upon the road. **points R**

rises *Martin DouL.* [*Bitterly.*] Oh God help me! [*He begins taking off his coat.*] I've heard tell you stripped the sheet from your wife and you putting her down into the grave, and that there isn't the like of you for plucking your living ducks, the short days, and leaving them running round in their skins, in the great rains and the cold. **throws coat L**

...

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

hard thing for a man to have his sight, and he living near to the like of you, [*he cuts a stick, and throws it away*] or wed with a wife, [*cuts a stick*] and I do be thinking it should be a hard thing for the Almighty God to be looking on the world, bad days, and on men the like of yourself walking around on it, and they slipping each way in the muck.

Timmy. [*With pot-hooks which he taps on anvil.*] You'd have a right to be minding, Martin Doul, for it's a power the Saint cured lose their sight after a while. Mary Doul's dimming again I've heard them say—and I'm thinking the Lord if He hears you making that talk will have little pity left for you at all.

Martin Doul. There's not a bit of fear of me losing my sight, and if it's a dark day itself it's too well I see every wicked wrinkle you have round by your eye.

Timmy. [*Looking at him sharply.*] The day's not dark since the clouds broke in the east.

(1) Dark day is it? 41

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

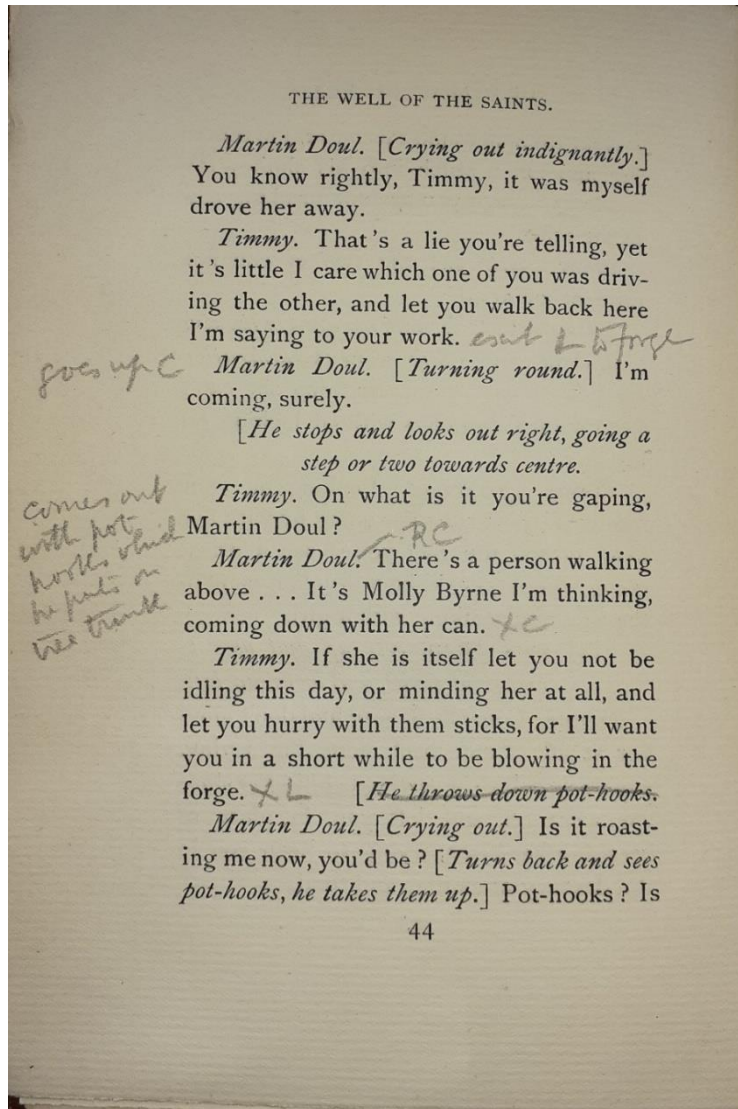
...

Martin Doul. There's not a bit of fear of me losing my sight, and if it's a dark day itself it's too well I see every wicked wrinkle you have round by your eye. (1)

Timmy. [*Looking at him sharply.*] ^ The day's not dark since the clouds broke in the east.

(1) Dark day is it?

41



THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

...

Timmy. That's a lie you're telling, yet
it's little I care which one of you was driv-
ing the other, and let you walk back here
I'm saying to your work. **exit L to forge**

goes up C *Martin Doul.* [*Turning round.*] I'm
coming, surely.

...

**Comes out
with pot
hooks which
he puts on
tree trunk** *Timmy.* On what is it you're gaping,
Martin Doul?²⁷ **RC**

Martin Doul. ^ There's a person walking
above ... It's Molly Byrne I'm thinking,
coming down with her can. **XC**

Timmy. If she is itself let you not be
idling this day, or minding her at all, and
let you hurry with them sticks, for I'll want
you in a short while to be blowing in the
forge. **XL** [*He throws down pot hooks.*

...

²⁷ This line is cut in the prompt-book.

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

talk to me the like of that. . . . You've heard, maybe, she's below picking nettles for the widow O'Flinn, who took great pity on her when she seen the two of you fighting, and yourself putting shame on her at the crossing of the roads.

up C *Martin Doul.* [*Impatiently.*] Is there no living person can speak a score of words to me, or say "God speed you," itself, without putting me in mind of the old woman, or that day either at Grianan?

Molly Byrne. [*Maliciously.*] I was thinking it should be a fine thing to put you in mind of the day you called the grand day of your life.

Martin Doul. Grand day, is it? [*Plainly again, throwing aside his work, and leaning towards her.*] Or a bad black day when I was ~~roused up~~ and found I was the like of the little children do be listening to the stories of an old woman, and do be dreaming after in the dark night that it's in grand houses of gold they are, with speckled horses to ride, and do be waking again, in

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

...

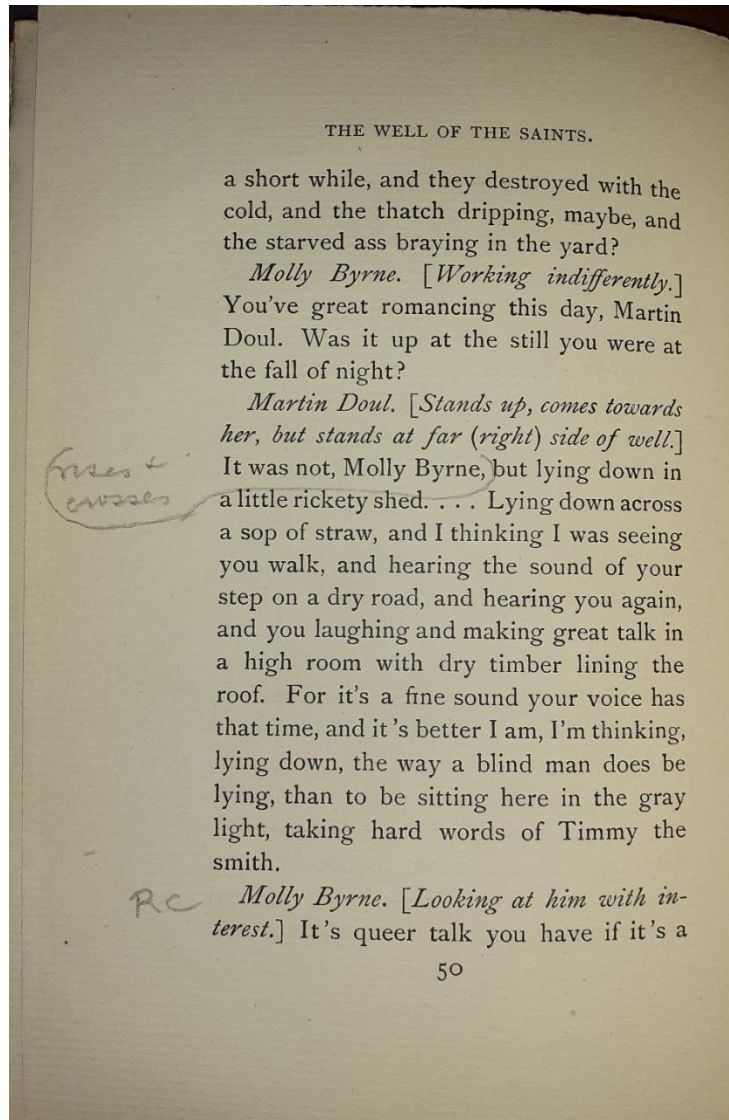
up C *Martin Doul.* [*Impatiently.*] Is there no living person can speak a score of words to me, or say "God speed you," itself, without putting me in mind of the old woman, or that day either at Grianan?

...

Martin Doul. Grand day, is it? [*Plainly again, throwing aside his work, and leaning towards her.*] On a bad black day when I was ~~roused up~~

...

**given my
sight**



THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

...

Martin DouL. [*Stands up, comes towards her, but stands at far (right)²⁸ side of well.*]
rises + crosses It was not, Molly Byrne, but lying down in a little rickety shed...

...

Molly Byrne. [*Looking at him with interest.*]
RC

...

²⁸ Fay's stage direction appears to modify the printed one.

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

little, old, shabby stump of a man you are
itself.

Martin Doul. I'm not so old as you do
hear them say.

Molly Byrne. You're old, I'm thinking,
to be talking that talk with a girl.

R of Molly *Martin Doul.* [*Despondingly.*] It's not a
lie you're telling, maybe, for it's long years
I'm after losing from the world, feeling love
and talking love, with the old woman, and
I fooled the whole while with the lies of
Timmy the smith.

Molly Byrne. [*Half invitingly.*] It's a
fine way you're wanting to pay Timmy the
smith. . . . And it's not his *lies* you're
making love to this day, Martin Doul.

Martin Doul. It is not, Molly, and the *but with*
Lord forgive us all. [*He passes behind her the good*
and comes near her left.] For I've heard tell *looks of*
there are lands beyond in Cahir Iveraghig *yourself*
and the Reeks of Cork with warm sun in
them, and fine light in the sky. [*Bending*
towards her.] And light's a grand thing for
a man ever was blind, or a woman, with a

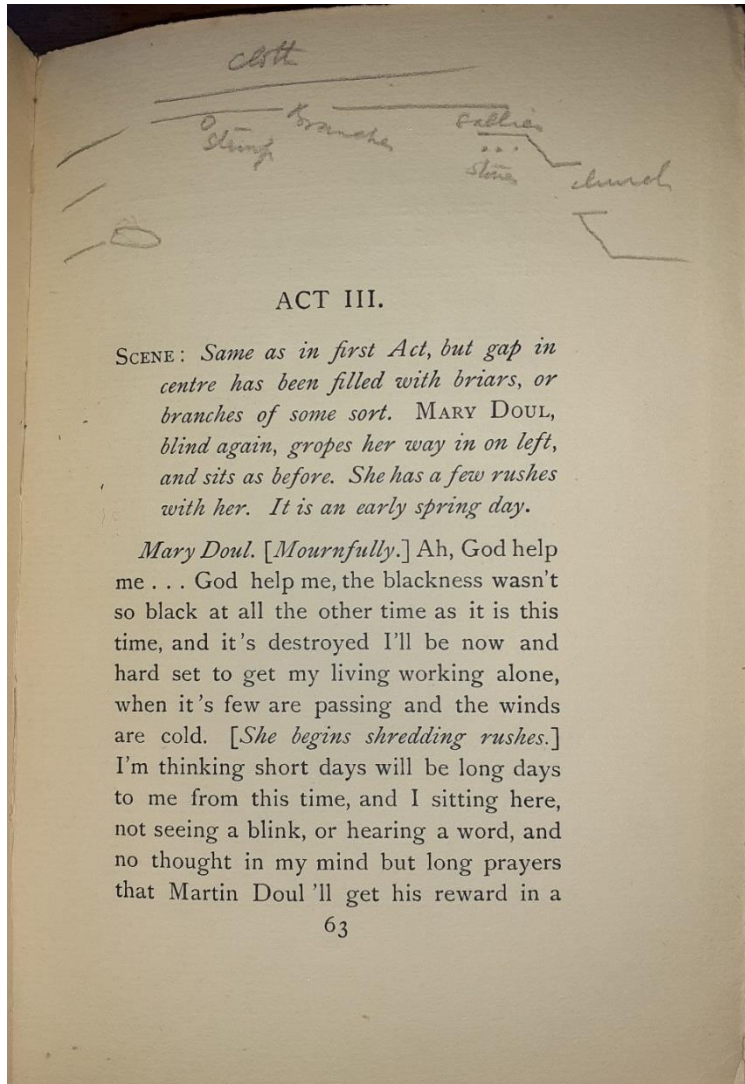
R of *Martin Doul.* [*Despondingly.*]
Molly

...

Martin Doul. It is not, Molly, ~~and the~~
Lord forgive us all. [*He passes behind her and*
comes near her left.] For I've heard tell
there are lands beyond in Cahir Iveraghig
and the Reeks of Cork with warm sun
in them and fine light in the sky.

...

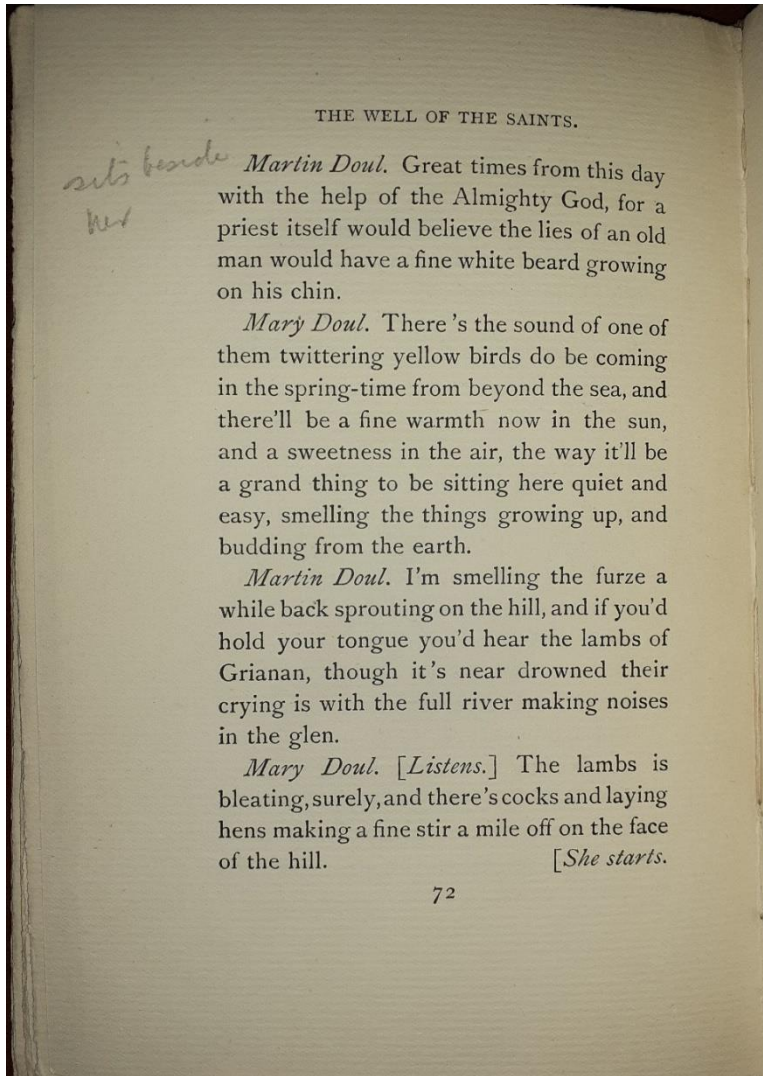
**but with
the good
looks of
yourself &**



[sketch of stage plot for Act III, which repeats the Act I set, but with the addition of small stones in front of the sallies and brambles blocking the gap in the wall]

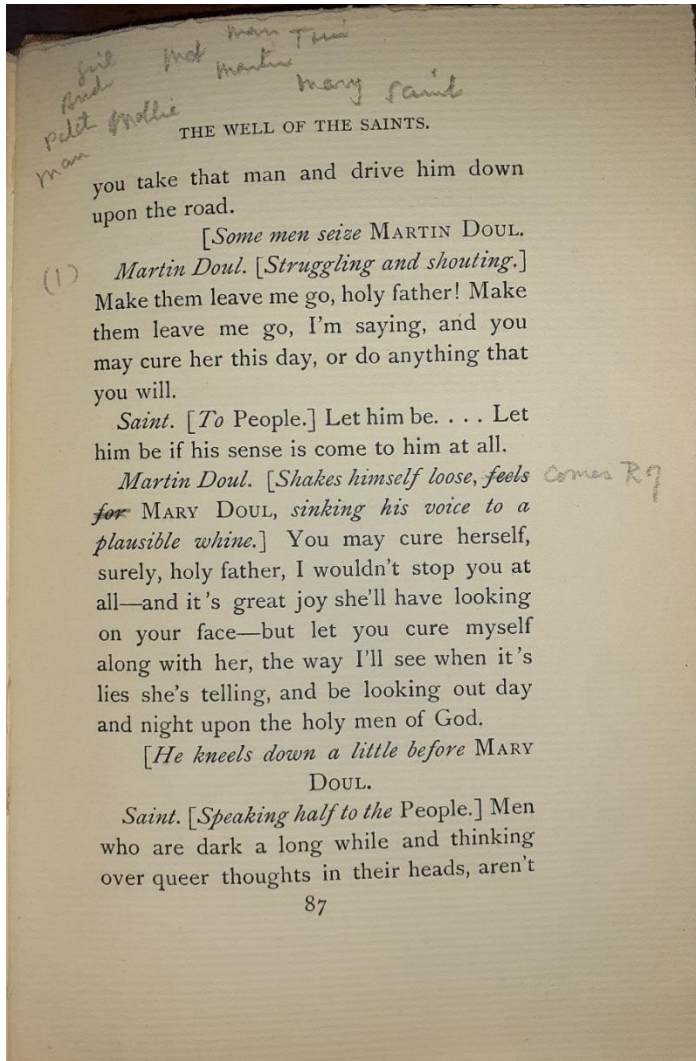
ACT III.

...



sits beside THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.
her *Martin Doul.* Great times from this day with the help of the Almighty God, for a priest itself would believe the lies of an old man would have a fine white beard growing on his chin.

...



[blocking for the characters on stage, showing Martin at bay surrounded by enemies]

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

...

- (1) Martin DouL. [Struggling and shouting.]²⁹
Make them leave me go, holy father!

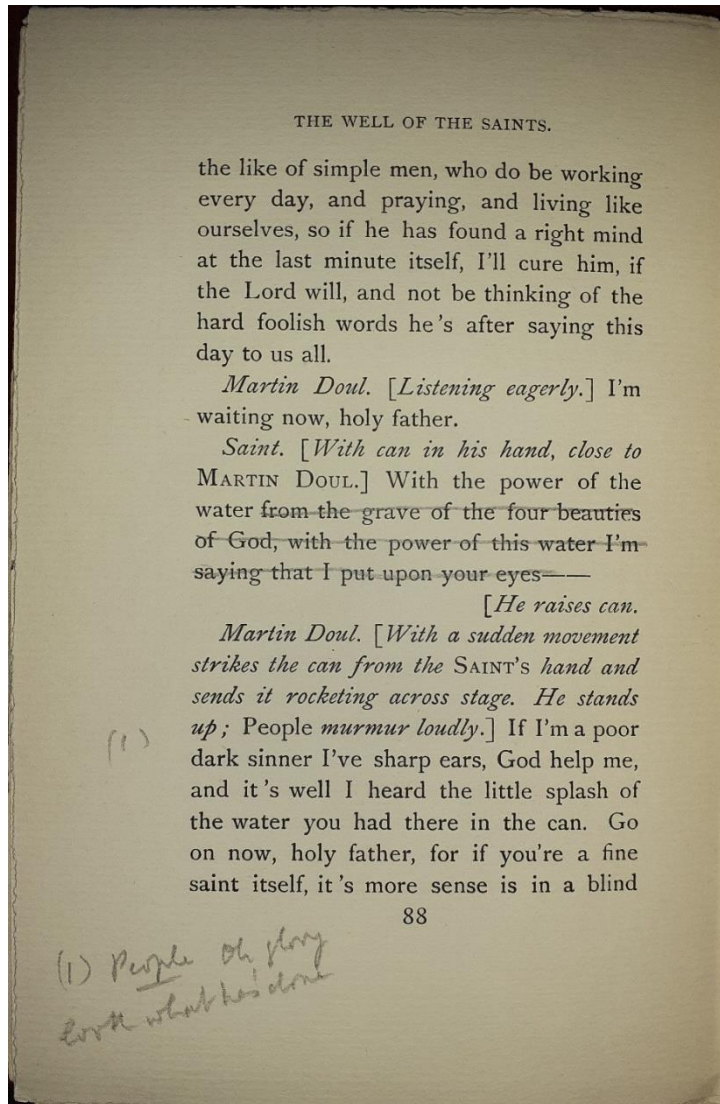
...

Martin DouL. [Shakes himself loose, feels comes R of
~~for~~ MARY DOUL, sinking his voice to a
plausible whine.]

...

87

²⁹ The blocking note at the page head appears to correspond to this moment in the text.



THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

...

Saint. [*With can in his hand, close to MARTIN DOUL.*] With the power of the water from the grave of the four beauties of God, with the power of this water I'm saying that I put upon your eyes — —

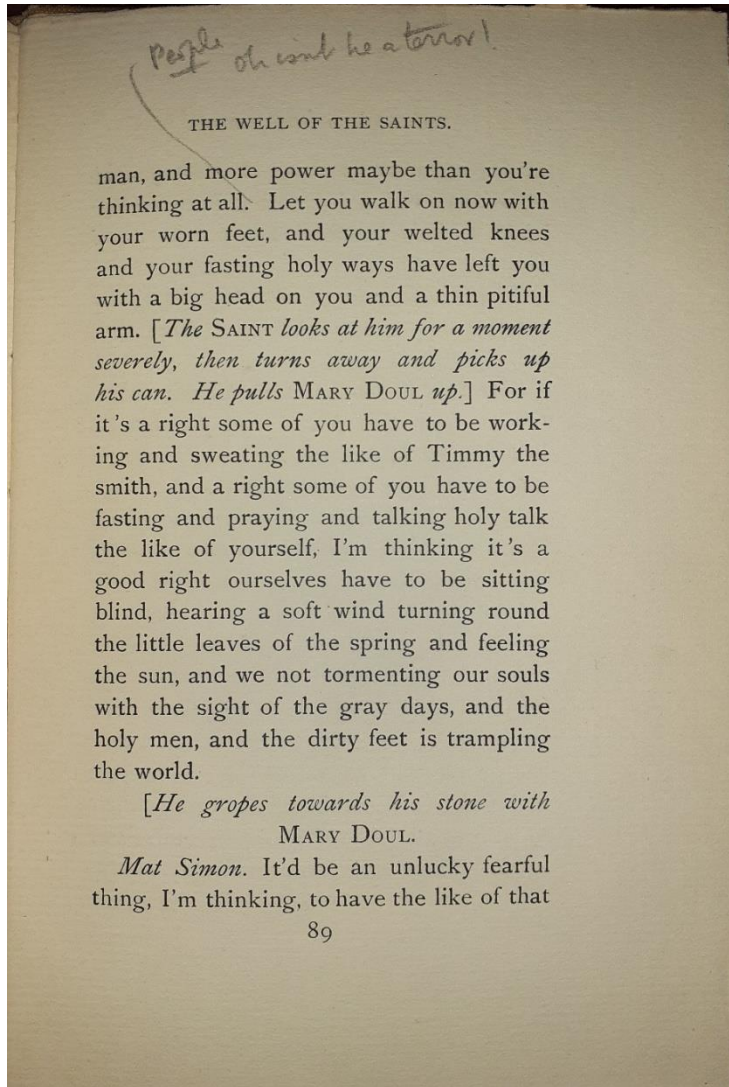
...

