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THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE DRAMA OF WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

by

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Montana State University

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Approved:

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Chairman of the Examining Committee

[Signature]

Dean of the Graduate School
"He begin to live when we have conceived life as a tragedy."

—William Butler Yeats
I  Plays Written Without Theatrical Experience
II  Plays While Trying to Establish an Irish Theatre
III Plays Between 1903–1913 for the Abbey Theatre
IV  Plays Written for Private Drawing-Room Performance
V   Plays of the Last Years
INTRODUCTION
William Butler Yeats has literary stature in lyric poetry, in poetic drama, and in prose essays and autobiographies. This study has converged on his prose and his plays to discover the development of Yeats's ideas of the drama and to determine wherein those ideas became a theory actually applied to his own plays.

Although the career of William Butler Yeats as a playwright begins with the writing of *The Countess Cathleen* in 1892, his previous apprenticeship to lyric poetry is not without significance to his development as a dramatist. It was through a fusion of the lyric and the dramatic disciplines that he achieved his ultimate technique in the theatre, since he began his writing of plays on a lyric foundation.

In 1884, when Yeats was nineteen, *The Dublin University Review* carried his first published poem. He was at this time "in all things pre-Raphaelite," enrolled in an art school, and greatly influenced by his father, who was also a painter. At twenty-one Yeats definitely gave up painting for literature and consciously set out to find

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an expression of his own. Steeped in Spencer, Rossetti, Blake, Shelley, and Keats, he tried to create a "sensuous, musical vocabulary" to be used in "traditional manner and method." In the search for his own artistic principles he delved into "psychical research and mystical philosophy," diverged from the pre-Raphaelites, and thought that art should be concerned only with the beautiful things and that only "ancient things and the stuff of dreams" were beautiful.

Paradoxically, it was through moving to London in 1887 that Yeats became intensely interested in matters pertaining to Ireland. Politically and artistically he was stimulated by John O'Leary, Katherine Tynan, George Russell, and other leaders of the Celtic Movement. However, his interest in Nationalism extended beyond contemporary affairs and into the myths and legends and cultural heritage of Ireland. O'Grady's *Celtic History* and Samuel Ferguson's collection of Celtic patriotic poems stirred Yeats to seek and edit a volume of Irish folk and fairy

tales which was published in 1888.

In the same year this interest in Irish folklore precipitated The Wanderings of Usheen, a long narrative poem based on the Irish mythology of the Fenian cycle. The book immediately established Yeats's reputation as a lyricist and provided personal association with such contemporary London poets and critics as Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson, Edwin Ellis, Arthur Symons, W.E. Henley, and Oscar Wilde. Yeats began to contribute his "first and good lyrics" to periodicals and determined after The Wanderings of Usheen to simplify his "too elaborate and ornamental" style by turning to contemporary popular literature -- country ballads, stories, and folklores. The idea of a national popular literature appealed to him strongly, and he believed that writing could unite "artist and poet, craftsman and day-labourer." In 1891 Yeats returned, at twenty-seven years of age, to Dublin to found the National Literary Society affiliated in

certain country towns with Young Ireland Societies.
The groups were political in their purpose, but Yeats's nationalism after the death of Farnell in 1891 seems inextricably bound with a desire to enrich the artistic content of Irish life. His interest in a national, popular literature had a tangible goal: "I had definite plans; I wanted to create an Irish Theatre; I was finishing my Countess Cathleen in its first meagre version, and thought of a travelling company to visit our country branches .......

Before that theatre was to come about, even experimentally with the help of Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn, and George Moore in 1899, Yeats wrote two plays, *The Countess Cathleen* in 1892 and *The Land of Heart's Desire* in 1894.

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Although written in 1892, *The Countess Cathleen* was not produced until May 8, 1899, in Dublin by the Irish Literary Theatre. The cast included Florence Farr, her niece Dorothy Paget, and May Whitty. In derivation and in execution of theme, this first of Yeats's plays shows, even in a revision published in 1907, unmistakable affinities with his early period of poetry.

The incident of a high-born lady who sold her soul to save her people was not original with Yeats; he acknowledged taking it from a story "told as Irish" by Leo Lespec in *Les Matinees de Timothé Frimas*. Thus the central idea rose out of the same interest in folklore that brought Yeats to write *The Wanderings of Usheen*. What he did in *The Countess Cathleen* was to use a lyrical technique in arranging a folk narrative into the form of drama.

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A most obvious indication of Yeats's closeness to the ancient legends in writing *The Countess Cathleen* is the retention of the setting "in Ireland, and in old times." The story moves within the traditional social pattern of a benevolent aristocracy that guides, inspires, and saves the peasantry. Moreover, both social classes are represented by characters (prototypes, really) bearing old Irish names: the Countess Cathleen, her foster-mother Gona, and the poet Aleel, Shamus Rua, his wife Maire, and his son Teig.

In the 1907 version of *The Countess Cathleen* the prevalence of references to old Irish mythology also indicates Yeats's interest in the "ancient literature that belonged to a whole people."

Because Aleel, the poet, had spoken with the Sid-he, he had particular powers of vision. The tapestries in the castle had represented legendary heroes of the Fenian and the Red Branch cycles. Gona's stories and songs for the amusement of the Countess Cathleen were about Cisin and Niabh, about the ancient Danaans, or about Fergus. When she was discouraged and troubled
by the suffering around her, the Countess Cathleen herself expressed a longing to go to the land of the Sidhe. In Aleel's dream, out of which grew his warning to the Countess Cathleen, a prominent place was taken by the connotations of the white birds of Aengus. Finally, after the Countess Cathleen had signed the merchants' demands, Aleel's foretelling of her doom associated her with the Irish mythological figures of destruction such as Balor, Barach, Caitlin, Conchobar, and Orchil.

To the stuff of the ancient stories Yeats added in *The Countess Cathleen* two elements of Irish peasant life. One of these is the part superstition plays in the lives of the peasantry intermingling pagan and Christian precepts. Portents of omen, the baying dog and the horned owls, are spoken of in the first scene in the first lines between Maire and Teig. Later, Maire -- for all her devotion and sincerity about the shrine of the Virgin Mary -- prevents Sheamus from burning the "blessed" quicken branch; when he does defy her and burn the bough, the demon-merchants appear almost at once. Finally, the merchants overtly identify themselves with the malevolent spirits in the guise of owls. The other
characteristic of Irish rusticity is the use of colloquialisms. In the opening line Haire reproves Teig: "You are all thumbs." Later, when the Countess Cathleen comes to the peasant cottage, Haire inquires: "Will you sit down and warm you by the sods?" Contractions and tendencies of dialect are not confined to the peasants' speech, for the Countess Cathleen replies: "We must find out this castle in the woods / Before the chill o' the night."

Despite the colloquial phrases, the lines of The Countess Cathleen lack the racy strength of Synge's peasant plays and the casual flexibility of Lady Gregory's. Yeats seems first the lyric poet in his diction; then he is the narrator employing dramatic techniques. The soft, sensuous quality is evident in scenes quite different in emotional content. The merchants calling up the spirits from the underworld evoke this sort of word-mood-music:

..................I can hear a sound
As from the waves beating upon the distant strands;
And the sea creatures, like a surf of light
Pour eddying through the pathways of the oaks;
Bow towards them, and the tall, drouth-jaded oaks
Fondle the murmur of their flying feet.

On the other hand, in a scene of great emotional fervor
the Countess Cathleen makes her decision and decides to break her vow, bidding her people,

......I must go down, down I know not where.
Pray for the poor folk who are crazed with famine;
Pray, you good neighbors.
Mary, queen of angels,
And all you clouds on clouds of saints, farewell!

Sometimes the lines are memorable with brilliant flashes of expression: one does not forget Jesus's line, "... our own poor hunger-shaken feet;" or Gons's "The dead are happy, the dust is in their ears;" or her offering of wisdom to Cathleen, "And I have known three things no doctor cures --- / love, loneliness and famine."

Again, it was surely the lyricist and not the dramatist in Yeats that made Alexel say, after the Countess Cathleen had rejected his love, that he would abandon himself to a life of wandering, seeking "the wind cry and the water cry and the curlew cry ... the three oldest cries in the world."

Throughout The Countess Cathleen are remarkable images which are poetically moving but not dramatically impelling. They make us stop and wonder at the truth they contain, but they do not help forward the action
of the story. Sometimes, especially in the commentary on the action by the secondary characters, the images seem to have been used for their own sake merely and not for a dramatic effect. The imagery occurs on both social levels. The Countess protests to Aisín, "...and not you / But I am the empty pitcher." Her subordination of self to ideal is contained in a figure that has the imaginative simplicity of the old saints' legends:

I have sworn
By her whose heart the seven sorrows have pierced
To pray before this altar until my heart
Has grown to Heaven like a tree, and there
Rustled its leaves till Heaven has saved my people.

In another instance an old peasant man philosophizes to the Countess Cathleen; his lines are sheer images, dignified and uncolloquial:

We are the slaves of wind, and hail, and flood;
Fear jogs our elbow in the market-place,
And nods beside us on the window-seat.
Ill-bodings are as native unto our heart
As are the spots unto the wood-peckers.

The literary quality of such images in the lines of the peasants suggests the thought that Yeats here was more concerned with the poetry and its effect than with the suitability of the images and rhythms to the social status of his characters. A writer with drama uppermost in his mind would likely have proceeded from a character's
indigenous speech toward poetic imagery occasionally; Yeats in his early plays seems to have started with the poetry and proceeded to fit characters to it.

The same metaphorical quality in the speech of peasants is evident again after the death of the Countess Cathleen when the women lament: "She was the great white lily of the world .. The little plant that I loved is broken in two." Finally, Oona's lines closing the play carry a kinetic image and a personalized emotion; the meaning is interpretative and the emphasis is of picturesque effect:

The years like great black oxen tread the world, And God the herdsman goads them on behind, And I am broken by their passing feet.

In language, then, The Countess Cathleen is graceful, imaginative, and poetic, containing many rich images which sometimes give a lyric self-interpretative tone to the poetry but sometimes merely decorate the story. That this lyric expression is blended with dramatic and narrative technique is seen in the employment of theatrical devices in the structure of the play.

The Countess Cathleen in the 1907 version is writ-
ten in four acts, each of which shows a progression of
incidents toward a small climax within that particular
unit of the play. The principal peak of emotional con-
flict occurs at the end of the third act with the
Countess Cathleen's decision to deal with the
demons; however, the highest point of dramatic action is her
actual signing of the terms of her contract with them
in the last act.

That Yeats in this play adhered to conventional
stage settings is indicated in that the scenes for the
first three acts are literal representation; the scene
for the fourth act, however, is suggestive and symbolic.
Act I represents Sheamus Rua's peasant cottage furnished
conventionally with simple furniture, cupboards, a hearth,
a settle, and flower pots. Down stage right, beyond the
door, is a shrine honoring the Virgin Mary. Likewise in
Act II and in Act III Yeats called for a room in the castle of the
Countess Cathleen. The luxurious furnishings furnish a
contrast to the peasant cottage, but the room itself
repeats the general lines of Act I. The oratory, for
instance, is an elaborate repetition of Maire's simple
shrine in Act I. To the upper left is a spinning-wheel balanced artistically in the upper right by a group of musicians. On either side of the window are hung rich tapestries depicting Irish legendary heroes. In Act IV the setting is extremely simple, being a cabin in the woods belonging to Shemus Rua and used by the demon-merchants as a bartering place. In the dark foreground is a long table covered with gold and presided over by the merchants. The background is an alcove containing a bed with candles around it. On the bed is the body of Mairé. Thus two areas of interest are set. The passive background is a foil for the dealing in the foreground, and the victorious physical death of Mairé foreshadows the ultimate spiritual victory of the Countess Cathleen. This is a good example of set, action, and characters complementing one another perfectly. The simplicity, unification, and symbolism in this act of _The Countess Cathleen_ are worth particular notice in a study of Yeats's dramatic technique.

As for the story and the action of _The Countess Cathleen_, it is apparent that the first act is really a procession of narrative symbols rather than an expression of conflicting action. In the first lines Mairé and
Teig discuss the ominous signs of horned owls and baying dogs, adding apprehension to the already present fear of famine; Shemus comes in with a dead wolf, the only food he can find; he denies his faith in spiritual values; the statue falls and Shemus crushes it under his foot because "God, and the Mother of God, have dropped asleep / For they are weary of prayers and candles." Despite Maire's pleas Shemus burns the quicken branch; the merchants appear, claim their victory (over Teig and Shemus but not over Maire) and burn the cottage. Thus they symbolize their victory of destruction and repeat the implications of doom foreshadowed by the burning quicken branch.

The second act is likewise a narrative procession, this time of incidents, culminating in the Countess Cathleen's first decision. The gardener comes in to report the loss of the orchards; the Countess Cathleen fixes the blame on the "famished season." The herdsman comes in to say the flocks are being stolen. The Countess Cathleen comforts the herdsman by laying the theft to the famine. Then two peasants come in to make restitution for the goods they have stolen -- for they have bartered with
the merchants and they again have worldly goods. Their capitulation appalls the Countess Cathleen. She is aghast that they should so easily sell their souls for physical comfort. Their specious reasoning to commit a wrong to do "good" arouses her to dispose of her own worldly goods and extend the charity of her possessions so far as possible to relieve the suffering around her. Thus the "destruction" of the cottage in Act I is repeated in Act II with the dissolution of the great estate of the Countess Cathleen. The arrangement of these incidents against a lyrical background of tapestry, mood, and song is like a dramatization of a ballad, relating a series of similar incidents that precipitated a consequence or "story."

