

ÉIGSE: A JOURNAL OF IRISH STUDIES  
FOILSEACHÁIN 3 / *PUBLICATIONS 3*

# **DOUGLAS HYDE: IRISH IDEOLOGY AND INTERNATIONAL IMPACT**

Eagarthóirí / *Editors*  
LIAM MAC MATHÚNA  
MÁIRE NIC AN BHAIRD

OLLSCOIL NA hÉIREANN A D'FHOILSIGH  
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## DOUGLAS HYDE: IRISH IDEOLOGY AND INTERNATIONAL IMPACT

Drawing on the latest research on diaries, personal correspondence, memoir reflections and newspaper reports in library and State archives, this collection of essays by leading scholars on Douglas Hyde and the Irish language revival traces developments in the formulation and explication of Irish revival ideology. It also interrogates pivotal aspects of the revival movement's impact and influence as well as its interaction with the Irish diaspora and Celtic scholars in North America and Continental Europe.

Many of the essays are based on papers delivered at ACIS 2018, the Annual Meeting of the American Conference for Irish Studies, held at University College Cork, 18–22 June 2018.

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DOUGLAS HYDE'S INTELLECTUAL LINKS  
WITH JOHN QUINN, LADY GREGORY AND W. B. YEATS

*Introduction*

This paper examines some of the intellectual reach of the Gaelic League in the revival period, focusing in particular on the years 1898 to 1906. Lady Gregory's big house at Coole Park, near Gort, Co. Galway, served as the initial meeting place for her, Douglas Hyde, W. B. Yeats and the Irish-American financial lawyer John Quinn, who was based in New York. Building on the twin successes of the *Punch and Judy* show which Hyde and Norma Borthwick staged in Irish at the end of 1898 and the placing of a commemorative tombstone on the poet Anthony Raftery's grave in 1900, the early years of the twentieth century saw Coole Park serve as the locus for creative collaboration between Hyde, Gregory and Yeats. They worked together on some of Hyde's earliest plays, including *Casadh an tsúgáin* ('The twisting of the rope'), *Pleusgadh na bulgóide; or the bursting of the bubble* and *An tincéar agus an tsídheóg* ('The tinker and the fairy'), to which latter play George Moore also contributed. But it was the cultural discussions occasioned by the arrival of Jack B. Yeats and his friend John Quinn for the Killeeneen feis to be held beside Raftery's grave at the end of August 1902, which led to the intellectual cross-currents which prompted Quinn to organise highly successful coast-to-coast American tours for Yeats in 1903–4, and Hyde in 1905–6. Hyde's trip took him to the White House twice, as well as to over fifty cities and twelve universities throughout the United States. In all, he collected \$64,000 for the Gaelic League, a sum said to be equivalent to between one and a half million and two million dollars today. This paper seeks to provide an overview and concise analysis of Hyde's interaction with the other three important turn-of-the-century figures, and briefly assess the impact of this intellectual milieu on the policies and activities of the Gaelic League.

One of the characteristic features of any movement or organisation is the great variation in the commitment and involvement of its members and supporters. This is true not only of the roles they undertake, but of the length and depth of their engagement in different activities. To illustrate this, we may consider the case of some leading members of the Gaelic League in the three decades from its inception in 1893 until 1922. This period includes events such as the resignation of the League's founding President, Dr Douglas Hyde, in 1915 and the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. We may summarise the pattern of active involvement and roles of some of the most prominent activists in the organisation as follows:

- Douglas Hyde, 1893–1915 (co-founder, President)
- Eoin MacNeill, 1893–1909 (co-founder, honorary Secretary, editor, Vice-President, President), but with stretches of inactivity after 1902 or thereabouts, and of activity after 1915
- Seosamh Laoide, 1893–1915 (honorary Treasurer, editor)
- Patrick H. Pearse, 1898–1913 (editor)
- Tomás Bán Ó Concheanainn, 1899–1911 (organiser, chief organiser)
- Pádraig Ó Dálaigh, 1901–15 (General Secretary)
- Stiofán Bairéad, 1902–21 (Treasurer)
- Fionán Mac Coluim, 1902–22 (organiser, chief organiser)

All of these rather well-known figures would be closely, many of them indeed primarily, identified with the Gaelic League organisation itself. But there were others who were also well-known, some indeed famous, but whose active and direct participation in the language movement was confined to shorter periods and/or specific activities. This is true of the three people whose relationship to Douglas Hyde is discussed in this paper, *viz.* John Quinn (1870–1924), Irish-American financial lawyer and patron of the arts, Lady Augusta Gregory (1852–1932), founder of the Abbey Theatre and a prime mover in the Irish literary revival, and W. B. Yeats (1865–1939), pioneering poet and dramatist of the Irish literary revival. Quinn, Gregory and Yeats were all close friends of Hyde’s at the start of the twentieth century and their intellectual relationship with him played a significant part in the early development of the Gaelic League and its impact on public opinion. As noted already, it was John Quinn who organised Hyde’s highly successful American tour of 1905–6,<sup>1</sup> and despite a serious falling out over the riotous reception accorded Synge’s play, *The playboy of the western world*, by Clan na Gael supporters in the United States some years later, they maintained friendly contact until Quinn’s death in 1924. Lady Gregory kept an open house in her residence at Coole Park, Co. Galway, where she entertained writers and artists. Hyde paid his first visit there in 1897, performing with Miss Norma Borthwick in an Irish-language *Punch and Judy* show in December 1898. Hyde returned to Coole regularly on short visits for a number of years, and it was there that Lady Gregory translated many of his plays into English, and typed them up.

<sup>1</sup> Liam Mac Mathúna, Brian Ó Conchubhair, Niall Comer, Cuan Ó Seireadáin and Máire Nic an Bhaire (eds), *Douglas Hyde: my American journey*, Foreword by President Michael D. Higgins (Dublin 2019).



*W. B. Yeats*

We may first consider the links between W. B. Yeats and Douglas Hyde, as they go back farthest. Born in 1865, Yeats was five years Hyde's junior. The two got to know each other in the 1880s. Yeats is first mentioned in Hyde's diary entry for 2 June 1885.<sup>2</sup> Yeats recalls in his *Autobiographies* how he first met Hyde as an undergraduate at Trinity, and conveys a picture of a young man, who had become as one with his Frenchpark neighbours:

I have a memory of meeting in college rooms for the first time a very dark young man, who filled me with surprise, partly because he had pushed a snuffbox towards me, and partly because there was something about his vague serious eyes, as in his high cheekbones, that suggested a different civilization, a different race. I had set him down as a peasant, and wondered what brought him to a college, and to a Protestant college, but somebody explained that he belonged to some branch of the Hydys of Castle Hyde, and that he had a Protestant Rector for father. He had much frequented the company of old countrymen, and had so acquired the Irish language and his taste for snuff, and for moderate quantities of a detestable species of illegal whiskey distilled from the potato by certain of his neighbours. He had already – though intellectual Dublin knew nothing of it – considerable popularity as a Gaelic poet, mowers and reapers singing his songs from Donegal to Kerry.<sup>3</sup>

In his entry for 23 January 1887, Hyde tells how he and Yeats walked the four miles to the writer Katharine Tynan's house at Clondalkin on a Sunday afternoon.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Hyde was soon helping his younger friend,

<sup>2</sup> See National Library of Ireland (NLI) MS G 1040, image 89; cf. Dominic Daly, *The young Douglas Hyde* (Dublin 1974) 57. Hyde maintained a diary in Irish from 1874, when he was just fourteen, until 1912. This is in thirteen volumes, which are held in the National Library of Ireland as NLI MSS G 1036–48. They have been digitised and may be consulted online. For discussion of entries in the early diaries, see Máire Nic an Bhaire and Liam Mac Mathúna, 'Douglas Hyde (1860–1949): the adolescent behind the diarist', in Rebecca Anne Barr, Sarah-Anne Buckley and Muireann O' Cinneide (eds), *Literacy, language and reading in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Liverpool 2019) 28–50, and Máire Nic an Bhaire and Liam Mac Mathúna, 'Early diary insights into Roscommon's impact on Douglas Hyde, Ireland's first President', in Richie Farrell, Kieron O'Connor and Matthew Potter (eds), *Roscommon: history and society* (Dublin 2018) 515–37.