Martin Doul. [*With a sudden movement strikes the can from the SAINT'S hand and sends it rocketing across the stage. He stands up; People murmur loudly.*]

...

88

(1) People oh glory
look what he's done

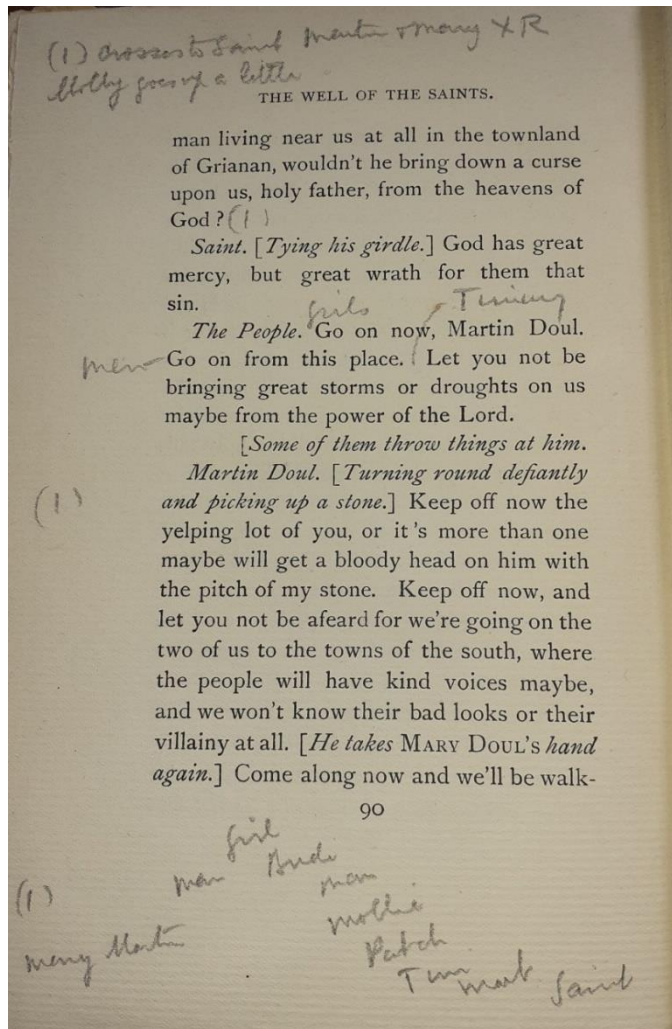
People

oh isn't he a terror!

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

man, and more power maybe than you're thinking at all.^

...



(1) crosses to Saint and Martin + Mary XR

Molly goes up a little

THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

man living near us at all in the townland
of Grianan, wouldn't he bring down a curse
upon us, holy father, from the heavens of
God? (1)

...

girls

Timmy

Men The People.^ Go on now, Martin DouL.

^ Go on from this place.³⁰ ^ Let you not be
bringing great storms or droughts on us
maybe from the power of the Lord.

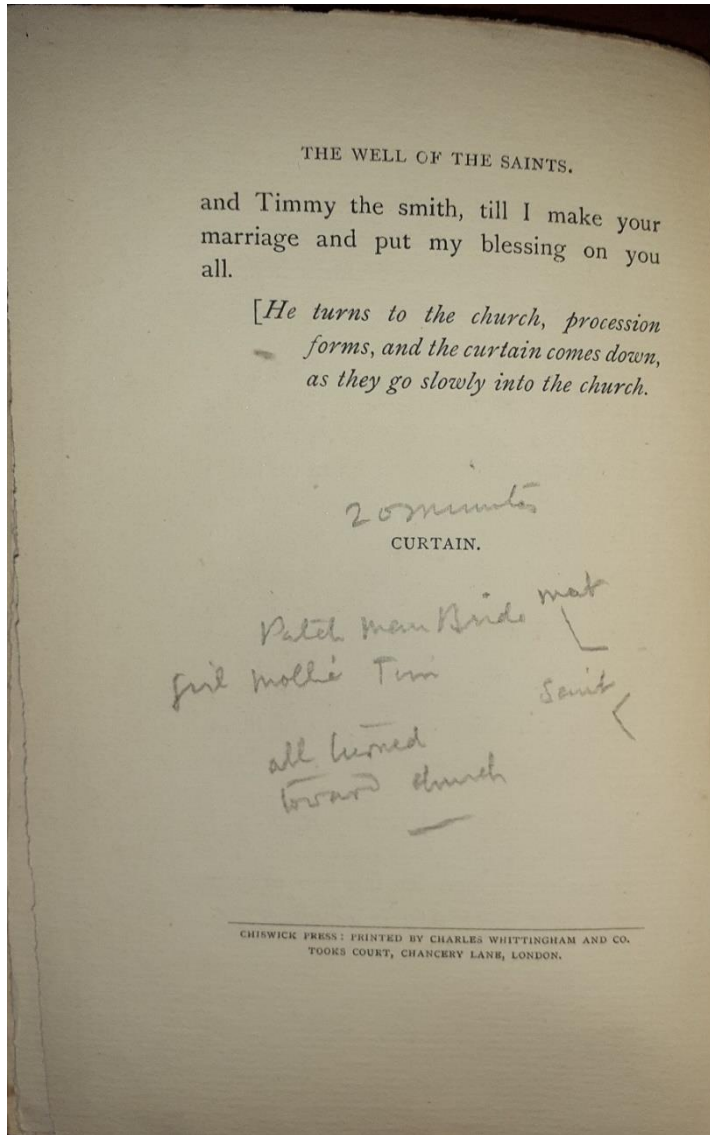
...

(1) Martin DouL. [Turning round, defiantly
and picking up a stone.]

(1) ... [blocking note showing Mary and Martin at exit with others
arrayed against them]

90

³⁰ It seems that this speech is split three ways in performance: the opening sentence is spoken by the village 'girls'; the middle one by the 'men'; and the final one by Timmy the smith.



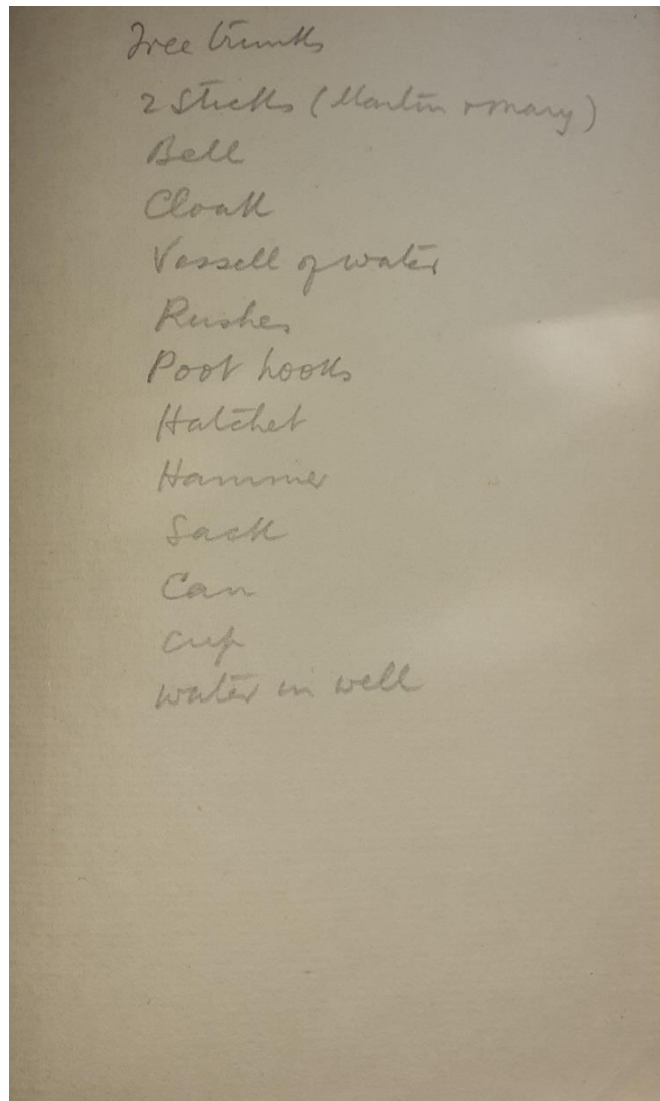
THE WELL OF THE SAINTS.

...

20 minutes

CURTAIN

[blocking note showing the characters after Martin and Mary's exit relative to the church entrance]



Tree trunks³¹

2 sticks (Martin + Mary)

Bell

Cloak

Vessell of water

Rushes

Poot hooks

Hatchet

Hammer

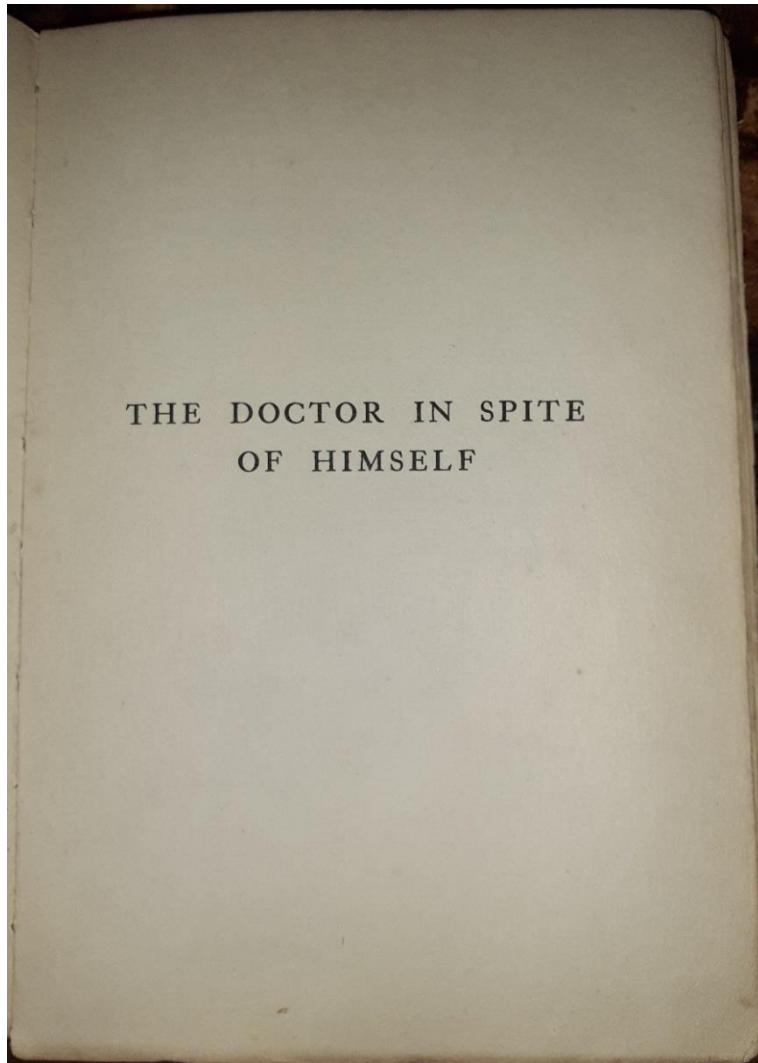
Sack

Can

Cup

Water in well

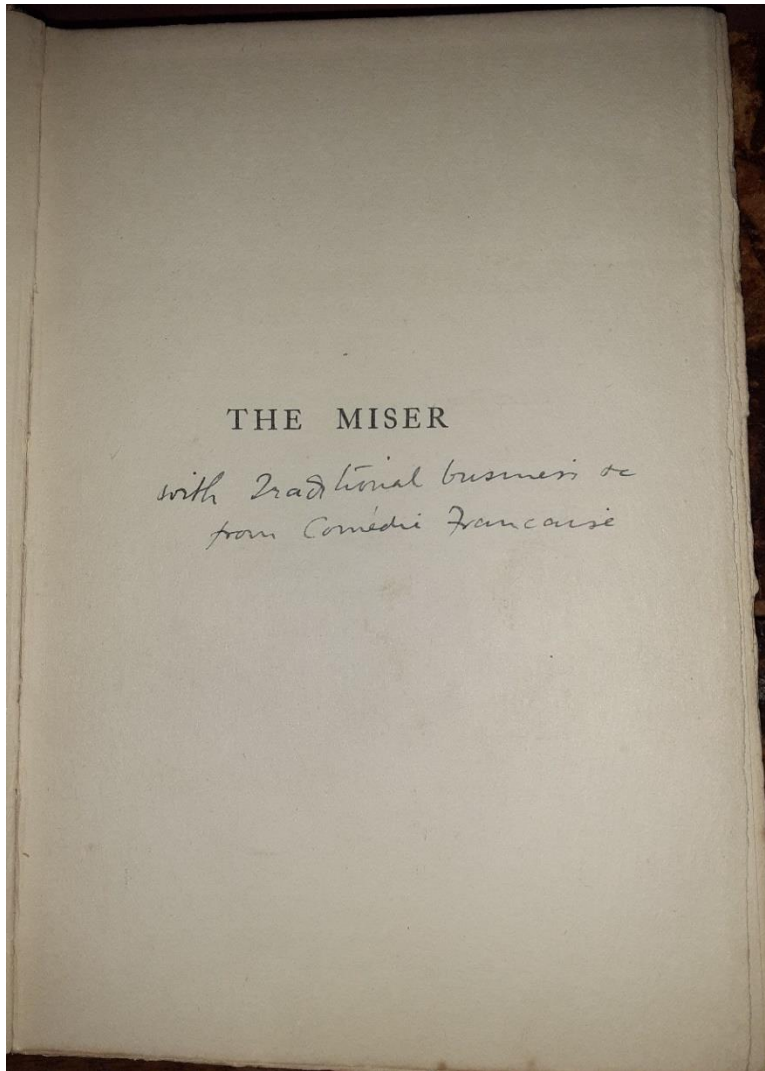
³¹ 'Property plot' on blank endpaper



Appendix E

Headnote:

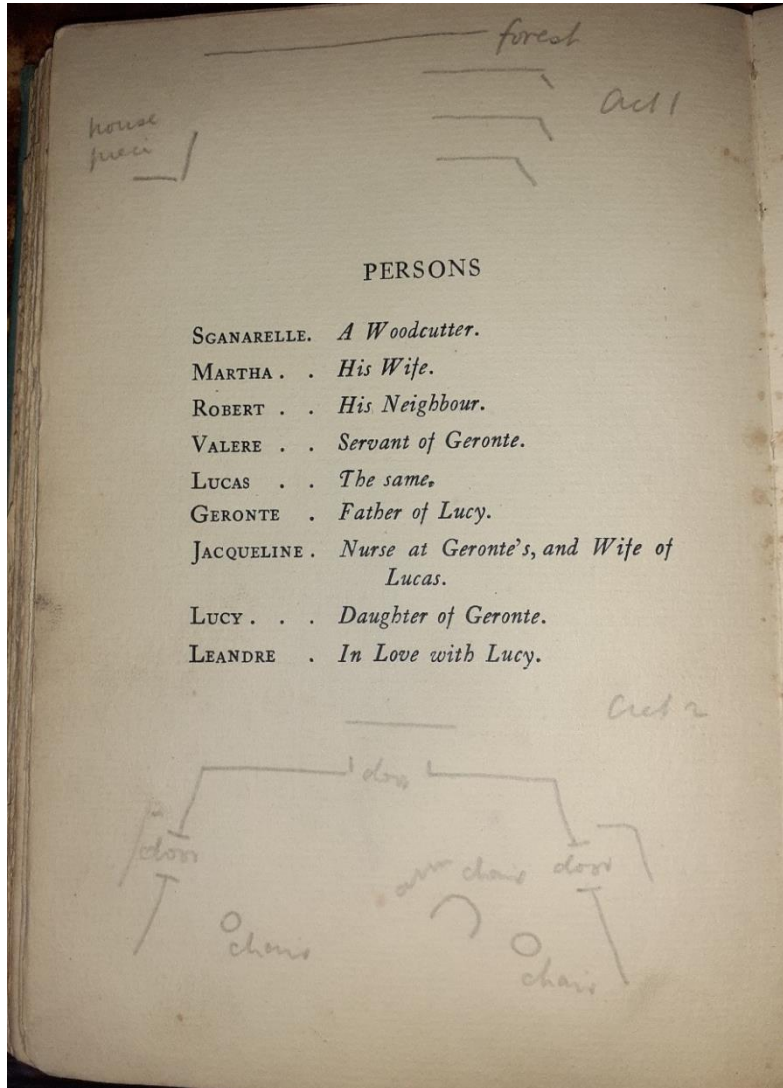
Fay's copy of Lady Gregory's *The Kiltartan Molière* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1910), includes *The Miser*, *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*, and *The Rogueries of Scapin*. *The Miser* precedes other plays in the volume. Fay's source for all annotation is *L'Éditions de la Comédie-Française*, acquired through Jules Truffier.



with traditional business &c
from the Comédie Française³²

³² *The Miser* introduces the volume. All plays are heavily annotated with the business of the Comédie Française. This plate has only been introduced

to indicate the provenance of the annotations to *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*. All following plates are of the latter play.



[sketch of scene plot of Act I]

[sketch of scene plot of Acts II]

THE DOCTOR IN SPITE
OF HIMSELF

ACT I.

SCENE: ~~A cottage kitchen.~~ Sganarelle and
Martha come in quarrelling. ¹ ~~from house R~~

² Sganarelle. I tell you I will not do it or any
other thing. ~~It is I myself~~ will give out orders,
~~I tell you,~~ and will have the upper hand.

Martha. And I tell you it is I myself will
be uppermost! I made no promise the day I
married you to put up with your pranks and
your tricks.

Sganarelle. Well ~~now,~~ isn't a wife the great
torment! Aristotle was surely right ~~the time~~ ^{when}
he said a woman ~~to be~~ worse in the house than
the devil! ⁴ ~~goes R L~~

Martha. Will you look ~~now~~ at this great
scholar with his fool talk of an Aristotle!

Sganarelle. ~~So~~ I am, ~~too~~, a great scholar.
Where now would you find any other cutter

THE DOCTOR IN SPITE
OF HIMSELF

1

SCENE: ~~A cottage kitchen.~~ Sganarelle and
Martha come in quarrelling. **from house R**

2

Sganarelle. I tell you I will not do it or any
other thing. ~~It is I myself~~ will give out orders,
~~I tell you,~~ and will have the upper hand.

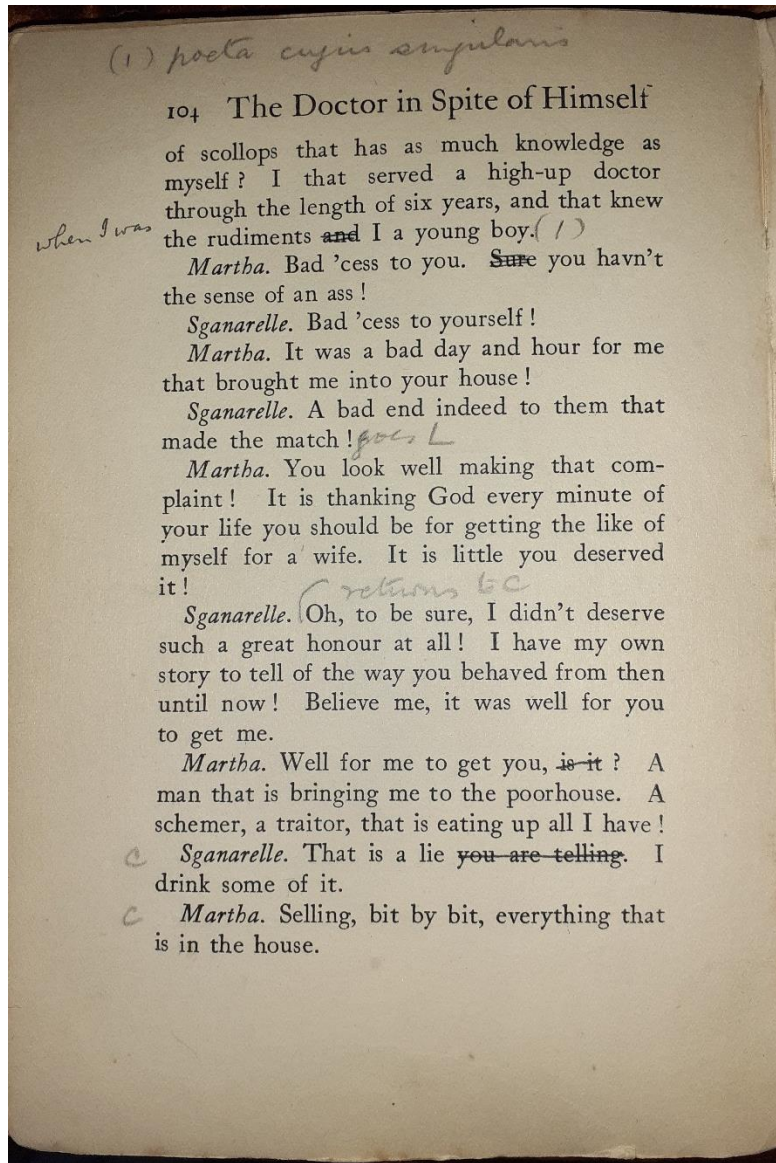
Martha. And I tell you it is I myself will
be uppermost! I made no promise the day I
married you to put up with your pranks and your tricks.

Sganarelle. Well ~~now,~~ isn't a wife the great torment!
Aristotle was surely right ~~the time~~ ^{when}

he said a woman ~~to be~~ ^{is} worse in the house than
the devil! **goes R L**

Martha. Will you look ~~now~~ at this great
scholar with his fool talk of an Aristotle!

