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Attitude Toward English Culture in Irish Literature

Sister Rita Cascia Smith

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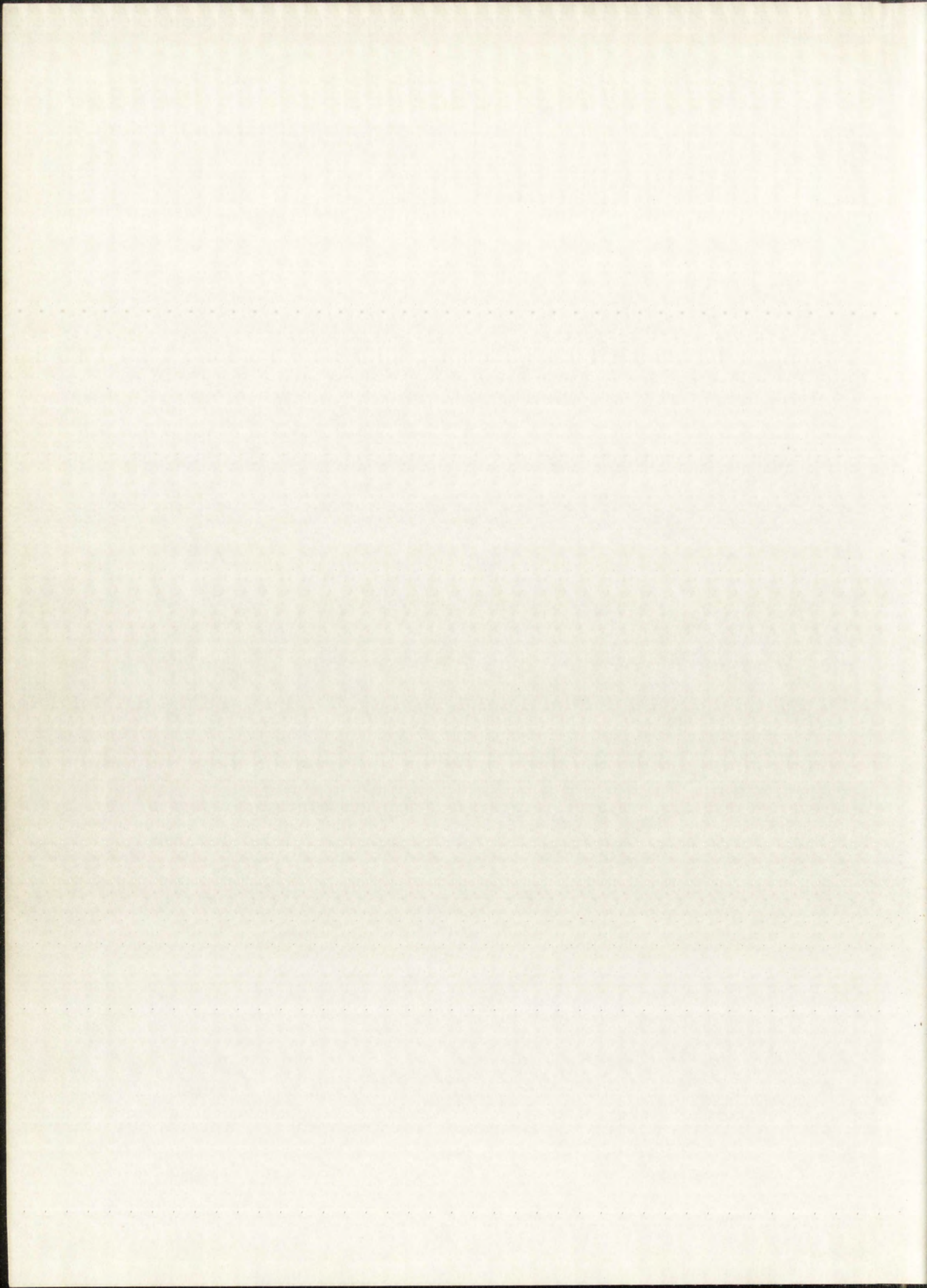


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ATTITUDE TOWARD ENGLISH CULTURE
IN
IRISH LITERATURE

By

Sister Rita Cascia Smith

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of
Arts in English

University of New Mexico

1940

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MASTER OF ARTS

George F. Hammond
DEAN

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DATE

Thesis committee

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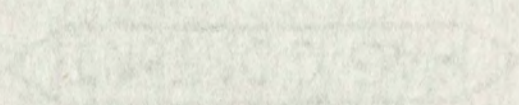


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THE GAELIC

What are these words that beat their wings in vain
Against the holden portals of my brain
Yet with swift flight and sure
Find my heart's inmost citadel
And rest secure:
Whence is their might?
How have they power to rouse me, as a bell
Rouses a sleeping city in the night?
Whence is this Pentecostal miracle?
They fall with alien sound upon mine ear,
And yet I hear,
I hear, I answer. Gael with Gael speaks
Across what seas of time, athwart what peaks
Of silence, from what deeps!
Not with my ears I hearken, but my blood.
Its surges are at flood.
There is a music in the fragrant night,
A flame, a thunder,
A beacon breaks in light,
The chains are reft asunder,
Torrent to torrent leaps
Across the sundering gulf of griefs and years
Not with my tongue I answer, but my tears.

Blanche Mary Kelly

What are these words that I hear
Against the golden portals of my door
Yet with swift flight and light
Find my heart's hidden door
And rest secure
Where is the light
How have they power to enter me, as I
Roses are blooming in the night
Where is the light
They tell of a light beyond the night
And yet I hear
I hear, I hear, I hear
Across the sea of time, across the sea
Of silence, from that distant
Not with my ears I hear, but with my heart
Its surges and its light
There is a music in the firmament of light
A flame, a thunder
A beacon breaks in light
The chimes are tolling
Torrent to torrent, I hear
Across the rushing mill of time and space
Not with my senses I hear, but with my heart

PREFACE

Oh Eire, leave the ways of sleep now days of
promise are;
The rusty spears upon your walls are stirring
to and fro,
In dreams they front uplifted shields--Then wake,
Mo Chraoibhin Cno!!

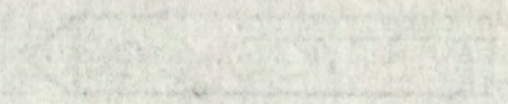
A consideration of the attitude toward English culture in Irish literature necessitates an understanding of the conflict of the two cultures: the conflict of an Anglo-Saxon race with an Irish race; the conflict of a Protestant culture with a Catholic culture.

A critical appreciation of this conflict which covers eight centuries with scarcely a suspension of twenty-four hours, may be gained by taking a dispassionate view of the history of both countries; by realizing what both have achieved; and speculating intelligently on their future.

These two islands, England and Ireland, in their physical isolation from the continent maintained distinct cultures which aroused a loyalty and independence with a delight in the homeland unknown to the common culture over the greater

1
Pronounced Mo chreeven no. "My cluster of nuts"--my brown-haired girl, i.e., Ireland. When it was treason to sing of Ireland openly, the olden poets sang of and to their beloved under many figurative names.

BOOK FIVE



part of Europe. These qualities are seen in even a greater degree in Ireland than in England since the isolation is greater; since the Roman dominion never reached Ireland.

A survey of Ireland's literary achievements with its prevailing attitude toward English culture will be the purpose of this paper. In order that this "clash of cultures" be intelligibly discussed, one must take cognizance of their social, economic, and political relationships throughout the centuries. The traditional cleavage occasioned by these relationships will be treated in the second chapter of this work.

Since culture includes not only physical environment and race but the philosophy of life--religion--as well, Irish culture was incapable of being absorbed into the materialistic culture of England. There originated, therefore, the "hyphenated Irishman." The Anglo-Irish and the Scots-Irish with their contributions to literature are matter for Chapter III. These societies differed much in culture but their common bond was a common antipathy to the Catholic, and, as a consequence, a common attraction to the great

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Protestant culture.

Their contact, however, with a peasantry which even today, apart from the corroding influence of this religio-political strife, maintains a native courtesy and urbanity you will not see surpassed in the courts and palaces of Europe, was certain to produce a rich harvest in literature. There sprang up, therefore, a distinctive literature of the Ireland which was not "national": written by people who had their roots in the soil, but not in the life of the nation; whose whole existence was passed among the completely Irish, and yet was divided from them by a deep severance, partly in religion but more intimately in the other fundamental question of ownership--of right to the soil.

There was something uncongenial to Catholic Ireland in the Anglo-Irish literature which dominated Ireland for three-hundred years, previous to the Celtic Renaissance; it was in Ireland and not Irish. Great in destruction, great in creation, the Anglo-Irish society helped to destroy Irish life and Irish civilization; until

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there arose Standish O'Grady who reinterpreted the glory and the dignity of early Gaelic Ireland; Douglas Hyde who stayed the decay of Gaelic speech; and William Butler Yeats who added to the national heritage a beauty partly compounded of ancient things. This revival of the Gaelic literary heritage is the concern of Chapter IV. Rescued from neglect by the pioneer editors and translators of the old literature, Irish culture began once more to live in the songs and stories of the poets, instead of dying slowly in the folk-tales of the peasantry.

The most conspicuous setting for the Celtic Renaissance has been the theatre. For, whereas the poets, essayists, and novelists worked in isolation, the theatre involved cooperation of many artists. Within the first five-and-twenty years of its existence the Irish Theatre produced plays by nearly a hundred authors, of whom eighty-two were Irish and either living or recently dead. Nothing of this movement is so surprising as Ireland's power to furnish fresh talent--and even genius--to the company of actors.

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 astonishing as Ireland's power to furnish Irish
 talent--and even genius--to the company of actors.

It has long baffled the ethnologist to account for the frequent instances where Irishmen born of uneducated parents have leaped from the humblest strata of society into the front rank of thinkers, orators, literateurs, artists and professional men, without the intervention of a single generation between the peasant and the celebrity. These recent authors with their corresponding attitude toward English culture are considered in Chapter V.

In conclusion, some future speculation is ventured into the advancement or degeneration of both countries with a corresponding culture portrayed in the literature of each.

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BOOK

CHAPTER I

TRADITIONAL LINES OF CLEAVAGE

The star of the West shall arise in its glory,
And the land that was darkest be brightest in story.

Should a foreigner be asked his opinion of Ireland and the Irish, he would possibly answer that Ireland is a small island in the Western Ocean, in close proximity to Britain. It enjoys a damp, equable climate. It was never conquered by the Roman Empire, but its people were subjugated by the English nearly eight hundred years ago and have only recently gained their freedom. Considering its relatively small size, the important place that Ireland holds in history is truly remarkable. The vast majority of the nation are Catholics, and it is one of the strongest centers of Catholicity in the world.

But, what of the Irishman with his fond memories and glorious tradition? The answer is quite different. Hallowed by its ruins and legends, Ireland, to him scorns such placid description. To him the green fields and talking rivers, the dun-topped ridges and carn-crowned mountains, the ruined and desecrated

fanels in the rich valleys, the white-walled cottages on sloping hillsides, the thatched roofs and bright turf hearths speak to his very heart and soul, calling up memories of valiant fights, of pleasant days, of the ploughboy's whistle, of the busy harvest field, of the pipes and the dancing, of children's merry laugh and reckless glee, and quick as shower follows sunshine on an April day, tears course down the cheek at the thought of ruined homes, and heartless evictions and state-aided exile, and penalised worship. But, as he ponders, a spot of light breaks through the dark clouds, widening and widening with great shafts of light, until the whole landscape is radiant with sunshine and the buttercups and ceannbhan dance with newness of life, for his beloved land has awakened to a light of peace and prosperity.

Stirring up the ashes of the dead past is always for Irishmen, a work of pleasure mixed with a good deal of regret--pleasure at the glorious achievements of their noble forbears, regret at the thought of what might have been and of what the Irish genius could have accomplished were its development not hindered and checked by such a series of untoward circumstances. There is great

consolation, however, in the thought that as a race, there is still within it the germ which by careful nurturing, will revivify the race and restore some of its former greatness.

Fifteen centuries before the Angels announced the birth of the world's Redeemer to the shepherds on the Galilean hills, a warrior set sail from Spain for the shores of Ireland. He was Galamh, the Knight, or Milesius. He and his band of followers found the colony of the Tuatha de Danaan of the race of Nemidius who had held possession of the island for one hundred and ninety-seven years. They defeated the Danaan who retired to Rathlin, Aran, and other lonely islands whence the Firbolgs, an older race of colonists, had fled two centuries before when the Tuatha de Danaan first came to Ireland.²

Early Irish literature is permeated with the magic race of the De Danaan who transformed themselves into Fairies, and in that guise continued to inhabit the underworld of the Irish hills. Fair or auburn haired, with blue eyes, these stately "People of the Fairy Mound" had

²
E. Leahy, "Hugh Roe O'Donnell" 20 pp. p.1
(Dublin: The "Irish Messenger" Office, 5 Great
Denmark St.)

the fair brightness associated with the divinities. Everything that these Irishmen of the past admired was reflected in the ideal beings of their imagination, the Fairies. Elaborate detail, a characteristic of ancient Irish writing was brought out in the descriptions of the Fairies, their activities, and their land.

These tales comprise the first cycle of Irish literature known as the Mythological Cycle. Practically all the personages are preternatural beings: gods, demi-gods, and fairies. References to their legendary beginnings and Irish genealogies are traced back to the kindred of Milesius--his three sons and his brother in this cycle. The knowledge of these was assumed thruout Irish literature down to the eighteenth century. Ireland is the only country of Europe where the native can produce titles of his descent, and trace with certainty to the twilight of history the origins of his race.

The Celts' early religion was Druidism; worship of the sun, the moon, and the stars as gods; and veneration for trees, mountains, rivers, and wells. The druids were "men of science,"

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and knew the arts of healing and divination; in fact, revered as magicians they were held in great esteem by the people. This racial mysticism, and constant communion with the eternal things of life, respect for womanhood, love of music and poetry, and belief in the immortality of the soul, betrayed a culture which harmonized with the ideals of Christianity and resulted in a mating of kindred spirits. Christianity, therefore, found moral and spiritual ideals of a highly developed order in pagan Ireland, and it did not hesitate to adopt whatever in the literature of the country illustrated its own teachings, and not only were the voyages made by pre-Christian Irish to a supernatural world--reached in some cases by sailing over the ocean and others by penetrating a fairy mound--full of suggestions as to ways of enforcing Christian doctrine; but Christianized, these people for the love of God emigrated in large numbers to plant the faith in distant lands. Christianity, then, did not abolish the existing Irish institutions but purified and perfected them.

The piety, zeal, self-sacrifice, and courage

RECKYAT BOND

in face of every danger and every trial, of St. Patrick, are completely revealed in his "Confession," one of his two existing works; the other work is his "Epistle to Coroticus." When he made his episcopal see at Armagh, he was confronted with the difficulty of providing priests to carry on his work. A college, therefore, was founded at Armagh in 450, which grew to be quite famous and attracted many students from distant lands. Other schools founded in the fifth century were Noendrum, Louth, and Kildare. The famous monastic schools of Clonfert, Clonard, Clonmacnois, Arran, and Bangor arose in the sixth century; while in the seventh century, those of Clendalough and Lismore arose.