<sup>3</sup> William Butler Yeats, ed. Douglas N. Archibald and William H. O'Donnell, *The collected works of W. B. Yeats. Vol. III. Autobiographies* (New York 1999) 180–1.

<sup>4</sup> NLI MS G 1041, image 89; cf. Daly, *The young Douglas Hyde*, 87.

who was very interested in Ireland's native traditions and culture, but lacked competence in the Irish language. For instance, Hyde provided three stories in translation from the Irish for Yeats's *Fairy and folk tales of the Irish peasantry*, published by Walter Scott in 1888. Yeats acknowledges that one of these was the best tale in his collection.<sup>5</sup> He then observes that he believed he 'had something to do with the London publication of his [viz. Hyde's] *Beside the fire* [1890]' which he goes on to describe as 'a book written in the beautiful English of Connacht, which is Gaelic in idiom and Tudor in vocabulary, and, indeed, the first book to use it in the expression of emotion and romance, for Carleton and his school had turned it into farce'.<sup>6</sup> In his Introduction to *Fairy and folk tales of the Irish peasantry* Yeats thanks Hyde for 'valuable and valued assistance in several ways', and individual notes on Irish words and phrases acknowledge them as Hyde's.<sup>7</sup> However, Hyde tended to be somewhat wary of his younger colleague, even when they were both members of organisations such as the National Literary Society in the 1890s. At a personal level, he found Yeats's torrent of ideas, all delivered and expressed with supreme confidence, to be rather trying at times.

In recognition of his tact and demonstrated ability to keep the peace between the elderly Sir Charles Gavan Duffy (1816–1903), whose literary views and standards had been formed in the heyday of the Young Ireland movement in the 1840s, and the fiery young Yeats, who was brimming with up-to-the-minute ideas, Hyde was appointed President of the National Literary Society in August 1892. Yeats had actually been the prime mover in the establishment of this organisation,<sup>8</sup> which of course was also the body to which Hyde delivered his celebrated, ground-breaking lecture entitled 'The necessity for de-anglicising Ireland' on 25 November 1892. The friendship between Hyde and Yeats was quite close at this period. Hyde's diary records that he and Yeats travelled to Cork together on 23 January 1893:

Cuaidh mé go Corcaigh. le Yeats, leis an g-coiste 9.15. Bhí Cúnt Pluinneud 7 O Mathghamna ann rómhainn. Chuadhmar don tig osta Victória 7 bhí dinnéar againn 7 dá ghlaine maith puinnse agam-sa. Chuadhmar do'n chruinniughadh annsin do cuireadh ar bonn leis an gCumann Náisiúnta Litirdhea do chur ar agaidh. Bi Dini O Liatháin (Lane) ann san gcáthaoir 7 rinne seisean caint i

<sup>5</sup> Yeats, *Autobiographies*, 181.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Daly, *The young Douglas Hyde*, 129.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* 153–4.

dtosach ag léigheadh o sgríbhinn. Labhair mise ann sin go rígh-mhaith. Thainig Yeats am' dhiaigh-se 7 an Cúnt 'nna ndiaigh-ne. Bhí timcioll 150 duinne ann 7 lucht-ionaid gach cumann litirdhea i gCorcaigh mar aon. ...<sup>9</sup>

'I went to Cork with Yeats on the 9.15 coach-train. Count Plunkett and O'Mahoney were there before us. We went to the Victoria Hotel where we had dinner and I had two good glasses of punch. Then we went to the meeting which had been arranged to promote the National Literary Society. Dinny Lane was in the chair and he spoke first, reading from a script. I then spoke and did so very well. Yeats spoke after me, and the Count after us. There were about 150 people present, including representatives of every literary society in Cork.'<sup>10</sup>

This is an interesting illustration of the wide public interest in national cultural matters at the time and is indicative of the latent reservoir of support which was available to be tapped by an organisation such as the Gaelic League, founded in Dublin just six months later. We also know that Yeats stayed at Hyde's home, Ratra House, Frenchpark, Co. Roscommon, 13 April–1 May 1895.<sup>11</sup>

When Yeats and Lady Gregory met Hyde at Coole Park at the start of the new century, they encouraged him to compose plays in Irish, and helped him in his endeavours by providing plot lines and cordial critical appraisal. Indeed, the full extent of the input which Yeats had into the plot of Hyde's first play, *Casadh an tsúgáin*, 'The twisting of the rope', is not widely appreciated. A number of entries in Hyde's diary throw light on the extent of the collaboration involved:

*28 August 1900*

Cuir Yeats ag sgríobhadh drama mé ar casadh an tsugáin 7 sgríobhas cuid mhór dhé ón scenario do tarraing seisean amach dam.

'Yeats set me to writing a play on "The twisting of the rope", and I wrote a good part of it from the scenario he drew out for me.'

<sup>9</sup> NLI MS G 1044, image 6. The orthography here and elsewhere is that of the original diary.

<sup>10</sup> Translations are by the author, unless otherwise stated. Cf. Daly, *The young Douglas Hyde*, 160.

<sup>11</sup> See notes to Yeats, *Autobiographies*, 466. The visit is also recorded in Hyde's diary, volume NLI MS G 1044, images 66–7.

29 August 1900

Ag críochnughad Casadh an tSúgáin. Tuirseach 7 rud beag tinn. Thug Laedi Gregory buideál seampaén dam ag dinéar.

‘Finishing “The twisting of the rope”. Tired and a bit sick. Lady Gregory gave me a bottle of champagne at dinner.’

30 August 1900

Táinig an Mairtíneach chum dinéir 7 léigh mé Casadh an tsugáin dó andé 7 bhí sé lán-shásta.

‘Martyn<sup>12</sup> came to dinner and I read “The twisting of the rope” to him yesterday and he was fully satisfied with it.’

31 August 1900

Léigh mé casadh an tsugáin andé 7 andiú don bhainteargna 7 do chló-sgríobh sí é om’ bhéal i mBéarla. Lá breágh. biseach orm. sgríobhas cuid de drama beag eile.

‘I read “The twisting of the rope” to Lady Gregory yesterday and today and she typed it in English from my dictation. A fine day. I was better. I wrote part of another little play.’<sup>13</sup>

Yeats had an active, if somewhat faltering, connection with the Gaelic League at the turn of the century, although the stresses which would soon see the language movement and the literary revival take separate paths are set out by Roy Foster in an account of some events in the second half of 1901:

Cultural enterprises continued to spark into life in Dublin, but WBY [W. B. Yeats], who was becoming worried at Gaelic League zealots causing trouble in literary organizations, preferred to stay at Coole. A letter he sent to D. P. Moran’s new journal the *Leader* on 26 August effectively argued against the pure Fenian line in cultural matters, and provided a self-defence against the continuing campaign waged against his ‘West-Britonism’ in the columns of *An Claidheamh Soluis*. When he did venture to Dublin in October

<sup>12</sup> Edward Martyn of Tulira Castle, Ardahan, Co. Galway was a playwright and leading personality of the Irish literary revival. He had introduced Lady Gregory and Yeats to each other at his home in 1896.

<sup>13</sup> NLI MS G 1045, from images 131–2; also detailed in Daly, *The young Douglas Hyde*, 135.

to preside at a Gaelic League concert in the Gresham Hotel, he trod very carefully indeed and obviously bore in mind the rancour aroused by Leaguers in the National Literary Society. After a programme that included Moore's *Melodies* as well as step-dancing, WBY spoke in English on the Irish language. 'It was no use disguising from themselves that they had now going on in Ireland a war of civilisation, and upon that war not only did the issue of Irish Nationality hang, but the very greatest issues that a man could concern himself with.' He moved on to attack English commercialism and vulgarity, and to call for a new Irish dramatic movement: short plays in Irish, without scenery, played all over Ireland 'in barns'. 'They should revive the old Irish drama' (an undefined concept).<sup>14</sup>

Nor is there any doubt but that Yeats had the utmost regard for Hyde's English-language renderings of Irish folktales and songs. Writing in 1902, Yeats recalled his first reading of *Love songs of Connacht*, initially published in book form in 1893:

The prose parts of that book were to me, as they were to many others, the coming of a new power into literature. I find myself now, as I found myself then, grudging to propaganda, to scholarship, to oratory, however necessary, a genius which might in modern Irish or in that idiom of the English-speaking country people discover a new region for the mind to wander in.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, although Yeats thought highly of Hyde's literary abilities, he always felt – and regretted – that the public man, *engagé* in current affairs, had relegated these qualities to a subsidiary place, as Daly observed:

Ceaseless travel, speechmaking and pamphleteering made it impossible for him to find time, as Yeats would have him do, 'for the making of translations, loving and leisurely, like those in *Beside the Fire* and the *Love Songs of Connacht*.' Henceforth for Yeats, he was 'the great poet who died in his youth'.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A life. I: The apprentice mage 1865–1914* (Oxford and New York 1998 [1997]) 235.