Sganarelle. ~~So~~ I am, ~~too~~, a great scholar.
where now would you find any other cutter



(1) poeta cujus singularis

104 The Doctor in Spite of Himself

of scollops that has as much knowledge as myself? I that served a high-up doctor through the length of six years, and that knew

when I was the rudiments ~~and~~ I a young boy. (1)

Martha. Bad 'cess to you. ~~Sure~~ you havn't the sense of an ass!

...

Sganarelle. A bad end indeed to them that made the match! **goes L**

Martha. You look well making that complaint! It is thanking God every minute of your life you should be for getting the like of myself for a wife. It is little you deserved it!

returns to C

Sganarelle. Oh, to be sure, I didn't deserve such a great honour at all! I have my own story to tell of the way you behaved from then until now! Believe me, it was well for you to get me.

Martha. Well for me to get you, ~~is it?~~ A man that is bringing me to the poorhouse. A schemer, a traitor, that is eating up all I have!

C Sganarelle. That is a lie ~~you are telling~~. I drink some of it.

C Martha. Selling, bit by bit, everything that is in the house.

very calmly
The Doctor in Spite of Himself 105

Sganarelle. ~~Sure~~ that is living on one's property.

Martha. That has taken my bed from under me!

Sganarelle. You will get up the earlier.

Martha. That has made away with the furniture ——

Sganarelle. We have the more room in the house.

Martha. That is drinking and card playing night and morning ——

Sganarelle. To keep myself from fretting.

Martha. And what now would you have me do with the children?

Sganarelle. Please yourself in that.

Martha. The weight of four little one-~~cents~~ on my shoulders!

Sganarelle. Leave them down on the floor!

Martha. And they crying to me for food ——

Sganarelle. Give them a taste of the stick!

Martha. Is it this way you will be going on for ever, you sot?

Sganarelle. Be easy now, if you please.

Martha. Am I to put up with your abuse and your scattering?

Sganarelle. Don't ~~now be letting~~ us get into a passion!

very calmly
The Doctor in Spite of Himself 105

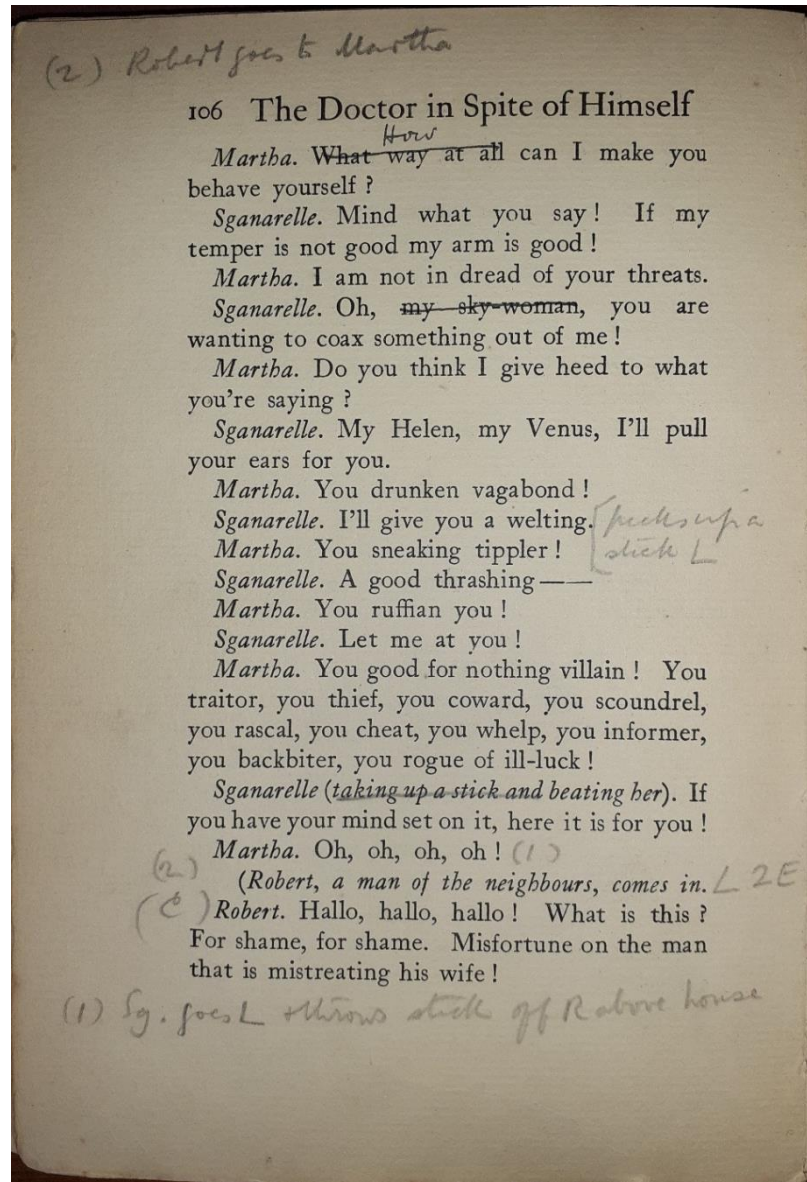
Sganarelle. ~~Sure~~ that is living on one's property.

...

Martha. The weight of four little one-~~cents~~ on my shoulders!

...

Sganarelle. Don't ~~now be letting~~ us get into a passion!



(2) Robert goes to Martha

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How

Martha. What way at all can I make you behave yourself?

...

Sganarelle. Oh, ~~my sky woman~~, you are wanting to coax something out of me!

...

Sganarelle. I'll give you a welting. *(picks up a stick L)*

Martha. You sneaking tippler!

...

Sganarelle *(taking up a stick and beating her)*. If you have your mind set on it, here it is for you!

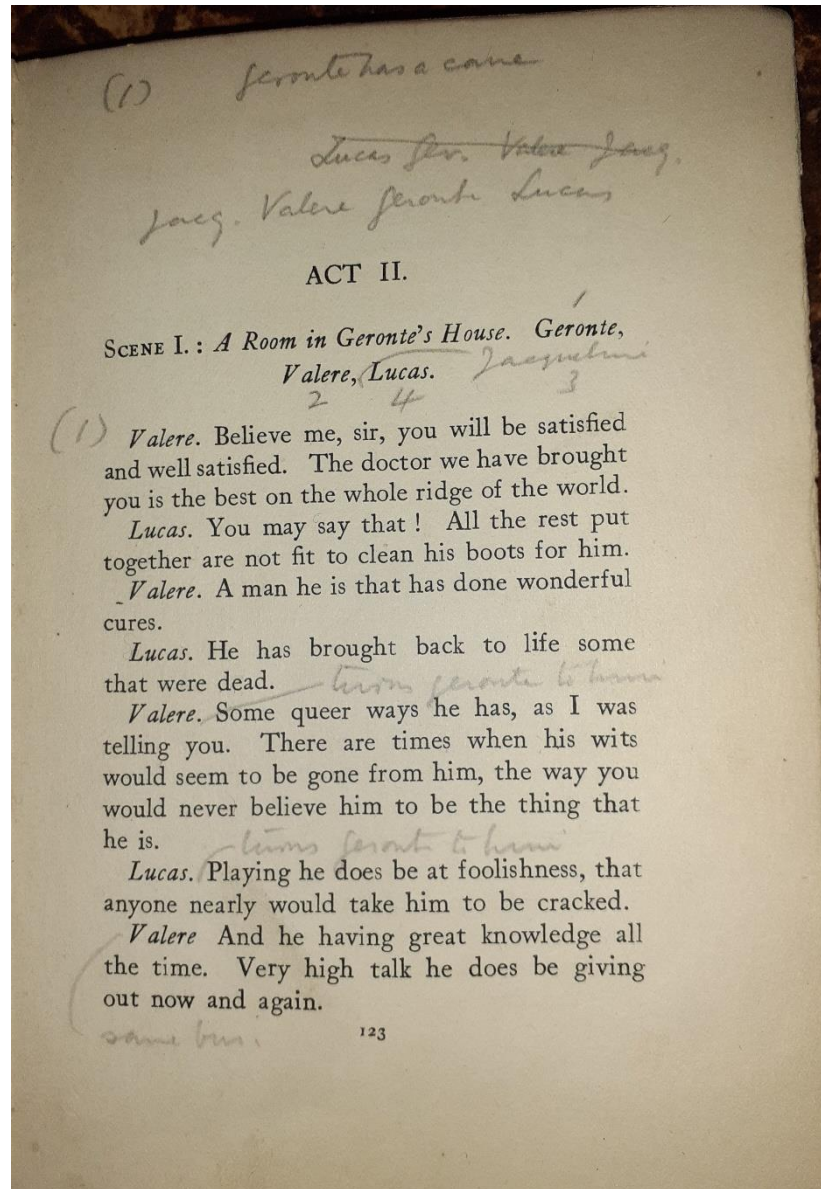
Martha. Oh, oh, oh, oh! (1)

(2) *(Robert, a man of the neighbours, comes in. L 2E)*

(C) Robert. Hallo, hallo, hallo! What is this?

For shame, for shame. Misfortune on the man that is mistreating his wife!

(1) Sg. goes L + throws stick off R above house



(1) Geronte has a cane

Lucas Ger Valere Jacq

Jacq. Valere Geronte Lucas

ACT II

1

SCENE I: A room in Geronte's House. Geronte,

Valere, ^ Lucas Jacqueline

2 4 3

(1) Valere. Believe me, sir, you will be satisfied and well satisfied. The doctor we have brought you is the best on the whole ridge of the world.

...

turns Geronte to him

Valere. Some queer ways he has, as I was as I was telling you. There are times when his wits would seem to be gone from him, the way you would never believe him to be the thing that he is.

turns Geronte to him

Lucas. Playing he does be at foolishness, that anyone nearly would take him to be cracked.

Valere. And he having great knowledge all the time. Very high talk he does be giving out now and again.

same bus.

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The Doctor in Spite of Himself 127

Geronte. In what chapter may I ask?

Sganarelle. In his chapter — upon hats.

Geronte. Since Hippocrates says it, it must be done.

Sganarelle. Well, doctor, having heard of the wonderful things —

Geronte. To whom are you speaking if you please?

Sganarelle. To yourself.

Geronte. But I am not a doctor.

Sganarelle. What is that? You are not a doctor?

Geronte. No indeed.

Sganarelle (taking a stick and beating *Geronte* as he had been beaten). Do you mean that?

Geronte. I do mean it. Ah, ah, ah!

Sganarelle. You are a doctor now. That is all the licence I myself got. (returns cane to *Ger.*)

Geronte. What devil of a man have you brought me?

Valere. I told you, sir, he was apt to be humbugging.

Valere. I will send him about his business with his humbugging!

Lucas. O don't give heed to it, sir. It was only a sort of a joke.

Geronte. I do not like this sort of joking.

The Doctor in Spite of Himself 127

...

from Geronte

Sganarelle (taking a stick and beating *Geronte* as he had been beaten). Do you mean that?

...

Sganarelle. You are a doctor now. That is all the licence I myself got. (returns cane to *Ger.*)

...

Ger. *Valere.* I will send him about his business with his humbugging!

...

128 The Doctor in Spite of Himself

Sganarelle. I ask pardon, sir, for the liberty I have taken. *bows*

Geronte. Do not mention it, sir.

Sganarelle. I am sorry.

Geronte. O, it is nothing at all.

Sganarelle. For the blows —

Geronte. There is no harm done.

Sganarelle. That I have had the honour to give you.

Geronte. You need not waste time talking of that. I have a daughter who is suffering from a very strange disease.

Sganarelle. I am well pleased, sir, to think your daughter has occasion for me. Indeed I wish that you yourself and your whole family had occasion for me along with her, till I would show the desire I have to serve you.

Geronte. I am much obliged for your good wishes.

Sganarelle. Believe me, it is in earnest I am.

Geronte. You do me too much honour.

Sganarelle. What now is your daughter's name?

Geronte. Lucy.

Sganarelle. Lucy! That now is a very nice name for a patient to have. (1)

Geronte. I will go and see what she is doing. (2)

(1) Lucinde, Lucinda, Lucindus, Lucindum
(2) Ger goes above Sg. towards RD. Sg stops him + points to Jacq. Lucas goes up to back R Valere follows Geronte

128 The Doctor in Spite of Himself

Sganarelle. I ask pardon, sir, for the liberty I have taken. **bows**

...

Sganarelle. Lucy! That now is a very nice name for a patient to have. (1)

Geronte. I will go and see what she is doing. (2)

(1) Lucinde, Lucinda, Lucindus, Lucindum

(2) Ger goes above Sg. towards RD. Sg stops him + points to Jacq. Lucas goes up to back R Valere follows Geronte

(2) Lucy enters R with Valere comes between Jacq + Sgan. Valere goes L

The Doctor in Spite of Himself 129

Sganarelle. Who is that fine young woman there ?

Geronte. She is nurse to a young child of mine. *(Goes out.)— R followed by Val. Sg goes to Jacq.*

Lucas. She is, and she is wife to myself.

Sganarelle. Ah! that is a very nice looking woman now to have in the house *(takes her hand.)* If there is anything at all I can do for you, tell me at any time and I will do it.

Lucas. Now, doctor, if you please, leave talking to my wife.

Sganarelle. Oh, she is your wife, is she ?

Lucas. She is so.

Sganarelle. Well, I wish her joy of so good a man, and I wish yourself joy of so handsome a wife, so sensible, so well shaped —

Lucas. That will do you, doctor. I have no great mind for those sort of compliments. *(Geronte brings in Lucy.)*

Sganarelle. Is this the patient ?

(2) Geronte. Here she is. I have no other daughter, doctor, and if anything should happen to her it would break my heart.

Sganarelle. Nothing will happen her. She cannot die, you know, without a prescription from the doctor.

Geronte. A chair here. *(see next page)*

Sganarelle (sitting between Lucy and Geronte).

(1) takes Lucas by RH turns him brusquely makes him pass above him, then goes to Jacq. embraces her

(2) Lucy enters R with Valere + come between Jac, + Sgan. Valere goes L

The Doctor in Spite of Himself 129

...

Geronte. She is nurse to a young child of mine. *(Goes out.) R followed by Val. Sg goes to Jacq.*

...

goes between Lucas. Now, doctor, if you please, leave **them** talking to my wife.

...

pulls Sg away + gets between him + Jaq *Lucas.* That will do you, doctor. I have no great mind for those sort of compliments.

(1)

(Geronte brings in Lucy. R & comes

Sganarelle. Is this the patient?

R of Sganarelle

(2) Geronte. Here she is. I have no other daughter, doctor, and if anything should happen to her it would break my heart.

...

Geronte. A chair here. **(see next page)**

Sganarelle (sitting between Lucy and Geronte).

(1) takes Lucas by RH turns him brusquely + makes him pass above him, then goes to Jacq. + embraces her

132 The Doctor in Spite of Himself

Sganarelle. That now was a great man!

Geronte. No doubt, no doubt.

Sganarelle. A very great man (*holding up his arm from the elbow.*) He was greater than myself by the length of that. Stop now till we go back to our discourse. It is what I hold to that this impediment to the action of the tongue is caused by certain humours that are called by scholars peccant humours — peccant you know — peccant humours; the same as the clouds that are caused by the exhalation of influences that rise up in the region of diseases — coming as you may say to — I suppose now you understand Latin?

Geronte. Not a word.

Sganarelle (*getting up, brusquely*). You don't know Latin!

Geronte. Not a word.

(1) *Sganarelle* (*with enthusiasm*). Cabricias arci thuram, catalamus, singularite nominative, haec musa, the muse, bonus, bona, bonum. Deus sanctus, est-ne oratio latinas? Etiam, yes. Quare? Quia substantive adjectivum concordat in generi, numerum et casus.

Geronte. O, why did I never study Latin!

Jacqueline. Well, now, hasn't he great learning!

(1) crosses extreme R, then extreme L speaking with great volubility. When he says "et casus" he throws himself into arm chair which falls on him Lucy + Ger. rise, all hurry to Sg. then Val + Lucas raise the arm chair. Sg sits repeating "et casus". Lucy + Ger. sit as before

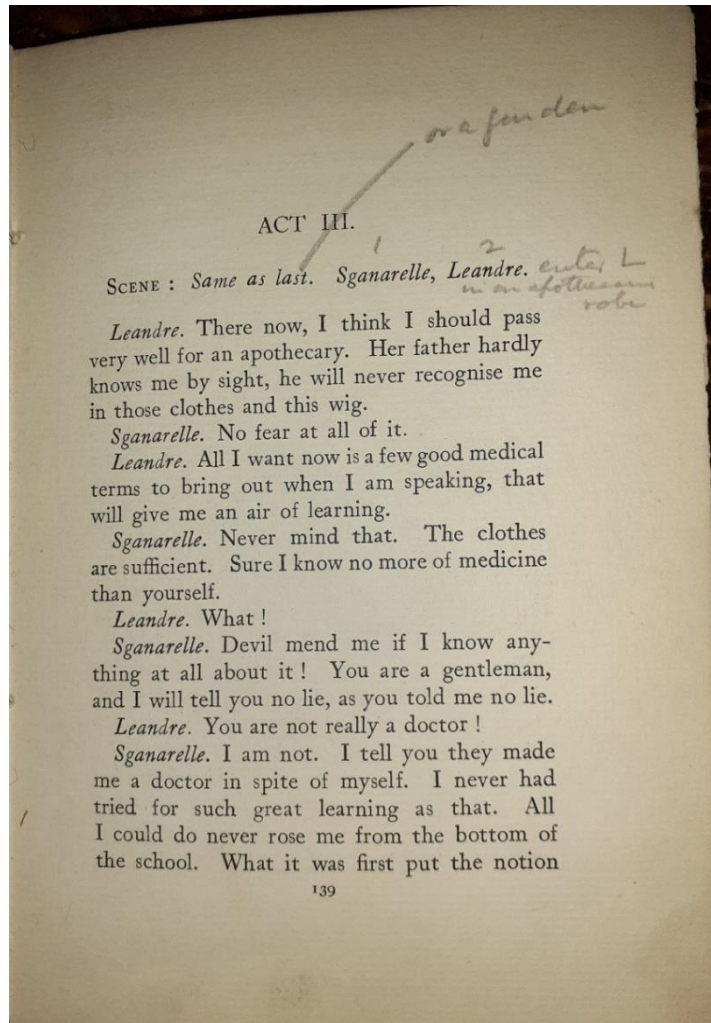
132 The Doctor in Spite of Himself

...

- (1) *Sganarelle* (*with enthusiasm*). Cabricias arci thuram, catalamus, singularite nominative, haec musa, the muse, bonus, bona, bonum.

...

- (1) crosses extreme R, then extreme L speaking with great volubility. When he says 'et casus' he throws himself into arm chair which falls on him Lucy + Ger. rise, all hurry to Sg. then Val + Lucas raise the arm chair. Sg sits repeating 'et casus'. Lucy + Ger. sit as before



~~ACT III~~ or a garden³³

1 2

SCENE : Same as last. Sganarelle, Leandre. **enter L**
in an apothecaries
robe

³³ The Comédie Française's directions allow for variant settings for the third act. I have been unable to establish how closely these directions were followed by the Abbey Theatre.

The Doctor in Spite of Himself 147

making out this house. What news have you for me now of the doctor I recommended you ?

Lucas. There he is before you, and he just going to be hanged.

Martha. What are you saying ? My man going to be hanged ! And what is he after doing to deserve that ?

Lucas. It is what he did, he got our master's daughter to be run away with.

goes near Sgan. *Martha.* My grief, my dear comrade, is it hanged you are to be ?

Sganarelle. You see the way I am. Ah —

Martha. And brought to your death with all the crowds looking at you ?

Sganarelle. Sure what can I do ?

Martha. If you had cut all the scollops you had to cut itself, that would be some comfort.

hits her with hat *Sganarelle.* Go away out of that ! You are breaking my heart !

Martha. I will not. I will stop here to hold up your courage until you die ! I will not leave you till such time as I have seen you hanged.

Sganarelle. Ah ! *Martha passes above Sg to L*

(Enter Geronte. C

to Sg *Geronte.* The constables will be here in a minute. They will put you in a place where you will be well minded !

Sg. rises kneels before Geronte spits the end of Geronte's cane on his (Sg's) shoulder. Lucas comes down extreme R

The Doctor in Spite of Himself

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...

goes near *Martha.* My grief, my dear comrade, is it

Sgan. hanged you are to be ?

...

hits her *Sganarelle.* Go away out of that ! You are

with breaking my heart !

hat

...

Sganarelle. Ah ! **Martha passes above Sg. to L**

(Enter Geronte C

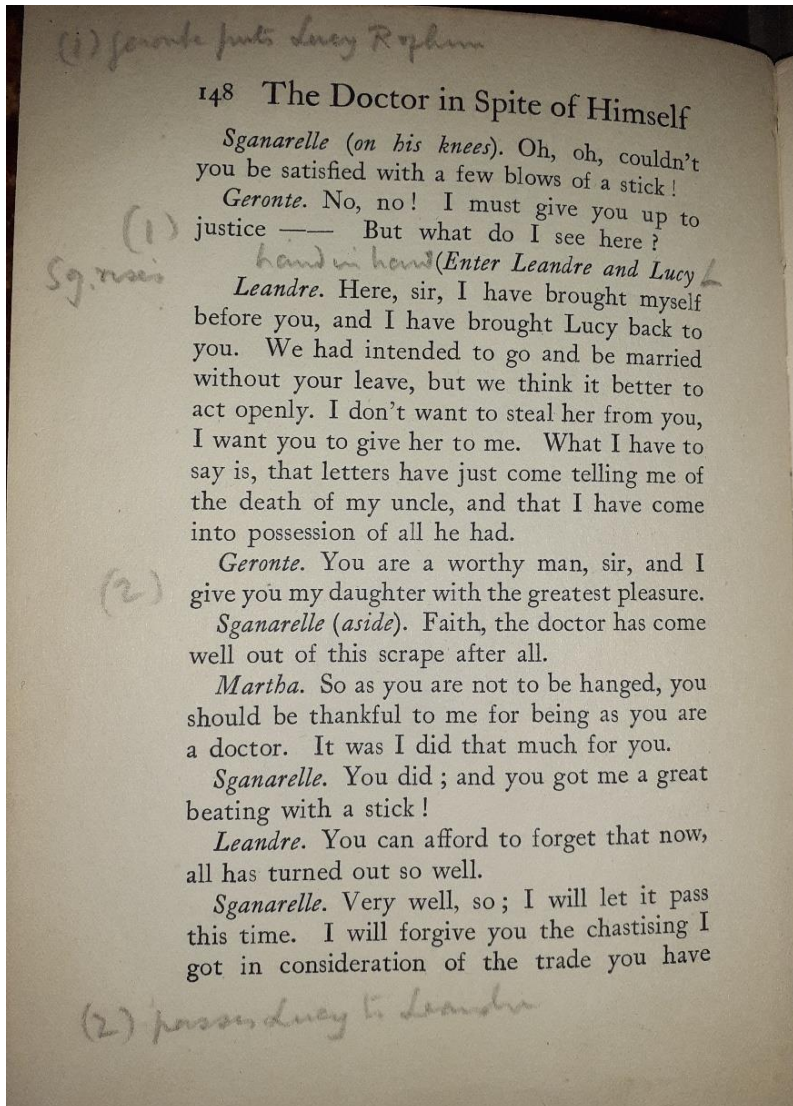
to Sg. *Geronte.* The constables will be here in a minute

They will put you in a place where you will be minded !