Whereas the first act was a series of symbols and the second one of ballad-like incidents, the third act is a presentation of internal emotional conflicts. It begins with Alcel's offering of love to the Countess

2. The Countess Cathleen to Gona:
Be silent, I am tired of tympan and harp,
And tired of music that but cries "sleep, sleep,"
Till joy and sorrow and hope and terror are gone."
Cathleen and his plea that she should escape the "famine;" she rejects his love because of a spiritual ideal. Aelel resigns himself to the loneliness of the poet's quest. While Cathleen sleeps, the merchants plot for her soul and steal her gold. Suffering peasants storm the castle. The Countess Cathleen wakes to the situation, reaffirms her faith -- and resolves to deny it. This is the most emotionally fervent section of the play. However, again the emphasis is not on conflict objectively presented but rather on feeling which is subjective and interpreted by the characters, especially Aelel and the Countess Cathleen; moreover, because the height of emotional conflict and the point of highest dramatic intensity do not occur simultaneously, we are more aware of the results of the action than of its causes and of its ramifications than of its actuality.

In action the last act follows the general technical structure of the three preceding ones: that of a series of incidents but slightly related to one another. However, in this act the grouping and variation effect suspense regarding the culminating, climactic incident of the Countess Cathleen's signing of the parchment.
In the first two incidents the demon-merchants deal with a middle-aged man with a fear of poverty and with a young wife who has been deceiving her husband. In the third incident the procedure of barter is reversed when Aleel, now cynical and disillusioned, tries to give his soul away; the merchants refuse because his soul belongs to "her". Something of spirituality still remains with Aleel, and even the vagueness of its presence makes the merchants uneasy. Then a harmless old peasant woman bartered with the merchants. (Her inadvertent blessing causes the demons real anguish.) Next a man, pragmatic compromiser through and through, tries to sell half his soul --- and the merchants refuse him. This see-saw in the dealings prevents the scene from becoming static and builds toward the entrance of the Countess Cathleen, "saint with the sapphire eyes." When she signs, the story is accomplished; nothing remains but the commentary by Aleel, Oona, and unnamed secondary characters.

This commentary has an important function. In structure it bridges the climax with the denouement; in effect it intensifies the emotion and prepares for a kind of catharsis. The mood is effectively sustained
both with on-stage business and with off-stage effects. Such symbolism as Aleel's smashing the mirror (the physical world) after the death of the Countess Cathleen serves to underline the emotional pitch. The mood and storm begin simultaneously when the merchants sense the imminent death of their most prized victim:

..........and when she wrote her name
Her heart began to break.

Throughout Aleel's ensuing prophecy and his curse on Time, Fate, and Change, an integral part of the effect comes from the roaring wind, thunder and lightning, and increasing darkness. The emotion is further heightened by the mass of peasants milling in confusion.

Finally (and this is the denouement) the darkness is penetrated by a light revealing a host of militant angels, one of whom announces that the Countess Cathleen has been saved because "the light of lights / Looks always on the motive, not the deed." Through the revelation comes light and with it, order and calm. The kneeling peasants and the armed angels provide a synchronized

3. An effect previously suggested in Act III when the merchants called up the evil spirits from the sea.
background for Alclose and Oona as they accept the Angel's word. The mood is melted away by the sound of horns in the distance, and the stage is gradually darkened. The turbulence has quieted.

The doubtful practicability of affecting these technicalities on stage seems of less importance than the fact that Yeats here solved a difficult problem posed by the very nature of the play. That problem evolves from the artistic necessity of the death of the principal character. The challenge, then, was to retain the singleness of emphasis and to maintain the tempo while precipitating the thesis of the play narratively through secondary characters, somewhat dramatically through primary ones. Perhaps Yeats's full-stop use of varied technical devices in the fourth act indicates his awareness of these difficulties.

Taken as a whole, The Countess Cathleen derives its totality of effect not from the action within the play but from an elaboration of the symbolism of the characters. That is, the Countess Cathleen, Oona, and Alclose are not individuals; they lack the human inconsistencies that would give them particularity. They are
symbols of abstractions, and the manipulation of the symbols as foils and as parallels gives the play its overtones in ideas.

Structurally, the Countess Cathleen is the hub of the play, with all action moving toward her and all effects radiating from her. She is the abstraction of refinement and purity, of disciplined and active idealism. Her counterpart is Maire, likewise sincere in her beliefs but unable to extend the effects of her ideals beyond herself. They both try to overcome the demons, Maire by open resistance and the Countess Cathleen by charity. They are both defeated but victorious.

Oona is wisdom, the storehouse of treasures of the past. Since she is somewhat deaf, the present must be related to her. She represents richness, stability, and material security. Her typical stage property is the spinning wheel, instrument of the hand. With Aelel she forms a parallelism as they are commentators on the action of the play; her role is to interpret the past.

Aelel's role is to foresee the future, for he is the poet of vision as well as the singer of emotion. His
property is the harp, instrument of the heart, but even as early as the first act he was "wrapped up in dreams of terror to come," and even after the strings of his harp have been torn, Aleel's prophetic gift is active. A little later in Act IV he reiterates the eventual triumph of good over evil (of traditional religion over paganism?)

This is particularly significant as Aleel represents intellectual pessimism, a denial of traditional faith which has its counterpart in Shamus. However, whereas Shamus has denied all spiritual values because he finds them incompatible to his own personal well-being, Aleel has denied only the traditional forms. He believes in love and thinks it can be had only through an escape from the world. The doubt of Shamus and of Aleel is the artistic antithesis in the play of the faith of Maire and Cathleen. Finally, Aleel's part in the structure of the play is to bind together the action and the implications of the play. If the Countess Cathleen is the center of the wheel, Aleel is the rim around it. His offering of love crystallizes her resolution to act not individually but for her people. It is Aleel who beseeches her then and later before the signing to "Leave all things to the builder of heavens." It is Aleel who
forstells her probable doom and it is Aleel who impels from the Angel the word of her salvation.

In summary these tendencies are evident in the first available version of The Countess Cathleen. Yeats's first play: (1) the re-working of traditional material from Irish legends; (2) the casting of old stories into a dramatic form; (3) the frequent handling of the material lyrically rather than dramatically; (4) the utilizing of technical stage effects to create and sustain mood and emotion; (5) and the carrying of the play beyond action into ideas through the use of symbolism in setting, in properties and especially in the characters.

The Land of Heart's Desire, the second of Yeats's two plays done, as he states, before he had "any adequate knowledge of the theatre," was written in 1894 at the request of Florence Farr as a vehicle for the stage debut of her niece, Dorothy Fagot, then eight or nine years old. In the same year it was produced at the Avenue Theatre in London as a curtain raiser for George Bernard

Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, in which Florence Farr had a principal role.

Like its predecessor, *The Countess Cathleen*, this play is of the Irish countryside both in setting and in story. The scene is the kitchen of Maureen Bruin's house in County Sligo, geographically the Ireland of Yeats's youth. Such details as a turf fire, a settle, a bowl of primroses in the window sill, a table being laid for supper give the set an air of actuality. The characters wear costumes "of a century ago" and supposedly speak in Gaelic. The story itself is based on one common to peasant folk tales: a young, dissatisfied peasant wife lives in a dream world, longing for the "wild freedom of winds and waves." She calls to the figures of the supernatural world to release her from bondage; a fairy child appears, enchants her, and lures her away from earthly responsibilities.

In execution this second play is considerably simpler than *The Countess Cathleen*. Written in one act and requiring but one set, it moves without the technical effects of lighting, sound, or correlation
of symbolism in properties and stage design experimented with in *The Countess Cathleen*. Except for the voice off-stage singing the lyric of enchantment and except for the swelling chorus of triumphant voices at the end, the play is carried by dialogue and action on stage.

Written in blank verse with a lyric twice interspersed, the poetry is agile and versatile, well-tempered with rhythmical variations to indicate differences of emotional tone. From Shaw's tender pleading with Maire:

Do not blame me; I often lie awake
Thinking that all things trouble your bright head--
How beautiful it is — such broad pale brows
— Under a cloudy blossoming of hair!
Sit down beside me here — these are too old
And have forgotten they were ever young ....

the range extends to the colloquialism of Maurteen:

Do not be cross; she is a right good girl!
The butter is by your elbow, Father Hart.
My colleen, have not Fate and Time and Change
Done well for me and for old Bridget there?"

5. The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart,
And the lonely of heart is withered away.
The tendency toward lavish use of imagery in *The Countess Cathleen* is lacking in *The Land of Heart’s Desire*. The most conspicuous metaphor is in Maire’s lines to Shaw:

> O, You are the great door-post of this house, And I, the red nasturtium climbing up.

The effectiveness of the lines is dependent upon their delivery by individual characters. Except for the chorus at the end, there is no use of massed voices and figures, as in Act IV of *The Countess Cathleen*.

Considerable use of exposition is evident, especially in the first part of the play when Maureen and Bridget discuss the growing absorption of Maire in dreams; their narration explains the mood of restlessness in Maire. Father Hart is the commentator and the final interpreter:

> Thus do the spirits of evil snatch their prey Almost out of the very hand of God; And day by day their power is more and more, And men and women leave old paths, for pride Comes knocking with thin knuckles on the heart.

The characters as in the first-play tend to be types: Maureen is the mellowed, philosophical peasant; Bridget is his scolding but good-hearted wife. Their function is to narrate detail to explain Maire’s feeling
and its affect upon the household. Father Hart represents
the established order, tradition, morality, and stability,
as did the aristocratic element in *The Countess Cathleen.*
His function is expository: to explain Maire's mood and
to try to reconcile it to practicality. Shawm is the
solid young peasant and Maire is imagination that can-
not be confined by mundane necessities. The Faery Child
is a symbol of abandon, of individualism, and of paganism:
for Maire found release neither in the hoped-for physical
child of Shawm nor through the spiritual Child to whom
Father Hart tried to direct her.

Irish peasant superstitions and pagan mythology
have an important place in the play. The ascending
action has to do with breaking the customs of the
countryside. Maire in strewing the primroses on May Day
Eve and in giving food and fire to strangers on that
night establishes rapport with the spirits and adds a
mood of apprehension to the already prevailing restlessness.
The conflict turns on a clash of mythological
and Christian attitudes; Father Hart had reinterpreted
pagan ideas through doctrine:

> And it was some wrecked angel, blind from tears,
> Who flattered Edane's heart with merry words.
Nevertheless, in deference to the fright of the faery (Child of Brig) the crucifix is removed from the room and the spell of enchantment is uncurtailed. Even the actual climax of the play is achieved through a lyrical ascendency -- a line of musical progression -- in which the connotations of a mythological symbol are played upon. The Child is coaxing Maire away to "the land of heart's desire."

Come with me, little bird!

Come, little bird with crest of gold!

Come, little bird with silver feet!

It is significant that the climax of the play is not a conflicting action but rather an intensification of feeling and a yielding to a mood.

The Land of Heart's Desire, then, is in substance and in execution much simpler than was Yeats's first play. Its triumph of individualistic waywardness and abandon is almost antithetical to the Christian charity in The Countess Cathleen. Its conflict springs partly from a difference in pagan and Christian attitudes but mainly from the incompatibility of dreams and responsibilities. The Land of Heart's Desire is a mood, not a drama; it turns on values temperamental, not spiritual.
Its total effect is lyric feeling rather than dramatic action. As an expression of personal feeling it belongs even more than *The Countess Cathleen* with the early period of Yeats's writing, the period of his subjective lyrics. This comment indicates Yeats's thinking at the time the play was written:

In 1894 ... I, with my Irish Theatre in mind, wrote *The Land of Heart's Desire*, in some discomfort when the child was the theme, for I knew nothing of children, but with an abundant mind when Mary (sic) Bruin was, for I knew an Irish woman whose unrest troubled me.6

Thus both of Yeats's first two plays show relation to the Celtic lyricism of his poetry of that period. Derived from folk literature, they are for the most part subjective and interpretive in execution, sensuous in their poetry, and expository and narrative rather than dramatic in method.

6. Probably Maude Gonne, although the play was written at the request of Florence Farr.
Yeats's first practical experience with the theatre came in 1899 when he joined with Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn, and later George Moore, to found the Irish Literary Theatre: "... to build up a Celtic and Irish school of dramatic literature ... to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland ... outside all political questions that divide us." It was a reaction against the false senti mentality of stage Irishism and the buffoonery too often presented as being "typically Irish". It was a movement against the commercialized theatre that depended upon representational realism on stage, the product of "the ingenuity of stage carpenters, costumers, and scene painters."

The Irish Literary Theatre was the first Irish movement toward a drama of ideas and the theatre dedicated disinterestedly to art. It was to be a three-years experiment to test the desires and needs of the Irish people.

for a national theatre; at the end of that time, Yeats wrote, the organisers were to go back to their "proper work, in which we did not include theatrical management." In fact, however, the business of management in the Irish Literary Theatre, and subsequently in the Irish National Theatre and in the Abbey Theatre, did keep Yeats so occupied that for the next decade he wrote "little poetry and no prose that did not rise from the needs of the theatre, directly or indirectly."

The fruits of his active fostering of the first movement toward a people's theatre in Ireland are not to be found in Yeats's plays, for between 1899 and 1902 he wrote but two: The Shadowy Waters (1900) and Diarmuid and Grania (1901) in collaboration with George Moore. Both were in effect repudiated by Yeats, for he "completely rewrote" The Shadowy Waters, and he excluded this collaborated work from any publications of his plays.