<sup>15</sup> W. B. Yeats, *Samhain*, 1902, reprinted in Mrs. W. B. Yeats, *Explorations: W. B. Yeats* (New York 1962) 93.

<sup>16</sup> Daly, *The young Douglas Hyde*, 136.

Recalling how he and Lady Gregory gave Hyde scenarios for plays, Yeats contrasts the difficulty he had in wresting poetry from words with the ease with which Hyde seemed to compose:

In later years Lady Gregory and I gave Hyde other scenarios and I always watched him with astonishment. ... When I wrote verse, five or six lines in two or three laborious hours were a day's work, and I longed for somebody to interrupt me; but he wrote all day, whether in verse or prose, and without apparent effort. Effort was there, but in the unconscious.<sup>17</sup>

However, Hyde's companions saw to it that he got a break from his writing:

Lady Gregory kept watch, to draw him from his table after so many hours; the gamekeeper had the boat and the guns ready; there were ducks upon the lake. He wrote in joy and at great speed because emotion brought the appropriate word. Nothing in that language of his was abstract, nothing worn-out; he need not, as must the writer of some language exhausted by modern civilization, reject word after word, cadence after cadence, he had escaped our perpetual, painful, purification.<sup>18</sup>

However, the underlying truth may well have been that Yeats was always a little in awe of, and probably somewhat envious of Hyde's easy way with people, with individuals, and perhaps more particularly, with 'the people', as a collective, when they congregated before him in crowds, or when he addressed them as a virtual or imagined community through print. A decade or so later, in 1912, Yeats confronted the question of the Abbey's unpopularity in verse, publishing 'At the Abbey Theatre' in the *Irish Review*. This poem was a direct challenge to Hyde, addressing him by his well-known pseudonym 'An Craoibhín Aoibhinn' ('The Pleasant Little Branch', here with the spelling *Aoibhin*, an orthographic by-form of the adjective) to explain why the theatre could put on nothing that pleased the Dublin audience, and implying that Hyde himself knew how to manipulate popularity.

<sup>17</sup> Yeats, *Autobiographies*, 324–5.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.* 325.

DEAR Craoibhin Aoibhin, look into our case.  
When we are high and airy, hundreds say  
That if we hold that flight they'll leave the place,  
While those same hundreds mock another day  
Because we have made our art of common things,  
So bitterly, you'd dream they longed to look  
All their lives through into some drift of wings.  
You've dandled them and fed them from the book  
And know them to the bone; impart to us –  
We'll keep the secret – a new trick to please.  
Is there a bridle for this Proteus  
That turns and changes like his draughty seas?  
Or is there none, most popular of men,  
But, when they mock us that we mock again?

As it happened, Hyde revelled in such calls to public debate and adroit as ever, happily responded smoothly in verse, claiming that he thought as one with the Irish people, while Yeats 'bewildered' them:

A narrower cult but broader art is mine,  
Your wizard fingers strike a hundred strings  
Bewildering with multitudinous things,  
Whilst all our offerings are at one shrine.  
Therefore we step together. Small the art  
To keep one pace where men are one at heart.<sup>19</sup>

In fact, Yeats himself conceded as much, saying of Hyde: 'He had the folk mind as no modern man has had it, its qualities and its defects.'<sup>20</sup>

Hyde's 1905–6 American tour retraced much of the journey Yeats had undertaken just over two years previously. On 16 December 1905 Hyde wrote to Yeats, passing on a cheque for £77 due to him for his talks in California. Reporting positively on his own endeavours, Hyde assured Yeats that he was also furthering the cause of the national theatre and that the poet himself was fondly remembered: 'I have been working very hard since I came here, speaking at either four or five meetings every week, generally for nearly an hour and a half. I think I have persuaded

<sup>19</sup> See Foster, *A life*, 455, for discussion of the verse dialogue. For the texts themselves see *Irish Review* (Dec. 1912) 505 and (Jan. 1913) 561.

<sup>20</sup> Yeats, *Autobiographies*, 324. Seán Ó Ríordáin in his diaries quoted this intriguingly apposite assessment of Hyde. I am grateful to Dr Pádraig Ó Liatháin, who is working on Ó Ríordáin's diaries, for this reference.

everybody I spoke to of the necessity for our movement. Many people have inquired lovingly about you, especially at the young ladies colleges, and I am sure everyone will be glad to see you again if you come out next year. I have said all the good I could think of about the theatre.’<sup>21</sup> In doing this, Hyde was reciprocating the effort Yeats had put into informing his own American audiences, two years earlier, about Hyde and his work. This is a point made forcefully by Quinn himself in a letter to Yeats dated 13 July 1906, written a few weeks after Hyde’s return to Ireland. Quinn was in retrospective mode at the time, reviewing the bigger picture and surveying the tours he had organised for Yeats and Hyde. He assured Yeats: ‘You did more to make him [*viz.* Hyde] known here than anyone else and I finished the job that you began. You did it generously and Hyde should never forget it. ... Outside of the Irish Societies he was almost unknown here a year ago except to some Irish, who weren’t numerous enough to make up a corporal’s guard. Today he is almost an international figure.’ Quinn had achieved what he set out to do when he envisioned the tours for both Yeats and Hyde: ‘You and Hyde have done more for the elevation of the Irish in this country and for the increasing respect with which Irish ideals and aspirations are regarded in this country than any other two men of your day and generation. The people were getting tired of mere politicians, whose sole stock in trade consisted of abuse of Englishmen and promises of the good things they were going to do.’<sup>22</sup>

### *Lady Augusta Gregory*

Lady Gregory was introduced to Yeats by Edward Martyn at his residence, Tulira Castle, Co. Galway in 1896, at a time when she was becoming increasingly interested in the Irish literary revival. Ironically, although Yeats himself never progressed beyond the elementary stage in learning Irish, Lady Gregory’s acquaintance with the young poet and her increasing familiarity with his writings were major impulses for her own, more successful, efforts to acquire the language. While she never quite mastered the skills of understanding and speaking the oral language, Lady Gregory did achieve considerable competence in the written word. She also had a growing appreciation of the richness of the folklore still to be found among the country people living about her in the west of Ireland. In addition, she was increasingly influenced by the ideas being promulgated by Dr Douglas Hyde, both by way of speeches

<sup>21</sup> NLI MS 18,253/2/5.

<sup>22</sup> Alan Hember, *The letters of John Quinn to William Butler Yeats* (Ann Arbor, Michigan 1983) 76–80.



reiterating the thrust of his 1892 de-anglicisation lecture, and through the dynamic activities of the Gaelic League. Further, more personal, motivation came from the interest in learning the language expressed by her son Robert, about the time of his sixteenth birthday in May 1897. Like most others of the period, Lady Gregory depended on Fr Eugene O'Growney's *Simple lessons in Irish* to guide her in learning the language. Although the more immediate appeal of hunting was soon to divert Robert from language learning, his mother worked her way through the exercises, checking the pronunciation with Mike Dooley, one of her tenants. When she travelled to London in autumn of that year, she made contact with Norma Borthwick of the Southwark Irish Literary Society, a pioneering Gaelic group, and arranged for a series of lessons.<sup>23</sup>

It was also at Tulira, in the summer of 1897, that Gregory first met Hyde. Her biographer, Judith Hill, tells us that 'she was immediately attracted to his enthusiasm, his sensitivity to the nuances of the language and the way he was haunted by the fragility of the dying oral culture'.<sup>24</sup> Hyde was already on the trail of Anthony Raftery, the early nineteenth-century itinerant poet, whose work he was to edit and publish in 1903. Hyde's first note to Lady Gregory was dated 19 August 1897 and expressed his regret at not being able to accept her invitation to Coole Park, for he had always heard that 'Gort abounded in shanachies and in correct Gaelic', and 'he was very sorry to miss this opportunity of proving it'.<sup>25</sup> But he was able to visit her soon afterwards, and Lady Gregory's diary for Sept.–Oct. 1897 includes the following entry:

And Dr. Douglas Hyde came – full of enthusiasm & Irish – I took him & Sharp to the cromlech & to Kilmacduagh – & he began talking Irish to Fahy, near Cranagh – who to my pride came out with legends of Finn & Ussian galore – I was able to help Dr. Hyde

<sup>23</sup> Judith Hill, *Lady Gregory: an Irish life* (Cork 2011) 180. As part of the group's new and lively desire to learn Irish, and evidently to further the young Robert's interest in the language, Edward Martyn presented him with a copy of Bedell's Old Testament in Irish, *Leabhair an tsean Tiomna*, printed in Dublin by Grierson and Keene in 1827, dedicating it (on the top half of a page) 'To Robert Gregory / from / Edward Martyn / Tillyra Castle. / 9 September 1897'. Following Robert's tragic death, piloting a plane in the Great War early in 1918, Lady Gregory returned the book to Martyn, with this touching message inscribed on the lower half of the same leaf: 'Returned to Edward Martyn / in memory of Robert Gregory / killed in action Jan 23.1918. / A. Gregory'. This volume is now held in the Edward Martyn Library, which is attached to St Teresa's Church, Clarendon Street, Dublin.

<sup>24</sup> Hill, *Lady Gregory*, 181.

<sup>25</sup> Janet Egleson Dunleavy and Gareth W. Dunleavy, *Douglas Hyde: a maker of modern Ireland* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford 1991) 132.

to get some MS from ‘one Connor’, who had left there for Galway a year ago, & who I finally traced to a butcher’s shop in Clare[n]bridge – but whether they are worth anything I know not.<sup>26</sup>

Gregory’s introductory highlighting of Hyde’s enthusiasm is noteworthy. This fervour with regard to the revival of the spoken language and his scholarly engagement with the collection of folklore and study of the language’s literature were characteristic of the man, and hallmarks of his personality: they impacted positively on almost everyone he met throughout his long life. While Lady Gregory and Hyde helped each other generally in a variety of ways, they collaborated closely in two particular areas, namely, the creation of original drama in Irish and the promotion of Raftery’s memory.

Fired by Hyde’s zeal, Lady Gregory helped him to source oral renderings and manuscript copies of Raftery’s poems. She took the initiative in locating Raftery’s grave in Killeeneen cemetery, near Craughwell in east Galway, and in raising funds for the placing of a memorial stone on the spot. Inspired by her comparison with the Greek epic poet Homer, the inscription she chose was a simple one, consisting only of the poet’s surname. A year earlier, in an article in *An Claidheamh Soluis* (16 September 1899), Tomás Ó Concheanainn, the first Gaelic League *timire* or organiser, described a conversation at Coole where Lady Gregory said it was a pity that there was no stone to mark Raftery’s grave.<sup>27</sup> Lady Gregory’s article ‘Raftery, the poet of the poor’, written at Hyde’s suggestion for *An Claidheamh Soluis* (14 October 1899), was an appeal for subscriptions for Raftery’s stone; it also included some stories about Raftery and a verse of his, which was later printed by Hyde in *The religious songs of Connacht*. As it happened, however, Lady Gregory herself paid for most of the cost of the stone – a high stone with a single word ‘Raftery’ – that was unveiled and blessed at a Gaelic League feis in Killeeneen, County Galway, on 26 August 1900.<sup>28</sup>

Importantly, Hyde was more understanding of the ideals of Lady Gregory and the other leaders of the Irish literary revival than some of

<sup>26</sup> James Pethica (ed.), *Lady Gregory’s diaries 1892–1902* (Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire 1996) 154. In footnote 145 the editor observes: ‘In a letter of 23 October 1897 to Hyde, AG [Augusta Gregory] mentions obtaining this manuscript from “one Connolly” (NLI). It appears not to have contained significant material since Hyde fails to mention it as a source in his publications, though he cites other material AG provided.’

<sup>27</sup> Tomás Ua Concheanainn, ‘Anonn agus anall’, *An Claidheamh Soluis* (16 Seacht-mhí, 1899) 419–21.

<sup>28</sup> Murphy, Maureen, ‘Lady Gregory and the Gaelic League’. In Ann Saddlemeier and Colin Smythe (eds), *Lady Gregory, fifty years after* (Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire and Totowa, N. J. 1987) 143–62 (at 151).

his colleagues in the Gaelic League, including Eoin MacNeill and Patrick Pearse, whose ideological antagonism towards the concept of a national Irish literature in the English language was bolstered by Fr Peter Yorke's 'The turning of the tide' lecture in Dublin on 6 September 1899. Already in April 1899 Hyde had written to Lady Gregory of his annoyance that the Gaelic League's newspaper seemed to oppose the idea of anything Irish in English – for example, the Literary Theatre. Fearing that his ally at Coole might be alienated because of sniping at her theatre in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, on 7 May 1899 Hyde wrote quite a firm letter in Irish to its first editor and his long-time friend, Eoin MacNeill:

I beseech you please to say nothing in *Claidheamh* against the Literary Theatre. Many of our friends, especially Lady Gregory are on the Executive Committee, so don't go against them. ... They are not enemies to us. They are a halfway house. They wanted, and did their best to do *Oisín* and *Padraig* in Irish, at the same time, in the theatre.

Hyde wrote that neither they, nor George Sigerson's group,<sup>29</sup> another 'halfway house', should be condemned.<sup>30</sup> The viewpoint of the anti-Literary Theatre element in the Gaelic League was expressed by P. H. Pearse in a letter to MacNeill as editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis*, 13 May 1899: 'The Irish Literary Theatre is in my opinion more dangerous, because glaringly anti-national, than Trinity College. If we once admit the Irish literature in English idea, then the language movement is a mistake. ... Let us strangle it at its birth.' However, by 1905 Pearse himself was speaking well of Lady Gregory's plays, although others still held to the ideas he had expressed previously.<sup>31</sup>

The first steps with regard to drama in Irish were taken during Hyde's Christmas visit to Coole in 1898. He and Miss Norma Borthwick gave a *Punch and Judy* show in Irish for local children at St Colman's Hall in Gort. This was an unqualified success and inspired Lady Gregory to urge Hyde to write an Irish play for a Dublin audience. She dated the beginning of a drama in Irish to that event:

<sup>29</sup> This was the National Literary Society.

<sup>30</sup> Gareth W. Dunleavy, 'The pattern of three threads: the Hyde-Gregory friendship', in Saddlemyer and Smyth, *Lady Gregory, fifty years after*, 131–42 (at 134–5). For the letter in question, which is in Irish, see NLI MS 10,874/9/9, Douglas Hyde to Eoin MacNeill, 7 May 1899.

<sup>31</sup> Dunleavy, 'The patterns of three threads', n. 17 on p. 411.

I hold that the beginning of modern Irish drama was in the winter of 1898, at a school feast at Coole, when Douglas Hyde and Miss Norma Borthwick acted in Irish in a Punch and Judy Show, and the delighted children went back to tell their parents what a grand curse An Craibhin had put on the baby and the policeman.<sup>32</sup>

These two projects concerning Raftery and drama in Irish formed a natural part of wider collaboration between Hyde and Lady Gregory. For instance, Lady Gregory was actively involved in the preparations for the first meeting of the Kiltartan Branch of the Gaelic League which took place at Kiltartan School on 9 January 1899, with her friend Father Fahey, Gort's Irish-speaking parish priest, in the chair. Hyde spoke in Irish, which Lady Gregory confessed she didn't understand, and in English. She felt that his remark, 'Let English go their road and let us go ours and God forbid their road should ever be ours' was too political.<sup>33</sup>

When Lady Gregory returned to London in spring 1900 she translated some of Hyde's poems from Irish, translations which Yeats read one evening to Mark Twain and to Mrs Clemens.<sup>34</sup> Hyde's reaction pleased her and she was proud of her growing ability to read Irish. He wrote to her on 5 June 1900, saying: 'I had no idea that you had translated anything like so many, or that you would have been able to translate them anything like so well'.<sup>35</sup> He then invited her to write the preface to his book of Raftery poems, and asked her to give Yeats a Gaelic League button, which he enclosed with the letter: 'Please give it him from me. I hope he'll wear it. It will be a talisman against the *banditti* of the League.'<sup>36</sup> This was almost certainly the same button which Fr O'Growney had enclosed for Yeats in a letter he sent to Hyde in 1899, in which he wrote the following note at the top of the first page: *Cnaipe do Yeats agus / do'n Athair O'Fathaigh san nGort.* ('A button for Yeats and for Fr Fahey in Gort.') The letter, in Irish, was sent from Sisters' Hospital, Los Angeles, Cal., dated *Ochtmhí* ['October'] 7/1899 and signed Eoghan O Gramhna.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Lady Gregory, with a foreword by T. R. Henn, *Poets and dreamers: studies and translations from the Irish by Lady Gregory including nine plays by Douglas Hyde* (Gerrards Cross, Bucks. 1974) 136.