The monastic character of the early Irish church resulted in the establishment of Clonard on the banks of the Boyne, by St. Finnian; Clonmacnois by the waters of the Shannon, by St. Kieran; so that before the close of the sixth century, thousands of monks had followed those holy men. St. Brigid founded a convent at Kildare and her example was followed by St. Ita,

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St. Fanchea, and many others. At the close of the sixth century there were few districts which had not monasteries and monks, convents and nuns.

Not only in missionary zeal were these schools, colleges, and monasteries influential, but these monastic schools had perfected the inheritance of the Irish native culture and had become the intellectual organs of Irish society. The classical traditions of Greece and Rome blending with the native culture created a vernacular literature of the Celts based on pagan traditions but enriched by Christian influence. Thus the Golden Age of Christian culture was reached in the seventh and eighth centuries.

And if we would know what was the character of these schools, we have only to remember that Colgu, who had been educated at Clonmacnois, was the master of Alcuin; that Cicuil, the Geographer, came from the same school; that Cummian, Abbot and Bishop of Clonfert, combated the errors about the paschal computation with an extent of learning and a wealth of knowledge amazing in a monk of the seventh century; and that at the close of the eighth century two Irishmen went to the court of Charlemagne and were described by a monk of St. Gall as 'men incomparably skilled in human learning.' The once pagan Ireland had by that time become a citadel of Christianity, and was rightfully called the School of the West, the Island of Saints and Scholars.³

3

Canon D'Alton, The Island of Saints and Scholars, "The Glories of Ireland." Edited by Dunn and Lennox, 1914, p. 12
(Washington, D.C.: Phoenix, Limited)

St. Francis, and many others. At the close of the

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Canon D'Alton, *The Island of Saints and Scholars, "The Glories of Ireland,"* Edited by Dunn and Lennox, 1914, p. 12 (Washington, D.C.: Phoenix, 1914)

Although Christianity stimulated learning, the Irish pagans knew sufficient letters to hand down to Irish Christians the substance of their pagan epics, sagas, and poems, which portrayed the manners, feelings, and customs of pagan Ireland with all the fond intimacy of romance. These pictures of the early Celts exhibit an earlier culture-stage in the evolution of humanity than do the poems of Homer.

The oldest alphabet used in Ireland appears to have been the Ogam, which consists of a number of short lines straight or slanting, and drawn either below, above, or through one long stem line. It is supposed to have been invented in Ireland and is found in stone inscriptions dated as early as the third century. Too cumbrous for literary purposes, the Roman alphabet was introduced to fit these needs.

The earliest writings of Ireland show little concern for any other country. Unlike the other barbaric peoples, they possessed a native tradition of learning, represented by the schools of the poets or Filid, which enjoyed considerable wealth and social prestige. It was the duty of the poet to

...the ...
...down to ...
...the ...
...with ...
...of ...
...in ...
...of ...
...a ...
...to have ...
...of ...
...other ...
...it is ...
...and ...
...as ...
...purpose ...
...these ...
...the ...
...concern ...
...part ...
...of ...
...or ...
...social ...

maintain national life as a recorder of important events in the life of the nation. Each Gaelic ruler had his Gaelic poet, and as an officer of the court was maintained thereby.

The harmonious versification of Gaelic poetry, was at first expressed in rhythmical verses, each containing a fixed number of accented syllables and hemistichs separated by a pause. The more learned system, however, introduced in the eighth century, was characterized by alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and a fixed number of syllables. This system was replaced again in the seventeenth century by a system in which no account was taken of consonantal rhyme or of the number of syllables. This tedious art was acquited only after long years of study, and the poets had a regular hierarchy.

The highest in rank, the oolamh, knew 350 kinds of verse and could recite 250 principal and 100 secondary stories. The ollamhs lived at the court of the kings and the nobles, who granted them freehold lands; their persons and their property were sacred; and they had established in Ireland schools in which the people might learn history, poetry, and law. The bards formed a numerous class, of a rank inferior to the file; they did not enjoy the same honors and privileges; some of them even were slaves; according to their standing, different kinds of verse were assigned to them as a monopoly.⁴

4

Georges Dottin, Native Irish Poetry,
Ibid. p. 266

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The highest in rank, the colman, knew
850 kinds of verse and could recite 250
principal and 100 secondary stories. The
colman lived at the court of the king and
the nobles, who granted him fiefhold lands;
their persons and their property were sacred;
and they had established in Gaelic schools
in which the people might learn history,
poetry, and law. The words formed a numerous
class, of a rank inferior to the colman; they
did not enjoy the same honors and privileges;
some of them even were slaves; according to
their standing, different kinds of verse were
assigned to them as a monopoly.

The main purpose of these poems was to preserve history, genealogy, toponomy, and lives of saints in verse form that they might be the more easily recalled. These poems were not the mere records of deeds but expressed in detailed description a deep love of inanimate and animate beings, garbed in subtle harmony.

But this real life in poetry is not found in the mythological cycle, important as it is in legendary background. To aid his memory the bard grouped his tales about certain happenings; such as, Feasts, Elopements, "Tains" or Cattle-spoils, and Battles. Those belonging to the Red Branch cycle of King Conchobar and Cuchulainn, including the epic tale of the Tain or Cattle-spoil of Cualnge, has some historical basis; and are especially valuable for social history on account of the detailed descriptions they give of customs, dress, weapons, habits of life, and ethical ideas.

Cuchulain, the Achilles of this group of tales, was half-divine. Not content with ordinary human deeds, the imagination of the Gael contrived creatures, neither god nor mortal, able to secure

The main purpose of these monuments is to
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 human deeds, the imitation of the Götter
 creatures, neither God nor mortal, but to reveal

protection from the immortals. The standard of wealth at that time was the possession of herds. When the Amazonian queen, Medb, and her husband, Ailill, compared their possessions, she decided to send the combined forces of the south and west into Ulster to carry off a famous bull, the Brown Bull of Cooley, the only match in Ireland for one possessed by her husband.

This pursuit of the cattle of neighboring tribes was the prime cause of the innumerable raids which comprise this cycle. Despite this apparent savagery, the warriors had a high and exacting code of honor greatly resembling the chivalry of the Arthurian circle with the exception that the Irish were devoid of the obligatory courtesies of the more artificial ages. These tales abound in generosity between enemies, simplicity and humor. The female characters of Emer, Deirdre, Etain, Grainne, form the subject of a large number of tales.

The story of Deirdre and the Sons of Usnach, is the most famous in early Gaelic literature and is comparable to the Greek story of Helen. Conachar set apart and reared for himself the child Deirdre

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to send the combined forces of the south and west
into Ulster to carry off a famous bull, the Brown
Bull of Cooley, the only match in Ireland for one
possessed by her husband.

This pursuit of the cattle of neighboring
tribes was the prime cause of the immortal's raids
which comprise this cycle. Despite this element
savagery, the warriors had a high and exalted code
of honor greatly resembling the chivalry of the
Arthurian circle with the exception that the Irish
were devoid of the obligatory courtesy of the
more aristocratic ages. These tales abound in
generosity between enemies, simplicity and humor.
The female characters of Erec, Delphine, Elaine,
Graune, form the subject of a large number of tales.
The story of Delphine and the Son of Hamach,
is the most famous in early Celtic literature and
is comparable to the Greek story of Helen. Conchobair
delights and reared for himself the child Delphine

but she fled from the gray king with the young champion Naoise. He with his brothers carried her safely to Scotland where they lived happily until Conachar by trickery slew these three sons of Usnach.

The scenes of the second saga cycle are laid in Leinster and Munster. The Fena were a standing army, maintained by the monarch, trained to military service. They were divided into distinct tribes or clans, belonging to the several provinces, each under its own commander, and all under the command of a general-in-chief. It was during the reign of Cormac Mac Art in A. D. 254, that the Fena flourished and chroniclers dwell upon the magnificence of his court at Tara, and the prosperity of the country during his reign.

Finn, the son of Cumbal, commander-in-chief of the Fena under Cormac Mac Art, is the most vividly remembered in popular tradition of all the heroes of ancient Ireland. Oisín, his son, is renowned as a hero-poet to whom the bards attribute many poems still extant. Oscar, the son of Oisín, youthful and handsome, kindhearted, is one of the most valiant of the Fena.

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 handsome, kindhearted, is one of the most valiant of
 the Norse.

The literature of this cycle shows greater literary craftsmanship, and a more advanced civilization than did the Ulster cycle. There are more beautiful descriptions of nature, more sentiment, and their contact with the Fairies is more frequent. It is said that all the Fenians were obliged to know poetry and most of it is ascribed to Oisín who is supposed to have recited it for St. Patrick.

The great love story in this cycle is that of Grania who was to marry Finn. At the wedding feast at Tara, she saw Diarmuid, the Brown, to whom no woman could refuse her love; drugging the Fenians with a sleeping potion, she charged Diarmuid under geasa, a sort of chivalric pledge, to fly with her, although he did not wish to break loyalty with Finn. After months of flight before Finn and his companions, peace was made and Grania and Diarmuid lived happily. Although a feast of reconciliation is prepared, the disappointed lover takes his vengeance.

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of these tales; but the story of Ossian which was built up after Ireland became Christian held greater interest in Ireland itself. In this story a king's daughter from an island beyond the sea, comes riding over the waves on a white horse to seek a lover from among the Fenians. Her choice falls upon Ossian who rides away with her. A branch from Ireland was washed up upon the enchanted shore and he longed for his homeland. Niav, his fairy mistress, permitted him to return to look upon Ireland but not to set foot on its soil. He found a Christian Ireland with no trace of the Fenians. Accidentally falling from his horse, he finds himself an old man and is taken to St. Patrick who tries to convert him to Christianity.

Ireland is unique in its cherished literature of a cultured people, self-centered, independent of Roman discipline; of a period when the European countries were, so far as memorials testify, clouded in obscurity. We have fragmentary records of them in Roman writings when the Roman armies were over-running Western Europe but no native records. Undisturbed by these early incursions, Ireland developed

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a great body of literary material--historical, religious, poetic, romantic, in great variety. When Rome withdrew from England, the Teutons swept over it--Angles, Saxons, Danes, and Norsemen--bringing their songs to a country which was a part of Europe because it had been part of Rome, but until the ninth century, Ireland remained undisturbed.

Despite the high civilization and culture portrayed in these tales, Ireland remained a tribal organization. The head of each tribe was a king elected by freemen with property; the kingly office was not necessarily hereditary. Above the king of the tribe, which comprised several clans, was the king of the more, a union of several tribes; the king of the province; and lastly, the High King of Ireland. The power of the kings was limited; they swore to govern not only justly but in accordance with the traditions of their kingdoms, and they were to be without blemish of person or mind. This type of government shows aristocracy tempered with democracy, and gives some credence to the saying that every Irishman is the descendant of a king.

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thunder and of strife, these blood-thirsty and conquest-loving Vikings of the North animated with the fiercest pagan fanaticism, turned with fury against Christianity, and especially against monks and religious foundations. The fatal defect in Irish civilization was the failure to establish a central government--an advantage as well as a disadvantage; she had no central force to defeat the Normans, and therefore, no central subjugation of the island. The great monasteries of Armagh, Clonmacnois, Bangor, Kildare, and others were destroyed; and establishing themselves in Dublin, Limerick, Waterford, Wexford, and Carlingford, these Norsemen levied tribute upon the inhabitants and raided the country round. Fortified towns were built and trading communications made with Britain and the continent. To the many onslaughts on the four shores of Erin from the eighth century to the beginning of the eleventh, the Irish responded manfully, only to find fresh hordes descending a year or two later. When Turgesius, the Danish leader, called himself monarch of Ireland, Brian Borumha, or Boru, refused to submit and on Good Friday,

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A. D. 1014 on the famous field of Clontarf, utterly defeated the Danes of Dublin and the Danes of overseas. Unfortunately King Brian Boru lost his life in this hour of victory and the united state dissolved into jealous tribes. Fragments of the Norsemen remained all over Ireland and gradually merged with the Irish people.

Both King Brian and his predecessor, King Malachy had done much to revive culture, and, as soon as Danish power was broken, literature and the arts regained their former position. Kenneth O'Hartigan (circ. 975), O'Flynn and Macliag were the precursors of the renaissance. Scribes and annalists like Tighearnach (circ. 1088) resumed their labors. Everything that could be found of the older writings was brought together in books such as those two books, "The Book of Leinster" (twelfth century) and the Leabhar na h-Uidhre, the work of the scribe Maelmuire (circ. 1106) which are the most ancient among the famous manuscripts of Ireland. The Gospels were written down in the "Book of Durrow," the "Book of Armagh," and many others, that have come down to us from the same period.⁵

The inevitable traitor which has blighted Ireland's hopes on so many occasions, appeared in the person of Dermot MacMurrough, King of Leinster, in the year 1169, when he appealed to the Norman knights of England for aid against Roderick O'Connor, the Ard-Righ of Ireland. With the permission of

5

L. Paul-Dubois, "Contemporary Ireland" 1911, p. 12, Maunsell and Company, Limited, 96 Middle Abbey Street, Dublin

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Henry II, he obtained assistance and repossessed himself of his kingdom and allowed his friends to occupy Dublin and its surroundings. Some months later King Henry II of England strengthened this foothold of the Norman English by arriving in Ireland with an army of four thousand men, and dividing the island among the Normans in truly feudal fashion.

With the coming of the Normans and the parcelling of the land of Ireland by King Henry II, the Irish concept of a state, the Irish attitude toward a king and toward land tenure, were first brought into conflict with the feudal ideals of a king and of the holding of land.

The literary renaissance realized after the Danish invasion was in turn checked by the Anglo-Norman invasion, and thereafter nothing was added to the wealth of sagas or romance but in its transmission from generation to generation, it was reshaped and modernized. The professional bards, however, continued their schools until the 18th century. Gaelic literature boasts of a heritage which the English-speaking countries have never possessed--a great folk literature.

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CHAPTER II

IRISH WRITERS IN ENGLISH CULTURAL TRADITION

We look upon the sadness of the bog,
Of the dark turf beneath the still grey sky,
Pity and sorrow fill our very soul,
And only barren poverty seems nigh.

These invaders of twelfth-century Ireland brought two languages with them: Norman-French and Early English. These conquerors of England, spoke French for the most part: the Normans, FitzGilbert de Clare, Harvey de Montmaurice, Fitz Henry, Milo Fitzgerald, Maurice de Prendergast, FitzStephen. They had their trouveres, minstrels, and jongleurs, their songs of love and war, and delighted in the great chansons of their race, of Roland, Charlemagne and Godfrey.

They found the Irish culture and social structure enough like their own to appeal to them and within a century Norman lords had their Gaelic poets; Geraldines of Kildare and of Desmond, Butlers of Ormond, were patrons of Irish poetry, and the bardic schools maintained their intensive training. Throughout the country there was a civilization that was Irish and rested on the Irish language, Irish law, Irish customs, Irish dress, into which were

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Throughout the country there was a realization that
was Irish and rested on the Irish language, Irish
law, Irish customs, Irish dress, into which were

absorbed Normans, Anglo-Normans, English; hence, the would-be conquered became the conquerors, for the Normans became "Hibernicized."