The dearth of plays written during the Irish Lit-

9. William B. Yeats, Plays and Controversies., p.3.
erary Theatre years should not be mistaken for inactivity
on Yeats's part, however; for he was lecturing and writing
prose in behalf of the association. Naturally enough,
his ideas turn principally on practical details of the
theatre and on constructive criticism regarding the pur-
pose of the movement and the means of effecting the
principles toward which it aspired. He urged those who
would write for the theatre to express but not to exploit
the best of things Irish, both from the past and from
the present; he thought that they should capitalize upon
the sense of dialogue innate with the ordinary Irish
speech but that they should learn the disciplines of
dramatic construction from the French and Scandinavian
masters. In 1901 Yeats summed up his own position re-
garding theatre:

I have spent much of my time and more of my
thought these last ten years on Irish organisa-
tion, and now that the Irish Literary Theatre
has completed the plan I had in my head ten years
ago, I want to go down to primary ideas again.
I want to put old stories into verse, and if I
put them into dramatic verse it will matter less
to me henceforward who plays them than what they
play, and how they play. I hope to get our
heroic age into verse, and to solve some pro-
blems of the speaking of verse to musical notes."

The year 1902 was for Yeats an interlude — but by no means a sterile one — between the Irish Literary Theatre and the Irish National Theatre. During that time in lectures and in essays he further crystallized some ideas about the Irish theatre, its purposes, its present direction and its possible future. He also wrote three experimental plays and saw in the work of a colleague a reaffirmation of the hope for renewing poetic drama.

"Our movement is a return to the people, like the Russian movement of the early seventies ..." he wrote in 1902. The function of such drama as Yeats and his colleagues worked toward in Ireland was to reflect life, not drawing room society but the life of country people, artisans, and workers. "The play that is to give them a quite natural pleasure should tell them either of their own life, or of that life of poetry where every man can see his own image, because there alone does human nature escape from arbitrary conditions." It is

plain that in 1902 Yeats had an increased awareness that an audience must participate in a play. Internal expression in itself is not sufficient; the effectiveness of drama comes from the application to situations in life. A play must be written for an audience, and thus a play written to "ennoble" peasants of the roads must be written "about the roads, or about the people of romance, or about great historical people."

Yeats's two one-act plays of 1902, _Cathleen ni Houlihan_ and _A Pot of Broth_, surely were written with an audience in mind -- an audience to be stirred politically or to be entertained facetiously. Both deal in prose idiom of country speech with ideas close to the simple country people of Ireland. The first is a patriotic drama in behalf of nationalism; the second is a rollicking situation, akin to peasant comedy as written by Lady Gregory. It is significant that these are

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15. In fact, she assisted Yeats in construction and in dialogue not only of these two plays but also of _Where There Is Nothing_ and _The Hour Glass_. In a dedicating letter in _Plays for an Irish Theatre_ Yeats wrote in 1903 to Lady Gregory: "I dedicate to you two volumes of plays that are in part your own."
Yeats's first attempts at propaganda and farce respectively.

_Cathleen ni Houlihan_ was first played on April 2, 1902, in Dublin with Maud Gonne in the principal role. No doubt her presence in a play about a subject so timely and inflammatory was in large measure accountable for the enthusiastic success of the play. Nonetheless it is in itself "good theatre," dramatic and compact. It is the simple extension of a gripping symbol: an old woman (Ireland) bereft of her "four fair fields" is so compelling in her appeal for aid against her enemies that man foresees hearth and home and bride and life itself to come to her aid.

The realistic set calls for an interior of a peasant cottage in Killala in 1778, the time of the landing of the French. The play shows much compression and simplicity. The story proceeds swiftly from the entrance of the Poor Old Woman to her commanding appeal which enlists Michael in her cause on the very eve of his wedding, an act which transforms her into a "young girl with the walk of a queen." The dialect is unaffected and unobtrusive, depending mostly on customary turns of
speech like the Poor Old Woman's greeting, "God save all here!" and Peter's reply, "God save you kindly."

There are also examples of inversion and of the detached participle as when Patrick says, "There is an old woman coming down the road. I don't know if it is here she's coming." Simple colloquialism is exemplified in another instance in which Peter observes, "I hope he has brought Delia's fortune with him safe ... and I after making it. Trouble enough I had making it."

Much of the effectiveness of Cathleen ni Houlihan comes from the compelling double meaning in the lines of the Poor Old Woman as in "It is seldom I have any rest. Sometimes my feet are tired and my hands are quiet, but there is no quiet in my heart." When she says that her trouble comes from having "too many strangers" in the house, the Poor Old Woman is not Cathleen ni Houlihan only but also Ireland itself, and the audience (or the readers) add by connotation much of the effect. She wanders not in need of food nor of drink nor of money but of those who would "give all." She has reason to hope, for she says, "I have good friends that will help me. They are gathering to help me now. I am not afraid."
If they are put down today, they will get the upper hand tomorrow." The double entendre was a rallying cry for Nationalism no less than was the triumph of her song of departure:

They shall be remembered for ever
They shall be alive for ever
They shall be speaking for ever
The people shall hear them for ever.

The ringing appeal of the play is a factor contributive to the fact that *Cathleen ni Houlihan* has been played more often in Ireland than any other of Yeats's plays.

*A Pot of Broth* is a slight comedy based on an old Irish folk tale, sometimes known as "the Limestone Soup." It takes place in the peasant cottage of John Consely and his wife Sibby. After taking the audience into his confidence, a fast-talking tramp persuades them that he has a magic stone, good for making stirabout, wine, poteen --- anything the owner wishes for. With talk beguiling his listeners, he demonstrates (using Sibby's ingredients, of course,) how to make a delicious soup. His listeners are too impressed to notice he has not only made a hearty meal from the soup he has prepared but that he has also taken with him as token payment for the stone a good supply of food and drink. It is purely a sketch
of a situation, entertaining but not dramatic, in which the audience enjoys with the tramp the genial fun of duping the parsimonious Sibby and her gullible husband, John. Like other prose plays of Yeats, *A Pot of Broth* shows a resemblance to Lady Gregory’s plays in matters of dialect and dialogue. In this, the only peasant farce Yeats wrote, the easy colloquialism is especially apparent and in one dedicatory letter Yeats acknowledged this as one of a group of plays “in part” here. A technicality which Yeats was to use later with interesting effects appears for the first time among Yeats’s plays: the monologue. In this case the tramp enters the scene alone and through comment and narration frames the situation so that the ensuing action is both meaningful and entertaining.

Yeats’s third play of the 1902 interim between the Irish Literary Theatre and the Irish National Theatre is a five-act prose tragedy, *Where There Is Nothing*.


17. Published hastily in 1903 because of Yeats’s difficulty with George Moore, the play -- obviously unsatisfactory to Yeats -- was re-written with Lady Gregory’s help and published in 1907 as a folk play entitled *The Unicorn from the Stars*. 
Despite its defects "There is Nothing" is an ambitious dramatic undertaking. In theme this play is related to both The Countess Cathleen and The Land of Heart's Desire, because much of its emphasis is on mood and subjective feeling. Paul Ruttledge is like The Countess Cathleen in being concerned with spirituality and social responsibility; unlike The Countess Cathleen, however, he rejects the principle of faith and adapts instead a philosophy of negation: "Colman, Colman, remember always where there is nothing there is God." Paul Ruttledge is like Maire in The Land of Heart's Desire in trying to escape the actual world since it seems to be incompatible with the ideal world; "I am going to be irresponsible," he says as he joins the band of tinkers, an escapism akin to Maire's going to the land of the fairies. As in the earlier plays, too, the restraining influence is the church represented by the clergy; but enchantment (mood) and not reason (action) has the stronger appeal:

Only to think of it -- to ride in the darkness under the stars, to make one's horse leap from cloud to cloud, to watch the sea glittering under one's feet and the mountain tops going by.

However, escape for Paul is not enough; he must
destroy the existing order: law, the Church, hope, memory, the very light of the world -- for out of nihilism, chaos, and destruction he envisages the emergence of the ideal. Perhaps Yeats is suggesting the infinity, boundlessness, and elusiveness of the Deity and the ideals of the spirit. The paradox is that since definites are constricting, indefinites and intangibles (the real world) can be approached only negatively. This is expressed when Paul says in Act V:

I have learned that one needs a religion so wholly supernatural, that is so opposed to the order of nature, that the world can never capture it.

Although the theme of this play lacks the moral fiber of The Countess Cathleen, the theme of Where There Is Nothing is certainly one of major proportion, an intellectual as well as an emotional one. In treatment it shows that Yeats as early as 1903 was thinking -- although in symbols more than in dramatic action -- of the difference between the actual and the real.

Moreover, the theme is two-stranded, for the problem is not only one of spiritual faith; it also probes the application of moral values to society. The social criticism in Where There Is Nothing is a
denunciation of the artificially "organized" life of the gentry hemmed in by social customs and mores, clubs and societies. "Well, I wish he would join something," mused Paul's sister-in-law, indicating the ready solution. In contrast to the gentry and the clergy which represented constricted society, the peasant element of freedom in society was introduced. Only the tinkers led free and expressive lives. The contrast is effectively symbolized in the stage settings (which tend to be representational of the actual, except in the last two of the five acts, where the detail is spare and symbolic.) In the first scene of the play, the hedges clipped to represent barnyard fowl indicate the formalistic tightness, the staid acquiescence of the behavior patterns, to which Paul's relatives and friends subscribed. The second and third acts represent the free informality and clutter of spontaneous gypsy life, in a roadside camp and in a hut temporarily occupied by the tinkers. In Act IV the door and the stone cross indicate proximity to a monastery and in Act V the scene is a plain near the River Shannon. Only the scenery of peasant life is spontaneous and vivacious; the other scenes represent formalism, design, encroachment.
The contrast between peasantry and gentry is carried out further in customs and in speech. Poaching and cockfighting are freely carried on by the tinkers. Paul and Sabina are married according to the gypsy custom of "jumping over the budget." The gentle people are at tea, playing croquet, and joining clubs. In speech the lines range from Colonel Lamley's:

What a pity he didn't go into the army. I wish he would join the militia. Every man should find some useful sphere of employment.

To Tony's urging Sabina to leave Paul at the monastery when he is ill:

What way can you care him, Sibby? It's no way to have him lying out on the roadside under guano bags, like ourselves, and the rain coming down on him like it did last night. It's in the hospital he'll be for the next month.

This difference in speech is one of the most effective contrasts in Where There is Nothing. The imagistic language of The Countess Cathleen has given way to a stringent prose, but symbolism in properties contributes to the theme as it did in the early play. For example, in Act IV the osiers represent order and Paul's smashing the basket suggests his desire to destroy order and formalism. Dramatic interest is heightened
in Act V when the clock and bell mark the tinkers' taking leave of Paul at the monastery. In the next scene candles are dramatically extinguished one by one as Paul reveals his play of destruction: of Law, of society, of Church, of hope, of memory of thought, and of light itself.

To the credit of dramatic effectiveness of *Where There is Nothing* must be instanced the thesis of the play, the dramatic contrast of realistic setting to frame intangible ideas, the contrast between social levels, the differences in speech levels, and the use of technical effects to heighten the story, and the unification of the theme and characters with Sabina and the peasants resooven into the story after the defeat and death of Paul. The failure of the play must certainly stem from the lack of completeness in the central character; the very negativity of Paul's ideas defeats one's belief in him. He has asked the hard question but his answer is unconvincing, his actions erratic and unworthy of the grand scale on which the thesis of the play should operate. He does not triumph even potentially, and there is no dramatic foil for him. He is an unfortunate figure,
perhaps a pathetic one, but not a tragic one.

All in all, the greatest dramatic event of 1902 for Yeats was probably George Russell's Leidre, staged by the Fay company of Irish actors on April 2. Yeats's observations on the construction and the production of this play probably affected his own work; at least it pointed a direction which his subsequent work followed. The play itself was praised by Yeats for being "well-constructed" with a notable lack of characterization, "like the absence of individual expression in wall decoration." It was staged with great simplicity both in costumes and in stage design, the background being no more obvious than a background for a portrait. This Yeats thought was a step in the right direction:

18. What Yeats meant by "well-constructed" can be inferred from his criticism of George Moore's The Bending of the Bough (1900), which he scored for being "badly constructed, had never become a single thought or passion." (Autobiography, p. 267.) Later he wrote in "The Reform of the Theatre" (1903): "If we do not know how to construct, if we cannot arrange a complicated life into a single action, our work will not hold the attention or linger in the memory ..." Plays and Controversies, p. 46.
I would like to see poetical drama, which tries to keep at a distance from daily life, that it may keep its emotion untroubled, staged with but two or three colours. 19

For the acting Yeats had high praise, this being the first performance he had seen "in which the actors kept still enough to give poetical writing its full effect on stage." 20 The actors kept their movements few, quiet, and rhythmical, often pausing between lines with an effect Yeats thought was "curiously dream-like and gentle."

In 1903 The Irish National Theatre Society was organized in Dublin to carry further on a more permanent basis the work of the Irish Literary Theatre. During this year Yeats set down a set of principles calling for a reform of the theatre and he wrote a one-act play, *The Hour Glass*, which shows the application of these ideas to drama.

III

The reform Yeats called for in 1903 touched on four major aspects of play production: the plays themselves, speaking, acting, and stage design. The views, coincident with the organization of the Abbey Theatre, reflect not only the views of that group but they also crystallize Yeats’s theatrical experience since joining with the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899.