<sup>33</sup> Murphy, 'Lady Gregory and the Gaelic League', 146.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.* 147.

<sup>35</sup> Dunleavy, 'The pattern of three threads', 135.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* The letter is dated September 1900, no specific day being cited.

<sup>37</sup> The letter quoted from here was donated to the UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore by Mrs Mary Sealy, December 2013.

When Hyde came to Coole for the shooting just after Christmas 1900, Lady Gregory showed him her translations of some of the early Irish saga tales. However, Hyde regarded the colloquial style as inappropriate.<sup>38</sup> He thought that the translating was really work for a scholar and disliked her practice of combining different versions in order to form a single narrative. However, she only wanted his approval, which he gave, and was not put out by his misgivings.<sup>39</sup> He continued to be doubtful and vaguely discouraging: 'I do think you are plucky to tackle the great cycle ... It is more difficult than it seems at first sight,' he wrote in March. But by May he was persuaded and enthusiastic: 'I am rejoiced to hear you have progressed so far with your Tain series. You are really wonderful. I shall be ever so curious to know and see what you have done.'<sup>40</sup> After that he gave her manuscripts, information on other scholars' work, and helped her with some of the translations.<sup>41</sup>

In another effort to advance the work of general, non-political, nationalist forces in Ireland Lady Gregory edited *Ideals in Ireland*, a collection of essays by 'A. E.', D. P. Moran, George Moore, Douglas Hyde, Standish O'Grady and W. B. Yeats, which was published in 1901. Standish O'Grady's 'The great enchantment' was the only contribution not concerned at some level with the Irish language and/or the Gaelic League. Notwithstanding the fact that Lady Gregory did not contribute an essay herself, her hand is clear in her selection, in her Introduction, and in her translation of Hyde's two essays and some of Raftery's work for Yeats's 'The literary movement in Ireland'. Significantly, not only was Hyde author of two of the essays, rather than the customary one, but the high esteem in which Lady Gregory held the President of the Gaelic League found direct expression in her Prologue, where she observed: 'Douglas Hyde, our Craoibhin Aoibhin, stooped down to make an earthenware candlestick, but when he lifted his head he knew it was not a candle he had lighted, but a star he had discovered, and is now lighting up all the western sky.'<sup>42</sup> Lady Gregory gave the Gaelic

<sup>38</sup> Pethica, *Lady Gregory's diaries*, p. 293; cf. Hill, *Lady Gregory*, 226-7.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Douglas Hyde to Lady Gregory, 13 March 1901 and 1 May 1901: see Pethica, *Lady Gregory's diaries*, 293.

<sup>41</sup> Lady Gregory to Wilfred Scawen Blunt, 7 April 1902: see Pethica, *Lady Gregory's diaries*, 293. Cf. Hill, *Lady Gregory*, 226-7.

<sup>42</sup> Lady Gregory (ed.), *Ideals in Ireland* (London 1901). Further evidence of the high regard in which she held Hyde is to be seen in the fact that he was author of one of the three literary pieces quoted by way of prelude to the book proper, the other two being Walt Whitman and Turguénieff (Turgenev). The following is the quatrain composed by 'An Craoibhin Aoibhin':

League the royalties for *Ideals in Ireland* and she also suggested to Yeats that the proceeds from the Spring 1901 issue of *Beltaine*, the occasional journal of the Irish Literary Theatre, should be given to the League as well. Yeats not only agreed, but decided that *Beltaine* should be 'A Gaelic propaganda paper this time'. *Beltaine* was in fact succeeded by *Samhain* but its profits for the October 1901 issue were donated to the League.<sup>43</sup>

Hyde stayed at Coole after the Gaelic League feis at Killeeneen in 1900. While there, Lady Gregory and Yeats set him to writing a play in Irish which might be produced by the Gaelic League: 'We thought at our first start it would make the whole movement more living and bring it closer to the people if the Gaelic League would put on some plays written in Irish.'<sup>44</sup> While Hyde, Yeats and Lady Gregory all agree that Yeats provided a scenario based on his Red Hanrahan story, 'The twisting of the rope', from *The secret rose* (1897), Hyde was of course familiar with the basic idea of the twisting of a straw rope to get rid of an unwanted suitor. He had already described it in the note to his version of *An súisín bán* ('The white coverlet') in *Love songs of Connacht* (1893). Although Hyde did not use the words of this song in his play, another of the songs, *Tadhg agus Máire* ('Teig and Mary'), may have inspired dialogues spoken by Una and Hanrahan in the play.<sup>45</sup>

As well as collaborating actively with Hyde on the plots of his plays, Lady Gregory translated them into English. Some of Hyde's plays were actually first published, with translation by Lady Gregory, in *Samhain*, the literary journal founded by Yeats. Among these were *Casadh an tsúgáin* in October 1901, *An naomh ar iarraidh* ('The missing saint') in October 1902 and *Teach na mbocht* ('The poorhouse') in October 1903. The last mentioned, originally scripted in collaboration with Lady Gregory, was rewritten by her as *The workhouse ward* (1909). *An tincéar agus an tsidheóg* ('The tinker and the fairy') first appeared in the *New Ireland Review*, May 1902; *Pléusgadh na bulgóide* ('The bursting of the bubble'), a good-natured, if biting, satire on Trinity College Dublin, in

Ní rachaidh mise go bráth ar gcúl,  
Má's éigin bheith umhal duit, is mór mo leun,  
Muna dtig liom siubhal, muna dtig liom siubhal,  
Muna dtig liom siubhal ar mo pháirc féin.

<sup>43</sup> See Murphy, 'Lady Gregory and the Gaelic League', 150–1.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted from Lady Gregory, *Our Irish theatre* (1972) 54, in Murphy, 'Lady Gregory and the Gaelic League', 153.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

the same *Review*, May 1903;<sup>46</sup> *An cleamhnas* ('The matchmaking') appeared in *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge / The Gaelic Journal*, in December 1903. All were afterwards published individually.<sup>47</sup> Lady Gregory also translated *Rígh Séumas* ('King James'), and *Maistín an Bhéarla* ('The mastiff of the English language').<sup>48</sup> Hyde's practice of interweaving work and play is neatly illustrated by the following observation recorded by Lady Gregory in *Poets and dreamers*:

'The Lost Saint' was written last summer. *An Craoibhin* was staying with us at Coole; and one morning I went for a long drive to the sea, leaving him with a bundle of blank paper before him. When I came back at evening, I was told that Dr. Hyde had finished his play, and was out shooting wild duck. The hymn however, was not quite ready, and was put into rhyme next day, while he was again watching for wild duck beside Inchy marsh.<sup>49</sup>

When the time came for Hyde to set out on his lecturing and fundraising tour of America, 1905–6, he was honoured with a great municipal reception consisting of speeches, toasts and well-wishes in the Gresham Hotel, Dublin, on 6 November 1905. Yeats had agreed that Lady Gregory should present Hyde with flowers on behalf of the Irish National Theatre Society, of which he had once been Vice-President. Less than three weeks later, on Saturday, 25 November, Hyde journeyed together with John Quinn to Washington D. C., having been invited to the White House to dine with President Theodore Roosevelt. The President proved to be very knowledgeable about both Irish and Norse mythology and was able to draw comparisons between them. Indeed, Roosevelt told his visitors that he had been brought up by Irish nurses and that Cú Chulainn and Fionn Mac Cumhaill had been familiar and vivid figures to him before he ever saw their names in literature. In a letter he wrote to Lady Gregory just four days later, Hyde was able to tell her of the President's high regard for her work: '... and on Saturday to lunch with President Roosevelt, who spoke so nicely about your work

<sup>46</sup> See Liam Mac Mathúna, 'Na róil a bhí ag an gCraoibhín Aoihbhinn, an Géagán Glas agus "G. G." i gcumadh *Pleusgadh na bulgóide; or The bursting of the bubble* (1903)', in Éadaoin Ní Mhuircheartaigh, Róisín Ní Ghairbhí and Pádraig Ó Liatháin, *Ó Chleamairí go ceamairí: drámaíocht agus taibhealaíona na Gaeilge faoi chaibidil* (Baile Átha Cliath 2021) 19–33.