Some of these settlers, however, were not so pliable but withdrew to Dublin and the surrounding country, where they lived in a district fortified against Irish raids by a palisade and a ditch, and appropriately called "The Pale." It was from this vantage ground that England began its efforts to "civilize" the Irish whom she regarded as barbarians. The democratic theory of land tenure, and a loyal devotion to the families from whom officers of the State were drawn, were inborn in the Irish and they regarded their system superior to the English feudal system of Roman civilization. This conflict between the English and the Celtic governmental systems from the time of the coming of the Normans built up century-old hostile attitudes.

Middle English came to Ireland in the twelfth century, spread in the thirteenth; and, in the following centuries, declined almost to extinction. From 1200 to 1600, English was an exotic medium and had scarcely more root in Ireland than Norman-French had.

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1800 to 1850, English was an exotic medium and had

scarcely more root in Ireland than Norman-French had.

Despite the famous statute of Kilkenny in 1367 by which Edward III forbade Englishmen to marry Irish-women, to form alliances with the Irish, to live according to Irish laws, to use the Irish language, to entertain Irishmen, to take Irish surnames, or to wear a mustache after the Irish fashion--under pain of death or imprisonment--the decline of English went on until the sixteenth century, when even in the towns within the Pale, English was being rapidly replaced by Irish.

The gallant house of Fitzgerald, or Geraldine, set the example of disregard for such a statute.

The English monarch strove in vain,
By law and force and bribe
To win from Irish thoughts and ways
This 'more than Irish' tribe;
For still they clung to fosterage--
To Brehon, cloak, and bard--
No king dare say to Geraldine:
'Your Irish wife discard!'

The barrenness of these centuries, following the Norman invasion, in literature and the arts might be explained in the fruitless internecine strife between lords and barons, in the fresh invasions of those who failed during these centuries to conquer the Gael or Gaelicized Normans.

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John F. Finerty, "The People's History of Ireland," p. 93, Vol. I 1904 (New York: The Co-operative Publication Society)

Despite the famous statute of Kilkenny in 1367 by which Edward III forbade Englishmen to marry Irish women, to form alliances with the Irish, to live according to Irish laws, to use the Irish language, to entertain Irishmen, to take Irish servants, or to wear a muslin after the Irish fashion--under pain of death or imprisonment--the decline of English went on until the sixteenth century, when even in the towns within the Pale, English was being rapidly replaced by Irish.

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the Norman invasion, in literature and the arts might be explained in the Irish interest in strife between lords and barons, in the Irish invasions of those who failed during these centuries to conquer the Gael or Gaelicized Normans. . . . The year after the Statute was enacted that

forbade the use of Irish in the English Pale, the fourth Earl of Desmond was appointed Justiciar for Ireland. He, Gerald the Rhymer, wrote poetry in Irish that still survives; he was, in fact, the originator in Irish of the poetry of courtly love.

The heroes and heroines of this type of poetry, were not derived from Ovid as in France and England. They are rather of Gaelic tradition which in its wealth of material had no need of borrowing.

There is a difference in Middle Anglo-Irish (1200--1582) and the Modern Anglo-Irish. The Middle Anglo-Irish literature, although exotic, must have had considerable bulk but only fragments of it remain extant; however, these fragments have distinctiveness. For instance, the verse-form that Friar Michael of Kildare makes use of is unique and therefore worth retrieving:

Rich man, bethink thee!
 Take good heede, what thou be.
 Thou are not but a brotil tree
 Of shorte seven foot,
 Ishrid without gold and fee--
 The axe is at thy root;
 The fiend unfreed halt all to glee
 This tree adown to root.
 So might I thee, I rede 'Flee!'
 And do thy soul its bote.⁸

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therefore worth retaining:

With me n, bebhinn éire!
Take good heed, what I say do.
Thou art not but a broil'ing
Of smoke never foot,
I'm all without gold and lea-
The axe is at thy root;
The land will need half the glass
This tree above the root.
So might I thee, I rede 't least,
And do thy soul its foe.

Another anonymous Goliardic piece of twenty stanzas is more oddly unique than is Michael of Kildare's. The first two long lines of each stanza rime with each other; the second two do not rime at all; the closing couplet rimes. A few Irish words are used in the poem and the whole thing has the effect of an unrepentant vagrant's delight in making fun of monks and merchants, saints and angels. The last two lines of each stanza is a comment similar to the remarks of a Chorus. In the first stanza the vagrant-poet is saluting the saints who are pictured in a church:

Hail, Saint Michael with the long spear!
 Fair be the wings upon thy shoulder,
 Thou hast a red kirtle anon to thy feet,
 Thou art the best angel that God ever made.
 This verse is full well iwrought,
 'Tis from very far ibrought.

And so it goes on, saluting monks, nuns, merchants, tailors, cobblers, skimmers, potters, bakers and brewers--the whole folk of the town in which the goliard finds himself, and making fun, too, of his own fun-making--a mad poet, and then there is the envoy to his friends:

Make glad, my friends, ye sit too long still,
 Speak now, and be glad, and drink your fill!
 Ye have heard of men's life that dwell in the land;
 Drink deep, make glad, for ye have no other need.

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 in a church:

Hail, Saint Michael with the long spear!
 Fair be the wings upon thy shoulder,
 Thou hast a red kirtle even to thy feet.
 Thou art the best angel that God ever made.
 This verse is full well wrought,
 'Tis from very far brought.

And so it goes on, saluting monks, nuns,
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 Ye have heard of man's life that dwells in the lap;
 Drink deep, make glad, for ye have no other need.

This song is isaid of me
Ever blessed mote ye be.¹⁰

This Anglo-Irish period ends with Richard Stanyhurst who wrote the Irish parts for Holinshed's Chronicles and translated a portion of Vergil--the Aeneid, Book I--IV; his translation is in hexametets. Although much of its phrasing is so fantastic that it is unintelligible, the passage containing Dido's address to Aeneas is magnificent; in this Stanyhurst shows himself Irish in his power of making a tirade:

Pack to soil Italian; cross the seas; fish
for a kingdom.
Verily, in hope rest I (if gods may take
duly revengement)
With gagd rocks compassed, then vainly
'Dido' reciting
Thou shalt be punished. I'll with fire
swartish hop after.
I will, as hobgoblin, follow thee; thou
shalt be more handled.
I shall hear, I doubt not, thy pangs in
Limbo related.¹¹

It is Richard Stanyhurst which makes the link between the first Anglo-Irish period and the second--the period which came with the Restoration. He was a Catholic and belonged to an Ireland that was more Norman than Saxon; the newer writers were Protestant.

The bitterness of race hatred had almost died out when the Reformation, as the opponents of the Church call the great schism of the sixteenth century,

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Ibid.

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10
 Ibid.
 11
 Ibid.

began to shake Europe like an earthquake. Although Henry VIII had defended the old faith to the extent of receiving from the Pope the title of "The Defender of the Faith," he was too weak to allow his religion to interfere with his passions and ambitions.

Henry severed England's spiritual connections with Rome, and declared himself head of the English "Reformed" Church, after the Pope refused him permission to divorce his lawful wife, Catherine. An "Act of Supremacy," declaring Henry supreme head of the Church of England, was passed through the English Parliament in 1534. The attitude of the Irish people toward Henry's "reformation" we learn from the Four Masters, who describe it as a new heresy and a new error in England, through pride, vain-glory, avarice, and lust.

Henry VIII assumed the more pretentious title of "King of Ireland," and the Irish parliament passed an Act of Supremacy and declared the dissolution of four hundred Irish abbeys. This property thus confiscated was to be used for the king and his courtiers. The Irish beyond the Pale and many within it remained loyal to the faith of their fathers and to the Roman

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See; this was considered treason and thus was added to the bitterness of race hatred, the blackest of religious feuds which resulted in the most cruel religious persecution in the history of the world. The threatened Faith and the threatened race were bound in a common cause. Once and forever, Irish nationality and faith were fused in a union like that of body and soul.

The Tudors resorted to the plantation system which allotted all the land belonging to the clan of a rebel Irish chief to English or Scottish settlers. The irate clan--the greater number of whom had taken no part in the chief's rebellion--bitterly opposed the invasion and bitter warfare ensued. This system accounts for the many Protestants found in Ireland, for the native population remained Catholic to the core.

When the patrons of the professional poets were rooted out of the soil, in the seventeenth century, there was imminent danger of the whole structure of Gaelic knowledge being ruined and lost to future generations. Four scribes of Kilbarron Castle, along the shores of Donegal, overlooking

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the roaring Atlantic, compiled a gigantic work, known as "The Annals of the Four Masters." It is an account of the history of Ireland as the Gael knew it which these four scribes deliberately arranged in the archaic language from chronicles collected thruout Ireland.

Another history of Ireland was written at this time by a priest and poet, Geoffrey Keating, in a prose style which became the standard for modern Irish. Born in Munster, he made a profound study of the traditions and antiquities of his native country, and his work has become one of the most valuable contributions to the ancient lore of Ireland.

At this time, there was a new growth in prose--in romance, saga, and history. The best minds of these tragic times occupied themselves with the history and traditions of the broken Gaelic order, their ambition being "to rescue from oblivion the memory of the great men of the nation, though the nation (as men feared) must die."¹² The professional poets, no longer restricted by the stringency of the bardic schools, broke away from their traditional rigidity and classic poetry began to yield place to the popular stressed verse.

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¹⁸ Hugh de Bascam, *Ibid.*

This verse consisted of longer and looser metres, measured by stress not by syllables, rich with colored words and interlocked assonance, ringing the changes upon alternating vowels. It was through this medium, essentially the cry of an aristocratic culture, that the eighteenth-century peasant uttered his revolt. It is a verse form which defies translation because it is of distinctly Irish origin when Greek and Latin were the basis for European literature, and because it is lyrical, having been influenced by Irish music which was the one art left unhampered.

When the English Parliament sent the formidable Cromwell to "pacify" the island when it was being ravaged by the plantation system, barbarism reached its height. The inhabitants of Ulster, Leinster, and Munster were ordered to leave their homes and move across the Shannon into Connaught, where the land had been laid waste. The evacuated land was planted by Cromwell's veterans and other Protestant settlers. Ulster's settlers were mostly Scotchmen; thus the Ulster of modern times is Scotch in nationality and Presbyterian in religion.

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Then followed the darkest century in Irish history when the Penal Age, which has been aptly called, "Ireland's Age in the Catacombs," reduced the unhappy isle to the most degrading servitude. By this code of laws, all bishops and religious were exiled; those priests who refused to take an oath of allegiance to which their conscience objected, were banished; the Irish Catholic was excluded from the army, from every government office; he could not bequeath his estate to anyone, or buy or inherit land; he had no access to any educational institution nor could he establish schools of his own. Every conceivable inducement was held out to those who would abandon their faith:

But, though the Irish love country
 and golden store
 They have always loved honor and virtue
 more!

English tyranny could ruin the land and reduce its people to abject poverty, but it never for a moment succeeded in shaking the foundations of Irish faith and Irish devotion to the Holy See.

Edmund Spenser, writing in Elizabeth's day, suggesting the complete extermination of the Irish race, knew full well the Irish literary heritage

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in poetry and music, yet he who had the most ardent ideas in English poetry, chose Sir Walter Raleigh, the scholar, the poet, the author, and the most splendid Englishman of this age, to execute the order, arranged at the council board, of wholesale butchery of a Spanish regiment captured in Ireland! His "Faerie Queene," revealing the glamor of the Gael and the beauties of Ireland, was composed in Ireland and was the great poem which marked the revival of English letters after Chaucer. He might well have envied the high esteem in which the professional poets of Ireland were held while he crouched at the feet of Elizabeth, finally dying of hunger in Westminster. His description of the beautiful and fertile province of Munster, desolated, as he witnessed it with his own eyes from his castle at Kilcolman, reads:

Starvation quickly finished the work that the sword began, and notwithstanding that Munster was a most rich and plentiful country, full of corn and cattle, that you would have thought they would have been able to stand long; yet ere one year and a half they were brought to such wretchedness that any stone heart would have rued the same. Out of every corner of the woods and glens they came creeping forth upon their hands, for their legs would not

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 yet the one year and a half they were
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 stone heart would have rued the same.
 Out of every corner of the woods and
 glens they came creeping forth upon
 their hands, for their legs would not

bear them; they looked like anatomies of death; they spake like ghosts crying out of their graves. They did eat carrions, happy where they could find them...and if they found a plot of water cresses or shamrocks, there they flocked as to a feast...in a short space there was none almost left, and a most populous and a plentiful country suddenly left void of man and beast.¹³

Sean O'Faolin, in his "King of the Beggars," thus describes the flight of the Irish gentry in these perilous times:

The flying Irish, down the Shannon or down the Lee with Sarsfield, looked up at the skies, and took the name, The Wild Geese. It was the end of a period. It was all but the end of a race... There were Diehards among them, 'No surrender' men, gunmen who were to become Raparees, and rove the hills, and raid the settling conquerors, and sleep and be cold and hungry under the trees... she was like a body dragging itself about with one half already dead. That dead half was her past, alive only in the memory, and slowly rotting even there.¹⁴

In this brilliant biography of Daniel O'Connell, he faithfully portrays O'Connell's work in behalf of the Irish, but he scathes the long line of bardic poets who, amid the ruin and misery of the eighteenth century, were still singing the praises of the Irish aristocrats who had abandoned the common people and fled from Limerick as "Wild Geese," and fawning on the

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Helena Concannon, "The Defence of Our Gaelic Civilization," p. 133 (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, Limited)

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Sean O'Faolain, "King of the Beggars" 1938 p. 13 (New York: The Viking Press)

best men; they looked like angels
of death; they spoke like ghosts
coming out of their graves. They did
not care, happy when they could
find them... and if they found a plot
of water, a stream or a brook, there
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Daniel O'Connell, "The Defiance of Our
Gaelic Civilization," p. 133 (Dublin: Thomas and
Son, Limited)

Sean O'Faolain, "King of the Beggars," 1933
p. 15 (New York: The Viking Press)

Saxon churls who had replaced them in their castles.

Basing the diatribe against what he regarded as the effete Gaelic, aristocratic tradition, O'Faolain cites as witnesses the Gaelic poets, regarding it as unfortunate that evidence of political history and the condition of the national mind must be found in poetry rather than in state papers but he failed to point out that these "beggars of Limerick" had always been an aristocratic nation inasmuch as the Irish peasants, who constituted the bulk of the nation after the exodus of the gentry, had given it its distinctive character, have always been aristocratic in their outlook on life. One can note this in their marriage customs. There is no class so exclusive or so particular about its blood as are the Irish small farmers; in an Irish community of farmers, big or small, a mesalliance is the unforgivable sin.

This would explain the aloofness from life and reality of the Gaelic poets in the eighteenth century. Their outlook was aristocratic because the outlook of the class from which they came and for whom they sang was aristocratic. They gave the people what they wanted.

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A temporary revival in the generation that followed 1670, when the Irish lords opened their houses again to the poets and musicians, traditional scholarship and the learned poets came again into esteem and produced two poets whose work delights present-day Anglo-Irish poets: David O'Bruadair and Egan O'Rahilly.