Sg rises kneels before Geronte + puts the

end of Geronte's cane on his (Sg's) shoulders. Lucas comes

down extreme R



(1) Geronte puts Lucy R of him

148

The Doctor in Spite of Himself

...

Geronte. No, no! I must give you up to

(1) justice — But what do I see here?

Sg rises **hand in hand** (Enter Leandre and Lucy L

...

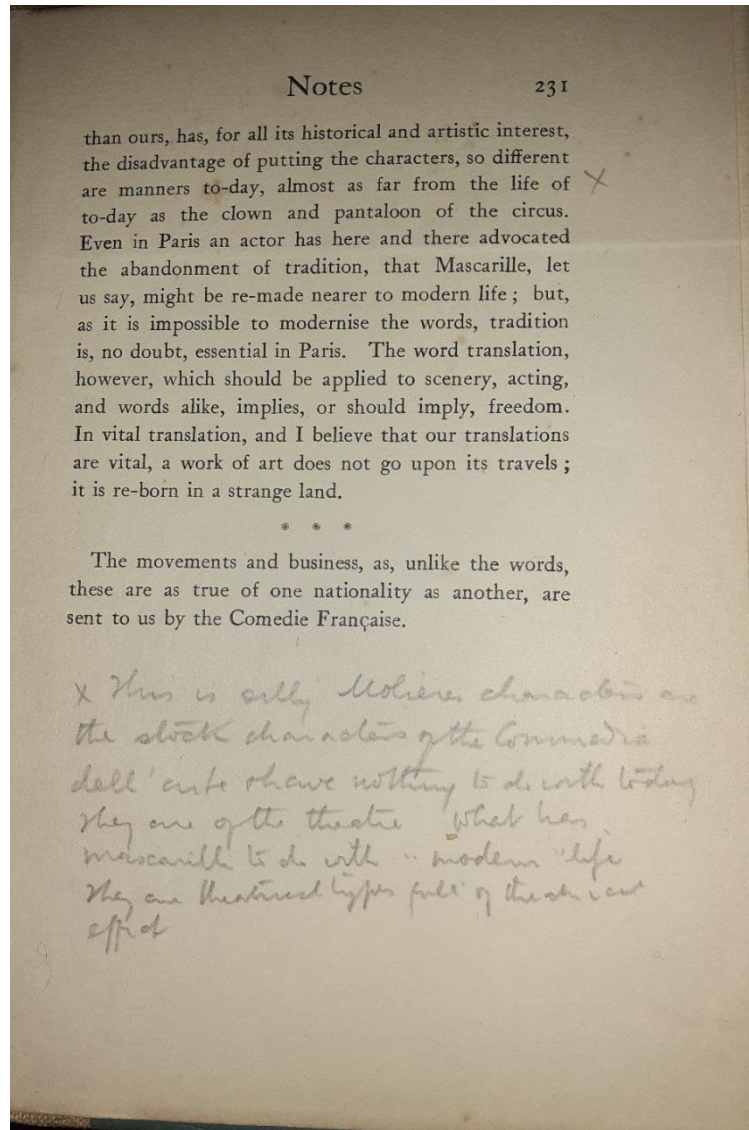
Leandre. ... What I have to tell you is, that letters have just come telling me of the death of my uncle, and that I have come into possession of all he had.

Geronte. You are a worthy man, sir, and I give you my

(2) daughter with the greatest pleasure.

...

(2) passes Lucy to Leandre.



Notes

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than ours, has, for all its historical and artistic interest, the disadvantage of putting the characters, so different are manners to-day, almost as far from the life of to-day as the clown and pantaloon of the circus. Even in Paris an actor has here and there advocated the abandonment of tradition, that Mascarille, let us say, might be re-made nearer to modern life; but, as it is impossible to modernise the words, tradition is, no doubt, essential in Paris. The word translation, however, which should be applied to scenery, acting, and words alike, implies, or should imply, freedom. In vital translation, and I believe that our translations are vital, a work of art does not go upon its travels; it is re-born in a strange land.

* * *

The movements and business, as, unlike the words, these are as true of one nationality as another, are sent to us by the Comedie Française.

X This is silly. Moliere characters are the stock characters of the Commedia dell'arte + have nothing to do with today. They are of the theatre. What has Mascarille to do with "modern" life? They are theatrical types full of theatrical effect.

Notes

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[This traditional way, which is at once distinguished, and, so far as the comedies we have chosen go, more farcical]³⁴ than ours, has, for all its historical and artistic interest, the disadvantage of putting the characters, so different are manners to-day, almost as far from the life of to-day as the clown and pantaloon of the circus. X

...

X This is silly[.] Molière's characters are the stock characters of the Commedia dell'arte + have nothing to do with today[.] They are of the theatre[.] What has Mascarille to do with "modern" life[?] They are theatrical types full of theatrical effect[.]

³⁴ Text in brackets is the beginning of the sentence continued on p. 231.

Appendix F

Letters from Jules Truffier to Frank Fay (1906-1927)¹

Letter 1

Paris, 1st July 1906 – in haste

Dear Sir,

I have just returned from holiday. I was in the country, and I'm hastening to reply to your letter:

The custom in our "staging" is to give all stage directions as from the audience's right. We even number of the characters on stage like this:

			far away				
left	1	2	3	4	5	right	
			front of the stage				

So right corresponds to "the actors left":

Robert enters from the right, second entrance. Martine exits on the right

There are some engravings of The Doctor in Spite of Himself; they are impossible to find. The wigs are "Louis the Thirteenth" ones of country folk. Sganarelle has or doesn't have a beard. We adapt the text accordingly.

Léandre simply wears a doctor's tunic when he comes back disguised as an apothecary – he has a moustache whose ends stand up like cat's whiskers (illustration).

Géronte is a fine old man who is quite credulous: he has grey hair that falls onto his shoulders à la Louis the Thirteenth. [illustration: grey wig]

At the start of the second act, Géronte stands between Lucas and Jacqueline and they do not walk about; they stay in one place.

When, in the third act, Géronte is pushed by Sganarelle into the armchair, it's like this:

Left				right
Lucinde	Léandre	Sganarelle	Geronte sitting in the armchair	
1	2	3	4	

The Tartuffe that you mention is quite hard to find. It costs 7-8 francs.

I am, dear Sir, your humble servant.

¹ All letters translated from French and transcribed.

With kind regards,

J. Truffier²

Letter 2

Paris, 7th January 1907

Dear Sir,

I have just returned from a short trip following another bereavement:

(the death of Madame Cinti-Damoreau, the last in the line of the great singer who gave the first performances of all of the great musical roles of Rossini, Auber, Meyerbeer, etc.).³ Madame Damoreau was our oldest friend and I had to take care of all of the arrangements for her funeral myself.

So please excuse my delay in replying to you. I have actually just given to one of your compatriots, Mrs Frazer (the wife of the translator of [Pausanias] the great English Hellenist Frazer⁴ of Cambridge) [is in possession of] the whole director's play text and all of the

² Jules Truffier, entered the Comédie Française in 1875 and was made *Sociétaire* in 1888. He retired in 1913 and became an honorary member in 1922. Truffier's father had connections in the theatre with Edmond Gôt and others, and these may have helped Jules gain admission to the Paris Conservatory. After graduation, with a prize for comedy, Truffier arrived at the Comédie Française via the Odeon. Victor Hugo allegedly called him the 'Gavroche de Molière' because of his cheeky humour. In addition to acting, he was a playwright and poet. In 1914, he was appointed director of classical studies of the Comédie Française, responsible for the staging of the classical plays. He was appointed professor at the Conservatory in 1906 and remained in post until 1929 (<<https://www.comedie-francaise.fr/en/artist/jules-truffier#>>) [accessed 23 July 2020]. Accounts of Truffier's background and character indicate some areas of similarity with Frank Fay: neither came from an obviously theatrical background, both were autodidacts and bibliophiles, and both were teachers of acting as well as practitioners. Both were by temperament theatrical conservatives.

³ Truffier's friend, Maria Cinti-Damoreau (1834-1906) was a singer and teacher of singing who died at the age of 72. Chiefly, she was known as the daughter of Laure (1801-1863), a French opera singer, who created lead roles in the first productions of the works of Rossini and Auber. Maria inherited her mother's talent and her method, which she passed on to a new generation of artists (*Le Monde Artiste*, 'Necrologie', 23 December 1906, 703). Truffier's friendship with Maria indicates the overlapping worlds of opera and classical theatre in turn-of-the-century Paris.

⁴ Sir James George Frazer (1854-1941), was an important source of information and commentary about folk lore and comparative religion from the 1890s onward. He is well represented in Yeats's library, which contains the whole multi-volume set of *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1890-1913) (nos. 695-703 in Edward O'Shea's *A Descriptive Catalog of W. B. Yeats's Library* [New York and London; Garland Publishing, 1985]), and which includes the *Bibliography and General Index* (1915). Only one volume (Vol. 8, *The Scapegoat*) is missing. Truffier, however, refers to Frazer's status as a classical scholar, rather than cultural anthropologist. This reputation rested on his six-volume translation and commentary of ancient Greek traveller Pausanias, *Pausanias's Description of Greece* (London: Macmillan, 1898). His wife Lilly, Lady Frazer (other married name Grove) (1854/5-1941), became, after the death of her first husband, a writer publishing *The Badminton Library of Sports and Pastimes: Dancing* (London: Longmans, 1895). Of French extraction, she was garrulous and

documents concerning “Les Plaideurs”, which is going to be performed in Cambridge shortly.⁵ I am so, so busy that I ask you the great favour of getting in touch with Mrs Frazer. She will share with you her observations (as she saw the play performed by us three weeks ago) – She took away with her some quite precise notes that I had given to her during her stay in Paris.

I would very much like, as you know, to be helpful to you as I consider it a charming tribute to our dramatic literature, this touching desire that you have to perform our great classics of the seventeenth century. They will remain for us the masters of all the periods.

I salute you fraternally and reiterate my warm wishes,

J. Truffier

Letter 3

1680-1907 15 February

Comédie Française

Dear Sir,

Mr Truffier has been madly busy the whole time recently and he is at present still unable to reply to you as he would like.

So he has asked me to provide you with brief information regarding the different points in your last letter.

1. You can ask for the complete director’s play text of Les Fourberies from the Comédie Française’s general manager, Mr Morène. A play text that will be sent to you in exchange for the usual regulatory fee.
2. Mr Robert is a middle-aged person, and the lash that he uses to beat Sganarelle consists of a quite wide leather strap that goes around his neck like a collar.

The staging of Molière’s plays does not differ hugely from the staging in the seventeenth century.

assertive where her second husband was unworldly and retiring. She quickly gained a reputation as ‘difficult’ in academic Cambridge, although it was widely recognised that she cared deeply for her husband and that everything she did was for the furtherance of his career (Robert Ackerman, article in *ODNB*, published online 23 September 2004,

<<https://0-doi-org.catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/66458>>) [accessed 23 July 2020].

⁵ The first, October 1906 issue of *The Arrow* contained a schedule for 1906-7 (Winter Season), which included, on January 19, ‘First Production of *The Pleadings*, a comedy in five acts, by Racine’. As a result of consequent alterations, the season of foreign plays was aborted. The season was to have included *Antigone* (26 January) and *Oedipus* and *Phèdre* on dates to be announced.

With regard to Racine's *Phèdre* which you mention, it goes without saying that these days the play is performed neither with the same costumes nor the same sets.

Mr Truffier is deeply touched by the friendship that you express towards him, and he is extremely sorry not to be able to reply himself to all of your questions about all of the French plays that you are quite rightly including in your repertoire.

He sends you and all of your colleagues the warmest regards of the Comédie Française.

Cordially yours,

On behalf of Mr Truffier

Laurent Max

PS If you write, address your letter to Mr Truffier.

Letter 4

1680-1907 15 February

Comédie Française

Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed the director's play text of "*Les Fourberies de Scapin*".

I would be grateful if you would send me the cost, which is 40 francs.

Best regards in haste,

Balcourt

Letter 5

Paris 3rd February, evening, 1922

4 rue Crevaux in haste

Dear Sir,

I am sorry not to be able to inform you usefully. I am no longer officially at the Comédie Française. In addition: the editions you mention have been out of print for many years.⁶

⁶ No clear indication is given as to the books referred to. However, they may be the director's editions of Molière's plays, published by the Comédie Française with full details of the traditional staging, of

Moreover, they stopped being published after just a few months. There isn't the smallest trace left of them!

The Molière festival was very fine.⁷ I had the pleasure of organising the finest (I think) of the festivities: that in the Caryatids Room in the Louvre, where we celebrated the most momentous date in Molière's career: 24th October 1658, when Molière performed for the first time before Louis the Fourteenth, aged 20, surrounded by the court. If Molière had not been approved that day, he would have returned to the provinces the next day and we might never have heard of him again.⁸ I know the brochures that you mention.⁹ It is pure fantasy. .We know nothing about Molière's true tradition. What is certain is that he conceived all of his roles as comic and not "sad" as they are stupidly played nowadays?¹⁰

I'm afraid I no longer have, alas! any photographs of myself! As for the memoirs of Mounet-Sully, they were published by

Pierre Laffitte Publications
90 Avenue des Champs-Élysées
Paris

but the publishing house has already undergone some changes. Write to this address.¹¹

which *Precieuses Ridicules/Médecin Malgré Lui* (Paris: Librairie Universelle [n.d.]) survives in Fay's library. Why Fay should enquire about them at this juncture is unclear.

⁷ According to Jim Carmody, the tercentenary season saw the production by the Comédie Française of 'all Molière's plays that were not in the repertory at that time' in new productions that dispensed with many of the traditional acting techniques (*Re-reading Molière: Mise en Scene from Antoine to Vitez* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993 [34]).

⁸ The American writer and critic Brander Matthews (1852-1929), elaborates on the circumstances of Molière's achievement of royal approval. Under the patronage of the young Louis XIV's brother, the Duke of Anjou, the company performed Corneille's *Nicomède* in the royal presence on 24 October. At the conclusion of this work, Molière begged permission to perform one of his own little farces *Doctor Amoureux*. It was the success of this piece (now lost) that prompted Louis XIV to authorise the company to remain in Paris and to share the royal theatre in Petit-Bourbon with the Italian comedians (*Molière, His Life and Works* [1910; New York: Russell & Russell, 1972], 41-2).

⁹ Untraced.

¹⁰ See notes to letter 4.

¹¹ Jean Mounet-Sully's *Souvenirs de'un Tragedien* (Paris: Laffitte, 1917) was published in the year after his death. Extracts were reprinted in a French magazine in the early 1920s, and survive in the Fay archive. The journal in which they appeared, *Je Sais Tout*, was also published by Laffitte. Divided into sections – childhood and early experiences in the theatre; early career at the Comédie Française; the creation of the roles of Oedipus and Hamlet – Mounet-Sully's memoir suggests the role of fate in his career. For example, on the verge of quitting acting altogether in 1872, he went, on a whim, to a performance of *Le Misanthrope*, where he met the Administrator of the Comédie Française who invited him to audition for the company the following day. Successful, he was offered a three-year contract and a series of leading roles including Orestes in *Andromache* and Nero in *Britannicus*, a beneficiary of a swerve towards the production of tragedy in the classical repertory. Success in *Marion Delorme* by Victor Hugo demonstrated Mounet Sully as equally at home in the Romantic repertory ('Mes Souvenirs par Mounet Sully', *Je Sais Tout* [Paris: Laffitte, 1922]. Fay archive). Writing to Yeats in 1902, Fay reports the view of Francisque Sarcey, the French critic, that Mounet Sully had a 'fine voice' but 'no diction'. Fay attributes his freer approach to verse speaking to a lack of formal

The legend of Racine is again in the realm of fantasy! We know nothing about the actors from this period.

With my best wishes and cordial regards,

J. Truffier

Letter 6

Veules-les-roses

"La Chaumière" ["The Cottage"]

Lower Seine

Dear Sir,

I am sorry to be so slow in replying to your kind letter. I was a little unwell when I returned from a voyage of some weeks, and your little questionnaire has arrived when I am quite alone and in a difficult position to translate your text... I only know a few words of English and, in spite of my dictionaries, I must have made many mistakes in my translation?...

So I will attempt to answer your questions, point by point, as best I can:

The photographic reproduction (No. 238 of Conferencia) is of a production by the Comédie Française. It dates to before 1914... and would appear "outdated" to our young aesthetes!¹²

You are right to observe (I think?) that our "moderns" have a concept of performance that is more "exterior" than "deep". For our part, we sought to show the audience what is "underneath", the characters' soul rather than their "picturesque" aspect.¹³

training (To Yeats, 21 December 1902. Fay archive). Yet Mounet Sully's memoir makes clear he was trained at the Conservatoire before entering the Comédie Française.

¹² Untraced. The 'young aesthetes' remark suggests the work of Jacques Copeau and his followers, including Louis Javert and Georges Pitoeff, who dominated the development of theatre between the wars in Paris. Copeau, the director of the Théâtre de Vieux Colombe (1913-17). Copeau produced *Les Fourberies de Scapin* by Moliere in 1917 on a *tréteau* (a platform on trestles) surrounded by steps on four sides to 'compel the actors to change position' (*Copeau: Texts on Theatre*, trans. and ed. by John Rudlin and Norman Paul [London: Routledge, 1990], 145). Fay, for his part, referred to the 'Copeau, Pitoeff freak show' (Letter to 'Tommy' [Thomas McGreevey], 19 March 1928, Synge Papers, TCD 8128/3/5).

¹³ Truffier's uncertainty is suggested by the parenthetical 'I think', indicating the difficulty of communicating clearly across a language barrier. Fay's implied criticism of 'moderns' seems rather broad, but we can trace it back as far as his comments on Henry Irving's performances and productions of Shakespeare. In letter to Yeats (20 March 1903. Fay archive), Fay, responding to criticism in the Dublin press that the acting of his company (the Irish National Theatre Society) was 'stilted', replied, first that he 'liked' stilted acting, 'some kinds at any rate', and then compared the Irish actors with those who performed in a larger auditorium where 'broad painting' is required – indicating Irving's Lyceum. Fay believed the best acting involved stillness and fine diction and he disliked Irving's attempts at naturalism. Such judgements are in some degree subjective: as Fay admits in his letter to Yeats, there was room for disagreement about what constituted stilted acting.

Tartuffe should indeed be played as a comedy, not as a tragedy – as the Germans and Norwegians do.¹⁴

You observe, as I do, that your compatriots, as well as mine, sell the text short and do not seem at all concerned about making themselves heard. “Gabbling” is widespread, I note with regret! One can no longer hear the actors!¹⁵

Certainly, the “classical repertoire” should not be performed like the modern one. Otherwise, one exposes oneself to a whole series of misinterpretations, since the mentality of the seventeenth century had absolutely nothing in common with that of our post-war contemporaries (1927)!¹⁶

Everything I say in my little piece in “Conferencia” is true.¹⁷ The criticism that I level at today’s performers of The Miser is right. They diminish the work by endeavouring to reduce to the “trivial naturalism” of our modern-day lives broad panoramas that were not conceived for little, narrow-minded actors without physical means. It is certainly easier to belittle everything.¹⁸

You are right to say that Antoine (whose immense work I respect) is somewhat to blame for the incoherence that now prevails in the performance of our classical masterpieces. He

¹⁴ Writing on acting in Molière’s plays in a literary journal, Truffier argues that since Goethe and his ‘romantic followers’, there had been a move to introduce a spirit of gravity or even tragedy to the performance of the repertory. Truffier quotes Theodore de Banville (1823-1891) who identified Molière with the Comic Muse, who he imagined declaring that ‘Molière owes me his smile/And that smile is immortal’. He felt that it was easier for modern actors to play great roles in a ‘sad and introspective’ manner than with comic energy (‘Molière a la Comédie Française’ *Revue des Deux Mondes* 57 [June 1920], 864-90 [875]; hereafter cited as ‘Molière’). He deplores the fashion for playing Molière’s comedies as melodramas in the Romantic mode.

¹⁵ Fay believed that all good acting and speaking depended on good voice production (see W. Fay, 32). Truffier also wrote that the primary ‘science of theatre’ was ‘diction’ and that it was a dying art. Moreover, a training in the classical repertory was essential to the correct production of the sounds of the French language. Without it, the actor could not attain ‘sharpness in his articulation’ (‘Molière’, 865).

¹⁶ Truffier laments the tendency to perform seventeenth-century characters as if they were modern and takes pride in the Comédie Française’s refusal to pander to contemporary tastes. Writing of the continuing success of *Étourdi* (Molière) in repertory, he makes of it a victory for ‘refusing to modernise what cannot be modernised’ (‘Molière’, 867). The *mentalité* of the seventeenth-century requires a radically different approach to *mise en scene* and acting and Truffier’s attempts, recalled in his memoir, to create a realistic set for a production of *Les Precieuses Ridicules* were scorned by his colleagues who preferred the traditional bare ‘salle’ necessary to preserve unity of decor. The acting of Molière’s comic characters required, Truffier believed, a physicality and a brightness that modern actors did not favour, or could not deliver: ‘on ne saurait trop le repeter, il est beaucoup plus facile, il est plus a la portee de tout le monde de jouer hostile, triste et en dedans, que de jouer comique et en dehors’ [‘one cannot repeat enough that it is easier to act angry, sad and from the interior, than to perform comically and externally’], (‘Molière’, 875).

¹⁷ Untraced.

¹⁸ The specific remarks about *The Miser* are untraced.

wanted to try some things out and people were quick to regard these experiments as definitive results. I'm sure that he himself would criticise, in many respects, what he advocated at that time.¹⁹ The staging of Tartuffe and The Misanthrope (with scenes outside) is incompatible with Molière's text.²⁰ When Molière wanted set changes (like in Don Juan), he lost no time in indicating them very clearly.²¹

As for the custom of numbering the actors' places on the director's play text, it scarcely goes back to the eighteenth century. Before that, they made do with fairly brief directions.

