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**Reconstructing Name:
Lady Gregory's Tragic Irish Heroine**

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Lady Gregory's Tragic Irish Heroine*

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A Dissertation Submitted for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in Anglo-Irish Literature

Submitted to the School of English,

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SUMMARY

This thesis discusses the development of historian, folklorist and dramatist Lady Gregory's dramatic technique in regard to her Folk-History plays, *Kincora I and II*, *Dervorgilla*, and *Grania*. The focus of the thesis is on how Lady Gregory dealt with an overwhelming wealth of history and folklore, which proved unwieldy for the stage. Faced with the problems of staging too many characters, changing too many settings, and having the stories of ancient Irish culture be lost among the morass, she began to trim away what was not necessary while re-assimilating the important aspects into a dramatic plot that focuses on the main characters. This task entailed the development of a new technique in Lady Gregory's Folk-History dramas, as she read how the history and folklore informed each other in order to come to a more realized understanding of who she was dealing with and how they may have acted.

In her investigations of ancient history and folklore, Lady Gregory learned that the heroines of her plays, Queens Gormleith, Dervorgilla and Grania, were written down, but not quite out, of the ancient accounts, thereby losing status in public consciousness. As she attempted to give fuller representations to her characters, she found that the stories of these women were as critical as the stories of the men they dealt with, but were yet untold from what may have been the heroine's perspective. Lady Gregory took it upon herself to discover these stories amongst the history and folklore, to consider how much of their stories were told and what was not, and to re-conceive the stories for the Abbey Theatre's stage. The result is three plays depicting heroines of Irish culture playing their essential roles in the formation of a cultural identification along with their with ancient mythic and historic hero counterparts.

This thesis begins by discussing Lady Gregory's Folk-History project and the techniques she employs to distil and discern the dramatic narratives of these heroines. It then considers and compares the development of the 1905 *Kincora* play to the 1909 version, examines the technique of *Dervorgilla*, and shows how Lady Gregory's project reaches its culmination in *Grania*.

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CONTENTS

Declarations	ii
Summary	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction	1
Kincora	6
Dervorgilla	17
Grania	26
Conclusion	39
Notes	40

INTRODUCTION

Fate itself is the protagonist, your actor cannot carry much character, it is out of place. You do not want to know the character of a wrestler you see trying [his] strength at a show.¹

Among the many authors who have ‘wrestled’ with Irish history, Lady Augusta Gregory’s work represents dedication and respect for her nation’s heritage of “Strong People.”² While chronicling Ireland’s unique cultural features to facilitate historical awareness, her writing developed into varied distinct styles according to each project’s demands. Gregory was just as meticulous in the history she left behind, editorially scrutinising her own autobiographical texts *Seventy Years* and *Our Irish Theatre*. Likewise, she also took great care in her written portraits of other Irish women’s narratives, a portfolio of which incorporates all classes and major historical periods. Unfortunately, contemporary criticism has focused on how the history of Gregory’s life informs her texts, rather than how the history of her texts inform her life as an author. Such historicist readings have included autobiographical interpretations of her tragic folk-history plays *Kincora*, *Dervorgilla*, and *Grania*, concerning the tragic lives of Queens Gormleith, Dervorgilla and Grania, respectively. Yet Gregory warned her contemporaries that her work is more often based on Ireland’s cultural history and psychological tendencies than on herself:

“When *The Image* was produced at the Abbey, I put on the programme a quotation, ‘Secretum meum Mihi,’ ‘My secret to Myself,’ which I had for a while thought of taking as its name. I think from a note in your paper you and some others believed that the secret I wanted to keep was my own, whereas I had but given a ‘heart-secret’ into the keeping of each of the persons of the play.”³

Gregory’s career goal was to re-inform the Irish of their near-forgotten history; not her own history.

Yet the academic attention on her folk-history plays concerning women in Irish history has been reviewed through the history of Gregory, comfortably dismissing the emotional power each heroine bears in the tragic impact of her play’s climax. This leaves the importance of her

work largely ignored on more significant levels: as historian of Irish heroines; as chronicler of Irish folklore; and as translator of Irish culture into drama.

Her “fascination with things difficult”⁴ stemmed from an experimental curiosity in how history, folklore and social psychology each created distinct readings of an individual which, when interpreted collectively, beget what is known as that individual’s *character*. Gregory was well aware, being a translator as well as a dramatist, that this practice was commonly flawed with social subjectivity and cultural misunderstanding:

One must set one’s original a little way off to get a translation rather than a tracing [...where] “character” is built up or destroyed by a password or an emotion, rather than by experience and deliberation. The idea was more of a universal one than I knew at first.⁵

Her Folk-History plays began as an experiment with the above concept of character building by investigating historical ‘passwords’ such as names, events, dates, and places, and the subjective connotations these words gain with time. By experimenting with reinterpretations of the details surrounding Irish history and folklore, she found both the space needed to dramatise historic characters and a new genre of Irish drama waiting to be written. The Folk-History play includes most major persons, events and emotions included in Irish historical and folklore narratives. With each play, Gregory found herself paring away increasingly more unnecessary structures from the narratives she encountered in Irish culture, a process that allowed her to clarify and develop her techniques of dramatisation. As a result her initial focus on the characterisation of the tragic male heroes quickly shifted into character studies of the story’s tragic heroines, an unprecedented movement in the drama of her time.⁶

To know the name of a person from the past does not mean we know him or her personally. We may be informed of when the person lived, of the common socio-cultural and political conditions, of class status, of relatives, and of loves and losses. The person’s name may even, for better or worse, bear the weight of a reputation in public consciousness. Yet such quantitative details do not mean we know the *qualities* of that person, of motivations, passions, and fears. Nor do we know if, over time, an interested or outside party has altered or misinformed our understanding of the person’s narrative. Part of the beauty of history is that the narrative of humanity is constantly being re-created and re-told. Yet this beauty creates a vulnerability in its subjects; the truth of a story often changes as quickly as it happens or is retold. This is a phenomenon of history which Gregory recognised and encountered in rendering the narratives of ancient Ireland into drama –where is the most correct and representative story to be found? Not in either the quantitative history or the qualitative folklore, but somewhere in between. The project she designates as Folk-History thus becomes one of juxtaposing the history and the folklore in attempts to re-create the most representative characterisations of figures who play significant roles in the national consciousness and identity.

In the writing and revisions of *Kincora*, Gregory's first historical drama investigating the tragic story of King Brian Boru, she found her first historical heroine, Gormleith. Though Brian was meant to be the play's focus, Gregory had difficulty controlling the dramatic energy that Gormleith demanded on the page and stage as the catalyst for male action. In the revised *Kincora*, Gormleith becomes far more rational, as do her complicated relations with the Kings and leaders of Ireland. Gregory subsequently began to experiment further with such women, beginning with her one-act play *Dervorgilla* in 1907, a work based on the tragic romance of Queen Dervorgilla that politically led to the English colonisation of Ireland. The structure, set at the end of Queen Dervorgilla's life, uses time to explore how the timeless heroine's cultural characterisation can lead to cyclical life experiences even after her initial tragic fall from social grace. Gregory then revised *Kincora* for a new production in 1909, this time depicting Gormleith and Brian as political equals entwined in tragically conflicting life goals: he desires a peaceful retirement from the soldier trade; she desires a life full of adventure and emotional satisfaction. The heroine is also more fully developed thanks to extra time and space on the stage; this is thanks to Gregory's delegation of unnecessary historical characters and events to the published notes, which allows for the elongation of scenes that build Gormleith's relationships with her current and former male relatives.

Other folk-histories by Gregory soon appeared in the Abbey, such as *The White Cockade* and *The Canavans*, comic depictions of how historical folklore could influence and/or inform contemporary history –but this time at the expense of the English Crown. Then, in 1911, she completed her final study of historical Irish women in *Grania*; a psychological portrait of the tragic love triangle between Diarmuid, Grania and Finn. This last play, arguably her finest tragedy, exhibits her development as a historical playwright through her economic use of only three characters over three acts. Perhaps more important than structure, however, is how intimately the fierce passions escalate among the characters. While the three act/three character structure may seem minimal over a maximal space, Gregory manages to make the scenes feel overwhelmingly close through the emotional dramatic energy.

In 1904 Gregory's *Spreading the News* was produced about a man's comic social experience, instead of the tragic women's social experience the author originally intended:

The idea of [*Spreading the News*] first came to me as a tragedy. I kept seeing as in a picture people sitting by the roadside, and a girl passing to the market, gay and fearless. And then I saw her passing by the same place at evening, her head hanging, the heads of others turned from her, because of some sudden story that had risen out of a chance word, and had snatched away her good name.⁷

Within the same year Gregory began writing the Abbey's first folk-history play, *Kincora*. Notably, this is also her first play with a historical Irish heroine who functions interdependently with her patriarchal environment to accomplish independent goals.⁸ Through the next seven years –the peak of her playwriting for the Abbey –Gregory began to reintroduce heroines from

Irish history while translating fresh characterisations through the more emotional accounts found within the western Irish folklore.

Historians trace the facts of names, dates, statistics and events into a whole picture. But this technique offers only a two-dimensional picture, or portrait, limiting any deeper understanding of the significance of these events for the people involved. Such information renders only a stage from which history develops sequentially. Therefore, being an Irish folklore historian, it is no wonder Gregory claimed "I usually first see a play as a picture."⁹ Likewise, folklore became Gregory's key to unlocking creative space for dramatizing the 'people who made history,' as she asserts that individuals make history; not events. Throughout her Folk-History plays, she prioritises the development of her new genre as a dramatist over her ability to dramatise historic events on stage. Her drama thus enables an Irish folklore that prioritises character building over accurately recorded events.

There is a clear progression from the first version of *Kincora* in 1905 to the 1912 publication of *Grania*, ever moving toward a more efficient use of plot structure and closing notes. Gregory openly admits that she had to work to control her historian's desire to incorporate historical detail.¹⁰ As she matured as an author, her confidence grew in leaving out large sections of superfluous historical detail which slowed plot development and dramatic energy; she simply moved these unnecessary details into the closing notes for each play, thereby becoming her reference-epitaph to past historical narratives while satisfying any anxieties about missing information. Marginal scenes, minor characters and mystical allusions are banished to the play's notes and divided according to whether they were from historical or folklore sources. This technique's increased economy gave her the necessary time and space on stage to accomplish her character development project, without sacrificing historical integrity for the sake of skeletal dramatic structures. Through this process, Gregory makes her notes to the Folk-History plays integral to understanding the cultural background of the narratives as well as her intricate creative accomplishments in their dramatisation.

The writing of these folk-histories and their publication are a testament to the personal investment Gregory made to ensure that these women's narratives were included in the labour of the Irish revival literature. Even against the grain of colleague's advice,¹¹ Gregory pushed her folk-history plays into the Abbey's work. It is through the tragedies of her folk-history series that she begins to find the heroines tempted Fate as their dramatic protagonist as much as any hero:

The riddle [Grania] asks us through the ages is, "Why did I, having left great Grey-haired Finn for comely Diarmuid, turn back to Finn in the end, when he had consented to Diarmuid's death?" And a question tempts one more than the beaten path of authorised history. [...] For the present play I have taken but enough of the fable on which to set, as on a sod of grass, the three lovers.¹²

This writing away from "authorised history" was a necessary step in her project to recast the stories of legendary Irish women. While history books offered little insight, Irish folklore

harboured emotional explanations offering further space for reinterpretation of the women's stories. By experimenting with new configurations of how their potential emotions and real events might have coincided, Gregory's new dramatic technique excavates more realized characterisations of the women behind the reputations of these famous heroines.¹³

The initial example of how Gregory employed her reclamation techniques is her negotiation of the 1905 version of *Kincora* into her more efficient second version produced in 1909. Between these versions she wrote and produced *Dervorgilla* in 1907; this experience helped her begin trimming the excess off the narrative accounts for the dramatic stage, and lead her back to *Kincora* with a different conception. *Grania* is a thorough distillation of the Folk-History genre through her 'cutting away' technique, and this proves to be her most efficient stylistic achievement of the three finished plays, running three full acts but using only three actors. In the following chapters, I will examine the development of a writers dramatic technique by closely exploring how and where Gregory distils the mass of historic and folklore information into presentable dramas that show us something of Irelands mythic and historic past.

KINCORA

Kincora, 1905 → *Kincora, 1909*

Kincora was the first historical play I wrote, and it gave me a great deal of trouble and I wrote many versions, for I had not enough skill to wrestle with the mass of material, and I think I kept too closely to history. It was produced at the Abbey Theatre in 1905 in the old printed version. [The] new version was produced in 1909.

I hoped then and still hope that we may give a week or more in every year to a sequence of history plays, or perhaps play them at schools, that schoolboys and schoolgirls may have their imagination stirred about the people who made history, instead of knowing them but as names.¹⁴

The investigative Folk-History project begins with Gregory's renditions of *Kincora*. Gregory wrote two dramatic versions of the narrative, both recounting the story of King Brian Boru's rise and fall as the first king to unite Ireland and permanently drive out the Danish invaders. The differences between the two versions is found in her treatments of character, time, and history, and these differences reveal her investigative interests in anomalies between a narrative's history and its folklore, resulting in alternative characterisations from the original source material. This is most evident in the character of Queen Gormleith in the second version of *Kincora*. Among the play's many characters, Gormleith has the most distinctive reputation in both Irish history and folklore; as such, Gormleith becomes a relatively obvious choice for Gregory's investigation of character through a Folk-History juxtaposition, and a good place to begin exploring Gregory's own Folk-History project.