Frank O'Connor, a recent Irish poet, gives the following translation of a poem of O'Bruadair's in which there is the haughtiness of the bardic world as it contemplated the supplanters of the Gaelic nobility:

My grief that I am not a boor,
Without good sense of feeling!
As such I might be even
With all this boorish people.

Or that I were a strutterer,
My worthy friends, among you!
Since such a one might suffer all
Your coarseness and presumption.

Or would that I could meet a man
Who'd take my wit and breeding!
I'd put a penny's price between
Him and his dour demeanour.

But since good clothes win more respect
Than learning or attainments,
Oh! would that all I spent on art
Were round me now in raiment.¹⁵

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Colum, Op. Cit.

A temporary revival in the generation that followed 1870, when the Irish poets covered their houses again to the poets and mysticism, traditional scholarship and the learned poets came again into esteem and produced two poets whose work brought present-day Anglo-Irish poets: David O'Donnell and Egan O'Connell.

Frank O'Connor, a recent Irish poet, gives the following translation of a poem of O'Donnell in which there is the language of the world as it contemplated the audacity of the Gaelic nobility:

It grieved that I am not a poet,
Without too sense of feeling
As much I might be even
With all this Gaelic people.
Or that I were a knight-errant,
My worthy friends, my good
Since such a one might suffer all
Your courtesies and attention.
Or would that I could meet a man
Who'd take my wife and children
I'd put a party's price between
His and his four children.
But since good clothes win more respect
Than learning or scholarship,
Oh! would that all I spent on
Were found me now in raiment.

This is typical of the attitude of the Irish toward the usurpers of their land, "strutting" about in gaudy and rich raiment and artificial manners, gleaning from the blood-soaked soil of martyrs only material profit with no appreciation of the high culture existing there. But O'Rahilly was more sorrowful; going to a house that had protected him in the old days he finds there no help for him, no welcome, and the litany of his wrongs breaks out in a flood:

That my old bitter heart has part in
 this black doom,
 That foreign devils have made our land
 a tomb,
 That the bright sun that was Munster's
 fame went down,
 Hath caused me ever to seek you,
 Valentine Brown.

And most, that Cashel in bare of house
 or guest,
 And that Brian's turreted home is the
 otter's nest,
 That the kings of the land have neither
 land nor crown,
 Hath caused me ever to seek you,
 Valentine Brown.¹⁶

This poet met his death with a mind that was filled with grief for the passing of the princely families who had protected the traditional culture:

¹⁶

Ibid.

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towards the owners of their land, "scurrying" about
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that for the devil's sake made our land
a tomb,
that the bright sun that was Hunter's
lame went down,
that caused me ever to seek you,
Valentine Brown.

And now, that I stand in bare of house
on grass
and that Brian's hurried home is the
cattle's nest,
that the king of the land have neither
land nor crown,
that caused me ever to seek you,
Valentine Brown.

This poet met his death with a mind that
was filled with grief for the passing of the old
ly land that who had protected the traditional

culture:

I shall cease now. Death comes, and
 will not brook delay,
 Since the warriors of Laune, Lene and
 Lee are no more with us,
 I shall follow the love of heroes even
 into the clay,
 The princes my fathers served ere Christ
 died on the Cross.¹⁷

Of him Padraic Colum tells us:

Egan O'Rahilly is one of the poets whom Daniel Corkery has so passionately and so revealingly written about in his 'Hidden Ireland'--the hidden Ireland being the Ireland living under the penal laws, whose aristocracy was gone, whose priesthood was hunted, and whose poets were forced to find their audiences in the cabin and not in the castle, but who contrived, nevertheless, to write learned and elaborate poems for such an audience. Then was created 'Aisling,' the poem whose subject was the vision of the inviolable Ireland. Many later poets were to use this form, but the poet who used it most enchantingly and most poignantly was Egan O'Rahilly. Speaking of O'Rahilly's 'Aisling,' Hugh de Blacam says, 'If Gaeldom was broken into fragments, this vision at least it never held in common. We can never know in full what these poets were to the subjected race--how often broken men, hearing their songs, were saved from the sins of despair, or how often their mettled praises of heroes saved tempted men from surrendering their faith... The age was sad, but not inglorious; and these poets were not unworthy of it.'¹⁸

Much of this lifting of the spirit to which Colum refers and credits to the poets of the age, belonged to the ballad-singer. There is no type of

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

I shall come now, death comes, and
 still not break delay,
 since the warriors of Lango, Lango and
 Lango are no more with us,
 I shall follow the love of heroes even
 into the clay,
 The hundred my fathers served and Christ
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When O'Rielly is one of the poets
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 "Irish Poets" -- the Irish Poets
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 the poem whose subject was the vision
 of the Holy Trinity. Many Irish
 poets were to use this form, but the
 poet who used it most effectively and
 most religiously was John O'Rielly.
 Speaking of O'Rielly's "Trinity"
 says de Visser, "The Trinity was
 broken into fragments, this Trinity
 itself it never held in common. We can
 never know in full what these poets were
 to the subject of the Trinity -- how often, how often
 hearing their songs, were saved from the
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Most of this lifting of the spirit to which
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 18
 19

literature, perhaps, which reflects the culture of a people as does the Ballad which is a folk product. Born of communal ways of living and never consciously literary because it is usually transmitted orally, it is the one way in which unlettered folk might speak for themselves. In rural Ireland, the ballad and the ballad-singer played a big part. Always sure of enthusiastic audiences, every festive gathering was enlivened by local or national songs sung either by these professionals or by amateurs. The Irish people in times of deepest national depression had ever sought refuge and relaxation in song; and as the peasantry were wont to satirize tyrannical landlords and overbearing officials by making ballads about them, so they hit back at their would-be proselyters by songs in which they refuted Protestant arguments and claims.

Louis J. Walsh, in his "Irish Country Ballads," thus describes these ballads:

These country ballads of ours had three remarkable characteristics: their fine idealism, their keen sense of beauty, and their purity. The last quality is very remarkable, because the popular songs of the peasantry of most other countries have often a coarseness and an outspokenness, which though, perhaps,

literature, perhaps, which reflects the nature of a people as does the ballad which is a folk product. Form of conventional ways of living and never consciously literary because it is usually transmitted orally.

It is the one very important folk right which is the right to themselves. In rural Ireland, the ballad and the ballad-singer played a big part. Always

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their world-in-prose by songs in which they related Protestant arguments and claims.

For the U. S. Ballad, the Irish Country Ballad.

What describes these ballads:

These country ballads of ours had three remarkable characteristics. Their line rhythm, their verse of heavy and their style. The last quality is very remarkable, because the popular song is the possession of most other countries have often a coarseness and an out-of-tune, which makes, perhaps,

more the result of simplicity than of evil, make them very unpleasant reading. But the Irish balladists had a delicacy, which was one of the finest flowers of that Catholic culture in which they had been nurtured. That is particularly noticeable in their humorous poetry. In the English-speaking world, from the times of Chaucer and Shakespeare to that of Hollywood and the 'talkies,' the word 'comic' has too often stood for vulgar sexual jokes. But an Irish rural ballad-singer could delight his audience for a day and night with verses of the most rollicking and subtle humor and never bring the blush of shame to the most sensitive of maiden cheeks. We have national faults in plenty; but, to adopt the phrase of St. Paul, if we must needs glory, let us glory in this and bless God that these rude ballads reveal our peasantry, in the main, as being of the glorious legion of 'the clean of heart.'¹⁹

England had despoiled them of the material but she had not the power to reach the Irish mind. Learning continued in the "hedge-schools" despite the despicable code and though Irish learning could not be appreciated because of its suppression, it was there and was a source of wonder when searchers of the literary heritage, found a high Gaelic culture among the peasantry. Although hidden like thieves among the hills, the clergy were ever faithful to their people in tending the faith and

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speaking world, from the time of
Gannon and MacGowan to the
Hollywood and the 'talkies', the
word 'babe' has been used for
vulgar sexual jokes. And an Irish
man called a woman a 'babe' and
his attitude is that of a man with
verve of the most refreshing and
sensitive manner and never giving the
slight of hand to the most sensitive
of modern women. We have not
learned to identify the word 'babe'
with the word 'babe' in the same
way, but as long as this and this
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thieves among the hills, the clergy were even
labeled as their people is tending the faith and

transmitting the knowledge which they themselves had obtained by stealth; for it became a matter of piety among these peasants to pay out of their meager substance for the education of a priest abroad.

The bitter, cruel years when Elizabeth ruled in England, when her "Eagles took flight for the Spanish main and the vultures settled upon Ireland," burned themselves deep into the heart fibres of the Irish race. The continued persecutions reduced Irish-Ireland to a struggling serfdom until in the eighteenth century, Daniel O'Connell, comprising in himself the whole genius Celt, and regarded on the continent as the personification of Christian Democracy, led his people to hope and success. Gifted with marvelous eloquence, untiring energy, and boundless courage, he swayed Irish hearts and Irish votes so completely that he has been called "the uncrowned king of Ireland."

It was he who effected emancipation, with the restoration of the Irish Parliament, and the disestablishment of the Established Church in Ireland. But recovery from the misery and poverty

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prowess, led his people to hope and success.
Filled with manifold eloquence, waiting every
and boundless courage, he saved Irish hearts and
Irish votes so completely that he has been called
"the unanswerable King of Ireland."

It was he who effected emancipation, who
the restoration of the Irish Parliament, and the
disestablishment of the Established Church in
Ireland, 1801, recovery from the misery and poverty

to which the Catholic body had been reduced was to take more than a century longer. The Ireland that emerged recognized three distinct divisions of Irish society, with partition boundary more potent and enduring than iron or steel: Irish, Anglo-Irish, Scots-Irish. Were these divisions but racial, internal fusion would have been matter of a generation or two; but it was a religious conflict and as such could not be broken down: the Anglo-Irish--Episcopalian; the Scots-Irish--the Presbyterian; the Irish-Irish--the Catholic.

The later Anglo-Irish following the seventeenth century was blended with the contemporary standard English and this culture produced Swift, and in producing Swift produced the beginning of an Anglo-Irish literature. Swift had attended the same school that Stanyhurst attended--the famous school in Kilkenny that had been founded by the Norman and Catholic house of Ormond which fact attests the same element in the culture of the later Anglo-Irish as was found in the earlier, which meant a true continuance of the tradition of early Irish culture.

Macpherson attempted an awakening of the Gaelic literary tradition in his "Ossian," a

to which the Catholic body had been wedded was so
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Macpherson achieved an synthesis of the
 Gaelic literary tradition in his "Ossian," a

sophisticated version as Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" was a sophisticated version of the original. But English-speaking Ireland in the educated realm had lost all contact with its national literature and such men as Oliver Goldsmith, although born and bred in Ireland, found them simply a barbaric dissonance.

As early as 1722, Dean Swift phrased the basic principles of the rights of people in one of his pamphlets, "The Drapier's Letters," which he wrote in defense of the oppressed Irish People. The native people were a mere helotry in his judgment and the religion they professed, nothing but debased superstition. He taught them the power of the pen, however, and urged them to think of themselves as a Nation with the same rights as Englishmen.

In his "Modest Proposal" there is the ironical suggestion that the paternal English government might arrange to have the children of extremely poor Irish parents killed like cattle and sold as food in the English market. He had no love of the Irish race but his first-hand knowledge of their

unpublished version as Thompson's "Lullaby of the King" was a sophisticated version of the original. The English-speaking Ireland in the present time had lost all contact with the national literature and even when it was written, it was not in the original but in English, and even then it was a parody.

As early as 1922, Sean Swift praised the basic principles of the rights of people in one of his pamphlets, "The English's Country," which he wrote in defense of the oppressed Irish people. The native people were a mere helms in his hands and the religion they possessed, nothing but a dead superstition. He taught them the power of the pen, however, and urged them to think of themselves as a Nation with the same rights as Englishmen.

In his "Molloy's Proposal" there is the first suggestion that the peasant Irish Government might arrange to have the English of English poor Irish people killed like cattle and sold as food in the English market. He had no love of the Irish race but his first-hand knowledge of their

miseries, his keen sense of justice, and his bitter resentment toward England produced his biting satires. This type of literature could not be regarded as truly national, but it is the first to defend Ireland's rights and gains for Swift the title of the father of patriotic journalism.

Another Anglo-Irishman, contemporary with the Dean, was Sir Richard Steele, a sparkling literary genius whose friend Addison had the reputation of being the most correct writer of his day; together they contributed greatly to English literature in the Spectator and the Guardian, popularizing the periodical essay. Among his other services to literature, he helped to purify the stage of some of its grossness.

Oliver Goldsmith, born in a parsonage in County Longford, and brought up at Lissoy, was a many-sided genius in his literary life of essayist, poet, novelist, playwright, historian, biographer, and editor. His poem, "The Deserted Village," won for him a high position among the writers of the time. The village of Goldsmith's boyhood days, Lissoy, Ireland, as enshrined in his youthful

misunderstanding, his keen sense of justice, and his other

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Lissey, Ireland, as mentioned in his poem.

memories with its farm cottages, church, the hawthorn hedges, the sports on the village green at the close of day, and the dancing and feats of strength displayed by the peasantry, is compared with the miserable condition in which he finds them when he returns to the village in later years.

Laurence Sterne, author of "Tristram Shandy" and "A Sentimental Journey," was, like Swift, of English parentage and perhaps more than any other Anglo-Irish writer was Irish by pure accident.

These are but a few of a brilliant nebulae of writers which flashed in this literary era manifesting the great influence on English literature and the English tongue by writers familiar from their childhood with turns of speech and modes of expression which characterize Hibernian temper.

The beginning of a revival of Irish nationality was the beautiful "Irish Melodies" of Thomas Moore, a sensitive and most accomplished master of verse interpreting the spirit of a country which had already found expression in another medium. English and Irish both awakened to a consciousness of the beauty, heroism, and pathos of Ireland's past. Fate had ordained that her choicest spirits should express themselves in a language of wider appeal than the ancient speech of Erin.

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CHAPTER III

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

There's not a man in all the land
Our country now can spare,
The strong man with his sinewy hand,
The weak man with his prayer;
No whining tone of mere regret,
Young Irish bards, for you!
But let your songs teach Ireland yet
What Irishmen should do.

These were the principles laid down by the "Young Irelanders" when in October, 1842, Charles Gavan Duffy, Thomas Davis, and John Blake Dillon established the Nation, a weekly newspaper for the reestablishment of Irish independence. Jointly with the speeches of Daniel O'Connell, whose life is the history of Catholic emancipation in England and Ireland, and who exemplifies those characteristics of strength and courage and guile that make such Irishmen romantic and awesome figures, there came a new Ireland.

These youthful enthusiasts including the three founders, John Mitchel, Thomas MacNevin, Thomas Darcy McGee, John O'Hagan, Richard Dalton Williams, John Savage, J. K. Ingram, Michael Joseph Barry, Denny Lane, James Clarence Mangan, Dennis Florence McCarthy, Maurice Richard Leyne, Michael Doheny, Rev. John Kenyon, Rev. C. P. Meehan,

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 Barry, Henry Lane, James O'Rourke, James
 Florence McCarthy, Maurice Richard Byrne, Michael
 Doherty, Rev. John Keble, Rev. J. F. O'Hagan.