In my youth, the great actors like Samson Regnier²² were very little concerned about *mise en scène*. Samson always said at rehearsals: "Put me where you like... I will always find a way, through my diction, to put my character in his place." He was right.

Exaggerated staging often does a disservice to the masterpieces, which "stand" by themselves. What we should do is to endeavour to play one's character as the author

¹⁹ Truffier's emollient remarks on Antoine reflect the respect in which the one-time *bête-noir* of the theatrical establishment was increasingly held. His appointment in 1907 to directorship of the Théâtre Odeon, the second most important house in Paris after the Comédie Française, indicates a degree of mainstream acceptance. Despite Antoine's reputation as a radical, he did not see his work on classic texts as an all-out assault on high-brow culture: 'I see for the classical repertory, not a modernisation but an adaptation to today's audiences', noting that the mass theatre-going public had been put off by the Comédie Française's academic approach to the texts of Molière and others (Andre Antoine, *Mes Souvenirs Sur Le Theatre Antoine et Sur L'Odeon* [Paris: Grasset, 1928], 285). We may infer from Truffier's comments that Fay's letter invited a more wide-ranging attack on Antoine's influence on modern acting, an invitation Truffier respectfully declines. It is possible that Fay himself rethought his position on Antoine: a well-thumbed, although unannotated copy, in French, of Antoine's second volume of theatrical autobiography, covering the years 1896-1906, survives in Fay's library.

²⁰ In 1907, Antoine produced *Tartuffe* at the Odeon, where he was director from 1907-14. Writing in *Les Annales du théâtre et de la musique*, 1907, Edmond Stoullig felt the experiment ought to lead to 'a revolution in the staging of our classic dramas' (187). He describes in detail the changing *mise en scène* that discarded the unity of place demanded by Aristotle. In Act I, Antoine sets the action 'in Orgon's garden', rejecting the traditional living room décor. This affords the piece a greater realism, 'the impression of real life being lived' (188). However, such realism, Stoullig acknowledges, sat at times uncomfortably with Molière's dramaturgy. For instance, the ever-changing hues of a 'picturesque', semi-rural sunset (Act 1) made it difficult to imagine the bourgeois action set in a 'modest quarter of Paris'. Moreover, the exact familial or domestic status of the servant Dorine is problematic when bourgeois domestic life is given in detail. Overall, however, Stoullig thinks 'a whole host of absurd traditions have been rendered obsolete' (189).

²¹ In *Don Juan*, Act 1 is set in 'A Place'; Act III in 'A Wood'; and Act IV in 'Open country by the Sea Shore'.

²² Philocles Regnier, first acted at the Comédie-Française in 1831; he retired in 1871. He was *Régisseur*, or artistic director from 1872-5. Truffier, who seems to have referred to him as 'Samson', considered him a representative of the best traditions of the Comédie Française. Both were teachers, and Truffier quotes Regnier, 'our master and friend', as saying '[i]t is by studying the classics that we learn to play the modern authors well', advice which Truffier says he repeats to his young trainees in the Conservatory. ('Molière', 864). Regnier played roles in both the classical and modern repertory, marking him out as a versatile actor.

wanted. Molière, for example, always takes care to describe to us through the mouth of this or that of his fellows what the type is like that he wanted to satirise.

So, my dear Sir and respected colleague, this is what I think I can (feeling my way! in the course of my deciphering) reply to your letter.

am very cordially at your service, be in no doubt.

My very best regards,

J. Truffier

Appendix G:

The Fay archive: a selective checklist

The Fay archive is a collection of letters, printed books and papers relating to F. J. (Frank) Fay (1871-1931) and the theatre. Included are both sides of a detailed correspondence with W. B. Yeats, which covers the years leading up to the founding of the Abbey Theatre. Printed books include several first editions of plays by W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and J. M. Synge, often heavily annotated with details of production. There is also a typescript prompt-copy of a key production of *Deirdre* by George Russell (AE) at St Teresa's Hall, Dublin in 1902.

Fay's letters to Yeats have been transcribed and rendered into typescript in *Volume II* of John Stokes's unpublished thesis *The Non-Commercial Theatres of London and Paris in the Eighteen Nineties and the Irish Literary Theatre and its Successors* (University of Reading, 1968). The same thesis includes as an Appendix typescript reproductions of Frank Fay's unpublished articles, written for W. B. Yeats between 1901-1903. As my thesis is primarily concerned with Fay's books, the following checklist is limited to that part of the archive constituting Fay's library of printed books. However, those letters from Frank Fay to W. B. Yeats which form part of the evidential basis of the thesis are described first. They are a portion only of the correspondence mentioned above, and in no way represent it fully.

Letters from Frank Fay to W. B. Yeats

Typescript letter, signed, 3pp, 12 Ormond Road, 23rd July 1901

Long discussion of verse speaking. Refs to French tradition – Racine, Molière, Talma, Coquelin, etc; and English – Garrick, Kemble, Kean, Sullivan, Irving, Vein, Benson's Company, etc²³

Typescript letter, signed, 3pp, 12 Ormond Road, 29th July 1901

Acknowledges letter from WBY. Continues previous discussion. Attack on Benson company. Discussion of Restoration and eighteenth century acting. Refs to Shaw.²⁴

²³ Jean Baptiste Racine (1639-99); Molière (1622-73); Francois-Joseph Talma (1673-1826), Constant-Benoit Coquelin (1841-1909), French actor, David Garrick (1717-79), English actor responsible for radical change in the style of acting, replacing formal declamation with an easy, natural manner of speech; Charles Kemble (1757-1823), English actor, whose formal, somewhat pedantic manner suited him for tragedy rather than comedy; Edmund Kean (1787/90-1833), English actor, the first to play Shylock as a tragic character, unsurpassed in the delineation of wickedness; Barry Sullivan (1821-91), Irish actor, whose vigour and forcible delivery in tragedy made him a success with less sophisticated audiences; Sir Henry Irving (1838-1905), English actor-manager, who in partnership with Ellen Terry dominated the late Victorian stage in London; Hermann Vein (1829-1910) English actor, outstanding in comedy and tragedy; Frank Benson (1858-1939), English actor-manager.

²⁴ George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950).

Ref to visit of 'Théâtre de L'Oeuvre' to London.²⁵ Ref to Benson and Diarmuid and Grainia. Refs to George Russell and Todhunter.²⁶

Typescript Letter, signed, 2pp, Ormond Road, 11th April [19]02

Article by Yeats in *The United Irishman*. Short discussion of French acting: Coquelin, and to article by F. Fay in *The United Irishman*.

Typescript Letter, 1p, [No address], [Nov. 1902]

Plans for opening in December and *The Hour-Glass*. Giving a lecture in January at the Celtic Literary Society called Readings from Irish Poets and Prose Writers. 'Has Shorter written anything about Samhain and where.'²⁷

Typescript Letter, 2pp, 12 Ormond Road, 9th February 1903

Discussion of *The Shadowy Waters* and controversy about *The Countess Cathleen*. Refs. To Coquelin, Bernhardt and the Independent Theatre Society.²⁸

Typescript Letter, 2pp, [No Address], 14th April [1904]

Encloses two articles from *To-day*. One on Irving, whom F. J. Fay criticizes and compares with the French.

Printed Books – owned by either Frank or William Fay

Many of these books listed below are in heavily distressed condition, fully reflecting their use for production purposes on a day-to-day basis in difficult circumstances, often over many years. Those with annotation are described in full.

W. B. Yeats

Cathleen ni Houlihan (Chiswick, London: Printed by the Caradoc Press for A. H. Bullen, 1902). Presentation copy.

Where There is Nothing: Being Volume One of Plays for an Irish Theatre (London: A. H. Bullen, 1903). Presentation copy.

²⁵ Theatre de l'Oeuvre, under the management of Aurelian-Francois Lugne-Poe (1869-1940), staged poetic and symbolist plays with transparent curtains, abolishing footlights and the box set, replacing realistic speech by formal intoning.

²⁶ George Russell (1867-1935) (AE) Irish poet and dramatist.

²⁷ Clement Shorter (1857-1926), editor and journalist. Editor of *The Illustrated London News* from 1891 to 1900, he was the founder editor of the *Sphere* (1900) and the *Tatler* (1903).

²⁸ Independent Theatre Society was a small, subscription theatre which produced mostly modern realist plays by European playwrights between 1891 and 1897, inspired by the Theatre Libre.

The Land of Hearts Desire, rev. edn (Portland MA: Thomas Mosher, 1903). Presented to Fay by Lily Yeats and dated 'Oct 23rd 1923 Dundrum'.

The Hour-Glass, Cathleen ni Houlihan, The Pot of Broth: Being Volume II of Plays for an Irish Theatre (London: A. H. Bullen, 1904). Presentation copy. Each play bears extensive pencil annotations throughout in the hand of Frank Fay indicating changes to 'business' and speeches, sketches and lists relating to property plots and scenery. Loosely inserted at the end of *The Hour-Glass* is a carbon typescript titled in Fay's hand 'New Ending of Hour Glass'.

The King's Threshold and On Baile's Strand: Being Volume III of Plays for an Irish Theatre (London: A. H. Bullen, 1904). Presentation copy. With some occasional pencil annotations and corrections throughout in the hand of Frank Fay; one emendation of speech in the hand of W. B. Yeats.

Deirdre: Being Volume V of Plays for an Irish Theatre (London: A. H. Bullen; Dublin: Maunsel & Co., 1907). Presentation copy.

Wheels and Butterflies (London: Macmillan, 1934). The text of *The Resurrection* has annotations in the hand of William Fay, preparatory to a production that did not take place.

Journals edited by W. B. Yeats

The Arrow, ed. by W. B. Yeats, 1.1 (1906).

Beltain[e]: The Organ of the Irish Literary Theatre, ed. by W. B. Yeats, nos. [1] and 2 [bound together with] *Samhain: [An Occasional Review]*, ed. by W. B. Yeats, nos. [1] to [4]. This collection contains the texts of *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, *Riders to the Sea* and *In the Shadow of the Glen*, and *The Rising of the Moon* by Lady Gregory. Each text is extensively annotated in pencil throughout in the hand of Frank Fay, including scenery plots, changes to speeches and 'business'.

Lady Gregory

Kincora: A Play in Three Acts (Dublin: The Abbey Theatre, 1905). The prompt copy. Bound from page proof gatherings (the first page of each gathering bearing the printer's rubber stamp and dated by hand between 14th and 16th March 1905), interleaved with blanks and bound up in dark green limp skiver, lettered in gilt. Extensively annotated and underlined in red and black ink and pencil throughout in the hand of either Frank or Willie Fay.

Kincora: A Play in Three Acts (Dublin: The Abbey Theatre, 1905). Presentation copy.

The White Cockade: a comedy [and] The Travelling Man: a miracle Play (New York: John Quinn, 1905). Copyright edition. Copy no. 2 of 30 numbered copies, initialled by Quinn, printed to secure copyright in the United States. Presentation copy.

The Rising of the Moon: A Play, Seven Short plays: no. III (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., [1909]). With Frank Fay's signature at the head of the title page and a single annotation within.

The Jackdaw: A Play, Seven Short Plays, no. IV (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., [1909]). Fay's autograph signature at the head of the title-page, and substantially annotated in ink and pencil throughout.

The Workhouse Ward: A Play, Seven Short Plays, no. V (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., [1909]). Fay's signature and a few annotations in the text.

New Comedies: The Bogie Men, The Full Moon, Coats, Damer's Gold, McDonagh's Wife (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's and Sons, 1913). Presentation copy.

The Kiltartan Molière: The Miser, The Doctor in Spite of Himself, The Rogueries of Scapin, trans. by Lady Gregory (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., 1910). Heavily and extensively annotated throughout in the hand of Frank Fay, including scenery plots, changes to speeches and 'business'.

The Image: A Play in Three Acts (Dublin: Maunsel, Co., 1910. With ink signature 'G & A Fay' on the front free endpaper.

J. M. Synge

The Shadow of the Glen and Riders to the Sea (London: Elkin Mathews, 1905). Heavily annotated throughout in pencil and ink in the hand of Frank Fay.

The Well of the Saints (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., 1907). Heavily annotated throughout in pencil in the hand of Frank Fay.

The Playboy of the Western World: A Comedy in Three Acts (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., 1907). With Frank Fay's signature on front free endpaper and pencilled notes titled 'Property Plot' on the rear free end-paper.

John Millington Synge 1871-1909 A Catalogue of an Exhibition held at the Trinity College Library Dublin, on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of his Death. (Dublin: Dolmen, 1959)

Programme [for Riders to the Sea and The Playboy of the Western World]. Abbey Theatre, January 1907

Books associated with the Abbey Theatre

AE (George Russell), *Deirdre: A Play in 3 Acts*. Prompt Book. Original ribbon typescript. Binder's black cloth, lettered in gilt. Annotated and corrected in pencil throughout in the hand of Frank Fay.

The Hero in Man (Hampstead, London, and Hale, Cheshire: D. N. Dunlop and Clifford Bax, [1909])

Boyd, Ernest A., *The Contemporary Drama of Ireland* (Dublin: Talbot Press; London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1918). Presentation copy. Chapters 3 and 4, 'The Beginnings of the Irish Theatre Movement', and 'W. B. Yeats' have occasional annotations and comments by Frank Fay.

Byrne, Dawson, *The Story of Ireland's National Theatre: The Abbey Theatre, Dublin* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1929). Printed dedication to 'William G. Fay and Frank J. Fay the Founders of the Irish School of Acting'.

Fay, W. G., *Merely Players* (London: Rich & Cowan, 1932)

Fay, W. G., and Catharine Carswell, *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre* (London: Rich & Cowan, 1935). A copy of the first edition marked up for a subsequent second edition that was never published.

McNulty, Edward, *The Lord Mayor: A Dublin Comedy in Three Acts ... As Played at the Abbey Theatre* (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., 1917). With Frank Fay's signature at the head of the title page and beneath this 'Prompt Copy'. Heavily annotated throughout in ink and pencil, including scenery plots, changes to speeches, and 'business'. Produced at the Abbey on January 29, 1914.

Malone, Andrew, *The Irish Drama* (London: Constable, 1929)

Molière, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, *Les Précieuses Ridicules le Médecin Malgré Lui*, with annotations and éclaircissements scéniques de M. Jules Truffier (Paris : Librairie Universelle [n.d.]). Loosely inserted and tipped in are a number of autograph letters and parts of letters, c. 1906-1927, from M. Truffier of the Comédie Française to Frank Fay concerning the production of the play and of Molière and the Comédie Française.

Robinson, Lennox, *Crabbed Youth and Age: A Little Comedy* (London: G. P. Putnam's, 1924). With Frank Fay's signature, dated July 1928 and pencil annotations throughout.

Zangwill, Israel, *The Melting Pot ... A Drama in Four Acts* (London: Heinemann, 1915). Heavily annotated throughout in ink and pencil with notes, scenery and property plots and extensive changes to speeches. Mounted on the rear paste-down and end-paper is a programme for Frank Fay's production of the play with the Dublin Jewish Dramatic Society at the Abbey on 23rd January 1927.

Other Printed Books

Antoine, André, *Mes Souvenirs sur le Théâtre Antoine et sur L'Odeon* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1928).

Calvert, Louis, *Problems of the Actor* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., [1919]). With occasional annotations in pencil in the hand of Frank Fay.

Cibber, Colly, *Apology for the Life of Colly Cibber ... Written by Himself*, 3rd edn (London: K. Dodslet, 1750)

Cornwall, Barry [Bryan Waller Proctor], *The Life of Edmund Kean, vol. II* (London: Edward Moxon, 1835)

Crofton, W. M., *Deirdre of the Sorrows: An Opera* (Dublin: R. T. White, [1925]). Private printing. Loosely inserted is a brief autograph letter, signed, from the author.

Crofton, W. M., *The Wooing of Emer: An Opera in Four Acts* (Dublin and Cork: Talbot Press, 1930)

Davies, Thomas, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick*, 4th edn (London: Printed for the Author and sold at his Shop, 1784)

Davis, Thomas, *The Love Story of Thomas Davis told in the Letters of Annie Hutton*, ed. by Joseph Hone (Dublin: Cuala press, 1945). From the collection of Willie Fay.

Dekker, Thomas, *Old Fortunas: A Play*, ed. by Oliphant Smeaton (London: Dent, 1904)

Drinkwater, John, *Tides* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1918)

Drinkwater, John, *Abraham Lincoln: A Play* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1918). Inscribed in pencil on a preliminary blank, 'Prompt Book as played at Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith'. With substantial pencil markings throughout and scenery plots on the rear endpapers

Drinkwater, John, *Bird in the Hand: A Play in Three Acts* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1928)

Dumas, Alexandre, *A Marriage of Convenience; a play in four acts*, adapted by Sydney Grundy (London: Samuel French, [n.d])

'*Everyman*' with other Interludes including *Eight Miracle Plays*, with an introduction by Ernest Rhys (London: Dent, 1926). Substantial pencil annotations and markings to some of the plays.

Esmond, H. V., *Eliza Comes to Stay: A Farce in Three Acts* (London: Samuel French, [n. d.]). Heavily marked and annotated throughout.

French Comedies. A collection of twelve French comedies, by various authors, bound up in one volume (Paris: Various Publishers, c. 1815-1820).

- Galsworthy, John, *The Pigeon: A Fantasy in Three Acts* (London: Duckworth, 1912). Willie Fay's signature. Substantial alterations, comments and notes throughout.
- Gay, John, *The Beggar's Opera: A Comic Opera in Three Acts* (London: G. H. Davidson, [n. d.]).
- Goldsmith, Oliver, *The Good-Natured Man: A Comedy in Five Acts* (London: Thomas Hailes Lacy, [n. d.]). With some pencil markings and annotations.
- Goldsmith, Oliver, *She Stoops to Conquer: A Comedy* (London: W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, 1818). Some markings and notes throughout.
- Goldsmith, Oliver, *She Stoops to Conquer: A Comedy in Three Acts* (London: Samuel French, [n. d.]). Inscribed 'Prompt Book' on a preliminary leaf. Heavily marked and annotated in ink and pencil and with property plots and a sketch of stage setting.
- Goldsmith, Oliver, *She Stoops to Conquer: A Comedy in Five Acts* (London: G. H. Davidson, [n. d.])
- Greene, Robert, *Robert Greene [Plays]*, ed. By Thomas H. Dickinson (London: Fisher Unwin, [n. d.]). The play 'Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay' is heavily marked and annotated throughout.
- Hamilton, John, *The Magic Sieve: A Play in Two Scenes. With an Irish Version* (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., 1908)
- Ibsen, Henrick, *The Pillars of Society, and An Enemy of the People*, trans. by William Archer (London and Fellingington-upon-Tyne: Walter Scott Publishing, [1919])
- Ibsen, Henrick, *Lady Inger of Ostraat; Love's Comedy, The League of Youth*, trans. by R. Farquharson Sharp (London: Dent, [1918]). Inscribed by the translator.
- Irish Poets of To Day; an anthology*, compiled by L. D. 'O. Walters (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1921). Inscribed by Freda Fay on the front paste-down end-paper: 'With love "Bird" Xmas 1922".
- Lacy (Thomas Hailes) Publisher, [A collection of 15 plays by various authors, each published by Thomas Hailes Lacy, London, c. 1860]. Various paginations. Bound up in three-quarter skiver, marbled paper sides and end-papers.
- Letts, W. M., *Hallow-E'en and Poems of the War* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1916). Inscribed by the author, 'To Frank and Freda Fay with good wishes from W. M. Letts, Jan 7.17'.
- Lytton, Lord, *Richlieu; or, The Conspiracy: A Play in Five Acts* (London: Samuel French, 1925).
- MacDonagh, Thomas, *Lyrical Poems* (Dublin: The Irish Review). Inscribed by the author on a preliminary blank. Tipped in, a typescript sheet with poem 'The Golden Bough' signed in ink 'Joseph Plunkett'.

Masefield, John, *Ballads* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1903). With Masefield's ink sketch of a fully rigged ship on the title page, beneath this a short verse and on the facing page a longer poem bearing his autograph signature and dated September 1911.

Masefield, John, *Esther: A Tragedy: Adapted and partially translated from the French of Jean Racine* (London: Heinemann, 1922). With a number of pencil annotations, notes and markings throughout. Neatly mounted on the half-title page is an autograph letter, signed, from Masefield to Fay.

Matthews, Bache, *A History of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1924). An appendix lists Frank Fay's six appearances at the Birmingham Rep. in December 1918 and March 1920.

Matthews, Bache, *Merely Nonsense! [poems]* (Birmingham: Privately Printed, 1929)

Sheffield, John, Duke of Buckingham, *Five Love Songs* (Birmingham: Privately Printed for Bache Matthews, 1926)

Maugham, W. Somerset, *The Land of Promise: A Comedy in Four Acts* (London: Heinemann, 1922). Heavily annotated throughout in pencil.

Monroe, Harriet, *The Passing Show: Five Modern Plays in Verse* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1903). Inscribed by the author.

The Manchester Stage 1880-1900: Criticisms Reprinted from "The Manchester Guardian", ed. by C. E. Montague (London: Constable, [1900]). Press cuttings of reviews by Montague mounted on the front and rear end-papers. Inscribed by Montague on the half-title page: "With kind regards from C.E. Montague".

Moody, T. W., *Thomas Davis 1814-45: A Centenary Address Delivered in Trinity College, Dublin, on 12 June 1945 at a Public Meeting of the College Historical Society* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co., 1945)

Mounet-Sully, Jean, *Mes Souvenirs*. Pages removed from *Je Sais Tout* (Paris: Laffitte, [1921]). With Frank Fay's autograph signature on a preliminary blank.

Murray, Gilbert, *The Hippolytus of Euripides*, trans. and ed. by Gilbert Murray (London: George Allen & Sons, 1908). With pencil markings throughout text.

Phillpotts, Eden and Adelaide, *Yellow Sands; a comedy in three acts* (London: Duckworth, 1927). With William Fay's pencilled autograph signature and the note "Prompt Book" on the front free end-paper that is also stamped "The Birmingham Repertory Company".

Power, Victor O'D., *Flurry to the Rescue: A Comedy in Two Scenes* (Dublin: James Duffy and Co., 1918). With Frank Fay's autograph signature at the head of the title-page and notes, comments, a scenery plot, and changes in ink and pencil throughout.

Rostand, Edmond, *The Fantastics: A Romantic Comedy in Three Acts* (London: Heinemann, 1912). Birmingham Repertory Theatre Prompt Copy.

Shakespeare, William, *All's Well That Ends Well* (Cassell & Co., London, 1908)

Shakespeare, William, *Hamlet* (London: Cassell & Co., 1893). Mounted on the preliminary leaves are a number of press cuttings that list Fay in the roles of Polonius and the Ghost of Hamlet's Father. One cutting bears the pencilled addition of "1914".