"The theatre," wrote Yeats in 1903, "should be a place of intellectual excitement where the mind goes to be liberated." 22 A dramatic work of art must necessarily deal, then, with broad and basic themes, the deeper realities of emotion, and the inner realities activated by the imagination. A work of art must have the effect of nature, but it must be disciplined and arranged. Art, said Yeats quoting Goethe, is art because it is not nature. The arrangement of the true and the beautiful justifies its own existence and need not

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22. Yeats, Plays and Controversies, p. 45.
be "compromised in the service of a cause." Plays concerned only with political propaganda or with social problems were discounted because they tend to become dated and because "art seldom concerns itself with those interests or opinions that can be defended by argument." The kind of drama sought by the Abbey Theatre was to be a "criticism of life" or "some vision of life" beautifully executed. Inasmuch, then, the plays must be significant of the mainsprings of human experience; tragedy, "passion defined by motives," was thought by Yeats to be the deepest kind of experience. In construction Yeats called for discipline and economy; a dramatic arrangement of incidents from life must compress life into a single action, subordinating character to plot. The style of the play was to be so closely blended to the content that the hearer "will not


know whether it was the word or the thought that moved him or whether they can be separated."

Reform in speech was the second point in Yeats's 1903 essay on reform in the theatre. He advocated that vigorous dialogue and accurate dialect (if used at all) be cadenced to become "the delicate movement of living speech that is the chief garment of life." Thus delivered, speech was more important than gesture on stage. Lively, gallant, and passionate speech would make a play "masculine and intellectual in its sound as in its form."

Simplification in acting and in stage design were the third and fourth points of reform called for by Yeats. If the play were to deal successfully with the inner realities, all physical distractions must be pared away to allow the deeper rhythms of life to be felt. Since the play was to be concerned with

27. Yeats, Plays and Controversies, p. 46. (A question arises as to whether Yeats really was thinking of compressing life into a "single action" or whether his attention was, after all, rather on theme and idea than on plot).

28. Ibid., pp. 46 - 47.
universal, not individual, experience its presentation
must suggest the general and not the specific. "Get
rid of everything that is restless," wrote Yeats in 1903,
"everything that draws the attention away from the sound
of the voice or from the few moments of intense expres-

sion." Likewise in stage design Yeats advocated simp-
lication of both scenery and costumes. The actors
should be dressed in harmony with the monochrome back-
ground, which should be designed as a pattern to suggest
the theme rather than as a picture to represent a place
or a scene. There should be nothing superfluous on
stage, nothing to detract from speech and movement.

The Hour Glass, written in 1902 and produced in
1903 by the Fay Company of Irish Players, reflects appli-
cation of all the points of reform called for by Yeats.
Sub-titled "A Morality", this play is a departure from
his previous plays in that it comes not directly out
of legendary or local peasant material but out of uni-
versal abstractions and ideas outside specific locales.

29. Ibid., p. 48.

30. Yeats stated that The Hour Glass "is founded
upon a story - The Priest's Soul - recorded by Lady Wilde
The provocative antitheses with which the play deals -- faith and reason, intuition and rationality, time and eternity, the physical and the spiritual -- might well have been the kind of "intellectual excitement" Yeats thought the drama should carry.

_The Hour Glass_ turns on the emptiness of the rational and scientific approach to knowledge. The Wise Man (who is really not wise at all) and the Fool (who is really wise because he is unspoiled and imaginative) represent the conflict. The Wise Man has taught his pupils to accept nothing on faith, nothing not based on sense experience. Warned by the angel that he is soon to die, he cannot confront death rationally and is shocked into wanting to believe. His salvation depends upon his finding one person with intuitive faith, but his pupils and even his wife express negation as he has taught them to. Only the Fool, having the gift of faith, is in rhythm with life. Thus the Fool is instrumental in saving the Wise Man. The theme of the play, then, is that the deeper truths of life are not the product of reason and science but of intuition and imagination.
In harmony with the ideas, which are universal and abstract, the characters are de-personalized and typical. They are not identified except by generic title: A Wise Man, A Fool, Some Pupils. The only character named is Bridget, wife of the Wise Man. With her floury hands and her matter-of-fact outlook she is the one touch of realism in the play, related in kind to Bridget in The Land of Heart's Desire and to Bridget in Cathleen ni Houlihan and perhaps even to Sibby in A Pot of Broth.

The Hour Glass makes serious use of prose, as did Cathleen ni Houlihan, but the peasant dialect is almost entirely absent. Even Bridget's lines are not in characteristic Irish dialect as this typical speech shows:

I think about nothing. Sometimes I wonder if the pig is fattening well, or I go out to see if the crows are picking up the chicken's food.

The language of the play is notably simple with none of the lush imagery prevalent in The Countess Cathleen and in The Land of Heart's Desire.

Another point of unlikeness between The Hour
enlightened common

in the hour. Hence, running out of hand
have to find better. Moreover, as a symbol and a
small span of time in which the essence of any art may
Finally, the symbol of the hour, then represents the
accustomed the one position in regard to morality
what time it is, indication that man can know only in
later in the play the theme of a dedication to stand out
rendered, perhaps, of the cutting of man's thread of time.
- The foot, first comes in carving a part of sphere
Three symbols point up the phenomenal aspect of life.
concept of time in dramatically related and framed.
of "time and place and change," but in the hour, time the
beauty, eternal reference made to the partaking essence
In the common culture and the land of hearts.

Resist in mutiny.

fully paid causes are an inherent and an essential as
exterter motion, the theme to be carried by dramatic stage
of the other. In one or another context and not of
between the emotional tone, the play, more than either
be made of group of people and chances of voices to
silence and the first two of voices, play to that no one
Thus *The Hour Glass*, in dealing with a conflict of abstract ideas, meets Yeats's first point in the reform of the theatre. The de-personalized characters, themselves symbols, through their very lack of individuality suggest universal experience; the dramatic symbolism of the properties adds to the result Yeats sought, an intellectually exciting theatre.

The directness of the language and the broad typicality of the characters in *The Hour Glass* suggests a simple, even a stylized, delivery of the lines. Yeats himself suggested that the Angel's words could be condensed or even spoken on note. An added effect in speaking could come from the unison of the pupils' speeches delivered with the perfunctory precision of lessons repeated by rote. This could be a fine contrast to the Wise Man's sophistication, the Fool's ingenuousness, and the Angel's calm simplicity.

As for acting, Yeats referred to *The Hour Glass* as the kind of play demanding simplicity in execution because it is a poetic drama that is remote from real life. W. G. Fay, who staged the play, was in accord

with Yeats's ideas and tried to enforce "the most rigid economy of gesture and movement, to make the speaking quite abstract, and at the same time to keep a music in it by having all the voices harmonized." A critic who saw the first performance commented:

"the actors stand still and do not do any fussy movements when they are speaking. They just stay where they are and listen. When they move, it is without premeditation, at haphazard and even with a little natural clumsiness as of people who are not conscious of being stared at in public. Hence a delightful effect of spontaneity and in their demeanor they have the artless impulsiveness of children."

On the fourth point, stage design, Lady Gregory noted that Robert Gregory's design for The Hour Glass represented "our first attempt at the decorative staging long demanded by Mr. Yeats." The costumes were purple and the background was green, supporting Yeats's suggestion that a single color should make

32. Stephen Gwynn, Irish Literature and Drama, p. 158.
33. Ibid., comment by A.E. Walkley, p. 158.
34. Lady Gregory, op. cit., p. 107.
35. A deviation from Yeats's stage direction? "The Angel enters in a dress the colour of cabbies, and carrying a blossoming apple bough in his hand and with a gilded halo around his head."
the background with the actors dressed in harmony with it.

In the decade after 1903 Yeats, an active director of the Abbey Theatre, wrote five new plays and revised several of his earlier ones. All of the work in this period shows an adherence to the general principles laid down in the 1903 essay, but each play shows new ideas and techniques emerging. Yeats did not write according to a rigid formula but rather he was constantly experimenting for new effects. If any general trend is present, it is toward an increasing objectivity in characters, in setting, and in acting. Likewise the themes are increasingly generalized so that they apply universally to human experience, not to an individual in a particular situation, although the new plays all have their origins in Irish mythology.

In order of first production dates the new plays are The King's Threshold (October 7, 1903), The Shadowy Haters (January 14, 1904), On Baile's Strand (December 27, 1904), Deirdre (November 27, 1906), and The Golden Helmet (March 19, 1908) which was revised into a poetic version, The Green Helmet, (February 10, 1910).
Significant revisions occur in _sirdre_ in 1911 and in _The Countess Kathleen_.

The story of _The King's Threshold_ comes from a middle Irish story of the demands of the poets at the court of King Guaire of Gor, but Yeats turned the story about and "revised its moral that the poet might have the best of it." It was written when the Abbey Theatre was beginning its championship for "pure art in a community of which one half is buried in the practical affairs of life, and the other half in politics and a propagandist patriotism." It has been cited "as near a play with a purpose" Yeats had written.

In plan _The King's Threshold_ is similar to the procession of incidents noticed in _The Countess Kathleen_; for the story is simply one of the poet's refusal to accept his subordinate position arbitrarily assigned him by the king and subsequently being subjected to several appeals and temptations. Eventually he wins.


38. Cornelius Weygandt, _Irish Plays and Playwrights_, p. 60.
his point in Yeats's version of the story. All of the characters are non-individual and impersonal; they move simply against a decorative and symbolic setting, reinforcing Yeats's ideas in the 1903 essay on the reform in the theatre. This is a play of ideas in which representative types of society try to bend Seanchean, himself representative of the poets and of the arts, toward pragmatism and practicality.

It is interesting to note that here for the first time in Yeats's plays, the artist or the poet comes into conflict with civil authorities and not merely with the practical world in general. Although the technique of presenting several successive incidents to tell the story had been used before, Yeats shows a greater compression and more obvious sense of climax and contrast than he had in the earlier uses of this device. This may be due, in part, to Lady Gregory's assistance in the construction of the play.

One of the effective and dramatic contrasts is

39. Lady Gregory, Our Irish Theatre, p. 82.
in the passivity of Seanchan and the activity and agitation of the people around him. The difference in moods among the various groups who approach him is a further distinction, and the manner in which they are won to Seanchan's position and support adds to the dramatic contrast. For example, the poets -- young and plastic pupils of Seanchan -- are at first convinced by the king's arguments but they are won to Seanchan by an intellectual as well as an emotional appeal. The civil authorities, who are accompanied by two cripples, are subservient to the king and their persuasion is effected through action more violent than that needed to persuade the poets. When "genteel" society comes to protest to Seanchan (good use of contrast in numbers here, a mass effect to intensify the agitation and to contrast with the former appeals which had been singular), the soldier actually draws his sword against Seanchan. When the two princesses approach Seanchan, he seems almost to yield before he pronounces them cursed with leprosy. At Fedien's appeal Seanchan actually asks for food, but he refuses it just in time.

In addition to the contrasts of moods and of num-
bers and groupings on stage, effective use is made of attention-arresting action throughout the play. Suspense is built through such incidents as Seanchan's actually accepting the dishes from the princesses and through the tumultuous invective of the cripples interrupted by the chamberlain's "Silence! silence! silence!" A contrast of speaking effects results in such instances as when the mayor and Brian deliver their lines together, joined subsequently by one cripple and then by both.

The simplicity of the setting is in accord with ideas in the 1903 essay and is capitalized upon most dramatically in the action of the king; in his first appearance when he is still master of the conflict, he ascends the steps for his exit and turns grandiosely to offer a compensation of worldly goods and luxuries if Seanchan will Capitulate; at the end of the play he effects a similar movement when he appeals to the pupils to beg for their lives -- but when they refuse, he must come back down the steps, and the descending action is in harmony with his capitulation to Seanchan. To end the play, Yeats employed a triumphant trumpet blast,
similar to the triumph in The Countess Cathleen and in The Land of Heart’s Desire.

Like The Land of Heart’s Desire, The Shadow Waters is not founded on any one story but it blends a good deal of “incidental Irish folklore and mythology.” Like the earlier play, it represents the conflict between the actual world and the ideal one, and like the first two of Yeats’s plays The Shadow Waters was extensively and often revised. It had been written as early as 1900 while Yeats was at Coole, Lady Gregory’s estate, and it was first played in 1904 when it was used as a practice vehicle for the Fay Company at Molesworth Hall in Dublin. After this it was revised for Abbey Theatre performance on November 23, 1906. This version, clearly showing application of ideas in Yeats’s 1903 essay, has particular evidence of lyrical lines, subordinated character, and stylized setting.

Although most of the lines of the play are in prose, the spell of love is so strong that the \textit{orto's} harp and the spell-casting power are deeply enchanting, as they are to for-} 

get to convert and to convert and not to the other char- 

acters or their fate and the net at a particular symbolic meaning 

sattires but convert the actor from the creature and warm 

represent the \textit{orto's} thinking. The ship is sustained by the 

spells of love to learn the meanings of the lines the 

spells are deeply enchanting, as they are of for- 

the sattires are deeply enchanting, as they are of for- 

lore's harp of the harp and the spell-casting power 

scored and the golden net of love is symbolized by Dee- 

means love and poetry, the ship stands for world-learn 

not characterized to extend the theme? the harp of nurturing 

again as an earlier play, Yeats has made symbols and 

captured the spirit-laden ship with symbols abroad. 

the man of action. It is the further exemplified by the 

by the contrast between \textit{fear} and the dreamer, and \textit{fear}. 

dreams, love, and poetry. The contrast is symbolized 

effects of the physical world and into the spell of 

world takes \textit{fear} out of the predestined and inherent 

\textit{in the shadow表明 the search for the ideal}
use is made of the idiomatic prose of the sailors as
when one of them says:

It is a hard thing, age to be coming on me,
and I net to get the chance of doing a robbery
that would enable me to live quiet and
honest to the end of my lifetime.