Thomas Francis Meagher, John E. Pigot, Richard O'Gorman, Jr., Thomas Devin Reilly, were allable men of letters and created in verse and prose image after image of the legendary greatness of their people, in their efforts to awaken an Irish national spirit.²⁰

Samuel Ferguson and Clarence Mangan distinguished themselves in lifting national poetry out of the noisy clamor of politics and devoting it to Irish legendary and historical themes, thereby heralding the revival. The Nation, an expression in prose and verse of the country's yearnings not only for political emancipation but for the revival of a native literature as well, served these poets, writers, and orators of "Young Ireland"--"to create and foster public opinion in Ireland and make it racy of the soil."²¹ Thomas Davis was recognized as their leader from the beginning with his chief concern, a restored nationality which might be accomplished with the combination of Irish history, language, art, and literature. His premature death was an irreparable loss to their cause.

²⁰

John F. Finnerty, Op. Cit. Vol. 2, p. 787

²¹

Ibid. p. 839

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²⁰ John G. Thompson, *Do. Will. No. 1*, p. 127.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

This nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish poetry sprang from pure sentiments of love of home and country, and has the bewitching charm that is associated with Irish eyes and Irish skies. But the writers, though living at a time when Irish was spoken by some millions of the population, among whom were thousands of story-tellers, failed to realise that a native imaginative literature existed among them. They ignored entirely the native culture of the Irish people; and, as a result, presented a false and vulgar picture of the Irish rural life to an unsympathetic and uninformed reading public.

They found an Anglo-Irish literature depicting the stage-Irishman associated with comic situations and cheap bufoonery, as invented for the most part by the early nineteenth-century novelists: Charles Lever, Samuel Lover, Gerald Griffin, and the Banims. In this respect, William Carleton ranks above his contemporary writers as depicting the true Celt in his novels, which gains for him the distinction of being one of the greatest novelists in Irish literature.

Altho these "Young Irelanders" had no knowledge of the Gaelic which Daniel O'Connell, the leader of modern democracy, had spoken as a child, or of the literary wealth of the western seaboard, they chafed against O'Connell's conservative policy that no political cause would justify bloodshed, and regarded themselves as the "real originators" of Ireland's emancipation. But with the death of O'Connell, Ireland sank into the misery from which Charles Stewart Parnell, who shares with him the glory of being the greatest of Irish leaders, lifted it to carry on the double tradition of "brain and fist."

The Irish nationalist movement directed its course out of a political into a cultural channel when Standish O'Grady's bardic "History of Ireland" was published in 1880. Steeped in the history of the Irish past, Mr. O'Grady retells the wonders of Cuchulain, the hero of the oldest Irish saga cycle, with changes and additions in the spirit of the originals, which kindle the splendor of Ireland's past and excites an enthusiasm for it. With this intense fervor of patriotism, Ireland

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 With this intense flavor of Celticism, Ireland

found voice in the Irish National Literary Society, founded in 1891; and in the less political Irish Literary Society founded in 1893.

The creation of a national theatre was in some respects a revolt against the commercialized theatre of London, which refused the production of plays which did not ensure immediate commercial success. Edward Martyn, a devoted Ibsenite, with William B. Yeats, whose interest was awakened at the production of his "Land of the Heart's Desire" at the Avenue Theatre in London, succeeded in interesting George Moore in the theatrical enterprise. At the encouragement of Lady Gregory, guarantees were secured and "The Irish Literary Theatre became a reality.

In 1892, Douglas Hyde had delivered a bomb-shell in a speech to a literary society in Dublin which contained all the substance of his deep thought on the revival, and was entitled, "The Necessity of De-Anglicizing Ireland." Ireland was to seek freedom, not only from English rule but from England's imposed culture; it was to be free to develop its neglected Gaelic inheritance. He

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asserted the folly of neglecting the cultural and spiritual heritage of which Irishmen had been robbed, for the imitation of the English. Naturally her culture was bound up in her language and the most effective way to revive that culture was to revive the language as a living, spoken tongue; for without a distinctive language, there could be no distinctive national existence.

He proposed prizes to be offered for quick mastery of the language; that all games and amusements as well as names and places be de-Anglicized: thus Biddy would become Bridget, Denis change to Donough, and Kingstown become Dun Laoghre; instead of Patrick or Edmund, or John, Irishmen called themselves Padraic or Eamonn or Sean.²²

The Gaelic League was founded, consequently, in 1893, with Douglas Hyde as president to attempt the revival of Irish as a spoken tongue as well as a literary medium. This required a basis of the rich language of native Irish speakers and the folk literature recorded and studied in all its aspects. So Hyde lectured, toured, campaigned, composed pamphlets and continued his great labor of love; collecting the songs and stories of the Connacht peasantry.

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On the title page of his "Love Songs of Connacht" was the pseudonym by which he is known even today, the Irish phrase "An Craoibin Aoibin," (an creeveen eavin) "The Delightful Little Branch" and he is addressed familiarly and endearingly as "An Creeveen" from a folk saying that as a forest feels the vibration of one branch, so a nation may be roused from apathy by the influence of one man. Dr. Hyde, steeped in the folk-lore of his nation, has never taken part in the revolutionary movement, has never been heard to make a political remark, and is said never to have made an enemy. As founder and president of the Gaelic League, he has dedicated his whole life to the herculean task of resuscitating the soul of Ireland by saving the language. He has thereby achieved the greatest step toward the revival of Ireland's culture and in so doing has instilled into Irish hearts the consciousness of nationhood.

His prose translations, literal but colored by Gaelic idiom, suggested a new literary medium which gave birth to Ireland's literary renaissance. Much of the work of the literary reformers was done

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in English, the Irish in spirit and based on the traditions of the country's past, but this did not satisfy the promoters of the Gaelic League; the Gaelic must be used in thought and speech thruout the land with an English medium for outsiders. This is carrying "de-Anglicizing" to the letter but there are those who will have it so.

The Gaelic Athletic Association honors only those who promote this extreme doctrine. There are writers, therefore, of both schools--the radical and the conservatist.

Ernest Boyd in "Ireland's Literary Renaissance" says on this question:

If language be accepted as the criterion of nationality, then the Literary Revival is condemned as un-national, and Anglo-Irish literature becomes simply a phase of English literature. This view represents the point at which two extremes of criticism meet. The English critics who refuse to admit the claim of Anglo-Irish literature to speak for a distinct and separate tradition from that of England, and the Irish critics who are so possessed by a sense of nationality that they cannot allow their English-speaking countrymen to come forward as representing the national spirit.

On both sides there is an over-emphasis of the importance of the English language, as if that were the determining factor. But those who persist in regarding

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On both sides there is an over-
 emphasis of the importance of the English
 language, as if that were the determining
 factor. But those who persist in regarding

literary Ireland as a province of England are no less mistaken than those who believe that Ireland loses her identity once she accepts the English language. The striking difference between the Anglo-Irish literature which has always existed and the Anglicized Irish literature which has always existed outside it, is sufficient proof that both views are mistaken. Ireland has produced writers whose work reveals nothing of their country but a certain note of provinciality; they have been simply imitators of England In neither case is there any justification for the generalizations of the two classes of critics already mentioned.

So long as Irish legends and stories, traditions and customs are cherished, so long will the feeling of nationality endure. It was precisely the desire to rescue and preserve these things which gave birth to the Revival. It is, therefore, absurd to pretend that the new literature, which has done so much in this direction, is not national. It is, however, equally true that the Gaelic Movement, which has coincided to a great extent with the Revival, has played a very important part in the development of Anglo-Irish literature

There is no necessary conflict between Gaelic and Anglo-Irish literature, they are complementary, not antagonistic. Whatever reproaches the more ardent Gaels have made against those Irish writers whose medium is English, the latter have never retaliated. They admit to the full all the claims of the older language, and they have constantly acknowledged their obligations to Gaelic literature. They only plead for the right of co-existence.²³

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23

Ernest Boyd, "Ireland's Literary Renaissance"
1922 p. 67 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf)

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But why would we have Irish literature in the
 Gaelic tongue with parallel translations which has

effected the Anglo-Irish medium--the old Gaelic spirit in modern garb. His intensive love of his country and people makes any inaccurate account of their precious heritage entirely out of order.

The beginning of contemporary Irish literature dates from the almost simultaneous appearance of Douglas Hyde's "Leabhar Sgeuligheachta," which heralded the Gaelic Movement and William Yeats's "The Wanderings of Oisín" in 1889. This was the outcome of the movement initiated by Standish O'Grady. Mr. Yeats says, "It was Mr. O'Grady that started us all." That is, the writers who began the Renaissance in the late eighties.²⁴

The Irish Renaissance had the definite purpose of retelling in English the old Irish legends and the still current Irish folksongs in Gaelic mood. Mr. Yeats has said: "My effort at that particular time, was to seek and find the old, the original, perdurable Ireland: the spirit underlying the very roads, and lakes, and mountains --Mother Ireland."²⁵ He looked to the day when his country should have a characteristic literature of her own, and not a variant of her neighbor's across

²⁴

Cornelius Weygandt: "Irish Plays and Playwrights" 1913 p. 139 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company)

²⁵

Pollock: "Ireland Today" Book Review July, 1937 Vol. II, No. 7, p. 77

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Cornelius Weyman: "Irish Plays and Poetry," 1913, p. 130 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company)

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the Channel. His leadership in this remarkable movement created a landmark in the literary history of Ireland.

The Irish Literary Theatre began its career on May 8, 1899 with the production of Yeats's "The Countess Cathleen," at the Ancient Concert Rooms. It was assailed as blasphemous and unpatriotic, and resulted in great disturbance. Catholic Ireland had looked askance at a movement inspired mostly by protestants; but the production of the play was an epochal event in that a poet had made himself as conspicuous as a politician.

For three years thereafter, plays by William Yeats, Edward Martyn, George Moore, and Alice Milligan were staged with English-trained actors in the casts. The current reproach against the new Anglo-Irish school was that it gave a picture of the Irish peasant which, while different from the stage Irishman of the past, was neither less false nor more agreeable; great and well-earned as has been its success, its appeal was limited.

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which was an Irish comedy by Douglas Hyde, Casadh an tSugain "The Twisting of the Rope," whose author filled the principal part. "It was a night of unprecedented enthusiasm! . . . It seemed to everyone present as though a new day had come after a long night, as though a visible and material sign of the revival of Irish literature had been manifested."²⁶

At the presentation of this play, Mr. W. G. Fay who directed it, conceived the idea of an organization of Irish-born actors to appear in plays by Irish authors. Both he and his brother, Frank, were "stage-struck, devourers of old plays and haunters of the gallery."²⁷ They were enthusiastic for the organization of purely national drama, acted by Irish players, and interpreted in the native tradition far removed from that of the English stage, commercial or otherwise. Under their direction, therefore, the Irish National Dramatic Society, a small self-governing society of amateurs was realized with William Yeats as president, with AE (George Russell), Douglas Hyde, and Maud Gonne as vice-presidents.

²⁶

L. Paul-Dubois, "Contemporary Ireland" 1911
p. 426 (Dublin: Maunsel and Company, Ltd., 96 Middle Abbey)

²⁷

Stephen Gwynn, Op. Cit. p. 155

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therefore, the Irish National Dramatic Society, a
small self-governing society of amateurs was
realized with William Yeats as president, with Mr.
(George Russell), Douglas Hyde, and Mark Gore as
vice-presidents.

Yeats found in this organization the trend of drama with which he was in sympathy, that of dealing with Ireland's poetic past. The dissolution of the Irish Literary Theatre within two years of its existence was probably due to the uncongenial collaboration of the quartette, surfeited with George Moore who dabbled in drama but viewed Ireland with an anti-Catholic bias. He characterizes Mr. Martyn, his best friend and a devout Catholic, in this fashion: "A good fellow--an excellent one, and a man who would have written well if his mother hadn't put it into his head that he has a soul. The soul is a veritable pitfall."²⁸

The lovely, dreamy, melancholy music of Yeats's lyrical poetry is displayed at its finest perhaps in "The Ballad of Father Gilligan"--the story of a priest who nods asleep in his chair thru weariness, when he should be consoling the last hours of a dying parishioner. The old priest awakes and rides thru the night to find that he is late, but God has sent one of His angels to administer the last sacraments. The old man kneels to whisper:

He who is wrapped in purple robes,
With planets in His care,
Had pity on the least of things
Asleep upon a chair.²⁹

28

Cornelius Weygandt, Op. Cit. p. 94

29

William J. Tucker, "The Celt in Contemporary Literature" The Catholic World, Vol. 146

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one of His angels to administer the last sacraments.

The old man means to whisper:
He who is wrapped in purple robes,
With diamonds in his ears,
Lays pity on the least of things
Alone upon a chair.²⁹

²⁸ *Domestic Wexford*, Op. Cit., p. 24.
²⁹ William J. Foster, "The Celtic Revival,"
Literature, The Catholic World, Vol. 144.

In such poems as this, he taught the politically-minded young people a finer sense of the beautiful in the pursuit of an artistic ideal rather than the assertive ballads with which Nationalist Ireland was most familiar.

Though chiefly a lyrical poet, Yeats's four plays in prose are worthy of note. "A Pot of Broth" is pure farce; the "Hour Glass" and "Where There is Nothing" are both different from his most intensely dramatic play: "Cathleen ni Houlihan," wherein Ireland is present under the figure of a poor old woman at the time of the French landing in 1798. With "too many strangers in the house" and with her "four beautiful green fields" taken from her, she portrays a nobility and pathos intimately appealing in its allegorical significance. The sacrifices of Young Ireland revitalize her and she becomes "a young girl" with "the walk of a queen."³⁰ This thought of the play is that which inspired the whole Irish movement--Ireland is old in history, but young in spirit.

Starting with the Fays and the few able actors and actresses they had acquired, with the national

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Cornelius Weygandt, Op. Cit. p. 50

In such poems as this, he leaves the reader with a feeling of a finer sense of the beauty of the pursuit of an artistic ideal rather than the associative ballads with which Nationalist Ireland was most familiar.

Though not a typical poet, Yeats's form plays a part in the work of some of the best in the land; the "Horn of Plenty" and "Where There is Nothing" are both different from his most intensely dramatic plays: "Cathleen at Houlihan," wherein Ireland is treated under the figure of a poor old woman at the time of the French landing in 1792. With "The Lady of the House" and with her "The Lady of the House" taken from her, she portrays a nobility and rather intimately appealing in its allegorical significance. The sacrifice of Young Ireland revolutionize her and she becomes "a young girl" with "the walk of a queen." This play of the spirit is that which inspired the whole Irish movement--Ireland is old in history, but young in spirit.

Starting with the facts and the few solo actors and actresses they had acquired, with the national

enthusiasm of the moment behind it, an Irish Theatre could have developed without Yeats as a leader.

But it would have been without clear ideas; it would have been dominated by political partisanship. With Lady Gregory he gave the company an organization and a policy. He brought to it his own poetry and his discovery of Synge. Then came the gift of a theatre made solely on Yeats's account by Miss Horniman.

With their entrance into the Abbey Theatre on December 27, 1904, the old democratic franchise of the National Theatre Society went out: now there was a directorate with Yeats and Lady Gregory as the influential directors.