Shakespeare, William, *Measure for Measure* (London: Heinemann, 1904). Inscribed in ink "Nottingham Repertory Theatre" on front paste-down end-paper and (in pencil) "Mr. G. W. Fay". With heavy pencil and ink annotations, changes and markings throughout.

Shakespeare, William, *Pericles; being a reproduction in facsimile of the First Edition 1609 from the copy in the Malone Collection in the Bodleian Library*, Intro. by Sidney Lee (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905)

Shakespeare, William, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Intro. by F.J. Furnival (London: Cassell & Co., 1908). Mounted on the front and rear end-papers are cuttings of cast lists in which Fay is noted in the roles of both Gremio and Baptista. Loosely inserted is a printed postcard from the Birmingham Repertory Company (post-marked 29th December 1918) summoning Fay to a dress rehearsal of the play. The Birmingham Repertory Theatre production of the play (directed by John Drinkwater) ran for 51 performances from 15th June 1918.

[The last item accompanied by a collection of six nineteenth-century editions of various of Shakespeare's plays, all in heavily distressed state. Six volumes, wrappers and skiver. Some bear notes and the signatures of Frank or William Fay].

Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, *The Plays of Sheridan: The Rivals*, Intro. by Edmund Gosse (London: Heinemann, 1924). With Frank Fay's autograph signature on the front paste-down end-paper; slight pencil markings throughout.

Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, *The Critic; or, A Tragedy Rehearsed, A Dramatic Piece* (London and New York: Samuel French, [n. d.])

Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, *The School for Scandal; a comedy in five acts* (London: John Cumberland, [n. d.]). With Frank Fay's autograph signature on the front free end-paper. With some occasional pencil annotations.

Shirley, James, *The Sisters* [a play], ed by C. M. Edmonston. Bankside Playbooks Series (Wells Gardner, Darton & Co., [n. d.]). With Frank Fay's autograph signature, the date May 1929 and the note, "Prompt Book" on the front free end-paper. Heavily annotated and marked throughout with changes to speeches, business, etc. Tipped-in on the rear end-paper is the programme for the production concerned by the Dublin University Elizabethan Dramatic Society on 30th and 31st May 1929 and of which Fay was the producer. A cutting of a newspaper review is mounted on the front paste-down end-paper.

Smith, Charles William, *The Actor's Art: It's Requisites, and How to Obtain Them...* (London and New York: Samuel French, [n.d.])

Sullivan, Robert, *The Spelling-Book Superseded...* (Dublin: Sullivan Brothers, 1884). With Frank Fay's autograph signature on the front free end- paper.

The Minor Elizabethan Drama. Vol. I: Pre-Shakespearean Tragedy. Intro. by Ashley Thorndyke, Everyman Series (London: Dent , [1910]). With Frank Fay's autograph signature at the head of p. vii; slight pencil markings to text.

Vandenhoff, George, *Leaves from an Actor's Note-Book; or, Anecdotes of the Green-Room and Stage, at Home and Abroad*, ed. by Henry Seymour Carleton (London: T.W. Cooper & Co. [and] John Camden Hotten, 1860)

Walker, John, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1838)

Ephemera

A small collection of various items of ephemera, including: playbills (mostly in exceptionally fragile condition); a group of handbills/programmes for the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin, c.1895- c.1896 (4to, gathered and sewn into wrappers); printed property plot for the National Theatre Society production of *Hyacinth Halvey* (1p, 4to); handbill for the 1928 Dublin University Dramatic Society production of *Hamlet*, directed by Frank Fay (1p, 8vo); handbill for the 1929 Elizabethan Stage Society production of Chapman's *Charles, Duke of Byron* (1pp, 8vo); a time sheet for the 1928 Birmingham Repertory Theatre production of Dryden's *Marriage a la Mode* (1p, 16mo), etc.

Notebooks and papers belonging to Frank Fay

Pre-Abbey

Notebook, containing drafts of theatre reviews, undated. Refers to Henry Irving production of the Bells in 1895. Also contains pen trials in Irish Language.

Abbey Years

A scrapbook of press cuttings regarding the *Playboy of the Western World* premiere in 1907 (14pp, exercise book, spine wholly defective). Includes *Pall Mall Gazette*, (Jan 28,1907), *The Evening Mail* (Dublin), *The Freeman's Journal*, *The Irish Independent*, *The Daily Express* (Dublin), *The Evening Telegraph* (Dublin) and others. Editorials, letter columns and news reports.

Post-Abbey

Notebook containing scenery plots for a range of productions the Fays were involved in at the Abbey. No date, but a postcard of an actor (Edmund H. Tennant) is dated 5.4.13.

Two single sheets (4°) written in pen in Frank Fay's Hand: *Importance of Being Earnest* Scene Plot; and Property Plot for each of three acts, signed 'Frank J Fay, S.M.' [no date]

Notes for a preface to an unnamed book on play production. Fay covers the role of the prompter, stage manager (or 'producer') and advises on acting. He writes, 'Try to feel and

think as you think the character would feel and think. Talk, move, stand, sit as he would do. Now-a-days it has become a custom to choose the man to fit the part: the actor should be able to fit himself to any part.'

A printed sheet called 'Press Opinions' with extracts from reviews of plays Fay had acted in, e.g. 'Mr. Fay played the Fool in the Morality...with an excellent sense of character' – William Archer (*The World*, May 12, 1903). The intention was to advertise Fay's ability to potential employers in the years after the Abbey.

Several engravings of famous actors dating from the eighteenth century. All single sheet and fragile: Macready as Brutus; Macready as Iago; Mead as Iachimo; Macready as Werner; Swift, engraving dated 1883.

Abbey Theatre Programmes (Fays performing)

Kincora (8p, 4to), 1 April, 1905

Twenty-First Birthday Anniversary Performance, *The Hour Glass*, *In the Shadow of the Glen*, *Hyacinth Halvey*, (12pp, sewn, with mounted portraits of A Gregory, W. B. Yeats and J. M. Synge), 27 December, 1925

Abbey Theatre Programmes (Post Fays)

The Plough and the Stars (2pp, 2to), 1939

The Arrow, *W. B. Yeats Commemoration Number*, contributors including John Masefield, Edmund Dulac (21pp, stapled in wrappers), 1939

Appendix H

[H]e is hard like a smooth pebble': Yeats's Dramaturgy in *On Baile's Strand* and the Marginalia in Frank Fay's copy of *Plays for an Irish Theatre, Volume III*

Matthew Fay²⁹

The opening of the Abbey Theatre in 1904 was a personal triumph for W. B. Yeats. Not only was *On Baile's Strand* the first play to be performed, but portraits painted by his father were hung in the lobby, alongside embroidered panels stitched by his sister Lily.³⁰ More importantly for the future, the Abbey's benefactor Miss Horniman acknowledged him as the inspiration for her gift when she wrote that she was 'in great sympathy with the Irish National Theatre Company as publicly explained by [Mr Yeats] on various occasions.'³¹

Publicity for the opening was organised carefully. John Masefield was to review it for the *Manchester Guardian* and Yeats gave interviews in the press.³² He also used *Samhain* to rebut possible objections to the project: the amateurism of the acting company was, he argued, a positive good, since it was associated with epochs when the drama was 'more vital than at present'.³³ Likewise, the limited expenditure available for sets made minimalism a necessity. Yeats extended an invitation to all who wished to join 'a household of living art in Dublin', but on his terms: members would have to 'care for a play because it is a play and not because it is serviceable to some cause.'³⁴

The great and good of Dublin attended the first night, although owing to illness Lady Gregory missed the premiere of her play, *Spreading the News*. Yeats telegraphed her when it was over, '[y]our play immense success. All plays successfully packed house.'³⁵ Both

²⁹ Matthew Fay is a PhD student at the University of London (School of Advanced Study), where he was previously awarded an MA in the History of the Book. His thesis stands at the intersection of the history of the book and theatre studies. It investigates the marginalia of Frank Fay's copies of play texts by Yeats, Synge and Lady Gregory.

³⁰ The portraits, commissioned by Miss Horniman, included among those depicted: Frank and Willie Fay, Maire Nic Shiubhlagh (Mary Walker), Miss Horniman herself, Dr Hyde, George Russell and Yeats. All were by J. B. Yeats, except the portrait of Yeats himself, painted by Madame Troncy of Paris (*The Freeman's Journal*, 1 December 1904, 5). In *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre* (London: Rich & Cowan, 1935), Willie Fay mentions Lily Yeats's embroideries in his description of the theatre (160).

³¹ To George Russell (A.E.), 8 April 1904, [Enclosure in Miss Horniman's hand]: 'To the President of the Irish National Theatre', April 1904, reprinted in *CL3* 572.

³² On 31 December, the *Evening Mail* printed 'A Chat with Mr W. B. Yeats', in which Yeats gave the paper's dramatic critic a tour of the new theatre, pointing out that what was now a theatre had once been a morgue. This prompted the critic to reflect, 'Life laughs joyously where Death held its court' (4). He felt that Yeats's unlikely enthusiasm had been amply justified by the new building. He was less certain about Yeats and Lady Gregory's 'offerings' on the opening night, remarking that the success of the enterprise would depend on rather more substantial dramatic fare than their two 'trifles light as air'. See *Evening Mail* (Dublin), 28 December 1904, 2.

³³ 'Samhain: 04, The Irish Dramatic Movement', *Ex* 124-140, (128); *CW8* 43.

³⁴ *Ex* 130; *CW8* 44.

³⁵ To Lady Gregory, 27 December 1904, *CL3* 690. The grandees attending represented all significant elements of Irish cultural life: political nationalism was represented by Stephen Gwynn, literature by George Russell and Edward Martyn, art by J. B. Yeats and Hugh Lane. The plays performed were *On Baile's Strand*, Lady Gregory's *Spreading the News*, and *Cathleen ni Houlihan*.

performers and playwrights were praised in the press.³⁶ Some critics noted a new muscularity in Yeats's characterisation and found to their surprise that what they had expected to be a difficult evening of esoterica was rather accessible.³⁷ Critics also appreciated the dramatic impact of *On Baile's Strand* and noted its 'Shakespearean' quality with the poet straining after 'no moral'.³⁸ This was testament not only to Yeats's ability, but to his increasing experience as a dramatic writer and to careful preparations made to ensure the success of the evening among a wide audience. Yeats was determined to avoid a repeat of the failure of *The Shadowy Waters* produced in his absence in early 1904, an example of precisely the type of obscure drama he knew could never be popular.³⁹

Reconfiguring *On Baile's Strand* from a heroic poem of limited dramatic effectiveness into a tragedy fit for a national stage was a Herculean labour for Yeats. The original printed text of August 1903 published in *In the Seven Woods: Being Poems Chiefly of the Irish Heroic Age*, was not performed until December 1904, suggesting that Yeats considered it unfit for production without further revision. After its first performances in December, it was altered again for a tour of Oxford, Cambridge and London in November 1905 and then rewritten 'entirely' from the beginning up to the first entry of the Young Man.⁴⁰ The first half of the version later published in *Poems, 1899-1905* (1906) is so different from that of 1903 that in the *Variorum* edition of the plays Alspach had to print them side by side, declaring that 'intelligible collation was impossible'.⁴¹ The difficulty for Yeats lay partly in deciding what to leave out as the story of Cuchulain's slaughter of his son was difficult to separate from other narrative strands which Yeats planned to dramatize separately in future.

Organisationally, too, Yeats and his colleagues were at a 'cross-road' after Miss Horniman's donation gave physical form to the idea of a national theatre.⁴² In less than a year, many of the actors would be employed as professionals by a limited company, with those who could not accept the abandonment of the amateur ethos offered no alternative but to leave. As Yeats struggled for control of the Abbey Theatre, he was still fighting to define what kind of dramatist he was and what kind of audience he required. The hope that a popular Dublin audience would 'care for a play because it is a play' would prove optimistic, as the disturbances over Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* would demonstrate.⁴³

³⁶ There was praise for Fay as Cuchulain. The *Daily Express* (Dublin), 28 December 1904, noted that 'as Cuchulain, Mr F. J. Fay was really excellent' (5); *The Freeman's Journal* for the same day wrote admiringly, 'Mr Fay's Cuchullain is as fine a piece of acting as could be seen on any stage and his elocution is far better than could be heard in any of the theatres of commerce' (5). Meanwhile, RM, quoted above, wrote in *Evening Mail* that Yeats's play was 'well-written' (2).

³⁷ *The Freeman's Journal*, 28 December 1904, 5, said, 'the characters are more virile and actual; and in the introduction of Barach, the Fool and a certain note of humorous commentary, Mr Yeats has approached somewhat the Shakespearean model without sacrificing his own originality of treatment.' The conservative *Daily Express* (Dublin), 28 December 1904, 5, wrote admiringly, 'judged by ordinary standards the play can stand of itself and it may at once be said that Mr Yeats's new piece deserved the success it achieved.'

³⁸ *The Freeman's Journal*, 5.

³⁹ 'The show has been as I feared little of a success this time. Lady Gregory and my sister are enthusiastic about the beautiful effect of 'The Shadowy Waters' scenery speech & so on, but as I warned the company such things cannot be popular,' To Quinn [1 February 1904], CL3 540-41, (540).

⁴⁰ VPI 526.

⁴¹ VPI 456.

⁴² VPI 526.

⁴³ Ex 130; CW8 44.

Throughout the period of *On Baile's Strand's* revision and well beyond, the Fay brothers, Frank and Willie, were Yeats's uncomfortable subalterns. They had once been equals in the theatre, but were now employees, albeit influential ones.⁴⁴ Both acted in all versions of the play and Willie Fay was the producer, what would now be called the director with responsibility for *mise en scene* and stage movement. Frank Fay was, in addition to his duties as Yeats's leading actor, the teacher of verse speaking to the company, a role for which he would eventually receive separate remuneration.⁴⁵ He kept an archive of books and papers, which have remained in the family's possession, and which formed the basis of Gerard Fay's *The Abbey Theatre: Cradle of Genius*, published in 1958.⁴⁶ Leaning heavily on Fay's extensive correspondence with Yeats, *The Abbey Theatre* made little of Frank Fay's library of printed books and first editions, many by authors associated with the Abbey, including Yeats, Lady Gregory and Synge. The interest of these copies lies in the annotations they contain which help us understand the process by which the printed text was adapted for the stage. The changes to speeches and dialogue recorded in Fay's copies of plays including *The King's Threshold*, *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* and *The Hour-Glass* raise questions about the role of rehearsal and performance in the creation and revision of Yeats's plays. In the case of *On Baile's Strand*, the marginalia are regrettably fragmentary and scanty, perhaps because Frank Fay's presentation copy of *Plays for an Irish Theatre, Vol. III* was not his principal working copy. Nonetheless, the marks have some value in adding to the picture of how the play was evolving leading up to the opening of the Abbey.

The copy is inscribed to Frank Fay from the author and is dated 'March 1904'.⁴⁷ This is just after Yeats's return from his successful lecture tour of the United States. According to Kelly and Schuchard, Yeats had been busy revising *On Baile's Strand* throughout the winter of 1903/4 for a proposed spring production in Dublin. This production was postponed perhaps because of the inconvenience of Yeats's being out of the country during rehearsal, but more probably because the purchase of the Mechanics' Institute in April meant a more suitable venue would shortly be available.⁴⁸ It is also quite possible that Yeats wanted yet more time to revise the text. In any case, there were other claims on their time: a *conversazione* performance of *The King's Threshold* and *The Shadowy Waters* for Stephen Gwynn on 26 April, which was rehearsed by Yeats in Dublin on 15 April. The annotation in

⁴⁴ In 1902 Yeats brought his literary gifts and reputation to an existing theatre company founded by the Fays. He was quickly made President of the newly-named Irish National Theatre Society at Frank Fay's invitation (August 1902), but the day-to-day running of the Society and its choice of plays to perform were, although subject to his influence, not in his control. A flavour of this period is captured in Jack Yeats's caption of his sketch of rehearsals of Yeats's *The Hour-Glass* at the Camden Street Theatre, which is 'Fays [sic] Little Theatre', (Christopher Murray, 'Three Sketches by Jack B. Yeats of the Camden Street Theatre, 1902' in *YA3*, 125-32, (126).

⁴⁵ To Frank Fay, 22 February [1906], 'I write to you as managing director to ask you to undertake classes in voice production and verse speaking ... We propose to pay you extra for this work — ... I always look on you as the most beautiful verse speaker I know —' (*CL4*, 345-46).

⁴⁶ The correspondence between Frank Fay and Yeats was quoted throughout in Gerard Fay, *The Abbey Theatre: Cradle of Genius* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1958).

⁴⁷ *The King's Threshold and On Baile's Strand: Being Volume III of Plays for an Irish Theatre* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1904), *Wade* 56.

⁴⁸ *CL3* 526n. On the timing of the decision to abandon the spring production, the National Theatre Society committee meeting of 12 March confirmed *On Baile's Strand* and *The Laying of the Foundations* by Frederick Ryan for its April programme. Horniman's 'Offer of a Theatre' is dated April 1904 and it was this that prompted the delay in production. The first definite mention of cancellation of *On Baile's Strand* is in a letter from Yeats to John Quinn of 11 May where he says, 'I told you I think that 'On Baile's Strand' has been postponed', (*CL3* 593-95, (595)). It is possible that the play was still being rehearsed in April after Fay had received the book.

Fay's copy belongs to this uncertain period when a spring production of *On Baile's Strand* still seemed possible. Yeats revised the play periodically thereafter, but internal evidence suggests that the revisions in Fay's copy are associated with the production in December 1904 and not the revival in 1906.⁴⁹ The marginalia in Fay's copy would not be incorporated into later published editions, but they do gesture towards future versions of the text and provide insights into Yeats's struggles to turn the raw material of Irish myth into a dramatic vehicle for ideas about heroism, political compromise, revenge and betrayal.

Fay's Copy of *On Baile's Strand*: The First Annotation

Compared with the 1903 version, the 1906 version suggests a movement towards a new fable-like quality, as Barach and Fintain become the Fool and the Blind Man, and a thinning of the mythic material in the cutting of the character of King Daire, leaving unnamed kings and singing women. The realistic clutter of a great hall, described in the stage directions of the 1903 version, especially the two great chairs carved with the symbols of Cuchulain and Concobar, is somewhat simplified in 1906, the chairs and benches described in less specific terms as 'many chairs and one long bench'.⁵⁰ The Fool and the Blind Man wear 'patched and ragged' clothes, and the Blind Man now 'leans upon a staff'.⁵¹ The language too indicates a shift, prioritising dramatic logic over the rehearsal of beautiful but irrelevant detail. In 1904, Barach prefixes his announcement of the arrival of the Young Man and his fighting on Baile's Strand, with a fanciful tale of the attempted seduction of him by 'Boann herself from the river', 'who had left 'the Dagda's bed' to peruse him.⁵² The first line of the revised version (1906) announces a new harshness of speech allied to a tight focus on dramatic logic: the Fool exclaims, '[w]hat a clever man you are, though you are blind [!]' telling the audience clearly what the character's symbolic function is in the play.⁵³ The Blind Man's wisdom enables him to tell the Fool, and the audience, what they will see, '[t]he High King will be coming', a very rare example of a line from the play's opening that is unchanged in

⁴⁹ Could they belong to one of the cycles of revision post-1904, which are referred to in the preface to *Poems, 1899-1905*, (VPI 1293)? In Fay's copy, six of Concobar's lines before the Young Man's first entry have been crossed out in pencil (VPI 496-97, ll. 380a-f). These lines are also missing from a prompt script in the Abbey Theatre Archive associated with the 1906 revival, suggesting an authorial correction, returning the text to its August 1903 state, (Abbey Theatre. *On Baile's Strand*. 27 December 1904 [script]. Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at the National University of Ireland, Galway, 190967_S_0001, 20). The incorporation of this cut into the typescript indicates that it had already been made when the 1906 production was being prepared, so it is reasonable to date it to revisions made prior to this. In any case, alterations to the first half of the 1904 printed text, such as appear in Fay's copy, would have been obsolete in 1906, since Yeats had by then rewritten the entire play up to the entry of the Young Man.

⁵⁰ VPI 459, directions before l.1.

⁵¹ VPI 459, variants noted. In *Plays in Prose and Verse* (London: Macmillan, 1922), the stage directions reflect Edward Gordon Craig's input as the Fool and the Blind Man's 'features [are] made grotesque and extravagant by masks' (VPI 459). The movement is towards a greater artificiality in costume and acting, both of which indicate the influence of Craig, although Yeats had earlier (1904) expressed reservations, concerned that Craig's methods were only 'a new externality' (CW8 78). The inclusion of the Blind Man's staff in the stage directions of the 1906 version highlights the way performance influences published text, even if only temporarily. In 1912, Yeats wrote to Craig of *On Baile's Strand*, 'I have not touched it for three or four years. I am sure you were quite right about the blind man's staff, it was probably written in years ago when I had to keep some amateur player quiet. One always gives them a stick to do that when one is able,' (To Edward Gordon Craig, 7 January 1912, *CL IntelLex* 1797).

⁵² *Plays for an Irish Theatre* (III), 70.

⁵³ VPI 459, l. 1.

1906 and one that, typically, prepares for dramatic action, rather than pausing for poetic description.⁵⁴

In the 1903 version, Fintain describes Concobar for the audience. He is 'a great King', made rich through war with 'chessboards and candlesticks made of precious stones'.⁵⁵ It is at this point that the first annotation in Fay's copy of the play occurs, as shown below.

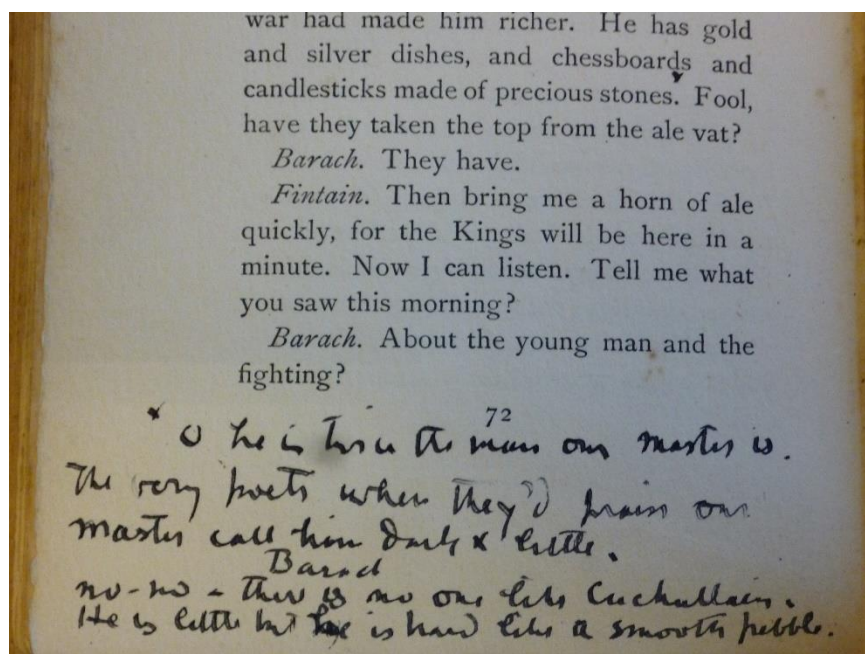


Fig. A. *Plays for an Irish Theatre (III)*, 72. Textual Addition at Foot of Page in Yeats's hand (Fay archive).