The author's new characterisation brings to light previously unexplored elements of Gormleith's life, such as her unique political connections arising from her several marriages – indeed, Gregory even gives her an extra unhistorical husband in King Malachi. Furthermore, the dramatic rewriting of the narrative innovatively claims Gormleith attempted to tame her aggressiveness while married to Brian, and suggests his zealous devotion to the Church could have led to their falling out. While Gregory's extensive revisions both eliminate and condense unnecessary scenes and characters, she was not yet radical enough in the first version, expending unnecessary time and energy on subplots and mystical characters not pertinent to the overall narrative. Nevertheless, Gormleith's characterisation evolves out of Gregory's

experiment, away from a reputation as an angry sociopath to a passionate woman often frustrated by being ignored within a patriarchal power structure. However, and quite significantly, throughout Gregory's Folk-History experiment with Gormleith, she never attempts to make one like her; Gregory asks the audience to imagine who the woman may have been behind the name once her actions are reassessed through the dramatisation. The result is a vivid Gormleith re-conceived out of our acknowledgement that the story of history changes constantly, as it does with every moment *Kincora* is retold on stage. The following will examine the development of characterisations, specifically Gormleith's, through Gregory's folklore-history juxtaposition in the original and the final version of the play.

*Kincora I*¹

Among the Folk-History plays, *Kincora I* remains most faithful to its backgrounds in history and folklore, as explained in the play's notes.¹⁵ Yet as implied in the above quotation, Gregory was still writing her way out of the all-inclusive style of her recently published accounts of the Irish epics, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* and *Gods & Fighting Men*. One of the most striking features of this inclusive style is her an ornate attention to narrative detail:

Then he went on to where there was another dun, very huge and royal, and another wall of bronze around it, and four houses within it. And he went in and saw a great king's house, having beams of bronze and walls of silver, and its thatch of the wings of white birds. And then he saw on the green a shining well, and five streams flowing from it, and the armies drinking water in turn, and the nine lasting purple hazels of Buan growing over it. And they were dropping their nuts into the water, and five salmon would catch them and send their husks floating down the streams. And the sound of the flowing of those streams is sweeter than any music that men sing.¹⁶

The first staging of *Kincora* resembles these narratives, and becomes heavy with the weight of too many characters and details. Keeping 'too closely to history' and its 'mass of material' necessitated extra time and structural space to interlock the characters of *Kincora I* into the plot. Such overwrought explanations in a dramatic form, however, results in various dramatic difficulties. For one, it draws attention away from what is important, the position of the protagonists within the dramatic plot. The most distracting example of this occurs in Gormleith's interrelations (literally) with the central male characters. Any dramatist would be challenged by Gormleith's web of connections with the leading men of her era: widow of Ireland's enemy, the king of the Danes; mother of his reigning son, Prince Sitric of the Danes; eventual wife of King Brian of Meath, later High King of Ireland; and sister of King Maelmora of Leinster. What's more, there are political rivalries between most of these men throughout the course of the play. These rivalries have historically revolved around their associations with Gormleith, and *Kincora I* includes this web in depicting her role within Brian Boru's story;

¹ Hereafter the 1905 and 1909 versions of *Kincora* are referred to as *Kincora I* and *Kincora II*, respectively.

however, this narrative faithfulness thins the dramatic plot among historical detail and thereby detracts from its overall impact.

Kincora I also maintains the classical structure of Brian's tragic journey toward his goal of political rest, which again leads to superfluous detail. Aoibhell's mystical messages of peace, Maire as the mythical beggar woman bearing the gold ring of peace, and Ireland as his maiden lover/icon of peace take up large chunks of the play's structure –even in the play's Prologue –to inform the audience of Brian's destiny of peace despite Gormleith's meddling. With three extra women distracting Brian's attention from Gormleith's political interests, the dramatic development of Brian and Gormleith's potential partnership –matrimonially and politically –is likewise impeded. Fortunately, *Kincora II* observes Gormleith's political roles more contemplatively with fewer characters, thereby alleviating the problem of detail weakening the plot and focusing the dramatic emphasis.

Another confusing device employed by Gregory in this play is the assignment of formal speech to royal characters and Kiltartan dialect to their servants. This at once distracts the ear from what the actors say and makes the servants appear coarse and subordinate in both grammar and status. While a standard practice within Elizabethan drama, she wisely loses this classist emphasis in her subsequent Folk-History tragedies.¹⁷ In *Kincora II*, she evades the class distinctions by revising all of the lines, except those using religious and political rhetoric, into Kiltartanese. Interestingly, some audience members preferred the class-distinctive speech; as W.B. Yeats observed, “The old version pleased the half-educated because of its rhetoric; the new displeases because of its literature.”¹⁸

Gregory's attention to historic detail and folkloric traits took its toll in the production's 1905 staging. The setting of *Kincora I* literally clings to the different settings of the historical and folkloric accounts of the narrative, resulting in superfluous props and scene changes that detract from the central story of Brian and Gormleith. For instance, the Prologue of Brian, Aoibhell and the two soldiers takes time away from the main plot and requires props for a forest setting. In this prologue, Brian's refusal of Aoibhell for his “hard sweetheart, Ireland”¹⁹ is also inconsistent with his later refusal of Gormleith for Aoibhell, but in the end he is anyway forced into battle for Ireland. The Prologue is removed in the later play, and that information is dealt with by having Brian briefly mention a dream he had the night before where Aoibhell appeared to him in Act III.

Like the Prologue, the last scenes of Act III in the earlier play are also wisely removed and merely alluded to in the later version. In *Kincora I*, Act III, Scenes 2 and 3 (on the battlefield at Clontarf and Brian's death in his tent at Clontarf) necessitate quick scenery changes and time away from the central play to cover Murrough's tragically ironic denial of the mystic Aoibhell, Brian's murder on the brink of victorious peace, the inclusion of yet another character, Earl Brodar of Man, and Gormleith confronting Brian's murder. Gregory's later Folk-

History plays avoid set changes by using one setting where the time lapses between acts, giving the drama a cogent sense of continuity while maintaining a stronger emphasis on the actors. The structural centre of action in *Kincora I*, the great hall at Kincora Castle, thus becomes the one and only setting of *Kincora II*.

As mentioned above, the character of Gormleith is the most heavily revised character between *Kincora I* and *Kincora II*, and all other characters' lines are amended to either support or help develop her new image, which is quite a departure from the image of the earlier play. In *Kincora I*, Gormleith is portrayed as a sociopath, pursuing egocentric motives at the expense of her environment without hesitation of guilt. Such a personality precedes her, intimidating others who encounter her:

MAIRE (*from the window*): [...] There is a boat come to the shore –there is some queen-woman stepping out of it.

BRENNAIN: What sort is she?

MAIRE: She is tall, and has rich clothing, and there is some shining thing on her head.

RURY (*going to window*): The Lord be between us and harm! It is Queen Gormleith!

DERRICK (*coming to window*): The High King's wife!

BRENNAIN: What does she want coming into Munster?

MAIRE (*shivering*): I hope she will bring no harm on our king!

PHELAN: Malachi thought she would stop at home, keeping her maids to their needles. It is time for him to have got better sense.

BRENNAIN: What did he want marrying her? I would never like to meddle with a woman that had been married to a Dane.²⁰

She is also repeatedly described as a hawk, a "Crow of Battle,"²¹ or as some other aerial predator:

MAELMORA: Where is my sister Gormleith

MALACHI: She is far enough away, at home.

MAELMORA: Did you ask her to come with you?

MALACHI: Did I ask a swarm of bees to come into the house to help to make the peace?

MAELMORA: She might like this peace for her son Sitric's sake.

MALACHI: Believe me, we are best without her.

MAELMORA: That may be. She has a wild heart yet.²²

Gregory uses Gormleith's 'Crow of Battle'²³ image again in *Kincora II*, but only in ex-husband Malachi's bitter descriptions of her, thus implying that Gormleith's historical reputation may have been 'written' into history by the only royal survivor of the Battle of Clontarf, her former spouse. In *Kincora I*, however, images abound of Gormleith swooping into a scene and pecking it apart until she carries it away crowing "War is best! War is best!"²⁴ Her entrance in Act II, Scene I is a perfect example: the 'court' of male characters all in agreement that King Maelmora and Prince Sitric, prisoners from the Battle of Glenmama and Gormleith's only blood relatives, are to be executed for treason. Brian Boru stops the proceedings to introduce the final prisoner, Gormleith, who enters with her battle spear still in hand. From this point on the court is in chaos, and the scene does not end until Gormleith has herself, brother and son acquitted; she has divorced Malachi; she becomes engaged to King Brian Boru; and her now-ex-husband Malachi is demoted from High King to king as Brian Boru takes the position of High King.

Once Gormleith enters this scene, all of the action benefits her at the expense of another. But the chaos of this scene has the effect of a modern action film, where the events serve immediate sensory stimulation but do little to develop character or plot.

The first Gormleith remains too close to the combative characterisations found in the historic texts and folkloric accounts; she is passionate about the glory of battle, fiercely opposed to anyone wasting their life by ignoring a conquerable foe, and even argumentative with blood relatives. Her frustration with the ageing Brian is never developed beyond the suggestion drawn from the folklore that she grows bored of him.²⁵ Gregory's treatment of Gormleith's relationship with her brother Maelmora in this first version, also drawing on the folklore, falls once again into playing on Gormleith's tempestuous reputation; at the beginning of Act III, Scene 1, the siblings argue over Maelmora's performing manual labour for Brian, which leads to her throwing his Maelmora's cloak into the fire. These particular scenes, however, are thoroughly revamped in *Kincora II* through an investigation of the relationships and language surrounding each event, and display a development in the playwright's abilities from simple dramatisations of the folkloric accounts to crafting a narrative for drama.

Another drawback to the 1905 production that is dealt with in the later version is the play's finale. In the first version characters question whether Gormleith is otherworldly, implying she may be a goddess of war who whets men's lust for conflict, resistance, and political unrest:

MALACHI: King [Brian], take her at her word; put her to death. I no longer speak in anger. I do not know who this woman is, whether she is of mortal birth, or outside the race of men—but this I do know, that while she is living there can be no peace in the world.²⁶

Gormleith's position as the advocate for war in this first version are set in opposition to the advocate for peace, the immortal Aoibhell of the Grey Rock, a juxtaposition which implies Gormleith may also be immortal.²⁷ Aoibhell and Gormleith's opposing roles in their powers of suggestion over men are far more defined in this early version, which has the effect of placing Gormleith in a stratum above mortal queen when her ideology of violence wins the sentiments of the men over Aoibhell's ideology of peace. Of course, it can hardly be said that she 'wins.' Neither woman ever directly confronts the other. Rather, it is when the men choose between their examples that marks Gormleith as victorious at the Battle of Clontarf in Act III, Scene 2:

SITRIC: Come, Queen, and call to the men of Leinster. It is for you to take Maelmora's place.

GORMLEITH: I will stay while I have a spear left to cast at some foolhardy enemy that is breaking through the wood. Go to his heart, swift messenger, beak of eagle, teeth of wolf. (*Throws a spear.*) Search out his secrets! Let out his rage! Sure love-token, bring him to my feet. (*Throws another.*) Darken his eyes! Whiten his face! Redden the grass!²⁸

Within minutes, Aoibhell tries to coax the wounded Murrough to follow her away from the battle, as she has tried to persuade his father, Brian, in the Prologue:

AOIBHELL: I, who know hidden things, know you must fall this day unless you come with me now to the happy country of all delight. And, indeed, Murrough, it is soon for you to die; and it is little time you have had for joy or for pleasure; your young youth and

strivings of the war-woman and the statecraft of the man of peace. Come with me now, and I will show you joys you have never known. I will give you the never-ending, never-lessening life.²⁹

But Murrough returns to the battle and to his death. Thus in this scene the men choose the ideology of violence represented by Gormleith over the peace represented by Aoibhell, which becomes a metaphor for the victory of the Irish over the Danes. This is another scene altered in *Kincora II*, and for good reason, as such a metaphor leads to the suggestion of the Irish being an inherently more violent people than others. In line with Gregory's developing Folk-History technique, Aoibhell is thus demystified into a mortal Beggar in the later version who challenges Gormleith and encourages Brian's dreams of peace. Similarly, Gormleith's passionate ideological preference for 'high hearted' persons and actions in *Kincora I* evolves into her advocacy of situations of chance and persons of 'luck' in *Kincora II*.

Kincora II

As mentioned earlier, the 1909 version of *Kincora* radically revises 1905 version; it is tighter in construction, eliminates most of the unneeded characters, flows with more natural speech patterns, and freely develops the stronger personality traits of each main character. This development comes from a greater consideration of how the history and the folklore inform each other, and what kind of story can be drawn from this information. All of these adjustments lead to a clearer narrative that focuses on Brian and Gormleith's passionate partnership and the influences surrounding their mutually tragic fate. Gregory's focal development is most significantly found in the final act, where Gormleith suffers in losing Brian; this both humanises the heroine and defies her sociopathic reputation for violence within history and folklore. It should be noted that her development as a Folk-History dramatist had already begun with 1907's *Dervorgilla*, so the evolution of *Kincora* has a structural precedent; it may even be said that this kind of Folk-History project is what drove her to revamp her previous version. The focus her later drama gains is through her interpretative abilities, a kind of cultural close reading which examines the historical and folkloric narratives in light of each other. Thus *Kincora II* exists as a development in Gregory's project as a dramatist of Ireland's history and folklore through her interpretative characterisations of tragic heroines and heroes.

Reviewing the transformations in *Kincora II*, the changes and amendments in the cast of characters and the reassignments of key lines is immediately striking. The roles of Derrick, Maire, Aoibhell and Brodar are all cut from the dramatis personae, and their previous lines are subsumed into the lines of different characters. Phelan takes over all Derrick's lines except those as *Kincora*'s songmaker, which are completely eliminated. Maelmora receives Brennain's lines in several scenes, which in tone reinforce Gormleith's accusation that Maelmora becomes a mere servant of Brian, as Brennain is a servant of Brian. Maire and Aoibhell are combined

into the antagonist role of the Beggar woman, though Brian still mentions seeing Aoibhell in a dream the night before Gormleith's final treachery. In Act I, Scene 1, Gormleith's meddlesome statement to Maelmora following the servants' quarrel –“Some say [Malachi] is uppermost, and some say Brian; but the king of Leinster is put in the lowest place of all!”³⁰ –is given to his servant, Phelan. Likewise, in Act III, Scene 1, Gormleith's confrontational lines with Murrough on the impending Dane invasion are given to Maelmora. Malachi's role as bitter prophet of Gormleith's fate is considerably clarified at the play's beginning with the quarrelsome pair's divorce and Gormleith's engagement to his rival, Brian. This last change also enables Malachi's role as Gormleith's 'prophet' to logically develop from his experiences as her former husband. All told, the random important lines of minor characters from the previous, historically and folklorically faithful version are absorbed into the dialogue of the major characters in the second version, thereby introducing a focus and character development lacking in her earlier endeavor.