<sup>47</sup> See Daly, *Young Douglas Hyde*, 216–17. Later in the 1930s, new editions, in Irish only, were published by An Gúm in the new independent state.

<sup>48</sup> See Murphy, 'Lady Gregory and the Gaelic League', 154.

<sup>49</sup> *Poets and dreamers* (1974) 137–8.

and the Irish sagas in general. It was a delightful experience meeting him. There was nobody there except himself and his own family and Mr. Quinn and myself.<sup>50</sup>

After quite a long period of regular contact and interaction, involving visits to Coole and frequent correspondence, Lady Gregory and Hyde became increasingly preoccupied with the demands of their respective, separate commitments, as Maureen Murphy notes. She goes on to observe:

Their correspondence fell off in 1905 and was irregular after that until the 1911 Abbey tour to America when Hyde, pressured by Clan na Gael threats to cut off American financial support to the Gaelic League, cabled a short statement from Dublin, affirming that there was absolutely no connection between the Abbey and the League. Strictly speaking, he was quite correct, but Lady Gregory saw it as an act of gratuitous disloyalty.<sup>51</sup>

However, their old relationship was still evident in a long letter Lady Gregory received from Hyde, which was written on 14 July 1910. In this he shared his greatest triumph with his old friend, describing the scene as the University Senate, by a narrow majority, decided that Irish should form an essential part of the university curriculum – indeed, should be a requirement for matriculation. ‘It is the greatest blow ever struck for the recovery of our nationality, and it is bound to profoundly affect the country.’<sup>52</sup>

But, of course, this predated the *Playboy* row and their serious falling out over the Abbey Theatre’s tour of Synge’s play in America, 1911–12. The protests and disturbances by Clan na Gael members which the play provoked were adversely affecting the fundraising tour of the States being undertaken at the same time by Shane Leslie and Fr Micheál

<sup>50</sup> Letter from Douglas Hyde to Lady Gregory, dated 29 November 1905, NLI MS 18,253/2/3. Indeed, we know from an earlier letter of Roosevelt’s, also held in the National Library of Ireland, that his book collection included both Lady Gregory’s work on the Cú Chulainn sagas and Hyde’s *Literary history of Ireland*: ‘My dear Mr. Gill: I thank you very much for the Cucullain Saga. I had ordered it myself, and now have canceled the order and have ordered Douglas Hyde’s “A Literary History of Ireland.”’ (Typewritten letter from Theodore Roosevelt (signed), Oyster Bay, N. Y., on WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON notepaper, to Mr. T. P. Gill, 51 west Forty-eighth Street, New York, N.Y., September 22, 1903; NLI MS 48,522). Gill was a journalist, politician and secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction; see s.v. Gill, Thomas Patrick in [www.dib.ie](http://www.dib.ie).

<sup>51</sup> Murphy, ‘Lady Gregory and the Gaelic League’, 155.

<sup>52</sup> Hyde to Gregory, 14 July 1910. See Dunleavy, ‘The pattern of three threads’, 140.



Ó Flannagáin (O'Flanagan) on behalf of the League. While not explicitly stating as much themselves, the Abbey group were happy for people to infer that the Gaelic League supported the play. Eventually in exasperation, John Devoy, head of Clan na Gael, and editor of *The Gaelic American* asked Hyde to issue an official denial that the League was associated with the Abbey. Hyde immediately did so, not once, but twice – the second telegram also sent at Devoy's request, as he had felt that the first one was not strong enough. Lady Gregory and John Quinn were both incensed. Hill observes: 'Quinn was furious, only too aware that the withdrawing of League support would strengthen their enemies. Augusta, however, did not doubt Hyde's personal support, speculating to Yeats that Devoy must have lied to him to make him repudiate them; in fact, he had not distanced the League enough for Devoy.'<sup>53</sup> Augusta wrote to Hyde, sadly and tactfully: 'Oh Craoibhin, what are these wounds with which we are wounded in the houses of our friends? ... We are fighting your battle if you did but know it, and the battle of all who want to live and breathe.'<sup>54</sup> Hyde wrote in response: 'I am sorry you minded my wire.' It was sent, he explained, in 'answer to two insistent cables in two consecutive days, demanding repudiation of connection with the Players, cabled by our own delegates. ... I might have said much more, but you yourself will acknowledge I could not have said less.'<sup>55</sup>

The matter of the cable continued to interpose itself in their correspondence. In May 1912 Hyde wrote to Lady Gregory: 'As you know, there is nobody in Ireland whose interests I would consult more than your own, if I could without harm to the Gaelic League.'<sup>56</sup> In an undated letter, probably written in May 1912, Lady Gregory sought to reassure Hyde: 'Yes, indeed, you would not willingly have done anything to hurt us, and I have always said you did what you believed best for the interest of the League...'<sup>57</sup> So, as Hill comments, 'undeniably the Gaelic League was forcing Hyde into a different set of allegiances and the episode remained an issue between them for some time'.<sup>58</sup> Although Murphy notes that among Gregory's papers are two letters from Hyde, written six months apart, trying to explain his position to her, it appeared to Murphy that Gregory never completely forgave

<sup>53</sup> Hill, *Lady Gregory*, 379.

<sup>54</sup> Dunleavy, 'The pattern of three threads', 141.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.* 141, 412.

<sup>58</sup> Hill, *Lady Gregory*, 379.

him.<sup>59</sup> Dunleavy commented that it was ‘curious, but perhaps indicative of the still cool relationship between them, that he did not inform his comrade of nearly twenty years of his departure from the League until December 1915.’<sup>60</sup> This was in a letter, enclosing his latest book, which was addressed to Lady Gregory at Coole Park, Gort, Co. Galway. She had evidently been in New York for an extended period. The tentative nature of the letter confirms that they had indeed drifted apart and were no longer in regular contact:

A Bhaintighearna dhílis<sup>61</sup>

I am sending you another little book.<sup>62</sup> I would have sent it before but I knew you were away. I do not know if you are home yet, but I suppose you are. I heard the other day that Robert had been ill and in hospital. I never knew until he had gone away again or I would have called to see him. I hope he is quite well again now.

I am no longer President of the Gaelic League. I kept them together for 22 years, but the war was too much for me! I shall tell you about it when I see you!

With all good wishes for Christmas

Mise do chara buídhreach

An Craoibhín

I hope you left John Quinn well. I suppose you saw him when in New York.<sup>63</sup>

However, shared personal tragedy was to bring them closer together again a few years later. In a letter of October 1916 Hyde thanked Augusta Gregory for her note on the death of his daughter Nuala. He described her death and funeral, and concluded, ‘What a dreadful year this has been both public and private. Ireland seems in a hopeless muddle. So does everything. The Gaelic League included.’<sup>64</sup>

Perhaps prompted by her grief following the death of her son Robert when his plane crashed during the Great War in January 1918, Lady

<sup>59</sup> Murphy, ‘Lady Gregory and the Gaelic League’, 155. Unfortunately, the actual period in question remains unclear, as there has been a slip in the editing at this point: the text has two superscript numbers ‘46’ (pp 155, 156) and endnote 46 on p. 415 clearly relates to the superscript on p. 156.

<sup>60</sup> Dunleavy, ‘The pattern of three threads’, 142.

<sup>61</sup> Lit. ‘Dear faithful Lady’.

<sup>62</sup> This was presumably *Legends of saints and sinners* which was published in 1915.

<sup>63</sup> NLI MS 22,957.

<sup>64</sup> Dunleavy, ‘The pattern of three threads’, 142.

Gregory took the initiative in penning a short letter opposing the enforcement of conscription in Ireland in May of that year. She typed it up and sent it to a number of newspapers, having persuaded some of her literary friends – W. B. Yeats, James Stephens, George Russell ('Æ') and Douglas Hyde (An Craoibhín) to add their support as co-signatories. The text of a clipping from *The Nation*, May 25 1918, shows a printed version:

IRISH WRITERS AND CONSCRIPTION.