It was now possible to get into a play the instincts and the temperament of the Irish writer; instead of writing for a London audience, using the temperaments of English players, being thus unable to put into their plays what differentiated them from their English contemporaries, thus denaturing their minds to write plays with a chance of production. It was indeed an event in the history of the Irish mind--a national drama could come into existence.

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existence.

The Anglo-Irish idiom, uncontaminated by cheap journalistic influences, full of vigorous archaisms, and colored by the poetic energy of Gaelic, has done more than anything else to raise the peasant drama to the level of literature. This factor enters, of course, into the belief expressed by Yeats that a return to the people is necessary to the creation of national drama, but he was singularly fortunate in finding a dramatist who was to make of the popular idiom the most powerful vehicle of literary expression in modern times. It cannot be denied that he was, in any case, entirely justified in holding romantic, historical and peasant plays to be the true basis of our national dramatic art.³¹

This Gaelic idiom--English, yet un-English--with its Gaelic effects of alliteration and assonance, familiar to Irish ears--tho many a ballad-singer would be surprised to hear that he was using it--fascinated Yeats.

His meeting with Lady Gregory in 1898 when she was writing plays based on Irish folklore, identified her with the Irish Renaissance Movement, and later with the Abbey Theatre. She wrote in the Anglo-Irish dialect "Kiltartan"--a dialect of Western Ireland and some of her plays are considered among the finest examples of the form. Writing to relieve the weariness which might be effected by the verse and romance of Yeats, AE, and Synge, her genius in

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Ernest Boyd, Op. Cit. p. 315

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and romance of Yeats, AE, and Synge, her partner in

dramatic writing is displayed in exaggerated comedy and farcical dialogue, which turn upon the theme of a whimsical misunderstanding.³²

"Spreading the News" is based on the absurd proportions a false report assumes as it spreads from mouth to mouth. "Hyacinth Halvey" sketches an episode in the career of a young man who comes from Carrow to Cloon armed with a huge parcel of glowing testimonials of the unparalleled integrity of his character. He is a very ordinary young man, and the exalted opinion the townsfolk of Cloon conceive of him on the strength of his testimonials becomes an intolerable burden, making him long for death. He steals the carcass of a sheep in order to disillusion his admirers, only to be overwhelmed with the gratitude of the butcher who has thereby been saved from arrest for stocking tainted meat. When he robs a Protestant church, and avows the deed, he is hailed as the magnanimous hero who takes the sin on his shoulders to save a poor lad who is suspect; and forthwith he is chaired away to a meeting to deliver an address on the building up of character. "The Jackdaw" and "The Workhouse

Ward" turn upon like ingenious entanglements of circumstance; "The Travelling Man" brings Christ into amodern peasant home. In her dedication in the book "Seven Short Plays" dated Abbey Theatre, May 1, 1908, she writes: "To you, W. B. Yeats, good praiser, wholesome dispraiser, heavy-handed judge, open-handed helper of us all, I offer a play of my plays for every night of the week, because you like them, and because you have taught me my trade."³³

The most famous event in the Abbey Theater's history was the violent disturbance kindled by the presentation of Synge's play, "The Playboy of the Western World," in 1907. Synge had been suspected by the Irish as malignantly misrepresenting the Irish people and this would-be portrayal of the Irish attitude toward a young man in flight because he believes he has killed his father, was anything but flattering. The many unjust laws inflicted upon them thruout the centuries had given them a certain contempt for law; but Synge's application of this attitude to such a circumstance was to belie its true nature.

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true nature.

This play and his five other plays manifest his being "neither Gael nor peasant by origin, but he had by choice associated much with peasant folk; yet hardly with peasants proper, who have house and holding and are fixed to the soil. His sympathies lay with the roving folk, tinkers and beggars, and with the strange community of Aran folk."³⁴

Although such extravagances as he portrays in his plays, "The Tinker's Wedding," which presents the wild, free life of such rovers; "In the Shadow of the Glen," in which a wife is made miserable thru lack of companionship in an old and phlegmatic husband and her associations with a tramp; "The Well of the Saints," in which a blind beggar and his wife are cured by a miracle of their blindness and at sight of each other pray to be made blind again and blindness returns--again Catholic Ireland resented this pagan conception of so holy a factor of their religion as a miracle--are to be found in the life of the roads in Ireland, no one would regard them as typical of the Irish peasantry.

His "Riders to the Sea" is often considered the greatest one-act play ever written. The story

³⁴

Stephen Gwynn, Op. Cit. p. 162

This play and his five other plays manifest
his being "Welsh Gael" not peasant by origin, but
by his choice associated man, with peasant folk;
yet himself with peasant's proper, who have none and

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the life of the people in Ireland, no one would be
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His "Blindness to the Sea" is often considered

the greatest one-act play ever written. The story

of the finding of the clothes of the last but one of the sons of Maurya, and the death of this last son at the very shore near their home, is least representative of Synge because it has in it "no humor, no quick changes of mood, no revelation of tumult of soul . . . it is less original than any other of his plays, reminiscent in fact in all but its style, now of Ibsen, now of M. Maeterlinck, now even of Mr. Edward Martyn."³⁵

Maurya, an old woman, suffers the pangs of the loss of these sons--all drowned at sea--but her beautiful soul rises above any bitterness and portrays a love great enough to deprive the grave of its sting. This nobility of soul reveals itself in her speech of resignation:

They're all gone now, and there isn't
anything more the sea can do to me . . .
May the Almighty God have mercy on
Bartley's soul, and on the souls of
Sheamus and Patch, and Stephen and
Shawn; and may He have mercy on my
soul, N ra, and on the soul of every
one left living in the world . . .
Michael has a clean burial in the far
north, by the grace of the Almighty
God. Bartley will have a fine coffin
out of the white boards, and a deep
grave surely. What more can he want
than that? No man at all can be living
forever, and we must be satisfied.³⁶

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Cornelius Weygandt, Op. Cit. p. 178

36

Curtis Canfield, "Plays of the Irish Renaissance" 1929 p. 170 (New York: Ives Washburn)

of the finding of the clothes of the first but one
of the sons of Mary, and the death of this last
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³⁵ Cornelius Weygandt, *Op. Cit.*, p. 173.
³⁶ Curtis Gentry, "Plays of the Irish
Renaissance" 1929, p. 170 (New York: T. W. Weygandt).

The heartfelt emotion in this humble speech depicts the profound beauty of Celtic mysticism.

Although Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory formed the permanent staff at the opening of the Abbey, Padraic Colum's first play "Broken Soil" was greeted as being more typically Irish than any play yet produced. "It has been said of Colum that 'he combines in his poetry and his plays something of the music of Yeats, much of the earthy tang of Synge, something of AE's mystical vision, and something of Douglas Hyde's faithful rendition of folk accents.'"³⁷ His simple version of the joy of life and earth, or of their pain and sadness, may be seen in "An Old Woman of the Roads," a pathetic little description of the wandering beggar woman who yearns for her own cottage with its bed, its clock, its "shining delph" and warm hearth-side:

I could be quiet there at night
Beside the fire and by myself,
Sure of a bed and loth to leave
The ticking clock and the shining delph!

Och! but I'm weary of mist and dark,
And roads where there's never a house nor bush,
And tired I am of bog and road,
And the crying wind and the lonesome hush!

36

1929 p. 170 Curtis Canfield, "Plays of the Irish Renaissance"

37

William J. Tucker, Op. Cit.

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 a pathetic little description of the wandering beg-
 gar woman who leans for her own cottage with its
 bed, its clock, its "shining glass" and warm hearth-
 side:

I could be quiet there at night
 Beside the fire and by myself,
 Beneath a bed and left to sleep
 The ticking clock and the shining glass!
 Good but I'm weary of mist and rain,
 And roads where there's never a house nor bush,
 And I'll find a bed and food and
 And the crying wind and the lonesome inn!

And I am praying to God on high,
 And I am praying Him night and day,
 For a little house--a house of my own³⁸
 Out of the wind's and the rain's way.

George William Russell, better known by the pseudonym AE (adopted when a printer objected that he could read only the first two letters of his pen-name Aeon), identified himself with the Abbey Players when Mr. W. G. Fay read his "Deirdre" in Standish O'Grady's All Ireland Review, and obtained his permission to produce it. Yeats's "Kathleen-Ni-Houlihan" completed the programme and with their production, the Abbey Players came into existence.

AE's verse contrasts with Yeats's in its less regard for the external means than for the end in aspiring to reveal Divine Beauty. He, therefore, sacrifices the letter to the spirit; whereas, Yeats's chief contribution to Irish verse is his standard of technical perfection.

The Deirdre legend has been treated by practically every Irish writer of importance in verse, fiction, or drama. The dramatic versions of Yeats, Synge, and AE of this sad and lovely story, reveal the style and individual conception of this sorrowful Queen. Both Yeats and AE "are bound by a common feeling of spirituality in handling the theme, Synge is alone in his

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individual conception of this important drama. Both
Yeats and AE are bound by a common feeling of spirit-
uality in handling the theme. Synge is alone in this

thoroughly realistic treatment of it."³⁹ This is AE's one dramatic contribution to Irish letters altho he has distinguished himself in so many other fields--journalism, art, economics, poetry, history, and politics--in the service of Ireland.⁴⁰

Originally a protege of AE, James Stephens, poet, novelist, and critic, grew to manhood in the Irish capital--the Dublin of the Abbey Theatre, of the Irish Renaissance, as well as the Dublin of the "Easter Rising," a revolution inspired and led by men of literature. He loves Ireland with all the warmth of his affection; his deep, sincere, abiding faith in the land, in its traditions, and in its future is found in his writings. He speaks, reads, and writes the ancient tongue, and is an authority on the art of ancient Ireland. He is known to many only as the man who wrote "The Crock of Gold," which is not the least nor the greatest of his works. Some of his other works are: "The Hill of Vision," "Insurrections," "A Poetry Recital," "The Demi Gods," "Julia Elizabeth" (a play), "Deirdre," "Little Things," and "In the Land of Youth."

In AE the love of Irish soil is a strong fervor; with Moira O'Neil (Mrs. Skrine), crying out

40

Ibid.

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"A Poetry Festival," "The Dead Gods," "The Irish Renaissance"
(a play), "Dante," "Little Things," and "The
Land of Youth."

In AE the love of Irish soil is a strong
fervor; with Maire O'Neill (Mrs. Skrine), clinging out

her homesickness for Ireland, it is a pensive and wistful mood. Her place in Irish literature is determined by her first work, "Songs of the Glens of Antrim," a compilation of lyric poems of Irish peasant life in the dialect of the Glens of Antrim, in the speech and with the thought of the simple folk of the land who naturally utter their thoughts to the accompaniment of poetical imagery and see the common events of their rough lives in the light of a poetical vision.

Katherine Tynan is an interesting figure in contemporary Irish literature in the devout attitude in her verse so representative of the Irish Catholic. "She sees nature with the eyes of devout reverence, and in her tender descriptions of all the small creatures of God, her love for the old or the helpless, she excels in conveying a sense of child-like admiration for and confidence in the works of an Almighty Power."⁴¹ Her "Rhymed Life of St. Patrick" reproduces the views of the Saint. The devotional side of her work is quite adequately represented by a selection from her religious verse, such as that which has recently appeared under the title, "The Flower of Peace."

⁴¹

Ernest Boyd, Op. Cit. p. 111

her homeliness for Ireland, it is a positive and
 vital work. Her place in Irish literature is
 determined by her Irish work, "Songs of the Men
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 from her religious verse, such as that which has re-
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Jane Barlow, who died during the World War, was daughter of one of the Senior Fellowsof Trinity, and had acquired remarkable skill. Her "Bogland Studies" is a series of stories told in verse thru the mouth of Irish peasants, with full command of peasant idiom. She has left a portrait of an old Irishwoman, Theresa Nolan, praying for her son, Michael, who is at the front:⁴²

The Irish Archangel

Ah, Michael, Michael, listen, Angel asthore!

.....
Ah, Michael, Michael, many's the time before,
I have seen you shining there athwart the light,
With those grand wings on you, all glistering white,
Like sailing clouds, when in at yonder door
From beneath the sun we'd step, half blind--'twas ere
The Big War took our lads--and then the sight
Did my heart good, so strong you stand to scare
The Devil's own self, and drive him down his lair,
But now this trouble's on us, let him be;
There's worse folks loose about the world than he.

..... But Lords and Kings
Might easy put a hand to better things
Than raising up a war, that ere 'tis done
Strikes thousands dead, and each a mother's son;

.....
Piled up heap on heap,
Like fluttered leaves you see the cold blasts sweep
Below the trees, the Dead are lying flung
Where Mick is fighting now. Ah, Michael, keep
An eye on him and sort him out among
The rest, for many a Mick is soldiering there,
And every one of them a decent lad,
But Micky's all the sons that ever I had--
You'd get none kinder if you searched Kildare.
And he a gossoon yet; a while ago
Just playing around, or maybe coaxing pence
For sweets.--My grief that ever I said him no.
So mind him, Michael, that's a Michael too,
And make a shift to bring him safely through
And home to me before they've laid him low.

James Garlow, who died during the World War,
 was daughter of one of the Senior Fellowship Trinity,
 and had acquired remarkable skills. Her "Fogland
 Studies" is a series of stories told in verse form
 the mouth of Irish peasants, with full comment of
 peasant life. She has left a portrait of an old
 Irishman, Thomas Nolan, praying for her son,
 Michael, who is at the front.

The Irish Farmer

Ab, Michael, Michael, Michael, Michael, Michael
 Ab, Michael, Michael, Michael, Michael, Michael
 I have seen you shining there against the light,
 With those grand wings on you, all glittering white,
 Like sailing clouds, when in at yonder door
 From beneath the sun we'd see, half hidden--there you
 The Big War took our lads--and then the signs
 Did my heart good, as strong you stand to home
 The Devil's own self, and drive him down his lane,
 But now this trouble's on us, let him be;
 There's worse folk loose about the world than he.
 . . . But lords and kings
 Might easy put a hand to better things
 Than raising up a war, that ere 'tis done
 Strikes thousands dead, and each a mother's son;
 . . .
 Piled up heap on heap,
 Like flattered leaves you see the cold blasts sweep
 Below the trees, the dead are lying there,
 Where Nick is fighting now. Ab, Michael, Michael,
 An eye on him and sort him out among
 The rest, for many a Nick is soldiering there,
 And every one of them a decent lad,
 But Nick's all the same that ever I had--
 You'd get none kinder if you searched William,
 And he a good son yet; a while ago
 Just playing around, or maybe counting down
 For sweets--My girl that ever I said him no.
 So mind him, Michael, that's a Michael too,
 And make a shift to bring him safely through
 And home to me before they've laid him low.

CHAPTER IV

RECENT IRISH WRITERS

Little you reck of the winter's blast,
For spring is following sure and fast;
The Master knows that your hearts are gay
Because you are praising Him today!