Wisely, Gregory rewrites old dialogue and creates new dialogue in a more casual tone. She accomplishes this by applying a 'high-Kiltartanese,' which introduces a consistent tone and approaches an elimination of class distinctions. However, there are a few scenes which specifically keep differences in language based in context and social position, such as when Gormleith and Malachi greet each other in courtly rhetoric following the servants' quarrel of Act I; when Brian and the Beggar speak in the rhetoric of religion following Gormleith and Brian's intimate exchange on war and peace in Act III; and in the political rhetoric shared between Malachi, Brian and Gormleith in the bewildering judgement scene following the Battle of Glenmama (during which Gormleith now stays at Kincora, keeping the setting and the stage in one place). Gregory re-worked these moments of dialogue more than any others in her second version of the play, which implies a deep interest in and emphasis on the use of courtly, religious, and political rhetoric. Yet these rhetorical instances are off-set by instances of 'low' rhetoric not found elsewhere. Thus, although characters of differing social standings usually speak with similar dialects, these key scenes foreground the artifice of the rhetoric and forces the audience to consider how social standing can be constructed upon such artifice.

Almost every line and stage direction of *Kincora I* is edited and altered in *Kincora II*, and Act I yields plenty examples of *Kincora II*'s reconsidered dialogue. The play begins with the revised dialogue between Gormleith's brother and ex-husband. Maelmora and Malachi's relations with Gormleith foreshadows the majority of characterisations in *Kincora II*; most are or were relatives of Gormleith, and each of their dramatic roles have some relevance in building a fuller understanding of Gormleith's fate in personal tragedy. Here the two kings' discussion, freed in content by not having Brian enter until after their talk, sets up the current issues facing Brian's approaching marriage to Gormleith as well as their disgruntled attitudes towards their individual treaties with Brian. Their conversational tone opens the play with markedly greater ease than *Kincora I*'s stiff beginning, which immediately addresses the relevance of the treaties

rather than foregrounding the personalities of the characters. Thus Maelmora and Malachi's opening assists the structure and clarity of *Kincora II* by taking advantage of what insight they can offer, both having lived with Gormleith (which Brian has yet to do) and rivalled Brian (which Gormleith has yet to do). Maelmora's initial dissent from Brian's treaty also helps explain the significance of his defection to the Danes at the end of Act I and his repudiation of allegiance to Brian when Gormleith throws his 'serving man's cloak' into the fire at the beginning of Act III. What is readily apparent then is how Gregory's application of language in *Kincora II* serves both in the understanding of content as well as in the structuring of form.

Brian's new entrance into Maelmora and Malachi's talk leads to another significant characterisation shift from *Kincora I*. When Brian questions the kings on whether they have signed their individual peace treaties with him and suspects they have not, he begins negotiating their signatures with 'friendly' reminders that they have no choice. Brian's armies can trounce Maelmora's, and Malachi would lose face as the High King of Ireland if he reneged on a promise to his rival. Though this tactic could quickly become puerile, Brian is convincing while he carefully preserves his hard fought peace:

MAELMORA: I did not put my name to [our agreement] yet. I made some changes. I was thinking you are too hard on me in this.

BRIAN: You did not think that way the time my army was visiting you in Leinster. Your memory is gone from you in its track. You came asking and calling to me to quit your province, saying you would give in to anything I might lay down. No, there is no cause for that flush on your face. It was only some little forgetfulness. We could find a cure for it quick enough, if I should come again upon the plains of Kildare.

MAELMORA: Give it here, I will put my name to what you wrote. (*Signs*) [...]

BRIAN: You see how the High King is not slow or unwilling putting his name to his own agreement. No, he has not written it. Brennain, go seek a better pen for the High King's use. It is the pen that has failed, and not his own word. Malachi is like myself, he always holds to his word.

MAELMORA: (*signing*) Well, Brian, you are a hard man. But you are doing what I suppose I myself might be doing, and I being in your place. [...] You are a terrible wicked man, Brian, to go out fighting with for peace.

Brian's new subtlety of suggestion continues throughout his characterisation, making his utopian ideals for peace within Ireland more plausible in *Kincora II*. In *Kincora I* Brian reacts to inspiring events, while in *Kincora II* he creates action out of inspiration. This shows Gregory performing a kind of cultural reassessment of his character by writing a drama *through* and not *of* the combined narratives of history and folklore.

The servants' episode is also loosened in tone while tightened in form and content. Their talk is still spoken in mild Kiltartanese, but the constant hero worship in *Kincora I* gives way in *Kincora II* to comfortably frank gossip on each royal character's strengths and weaknesses. This allows for more liberal character interpretation and development, and in turn allows Gregory to experiment with how prevailing hearsay can develop into folklore; in fact, the servant's gossip often mirrors shared opinions found in the folklore, which Gregory summarises in the play's notes.

Gormleith's entrance on to the servants' gossip marks a shift in dialogue that parallels Brian's entrance on Maelmora and Malachi's discussion of dissent. It is not until Gormleith exposes the subjectivity with which royal positions are considered that the servants take sides according to their sworn allegiances. Her influence is the opposite of Brian's, however. Where he initially uses subtlety to encourage peaceful resolutions and holds war as a last resort, Gormleith subtly evokes arguments that lead to great battles, resorting to peace with Brian as a last resort. She is able to leave the servants in *Kincora II* (she stays to watch in *Kincora I*) and later return with the lower royalty, who then carry on the dispute like a children in a schoolyard fight until the re-entrance of the Kings Brian and Malachi.

Following the swift apologies among the men when the kings return, Malachi and Gormleith are left alone together, setting up a chance to develop Gormleith's reputation in the eyes of her ex-husband and prophet. It is, in fact, rather humorous to look at King Malachi's opinion of his ex-wife, Gormleith, in how it *doesn't* represent changes in her characterisation between her reputation and the Folk-Histories or *Kincora I* and *Kincora II*. According to slight changes in Malachi's accusatory lines, she merely develops from a meddlesome woman of "lightness & laughter" (*Kincora I*) to one with tragically "flighty, headstrong ways" (*Kincora II*).

Gormleith²

"In bringing together the Danes for Clontarf nobody had been more active than Gormleith. Since Maelmora's visit to Kincora she had been repudiated by Brian and had become so 'grim' against him that she wished him dead. She had sent her son Sitric to the Danish leaders to beg their assistance. The two best known of these leaders [...] made it a condition to be acknowledged King of Ireland if Brian were defeated and slain, and also to get Gormleith in marriage ...though the latter was now old, and it is unlikely that they were attracted by her doubtful virtue or coveted her faded charms."

So far the histories, founded, one must think, on the legends of the people. Around Kincora such legends still linger.³¹

One finds a very different Gormleith walking into Kincora in Act I and exiting in Act III. From beginning to end, Gormleith is developed as a woman that men believe they know and can predict to be argumentative, when in fact she is quite loyal when respected and involved in local events. It is when her involvement abates that Gormleith resorts to creating political situations for her inclusion, which is discussed later. One of Gregory's most radical revisions to the historic and folkloric accounts is her alteration of Gormleith's crucial role in the final invasion of the Danes. The play's notes show that in the history and folklore Gormleith has been regarded as the sovereign of the Danes at the Battle of Clontarf: "Since Maelmora's visit to Kincora she had been repudiated by Brian and had become so 'grim' against him that she

² *Kincora II* of 1909 is the version referenced from this point forward.

wished him dead. She had sent her son Sitric to the Danish leaders to beg their assistance.”³² Gregory’s alteration is seen in both dramatic versions when Sitric approaches an unsuspecting Gormleith for her signature of treasonous intent against Brian/Ireland. This implies that he *already* arranged for the Danish invasion in his mother’s name without her consent. Furthermore, she refuses to assist her son until *after* Brian’s harsh repudiation of her. Spurred by Brian’s lack of interest, and by extension her lack of political involvement, she regresses back to her wilder combative ways, which in turn results in her tragic consequences. In her new characterisation, Gormleith is offered the freedom of offering her signature, just as when she marries Brian and he offers her a new life—she can ‘go her own way’ when she desires. Yet in this freedom lies her tragic hamartia, as her freedom to leave Brian leads to her freedom to sign the letter, and thus to her own tragic conclusion. In turn, however, she as a person/character evolves toward a more mature mentality/understanding. Gormleith never tires of Brian himself, but rather fears losing the love she shared with her husband when they still lived as warriors—a life she understands. As Brian himself says to her, “You were brought up in a king’s house, you knew the rules of every quarrel and of every game.”³³ While many of these qualities are present in the first version, Gregory makes them more pronounced and developed in the final version. It is crucial to point out that there is now a tragic hero *and* heroine: the story’s focus shifts from the story of Brian’s peace-desiring tragic reign to the mutual tragedy between Brian and Gormleith.

In both plays, Brian chose Gormleith because of her exciting demeanour and the challenge of her social position as the former wife of his two greatest rivals. Gormleith presumes that he married her with the understanding she was not the ‘tend to the needle’ type, which leads to her natural disappointment when he expects her to lead a life more ordinary. If he married her for politics and love, he emotionally deserts their marriage for his ‘Master’ God. When she resorts to politics, Gormleith finds his bond with her renewed, but tragically, too late. This mutual tragedy is destined: Brian falls in love with a woman who can not be peaceful unless she is his equal; Gormleith has fallen in love with a man who does not treat her as an equal unless their kingdom is at war, usually with her family. Thus, Gormleith’s tragic action lies in that, when faced with Brian’s repudiation, she regresses away from her maturing process and back to her old meddlesome ways; because of this, her public perception as a ‘bad woman’ is unfortunately reconfirmed; and structurally, the play slowly begins to return to the ‘boundaries’ of history and folklore, where this reputation began.

This is a very important shift in Gregory’s interpretative strategies in regard to history. While the history and the folklore placed the blame on Gormleith for Brian’s fall as he led Ireland toward his ideal goal of peace, Gregory reinterprets Brian and his wife as equally suffering personal tragedy in their incompatible dreams for Ireland’s future. Through this re-

conception of public reputation, the author heightens Gormleith's tragedy as she desperately grasps at a hope expressed in a final speech that she and Brian could still share their dreams:

GORMLEITH: It is not Brian would wish to die the death of a man that is lessening and stiffening, the time he grows attentive to his bed, but of a winner that is merry and shouting, the time his enemies are put down. I was maybe a right wife for him. A right wife, a lucky wife, in spite of it all!³⁴

Another important deviation of public reputation occurs in her characterisation of Gormleith's passive involvement in the Danish invasion, unlike the active role attributed to her in Irish folklore and history. If Gormleith was reputed to be the instigator of the Danes' invasion, then Gregory's dramatic assertion that Sitric began these troubles ennoble Gormleith's position of total responsibility in protecting her son –by signing the letter, she in effect takes any blame that could be attributed to Sitric. The author addresses this issue in the closing dialogue of *Kincora II*, as Gormleith refuses the pity of the court if her son's actions created the current dilemma, insisting "I did my own part, I have no mind to deny or to hide my own share in it at all."³⁵ This implies how in future histories she will be assumed to be the instigator of the invasion, rather than as the accomplice Gregory imagines her to be, a tragic character altered through misunderstood language and emotions, which lead to misinformed future accounts of her own language and actions.

Gregory continued to experiment with alternative actions and motives between the lines of Ireland's history and folklore. Following her *Kincora* experiment, she chose women as the central figures in the rest of her history plays, with the exception of King James in *The White Cockade*. The first version of *Kincora* was clearly Gregory's first effort to cleave historical fat, but the trim-and-lean result in the 1909 *Kincora* was well worth the revisions; a mortal Gormleith distinctively portrayed. Thus, Gregory began her examination of the women in Ireland's past, still lying in a reputation-limbo between their history and their folklore.

DERVORGILLA

An Abbey's Ageing Queen

Dervorgilla I wrote at a time when circumstances had forced us to accept an English stage-manager for the Abbey. I was very strongly against this. I felt as if I should be spoken of some day as one who had betrayed her country's trust.³⁶

In Irish history and folklore, the individual known as Dervorgilla is often attributed with the guilt of facilitating the initial invasion of England into Ireland. Dervorgilla was Queen to King O'Rourke of Breffny, but in love with King Diarmuid of Leinster, which is the background to her own tragic story. It is to be noted that in the notes to the play, Gregory includes both the folklore and the historic accounts of Dervorgilla's care for Diarmuid which are conflicting: in some accounts she is taken by Diarmuid³⁷ and in some she betrays O'Rourke for Diarmuid.³⁸ Gregory leaves these conclusions and creates her own: Dervorgilla was originally promised to Diarmuid, to whom she committed her eternal love, but her family later reneged on their engagement and gave her in marriage to O'Rourke. In the above statement, Gregory's interest in Dervorgilla's life, that of a seeming national apostate, echoes her professional insecurities over bringing an English stage manager in to govern the dramatic voice of a renewed nation, Ireland's Abbey Theatre. In Gregory's Folk-History treatment of Dervorgilla's story, she chooses the unique stance of dramatising the untold story of the *end* of Dervorgilla's life. By doing so, Gregory attempts to unveil the tragic long-term ramifications of cultural shame inflicted on an individual's public reputation.