The lines of Aibric are in verse but they reflect his
practical turn of mind, as in the image he uses when
trying to persuade Forgaal to be satisfied with cap-
turing the vessel: "The whole ship / Flashes as if it
were a net of herrings." The lines of Forgaal and of
Deorro are particularly musical and sensuous, loaded
with imagery and with lyrical interpretation rather
then with action usually regarded as necessary to dramatic
treatment. This is exemplified in Forgaal's explanation
to Aibric of why he feels impelled to pursue a search
for the meaning of the ideal world:

I cannot answer.
I can see nothing plain; all's mystery.
Yet, sometimes there's a torch inside my head
That makes all clear, but when the light is gone
I have but images, analogies,
The mystic bread, the sacramental wine,
The red rose where the two shafts of the cross,
Body and soul, waking and sleeping, death and life,
Whatever meaning ancient allegorists
Have settled on, are mixed into one joy.
For what's the rose but that; miraculous cries
Of stories about mystic marriages,
Impossible truths.
This tendency toward self-analysis and self-interpretation, with a consequent shadowiness and staticism of character, is also indicated in Lectora, as when the rope is but, setting her and Forgael adrift as Aibric and the sailors return with their loot to the actual world:

The sword in the rope --
The rope's in two -- it falls into the sea,
It whirls into the foam. O ancient worm,
Dragon that loved the world and held us to it,
You are broken, you are broken. The world drifts away,
And I am left alone with my beloved.

As she gives Forgael her crown, the passage culminates in a litany of lyrical images recalling from Irish folklore such figures as the Red Branch, Aengus, Liarmuid and Grania:

Bend lower, O king, that I may crown you with it,
O flower of the branch, O bird among the leaves,
O silver fish that my two hands have taken
out of the running stream, O morning star,
Trembling in the blue heavens like a white fawn
Upon the misty border of the wood,
Bend lower, that I may cover you with my hair,
For we will gaze upon this world no longer.

And finally Forgael, in the closing lines of the play, turns away from the passing nature of things physical and finds true reality -- love and poetry -- only in the unactuality:

Beloved, having dragged the net about us,
And knitted mesh to mesh, we grow immortal;
And that old harp awakened of itself
To cry aloud to the grey birds, and dream
That have had dreams for fathers, live in us.

This turning away from the actual world in search of the
dream, love, and poetry, could well be an extension of
Alceol's escapism in The Countess Cathleen. Always in
The Shadow Waters the emphasis is on the interpretation
of emotions that result from the conflict of ideal and
real.

There is but little movement in this play. The
action is frugal. Only three examples of action occur
on stage: the near-mutiny against Forgael which Abrie
quells, the resistance of Dectora until she gradually
falls under the spell of Forgael and the harp, and the
unsuccessful attempt of Abrie to persuade Forgael to
forsake his dream. (The seizing of the treasure ship
occurs off stage while Forgael is entranced.)

The setting, complementary in effect to the mood,
is modernistically simple and not suggestive of any
actuality. The scene is the deck of an ancient ship, so
arranged that several acting areas are provided; the
difference in acting levels is effectively capitalized
upon as when Dectora, threatening to leap from the ship
on which she has been taken captive, ascends to successively higher parts of the ship before she falls under the spell of the harp. The color scheme is blue-green in both the setting and the costumes, with a contrast of copper swords and ornaments. Thus the effect is according to Yeats's suggestion of using a monochromatic scheme with accessories of the complementary color. As for lighting, arc lights and one overhanging green lantern provided wavering shadows. Moods evoked in such a scene, with the actors directed to move "but little," are a direct appeal to the imagination, to the mystery and not to the reality of living. Indications in The Shadowy Waters Yeats turned even farther away from representational realism than he had in The Hour Glass, to produce here an effect "dramatic in form, but decorative in characters." 41 Yeats in this play was moving clearly toward "his theory and practice of a dramatic art where symbol replaces character, events are allegoric and words keep more than half their secrets to themselves." 42

42. Hone, op. cit., p. 112.
The 1904 version of *On Baile's Strand*, the third of the five new plays, is considerably different from the version described by Yeats in 1906 as being "as right as I can make it with my present experience."

In the latter version he shows a remarkable psychological astuteness of theatrical technique in presenting a legend out of the Irish folklore. This play, one of a projected series to deal "with Cuchulain, with his friends and enemies," dramatized the incident of Cuchulain's unknowing slaying of his own son. The tragedy is a powerful one emotionally because of the impact of the central idea and because of the skill with which technical effects are woven into the story. Thus, suspense is maintained and interest is built up even though the outcome of the conflict is familiar to the audience.

As in the earlier plays, especially in *The Countess Cathleen*, secondary characters narrate events in the story. However, the difference between the technical functions of the Fool and the Blind Man in

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On Baile's Strand and Aleel and Oona in the former play is that the Fool and the Blind Man are not only narrators of incidents around the conflict and observers of its effects but also foreshadowers of the events and unsitting precipitants of the tragedy. For instance, when the Blind Man acts out the incipient ceremony in which Cuchulain will swear allegiance to Conochar, he is preparing the audience no less than the Fool for what will follow. Likewise his subtle hints as to the identity of the young man are the seeds of Cuchulain's belated revelation. The facts about Aoife, her son, and Cuchulain are so gradually and unartificially arranged in the conversation with the Fool that their true inter-relationship adds an element of inevitability to the tragedy. When Cuchulain is finally roused to meet the young man in battle, the dire prophecies of the women are less like foreshadowings than like confirmations of what we already know is doomed to happen.

Skillful use of irony shows On Baile's Strand technically advanced over any of the plays Yeats wrote before this. One type of irony comes from the retrospective realization that the tragedy could have been
averted. In the first instance the Fool, aroused by what the Blind Man had said, was impelled to ask Cuchulain about the identity of the young man -- but fear of Cuchulain's wrath deterred him. Later when Cuchulain actually met the young man, he felt strongly attracted to him and offered to his challenger friendship and the gift of the cloak his own father had given him: "His head is like a woman's head I had a fancy for." But again the wrath and pride of Cuchulain catapulted the action inevitably toward tragedy.

Other instances of irony occur from the fact that because the audience knows the final outcome of the conflict, certain situations have special significance. This is exemplified in Cuchulain's empty boast to Conchobar before the ceremony of taking the oaths:

I think myself most lucky that I leave No pallid ghost or mockery of a man To drift and mutter in the corridor Where I have laughed and sung.

"Pallid ghost" is in itself a mockery when we know of the splendid youth who was Cuchulain's son, and after Cuchulain's tragic deed we remember him neither for his laughter nor for his song.
The oath itself is an irony, taken indifferently because "time has put the water in my blood." Cuchulain, the man of action and of emotion, binds himself irrevocably to rationality: "I swear to be obedient in all things / To Conchobar, and to uphold his children."
Sword in flame he prays: "Give us the enduring will, the unquenchable hope, / The friendliness of the sword."
There is a friendliness at first when Cuchulain offers gifts to the adversary, and that very attraction to the young challenger is ironic as Cuchulain says, "Boy, I would them all in arms / If I had a son like you. He would avenge me." But Conchobar protests and holds Cuchulain to his oath. The tragedy spins on because Cuchulain has boxed in his passionate nature with an oath which his anger and his pride make him fulfill. The innate impulse of love is distrusted and overridden. Reason ruling over passion hurls Cuchulain to a dire end. Such a realization might well be the kind of "intellectual excitement" Yeats thought the theatre should supply.

Another indication of Yeats's technical skill

44. Underlining mine.
The Countess Cathleen in which was supported

of imagination a rich and varied array of

Three were bearing money of strange and shining a charge

a procession of kings and queens to the Grotto of the scene.

I erased all in pomp and ceremony on the path to

quarter between Cuchulain and Conchobar; the scene is

sharpened and the desire to behold it more

with the entrance of the essence of the scene

entrance, as the footsteps had been recognized by the

effect of building suspense toward Cuchulain's trial

who and the young man to the corner here also the tempest

the second in the battle to which the stench and

Conchobar, and note with the thud, her seat. Point him

he made to keep straight the path of Cuchulain

the thump in a foot of path, in the presence in which

of the scene, reminiscent of the carefree profanity of

Conchobar, and the monadness of the path. The foot

can arise out the earth which Cuchulain will speak so

of peace; the play within a play. In which the thump

the foot and the thud was never to cease for variation

in various parts of the play. The opening dialogue between

in an neither eligible in the picturesque context in tempo
a rising emotion. At the very climax of the oath there is a knocking at the outside door; the dramatic suspense is deepened by Conchobar’s surprise that it is another king detained on the way. The young man rushes in, and the pace is quickened as he is recognized. The next scene returns to dialogue as Cuchulain proffers friendship to the young man, accelerates with Cuchulain’s outburst against Conchobar, retards with his remembrance of his oath, and culminates in his rushing out to fight with the youth, followed by the kings in great excitement. Then comes a calm, prophetic scene in which the three women foretell Cuchulain’s inevitable death and self-defeat: “Life drifts between a fool and a blind man / To the end, and nobody can know his own end.” The chorus of lament is followed by a realistic scene in which the Fool physically attacks the Blind Man, paralleling the sword fight off stage. This fast-paced scene is interrupted by the entrance of Cuchulain, the apparent victor. Gradually the tempo is slowed as one by one are revealed the clues identifying the vanquished challenger. Finally, the Fool inadvertently confirms the suspicion Cuchulain had built up:
He [the Blind Man] said that he heard Aoife boast that she’d never but the one lover, and he the only man that overcome her in battle. (Pause).

At the height of emotion there is only silence. And in that silence is achieved the most rocking kind of climax. Then the shaking of the bench disturbs the terrifying quietness; Cuchulain’s sobs in being repressed are terrible instead of pathetic:

The Blind Man: Somebody is trembling, Fool. The bench is shaking. Why are you trembling? Is Cuchulain going to hurt us? It was not I who told you, Cuchulain.

The Fool: It is Cuchulain who is trembling. It is he who is shaking the bench.

The Blind Man: It is his own son that he has killed.

Then Cuchulain’s lashing figuratively against Conchobar by striking at the throne chair and his mad dash out into the sea are a swift coda and an anti-climax to the violence of the emotion. Relief comes from the Fool’s excited, child-like report that Cuchulain is “fighting the waves.” The tragedy is finally leveled off in the Blind Man’s cynicism:

There will be nobody in the houses. Come this way; come quickly. The ovens will be full. We will put our hands into the ovens.

They go out and the curtain falls on an empty stage.
In setting, language, and characterization On Baile's Strand holds to ideas in Yeats's 1903 essay. The simplicity of the stage design makes no attempt realistically to represent a place; the story occurs not in a "great ancient house" but in a small assembly hall near the sea. A large door at the back provides dramatic interest as does the throne chair. The only other stage setting are some chairs, a long bench, and a table with flagons of ale and drinking horns on it.

The language is simple, being compact and direct, colloquial but not obtrusively idiomatic. The dialogue of the Fool and the Blind Man is in prose but the King's lines and the women's songs and prophecies are in poetry. However, at the climax Cuchulain's lines are in prose before he recognizes his deed and in poetry after his realization. Symbolism is used, but as an integral part of the story and not for its own sake; the most notable example is that of the waves -- at the opening of the play the Fool tells of running races with the witches at the edge of the waves "to get an appetite" and at the close of the play, of course, the waves master Cuchulain. In a similar way, metaphor, when used, is
inseparably a part of the expression and not an extrinsic addition as in The Countess Cathleen and The Land of Heart's Desire: a ready example is Conchobar's saying to Cuchulain: "Your mind / Runs as it were a swallow on the wind."

On Baile's Strand is like the preceding plays, especially The Hour Glass, in subordinating character to plot. That is; the emotional impact of the story is more important than the people it affected, and the effect itself is universal and not individual. The Fool and the Blind Man, like the Fool and the Wise Man in The Hour Glass, are generic types; and no delineation is made of individualities of Conchobar and Cuchulain, who, as legendary heroes, have not particularized but general characteristics.

The masterful presentation of the Fool in On Baile's Strand is a distinct advance over the Fool in The Hour Glass. Out of the two-dimensional simplicity of the latter has developed a full-rounded creature, poignant and wistful. Some of the feeling for the Fool in On Baile's Strand comes from the glibness with which
the Blind Man dominates him:

I wouldn't tell anybody else, but I will
tell you, -- a secret is better to you
than your dinner. You like being told
secrets.

The pathos is intensified because the Fool is so depen-
dent upon his expliter. Yet he is saved -- by the skill
with which his words are assembled -- from the vulnerable
extremes of stupidity, silliness, or idiocy. For example
the winning simplicity of such lines:

What a mix-up you make of everything, Blind
Man. You were telling me one story, and now
you are telling me another story ... How can
I get the hang of it at the end if you mix
everything up at the beginning?

The characterization of the Fool in *On Baile's Strand*
suggests the thought that to disparage the lack of
individuality in poetic dramas is to overlook the
exacting discipline required to generalize characters
successfully.