The Irish writers of today are near enough in age to be influenced by the writers of the Irish Renaissance but not to be influenced by what influenced them. The drab Dublin of Joyce's early writings went out in the Easter Rebellion of 1916, never to return. "A new Catholic Irish democracy is risen up to take the places of the old leisured, retired, cultivated class of civil servants of landed gentlemen."⁴³

Although the participants of the Easter Rebellion of 1916 were largely Irish poets, strangely enough it was at this time that Lennox Robinson's comedy, "The White-headed Boy" reawakened interest in a neglected decade of Anglo-Irish literature, 1911--1921. He is one of the most noteworthy of the coterie influenced by Synge in the interpretation of contemporary Irish life, and like Synge, too, the greater part of his work has been done for the theatre.

RECENT IRISH WRITERS

Little you lack of the writer's class.
For writing is following and last;
The writer knows that you have the last
because you are writing him today.

The Irish writers of today are more enough
in age to be influenced by the writers of the Irish
Revolution but not to be influenced by the Irish
Revolution. The Irish writers of today are more enough
to write out in the Irish Revolution of 1916, even
to return. "A new Catholic Irish literature is rising
up to take the place of the old literature, refined,
cultivated class of civil servants of landed gentry
literature."

Although the practitioners of the Irish
Revolution of 1916 were largely in a poor, struggling
enough it was at this time that James Joyce's
comedy, "The White-headed Boy" represented interest
in a neglected decade of Anglo-Irish literature,
1911-1916. He is one of the most necessary of
the writers influenced by Joyce in the Irish literature
of contemporary Irish life, and the Irish literature,
greater part of his work has been done for the Irish.

James Joyce, "The White-headed Boy" and
"The White-headed Boy" and "The White-headed Boy"

His other plays which describe rural and small-town life in Ireland, are: "The Clancy Name," "The Crossroads," and "Harvest." Those which deal with politics are: "Patriots and the Dreamers," and "The Lost Leader." His only novel, "A Young Man from the South" was written before the Easter Rebellion.⁴⁴ He is a more faithful realist than Synge in that he excludes his own personality from his plays.

Despite the death of Synge in 1916, there has been no dearth of playwrights; the vitality and genius of the idealists have kept the spirit of the National Theatre bright and gleaming thru fair days and dark in the little theatre on Abbey Street, Dublin.

Lord Dunsany, from 1909 on, produced a kind of play which deals with the most fantastic subjects in a style which exactly suits them--a highly imaginative prose which produces the effect of poetry. "His mystical sense of beauty, his use of the supernatural, and the sense of lyrical quality of his diction show his artistic kinship with Yeats."⁴⁵ His "A Night at an Inn" is a ghastly story about the

⁴⁴

O'Connor, Op. Cit. p. 158

⁴⁵

Tucker, Op. Cit.

fate attached to an Oriental gem; the "Flight of the Queen" is a dramatized version of the story of the queen bee's nuptial flight so well described by Maeterlinck.

Isolated from reality, his scenes are in a world of wonder, in a language rich in lovely imagery and fascinating for its subtle rhythm.

Paul Vincent Carroll, a leading dramatist, has produced two highly successful plays: "Shadow and Substance" and "The White Steed," a current production.

Two theatres now provide plays from Irish sources; the more recent established "Gate Theatre" Company has become a serious competitor of the Abbey. Dorothy Macardle's "Dark Waters," "Ann Kavanagh" and "The Old Man" have been produced by the Gate and Abbey Theatres. The first is a psychic play, the second and third historical rebel pieces.

Other dramatists who have found their sources in the living Irishman on the soil or in the streets of Dublin and the country town in the last quarter of a century are: Rutherford Mayne, William Boyle, St. John Ervine, T. C. Murray and Sean O'Casey, who claim that they have been justified in their aims

by discovering a new audience; for although the theatre was created in less than ten years, it took thirty to create the public.

Lennox Robinson, the first Englishman to be in command of the Abbey, was joint director of the theatre and generally the producer of its plays from 1922 until 1935 when twenty-five-year-old Hugh Hunt left his Eastbourne home to take up his new appointment as Director of Ireland's National Playhouse. He tactfully overcame his initial unpopularity by acquiring an Irish accent, accustoming himself to Irish ways and habits, and emerging as a recognised Dublin celebrity.

His chief concern today is to steer a middle course between the two factions who battle for control of the Abbey. The Old Order, led by Irish adherents of the late poet William Butler Yeats, would like Hunt to maintain the traditional policy of producing great plays of all nations. The revolutionaries whose spiritual chief is Eamon De Valera, want the Abbey Theatre to become the home of Irish drama only, performed, whenever possible, in Gaelic.

In Austin Clarke's poetic play, "The Son of Learning," he has retold the story of that magnificent

by discovering a new audience; for although the theatre was created in less than ten years, it took thirty to create the public.

Lawrence Robinson, the Irish Republican, was in command of the Irish, who joined the ranks of the theatre and generally the ranks of its plays from 1922 until 1935 when twenty-five-year-old Shaw left his Eastbourne home to take up his new appointment as Director of Ireland's National Theatre. He busily oversaw his initial appointment by securing an Irish accent, representing himself as Irish was essential, and emerging as a recognised Dublin celebrity.

The chief concern today is to steer a middle course between the two factions who battle for control of the Abbey. The old order, led by Irish adherents of the late poet William Butler Yeats, would like Shaw to maintain the traditional policy of producing great plays of all nations. The revolutionaries whose spiritual chief is James Joyce, want the Abbey Theatre to become the home of Irish drama only, performed, whenever possible, in Gaelic.

In Dublin Gluck's poetic play, "The Son of Learning," he has repaid the army of that magnificent

satire: "The Vision of MacConglinne." The modern poets have turned much more often to Irish epic and romance than to the sagas of these traditional historical personages: for every "Son of Learning" we have dozens of treatments of the heroes, and heroines of the Mythological, Red Branch and Fenian Cycles of Old Irish Romance.

Drama was not the only literature that came into existence with the theatre but the living speech of the country people thus discovered inspired poets and the dramatic construction, the rising novelists by helping them find a convention more in accordance with their minds than the copious English novels that had been their models. Every Irish writer of distinction has been more or less molded by the Irish theatre except James Joyce.

James Joyce's three volumes of fiction, "Dubliners," "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" and "Ulysses," stamps him as the experimental novelist of the century in his use of a variation in language, the Graeco-German combination of words, and the boldness of association, which are his main contributions to the art of the novel. He differs from the traditional novelist in carrying out his

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 contributions to the art of the novel. He differs
 from the traditional novelist in carrying out his

own technique in the use of language and allowing the reader to unlearn his left-to-right manner of interpretation and regard the unit--paragraph--as a picture.

Stephen Gwynn says of Joyce, and his "Ulysses":

It may be possible to construe the whole book into some meaning; but one thing seems clear: it is the study of a diseased soul, seeking forgetfulness in debauch, in word-spinning, in laughter, in subtleties of artistic theory; the study of a soul whose only assurance lies in the vital principle of revolt.

"Ulysses" has, beyond question, affected or infected the whole of Europe. All the new writers feel obliged to attempt, as it does, the doing of two things at once: moving at the same time on two (or three) distinct planes. It has also affected all theories of style; and on this we may agree with John Eglinton that Joyce is taking his revenge on the language of the alien. He writes: ' . . . Like a devil taking pleasure in forcing a virgin to speak obscenely, so Joyce rejoiced darkly in causing the language of Milton and Wordsworth to utter all but unimaginable filth and treason.'

Joyce holds high rank indisputably--with Sterne, for instance, the author least unlike him; and like Sterne he has created characters . . . And in this creation is concentrated all the quality by which Joyce is distinguished from Sterne, and excels him--his intensity of passion.⁴⁶

The prose writers, who have been in the main realists, ignored or misunderstood at home, are

⁴⁶

Stephen Gwynn, Op. Cit. p. 200

own technique in the use of language and allowing
the reader to witness his left-to-right manner of
interpenetration and regard the mid-paragraph as
a sentence.

It may be possible to regard the
whole book as a series of sentences; but one
thing seems clear: it is the study of
a diseased soul, seeking for relief
in debauch, in word-spinning, in language,
in a series of artistic theories; the
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Eliot that Joyce is a writer of the average
on the language of the artist. He writes:
"... like a devil taking pleasure in
looking a virgin to speak coarsely, so
Joyce rejected dandy in carrying the
language of Milton and Wordsworth to
new and unimaginable limits and
breadth."

Joyce holds his rank indisputably
with George, for instance, the author
least unlike him; and like George he has
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creation is concentrated all the quality
by which Joyce is distinguished from
George, and excels him in intensity
of passion.

The prose writers, who have been in the main
realists, turned or misunderstood at home, are

expatriated from their own people, even though their interests and sympathies are forever anchored deeply and firmly in Ireland. The effect of this revulsion-attraction complex on Irish literature has been the Celtic Mist--a release from the cruder realities of Irish life. A few of these expatriates are: O'Flaherty, Moore, O'Leary, Boyd, O'Riordan, Strong, Miss O'Brien, and Joyce. Sean O'Faolin says:

Only those writers who have idealized Irish life, or whose orbit of interest is limited, or who treat of Irish life idyllically by a gentle process of tactful omission, are really happy and at rest at home--e. g., DeBlacam, Corkery, Hogan, Miss Smithson, Miss Somerville.⁴⁷

It must be recognized, however, that modern Ireland is a very self-conscious nation; realizing its freedom after so many centuries of struggle, it may be likened to a man waking up one morning to find himself famous, and is not quite sure just what his responsibilities are or which of his relations may be taking advantage of his position.

An example of the new idealization of Irish life in prose fiction might be found in Francis Gallagher's "Dark Mountain," and in Daniel Corkery's "Stormy Hills." There is question as to the outcome of such a procedure: will it lead to sentimentalism?

⁴⁷

"Literary Provincialism," Commonweal Vol. 17

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Frank O'Connor, in his "Guests of the Nation," has blended reality and fantasy: ". . . he has found a middle position where his art has become fluid to match this dazzling interweaving of a perpetually elusive Irish life."⁴⁸ His "Death In Dublin," is a biography of Michael Collins, and a history of the Irish revolution. It is a well written book giving a clear picture of events from 1916 to 1921 in which Michael Collins played such an inextricable part.

"Army Without Banners," an autobiography by Ernie O'Malley, a young medical student who became a leader in the guerilla warfare under Michael Collins, might be regarded as a companion volume to "Death in Dublin."

Both O'Faolin and O'Connor are familiar to American readers in their short stories for American magazines. Sean O'Faolin's latest book, "King of the Beggars" is a biography of Daniel O'Connell, in whose life is the history of Catholic emancipation in England and Ireland.

Seumas MacManus, who is famous for the "Story of the Irish Race," has written his autobiog-

⁴⁸

O'Faolin, Op. Cit.

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raphy and called it "The Rocky Road to Dublin." It is such a delightful account of the author's boyhood days in Donegal that it should be read aloud to catch the music of the rhythmical style.

Kate O'Brien stands foremost as an Irish novelist, to the extent of being called the Irish Calsworthy. Her "Without My Cloak" pictures the rise of an Irish family of merchant princes; her "Ante-room" (recently filmed) is of a different, narrower, more sombre and poignant type. Her latest book, "Pray for the Wanderer," is a study of Irish intellectuals.

Within the domain of imaginative prose falls Nora Connolly O'Brien's "Portrait of a Rebel Father," an intimate study through the eyes of a child of James Connolly, Irish leader, executed in 1916. This is the outstanding book by an Irish woman writer of the year. It recalls the *Wahreheit und Dichtung* manner used so effectively by Goethe in his reminiscences of childhood, half-history, half-poetry, dimly remembered scenes hidden away in the subconscious and revealed as if by a searchlight flash. From it emerges Connolly, the father and the man in his home, everyday environment, with the economic struggle as

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... Kate O'Brien stands foremost as an Irish novelist, as the author of fiction called the Irish Calverley. Her "Without a Clack" pictures the rise of an Irish family of merchant princes; her "The Room" (recently filmed) is of a different, narrower, more somber and poignant type. Her latest book, "The For the Forthright," is a study of Irish intellectual life.

Within the domain of imaginative prose, Julia Howe Connolly offers a "Portrait of a Rebel Master," an intimate story through the eyes of a child of James Connolly, Irish leader, executed in 1916. This is one outstanding book by an Irish woman writer of the year. It recalls the Whitfield and Michener manner used as a model by George in his reminiscences of childhood. Half-history, half-fiction, finely remembered scenes hidden away in the subconscious and revealed as if by a searching light. From it emerges Connolly, the father and the man in his home, every day environment, with the social events as

a dark background.

Liam O'Flaherty's new novel, "Famine," is a story of the great hunger in Galway in the years 1846 and 1847, during which the blight withered the potato fields and Ireland declined in population from eight to six and a half million. It was an artificial famine, for in the years the potato crop failed Ireland produced more than enough wheat to feed her people, but a Government right asserted itself over the right of the peasant to live.

This historical novel marks an advance in seriousness and restraint if not in flash and brilliance. He does not idealize his peasant, but depicts him in all his cruelty, selfishness and obstinacy; roused to fury by the shock of his gray poteen, soothed by the rites of his beloved religion, devoted to custom, ritual, etiquette, speaking words at once specific, concrete and full of imagery.⁴⁹

Although these are some of the best known contemporary Irish writers, the list is far from complete; some have blazed new trails, tried new experiments; some portray life, some try to recreate

a dark background.

William Williams's poetry

a sort of the great power

1943 and 1947, during which

the police took and transferred

from 1941 to 1942 and 1943

was an excellent example

of the great power

which was to be seen

right across the

and to the

This historical novel

contains and contains

Williams. He does not

believe him in all his

obstacles; rather to

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Although there are

consequently, it is

complete; some have

experiment; some

The New York Times Book Review

and reshape; different in style, treatment and approach, all are alike in their Irish quality and expression, representing the contribution of the Irish people of the present day to literature.

The intolerant attitude toward realism has caused a swing back to romance, fantasy, and poetry as inevitable. The modern Irish writer, therefore, reorientated into himself and being perforce divided by his interest in life and his retirement into self, will produce a subjective, intellectual art "possibly of formal beauty, possibly of fantastic color, possibly of a fiery quality in which reality will become melted into strange shapes."⁵⁰

Padraic Colum has turned to the tales of the traditional kings of Ireland in "The Story of Lowry Maen" at the time of the coming of the Iron Age in Ireland. It is a narrative poem which recounts the tale of Lowry Loingsech, Lowry the Voyager, who as a boy of eight sees his father murdered by his uncle Cavach, and is literally struck dumb by the sight. Hence his epithet "Maen," "Speechless." His infirmity saves his life for there is no need to slay a dumb lad; he can never dispute the kingship with either Cavach or his

50

Sean L'Faolin, "Irish Letters: Today and Tomorrow" Op. Cit.

and message; different in style, treatment and
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Padraic Colum has turned to the tales of
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counts the tale of Lowry Mass, Lowry the boy-
ager, who as a boy of eight sees his father mur-
dered by his uncle Cavan, and is literally driven
dumb by the sight. Hence his epithet "Mute."
"Speechless." His infirmity saves his life for
there is no need to slay a dumb lad; he can never
dispute the kingship with either Cavan or his

descendants.