In presenting the long-term effects of a tragic event, Gregory's treatment of the Dervorgilla story seems to suggest once a tragic woman, always a tragic woman. But is she, and is this what the play simply portrays? Within the assumption lies the real tragedy: the oversimplification of an unfortunate woman's story, damning her in life and death to become a mere figurehead of tragedy. This damnation denies recognition of any significant emotions or other works accomplished beyond the scope of her tragedy—a question which Gregory's play raises. The play also speculates whether Dervorgilla inadvertently invites English aggression, or if her community's insecurities in warfare are to blame, thus calling into question her long-held accountability for Ireland's own national tragedy. In effect, Gregory challenges national

sentiment and understanding, both historical and in folklore, and she does this by returning to the sources to discover and display the story, the historical accounts and the folklore of the people, to re-claim and re-create a persona whom an aspect of national identity is predicated upon. Is Dervorgilla deserving of the mantle of tragic figurehead, or is this a popular mis-construction? If so, is there anything to be gained from her actual story?

Kincora I → Dervorgilla → Kincora II

As discussed in the previous chapter, *Kincora I* underwent a radical evolution to create *Kincora II*. One of the major elements influencing these adaptations was Gregory's writing and production of 1907's *Dervorgilla*. During her creative process, Gregory developed and experimented with some of the dramatic devices misused in *Kincora I* and introduced in *Kincora II*. In light of this, her dramatic ambitions with *Dervorgilla* were clearly more than a mere on-stage apology for the Abbey's hiring an English stage manager: more importantly, she was fostering the early development of her Folk-History project. This project will culminate in the later *Grania*, where one sees structural elements of *Kincora I*, *Dervorgilla* and *Kincora II* finely reworked into *Grania's* form, style and narrative approach.

Dervorgilla, as an intermediary work, has parallels with both *Kincora I* and *II*. The play begins with the servants Mona and Flann 'building' Queen Dervorgilla's character,³⁹ followed by further character development through the youngsters' questions about Dervorgilla's anonymity. It is after this development that Dervorgilla enters. Likewise, in the opening scene of *Kincora II*, Maelmora and Malachi construct the characters of Queen Gormleith and King Brian, ostensibly for the audience, followed by the kings' servants constructing the characters of their kings and Gormleith. It is only after these constructions when Gormleith enters. Just as important is the subtle shift in the different interpretations of public reputation preceding each heroine's entrance, always occasioned by character constructions among two groupings of supporting characters.

According to the play's notes, Gregory had little historic and folklore background to base Dervorgilla's motivations at the end of her life on:

Dervorgilla, having outlived O'Rourke and Diarmuid and Strongbow, is said to have died at the Abbey of Mellifont, near Drogheda, in the year 1193, aged 85.⁴⁰

With so much room for elaboration, Gregory chose to take the known outline of Dervorgilla's death 'at the Abbey,' suggesting a repentant chastity,⁴¹ and animate her with the quality of Gormleith's passion for 'high-hearted' men:

DERVORGILLA: [...] though I am an old woman given to praying, I can take pride in strength of body and readiness of hand; for I saw such things long ago in kings' houses.⁴²

Exposed within Dervorgilla's self-reflexive statement is a struggle of personal duality between a present life of prayer and a past life of pleasure and pride. Gregory is also developing a short

motif within the Folk-History plays beginning in *Kincora I* with Gormleith suggesting that one of the reasons she tires of Brian is that he is more interested in prayer than in battle. However, after *Dervorgilla*, Gormleith in *Kincora II* instead suggests that Brian prefers prayer to a fulfilling life shared with *her*. This shift evolves from *Dervorgilla*, where prayer is first suggested as a means of emotional detachment from problematic passions, but results in a self-inflicted emotional castration from natural passions, merely delaying the character's tragic climax rather than preventing it. The device of internal conflict unresolved through prayer enables Gregory to construct Brian and Gormleith's new mutual dilemma in *Kincora II*: Brian is 'given to praying,' while Gormleith takes 'pride in strength of body and readiness of hand [...] in kings' houses.' Also present within *Dervorgilla*'s statement is Gormleith's personal struggle in *Kincora II* between her youthful passion for royal houses full of strong warriors and the prayer she associates with Brian's ageing and emotional abandonment. The prayer device is later abandoned in *Grania*, however, as the play is set in Pre-Christian Ireland.⁴³

In *Kincora II*, Gormleith speaks to Maelmora of the lost 'games' that encourage individual fitness for battle among the troops.⁴⁴ It is she who brings together Brian's troops for exercises,⁴⁵ troops which in *Kincora I* are gathered by Brian for Malachi's benefit.⁴⁶ To have the Queen call together the kingdom's troops to test their prowess serves as a foreshadowing device which comes from *Dervorgilla*: the heroine calls her community's young men to gather and engage in similar games to "let me see that the doings of the great men are not forgotten."⁴⁷ Thus, *Dervorgilla* and Gormleith each inform the other's dramatic characterisation, as Gregory discovered and developed potential parallels in the women's lives and narratives. Gregory thus not only uses the historic and folkloric accounts for her re-construction of *Dervorgilla*, but calls upon the cultural background of Gormleith to help shape her development.

Dreams are another narrative device Gregory initiates in *Kincora I*, develops in *Dervorgilla*, evolves in *Kincora II*, and abandons in *Grania*. The main prayer-laden characters see his or her Fate in a dream the night before the climactic tragic event. In Brian's dream, Aoibhell shows him Ireland in peace without bloodshed.⁴⁸ *Dervorgilla* dreams that her good name built with anonymity dissolves when her culture recalls her bad reputation constructed by others according to partial history and folklore –her real name has been sullied in these past accounts, and she cannot escape this. However, these dreams do not function merely as a foreshadowing device. They also signify the hero's hauntingly ironic moment of near self-recognition in the face of an impending tragic Fate. Gregory once described the tragic device of a character's inevitable tragic fate as "The Woman in the Stars:" an Irish pagan deity who was said to self-inflict the torture of one's Fate until one realises and take on the Fate when/as it occurs:

Tragedy shows humanity in the grip of circumstance, of fate, of what our people call 'the thing will happen', 'the Woman in the Stars that does all'. There is a woman in the stars they say, who is always hurting herself in one way or other, and according to what she is doing at the hour of your birth, so will it happen to you in your lifetime, whether she is

hanging herself or drowning herself or burning herself in the fire. [...] Well, you put your actor in the grip of this woman, in the claws of the cat. Once in that grip you know what the end must be. You may let your hero kick or struggle, but he is in the claws all the time, it is a mere question as to how nearly you will let him escape, and when you will allow the pounce. Fate itself is the protagonist, your actor cannot carry much character, it is out of place. You do not want to know the character of a wrestler you see trying his strength at a show.⁴⁹

Speaking specifically of Dervorgilla and using Gregory's terminology, within her dream Dervorgilla sees both her Fate and *herself* as the Woman in the Stars. She is warned in her dream by glimpsing her Fate, and therefore glimpses herself as *and* in place of the Woman in the Stars/Tragic Fate. If one places Brian within the same dreamer's dynamic, he takes on a feminine role during his Fate Dream, while he is also sufficiently warned that such actions in the future will inflict *that* Fate on *himself*. Therefore, by misinterpreting their Fate Dreams, Dervorgilla and Brian self-inflict their Fate just as the 'Woman in the Stars' self-inflicted their Fate for them until their moment of climactic self-realisation.

Reputation, the Songmaker and the Poet

[They] will hear [his singing ...] it will set them thinking of me, and talking.⁵⁰

The Songmaker functions as Dervorgilla's antagonist. His songs provide the language containing the historic and folkloric backgrounds and the reputation in cultural consciousness necessary to inadvertently deduce her name, which re-animates her negative reputation against her will. When the Songmaker asks his audience to select a theme for his next song, the youths refuse his suggestion of older, uplifting folklore; they instead desire fresh, 'younger' narratives of recent tragedy.⁵¹ As the Songmaker begins to sing of the events leading to the English invasion, Dervorgilla's servant Flann interrupts him. At first Dervorgilla defends the Songmaker, telling Flann, "It is not the telling of the story makes the story. Let me hear what is the common voice."⁵² Thus begins the play's central struggle between the protagonist's desire for anonymity and the Songmaker's desire for creative license in using the protagonist's name for its historic and folk connotations. Dervorgilla's name becomes a word capable of betrayal against her new public reputation, just as her self-determination of Fate betrayed her husband's public reputation as a sovereign being.

Gregory takes several measures within the dialogue between the Songmaker and his audience to point out specifically the power a name can bear amongst cultures, while its interpretation can remain fundamentally subjective. Dervorgilla eventually sees his song as a damnation:

SONGMAKER: [...] Give me time now, and I will give out the story of a man that has left a name will never be forgotten here, and that is Diarmuid MacMurrough, King of Leinster, that first called the English into Ireland [...]

His great body is down under the stone
Chased by the hounds were before the world;

It was Peter's own frown closed the door before him,
It is Diarmuid is bound in cold Hell for ever!

DERVORGILLA: That is enough, that is enough! Why should you heap blame upon one that is dead? King Diarmuid's lips are closed now with clay. It is a shameful thing, a cowardly thing, to make attacks upon a man that cannot answer. Are you not satisfied to let God be the judge?

SONGMAKER: I had no intention to give offence. To dispraise Diarmuid and the English; I thought that would give satisfaction in this place, the same as it does in Connacht.

DERVORGILLA: Those that have a good heart and a high nature try to find excuses for the dead.

SONGMAKER: So they would, so they would. It is finding excuses we should be for the dead. There is an excuse for every one; the Blessed Mother knows that, and she sitting every Saturday as the attorney for poor souls. Making out a case for them she does be.

DERVORGILLA: There is no one who might not be freed from blame, if his case and what led to his wrongdoing were put down.

SONGMAKER: I'll make a case for him. I can tell out what led King Diarmuid into his sin and his treachery; and that is the thing [that] brings mostly all mischief into the world, the changeable wagging nature of a woman.⁵³

In fact, the Songmaker only liberates the blame from one name to displace it upon another, the blame finally falling on Dervorgilla's name and thereby acknowledging her inescapable public reputation. Interestingly, in order to make his excuse for Diarmuid at the expense of Dervorgilla's name, the Songmaker recasts the historical narrative out of order. According to the play's notes, which draws upon both the history and the folklore, Diarmuid was already taking political action against O'Rourke when Dervorgilla either left or was taken from her husband, depending on the account—she was an afterthought, not an inspiration. For the Songmaker's excuse for Diarmuid to be correct, Dervorgilla would have to have asked Diarmuid to act against her husband King O'Rourke without provocation. All other information within the play and its notes imply, however, that Diarmuid initiated the treasonous web in which Dervorgilla became entangled.

Dervorgilla's insecurity of divine forgiveness continues to weaken when, after the Songmaker finally sings her name, Owen and Mamie share misinformation with him based on recent tales of Dervorgilla's Fate. Meanwhile, the Songmaker has also received money from the young men and now refuses to 'find excuses for the dead' Diarmuid and the presumably dead Dervorgilla:

MAMIE: I often heard of Dervorgilla that left the King of Breffny for Diarmuid, and started the war, but I never heard what happened to her after.

OWEN: There is no one knows that. Some say King Roderick put her under locks in a cell at Clonmacnoise.

SONGMAKER: More likely she hanged herself, after setting the whole of the country in an uproar.

OWEN: If she did they had a right to bury her with a hound on her false heart, the same as Diarmuid himself was buried.

SONGMAKER: No, but Diarmuid's father was buried with the hound. Excuse or no excuse, a bad race they are, a bad race.⁵⁴

The clear interest in accurately maintaining the historical integrity of Diarmuid's public reputation at the expense of Dervorgilla's is only one of several flaws Gregory gives the Songmaker.

It is evident that Gregory holds the Songmaker's title as 'Songmaker,' despite his insistence throughout the play to be a "poet." Though not mentioned in the play's notes, the songmaker appears to be fashioned after the traditional Irish poets, a point noted by Declan Kiberd.⁵⁵ However, to compare the two examples through Gregory's perspective is certainly to see how far the Songmaker of *Dervorgilla* is from being a poet on any professional level. By calling himself a poet, he attempts to give himself a name and reputation with stronger connotations than his talents. His own verse is simple, not metrical, and nearly monotone, while the epic songs he sings are stylistically quite different. This suggests that the Songmaker, unable to put metrical poems to a melody, sings poetry and music learned from other *real* poets. Such poets were famous by their names, which carried particular public reputations, as well as their power to conjure and use another's name and public reputation. Gregory recorded the following in her folklore collection, *Poets and Dreamers*:

[The poets] were much dreaded. 'He was very sharp with anyone that didn't please him,' I have been told; 'and no one would like to be put in his songs.' And though it is said of his songs in praise of his friends that 'whoever he praised was well praised,' it was thought safer that one's own name should not appear in them. The man at whose house he died said to me: 'He used often to come and stop with us, but he never made a verse about us; my father wouldn't have liked that. Someway it doesn't bring luck.'⁵⁶
'No one that has a song made about them will ever live long.'⁵⁷

As a songmaker, this person leaves much to be desired, but by claiming to be a poet, he also lays claim to the reputation the word 'poet' suggests. Thus one should take note of what he does with another's name and reputation in his verse. What Gregory does in this scene wants careful reading, for if he is a *bad* songmaker and a *false* poet, how much credibility would his poetry or verse have? Not much, yet his claiming the title of poet, a figure who specifically deals in the names and reputations of others, is enough to gain his verse the attention of others; consequently, whether he speaks correctly or not has nothing to do with the damage the 'poet's' verse does to Dervorgilla's reputation. The key to this scene, however, is the dynamics of name and public reputation, both that of the 'poet' and of Dervorgilla. What this scene develops, then, is the *modus operandi* of the drama, which functions on how a name and its attendant public reputation are received and perceived. Again, this is something Gregory develops not out of direct accounts of either the history or folklore, but through a re-assessment of how name and reputation function in these elements and how they can each inform a dramatic representation.