One aspect of this widened characterization is
that as idiosyncratic qualities are subordinated, ab-
stract ones are made dominant. Thus a typical character
can be associated with an abstract quality, as the Count-
ess Cathleen represented fervent, active faith and the
Wise Man meant learning based solely on reason. Charac-
ters in *On Baile's Strand* are likewise extensions of qualities. Conchobar is traditional power, demanding and expediential. Cuchulain is passion without sadness, strength without intellectuality. The Blind Man is opportunistic worldliness, cynical and unseeing. The Fool is ingenuous goodness, lacking both rational capability and emotional depth. The kind of parallels in characters occurring in *The Countess Cathleen* is also evidenced in this play. The Fool and Cuchulain have a similar inter-relation to and inter-dependence upon the Blind Man and Conchobar respectively. The meaning of the play is extended into secondary meanings through an interpretation of the characters as symbols of abstractions. For example, the scene in which the Blind Man and the Fool unwillingly bring Cuchulain to a recognition of his deed suggests that tragic experience occurs singularly in a personal world that cannot be penetrated by any other human being and that life itself is half-blind and slow-witted.

This parallelism of characters is used in another and more technical effect in the play, that of parallel action. For instance, the Blind Man's sitting in Conchobar's throne chair to tell the story of Cuchulain's oath
not only narrates detail important to the Fool (and to the audience) but it also dramatically foreshadows the coming action. Another instance of parallel action occurs near the end of the play when the Fool's frustration and his attack on the Blind Man suggest the violent physical action then taking place off stage and foreshadows the recrimination Cuchulain will take upon Conchobar.

Thus the Fool and the Blind Man as catalysts in the play have the important function of narrating the events preceding the action and of haphazardly dropping clues that bring on the tragic recognition. They also serve one other interesting and important purpose, that of distancing the audience from the physical violence of the tragedy. The sword battle occurs off stage as does Cuchulain's own last desperate action. The smaller pattern of the Fool and the Blind Man stands in place of the larger one which is too terrible to witness, and the final tragic emotion is relieved by the simple mad-

45. Dramatically effective because the imagined can be more terrible than the visible if the imagination has been stirred powerfully.
ness of the Fool and even by the cynical pragmatism of
the Blind Man. To be thus removed from the shock of the
physical violence bares the emotion so that as experi-
ence it perhaps the more deeply for being undistracted
by actuality, while the psychologically necessary provi-
sion of relief from the intensive emotion restores the
calm and the balance from which the full meaning of the
impact can be the better related to other aspects of
life. Thus On Baile's Strand fulfills Yeats's own defi-
nition that tragedy is "passion defined by motives"
and that a drama should compress life into a single
action. This play, because of its emotional impact,
its dramatic conciseness, and its technical skill,
might well rank as Yeats's most effective play.

Leirdre, first produced on November 26, 1906,
at the Abbey Theatre, is another instance in which Yeats
has gone far back into Irish folk literature for sub-
ject matter. This is an adaptation of one of the "Three
Sorrows of Story Telling." Specifically, Leirdre --
like On Baile's Strand -- is derived from Lady Gregory's
Cuchulain of Muirthemne, which contains the story of
Leirdre and Naisi, "The Fate of the Sons of Usnach."
Deirdre is like The Countess Cathleen in that a beautiful and compelling woman attains a triumph even though defeated by the world. There is sharp contrast, however, in the social consciousness dictating the Countess Cathleen's decision and the individualistic renunciation of the world by Deirdre. Her belief that "love is all we need" places her in type with Fergus and Hector.

In structure Deirdre is somewhat like The Countess Cathleen in being a series of pictures in which various moods and aspects of the central character are revealed; Deirdre is in the course of the play apprehensive, courageous, ecstatic, gentle, resigned, beseeching, yielding, pleading, threatening, cajoling, fiercely and purposefully calm. This play, however, in one act instead of four, is more compressed than The Countess Cathleen and the transitions between scenes are, for the most part, smoother -- indicating Yeats's technical advancement over the first play he wrote.

Unlike The Countess Cathleen, Deirdre has no foil -- no Cuna, no Faire. Her moods are contrasted,
however, with the prevailing moods of characters around her as when she feels an intuitive apprehension about Naisi's return to Conchobar's kingdom:

I have heard to ever-living war mankind
By changing clouds, and casual accidents
Or what seem so.

Naisi's calm was a rational one, the result of his over-riding his original uneasiness about the chess game, an unlucky omen reminding him of the tragedy of Lugdaigh Redstripe and his wife, and about the flagon which was dry of ale and the bread which was moldy. His control is a remonstrating contrast to Leirdre's tauntness:

"Being a queen / You should have too calm thought to start at shadows." Naisi's self-possession, resulting from unknowingness, is in turn a contrast to Leirdre's calls at the pitch of emotional excitement in the play when, proceeding ostensibly to obey Conchobar's play, she realizes the situation and outwits him in order to perform her ultimate act of self-destruction. Another instance of parallelism in mood occurs in Naisi's trustfulness of Conchobar and Fergus's faith in man generally and in Conchobar in particular:

I have believed the best of every man,
And find that to believe it is enough
To make a bad man show him at his best
Or even a good man swing his lantern higher.

However, Naisi, a young king, and Fergus, an old one, are
in themselves dramatic contrasts, with Conchobar acting
as a fulcrum between them.

An interesting and important development in Deirdre
is Yeats's use of the musicians, not as a mass of voices
to heighten the emotion as in The Countess Cathleen and
in The Land of Heart's Desire, but as a simple chorus
of "three comely women, about forty, carrying musical
instruments." These musicians serve four functions in
Deirdre. The first is to narrate events preceding the
present action, as in telling of Deirdre's girlhood:

He Conchobar went up thither till at last
She put on womanhood and he lost peace,
And Deirdre's tale began.

Another function is to supply the thoughts of the characters
as they are trying to realize the situation so that the
result is something like a self-colloquy or a kind of
monologue. Two artistically parallel instances of this
occur. The first is that in which Fergus dispells his
own doubts when he enters the guest house and finds no
messenger and no sign of preparation for Naisi's coming.
He muses:
That you should know that all things change in
the world
And hatred turns to love and love to hate
And even kings forgive.

The musicians answer, as though out of Fergus's own con-
sciousness if he were arguing with himself, "Yet old
men are jealous —" and Fergus shouts, "Be silent or
I'll drive you from the door." The other instance in
which the musicians' comments complement a character's
thoughts to produce a soliloquy occurs when Beirdred
realizes definitely that Conchobhar has treacherously
summoned Naisi to return. The musician says:

I have seen a bridal bed so curtained in,
So decked for a miracle, in Conchobar's house,
And learned that a bride is coming.

"Am I the bride?" asks Beirdred, and from then on she
realizes the covetous implications of Conchobar's designs.
The third function the musicians serve is that of
commenting upon the present action and interpreting it.
A good example is the dirge sung when Beirdred makes her
death-visit to Naisi:

They are gone, they are gone, The proud may lie
with the proud ............Eagles have gone into
their cloudy bed.

The fourth purpose of the musicians is exemplified in the
technical way in which they, like the Blind Man and the
Fool in *O'Neill's Strain*, distance the audience from the physical action of the tragedy, all of which occurs off stage: the capture of Naisi, the execution of Naisi, the self-destruction of lierdre. Thus the musicians are not merely an accompaniment to the drama; they are an integral part of the play serving as a chorus to narrate, foreshadow, comment upon, and interpret the action.

The moods of the play are well-supported by theatrical technicalities of stage setting and lighting. The scene is a guest house in a wood, a rough house with boughs and leaves seen through the windows and doors. The play opens in twilight, setting a mood of gray apprehension, pierced only by a brazier with a fire. As lierdre and Naisi enter with Fergus, "the lighting and the character of the scenery, the straight trees, and the spaces of sky and mountains between them suggest isolation and silence." Changes in lighting emphasize quickened action and heightened conflict, as when Naisi rushes out after Conchubar the house is dark except for the few torches and a faint evening light from the outside. At the end of the play when Fergus and his company break in upon Conchubar, the house is entirely dark.
except for the light coming in from outside where the wood is on fire and many men carrying torches are marching in upon the king. The final pathos of Conchobar's lonely and defeated position is summarized in his closing words:

I have no need of weapons.
 Heal if you will -- but I, being king, did right
 In choosing her meet fitting to be queen
 And letting no boy lover come between.

The Green Helmet, produced at the Abbey Theatre on February 10, 1910, the last of the new plays in this group, was a poetic version of a prose play, The Golden Helmet, produced in 1908 but never published. Sub-titled "an heroic farce," The Green Helmet -- like the others of Yeats's plays of this period -- dipped deep into Irish legend for its source; its immediate origin was "The Feast of Briciu," as related in Lady Gregory's Cuchulain of Muirthemne. This story of the laughing, not the tragic, Cuchulain and of his prideful wife, Emer, was meant as an introduction to In Beale's Strand.

The comic effect is achieved through three deviations

from the technique Yeats used in handling the tragic themes: the poetry is in a rime free-reeling iambic hexameter with a notable absence, or at least a diminishing, of imagery; characterization is even more subordinated to the situation than it was in the poetic tragedies; and theatrical effects of a frankly exaggerated and "startling" sort are employed. It is probably for the last that this play is most notable. The set calls for an intense color scheme of orange-red complemented with luminous sea-green and slight touches of purple. All the characters except the Red Man and The Black Man wear shades of green relieved with touches of nearly black purple. The Black Man suggest cats (mythologically malignant), for they wear cored caps and their eyes glow green from the reflected lights; their costumes are purple. The Red Man, whom the laughing Cuchulain outsite, is dressed in red and his great height is exagger-

47. Character, wrote Yeats in August of 1910, is present in comedy along; farce results from situation with the character left out, he had agreed with Lady Gregory as early as 1903. See Our Irish Theatre, p. 106.
ated by the horns on the Green Helmet. Here for the first time Yeats used costuming to suggest the total absence of personality, of something other than people, of abstract qualities and forces.

One effect of the pronounced color scheme was elaborated upon by Yeats in 1911 when he observed of this play that "the more obviously decorative is the scene and costuming of any play, the more it is lifted out of time and place, and the nearer to faeryland do we carry it." At the same time he reiterated his idea that movements on stage, especially if there are many players, should be deliberated and concerted, executed with great simplicity. Contrasts of shadows and lights and of colors and complements would prevent the play from becoming monotonous if the action on stage were kept simple enough: "... the simplicity which gives depth of colour does this, just as, for precisely similar reasons, the lack of colour in a statue fixes the attention upon the form."

In action *The Green Helmet* calls for many changes of pace as from the quiet apprehension of Conall and Legaire about the Red Man's return to the surprise entrance of the young man who turns out to be Cuchulain. The excitement mounts with Cuchulain's refusal to take seriously the story Conall and Legaire tell him: "I have imagined as good when I've been as deep in the cup ... and believed it." Another instance of pace change occurs in the quickened tempo when the racing Laeg rushes in with an aroused accompaniment of stable boys and kitchen boys, all of whom have divided loyalties to the three kings. This is paralleled and heightened by the excitement of the entrance of the three queens, wives of Conall, Legaire, and Cuchulain. After their respective praises of their husbands, the riot scene is repeated, but suddenly it is quelled by the black hands which reach in through the windows extinguish the lights, and terrify the crowd into submission. It is while the lights are out that the Red Man comes to claim his due. Cuchulain answers the challenge, against Laer's pleading and threat to self-harm:

*Cuchulain* (throwing her from him) Would you stay the great barnacle-goose when its eyes are turned to the sea and its beak to the salt of the air?
Eumer: (lifting her dagger to stab herself) I, too, on the grey wing's path.

Cuchulain: (Seizing dagger) Do you dare, do you dare? Bear children and sweep the house. (Forcing his way through the Servants who gather round.)

But, as he kneels before the Red Man, the impending disaster is averted because the Red Man has taken a fancy to Cuchulain, and he triumphantly crowns Cuchulain with the Green Helmet.

**The Green Helmet** thus indicates a general adherence to Yeats's 1903 principles. However, the consciously startling effects of a sophisticated scheme of colors and shadows shows an increasing artificiality in theatrical technique.

During the last part of the 1903-13 decade Yeats wrote no new plays, but he revised some of his earlier ones on the basis of his theatrical experience. The 1911 revisions in *Leirdre* and the 1912 revisions in *The Countess Cathleen* are indicative of changes in his views on the drama.

The 1911 version of *Leirdre* shows a few internal
alterations as well as some lighting and staging changes which were probably the result of Yeats's exchange of ideas with Gordon Craig. Thematically and structurally the play is not much different from the earlier version: retained intact are such dramatically stirring incidents as Fergus's trust and subsequent disillusionment, the quiet game of chess between Naisi and Leirdre at the height of their emotional conflict, the balance of antitheses as in Leirdre's observation, "We listened to the counsel of the wise, / And so turned fools," and her poignant charge to the musicians foreshadowing her own beautifully tragic destiny:

Oh, singing women, set it down in a book
That love is all we need, even though it is
But the last drops we gather up like this;
And though the drops are all we have known of life,
For we have been most friendless -- praise us for it
And praise the double sunset, for naught's lacking
But a good end to the long, cloudy day.

One obvious structural change, however, was apparently made to better motivate Fergus's first entrance, having him say as he comes in, "I thought to find a message from the king," and then, as in the earlier version, "You

49. See Appendix III.
are musicians by these instruments," and so on. Another such modification occurs in Deirdre's first entrance: in the 1911 version she stops the musicians in their song and asks them to help her arrange the ornaments in her hair and apply the pigments "for one that's coming." This has the psychological effect of hastening the conflict between Deirere and Naisi and ultimately between Naisi and Conchubh, because it makes clear from her first entrance that Deirdre is apprehensive of Conchubhar's motives.

The principal effects of the lighting changes were to reduce the ominous dark-faced men and the spying Conchubhar to mere sinister shadows, unidentified. This greatened inter-play of lights and shadows was Gordon Craig's suggestion, which Yeats thought interesting but which he regarded with some reservation:

"...but I may let the king enter as at present when he comes to spy, the shade of fear become a substance at last, for the passing of the second musician across the stage hold-her torch has a dramatic value.