[Fintain.] O he is twice the man our master is.
 The very poets when they'd praise our
 Master call him dark & little.
 Barach
 No - no - there is no one like Cuchullain.
 He is little but ~~like~~ he is hard like a smooth pebble.⁵⁶

This interpolation is not represented in any printed edition of the play, although part of it survives in a stage direction in *Poems 1899-1905*.⁵⁷ It is a pen addition in Yeats's hand, concerning Cuchulain's physical appearance and characteristics emerging from observations by Barach and Fintain (the Fool and the Blind Man from *Poems, 1899-1905* onward). The new dialogue is signalled by a primitive manuscript asterisk in the body of Fintain's speech of exposition (Fig. B).⁵⁸

⁵⁴ VPI 460, l. 31.

⁵⁵ *Plays for an Irish Theatre (III)*, 72.

⁵⁶ It is not possible to be sure, but the sequence of writing might be that Yeats first wrote 'like' and then overwrote 'he'.

⁵⁷ VPI 477, directions after l.199: '[Cuchulain] is a dark man, something over forty years of age'.

⁵⁸ VPI 460, l. 175.

This small addition to dialogue is in keeping with the relationship between the Fool and the Blind Man (as we will refer to Barach and Fintain) as Yeats establishes it elsewhere. It is a bickering, mutually exploitative, mutually dependent partnership of opposites, played for comic effect. The Fool is forced to defend himself and his master against the accusations of the Blind Man, just as Cuchulain defends his conduct against criticism from Concoabar. In a revision associated with the 1904 production, the Fool comes on stage defending himself against the charge of otherworldliness, 'I did not take a string of herrings for a sword'.⁵⁹ Here he defends Cuchulain against the charge of insignificance and unprepossessing appearance. The language they express themselves in is significant: the Blind Man, as befits a character who represents values connected with utility and commerce uses an everyday speech ('the very poets when they'd praise our master'), while the Fool who is connected to dreams, uses a symbolic language ('he is little but he is hard like a smooth pebble'). The contrast between the Fool and the Blind Man and between Cuchulain and Concoabar was important to Yeats's conception of the play and became more so as he revised it between 1904 and 1906, during which time much of his re-writing was aimed at focusing the audience's attention on the confrontation between the warrior and the 'High King'.⁶⁰ It was also at this time that he was developing his theory of the mask and the self-division of personality it symbolised. Just as the soul adopts a mask as it turns outward to life, so Concoabar and Cuchulain seek each other out, indeed, are inseparable. Writing in the Preface to his late play, *The Resurrection*, he puts the same idea in slightly different terms, remembering the pained period in which he was revising *On Baile's Strand*:

So did the abstract ideas persecute me that *On Baile's Strand*, founded upon a dream, was only finished when, after a struggle of two years, I had made the Fool and Blind Man, Cuchulain and Concoabar whose shadows they are, all image, and now I can no longer remember what they mean except that they mean in some sense those combatants who turn the wheel of life.⁶¹

The Fool's response to the Blind Man reveals his loyalty to Cuchulain, which he justifies by saying Cuchulain is 'little but he is hard like a smooth pebble'. On 21 January 1904, Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory from Minnesota, telling her that he had written to Frank Fay and had 'sent him the new lines he *wanted*, the bits about Cuchullain being a small dark man'.⁶² These lines accompanied a letter to Frank Fay of [20 January 1904] but are now lost.⁶³ Yeats's phrasing, implies a change made at the actor's request, while the description of the content

⁵⁹ Abbey Theatre *On Baile's Strand*, 27 Dec 1904 [script]. Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at National University of Ireland, Galway, 10967_S_0001, 1.

⁶⁰ *VPI* 463, l. 39.

⁶¹ *VPI* 932. The thought bears comparison with lines first published in *The Atlantic Monthly* and in *The London Mercury*, January 1939:

And when the Fool and Blind Man stole the bread
Cuchulain fought the ungovernable sea;
Heart-mysteries there, and yet when all is said
It was the dream itself enchanted me:
Character isolated by a deed
To engross the present and dominate memory.
Players and painted stage took all my love,
And not those things that they were emblems of.

From 'The Circus Animals' Desertion, ll. 25-32, *VP* 630.

⁶² To Lady Gregory, 21 January 1904, *CL3* 528-30, (529-30), emphasis added..

⁶³ To Frank Fay, [20 January 1904], *CL3* 526-28.

(‘a small dark man’) appears to connect the lost dialogue to the surviving marginalium on Fay’s copy (‘dark and little’) offered above. What is unexplained is Fay’s interest in the change.

The Fool describes Cuchulain’s character and appearance, focusing on his complexion and height, shortly before the hero’s first entry. In the version of 1906, there is no reference made to Cuchulain’s stature and the fact that he was a dark man is highlighted in a stage direction rather than dialogue.⁶⁴ Frank Fay was insecure about his modest height, feeling that it held him back in his career.⁶⁵ An anecdote from the production of *On Baile’s Strand* makes the point amusingly. In a Preface to the memoirs of Marie Nic Shiubhlaigh, the playwright, Padraic Colum remembers,

Frank’s [Walker] most exciting appearance was in *On Baile’s Strand* where as Cuchulain’s son he played opposite Frank Fay’s Cuchulain. Now Frank Fay was far from heroic in his build, but he could project himself as an heroic figure as he did not have to draw the audience’s attention to this bodily equipment. But he had to take hold of the arm of the young man who was his son, and ejaculate: ‘That arm had a good father and a good mother, | But it is not like this.’ And strip his own to show an arm as meagre as any townsman’s. It was wonderful that he could do it and leave only a momentary sense of incongruity.⁶⁶

‘A momentary sense of incongruity’ resulting from the juxtaposition of a Dublin ‘townsman’ with an archetype of aristocratic manhood was perhaps reason enough for Fay to request some protection from Yeats in the form of dialogue preparing the audience for the appearance of Cuchulain, especially his height. Part of Yeats’s dramaturgy was determined by the players he had at his disposal: he had to base his creation of character on what the audience would see onstage, not simply on what they or he might imagine.

The letter which accompanies the lost sheet of dialogue is a well-known description of the character of Cuchulain dating from [20 January 1904].⁶⁷ Some critics have found it lends support to the idea that Yeats’s characterisation has a basis in autobiography, that the hardness referred to in the letter (‘he is a little hard, & leaves the people around him a little repelled’) is a reflection of the ‘increased self-confidence’ Yeats felt on returning from his American odyssey.⁶⁸ Other critics have speculated that having to explain himself to Frank Fay focused Yeats’s mind on the ‘logic of his theme’ in the play (the ageing hero seeking, but unable to find, renewal), enabling him to arrive at details, such as Cuchulain’s age, ‘about 40’, which were introduced in the printed version of 1906.⁶⁹ Another way of looking at it is that Yeats was attempting to apply principles of dramaturgy to a character whose existence was based in myth, much better suited to the epic narrative of Lady Gregory’s *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*. Yeats himself points out in the letter that the great souls of epic, Helen and Cuchulain, for example, never age, but that in drama they must, since Cuchulain has a son

⁶⁴ CL3 520n.

⁶⁵ His son recalls him as an amateur Hamlet, ‘with an all-black costume, that seemed to make him look even shorter than he really was,’ (Gerard Fay, 139).

⁶⁶ Padraic Colum, ‘Forward’, *The Splendid Years* by Marie Nic Shiubhlaigh (Mary Walker) (Dublin: James Duffy, 1955), ix.

⁶⁷ CL3 526-28.

⁶⁸ CL3 527; Roy Foster quotes from the letter at length in the context of Yeats’s ‘new-found confidence’, which among other things enabled him to be firm with his American publishers, *Life* 1, 315-16, (316).

⁶⁹ VPI 477, directions after l. 199. See Suheil Bushui, *Yeats’s Verse-Plays: The Revisions, 1900-1910* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 65.

who is old enough to fight him.⁷⁰ Engaging with the story as theatre rather than literature forced decisions on the author, and persuaded him to reach for dramatic models that would be understood by his actors and audience. In this case, the relevant model was Shakespearean tragedy.

Cuchulain's hardness is the source of his strength but it is also a blind-spot which contributes to his failure to credit the warm feelings he has for the Young Man, allowing him to carry out Concobar's injunction to fight him. 'Without this thought,' writes Yeats, 'the play had not any deep tragedy.'⁷¹ Yeats had to choose dramatic models and explain them so that his actors might be supported in the creation of their roles, a point that was especially important in the case of his leading actors on whose performances the success of the play depended. Explanation required compromise and simplification, but it was a necessary sacrifice in the creation of a 'new dramatic literature for Ireland'.⁷² His attraction to Shakespeare at this moment can thus be explained in terms of context: an Irish National Theatre required a national playwright: as Shakespeare was to the Elizabethans, Ibsen to the Norwegians and Wagner to the Germans, so would Yeats be to the Irish.⁷³

Revisions to the published text (1904) are driven partly by temporary factors such as choosing a 'Dublin townsman' to play Cuchulain. They are also prompted by a need to emphasise Cuchulain's warrior-spirit as essential to the play's dramatic machinery. In the 1906 version, Yeats creates an alternative genealogy for Cuchulain. No longer is he only the son of the god Lugh of the Long Hand, as in Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, conceived by his mother Dechtire when she swallowed the god in the form of a mayfly in her wine cup.⁷⁴ Now, he is begotten of 'that clean hawk out of the air' in a change that stresses Cuchulain's instinct for predation as well as gesturing towards the later dance play *At the Hawk's Well*.⁷⁵ Like the hawk, his focus is one-pointed, so that even love is an extension of war: he possesses Aoife after becoming 'the only man that had overcome her in battle'.⁷⁶ In addition to providing Aoife with a motive for revenge, such selfishness in love recalls the pebble of the brook in Blake's 'The Clod and the Pebble' that seeks to 'bind another to its delight' and 'joys in another's loss of ease'.⁷⁷ This allusion is also suggested by the Fool's description of Cuchulain as 'hard like a smooth pebble', in Yeats's annotation to Fay's copy. Another change of 1906 indicates that Cuchulain's actions make him vulnerable to 'the Shape-Changeers' who would 'hurl a spell on him', creating a stronger sense of the inevitability of his downfall.⁷⁸

Fay Copy: The Second Annotation

⁷⁰ CL3 527.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² VPI 1293.

⁷³ See 'The Freedom of the Theatre', CW10 93.

⁷⁴ Lady Gregory, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, 5th edn. (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1970; repr. 1984), 21-2.

⁷⁵ VPI 485, l. 284. According to Clark and Clark, this genealogy is an invention of Yeats's (CW2 852n).

⁷⁶ VPI 521, ll. 740-1.

⁷⁷ William Blake, 'The Clod and the Pebble', PWB 67, and WWB3, 49. For a modern reprinting, see *The Poems of William Blake*, ed. by W. H. Stevenson (London: Longman, 1971), 211.

⁷⁸ VPI 495, ll. 394, 410.

The second annotation, also in Yeats's hand, occurs a few pages further on, just after Cuchulain's first entry.

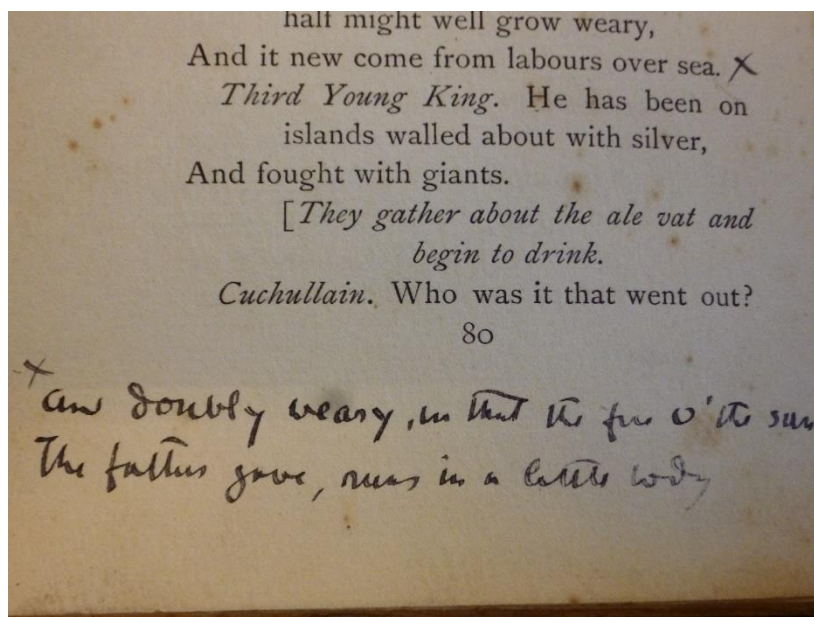


Fig. B. *Plays for an Irish Theatre (III)*, 80. Annotation at the foot of the page in Yeats's hand (Fay archive).

And doubly weary, in that the fire o' the sun
The father gave, runs in a little body[.]

This is from a part of the play comprehensively reconfigured in the 1906 version of the text. Because Cuchulain's friends, the four Young Kings, do not survive the revision which focuses on the confrontation of the aristocrat-heroes, Cuchulain and Concobar, it is not surprising that this addition does not survive in any printed edition. It is, however, not without interest. I consider it first in terms its relationship with the 'new dialogue' of Yeats's letter of [20 January 1904] and then in the light of Yeats's engagement with his Irish sources.

Together with the first annotation, this addition seems to confirm the nature of Fay's request in the lost sheet of January 1904. In his letter, Yeats wrote 'I send you the new Cuchullain dialogue ... The repetition on Cuchullain's entrance will fix it in the mind'.⁷⁹ It seems probable that the repetition referred to in the letter concerns Cuchulain's height, 'little' in the first annotation and 'a little body' here. This second reference to stature ('repetition') happens some ten lines after Cuchulain's first entry, close enough to fit the description given in the letter.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ CL3 526.

⁸⁰ This explanation contradicts that given by Kelly and Schuchard (CL3 526n) who speculate that Yeats is referring to a speech for the Fool. Part of it reads as follows: 'I'll ask [Cuchulain] ... I'll ask him ... But no I won't ask him ... Yes, I will ask him,' (VPI, 475, ll. 184-187). While this speech is close to Cuchulain's first entry and contains a good deal of repetition, there is no reason why Frank Fay should have requested this speech, which has no connection with him personally. There is also no reference in this speech to Cuchulain's appearance,

Yeats's first poetic expression of the story of the death of Cuchulain was published in *United Ireland* in 1892: a narrative poem called *The Death of Cuchulain*.⁸¹ This poem draws on the fighting-the-waves death, like *On Baile's Strand*, although the tone is melancholy as opposed to defiant, but the source for both endings is the folk-tale version, which is also referred to in 'The Celtic Element in Literature' where Yeats tells us that Cuchulain dies 'warring upon the waves'.⁸² However, Yeats also refers to a bardic ending in his essay, in which the hero dies on the battlefield and was lamented by his wife, Emer.⁸³ The legends of Cuchulain survived into the modern age in a number of Medieval Irish manuscripts, *The Yellow Book of Lecan*, *The Book of the Dun Cow* and the *Book of Leinster* for example, which in some cases were based on earlier lost manuscripts dating back to at least the eighth century. The authenticity of this ancient literature was called into question in the wake of the Ossian controversy of the late eighteenth century.⁸⁴ Scholars of the Celtic revival sought to prove the existence of an older culture and had some success. For example, Eugene O'Curry was able to do so with *The Book of the Dun Cow* thanks to interlinear glosses translating archaic vocabulary, which indicated that the twelfth-century manuscript was a transcription of a still more ancient written version.⁸⁵

Yeats and other Irish revival writers wanted to challenge the colonial stereotypes of Irishness made respectable by so-called admirers of the Celtic temperament such as Matthew Arnold. The influence of Arnold on Yeats was considerable, and the Irish poet was grateful for Arnold's appreciation of 'the intimate feeling of nature' characteristic of Celtic literature, but Arnold argued that the Irishman's uncontrolled imagination made him unfit for self-government and his emotionalism needed to be balanced by English good sense. The Irish literary revival was in part a response to such patronising and damaging judgements. Publishers like Alfred Nutt looked for writers to put the Irish heroic tales into accessible English, while Lady Gregory thought that it was her duty to show that there was 'imagination and idealism and beauty' in the old Irish literature.⁸⁶ Most of all, Yeats sought to refute such prejudices through his varied activities in theatre and in print, seeing in the literature of Ireland the very basis and justification for an independent Ireland.

However, the fact that the essay on 'The Celtic Element in Literature' contained references to both the folk tale ending of the Cuchulain story and the very different bardic version raises the question of which one Yeats was using in *On Baile's Strand*, and whether he fully understood the difference between them. In an early article in *The Gael*, dating from

which Yeats specifically mentions in his letter of 21 January to Lady Gregory, 'I have sent [Fay] the new lines he wanted, the bits about Cuchullain being a small dark man,' *CL3* 529-30.

⁸¹ *VP* 105n; in a note to the poem, Yeats explains his sources: 'Cuchulain (pronounced Cuhooin) was the great warrior of the Cononin cycle. My poem is founded on a West of Ireland legend given by Curtin in 'Myths and Folklore of Ireland'. The bardic tale of the death of Cuchulain is very different.' (*VP* 799). Jeremiah Curtin, *Myths and Folk-Lore of Ireland* (Boston: Little Brown, 1890; London: Abela, 2009), 236-54, narrates the fighting-the-waves ending of Cuchulain's life taken up in *On Baile's Strand* and *The Death of Cuchulain*. There is another version of the story which Yeats was familiar with, the 'bardic tale' (above *VP*). In this version, Cuchulain dies in battle, tricked by his enemies. Cornered, he lashes himself to a stone pillar, so he can die facing his enemies. In his essay, 'The Celtic Element in Literature', Yeats refers to both versions (*E&I*, 179; *CW4*, 132).

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *E&I* 186; *CW4* 137.

⁸⁴ Thomas M. Curley, *Samuel Johnson, the Ossian Fraud, and the Celtic Revival in Great Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2.

⁸⁵ Arnold, 76.

⁸⁶ Lady Gregory to William Scawen Blunt, 7 April 1902, Berg, quoted in Judith Hill, *Lady Gregory: An Irish Life* (Cork: Collins Press, 1911), 224.

April 1887, Yeats appeared to think that the Red Branch stories, including Cuchulain, were folk tales, placing them in the same category as those that made up the Fenian cycle. In the article, Yeats stresses the similarities between the two cycles, saying that Finn and his followers lived 'rudely and simply as Cuchulain of old' and that they sought to be that which Cuchulain and his followers were, 'men of nature'.⁸⁷ Both Cuchulain and Finn are contrasted with the 'architects of kingdoms' and seem to embody a utopian, or pastoral, freedom expressed in the values of bravery and generosity.⁸⁸ Such language reflects the influence of William Morris on Yeats's thinking, and more broadly, of Bedford Park bohemianism in its depiction of an Irish 'brotherhood' that, mixed with Christian influence, became '[m]edieval chivalry'.⁸⁹

By the time he came to write *On Baile's Strand*, his thinking had changed. Now the Fenian cycle belonged to the folk imagination, while the Red Branch tales were bardic or aristocratic in origin. In his preface to *Gods and Fighting Men* by Lady Gregory, Yeats tries to create a chronology for the old stories with the Finn cycle belonging to one of the 'oldest worlds that man has imagined', while the Cuchulain stories come from a time when the 'wild wood was giving way to pasture and tillage'.⁹⁰ In a letter to Lady Gregory from 1901, Yeats writes, 'I find from Stokes that the Fenians were all servile tribes' as distinct from the Ulster warriors who were aristocratic.⁹¹ Yeats's turn away from folk sources, which were the inspiration of much of his early verse, towards the epic narratives and characters of the Red Branch cycle was part of his attraction to aristocratic models of social organisation, where, he felt, artistic freedom would be guaranteed by a reverence for tradition and art. The Ulster tales were, he was convinced, the equivalent of the heroic tales of Greece, and using them as the source material for drama added to the argument for the superiority of Irish over modern English culture.

The most important source for *On Baile's Strand* is Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*.⁹² This is entirely in keeping with Yeats's understanding of Cuchulain as an aristocratic hero. Lady Gregory is of the same caste as the warrior, both have 'knowledge of the top of the world where men and women are valued for their manhood and charm, not

⁸⁷ 'Finn MacCool', *The Gael*, 23 April 1887, reprinted in CW9 45-50, (48).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ 'Gods and Fighting Men', Ex 16; 'Thoughts on Lady Gregory's Translations', CW6 126.

⁹¹ To Lady Gregory, [26 November 1901], CL3 126-28, (127).