Reputation in the Mouths of Women

DERVORGILLA: It is of no use, dreams cannot lie, my punishment must come. I knew it all the time, even within the walls. I tried to make it up with good works. It was of no use, my name is in men's mouths.⁵⁸

In the above statement, Dervorgilla assumes that if her 'name is in men's mouths' she is doomed to suffer a revival of her name's reputation –yet her name is not connected with her person by anyone when men say her name. It is never revealed if the Songmaker mentions her

to the English troops or not. Flann's words in the ear of the Songmaker are never said to have included or connected the word "Dervorgilla" with their matron. In fact, her name is safely dissociated from herself until it is in another woman's mouth. After Mona and Dervorgilla discuss the possible variations from the truth found within current written and oral interpretative accounts, Mona creates the play's tragic climax with the truth. When her husband loses his life for the sake of Dervorgilla's anonymity—he tries to drag the songmaker away before he sings of Dervorgilla to the English troops,⁵⁹ Mona says her name while addressing her as the real woman behind the 'Dervorgilla' reputation so notorious in public consciousness. By exposing Dervorgilla through a grieving confidante's delirium, Gregory creates a situation where the woman's true name can be freely delivered without externally positioning her subject in a written or oral tradition: Mona personally knows Dervorgilla and in her shock accidentally addresses her by name in front of an unsuspecting audience. Dervorgilla even recognises that Mona had no motive in publicly reconnecting her with the tragic word of her name: "even in her grief, she called out no word against me."⁶⁰ What becomes truly tragic is how Mona unwittingly enables the destruction of Dervorgilla's public reputation immediately after their establishing that the 'true' actions of Dervorgilla—as suggested by Gregory's dramatisation—were not those told in written history and oral folklore, as suggested by the ersatz poet.

The women deliberate over Dervorgilla's current public reputation versus creating a mystique around the history and folklore, beginning with the issue of whether men's words should be allowed to determine the long-term understanding of a historically significant woman's motives:

MONA: What signifies one beggar's song? It is not on you the blame should be laid. It was not you went to Diarmuid MacMurrough. It was not you followed after him to Leinster. It was he came and brought you away. There are many say it was by force. There are many that are saying that. That is the way it will be written in the histories.

DERVORGILLA: If Diarmuid MacMurrough had taken me by force, do you think I would have lived with him for one day only? My hands were strong then. I had my courage then. I was free to make an end of myself or of him. Will the generations think better of me, thinking me to have been taken as a prey, like the Connacht hag's basket, or the Munster hag's speckled cow? Does the marten that is torn from the woods lull itself in its master's arms?

MONA: Maybe so, maybe so. I used to be better pleased myself hearing them say it, than putting the blame on yourself of leaving O'Rourke.⁶¹

Dervorgilla clearly prefers damnation according to facts than absolution through a myth of passivity. In the first four sentences in the above quotation, she admits she willingly left O'Rourke for Diarmuid. Should those facts be rewritten against her will, she would become the passive heroine described in her final two sentences, the unglamorous prey of mere domestic value stolen from a defenceless old woman.

Mona's following comment implies that Dervorgilla's own serving maid could be responsible for the confusion in historic and folk imagination of whether the Queen ran or was stolen away from her husband. Dervorgilla responds by explaining the constancy of her love for Diarmuid, reiterating that a woman's heart is not always flighty between men:

DERVORGILLA: O'Rourke was a good man, and a brave man, and a kinder man than Diarmuid, but it was with Diarmuid my heart was. It is to him I was promised before ever I saw O'Rourke, and I loved him better than ever my own lord, and he me also, and this was long! I loved him, I loved him! Why did they promise me to him and break the promise? Why was every one against him then and always, every one against Diarmuid? Why must they be throwing and ever-throwing sharp reproaches upon his name? Had a man loved by a king's daughter nothing in him to love? A man great of body, hardy in fight, hoarse with shouts of battle. He had liefer be dreaded than loved! It was he cast down the great, it was the dumb poor he served! Every proud man against him and he against every proud man. Oh, Diarmuid, I did not dread you. It was I myself led you astray! Let the curse and the vengeance fall upon me and me only for the great wrong and the treachery done by both of us to Ireland!⁶²

Having experienced passionate emotions earlier in life –love, betrayal, devotion, treachery, desire, sexual realisation, guilt, pride, shame –Dervorgilla believes she has become capable of a desensitised existence in her age. By calling down ‘the curse and the vengeance [to] fall upon me,’ Dervorgilla’s life moves from the torment of resisting her identity predetermined by a reputation found in historic accounts and folk imagination to accepting – even demanding –her Fate as a damned lover.

The audience of the theatre or the text becomes aware of Dervorgilla’s place in history through Dervorgilla’s speech of forced marriage to King O’Rourke and consistent love for Diarmuid. However, the audience within the text, Dervorgilla’s community, will sadly only see her as a woman with a fickle heart. Throughout the play’s dénouement, Dervorgilla faces the insurmountable reputation her name bears within public consciousness and withholds her previously discussed account of the true events. Dervorgilla thus chooses to accept her social damnation by the youths for the short remainder of her now self-constructed narrative.

The final staging of the play further implies that she will face eternal damnation. Dervorgilla sinks to the ground as the lights dim, creating the effect of her being both swallowed by the ground and the stage. In the background the Songmaker is heard approaching the stage singing Dervorgilla’s name in a poet’s curse, which are the final lines of the play:

The rat in the cupboard, the fire in the lap;
The guest to be fattening, the children fretting;
My curse upon all that brought in the Gall,
Upon Diarmuid’s call, and on Dervorgilla!⁶³

The visual and aural images of the play’s closing moments foreshadow Dervorgilla’s descent into the grave the following year with her unfortunate name and reputation left inscribed upon public consciousness.

Folk-Historical Retrospect through an Ageing Heroine

DERVORGILLA: [...] For half my life I ran my own way, and through the other half of my life I have paid the penalty.⁶⁴

By making her life half pleasure and half pain, with an earnest desire for social and divine forgiveness, Gregory approaches the construction of a conscience for Dervorgilla, a character denied that human right in past historic and folkloric accounts. Gregory also enables Dervorgilla with the power of blending her own true and false images (such as the previous passage where she is a woman both of prayer and warrior games), while other characters perceive her only as a representation of social welfare. These discrepancies lead to her being used representationally within her community: first as their good saint while anonymous; then as the evil sinner/slut once her real name is exposed.

GRANIA

Maturation of the Tragic Irish Heroine

I think I turned to Grania because so many have written about sad, lovely Deirdre, who when overtaken by sorrow made no good battle at the last. Grania had more power of will, and for good or evil twice took the shaping of her life into her own hands. The riddle she asks us through the ages is, "Why did I, having left great grey-haired Finn for comely Diarmuid, turn back to Finn in the end, when he had consented to Diarmuid's death?" And a question tempts one more than the beaten path of authorised history. If I have held but lightly to the legend, it is not because I do not know it, for in *Gods & Fighting Men* I have put together and rejected many versions. For the present play I have taken but enough of the fable on which to set, as on a sod of grass, the three lovers, one of whom had to die. I suppose it is that "fascination of things difficult" that has tempted me to write a three-act play with only three characters. Yet where Love itself, with its shadow Jealousy, is the true protagonist I could not feel that more were needed. When I told Mr Yeats I had but these three persons in the play, he said incredulously, "They must have a great deal to talk about." And so they have, for the talk of lovers is inexhaustible, being of themselves and one another.⁶⁵

A myth has come to surround Gregory's feelings about *Grania*, mainly stemming from a public curiosity that the play was never produced. The most common version of this myth is that she insisted it not be produced during her lifetime, with commentators claiming she was ashamed of autobiographical tones,⁶⁶ and that her Victorian sensibilities got the better of her. As seen in her investigation and subsequent realistic characterisations of Irish heroines, Gregory was not a slave to Victorian conservatism, nor was she ashamed of her development of the Irish Folk-History dramatic genre.

If she was ashamed of *Grania*, several questions immediately arise: Why would she publish the play in a book dedicated to internationally famous Theodore Roosevelt?⁶⁷ Indeed, in her dedication of *Irish Folk-History Plays: The Tragedies*, she refers to the plays' tragic characters as "strong people;" would she have done so if she felt Grania's behaviour was too shameful to perform? Why did she begin discussing the roles with the Abbey actors?⁶⁸ Perhaps the greatest question has been asked by Richard Allen Cave: why, once Gregory had offered Sara Allgood the role of Grania, did W. B. Yeats attempt to psychologically undermine *Grania's* potential production with the following letter to its author:

I am sorry to write all this but I don't want you to promise to [Sara Allgood] what I may have to greatly oppose, the taking of an oratorical or monotonous or commonplace *Grania* performance to England or America... We may never get an actress with real emotional power but that makes it all the more necessary not to kill fine work by giving it to out people while they are not ready for it. Your *Grania* published in a book will attract some emotional actress in America or in England if we do not force the play into failure. Miss Allgood may do what she likes in Dublin but I feel at this moment as if I would rather give up the whole theatre than allow her to spoil your play anywhere else.⁶⁹

In his essay, Cave offers several illuminating readings of Yeats' letter in light of Gregory's play:

Was Yeats prevaricating because the bleak tragic vision of *Grania* had disturbed him? Did he genuinely believe that Sarah Allgood and her Abbey Colleagues would try to soften the harshness of the play? Or did he foresee a hostile response from Dublin audiences? [...] If *Grania* had been staged in 1912, it would have provoked as savage a reaction as *The Playboy of the Western World*, especially since such an honest, clear-sighted analysis of the vagaries of passion and the way that sexual delight borders frighteningly on the edge of discontent, jealousy and obsessive fantasising had come from the pen and mind of a woman. Lady Gregory was never afraid of challenging an Irish audience's comfortable pieties—*The Deliverer* and *The Image* had shown her capable of a bitter, satirical impulse; but those dark comedies have none of the emotional immediacy of *Grania*.⁷⁰

Indeed, Yeats appears to be answerable for the overall question of why *Grania* was not produced; not Gregory. Looking at the play itself is to see both Gregory's finest Folk-History play and her last Tragedy, but not Gregory.

Compared with her previous Folk-History plays, Gregory makes a conscious stylistic jump with *Grania*. She avoids the complicated desensitising device of the Christian Church, used to a large extent in preceding Folk-History plays, since the story takes place in Ireland's Druid/Pre-Christian era. The play is also far more economical than its sister plays, primarily due to a small cast and simple staging requirements. For instance, *Grania* disowns the small collection of stock supporting characters Gregory was beginning to favour in her new Folk-History genre: the informing servant, the younger male primary-antagonist, the lower class female secondary-antagonist, and the younger woman emblematic of the socio-cultural climate. This kind of padding of the cast was became less common in plays she wrote around the time of *Grania*:

The success of [strict editing of *The Poorhouse* into *The Workhouse Ward* in 1908] set me to cutting down the number of parts in later plays until I wrote *Grania* with only three persons in it, and *The Bogie Men* with only two [...] one has to go on with experiment or interest in creation fades, at least so it is with me.⁷¹

With only three characters, two settings and one set, Gregory clears the stage and page to create the space required for examining the interpretative possibilities of this important mythological love triangle. It is through her new creative process of juxtaposing folklore and history on stage, combined with her new experiment in 'cutting away' characters, that *Grania* shapes into a revolutionary new form of Folk-History play.

Cutting away becomes a theme within *Grania*, where all hopes and expectations of the three characters in love—their 'heart-secrets'—are chiselled away until they each are exposed to

the destructive reality of jealousy. Gregory's new style of play furthers her investigative project of reclaiming reputations misconstrued through partial accounts in Irish history and folklore, while simultaneously breaking from the genre of previous Folk-History plays which *Grania* develops from. Thus to focus on the play as it stands alone is to appreciate how far Gregory's Folk-History style evolves, a style which in *Grania* attempts to answer its own 'questions' of 'authorised history.'

The theme of cutting away manifests itself in the characters' insecurities and defensiveness. Each takes a turn philosophically defending a personal dream, yet offer to sacrifice a life of comfort for an idealised life-partner. These are flawed stances, at once clinging to an ideal while offering the self to an ideal other. Through these personal inconsistencies, Gregory sets up love as the protagonist, and jealousy as the antagonist: Love initiates action in an individual character, while Jealousy among the collective characters drives the play's action to its tragic end. Therefore, one must look at the initial actions of each character to understand how the dynamics of the character collective—the threesome of Finn, Grania, and Diarmuid—generates the dramatic problem in Act I and drives towards its resolution in the major climax of Act III.

Grania

Grania's initial action is her attempt to profess her idealised love to Diarmuid and ask his help to escape Almhuin and a marriage to grey-haired Finn. All of the above events and sentiments occur in both the historical accounts and folklore, as well as in the play. It is *how* these events and sentiments are resituated among the characters of the drama that shows Gregory taking liberties. In *Gods and Fighting Men*, all characters, their family, and the Fianna are at Finn and Grania's wedding feast. Before she can be betrothed to Finn, Grania drugs everyone except Diarmuid and his young Fianna comrades. This is her initial action, and Diarmuid is understandably stunned and resists until Grania puts bonds⁷² on him. Diarmuid's friends, including Finn's son Oisín, advise him to honour his bonds, but to keep far away from Finn's wrath. Frustrated but ever-chivalrous, Diarmuid leaves Finn and the Fianna to follow his bonds by Grania.

In the play, Lady Gregory simplifies the cast size and setting by having the play open the night before the wedding, with Grania meeting Finn in transit to Teamhair at his Almhuin encampment. This shift in setting negates the need for a wedding party and focuses the setting on the threesome's unforeseen future, where they abandon their royal homes and become travellers. Grania's initial *dramatic* action is therefore liberated from having to drug a whole wedding feast in order to get to Diarmuid. In setting up Grania's action, Gregory instead chooses an even more radical departure from the folklore, using the classical device of mistaken

identity to ignite a collective initial action by the threesome recognising themselves in a love-triangle.

To set up this collective initial action, Gregory uses the guarding of the wedding valuables on the eve of the wedding, including the bejewelled Grania. Grania retires for the evening, thinking Finn has gone to sleep and Diarmuid is guarding the wedding gifts. After she exits, Finn and Diarmuid discuss their concerns for their own individual futures, and Diarmuid accepts Finn's offer to take his watch for the night. This is completely new material: Gregory rewrites the events leading up to Grania's initial action, which removes the necessity for Grania to 'enchant' or drug anyone; in the dark, Grania simply mistakes Finn for Diarmuid on guard. This in turn clarifies Finn's immediate jealousy and damnation, having heard from Grania's own mouth her adoration of Diarmuid and abhorrence of himself, while Diarmuid slumbers peacefully nearby.