Considerably more extensive than the 1911 modifications of Deirdre were the changes made in the 1912

version of *The Countess Cathleen*. In the later version are alterations in structure, in scene, in lighting, and in acting. These changes, together with a good number of instances of compression of lines, tend to simplify the play and intensify its emotional impact.

Because the play in this revised version is in five scenes instead of in four acts, it attains better structural balance and compression than did the earlier one. This is in part because of the artistic effectiveness of the odd number which allows the emotional climax to come at the end of the third act; it is even more the result of having a long and well-developed third act preceded by two shorter ones and succeeded by two others to balance the first two. In setting this version is considerably simpler than was the first version; it now conforms to Yeats's theories of unobtrusiveness and suggestive stage design. The first scene occurs in the cottage of which "the walls are all of one colour" and in which the furnishings are unobtrusive, giving "the effect of a missal painting." The second scene occurs in a suggested exterior, done in flat colour and with a diapered or a gold background. The third scene representing a hall in the house of the Countess Cathleen is a
simplification of the room in the earlier edition; the
oratory and the tapestries are retained but the needs
outdoors are merely suggested through the simple arches,
and the furnishings are not at all elaborate. The fourth
scene repeats the stage set of the second scene, giving
an artistic unity to the set. The fifth set is similar
to the last set in the first version of the play, employ-
ing again the double area of interest with one being
passive and the other active. The lighting of the 1912
version calls for arelights, eliminating as in The Shadow
Shaler the necessity of footlights.

Just as most of the changes in setting occur in
the first part of the play, so do most of the structural
alterations come there. The principal general effect is
the shortening of individual speeches. For instance, in
the 1906 version Maire observes, as Shamus makes his
first entrance:

Shamus, you are late home; you have been lounging
and chattering with some one; you know well
How the dreams trouble me, and how I pray,
Yet you lie sweating on the hill from morn,
Or linger at the crossways with all comers,
Telling or gathering up calamity.

In the 1912 version her lines read at this point:
What is it kept you in the wood? You know
I cannot get all sorts of accidents
Out of my mind till you are home again.

Another type of change is in the fuller development of characteristic traits, as the truculence of Shemus: his sulkiness toward Aleel’s song (“Shat, music, music!”), his sarcasm toward the Countess Cathleen (“I have said nothing, lady, / Why should the like of us complain?”), and his brutality toward his wife (named Mary in the 1912 version) to the point of actually striking her when she suggests they will not let the merchants into the house. Likewise traits of the mysterious merchants are intensified in the 1912 version in their dress and in their manner of coming into the cottage, for they are costumed as exotic Eastern merchants and they carry a small carpet which they “slowly and deliberately” unfold and then they sit upon it cross-legged, take gold out of their purses, and begin to arrange it upon the rug while Teig urges Shemus to address them.

Another notable change is in the last scene, particularly in the role of Aleel, whose lines are considerably compressed and deleted of many references to Irish mytho-
logical figures. For instance, his visions of the mythological underworld are shortened, the lines about Orchill being deleted altogether in the acting version and the lines upon smashing the mirror being reduced from twelve lines to six. Likewise in the last scene, the mass of triumphant angels is replaced by one angel who tells of the salvation of the Countess Cathleen; this was in part the result of the physical limitations of the stage at the Abbey Theatre.

During the twenty years, then, between the first writing of *The Countess Cathleen* and its 1912 version, Yeats wrote nearly a dozen plays in which he experimented widely in the problem of reconciling lyricism with drama. In summary these are the tendencies toward which his efforts gravitated:

1. The themes of the dramas, usually drawn from the heritage of Irish folklore and mythology, seldom have any immediate pertinency to contemporaneous political or social conditions but are chosen to represent basic experiences of mankind. The ideas often turn on the

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incompatibility of the ideal world and the actual world. In treatment the trend is away from folk history and toward the heroic, aristocratic age.

(2) The characters throughout the plays tend to be types, not persons. They often express a mood, narrate action, comment upon it, and interpret the effects of the conflict. Their characteristics are taken from those aspects which dissolve them into humanity, not from those which separate them from men and make them individuals. Their action seeks to show the "activity of souls" rather than the business of everyday living. Their subjectivity has caused one critic to remark that Yeats "can no more be deeply interested in another man than himself than can D'Annunzio."

(3) The settings tend to become stylized simplified patterns subordinated to the action, although correlated with the actors in color scheme. They become suggestive, not representational, and they are often symbolic. Lighting effects and the inter-play of shadows are handled with increasing skill.

(4) The acting called for is, like the settings, removed from actuality in being exaggeratedly simplified. Much experimentation with speaking effects produced such varied results as paucity accompaniment to cadenced speech, words spoken on note, due and unison delivery of lines, and massed choruses for heightened effects.

(5) Through compression and economy of lines there resulted a growing dependence upon suggestiveness of detail and a sharpened theatrical sense of tempo, climax, and suspense.
The next period of Yeats’s activity in the drama begins in 1916 with *At the Hawk’s Well*, the first of a group of one-act verse plays entitled *Four Plays for dances*. Both in theme and in technique this collection shows a departure from the work Yeats had written for the Abbey Theatre. Underlying the change are two basic reasons: these plays were written after the 1914 *Responsibilities*, a collection of poems often cited as marking a transition in Yeats’s outlook and style from a soft lyricism to a cryptic and highly personalized symbolism; furthermore, this group of plays was not intended for a public theatre but for a private and selected audience, “for some fifty people in a drawing-room or a studio.”

This turning away from the physical limitations of a public theatre and an unselected audience was in part a reaction on the part of Yeats against the everyday realis which was an increasing trend at the Abbey

Theatre; after 1912 he was less actively associated with that movement, deploring that fact that playwrights there had decided that it was necessary to "applaud the common taste or starve." Yeats, however, felt the need of a theatre. "I believe myself to be a dramatist," he wrote in 1916. "I desire to show events and not merely tell of them ...... and I seem to myself most alive at the moment when a room full of people share the one lofty emotion. My blunder has been that I did not discover in my youth that my theatre must be the ancient theatre that can be made by unrolling a carpet or marking out a place with a stick, or setting a screen against the wall." Yeats realized that the success of such an endeavor would be necessarily limited: "In writing these little plays I knew that I was creating something which could only fully succeed in a civilization very unlike ours. I think they should be written for some country where all classes share in a half-mythological, half-philosophical folk-belief which the writer and his small audience lift into a new subtlety ... I have now found all the mythol-
ogy and philosophy I need in the papers of my old
friend and rival, Robertes."

Thus it is not surprising that in these all four
of the plays are more removed from actuality and recognisable realism than plays Yeats had written previously.
The first two, At the Hawk's Hall and The Only Jealousy
of Euer, are respectively the first and the last in the
Cuchulain cycle, the others being The Green Helmet and
On Balle’s Strand. At the Hawk’s Hall deals with the
meeting of Cuchulain and Sofe (Aoife) at the well guarded
by the Sidhe; the last play dramatizes the attempt of
Euer to stir the ghost of Cuchulain back to life through
arousing memories even of Eithne Inguba, Cuchulain’s
mistress. The exploration of the world beyond conscious-
ness enters into the theme of another of the plays in
this series, The Dreaming of the Bones, which -- with
political overtones of the Easter Uprising -- is based
on the idea that the dead can return to their moral
and intellectual affinities on earth and converse with

87. Ibid., p. 106.
the living, "that the dead dream back for a certain time, through the more personal thoughts and deeds of life;" it suggests that the unrest in Ireland is part of the penance imposed upon Dermot and Dervergilla, mythological betrayers of their country. The last play of this group is Calvary, turning on the objective-subjective antithesis which Yeats felt a part of human personality; it explores the irrecoverable necessity of Judas's betrayal of Christ. All of the plays, then, carry a "psychic" and highly subjective theme which is furthered through a symbolism quite esoteric, for example, the birds in Calvary.

In treatment, however, the plays are consciously objective and even artificial in action, characters, and settings. Stylized gesture now becomes pantomime, as of the old man in At the Hawk's Hall; with intensified emotion it approaches the dance: the dance of the hank-woman in At the Hawk's Hall, the dance of the Síde in The Only Jealousy of Erzul, and the "dance of the dice-throwers" in Calvary. In keeping with the artificiality of the action, the characters are masked and marionette-like, altogether without individuality and wholly removed

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88. Ibid., p. 129.
from physical personality, representing the "images of profound emotion." As for the scene, it is no longer even suggested by stage design but only symbolized—sometimes by a patterned screen as in The Dreaming of the Bones, sometimes by a cloth unfolded and folded by the musicians as they chant a background seed or setting. The delivery of the lines of the musicians and of the actors is carefully directed to be spoken in tune with the music explicitly scored for the pitch and cadence of the voice as well as for the drum, zither, and gong, which accompany the speaking.

In keeping with the reserved discipline of the technique of these plays, the lines are notably pruned of the kind of imagery for its own sake that was often apparent in Yeats's earlier work. The soft, sensuous poetry has given way to sleek and hardened crypticism, such as Cuchulain's "What a wise silence has fallen in this dark!" or his observation that the Sidhe "are dextrous fishers and they fish for men / with dreams upon the hook." This kind of propelling imagery is also in such lines

59. Ibid., p. 87.
as Emer's "We're but two women struggling with the sea" and the old man's summary, "Those that have long to live should fear her most, / The old are cursed already." The musicians, too, often add a comment of totality, as in At the Hawk's Well. "Wisdom must live a bitter life," and "Who but an idiot would praise / Dry stones in a well?"

An effective heightening of dramatic contrast is achieved through the antitheses of the characters such as Lazarus and Judas, Cuchulain and the Old Man, Emer and Pitheus Ingeba: "Women like us, the violent hour passed over, / Are flung into some corner like old nut-shells." In each instance a central and stabilized character acts as a fulcrum between the two opposing forces: Cuchulain in The Blessing of the corner, Christ in Galvare, and Zeff in At the Hawk's Well.

Dramatic suspense is especially well-handled in At the Hawk's Well and in The Only Jealousy of Emer. The unsuccessful quest of the old man adds to the apprehension when Cuchulain undertakes the search for the supernatural experience, and the curse which is the mark of success
is kinetically meaningful in relation to the inevitable outcome:

....That curse may be
Never to win a woman's love and keep it;
Or always to mix hatred in the love;
Or it may be that she will kill your children,
That you will find them, their throats torn and bloody,
Or you will be so maddened that you will kill them
with your own hand.

Likewise the progression of attempts to arouse Cuchulain
— Emer, Eithne Inguba, and finally the Sidhe — create
a suspense as to whether Cuchulain will capitulate to
the supernatural forces entirely.

In *Four Plays for Dancers*, then, Yeats departed
from his earlier technique by adopting some ideas from
the Noh plays of Japan; in the use of masks and of mar-
ionette-like gestures, approaching the dance, of cadenced
and chanted speech, and of formalized and esoteric
symbolism he thought that he had "found out the only
way the subtler forms of literature can find dramatic
expression ... whatever we lose in mass and in power
we should recover in elegance and subtlety."

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Yeats's last period of work in the drama, that period after the publication of *A Vision* in 1925, shows many of the artificial tendencies of the *Four Plays for Dancers* group: the mask (but not the marionette), the reserved economy of diction, the frequent use of esoteric symbolism, the simplicity of stage setting. Prose is more in evidence in these last plays than in the preceding period, however; *Fighting the Waves* is a prose version of *The Only Jealousy of Emer. The King of the Great Clock Tower* exists in both a prose and a poetic version, and *The Death of Cuchulain* — the last of Yeats's plays — contains a lengthy prose prologue. Evident also is a "comic and sardonic cast of mind" — far removed from the free-flowing lyrics of dreams and beauty in Yeats's early plays and apart, too, from the "psychic" philosophy-mythology of his second period.

The plays of the last several years include *The Cat and the Moon*, produced at the Abbey Theatre on May 9, 1926, "a play of occult character which incidentally

saturated the friendship between George Moore and Edward Hartley; “Fighting the Waves,” produced on August 13, 1929; 
Words Upon the Hind LEG, produced on November 17, 1930; 
The King of the Great Clock Tower, produced on June 30, 1934; Resurrection, produced on July 30, 1934; The Herm's Egg (1930), “too ribald to be produced”; Purgatory, 
produced in August of 1938; and The Death of Cuchulain, 
published posthumously in 1940.

The King of the Great Clock Tower, written in prose in 1934 and revised in 1938 to a poetic version called A Full Moon in March, is of the period during which Lady Gerald Wellesley noted of Yeats that “Sex, Philosophy, and the Occult preoccupy him. He strangely intermixes the three.” In the first version the characters are a king, dressed in red; a queen, masked and dressed in orange with details in black or red; a stroller, wearing a half-savage mask and dressed in black with red details;

62. Ibid., p. 385.
63. Ibid., p. 495.
64. Hone suggests (p.270) that The Player Queen, published in 1922, belongs to the last period.
the attendants, one bass-voiced and one tenor-voiced, both dressed in black. The action turns upon the incident that when the stroller claims the love of the queen and the king has him executed, the queen in a symbolic dance makes obeisance to the head; the king is so overcome that he lays his sword at her feet. The two attendants as musicians set the mood of the play: "O, what is life but a mouthful of air?" and they sing the lyrics of the queen's thoughts and of the head's consciousness. In 1938 a poetic version of the play was printed with Yeats's suggestion that if the play were to be played, the prose version of 1934 should be used.