⁹² While Lady Gregory's book is Yeats's principal source for the play because its literary merit lent dignity to Irish literature, other revival writers were significant influences. Chief among these was Eleanor Hull, a writer and scholar who was to re-tell the Cuchulain story for younger readers – an audience Lady Gregory's also wished to address and a reason why her version omitted some episodes on prudish grounds, (*Cuchulain, The Hound of Ulster* (London: George Harrap, 1909). Yeats would certainly have been aware of Hull's earlier work, *The Cuchullin Saga in Irish Literature* (London: David Nutt, 1898), a compilation of translations of the tales by scholars, which Lady Gregory cites as an important source for *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*. Her scholarly introduction considers the saga as literature, history and mythology, the last section of which expounds the traces of pagan sun worships which survive in the character of Cuchulain, the 'avatar of Lugh,' (lix). These ideas influenced Yeats, who wrote to Fay that Cuchulian was 'the hot sun' (CL3 527). A third source for the play is Standish O'Grady, whose *The Coming of Cuculain* (London: Methuen, 1894), helped fire Yeats's imagination, although his style was insufficient for the material (*E&I* 512-13; CW5 205). Still, his versions were preferable to his cousin, the scholar Standish Hayes O'Grady's *Silva Gadelica*, 2 vols (London: Williams and Norgate, 1892), a collection of tales from the manuscripts, which Yeats had to translate into 'better English' as he read them, so dry and Latinate was their style (To the Editor of the *Daily News*, 11 May 1904, CL3 592-93, (593)). Other manuscript translators were also off-putting: for example, O'Curry's Irish history 'defeated my boyish indolence', (*E&I* 511; CW5 205).

their opinions'.⁹³ Yeats saw her Ascendancy background as part of the reason for the success of her arrangement of the stories. Her influence on Yeats is greater for example than Standish James O'Grady's because his is an Anglicised version of Cuchulain, suffused with Victorian sentiment and 'shaped by the style of Carlyle'.⁹⁴ Lady Gregory's on the other hand, combines aristocratic appeal with something defiantly nationalist, which, as Yeats says was undertaken for 'the dignity of Ireland'.⁹⁵

If we return to the Fay annotation, we can see the influence of Yeats's thinking about his sources. Cuchulain is thoroughly mortal ('a little body') but visited by a god. Crucially, this god is not the Christian god but part of a polytheistic pagan pantheon of Irish gods. He is the sun god Lugh, whose blood runs in Cuchulain's mortal veins. Yeats distinguishes between Finn, who is the equal of the gods and Cuchulain, who may be the son of one them but is still 'far apart' from them, destined, as we have seen, to get older and die.⁹⁶ The pagan myths of Ireland allow Yeats to place himself within a native aristocratic tradition, equivalent to that of the heroic civilization of Homer, within which he can claim special privileges as a poet, since poets, like aristocrats, represent the values of bravery, generosity and self-creation. In doing so, Yeats manages to perform a powerful gesture of nationalism in defiance of those, like Arnold, who perpetuate stereotypes of Irish sentimentality and buffoonery. At the same time, he allies himself with a tradition and a set of values that elevate him beyond the morality of the common sort, whose interests he may decide to serve, but from a position of choice, not obligation.

Fay's Additions to the Text

The second set of marginalia, in pencil, is also significant, hinting as it does, at intermediate states of the text. These additions are in Frank Fay's hand and they are actor's marks indicating slight changes to speeches, the addition of a word here, the lopping of unnecessary dialogue there. As such they indicate performance changes to the printed text, in this case provided by *Plays for an Irish Theatre (III)*. They show Yeats accommodating his style to the realities of the theatre.

Some of Fay's annotations to *On Baile's Strand* are characteristic of a play-text devoted to an actor's creation of a role and without wider significance in the development of the text. One such is the episode in which Cuchulain and the Young Man, both of whom are ignorant of their true relationship, are exchanging gifts. Cuchulain points out the mythological story of his cloak, with its 'little golden eyes' which were embroidered by Fand from hairs 'stolen from Aengus's beard'. The word 'stolen' is underlined in pencil (see Appendix A, 19).⁹⁷ This mark is suggestive of the emphasis given in speech and indicates that this was a working copy of the text and not a souvenir copy. It was not a normal working copy, though, because such marks of emphasis are few and marks indicating stage business, while appearing occasionally in Fay's copy of *The King's Threshold*, are absent in *On Baile's Strand*. Fay must

⁹³ *Au* 456; *CW3* 336.

⁹⁴ 'A General Introduction for my Work', in *E&I* 513; *CW5* 207.

⁹⁵ *Au* 456; *CW3* 335.

⁹⁶ *Ex* 17; *CW6* 126.

⁹⁷ Variant noted, *VPI* 511, ll. 590-92. Similar usage is found in Fay's copy of *Plays for an Irish Theatre (III)*, 51 (*The King's Threshold*), Appendix A, 11.

therefore have used this copy in conjunction with another copy in rehearsal – perhaps the one that he was using for the proposed spring production in 1904.

Elsewhere, the text is not emphasised, but edited. An example of Cuchulain's sexual bragging is somewhat bowdlerized: Cuchulain's printed line reads, 'one is content awhile | With a soft, warm woman who folds up our lives'.⁹⁸ In Fay's copy, the adjective 'warm' is crossed out. This is a performance emendation, perhaps reflecting Fay or Yeats's preference for the way the line scanned. It is also possible that Cuchulain's choice of words was considered too risqué for elements of the Dublin audience, especially in the wake of the controversy over the representation of Irish women in Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen*, which had erupted the previous autumn.⁹⁹

Another marginalium hints at an intermediate state of the text and highlights Yeats's maturing dramaturgy. On page 105 of *Plays for an Irish Theatre (III)*, Fay added the single word 'ford' in pencil after A King's line, 'I saw him [Cuchulain] fight with Ferdiad' (see Appendix A, 20), as the Court is making its way to witness the single combat.¹⁰⁰ It is a puzzling addition: it does not make sense grammatically and it is not taken up in any later printed text. In *Poems 1899-1905*, the passage reads:

Cuchulain. Out, I say, out, out!
[*Young Man goes out followed by Cuchulain.*
The Kings follow them out with confused cries, and words one can
hardly hear because of the noise. Some cry, 'Quicker, quicker!'
'Why are you so long at the door?' 'We'll be too late'. 'Have they
*begun to fight?' 'I saw him fight with Ferdia!' *Their voices**
*drown each other out. The three women are left alone.*¹⁰¹

A clue can be found in Berg H, an assemblage of 'typescripts, holograph drafts, and fragments of proof pages' that formed the printer's copy for *Poems 1899-1905*.¹⁰² The stage direction above is written in Yeats's hand on an insert slip that covers a cancelled proof:

~~'SECOND OLD KING. I saw him fight with Feriada at the ford. We'll be too late.
Quicker, quicker!'.~~¹⁰³

Fay's annotation of 'ford' now makes sense as an abbreviation of 'at the ford', referring to the legendary battle between Cuchulain and his friend Ferdiad.¹⁰⁴ Fay's copy combined with

⁹⁸ *VPI* 486^v, ll. 248-49; This line was itself a revision of the line in the Lord Chamberlain's Office typescript and manuscript copy, prepared in April 1903, which reads, 'one is content awhile | with a soft warm woman who folds up our ~~eyes~~ lives'. BL MS ADD 64649.J., 15^r.

⁹⁹ Fay would have been aware that the writings of Yeats and Synge, as members of the Protestant Ascendancy class, were scrutinized by journals like *United Irishman*, edited by Sinn Fein founder Arthur Griffith, and D. P. Moran's Catholic journal *The Leader*, for evidence of moral offence or supposed slurs against Irish womanhood. See, *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre* for 'bitter reflection' (147) on the sectarian reasons for the contrasting reception of plays by Padraic Colum, a Catholic, and J. M. Synge, a Protestant.

¹⁰⁰ Variant noted, *VPI* 513, l. 613b.

¹⁰¹ *Poems 1899-1905*, 121; *VPI* 513, directions after l. 613.

¹⁰² Kiely, *OBS*, 391. This version supersedes the three intermediate scripts in the Abbey Theatre Digital Archive.

¹⁰³ The original cancelled proof is Berg H (1), 23^r, in Kiely, *OBS*, 479, ll. 59-61; the insert slip is Berg H (1), 24^r, in Kiely, *OBS*, 483, ll. 1-6.

¹⁰⁴ Yeats wrote of his wish — 'a long cherished project' — to write 'a poetical version of the great celtic epic tales Deirdre, Cuchullin at the ford & Cuchullins death & Dermot & Grania' to Fiona Macleod [12 January, 1897], *CL2* 75. Yeats came close to achieving his aim in a 'number of connected plays — *Deirdre*, *At the Hawk's Well*, *The Green*

the cancelled proof Berg H 23^r, ll. 59-61, suggests an intermediate state of performance, superseded by the stage direction in *Poems, 1899-1905* (see above). The three states, *Plays for an Irish Theatre (III)*, Fay's copy and *Poems, 1899-1905*, demonstrate Yeats's growing confidence in the handling of dramatic action. In the unannotated *Plays for an Irish Theatre*, the exits of the Kings are handled clumsily: the gap between Cuchulain's determined departure and The Third King's exit is too long, covering six lines of text.¹⁰⁵ The effect is to drain the transition of dramatic tension. Berg H 23^r is an improvement – only two lines of text cover the exits of Concobar and the Kings, effecting a swifter and more dynamic end to the scene. Best of all is the text in *Poems 1899-1905*, where A King's memory of Ferdia and the ford is removed from dialogue and placed in a stage direction. Yeats now instructs that the audience should hardly be able to hear the words because of the noise, creating an atmosphere of hurry and anticipation in contrast with the cautious return of the Fool and the Blind Man.

The intense reworking of the key moment of Cuchulain's final exit is mirrored in the revisions around his first entry. As we have seen Yeats's annotations on Fay's copy attempt to prepare the audience for the appearance of the actor creating the role of Cuchulain. Later revisions use the Young Kings to introduce the hero. An addition in Yeats's hand to a fire and water damaged Abbey Theatre prompt script associated with the 1904 production has the kings entering alone and discussing Concobar's lateness and Cuchulain's otherworldliness. To enforce the point, Yeats writes a speech for Cuchulain, who is on stage but facing out the door in praise of the Sidhe who 'dance between the water and the mist'.¹⁰⁶ The Second Young King then says, '[h]e is in a dream'. This is the Cuchulain who is in touch with the spirit of nature, the romantic hero. In *Poems 1899-1905*, Yeats cuts the Kings' discussion of Cuchulain and his dreamy utterances and shifts depiction of the character to utterances of his own, as he enters addressing Concobar directly. Declan Kiely notes that this is an effort to enact rather than narrate Cuchulain's character in an effort 'to make his play better suited to actors on a stage'.¹⁰⁷

Exits and entrances can manipulate tension. The clearing of the stage for the fight and the return of the vagrants to the emptied space is an important dramatic transition or beat: a movement from royal pomp to furtive poverty, from tragedy to comedy. Fay's copy of *Plays for an Irish Theatre (III)*, in combination with the printer's copy for *Poems, 1899-1905*, demonstrates the different stages of this improvement. Comparison with earlier versions of the text indicates that Yeats wished to cut poetic decoration and employ demotic speech. In the printed text of 1904, the Young Man's entrance is delayed by a speech full of symbol and description. In Fay's version, this is crossed out in pencil (see Appendix, 18).¹⁰⁸ In *Poems*

Helmet, On Baile's Strand' (VPI 567-68). The episode of Cuchulain's battle at the ford, in which he kills all Queen Maeve's champions, including, finally, his friend Ferdiad, remained untold by Yeats in verse or prose. He wrote in 1934, 'I would have attempted the Battle of the Ford and the Death of Cuchulain, had not the mood of Ireland changed.' (VPI 568).

¹⁰⁵ VPI 513-14, ll. 613a-f.

¹⁰⁶ The Abbey Theatre. On Baile's Strand. 27 Dec 1904 [script]. The Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at National University of Ireland, Galway, 10967_S_0001, 8.

¹⁰⁷ Kiely, *OBS*, xl.

¹⁰⁸ The relevant section in *Plays for an Irish Theatre (III)* reads:

[The sound of a trumpet without.

Open the doors!
'I hear a herald's trumpet and await,

1899-1905, the episode is much altered, reflecting the almost entire rewriting of this section of the play, but the first of the three scripts in the Abbey Theatre Digital Archive referred to above, and the one most closely associated with the opening performances of the play at the Abbey in December 1904, has the whole description crossed out in blank ink and replaced with a single line in Yeats's hand.¹⁰⁹ The line is: 'open the door that is a herald's trumpet'. Fay's copy and this state of the text independently confirm this as a performance alteration, representing a streamlining of the action, bringing forward the Young Man's entrance to maintain dramatic tension. Moreover, Conobar's reference to the 'ancient crowns | Long hidden in the well at the World's End' is, for one thing, a rather too obvious a use of William Morris's title.¹¹⁰ In *Poems, 1899-1905*, the trumpet would be cut altogether and be replaced by a stage direction, either, 'there is a low knocking at the door' or a 'loud knocking.'¹¹¹ Not only is the knocking more dramatically effective, it alludes to *Macbeth* and Macduff's arrival at the castle, deftly adding a layer of tragic meaning by drawing on his Dublin audience's familiarity with Shakespearean tragedy.

The fragmentary annotations in Fay's copy suggest Yeats was substituting for his earlier lyricism something more economical, placing dramatic necessity above symbol. It fits within a larger creative context, that of Yeats's effort to find more ordinary or everyday forms of speech for his poetry from the very late 1890s onwards. It is also certain that the experience of observing his play in rehearsal and performance was a key impetus to revision.¹¹² Seeing the effect of transitions and monitoring the fluctuations in audience interest would prompt changes to the text, focusing the poet's mind on making it better suited to actors. Fay's copy helps us trace this process.

Authorship and Dramatic Production

A conundrum emerges from this discussion of the revisions of *On Baile Strand*. Who is responsible for them? The difficulty is to reconcile two conflicting ideas—the text as literature and the text as an acting script. We may feel instinctively that when it comes to

It may be, the heavy fleeces of the sea
And golden and silver apples or ancient crowns
Long hidden in the well at the World's End,
Or glittering garments of the salmon, tributes
From the Great Plain, or the high people of Sorcha,
Or the walled garden in the east of the world.'

Plays for an Irish Theatre (III), 92; *VPI* 496-98.

¹⁰⁹ NLI 52 552 (1), 20^r, in Kiely, *OBS*, 287, ll. 1-5.

¹¹⁰ Yeats reviewed *The Well at the World's End* (London: Kelmscott Press, 1896) in the *Bookman* issue of November 1896, shortly after Morris's death. Yeats wrote admiringly, praising Morris's inclusive social and artistic vision – he 'accepted life and called it good; and became alone among [the dreamers of the world] he saw, amid its incompleteness and triviality, the Earthly Paradise that shall blossom at the end of ages.' (*UP* 1 419; *CW* 9 320).

¹¹¹ 'There is a low knocking' survived uncorrected in Yeats's American edition, *The Poetical Works of William B. Yeats*, 2 vols (New York: Macmillan, 1907), II, in the revised second edition (1912), and in an edition of *Selected Poems* (New York, 1921); 'loud knocking' is preferred in all other editions from 1906 (*VPI* 499, directions after l. 452).

¹¹² Yeats wrote a note to *Deirdre* (1917), reprinted in *VPI*, recalling a performance of *The King's Threshold* at London's Court Theatre at which he sat behind three people, a couple he surmised and their friend. The husband's fidgeting annoyed Yeats, while the wife was all attention, saying 'they do things very well'. For Yeats the painful memory was of a bored husband, not an attentive wife. 'The worst of it is that I could not pay my players...unless I could draw to my plays those who prefer light amusement or have no ear for verse'. (*VPI* 415)

the preparation of his texts for publication, Yeats exerted firm control, delaying, for example, publication to enable further revision.¹¹³ On the other hand, we cannot escape the notion of the theatre as a collaborative activity, involving the creative input of designers, directors and actors as well as the playwright. The physical resources at a playwright's disposal also inevitably circumscribe his or her room for manoeuvre. A playwright must reckon with what the audience will see on stage, not what he or she would like them to see. This situation is more extreme when his or her mission is to create a national theatre, which has obligations not only to the creative vision of the author, and to physical capacity of the theatre company, but to the political aspirations of the audience.

The marginalia in the Fay acting copy help us unravel these problems. The annotations fall into three categories: those made before rehearsal by the author; those made in rehearsal, perhaps in collaboration; and those made after rehearsal. The black ink annotations in Yeats's hand describing Cuchulain as 'hard', are echoed in his letter to Fay of [20 January].¹¹⁴ This is the 'new dialogue' written by Yeats for Barach and Fintain, characters he created. Syntactically and verbally, this is Yeats's revision, so it seems clear that it is an authorial intervention. On the other hand, the intervention was prompted by a request by Frank Fay to justify his small stature to a sceptical audience. So, who is the true author of these lines, the poet or the actor?

The marks made in rehearsal, fragmentary words and phrases made in haste which alter the words of *A King* from 'I saw him fight with Ferdiad' to 'I saw him fight with Ferdia at the ford', or which edit down Conobar's speculation about whose arrival is announced by the herald's trumpet, are not easy to attribute with confidence either. We can say that Yeats was present at rehearsals, and that, in as much as these changes are incorporated into the literary text (which, in the case of Conobar's speech, they were), they are authorial interventions. Yet rehearsal allows creative suggestions to emerge from different quarters; they may come from the actors, the stage manager, or the author, if present, which, as Fay complains, Yeats frequently was not.¹¹⁵

Finally, there are those changes made after rehearsal, found in the archive of Abbey theatre scripts. A typescript fragment beginning with the song of women and running to the end of the play contains marks in Fay's hand.¹¹⁶ Some changes are to stage directions: for example, a direction prompting the actors to thrust their swords 'into' rather than 'at' the flames during the oath-taking scene could be actor-inspired.¹¹⁷ Other changes are to dialogue, as when Cuchulain, raging after the realisation of his fatal error has dawned, imagines Conobar on his throne, his power symbolised by 'that old branch of silver' (1904).

¹¹³ "'The Shadowy Waters,' 'The King's Threshold,' and 'On Baile's Strand' are not at all as they were when first printed, for they have been rewritten and rewritten until I feel I can do no better with my present subjects and experiences.' Preface to *Poems, 1899-1905*, VPI 1293.

¹¹⁴ 'He is a little hard, & leaves the people about him a little repelled', CL3 527.

¹¹⁵ Fay's complaints about Yeats's tardiness in replying to requests for guidance attest to this: 'you have not told me whether I have rightly interpreted the speech commencing "all comes to an end". I shall from time to time want to be guided as to the meaning of speeches in *Forgail*,' Letter to W. B. Yeats, 30 March 1903. Fay archive.

¹¹⁶ Abbey Theatre. *On Baile's Strand*, 27 Dec 19904 [script]. The Abbey Theatre Digital Archive at the National University of Ireland, Galway, 10967_S_0003. This is the third typescript fragment associated with revisions to the text after performance.

¹¹⁷ *On Baile's Strand* [script], 3; VPI 499, directions after l. 449

In the 1906 version, this is changed, in Fay's hand, to 'rod of kingship' in typescript.¹¹⁸ We might speculate that the changes to do with stage management originate from the actors, while those affecting dialogue come from the author, but we have no way of proving this. We are left with the fact that Fay and Yeats's hands are on the same typescript, often on the same page.

It seems that the changes to Fay's copy and the other intermediate typescripts point more towards the problems of clearly attributing authorship, than to the solutions. The text that descends through the various printed editions is a product of both the imaginative power and judgement of the playwright and of the textual history of the play in production. The two are inescapably linked, although they are not identical and serve different purposes and audiences. To the extent that the literary and acting texts are interwoven, while it would be an overstatement to claim that the actors are co-authors, it is the case that the process of theatrical collaboration extends beyond design and acting and into the realm of textual development.

Conclusion

The annotations in *Plays for an Irish Theatre (III)* point towards a tension between competing interests or energies at work in the Abbey Theatre, between an actors' and a writers' theatre, between the plays as theatre and as literature. One function of the revisions Yeats undertook to the relatively undramatic version of the play printed in *In the Seven Woods* was to make the play easier for the actors to stage. As early as 1902, Yeats was writing to Lady Gregory that he had gone over an early draft with George Moore and that the play was still 'in want of a little simplification', adding 'I shall get it simple enough for Fay in the end,' (though which Fay is unstated).¹¹⁹ The changes in the Fay copy and the comments in Yeats's letter about the lost sheet suggest the push and pull of creative relationships in the theatre, from which Yeats benefited but of which he would ultimately tire.

What is new in *On Baile's Strand* is the combination of hardness and poignancy in the character of Cuchulain.¹²⁰ The hardness, more pronounced in the revised version, begun during winter 1903/4, may show a renewed engagement with Nietzschean ideology as expounded within Thomas Common's 1901 edition of selections from the philosopher.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ *On Baile's Strand* [script], 3; VPI 523, l. 765.

¹¹⁹ To Lady Gregory, 3 April [1902], CL3 166-68, (168).

¹²⁰ In a letter to Yeats in 1911, Craig was to write excitedly to Yeats about the play, exclaiming, '[n]o other of yours that I have read is the force & tenderness so closely joined,' *Letters to W. B. Yeats*, vol. 1, ed. by Richard J. Finneran, George Mills Harper, William M. Murphy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 237.

¹²¹ The impact of Nietzsche's ideas on English-speaking artists in the early twentieth century, including Yeats, has been widely explored. Cuchulain's passion and death may be interpreted as ushering in a new era of spiritual justice in its rejection of the values of materialism. In this sense Yeats could be said to have been influenced by his reading of Thomas Common's selections from Nietzsche, lent to him by John Quinn when he visited the USA on his first lecture tour (November 1903-March 1904), CL3 239n. Yeats's annotations to this copy, now held in the library of Northwestern University, have been carefully examined by David Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England, 1890-1910* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1970), 143-152. All but one is to be found in the 'Ethics' section of *Nietzsche as Critic, Philosopher, Poet and Prophet: Choice Selections from His Works* (London: G. Richard, 1901), 89-138. Yet recent scholarship has shown that Nietzsche's influence on Yeats's antinomianism has been overstated and fails to take into account the significant influence of Joachim of Fiore (see Warwick Gould and Marjorie Reeves,

These ideas complemented thoughts arising from Yeats's developing ideas of Irish literature, which, after an early essay in the *Gael*, Yeats saw as divided between the folk stories of Finn and the aristocratic and epic Cuchulain cycle. Meanwhile, he was developing a poetic style newly charged with energy of ordinary speech, frequently fierce and harsh-sounding.

On the other hand, Yeats's portrait of Cuchulain is charged with human emotion. It has an expansiveness not often apparent in his theatre, perhaps the result of the autobiographical implications of the character. The humanity of Cuchulain is best explained in the letter to Fay of [20 January 1904], where the hardness of the hero who has put off the need for affection, perhaps through accident, is tested by the appearance of a Young Man for whom he feels an instinctive sympathy, who, has been sent, unknown to him, for revenge, and whose death seals his fate.

On Baile's Strand contains a tension between hardness and sympathy, which implies a larger tension between Yeats's wish for an unpopular theatre, in which he has full control, and his desire to fill a role as the nation's bard, which required compromise. This tension in this play is creative, producing a work tackling the largest themes, but which also throws up memorable theatrical images, such as the Blind Man and Fool profiting from the diversion caused by Cuchulain's death, or the Young Man arriving at the big rear doors just after Cuchulain has sworn the oath. Ultimately, this was not the direction in which Yeats would take his drama, but, at this moment of personal triumph with the opening of the Abbey Theatre, it provided him with a play that seemed, just, to combine popular success with artistic integrity.

Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Oxford Clarendon Press, revised edition, 2001), 221-98). Joachim of Fiore, about whose influence Yeats had written in *The Tables of the Law* (1896: see *Myth* 2005, 192-200), proposed a Trinitarian view of history, culminating in an Age of the Holy Spirit characterised by the attainment of "[s]elf-conscious passionate individuality' (229).