Grania also oozes Romantic idealism. She enters Act I dressed in her royal garments and jewellery; a young princess-bride, acknowledging the benefits of royal life while yearning to feel the "three sharp blasts" of love, unconcerned with its potentially tragic consequences.⁷³ In her early discussion with Finn on love, she interrupts the dialogue to reassert her notions that differ from or alter Finn's conceptions;⁷⁴ this scene, an elaboration of Finn's fabled 'test' of Grania's gift with words,⁷⁵ is again another re-conception of the folklore and history to make it amenable to the stage. Finn's formal tone is continually hindered by Grania's quick, passionate responses to his sage answers, which also obstructs any romantic connection between the two before Diarmuid's entrance. Grania therefore does not bond with Finn before Diarmuid enters because she has been too preoccupied defending her notions and knowledge of love in the face of Finn's seeming lack of interest: "I knew enough of the heat of love in my time, and I am very glad to have done with it now, and to be safe from its torments and its whip and its scourge."⁷⁶ Just as she concedes to Finn's affirmation of quiet love, Diarmuid's "mocking laughter" both introduces his entrance and foreshadows the humiliating effect he is will later bear on Grania's life.⁷⁷ The emphasis of this foreshadowing centralises her character: her idealism is the first and most clearly 'mocked.' However, in Act III's finale, her naïve obsession with Diarmuid will ironically resemble Finn's jealous obsession with her, thereby aligning love with jealousy and suggesting it too is something to be mocked.

One of the similarities that *Grania* shares with the other Folk-History plays is Gregory's interest in exposing the unqualified reputation of heroines within folklore and historic accounts as unreliable lovers and disturbers of men's passions. In the Folk-History plays, once a heroine gives her love to the hero, her heart remains with him: Gormleith in *Kincora II* leaves her heart with Brian in *Kincora*; when Dervorgilla gives her love to Diarmuid, even an arranged marriage can not help her forget her ultimate desire for him. Therefore, in Gregory's effort to make women's passion appear more consistent, she retains the flashback device of love-at-first-sight

associated with Diarmuid's 'love-spot' in the folklore: supposedly, when any woman saw his divine 'love-spot,' which was placed on his forehead by the child-goddess Youth, the woman would immediately give her heart to him forever.⁷⁸ Thus, when Diarmuid takes off his cap, Grania could be said to see his love-spot for a second time, the first being when as a child she saw him anonymously save her dog and his cap fell off.⁷⁹ Yet Diarmuid's love-spot is not formally addressed during the play, which makes Grania appear to suffer from a strong case of love-at-first sight; the mystical device of Diarmuid's forehead being only suggested by his merely removing his cap and her sudden re-action. Though she tries to hide her cry at seeing his forehead with "he is wounded," that cry occurs exactly when she is "blown" by a white blast of love, or her overwhelming recognition of Diarmuid as the young man she fell in love with years before.⁸⁰ By resorting to the more realistic, non-mystical device, Grania spellbinds her own heart to a doomed love for Diarmuid, and doesn't recognise his attitudes are passive towards women, and active towards men. This half-recognition of Diarmuid foreshadows Grania's final tragic recognition that his heart was always bound to Finn, and parallels Finn's later disguise as the crippled beggar "Half-Man." According to *Gods and Fighting Men*, some historic and folk narratives claim that Finn cast a spell on Grania to marry him in the end.⁸¹ The play therefore suggests that the only spell Grania's heart was misled by was her personal fantasy that Diarmuid had fallen in love with her; her 'heart-secret.' Grania, under her self-inflicted spell, remains in love with Diarmuid. Through this, Gregory does not depict simple capriciousness, but introduces a constancy in the emotions of her heroine.

This constancy is thus introduced in Grania's initial dramatic action of accidentally informing Finn that she dreads marrying him and is sure she loves Diarmuid. What is more, this allows Grania to express of her own feelings and motives, something the history and folklore do not. Once Grania's feelings for Diarmuid are apparent, Finn and Diarmuid themselves bicker like lovers as Grania presents a threat to their understood relationship:

FINN: My life is a little thing beside what you have taken!

DIARMUID: You are talking folly. You never found a lie after me in any sort of way. But the time courage was put in your heart there was madness furrowed in your brain!

FINN: Was it every whole minute of your life you were false to me?

DIARMUID: You would not have said that, the day I freed you from the three Kings of the Island of the Floods.

FINN: It is quickly you have been changed by a false woman's flattering words!⁸²

In a move reminiscent of Gormleith and Dervorgilla's coping techniques for grief and embarrassment, Grania initially tries to jump into her traditional female role as troublemaker in men's lives and claim responsibility for their problem:

GRANIA: It is not [Diarmuid's] fault! It is mine! It is on me the blame is entirely! It is best for me to go out a shamed woman. But I will not go knocking at my father's door! I will find some quick way to quiet my heart for ever. Forgive me, Finn, and I have more cause yet to ask you to forgive me, Diarmuid. And if there were hundreds brought together this day for my wedding, it is likely there will be at my burying but the plover and the hares of the bog! (*Goes towards door.*)⁸³

For the first time in Gregory's Folk-History genre, however, this self-deprecating move of blame-seeking by the heroine is characterised as foolish, uncalled for, and lacking critical recognition of her self and the reality of her idealised other. All of Grania's emotional responses contradict the men's words, and their understanding of and behaviour towards each other. Throughout the play, Grania tries to hold onto her Romantic ideals, including death as a means of ultimate freedom for a couple in 'true love.' She thus loses her heart-secret when she realises the true love was between the two men, which displaces her from the triad dynamic and leads her to a revised Romantic ideal of love beyond the grave. Consequently she defies the men's true love by wedging her heart, now grown cold of its fiery passion through grief, between theirs. Significantly, she simultaneously gains a critical recognition of herself and the reality of her idealised other.

In Acts II and III, a crucial struggle begins for Grania; the men attempt to recast her story without respecting her right to self-determination. A consistent development among the heroines of the Folk-History plays, the dilemma of the heroine's role in the story, is distilled through Grania and Finn's dialogue in Acts II and III. Her battle with Finn to maintain an accurate telling of the threesome's story becomes a literal battle of words, and a struggle to retain the self.

Finn

Finn's initial action is a jealous violent reaction to Grania's desire for Diarmuid. Normally a wise leader, Finn's tragic flaw throughout folklore is his uncontrollable rage, once provoked. *Grania* certainly could be said to draw on that tradition: Grania is treated like property or goods, especially by Finn once he becomes jealous, and the play thereafter characterises Finn as a manipulative tyrant when gripped with jealousy, benevolent community leader when not.

Grania informs Half-Man/Finn in Act II how "she is better pleased than if she was a queen of queens of the world, that she, a travelling woman going out under the weather, can turn her back on him this day as she did in the time that is past." Half-Man/Finn, as Diarmuid's master, begins talking *past* Grania to Diarmuid's sense of mythological hero rhetoric.⁸⁴ Grania's reference in Act I to love as her master⁸⁵ is now juxtaposed with Diarmuid's reference to Finn as his master, foreshadowing the play's climax. The threesome begin arguing within new terms: true story, hearing, and name.⁸⁶

The speech of Finn is full of symbols and metaphors, particularly while disguised as Half-Man in Act II. This half-direct tone sounds rhetorically heroic, but is merely a crutch for communication, making him seem both older in his formality and deceptive in his non-directness. For instance, Finn continually confronts Grania with the courtly gesture of offering her his royal symbol, the golden 'rising sun.'⁸⁷ In Act III, Finn seems to borrow from *Kincora II*

and the men's characterisation of Gormleith as a predatory bird to be tamed; Grania acknowledges Finn's symbolic rhetoric, and this acknowledgement allows her to shift the tone of their dialogue back to the harsh reality of his cruelty to her and Diarmuid:

FINN: A wild bird of a hawk I had, that went out of my hand. I am entitled to it by honest law.

GRANIA: I know your meaning well. But hearken now and put yourself in a better mind. It is a heavy punishment you put upon us these many years.⁸⁸

This mode of speech between Finn and Grania shows them to be locked in a pointed understanding of each other's rhetoric.

Within Grania and Finn's dialogue a shift can be detected between Acts II and III towards a new issue: the right to public memory of their story. In this battle with words, each accuses the other of lying while arguing for the validity of his or her own perspective of the threesome's experience. Before the story has even finished, this dialogue appears to negotiate what the 'true' story will be. The following is an example of this negotiative rhetoric:

GRANIA: But we to have settled home and children fondling, that would not have been the way with us, and the day would have been short, and we showing them off to one another, and laying down there was no one worthy to have called them into the world but only our two selves.

FINN: You are saying what is not true, and what you have no right to say. But you know well and you cannot deny it, you are man and wife to one another this day.

GRANIA: And if we are, it is not the same as a marriage on that day we left Almhuin would have been. It was you put him under a promise and a bond that was against nature, and he was a fool to make it, and a worse fool to keep it. It was you turned my life to weariness, and my heart to bitterness, and put me under the laughter and the scorn of all. For there was not a poor man's house where we lodged, but I could see wonder and mockery and pity in the eyes of the woman of the house, where she saw that poor as she was, and ugly maybe and ragged, a king's daughter was thought less of than herself. Because if Diarmuid never left his watch upon my threshold, he never came across it, or never gave me the joy and pride of a wife! And it was you did that on me and I leave it on your head [...]

FINN: That hatred is as if crushed out of the great bulk of my love for you, that is heaped from the earth to the skies.

GRANIA: I am not asking it or in need of it. Why would I listen to a story I have heard often and too often.⁸⁹

Nevertheless, Finn persists to tell his story, believing it to be the most tragic:

FINN: I am [...] dragging there and hither, my feet wounded with thorns, the tracks of tears down my cheeks; not taking rest on the brink of any thick wood, because you yourself might be in it, and not stopping on the near side of any lake or inver because you might be on the far side; as wakeful as a herd in lambing time, my companions stealing away from me, being tired with the one corn-crake cry upon my lips always, that is, Grania. And it is no wonder the people to hate you, and but for dread of me they would many a time have killed you.

GRANIA: [Diarmuid] never put reproaches on me, as you are reproaching me [for our fate].⁹⁰

This battle for the rights to public memory can also be described as a battle for the right to the tragedy of the play. Her love for Diarmuid is soon revealed to have been unrequited, as Diarmuid remains ultimately faithful to Finn. On his deathbed, Diarmuid remembers only Finn

as his partner in life and death. The tragedy is thus with the heroine who lays claim to the title of the play, as she is neglected in her faithfulness.

Diarmuid

Diarmuid's initial action takes place at an interesting moment. He jumps into a traditional role of chivalry, before he realises what he has sworn to do. Sleeping, Diarmuid is innocent of Grania's agency and action. Gregory uses this new construction of his heroic role to manipulate his agency as Grania's protector in folklore. She characterises him as foolishly reacting with instinctive chivalry without observing to whom he was pledging or protecting. By promising to protect Grania's virtue while remaining faithful to his 'master' Finn, he puts more bonds on himself that Grania places on him in the folklore. Likewise, he appears to feel disempowered by Grania's affection in both accounts: in the folklore, he asks Oisín and friends what to do about his bond; in the play, he asks Finn what to do about his bond. His misguided action is tragically misleading for Grania, when as the play concludes in Act III, Diarmuid completely forgets his time with her and dies professing his complete devotion for Finn.

Diarmuid and Finn discuss their opinions of Grania before she re-enters the scene, further emphasising Diarmuid's actions afterwards to be reactive. As the men discuss the pros and cons of love between old and young royalty, Diarmuid remains emotionally dull to the conversation. The tone of Diarmuid's vague answers to Finn's questions on his opinion of Grania as an appropriate bride imply that he thinks she is spoiled and will continue to be so:

FINN: It is not often I have known you to be so begrudging of praise.

DIARMUID: What call have I to be praising her? I could tell you no more than you knew before, through your own heart and through your eyes.

FINN: But tell me this, now. Is she that is so airy and beautiful any sort of a fitting wife for me?

DIARMUID: You are brave and she will put her pride in you. You are the best of all, and she is a woman would only join with the best. [...] Such a woman will be a right head for Almuin. She is used to a king's house.⁹¹

Diarmuid nearly evades his fate altogether by getting leave from Finn to journey at dawn to stop a potential invasion by the King of Foreign. Tragic irony builds as Finn orders Diarmuid to let him take the first watch of the night in order to rest before leaving at dawn. Finn therefore takes the sleeping position, where Grania assumes she can find Diarmuid alone, creating the minor climax of Act I: Grania approaches Finn in the name of Diarmuid. As stated above, Diarmuid remains 'in the dark' once the lights come back up on stage: his actions in defence of Grania's honour are groggy reactions of empty chivalry to Finn's reactive rage that remains anti-chivalrous throughout the play.

In Act II, Gregory explores the potential complications to traditional chivalry created by Irish mythological accounts claiming Diarmuid did not desire Grania until he nearly loses her to

another suitor:⁹² a much more primal, possessive reaction than expected in tragic romantic drama. As this next act opens, Diarmuid is found seven years after his initial flight from Teamhair having finally given his love/union to Grania. But he gives in to Grania's affection because the King of Foreign had attempted to kidnap her, activating Diarmuid's jealous rage just as Finn reacts in Act I. The difference in Grania's reaction this time is, of course, that she happily interprets Diarmuid's jealousy to be passion for her. He seems bewildered as to how, in his rescue effort, he and Grania came to kiss, stating, "What was it happened? I was as if blind—you were in my arms not his,—my lips were on the lips he had nearly touched, that I myself had never touched in those seven years."⁹³ That his experience of their first kiss is so numb of romantic sensation, the gesture appears to have been part of an overall jealous reaction to almost losing a possession. Grania offers him the moment with a thin guise of love—"It was a long, long kiss"—which he takes with surprising readiness.