Lowry grows up, fostered and attended by an old harper, Croftnie; and in a moment of passion regains his speech and falls in love with the beautiful young Miria, only daughter of the minor king, Seorlah. He takes ship for Faul, where he has heard men make swords longer of the new metal--iron. Successful and eminent in his service with Catumandus, King of the Gauls, he is given 3,000 Gaulish soldiers armed with iron swords to wrest from Cavach the kingship which is his right. He triumphs in the battle and marries the beautiful Miria.⁵¹

Colum's gift for storytelling and his power to evoke the past through the common timeless things: "smoke rising from wattled roofs, a woman grinding grain with stone upon stone, a goose turning on a spit before the fire, the call of curfews and the annual change of cygnet into swan,"⁵² are displayed in this simple story of wrong righted and love won.

A born poet, untouched by the many movements and variations in the gesture of poetry that the past two decades have witnessed, Colum treats of simplicities of living of the common people:

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Horace Reynolds, "Padraic Colum Sings of the Kings of Ireland," The New York Times Book Review, January 16, 1938

⁵²

Ibid.

descendants.
Lowry grows up, fostered and attended by
an old harper, O'Grady; and in a moment of passion
regains his speech and falls in love with the beau-
tiful young Milla, only daughter of the harper.
Secretly, he takes ship for Spain, where he has heard
men make swords longer of the new metal--iron. Two-
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King of the Galla, he is given 3,000 Spanish soldiers
armed with iron swords to wrest from Gavanah the
kingdom which is his right. He triumphs in the
battle and carries the beautiful Milla.
Colum's gift for story-telling and his power
to evoke the past through the common elements
things: "smoke rising from washed rocks, a woman
grinding grain with stone upon stone, a goose
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are displayed in this simple story of young Milla
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past two decades have witnessed, Colum brings to
simplicity of living of the common people:

51
Horace Reynolds, "Fables of the
Kings of Ireland," The New York Times Book Review,
January 18, 1932
52
Ibid.

. . . the wandering scholar, the old woman praying for a small house, the drover driving his cattle to the sea, the plowman breaking the wild earth, the sower flinging the seed into the furrow, the knife-grinder and the toymaker and the wandering ballad-singers and the old men complaining and the girls spinning, and the tin whistle player and the sauntering beggars--and over each humble figure, he manages by a fine and hardly discernible art, so simple is his magic in words, to cast a poignant and unforgettable atmosphere.⁵³

With these humble and not so humble personages move a host of the animals of the earth and the birds of the air.

Two Irish poets of today, Austin Clarke and Francis Higgins, make deliberate use of the assonated form William Larminie advocated some forty years ago to reform English verse, and relieve the poet of the burden of rhyme. In an essay in the Dublin Magazine, Austin Clarke has this to say of the innovation he practices:

Occasional assonance was used instinctively in popular verse of a bilingual period. The younger English poets are now experimenting in 'false rhyme,' a system accidentally discovered, I believe, by Mrs. Browning and first popularized by the 'divided rhyme' of Wilfred Owen, a war poet whose system proved impracticable. But it is at best an occasional device. Cracked rhymes must and eventually in cracked

verses. Assonance, on the other hand, is a complete medium and capable of development. Assonance is not the enemy of rhyme. It helps us to respect rhyme, which has been spoiled by mechanical use. By means of assonance we can gradually approach, lead up to rhyme, bring it out so clearly, so truly, as the mood needs, that it becomes indeed the very 'vox caelestis.'⁵⁴

Some extracts from his later poetry in which assonance takes the place of the familiar rhyme are:

'Black and fair strangers lean upon the oar
And there is peace,' she answered.

'Companies
Are gathered in the house that I have known,
Claret is on the board and they are pleased
By story-telling. When the turf is redder,
And airy packs of wonder have been told,
My women dance to bright steel that is wed,
Starlike upon the anvil with one stroke.'

The Planter's Daughter

When night stirred the sea
And the fire brought a crowd in,
They say that her beauty
Was music in mouth,
And few in the candle-light
Thought her too proud,
For the house of the planter
Is known by the trees.

Men that had seen her Drank deep and were silent,
The women were speaking
Wherever she went--
As a bell that is rung
Or a wonder told shyly,
And O she was the Sunday
In every week.⁵⁵

54

Padraic Colum, "Assonance in English Verse,"
Forum, Vol. XCIV, No. 94

55

Ibid.

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moderns, that it becomes indeed the
very 'vox angelica'.

Some extracts from his later poetry in which
assonance takes the place of the familiar rhyme are:

'Black and fair strangers lean upon the sea,
And there is peace,' she answered.
'Companies
Are gathered in the house that I have known,
Gathered is on the board and they are pleased
By story-telling. When the turn is red,
And airy pecks of wonder have been told,
My women dance to bright steel that is set,
Starlike upon the anvil with one stroke.'

The Planter's Daughter

Then right stirred the sea
And the fire brought a crowd in,
They say that her beauty
Was made in months,
And few in the candle-light
Thought her too proud,
For the house of the planter
Is known by the trees.
Her that had seen her dark deep eyes were all
The women were speaking
Wherever she went--
As a bell that is rung
Or a woman's voice
And O she was the Sunday
In every week.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

And they called it Eire--

Free to govern at least most of its territory after seven hundred years of subjection, Eire finds itself faced with the internal problem of a divided country and that of the revival of the language; the external problem of adaptation to the struggle-for-life among the nations.

Its distinctive culture, a silver thread in its garment of sackcloth worn through the ages, has survived and by degrees the old race is creeping back, devoted as ever to the faith and ideals not extinguished by dungeon, fire, and sword. It has been proved that Ireland is as truly Irish as France is French and England, English. No foreign culture can be imposed upon her.

Although Gaelic is now the official language of Eire, it will be some time before it becomes the ordinary vehicle for literature. A more or less lengthy bilingual phase will have to be passed through, and probably there will always be those who continue to choose English as their medium for the sake of a wider public, or because they can express themselves more easily

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becomes the ordinary vehicle for literature. A
more or less lengthy bilingual phase will have
to be passed through, and probably there will
always be those who continue to choose English as
their medium for the sake of a wider public, or
because they can express themselves more easily

in that language, even though it be written with a difference, which will individualize them as much as it does Americans.

It is to An t-Athair Peadar that belongs the credit of establishing modern Irish prose on the secure foundation of popular speech, a medium that is rich and vigorous and racy of the soil, rather than the excellent but archaic style of Geoffrey Keating who, though belonging to the seventeenth century was the best and most recent model to be had. Had the latter attitude prevailed, it would have proved disastrous to the creation of a modern prose literature in that it would be merely a pale reflection of the past.

With the significance of Ireland's past running through the whole literary movement in Irish and Anglo-Irish writers alike, a distinction tends to disappear with the result that the literature of our times has been singularly enriched.

Both the literary movement and the movement for revival of Gaelic have been affected by the political revolution that developed concurrently with them. Step by step, de Valera has dropped the bonds which linked the Free State to Great

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Britain: by abolishing the oath of allegiance to the Crown; by refusing to continue payment of \$25,000,000 due Britain in return for land sold to Irish tenants; by doing away with appeals to the Privy Council in London; by leading the Dail in voting out of existence the pro-British Senate; and, finally, by abolishing the post of governor-general; and after centuries of bitterness, Britain and Eire signed a treaty of friendship.⁵⁶

It is most fitting that Eire's first president should be Dr. Douglas Hyde, the poet and scholar universally loved in Ireland. A new era, rich in promise, opened before the country at this realization of De Valera's dream in the first president of Eire: "a majestic figure, symbolizing the spirit and aspirations of the Irish race, apart from the political strife for power, yet exercising the moral influence of an uncrowned king."⁵⁷

Eamon de Valera had thus achieved all but his ultimate goal of a united Ireland. And by choosing a Protestant for president of his predominantly Catholic country, he made a friendly gesture in the direction of the six Ulster counties in the North.

56

Newsweek: "A New Outlook for Ireland; London Pact Ends Old Feuds" May 2, 1938, p. 16

57

Ibid.

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

And they called it Eire--

Free to govern at least most of its territory after seven hundred years of subjection, Eire finds itself faced with the internal problem of a divided country and that of the revival of the language; the external problem of adaptation to the struggle-for-life among the nations.

Its distinctive culture, a silver thread in its garment of sackcloth worn through the ages, has survived and by degrees the old race is creeping back, devoted as ever to the faith and ideals not extinguished by dungeon, fire, and sword. It has been proved that Ireland is as truly Irish as France is French and England, English. No foreign culture can be imposed upon her.

Although Gaelic is now the official language of Eire, it will be some time before it becomes the ordinary vehicle for literature. A more or less lengthy bilingual phase will have to be passed through, and probably there will always be those who continue to choose English as their medium for the sake of a wider public, or because they can express themselves more easily

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Eamon de Valera had thus achieved all but his ultimate goal of a united Ireland. And by choosing a Protestant for president of his predominantly Catholic country, he made a friendly gesture in the direction of the six Ulster counties in the North.

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Tamon de Valera had then achieved all but his ultimate goal of a united Ireland. And by choosing a Protestant for president of his predominantly Catholic country, he made a friendly gesture in the direction of the six Ulster counties in the North.

⁵⁶ Newsweek: "A New Outlook for Ireland; London Post Herald: 'Old World', May 2, 1958, p. 12

As a boy in Connaught, the most Gaelic part of Ireland, Douglas Hyde loved the language and the ways of the Catholic peasants who lived about his father's rectory. As a scholar and a poet, he has struggled to preserve the Celtic heritage in the work of the Gaelic League which he founded.

The overwhelming desire of the vast majority of people in Ireland today is for peace and amity with the British and no leader could have done more to assure that than Mr. de Valera. Nobody expected the Prime Minister could have overcome the partition obstacle but many feel he has advanced far along the road that will eventually lead to rapprochement between the North and South.

The new constitution which transformed the Irish Free State into a nation assuming its ancient name of Eire, asserts Ireland's right to independence as follows:

The Irish nation hereby affirms its inalienable, indefeasible and sovereign right to choose its own form of government, to determine its relations with other nations and to develop its life, political, economic and cultural, in accordance with its own genius and traditions.⁵⁸

Her freedom, however, is bound up with regeneration--intellectual regeneration, economic

58

Our Times, "Ireland's New 'Supreme Law' "
May 17--21, 1937 Vol. II, p. 197

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For freedom, however, is bound up with
regeneration--intellectual regeneration, economic

and social reform. The strong, central government which she has ever needed must be realized and a government can be strong only when it is national. She is little more than recuperating from the ordeal of the misgovernment of the past.

An independent, self-reliant attitude has yet to be attained and upon it depends for the most part, the future of Ireland which vision as seen by Cardinal Newman nearly a hundred years ago formed the conclusion of De Valera's address to America in January, 1939:

I look towards a land both old and young, old in its Christianity, young in the promise of its future, a nation which received grace before the Saxon came to Britain and which has never quenched it.

I contemplate a people which has had a long night, and will have an inevitable day. I am turning my eyes towards a hundred years to come, and I dimly see the island I am gazing on become the road of passage and union between two hemispheres and the centre of the world.

Thither, as to a sacred soil, the home of their fathers and the fountainhead of their Christianity, students are flocking from east, west and south, from America and Australia and India, from Egypt and Asia Minor, with the ease and rapidity of a locomotion not yet discovered, all eager for one large, true wisdom; and thence when their stay is over, going back again to carry over all the earth 'Peace to men of good will.'

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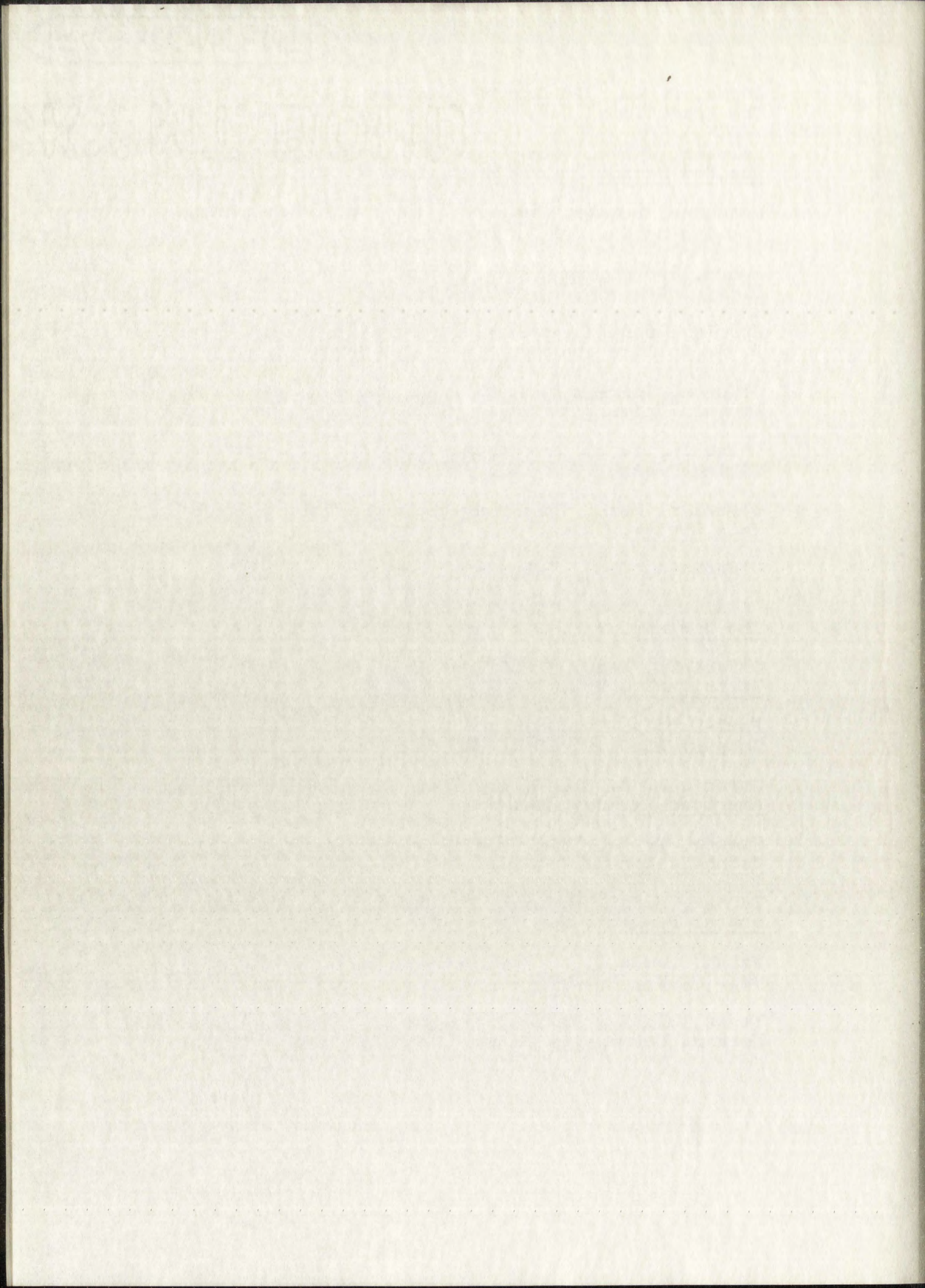
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