A Full Moon in March uses the same general ideas of The King of the Great Clock Tower but the character of the king is omitted to reduce the fable to "its essentials" and give it "greater intensity." The character of the swineherd replaces the stroller and his lines are more pithy and realistic than were the lines of the stroller:

----------my memory too is gone,
Because great solitudes have driven me mad.
But when I look into a stream, the face
That trembles upon the surface makes me think
My origin more foul than rag or flesh.
The section concerns an old man and a boy who came

a notable example of compression and pictorial detail.

with the importance of the affections of a being. It in

written around the theme that a family is created

about the mother and the father. It once were stay

effort merely but that it is indicated when an consciousness

ended the play contained nothing accord for phenomenon

public appearnace it was on the occasion that the

the 1893 Abbey Theatre performance was to return the

another of the last plays Be Fitzgerald's of which

... description and the lower's night is returned.

... consider portion. The attention to staging remains

head, but her attention is more intense than in the

motion as before with a dance of affection toward the

the queen, now settled instead of masked, altho the

101
The play employs no machinery, no-opera, no lyrics. In the event of the lighting and the removal of the gods.

The theatre of the living and the removal of the dead.

Modern concept

emotion at the old man, recognition the result of the
murdered gods. The play opens on a moment of urgence
of the ghosts who appear in the house, in dead, living,
or in the boy's conversation open meaning the second
for when the consciousness is at on and / the dream
shows the mythically-poised and existential. at the old man's comment.

Yet of the line. The change to an irritable line.
apposite to the separation of the action and the appear-
the boy in existence, and the phenomenon of the scene in
the internal contrast between the old man and

the same speech-uttered.

regard that accrued crime. My father and I can

quarrel over a bag of money and the man who ate the boy.
The play is stripped to its bare essentials. "Right down to the end Yeats was experimenting."

In his last play, *The Death of Cuchulain*, Yeats treated the kind of subject of much of his early work in a manner definitely characteristic of his second and third periods. The play is a procession of relationships introduced by a prose prologue spoken by an old man:

I have been selected because I am out of fashion and out of date like the antiquated romantic stuff the thing is made of. I am so old I have forgotten the name of my father and mother .... I wanted an audience of fifty or a hundred, and if there are more, I beg them not to shuffle their feet or talk while the actors are speaking .... On the present occasion they must know the old spice and Mr. Yeats's plays about them ............

Then there are scenes of Cuchulain and Eithne Inguba, of the Morrígú, of Aoife and of the Blind Man of On Baile's Strand, who slays Cuchulain for the twelve pennies Evea has promised for Cuchulain's head. Then in a dance reminiscent of the Queen's adoration in *The King of the Great Clock Tower*, Eve dances around the

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at a present-day Irish fair played and sung by fiddlers
new ornament for tunes - the phy o' the tone on a gone out
remarkable instrumentation of the time element, another
the heads of the six successful tenor. Finally - in a
march partizan a partizan representing organization need and
CONCLUSION
In conclusion, these observations are cited in regard to Yeats’s application of his theories of the drama to his own plays:

(1) At thirty-five, as an established lyric poet, Yeats turned to a practical association with the theatre which was to furnish a discipline out of which emerged some theories of the drama and some plays written to fit his own requirements. The principal ideas Yeats held to were that the theatre should be an art stimulating men’s deepest emotions aroused out of their deep-rooted past; that drama is the most inclusive of the arts and that tragedy is the highest form of the drama; that character should be non-individual and representative of the “souls of men in action;” that scenery should be only a patterned background; that acting should be simplified and that speaking should be delivered on note or chant for a heightened emotional effect. Yeats’s themes were often subjective, as in The Shadowy Waters, and his treatment of them was for the most part lyrical and interpretative, as in The Countess Cathleen and The Land of Heart’s Desire. Likewise in these first plays, his poetic language was soft, sensuous, and over-laden with imagery. A constant experimenter, Yeats revised his plays frequently to try new effects in speaking, in acting, in scene, and in lighting. He was so uncompromising in his artistic
The emotional impact often present in the third period...

Paradoxically, combining the comedy of the second period with farce and irony, and in manner both the play and question, for example, referring to allusions from Irish of the first two periods, in subject matter the lesson of play suitable for a public theatre, combining the techniques in the last years, tends returned to writing.

Together on mood and emotion objectively presented.

Artistic and appropriate, and the empathy was absolute.

Any representation of actuality. The style became removed the play even further than had earlier ones from manner including music, decoration, and transfer which in poor plays for reasons the employed a highly artificial who would appreciate the poetry in the verse-dramas.

And so, the theatre and wrote for small, select groups of those that the sometimes disregarded the playwright.

The Shadowed Reefs.

At in the continuing scene of the Committee gathered and in limitations of the theatre and the presence of an audience, standards that he sometimes disregarded the physicist.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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----- *Letters on Poetry from W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley.* London: Oxford University Press, 1940.


----- *Plays for an Irish Theatre.* New York: Macmillan, 1903, V. I - II.

----- *Plays for an Irish Theatre by William Butler Yeats.* London: A. H. Bullen, 1913. (With scene designs by Gordon Craig.)


APPENDIXES
### APPENDIX I

First Production Dates of Plays by William Butler Yeats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Venue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 29, 1894</td>
<td>The Land of Heart's Desire</td>
<td>Avenue Theatre, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 9, 1899</td>
<td>The Countess Cathleen</td>
<td>The Irish Literary Theatre Antient Concert Rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 21, 1901</td>
<td>Diarmuid and Grania</td>
<td>The Irish Literary Theatre at the Gaiety Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2, 1902</td>
<td>Cathleen ni Heilihan</td>
<td>The National Dramatic Company St. Teresa's Hall Clarendon Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 30, 1902</td>
<td>A Pot of Broth</td>
<td>The Irish National Dramatic Company, Antient Concert Rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 14, 1903</td>
<td>The Hour Glass</td>
<td>Irish National Theatre Society, Maltesworth Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 7, 1903</td>
<td>The King's Threshold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 14, 1904</td>
<td>The Shadow Waters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1. Compiled from Lady Gregory's Our Irish Theatre, Malone's The Irish Drama, and Yeats's plays as cited in the bibliography.

2. Malone (p. 343) cites October 13; he also cites October 30, (p. 327), the date given by Lady Gregory.

3. This is the date given in both the 1907 and 1919 editions of The Poetical Works of W.B. Yeats; Lady Gregory gives the date as October 8, 1903.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Play</th>
<th>Production Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 27, 1904</td>
<td>On Smiles Strand</td>
<td>The Irish National Theatre Society at the Abbey Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 27, 1906</td>
<td>Daïdrou</td>
<td>The National Theatre Society, Ltd. Abbey Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 8, 1906</td>
<td>The Shadowy Waters</td>
<td>The National Theatre Society, Ltd. Abbey Theatre</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 21, 1907</td>
<td>The Unicorn from the Stars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 19, 1908</td>
<td>The Golden Helmet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 10, 1910</td>
<td>The Green Helmet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 16, 1911</td>
<td>Land of Heart's Desire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 14, 1911</td>
<td>The Countess Cathleen</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>February 22, 1912</td>
<td>Land of Heart's Desire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 26, 1912</td>
<td>The Countess Cattleen</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 21, 1913</td>
<td>The Hour-Glass</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 13, 1913</td>
<td>The King's Threshold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. This is the date given in both editions of Yeats's The Poetical Works of William B. Yeats. Malone and Lady Gregory both give the date as November 24.

5. This is the date given in the 1915 edition of The Poetical Works of William B. Yeats; Malone cites both January 26 (p. 339) and February 26 (p. 343).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Production Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 9, 1916</td>
<td><em>At the Hawk’s Well</em></td>
<td>Private Performance in London</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 9, 1919</td>
<td><em>The Player Queen</em></td>
<td>The Abbey Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 9, 1926</td>
<td><em>The Cat and the Moon</em></td>
<td>The Abbey Theatre</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| December 6, 1926| *Oedipus the King*  
  (translated from Sophocles) |                          |
| September 12, 1927| *Oedipus at Colonus*  
  (translated from Sophocles) |                          |
| August 13, 1929 | *Fighting the Waves*       |                          |
| November 17, 1930| *Verses Upon the Window-pane* |                          |
| June 30, 1934   | *The King of the Great Clock Tower* |                          |
| July 30, 1934   | *The Resurrection*         |                          |
| August, 1938    | *Purgatory*                |                          |
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Important dates in the life of William Butler Yeats.

Appendix II
1902 The Dun Emer Guild founded. First book off the Dun Emer press was *On Baile's Strand*. 
*Cathleen ni Houlihan* and *A Fat of Broth* produced by the Fay Company.

1903 The *Hour Glass* and *The King's Threshold* produced. 
*Adams of Good and Evil* (essays) published.

1903-1904 Yeats on first lecture tour in the United States.

1904 *The Shadow Baters* and *On Baile's Strand* produced.

1906 *Leidred* produced.

1907 *The Unicorn from the Stars* (with Lady Gregory.) 
The Playboy controversy.

1908 *The Golden Helmet* produced.

1909 The death of Synge. Yeats met Ezra Pound.

1910 *The Green Helmet* produced. Lennox Robinson became 
manager of the Abbey Theatre.

1911 Revivals of *The Countess Cathleen* and of *The Land of 
Heart's Desire*.

1912 Yeats met Georgie Hyde-Lees.

1914 Publication of *Responsibilities* (poems) often cited as 
marking a transition in Yeats's outlook.

1916 *At the Hawk's Well* produced. The Easter uprising. 
Yeats refused a knighthood.

1917 Florence Farr died on April 28 in Ceylon. Yeats was 
marrid on October 21 to Georgie Hyde-Lees with Ezra 
Pound as best man.

1922 Yeats a Senator of the Irish Free State.

1923 Yeats awarded the Nobel Prize in literature.
1924 Yeats visited Ezra Pound in Sicily; the first of continental holidays.

1925 *A Vision* published privately.

1926 *The Cat and the Moon* produced at the Abbey Theatre.

1928 *The Tower* (poems) published.


1930 *Words Upon the Windowpanes* produced.

1931 Degree of Doctor of Laws from Oxford.

1932 Death of Lady Gregory, Formation of the Academy of Letters with Shaw as president.

1933 Death of George Moore.

1934 *The King of the Great Clock Tower* produced. Death of George Russell.

1935 *A Full Moon in March* produced. (Revision of *The King of the Great Clock Tower*.)

1936-37 BBC Broadcasts.

1938 *Purgatory* produced. Yeats's last public appearance.

1939 Death of Yeats January 28 on the Riviera.
APPENDIX III

The highly interesting possibility of the inter-relation of ideas on stage design held by Yeats and Gordon Craig has not been satisfactorily established. Certainly several striking parallelisms occur.

As early as 1901 when Craig was yet unknown and when the Irish Theatre movement was in its infancy, Yeats, admiring Craig's work, "longed for productions of his poetic plays by Gordon Craig," but this was prevented by lack of financial support. However, Yeats apparently kept watch of Craig's stage designs, for he commented in 1904 that Craig had done "wonderful things with the lighting ..." though somewhat at the expense of the actor.

The main ideas in Yeats's 1903 essay on the reform of the theatre are similar to Craig's comment from Berlin in 1905 calling for a reform in all parts of the theatre. In 1908 Craig advocated a theatrical appeal to all the

1. None, W. B. Yeats, p. 182.
2. Yeats, Plays and Controversies, p. 135.
senses through action, word, color, line, and rhythm.
This compares with Yeats's remark in 1911 that the plane of the diminished character in tragedy should be taken by "rhythm, balance, pattern, images that remind us of vast passions ...." Yeats's ideas on the simplicity of stage design and the function of the patterned suggestiveness of the set is the essence of Craig's remark in 1906, "Actuality, accuracy of detail, is useless upon the stage." He elaborated again upon this idea in 1923 in Scene. The possible inter-flow of ideas on stage design between Yeats and Craig was commented upon by one writer in 1915:

Mr. Yeats has been an advocate of scenery that is background chiefly, and in no way divertive of attention from the play itself, its thought, its words, its acting. He would have it, in a way, decorative, but subdued and in harmony with the subject of the play ... It may be that this attitude of Mr. Yeats is in a measure due to his talks with Mr. Gordon Craig, but it is equally true, I think, that some of Mr. Gordon Craig's ideas are due in part to his talks with Mr. Yeats.

As for the idea of marionettes on stage, Craig as early as 1907 pushed his theory of formalism to the extreme.

5. Yeats. Plays for an Irish Theatre (1911), p. viii
of predicting the replacement of the actor by the marionette because, as he thought, there was no need for individuality or for characterization on stage. Not until 1916, however, in At the Hawk's Well, did Yeats direct the players to move "a little stiffly and gravely like 9 marionettes."

The mask as a theatrical technicality was first advocated by Craig in 1910. The next year he designed a mask for the Fool in The Hour Glass; that mask was not then used, however, because Craig could not be present to supervise its construction. Yeats at that time pondered the possibility of using the same Fool and mask with a masked Blind Man in a production of On Baile's Strand. Actually, Yeats's first use of the mask in the theatre was in 1916 in At the Hawk's Well. His reasons for

12. Ibid., p. 221.
championing the use of the mask are essentially the same as those of Craig: that facial expression cannot be controlled but projected as the theatre demands; that most expression on stage comes from movements of the whole body; and that the mask in being an exaggerated highlighting of the characteristics of what it represents can intensify the effect of the characters. However, Yeats in 1920 in a preface to *Four Plays for Dancers* made no mention at all of Craig but gave sole credit to Edmund Dulac for having taught him "the value and beauty of the mask" and for "rediscover[ing] how to design and make it."