Yet there is another important element which Gregory reintegrates from Act I: his rather dull emotions toward women. Recalling his recitation of how he saved Grania from the King of Foreign; he describes his regret in missing his chance to kill his adversary more than his first kiss with his wife. This is a notable liberty taken by Gregory's dramatisation of the folklore, where Diarmuid does kill the King and afterwards scorns Grania for her fickle heart.

Gregory uses her neoteric interpretation of Diarmuid as purist pagan (among the threesome, he is newly characterised as the most unquestioningly loyal to their culture's Pagan mythology as reality⁹⁴) as a tool for dramatising this non-traditional possessiveness-paradox in the couple's 'new' romance. Their first postcoital chat gives way to Diarmuid's plan for he and Grania to move on to Ireland's western coast and Aran Islands. Swiftly Grania reminds him how illogical such a move would be, given their previous incapability to subsist there as well as the people's hostility toward them there. Diarmuid becomes increasingly fantastic, imagining he and Grania into a mythological existence together, losing all touch with the real world. Fearing for his sanity, Grania encourages their dialogue to shift onto more populated places and events they have yet to approach—and soon:

DIARMUID: But beyond Aran, far out in the west, there is another island that is seen but once in every seven years.

GRANIA: Is that a real place at all? Or is it only in the nurses' tales?

DIARMUID: Who knows? There is no good lover but has seen it at some time through his sleep. It is hid under a light mist, away from the track of traders and kings and robbers. The harbour is well fenced to keep out loud creaking ships. Some fisherman to break through the mist at some time, he will bring back news of a place where there is better love and a better life than in any lovely corner of the world that is known. (*She turns away.*) And will you come there with me, Grania?

GRANIA: I am willing to go from this. We cannot stop always in the darkness of the woods—but I am thinking it should be very strange and lonesome.

DIARMUID: The sea-women will rise up giving news of the Country-under-Wave, and the birds will have talk as in the old days. And maybe some that are beyond the world will come to keep us company, seeing we are fitted to be among them by our unchanging love.

GRANIA: We are going a long time without seeing any of the people of the world, unless it might be herds and fowlers, and robbers that are hiding in the wood.

DIARMUID: It is enough for us having one another. I would sooner be talking with you than the world wide.

GRANIA: It is likely some day you will be craving to be back with the Fenians.

DIARMUID: I was fretting after them for a while. But now they are slipping out of mind. It would seem as if some soul-brother of my own were calling to me from outside the world. It may be they have need of my strength to help them in their hurling and their wars.

GRANIA: I have not had the full of my life yet, for it is scared and hiding I have spent the best of my years that are past. And no one coming to give us news or knowledge, and no friendly thing at all at hand, unless it might be Hazel the hound, or that I might throw out a handful of meal to the birds to bring me company. I would wish to bring you back now to some busy peopled place. [...] It is time for you to have attendance again, and good company about you.⁹⁵

She is conscious that her sudden desire to travel home, where they are also not welcome, is contradictory, and eventually admits so to Diarmuid:

GRANIA: Listen to me. You are driving me to excuses and to words that are not entirely true. But here, now, is truth for you. All the years we were with ourselves only, you kept apart from me as if I was a shadow-shape or a hag of the valley. And it was not till you saw another man craving my love, that the like love was born in yourself.⁹⁶

What is more significant to notice, though, is how her tones of discord again echo her first chat with Finn, precursor to Diarmuid's entrance in Act I. She is beginning to recognise that the men in her life do not consider her personal wishes within their actions of jealousy for her. Hence, Grania realises that Diarmuid's love has swung to further devotion than her own through his discovery of potential adventure in romantic passion's dangerous extremes.

By latching on to the potential of a romantic hero's identity within Irish folklore, Diarmuid simulates personal growth into a new understanding of love and history (the play's overall focus). In reality he has merely shifted his dependence on one self-defining heroic structure to another: historic warrior of battle to romantic lover of folklore. Thus he can incorporate Grania into his future as far as her *name* is required to appear with his as a famed tragic couple in heroic Folk-History. Consequently, when Grania refuses to participate in Diarmuid's heroic fantasy while he continues to fantasise, she manipulates his self-image as a historic lover by feeding it libelous grounds for jealous reactions. Diarmuid falls for her taunts and jabs at his unusual sense of masculinity, particularly when she implies that she was nearly orgasmic when the King of Foreign supposedly kissed her.

GRANIA: It as if frightened me—it seemed strange to me—there came as if a trembling in my limbs. I said: "I am this long time going with the third best man of the Fenians, and he never came as near as that to me."

DIARMUID (*flinging her from him*): Go then your own way, and I would be well pleased never to have met you, and I was no better than a fool, thinking any woman at all could give love would last longer than the froth upon the stream!⁹⁷

His disgust assumes from her words that she has been unfaithful moments before Finn re-enters the play in disguise. Diarmuid's reaction echoes Finn's jealous rage and misogynist venom toward Grania as Diarmuid awakens and re-enters the fray in Act I:

FINN: What was her mother then? Was she some woman of the camp? (*Pushes her from him.*)

Here Gregory invests another dramatic device into Finn as beggar “Half-Man” enters into Act II.⁹⁸ When Half-Man/Finn asks for the bread Finn is ‘hungry’ for, Diarmuid’s sense of fraternity is reactivated as he suddenly regresses into violent shame of his broken ‘word’⁹⁹ to Finn “my master and my friend,” leading him within his shameful reaction to break the bread/his union with Finn. Grania meanwhile begins to recognise in such reactions that Diarmuid will never be “entirely my own;”¹⁰⁰ throughout the play, Finn ignites far greater passion within Diarmuid than she ever does.

Therefore, once Diarmuid collapses into a sobbing heap of warrior-ignominy on his matrimonial bed, it is up to the other two characters within the threesome to perpetuate his self-image for the young hero. Grania begins to manipulate Diarmuid’s love for her dramatically in the eye of the public and rhetorically in the mind of Finn. Diarmuid’s representation by Grania also switches from inferior lover compared with the King of Foreign’s potential to superior lover compared with Finn’s potential. Finn retorts by claiming that Diarmuid can’t be an ideal lover if he has left Finn living: if he really loved her, he would have killed Finn/alternate suitor. Finn wins the argument, one could say, by inciting Diarmuid to leave Grania to kill the King of Foreign/alternate suitor, despite Grania’s heart-wrenching entreaties to remain with her (his dearest desired before Half Man/Finn arrived). This is reinforced by Diarmuid and Finn’s last bonding scene, as Diarmuid dies without recognising Grania’s presence within his life, in Act III’s finale.

Answering/Resolving Grania’s Questionable Reputation

FINN: There is no man only a lover, can be a beggar, and not ashamed.

GRANIA: It was not you—you were not that cripple.

FINN: This is the hand where you put the broken bread.

GRANIA: It was you sent Diarmuid out! It was you came between us! It was you parted us!

It was your voice he obeyed and listened to, the time he had no ears for me! Are you between us always?—I will go out after him, I will call him back—I will tell him your treachery—he will make an end of it and of you. He will know you through and through this time. It will fail you to come between us again.

(A heavy shout is heard.)

FINN: Hush, and listen! *(Goes to the door.)*¹⁰¹

Diarmuid regains consciousness moments before death recognising only his bond with Finn, abandoning for him his brief heterosexual coupling with Grania. Simultaneously, he denies Grania as his wife by ignoring her screaming into his ear that he loves her more than Finn and repeatedly addresses his true love to be “my master Finn.”¹⁰² His dying bond clearly with Finn, *none* with Grania, his dying words could not have been a harsher denial of Grania’s fantasy of mutual love, nearly calling her his hound:

DIARMUID: What was it I brought away from you? Was not Hazel my own hound? *(He dies.)*¹⁰³

Gregory rewrites Grania's infamous keening of Diarmuid, to have Finn looking on as she keens, neither realising that is Diarmuid merely unconscious.¹⁰⁴ Once Diarmuid *is* dead, Gregory characterises Finn as the first to keen him once dead; this is entirely the author's creation, further questioning the folklore, if Grania's famed keening was yet another misdirected emotional advance toward Diarmuid. Nevertheless, Finn's words of keening are rather telling of Gregory's personal interest in recasting the threesome from their past characterisations. Finn cries how he wishes he were dead and not Diarmuid, admitting he sent him to his death. He then calls the Fianna and men of Ireland to "keen him," (traditionally, women would keen for the dead within an Irish community).¹⁰⁵ Finally, Finn begins to put hypocritical words and evasive phrasing to the events leading to Diarmuid's death, blaming in particular women and heterosexual desire:

FINN: Are you gone indeed, Diarmuid, that I myself sent to your death? And I would be well pleased it was I, Finn, was this day making clay, and you yourself holding up your head among the armies. It is a bad story for me you to be dead, and it is in your place I would be well satisfied to be this day; and you had lived out your time. [...] And it is as if all the friends ever I had went to nothing, losing you. (*After a moment's silence he turns to the YOUNG MEN.*) Bring him out now, slaves of Britain, to his comrades and his friends, and the armies that are gathering outside, till they will wake him and mourn him and give him burial, for it is a king is lost from them this day. [...] For he was a good man to put down his enemies and the enemies of Ireland, and it is living he would be this day if it was not for his great comeliness and the way he had, that sent every woman stammering after him down in the end, and sent him astray in the world. And what at all is love, but lies on the lips and drunkenness, and a bad companion on the road?
(The body is carried out, The bearers begin to keen. The keen is taken up by the armies outside. FINN sits down, his dead bowed in his hand. GRANIA begins fastening up her hair and as if preparing for a journey.)

Of course, Grania is quick to point out that Diarmuid's final words were *not* about women and love. Having hoped such words would be his last, paired with the trauma of his final words denying any love for her, she claims her love for Diarmuid has grown cold in the shadow of Finn's 'rising sun':

GRANIA: As for the love I had for him, it is dead now, and turned to be as cold as cold as the snow is out beyond the path of the sun. [...] He had no love for me at any time. It is easy [to] know it now. I knew it all the while, but I would not give in to believe it. His desire was all the time with you yourself and Almhuin. He let on to be taken with me, and it was but letting on. Why would I fret after him that so soon forgot his wife, and left her in a wretched way? [...] Does any man at all speak lies at the very brink of death, or hold any secret in his heart? It was at that time he had done with deceit, and he showed where his thought was, and had no word at all for me that had left the whole world for his sake.¹⁰⁶

In Grania's contempt and jealousy for Diarmuid and Finn's bond, she can remain the active agent of her return to Finn. However, her heart is withheld as much as her jealousy can free it/her:

GRANIA: He will think to keep your mind filled with himself and to keep me from you,— he will be coming back showing himself as a ghost around Almhuin. He will think to come whispering to you, and you alone in the night time. But he will find me there before him! He will shrink away lonesome and baffled! I will have my turn that time. It is I will be between him and yourself, and will keep him outside of that lodging for ever!¹⁰⁷ [...] It is women are said to change, and they do not, but it is men that change and turn as often

as the wheel of the moon. You filled all Ireland with your outcry wanting me, and now, when I am come into your hand, your love is rusted and worn out.¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, to add insult to (im)mortality, she wants Diarmuid to see “a woman that cared nothing at all for his treachery.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, as she leaves their tent as Finn’s future wife, she demands, “Let him see now what I am doing, and that there is no fear on me, or no wavering of the mind.”¹¹⁰

Exiting, Grania falters at the mocking laughter from either Diarmuid’s ghost or his Fianna brotherhood. She responds by telling the poor, strong men that they can laugh their fill; all sound is irrelevant to her now: their words and emotional reactions are pointless without her reactive interest. The laughter stops as she finally leaves the tent, reborn through Gregory’s answer to the question posed by Grania within the play’s notes: why?

“Notes”

The play notes to *Grania* are representative of Gregory’s overall changes in her Folk-History technique within the play. After all, it is the only play within her genre to skip historical information by referencing her own folklore research, explaining her experimental method and directly delving into folklore accounts. Within the notes she also makes the clearest distinction of each gender’s role within the relevant folklore and historic accounts by first describing the men’s role, then the women’s.

Gregory also makes a similar effort to juxtapose Deirdre and Grania’s differences in how their roles function within this same folk-historic inherited narrative, but with more of a focus to explain (and perhaps justify) her stronger interest in the latter heroine. This therefore shows that through her work with history *and* folklore, Gregory sought to argue that Grania’s story is superior to Deirdre’s story for both anthropological and archaeological reasons.¹¹¹ Anthropologically, Gregory points out that Fianna tales, where Grania’s character occurs, are told more frequently.¹¹² She also indicates that Fianna tales predate the Cuchulainn mythological cycle, where Deirdre’s character occurs.¹¹³ Genetically speaking, Gregory further intimates that Grania being of the “small race” and Finn of the “Giants,” Grania’s choice to join with Finn was the inevitable union between the rumoured parent races of Ireland.¹¹⁴ In the interest of archaeology, Gregory’s notes mention folklore which claims that Ireland’s cromlechs (dolmens) are attributed to Grania and Diarmuid’s flight through Ireland’s early wilderness; Deirdre and Sons of Usnach (never mentions Naisi) went to Scotland, but aren’t said to have created any of Ireland’s features or art, nor to have brought Scottish cultural influences back with them.¹¹⁵ Finally, according to Gregory’s research, she states that only in folksongs does Deirdre appear more frequently than Grania.¹¹⁶

CONCLUSION

The result of Gregory's Folk-History Project was a new genre within Irish drama. She accomplished this through creative reconstruction of historic events with Irish narratives, which centred on tragic heroines. By considering the subjectivity of memory inherent in any narrative of past events, Gregory took license and began 'cutting away' excessive historical detail. In turn, she found the women to indeed be as heroic as the men. Through her efforts, she exposes how history and folklore create the other, but are always subjective to the person retelling their story. Thus, she accomplished her personal heroic effort to rediscover the real women so long subjected to negative reputations assumed strictly by their name, and developed her dramatic writing of tragedy into a bold new style of historical characterisation. In light of this, Gregory's Folk-History plays can be said to have become historic narratives in themselves.