Sir, - We, the undersigned writers, feel compelled to appeal and protest against the enforcement of Conscription in our country, believing, as we do, that such action will destroy all hope of peace in Ireland and goodwill towards England in our lifetime. –  
Yours, &c.,

(Signed) A. Gregory.  
W. B. Yeats.  
James Stephens.  
George Russell ("Æ")  
Douglas Hyde (An Crasibhín). [*sic*]  
May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1918.<sup>65</sup>

A Dublin auction recently brought to public notice a signed autograph letter (in pencil) on the same subject which Hyde sent to Lady Gregory from his Roscommon home at Ratra, July 14, 1918, when he was still recuperating from a rather serious illness. He tells her:

I met Yeats in Dublin, & he gave me your kind message ... I came home at the end of June, but am not much better, I cannot fish or boat or bicycle, and when the grouse come I fear I won't be able to shoot! ... I enclose a poem which may amuse you. I wrote it in a white heat when Lloyd George made his conscription speech.

The poem he enclosed with the letter was the well-known *Almost any O or MAC to almost any Englishman, with almost any Englishman's answer*, and is 'a most effective polemic', as the auction house catalogue states. The copy they refer to was printed on one side of a folio sheet, inscribed in manuscript 'July 1918. *An Craoibhín do scríobh agus é tinn ar a leabaidh*' ('Written by Douglas Hyde while he was sick in bed.').

<sup>65</sup> The original letter and clipping are held in Stuart A. Rose Library, Emory University, Atlanta, TN 37678.

It carries the caption, ‘On reading Christopher Benson’s “Hymn for Empire Day”’.<sup>66</sup> Writing to Hyde shortly afterwards, on 20 July 1918, probably in response to this letter and its verse enclosure, Lady Gregory reminded him of what they had achieved: ‘... but you and I anyhow didn’t put off the rebuilding until Home Rule! Your League encompasses the end of the earth – and our theatre is anyhow marking time till we can hand it over to a National Movement.’<sup>67</sup>

All in all, one has to conclude that despite its vicissitudes, the early friendship of Hyde and Gregory and their shared passion for Ireland’s people and culture, as expressed in the country’s two languages, lived on as heartfelt mutual respect. Writing to John Quinn in a generous effort to heal the *Playboy* rupture in a 1912 New Year’s letter, Hyde had called Augusta Gregory ‘a wonderful, wonderful woman, with the pluck of a Joan of Arc’. For her, despite her disappointment in him in 1911, he was the man who had ‘given the imagination of Ireland a new homing place’.<sup>68</sup>

### *John Quinn*

In late August 1902, two years after the inscribed tombstone was placed at Raftery’s grave, another feis was held in Killeeneen. Hyde, Jack B. Yeats, W. B. Yeats and John Quinn were all staying at Coole Park at Lady Gregory’s invitation so that they could attend that year’s nearby feis. Quinn’s visit to Coole actually formed part of his first trip to Ireland and England. He had sailed from New York on 15 July. When he was in London he bought nearly a dozen paintings from Jack B. Yeats as well as portraits of John O’Leary, Douglas Hyde and George Russell (‘AE’) from his father John. As his biographer, B. L. Reid, observes, Quinn ‘was setting out to collect images of his heroes in the cultural and political life of Ireland’.<sup>69</sup> Reid conveys well a sense of the vigour, enthusiasm and cultural interests of this thirty-two-year-old Irish-American in his account of Quinn’s engagements in Dublin and Galway:

In a mere week in Dublin and Gort Quinn found time to meet, to impress and be impressed by, W. B. Yeats and his sisters Lily and Lollie, Russell, T. W. Rolleston, Douglas Hyde, George Moore, Edward Martyn, and Lady Gregory. At Killeeneen, Craughwell,

<sup>66</sup> Fonsie Mealy Catalogue 2017, lot 403, p. 41. From the collection of Mrs Catherine Kennedy, ‘Nu’, grand-daughter of Lady Gregory and daughter of Robert Gregory.

<sup>67</sup> Dunleavy, ‘The pattern of three threads’, 413 (n. 50).

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.* 142.

<sup>69</sup> B. L. Reid, *The man from New York: John Quinn and his friends* (New York 1968) 7–8.

on the last day of August, Quinn joined in a Gaelic Feis at the new tomb which lady Gregory had erected of the blind Connacht poet Raftery, and Jack Yeats decorated a program of the day with charming sketches of Quinn, Lady Gregory, Hyde, W. B. Yeats and himself. At Lady Gregory's great house of Coole Park Quinn heard Hyde read one of his Gaelic plays, and it must have been at this time that he added his initials to those carved in the bark of her famous signatory beech tree.<sup>70</sup>

Quinn stayed at Coole for just two nights, but it is clear that the intellectual vigour and fervour of his discussions with W. B. Yeats and Hyde, in particular, had a deeply inspirational effect on him, moving to action this consummate strategist and organiser. He decided to invite first Yeats and then Hyde to tour America, lecturing and raising funds. Yeats crossed the Atlantic in 1903–4, Hyde in 1905–6.

Quinn was back in Dublin in late October 1904. In order to honour Quinn's interest in the efforts to found an Irish theatre, Lady Gregory invited all the players to meet him at a reception and supper on the evening of Tuesday, 25 October. Standish O'Grady sat at the left of the hostess, with Quinn at her right, followed by Douglas Hyde.<sup>71</sup> On the following Friday Quinn lunched with Douglas Hyde in Harcourt Street, and Hyde made a verse for him in Irish. One of Quinn's goals on this trip to Ireland was to plan a lecture tour for Hyde and the Gaelic League in America. Reid tells us:

Quinn was anxious to promote Hyde and his cause, admiring both as native Irish, nonclerical, nonpolitical, and intellectual. He assured Hyde of nearly certain success and promised to take care of all the practical details of the tour. But Hyde was doubtful and finally agreed to take the plunge only after Quinn had personally agreed to guarantee him against any loss. ... Again at tea with Lady Gregory, Quinn met the Hydes, W. B. Yeats, and another of George Moore's sparring mates, Edward Martyn.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Reid, 8–10, with image of the feis programme in question on p. 9. Hill also notes how the occasion was commemorated by Jack B. Yeats and lives on for posterity in the memorable drawings he applied to a copy of the feis programme: 'His [viz. John Quinn's] quick interest was greeted with spontaneous affection, expressed in Jack Yeats's scrawls on the feis programme where Quinn's rather austere profile takes its place with Hyde, a comfortably seated Lady Gregory, a meditative W.B. Yeats, Jack and a frenetic feis dancer' (Hill, *Lady Gregory*, 248).

<sup>71</sup> Reid, *The man from New York*, 25.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.* 28.

At George Russell's, Quinn stated that for him the most interesting thing he had discovered in Ireland was that 'all those who were denounced turned out to be very charming people'. Reid notes that 'he commented several times in his journal on the habitual and brilliant malice in the conversation of Dubliners. Indeed, Quinn recorded that '[t]he 'only three men in Dublin who have not said sharp things about others' were Russell, O'Grady and Hyde'.<sup>73</sup>

This is not the appropriate context for a detailed account of Quinn's magisterial management of Hyde's 1905–6 tour, which has been treated at some length by the author and others in a separate publication.<sup>74</sup> Quinn was a perfectionist, brilliantly capable, meticulous and effective in all he undertook. For instance, a vast amount of his correspondence lives on. In the case of his letters to Hyde two copies are regularly extant – the original one mailed to Hyde, and the copy retained by Quinn himself. Indeed, rather than penning them by hand, his practice was to dictate his letters and have them taken down and typed, thus facilitating the maintenance of records – they could run to eighteen typescript pages! The letters which Quinn sent to Hyde are in the National Library of Ireland, while his own personal copies are now in the New York Public Library, as indeed are Hyde's hand-written letters to him.