NOTES

- ¹ Lady Augusta Gregory, "Notes: *Drammer's Gold*," *Collected Plays: The Comedies*, ed. Ann Saddlemyer (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979) 262. Lacking gender neutral pronouns, Gregory used masculine pronouns according to grammatical practice of the time. I have substituted the masculine with a gender neutral pronoun strictly to help clarify my focus with this dynamic and female representation within the tragedies.
- ² Lady Augusta Gregory, "Dedications," *Collected Plays II: The Tragedies & Tragic-Comedies* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979) xvii.
- ³ Lady Augusta Gregory, "Notes: *The Image*," *Collected Plays II: The Tragedies & Tragic-Comedies*. ed. Ann Saddlemyer (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979) 296.
- ⁴ Lady Augusta Gregory, "Notes: *Grania*," *Collected Plays II: The Tragedies & Tragic-Comedies*. ed. Ann Saddlemyer (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979) 283.
- ⁵ Lady Augusta Gregory, "Notes: *Hyacinth Halvey*," *Collected Plays: The Comedies*, ed. Ann Saddlemyer (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979) 255.
- ⁶ Lady Augusta Gregory, "Notes: *Spreading the News*," *Collected Plays: The Comedies*, ed. Ann Saddlemyer (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979) 253. Previous to this project, Gregory found that in writing Abbey plays, if she began with a contemporary tragic female's story she was 'encouraged' by her male Abbey collaborators into writing a comic male's story to compliment their own less humorous work. By writing about historical women, she was given licence through the larger project of the Irish Literary revival to tell the women's stories for the edification of Irish audiences in Irish history and tradition.
- ⁷ Lady Augusta Gregory, "Notes: *Spreading the News*," 253. *Spreading the News* was first produced at the Abbey Theatre in 1904.
- ⁸ Ann Saddlemyer, *In Defense of Lady Gregory, Playwright*, (Dublin: Dolmen, 1966) 63.
- ⁹ Gregory, "Notes: *Drammer's Gold*," 262.
- ¹⁰ Lady Augusta Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1972) 200.
- ¹¹ Lady Augusta Gregory, "Playwriting," *Our Irish Theatre* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1972) 58. "I made many bad beginnings, and if I had listened to Mr. Yeats's advice I should have given [*Kincora*] up, but I began again and again till it was at last moulded in at least a possible shape."
- ¹² Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre*, 195.
- ¹³ Lady Augusta Gregory, "Notes: *Spreading the News*," *Collected Plays: The Comedies* (Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1971) 253. In 1904, Gregory's raucous *Spreading the News*, an exploration of village gossip and its the explosive potential, had very different beginnings which tether it to her later tragic heroines:
- "The idea of this play first came to me as a tragedy. I kept seeing as in a picture [a girl walking by with her head up high...] people sitting by the roadside, and a girl passing by the same place at evening, her head hanging, the heads of others turned from her, because of some sudden story that had risen out of a chance word, and had snatched away her good name."
- ¹⁴ Lady Augusta Gregory, "Notes: *Kincora*," *Collected Plays II: The Tragedies & Tragic-Comedies*, ed. Ann Saddlemyer, (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979) 286.

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- ¹⁵ For both plays I will be referring to the notes of *Kincora II* for Gregory's summaries of her historical and folklore source material.
- ¹⁶ Lady Augusta Gregory, "The Ever-Living Ones: His Three Calls to Cormac," *Gods & Fighting Men*, (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1993) 108.
- ¹⁷ She does however, make use this style in some of her Folk-Historic Tragic Comedies for comic effect and social commentary. A great example is the dialogues between the two Widows Deeny and Greely, and Anthony Canavan and Captain Headley in Act II of *The Canavans*.
- ¹⁸ W. B. Yeats, *Memoirs: Autobiography-First Draft, Journal*, ed. Denis Donoghue, (London: Papermac/Macmillan, 1988) 167. The context of this statement is Yeats debating with W. A. Henderson, who did not prefer the application of colloquial dialect throughout *Kincora II*.
- ¹⁹ Lady Augusta Gregory, "Appendix I: *Kincora* (The First Version)," *Collected Plays II: The Tragedies & Tragic-Comedies*, ed. Ann Saddlemyer, (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979) 316. Hereafter title is cited as *Kincora I*.
- ²⁰ Gregory, *Kincora I*, 320.
- ²¹ Gregory, *Kincora I*, 331.
- ²² Gregory, *Kincora I*, 318-319.
- ²³ 'Crow of Battle' may derive from Gormleith's past life with and continued association with the Danes, who are mentioned in the play's summaries for leaving roosters in Ireland; "'crowing they are to be back in Denmark.'" (Gregory, "Notes," *Kincora*, 289).
- ²⁴ Gregory, *Kincora I*, 327.
- ²⁵ Gregory, "Notes: *Kincora*," 288-289.
- ²⁶ Gregory, *Kincora I*, 348.
- ²⁷ In the form of a beggar girl, Aoibhell was brought in from another legend for creative emphasis. She does not represent a historical role in this story.
- ²⁸ Gregory, *Kincora I*, 349.
- ²⁹ Gregory, *Kincora I*, 350.
- ³⁰ Gregory, *Kincora I*, 324.
- ³¹ Gregory, "Notes: *Kincora*," 288.
- ³² Gregory, "Notes: *Kincora*," 288.
- ³³ Gregory, "*Kincora*," *Collected Plays II: The Tragedies & Tragic-Comedies*, ed. Ann Saddlemyer (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979) 70.
- ³⁴ Gregory, *Kincora II*, 91.
- ³⁵ Gregory, *Kincora II*, 91.
- ³⁶ Gregory, "Playwriting," 58.
- ³⁷ Lady Augusta Gregory, "Notes: *Dervorgilla*," *Collected Plays II: The Tragedies & Tragic-Comedies* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979) 289.
- ³⁸ Gregory, "Notes: *Dervorgilla*," 293-294.
- ³⁹ Lady Augusta Gregory, "*Dervorgilla*," *Collected Plays II: The Tragedies & Tragic-Comedies* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979) 95-96.
- ⁴⁰ Gregory, "Notes: *Dervorgilla*," 290.

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- ⁴¹ Her dying at the Abbey suggests Dervorgilla followed the tradition of Christian women fallen from social favour who devote their remaining lives in chaste prayer for their past lascivious sins.
- ⁴² Gregory, *Dervorgilla*, 97.
- ⁴³ Though a bit of a stretch, it could possibly be argued that Diarmuid emotionally castrates himself from potential feelings for Grania by worshipping his warrior-brotherhood with Finn and the Fianna, leaving a 'host' of bread every month in symbolic sacrifice to his brethren. He leaves the 'faith' through Grania's temptations. I feel this is too thin of an argument, however, and feel it depends too heavily upon the 'evil queen' stereotype, which Gregory was attempting to deconstruct.
- ⁴⁴ Gregory, *Kincora II*, 78.
- ⁴⁵ Gregory, *Kincora II*, 77.
- ⁴⁶ Gregory, *Kincora I*, 339.
- ⁴⁷ Gregory, *Dervorgilla*, 97.
- ⁴⁸ In Brian's dream of Aoibhell, the Fate Dream device also enables Gregory to allude to Aoibhell's appearance as a mystical apparition in *Kincora II*, rather than have her appear on stage with her message for Brian, as in *Kincora I*.
- ⁴⁹ Gregory, "Notes: *Dramer's Gold*," 261-262.
- ⁵⁰ Gregory, *Dervorgilla*, 107.
- ⁵¹ Gregory, *Dervorgilla*, 102. As the matriarch of the Abbey Theatre, Gregory is also recognising at the same moment the encroaching influence of the Realists and Modernists upon the arts in Ireland. The younger generation of James Joyce and his peers were already beginning to call for more realistic themes to work with than Irish folk imagination and rural humour.
- ⁵² Gregory, *Dervorgilla*, 103.
- ⁵³ Gregory, *Dervorgilla*, 104.
- ⁵⁴ Gregory, *Dervorgilla*, 105.
- ⁵⁵ Declan Kiberd, "Lady Gregory and the Empire Boys," *Inventing Ireland* (London: Vintage –Random House, 1996), 91.
- ⁵⁶ Gregory, "Poets & Dreamers," *Selected Writings* (New York: Penguin, 1995) 99.
- ⁵⁷ Gregory, "Poets & Dreamers," *Selected Writings*, 100.
- ⁵⁸ Gregory, *Dervorgilla*, 107.
- ⁵⁹ Gregory, *Dervorgilla*, 109.
- ⁶⁰ Gregory, *Dervorgilla*, 110.
- ⁶¹ Gregory, *Dervorgilla*, 107-108.
- ⁶² Gregory, *Dervorgilla*, 108.
- ⁶³ Gregory, *Dervorgilla*, 111.
- ⁶⁴ Gregory, *Dervorgilla*, 98.
- ⁶⁵ Gregory, "Notes: *Grania*," 283.
- ⁶⁶ Gregory had an affair with Wilfred Scawen Blunt early in her marriage to Sir William Gregory. Some critics, such as Declan Kiberd and Mary Lou Kohlfeldt, claim that *Grania* is really a play about her personal feelings of guilt for having this affair. Of course, this same critique is applied to nearly all of her plays where a strong heroine appears (such as Kiberd's parallel interpretation of *Dervorgilla* in

Inventing Ireland).(Kiberd 89-95) As stated in my introduction, she addressed such misreadings of her characters, warning that their “heart-secrets” were not necessarily her own. I personally find it interesting that the autobiographical criticism centres around the era of her life when she was sexually active *and* married—I have yet to see a perspective written of how her use of widows and hags in the same plays might represent a preoccupation with her role as a high-profile ageing woman within modern Irish culture.

⁶⁷ Lady Augusta Gregory, *Irish Folk-History Plays: The First Series: The Tragedies* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1912) iii.

⁶⁸ Richard Allen Cave, “The Danger and Difficulties of Dramatising the Lives of Deirdre and Grania,” *Perspectives of Irish Drama and Theatre*, Series: Irish Literary Studies 33, eds. Jacqueline Genet & Richard Allen Cave (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1991) 11.

⁶⁹ W. B. Yeats, letter to Lady Gregory as cited by Cave, 11.

⁷⁰ Cave, 12-13.

⁷¹ Gregory, “Playwriting,” 57.

⁷² Bonds are like oaths of chivalry.

⁷³ Lady Augusta Gregory, “*Grania*,” *Collected Plays II: The Tragedies & Tragic-Comedies* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979) 15.

⁷⁴ Gregory, *Grania*, 14-15.

⁷⁵ Lady Augusta Gregory, “Diarmuid and Grania,” *Gods and Fighting Men* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe,) 270.

⁷⁶ Gregory, *Grania*, 16.

⁷⁷ Gregory, *Grania*, 16.

⁷⁸ Lady Augusta Gregory, “How Diarmuid Got His Love-Spot,” *Gods and Fighting Men* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe) 252.

⁷⁹ Gregory, *Grania*, 17.

⁸⁰ Gregory, *Grania*, 17.

⁸¹ Gregory, “Diarmuid and Grania,” 308. “And some said the change had come on her because the mind of a woman changes like the water of a running stream; but some said it was Finn that had put enchantment on her.”

⁸² Gregory, *Grania*, 14.

⁸³ Gregory, *Grania*, 21-22.

⁸⁴ Gregory, *Grania*, 32-33.

⁸⁵ Gregory, *Grania*, 16.

⁸⁶ Gregory, *Grania*, 32.

⁸⁷ Gregory, *Grania*, 35, 36.

⁸⁸ Gregory, *Grania*, 35.

⁸⁹ Gregory, *Grania*, 37.

⁹⁰ Gregory, *Grania*, 38.

⁹¹ Gregory, *Grania*, 18-19.

⁹² Gregory, “Diarmuid & Grania,” 294.

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- ⁹³ Gregory, *Grania*, 26.
- ⁹⁴ Gregory, *Grania*, 16, 26-27.
- ⁹⁵ Gregory, *Grania*, 26-27.
- ⁹⁶ Gregory, *Grania*, 28.
- ⁹⁷ Gregory, *Grania*, 29.
- ⁹⁸ I believe there is a deeper significance held in Finn's undercover identity as 'Half-Man,' which I have yet to uncover, beyond the obvious surface interpretation of it representing Finn's feelings of incompleteness and betrayal within the threesome's structure and circumstance. It is my suspicion that there is perhaps a reference along the lines of Shakespeare, Voltaire, Shaw, Dante; in short, there are plenty of possibilities given Gregory's broad scope of reading interests. I would be most delighted to hear and/or discuss any suggestions as to where 'Half-Man' might derive from or signify an intertextual reference. Please direct any such information to my email address:
<ellswift@yahoo.co.uk>
- ⁹⁹ Gregory, *Grania*, 31.
- ¹⁰⁰ Gregory, *Grania*, 26.
- ¹⁰¹ Gregory, *Grania*, 39-40.
- ¹⁰² Gregory, *Grania*, 41,42.
- ¹⁰³ Gregory, *Grania*, 49.
- ¹⁰⁴ The staging from this point forward (Diarmuid lying horizontally as other two lean in over him) could create a classic triangulate visual of the threesome-structure.
- ¹⁰⁵ Gregory, *Grania*, 43.
- ¹⁰⁶ Gregory, *Grania*, 43, 44.
- ¹⁰⁷ Gregory, *Grania*, 44.
- ¹⁰⁸ Gregory, *Grania*, 45.
- ¹⁰⁹ Gregory, *Grania*, 45.
- ¹¹⁰ Gregory, *Grania*, 46.
- ¹¹¹ Gregory, *Grania*, 284.
- ¹¹² Gregory, *Grania*, 283.
- ¹¹³ Gregory, *Grania*, 284.
- ¹¹⁴ Gregory, *Grania*, 285.
- ¹¹⁵ Gregory, *Grania*, 285.
- ¹¹⁶ Gregory, *Grania*, 285.