The people Quinn corresponded with were numerous and of varied background. In the United States he acted as attorney for Maud Gonne in her bitter divorce proceedings against John MacBride, and thus began an exchange of letters which lasted from 1906 to 1921. By a happy coincidence for the theme of this paper, Quinn's very first letter to Maud Gonne, dated 24 May 1906, was written when Hyde's trip was still ongoing, and contains some fascinating insights into the tour from Quinn's perspective. Quinn estimated that he had spent between one and three hours a day over a year-long period organising Hyde's great American journey. Hyde and his wife Lucy were due to spend just a few weeks more in the United States, before returning to Ireland on the *Lucania*. Quinn was looking forward to the completion of his major efforts and, understandably, felt very pleased with the spectacular success of the tour, tinged as his satisfaction was, however, with a note of self-pity. At any rate, he took the opportunity to take stock and the following is the summary assessment he sent to Maud Gonne:

Hyde has had a great trip out here. He has been here seven months and has traveled over 19,000 miles and has spoken to over 75,000

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.* 31.

<sup>74</sup> See Liam Mac Mathúna, 'Introduction', in Mac Mathúna et al., *Douglas Hyde: my American journey*, xxiii–lxviii.

persons. He will take back with him \$50,000 net, over and above all expenses and exclusive of the \$5,000 which he returned to San Francisco. When you consider the fact that he came here without any organization and was practically unknown except to a mere handful of insignificant Gaelic Leaguers, I think the results of the tour are marvellous. Mr. Thomas Concannon, above referred to, came out here heralded as the 'chief organizer of the Gaelic League in Ireland,' but he was an utter failure. He was vain, conceited, arrogant, and bursting with vanity. I saw that the thing would be a failure with Concannon trying to arrange things (because he mused everything he touched and got into all sorts of difficulties) and so I put my shoulder to the wheel. In fact I began to arrange for the Hyde lectures just one year ago and there has scarcely been a day pass that I have not devoted from one to three hours to the work, and I am beginning to feel it is now time to consider myself. I think I have done in the last three years as much work for Ireland as any man in America. It is not in me to do things by halves, and so far as the organizing and advertising work I have been doing for the past three years is concerned, I must drop it altogether. There are three kinds of Irishmen: The first kind give advice and nothing but advice; the second kind give money, and the third kind give themselves. I have given both myself and money, and hereafter I will try and qualify in the second class and save myself a little.

Hyde and Mrs. Hyde sail on the 'Lucania' on the 9th, and they will both, I imagine, be very glad to get back to their quiet place in Ireland.<sup>75</sup>

The Londravilles, who edited the correspondence between Quinn and Maud Gonne observe that Quinn seemed unable to delegate work to others and that few people could match his aptitude for management and ability to get things done, noting that 'This also allowed him to voice the perfectionist's bitter complaint that he had to do everything himself'.<sup>76</sup>

The interaction of the four people discussed in this paper, took place in many ways and over quite a long period, albeit mainly in the first decade of the twentieth century. For example, it had been at W. B. Yeats's request that Quinn first helped Gonne in her difficulties with John

<sup>75</sup> Janis and Richard Londraville (1999), *Too long a sacrifice: the letters of Maud Gonne and John Quinn* (Selinsgrove and London 1999) 36.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.* 22.

MacBride, going on to obtain affidavits of his drunken behaviour while on tour in the US. This information served as an important part of the case she was building against her husband, as she sought legal separation from him and custody of their young son, Seán.<sup>77</sup> Quinn's friendship with his Irish acquaintances continued after the American tours. For instance, he told Gonne of his plans for a short visit to Ireland in 1909: 'I am going to spend a day or two at Lady Gregory's place and a day or two with Douglas Hyde, and I expect to sail from Queenstown.'<sup>78</sup>

The bitterness unleashed by the *Playboy* controversy, already referred to, is clear in the blunt reference to Hyde in a letter which Quinn sent to Gonne, dated 15 March 1912: 'I was very much disgusted at Hyde's attitude.'<sup>79</sup> As noted already, matters had come to a head because Shane Leslie and Fr Micheál Ó Flannagáin were engaged in a fundraising campaign on behalf of the Gaelic League in the United States at the same time as the Abbey Theatre Company was touring. The *Playboy* was being attacked by John Devoy's Clan na Gael organisation and the public protests were stymying the League's fundraising efforts, because it was felt that the Abbey players were implying that they were endorsed by the League, although this was not the case. In Quinn's words:

The fact is, as I was informed at the time, that Devoy and that crowd insisted that they would not help Father O'Flanagan and Shane Leslie, who were out here collecting on behalf of the Gaelic League, unless the Gaelic League repudiated the Abbey Theatre Company. O'Flanagan, although he had previously praised the work of the Company in public speeches both here in the [city and in] Boston and in Chicago, very promptly knuckled under and asked Hyde to 'repudiate,' and Hyde timidly and weakly did so. If Hyde were a mere politician one might make the defense for him that the same rule of honorable dealing does not and cannot apply to a political leader in every case that a man would feel bound by in his private relations. But the Gaelic League has been fond of boasting that it is above politics and is governed by principle and is independent and non-partisan.<sup>80</sup>

On the other hand, Hyde was the unwitting trigger for a curious interaction between Gonne and Quinn, which tells us something about

<sup>77</sup> Londrville, *Too long a sacrifice*, 20–3.

<sup>78</sup> 4 June 1909, Quinn to Gonne, *ibid.* 42.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.* 92.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*



the personalities of both. Writing to Quinn from Paris on 8 March 1914, Gonne enquires:

Have you seen Willie Yeats? In Dublin at Douglas Hyde's house I saw the reproduction of a portrait drawing of you by [Augustus] John. I want one so much. Have you a copy you could send me? It is a wonderful drawing of you. It looks harder than you do generally, but I have seen you look like that occasionally. It has all that strength and determination, which makes me feel wild that you do not belong to Ireland *entirely*, for you would have led the people and made history as Parnell did. With the Irish people, in the Isle of Destiny that would be possible.<sup>81</sup>

One wonders whether this is a line of thinking which had been proffered to John MacBride and Yeats – and perhaps others – before Quinn? At any rate, practised in the ways of the world, Quinn didn't rise to the bait. He was over a page into his reply of 18 March 1914 before he responded succinctly to the urgent request for a portrait reproduction of himself:

I shall of course be glad to send you a reproduction of the John drawing. The first reproductions were done very well; the last have come back rather dark and smoky. I will have a good one made and send it to you with pleasure.<sup>82</sup>

There is no hint here of Quinn answering Ireland's call, as mediated by Maud Gonne!

Later rounds of correspondence between Quinn and his friends were prompted by the aftermath of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, when Quinn liaised anxiously and copiously with both Leslie and Hyde, first trying to get Casement's sentence commuted, then in an effort to get Eoin MacNeill out of jail as early as possible.<sup>83</sup> It may also be noted that Quinn wrote to Sir Horace Plunkett in 1918, requesting that Hyde be appointed to the National Convention, and to Lady Gregory in the 1920s in support of Hyde being appointed to the Free State Senate, of which Yeats was already a member.

### *Conclusion*

However, these responses to the pressures created by the 1916 Easter Rising (and in Hyde's case to those which arose out of his resignation

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.* 124.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.* 126.

<sup>83</sup> See, for instance, the letter of 14 March 1917, from Quinn to Gonne, *ibid.* 188.

from the Presidency of the Gaelic League in 1915) were mere postscripts. The 'real' world of the four friends and colleagues discussed here had been new and young, and everything had seemed possible to them some two decades earlier. But the four friends did in fact accomplish much together, especially in that initial period. The *fin-de-siècle* and turn-of-the-twentieth-century collaboration between Douglas Hyde, W. B. Yeats, Lady Augusta Gregory and John Quinn had resulted in vibrant cooperation between the Irish literary revival and the Irish language movement. Hyde and the Gaelic League benefited in myriad ways: for instance, drama in Irish was created and substantial funds to further the language cause were raised in Ireland, and more especially, in America. But above all else, this collaboration of leading cultural intellectuals in Ireland and Irish-America helped to ensure that the Irish language, and the ideology and ideal of a de-anglicised, Irish Ireland moved centre stage in Irish cultural life, a place where they continue to maintain a significant presence to this day, resisting all attempts to ignore or dislodge them. John Quinn, Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats – and Douglas Hyde – all had a two-fold interest: the language, literature and culture of Ireland and the literature, culture and arts of the whole world. So too had the Gaelic League / Conradh na Gaeilge, in its heyday and at its highpoint, when the world was a seamless cultural garment, resplendent with a distinctive Irish hue.

LIAM MAC MATHÚNA