

MAUD GONNE AND HER TIMES: A STUDY  
OF YEATS'S HELEN

by

EDWINA PATRICIA MACLEOD

B.A., University of Cape Town, South Africa, 1952

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department  
of  
ENGLISH

© EDWINA PATRICIA MACLEOD, 1975

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

AUGUST 1975

APPROVAL

Name: Edwina Patricia Macleod  
Degree: Master of Arts  
Title of Thesis: Maud Gonne and Her Times: A  
Study of Yeats's Helen  
Examining Committee:

---

Dr. Evan Alderson  
Chairman

---

Dr. Stanley Cooperman  
Senior Supervisor

---

Dr. R. Dunham

---

Dr. J. Mills

---

Dr. M. Page

---

Dr. Peter Taylor  
External Examiner  
University of British Columbia

Date approved: August 12, 1975

---



## ABSTRACT

The life and work of William Butler Yeats has spawned a mass of scholarly writing both biographical and analytical. The few people who affected him profoundly have received only scant attention and have been looked at mainly through their relationship to him. Maud Gonne was one of these, his love and inspiration for more than a quarter of a century.

Historians give Maud Gonne peripheral mention, if any at all, in the events that culminated in Home Rule for Ireland. Yeats's biographers naturally view her only in the Yeatsian perspective. And yet in the late 19th and early 20th centuries she was very much a political and social figure in her own right. She died in 1953 at the age of 88 and even into old age she continued her participation in the political life of Ireland.

Yeats's unrequited passion for her resulted in some of the world's most exquisite love poetry. Because of its eminence, this poetry has become the main source for Maud's contemporary image but the Maud of the poetry is not always synonymous with the flesh and blood Maud. Yeats loved her passionately for 28 years but was always rejected. The conflict

caused by this "barren passion" exploded into the poetry but the demands of poetic discipline and the vision of a genius have resulted in the perpetuation of a distorted image of this remarkable woman.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine, as far as is possible, the Maud Gonne known to her contemporaries, family and friends, to place her in the context of the times and to provide some understanding of the "Helen" who exercised so vital an influence throughout Yeats's aesthetic career. This biographical discussion of her life shows that the image of a virago consumed by popular politics, suggested by Yeats and others (George Moore, for example), is not synonymous with the image of a charming and elegant woman who dedicated her life and considerable talents to social justice and to the Nationalist cause which she saw as the only way of restoring a sense of purpose and dignity to the lives of Irish men and women. Quotations from the Irish Nationalist press, the American press and from writings by her contemporaries reveal other aspects of this multi-faceted woman and a comparison with another well-known Irishwoman of the times, Constance Markievicz, shows that it was Maud's consistent and intelligent use of her resources coupled with a genuine compassion that propelled her into public life. She was not only Yeats's "Helen" but many other things to many other people.

This work is based on available texts, on original interviews with people who knew Maud Gonne personally and on research at the British Museum Reading Room, London, and the National Library in Dublin.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Stanley Cooperman for his advice and criticism, and my husband, Graeme, who has been an unfailing source of encouragement and critical evaluation as well as a most efficient research assistant.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
APPROVAL PAGE . . . . .	ii
ABSTRACT . . . . .	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS . . . . .	vii
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
CHAPTER I . . . . .	13
CHAPTER II . . . . .	66
CHAPTER III . . . . .	93
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	110
Appendix i	
Appendix ii	



## INTRODUCTION

A great deal has been written about William Butler Yeats both as poet and as personality. Not much attention has been paid, however, to the men and women who had a profound effect on his life and work. Maud Gonne was perhaps chief of these, his inspiration for more than a quarter of a century.

Out of his unrequited passion for Maud Gonne Yeats produced some of the world's most beautiful love poetry. "How much of the best that I have done and still do is but the attempt to explain myself to her?" Yeats writes in his diary in January, 1909. "If she understood, I should lack a reason for writing..."<sup>1</sup>

It is true, perhaps, that were it

---

<sup>1</sup> W.B. Yeats Memoirs, ed. Denis Donoghue, (London, 1972), p.142.

not for Yeats's "babbling of fallen majesty," Maud would be long forgotten except among a few specialized students of Irish history, and yet in the late 1800's and early 1900's she was very much a figure in her own right not only in Ireland but in France and England as well.

This biographical study of Maud Gonne is gleaned from newspaper articles of the time, from her autobiography A Servant of the Queen, from reading the profusion of articles she wrote for the United Irishman\* and other papers, from newspaper reports of her journeys through America to lecture and raise funds for various causes, from the few biographical pieces that have been written about her, from comments of other celebrities of the time (George Moore for example) and from the writer's own deductions based on these sources.

---

\* Accounts of the events in which Maud Gonne was involved are contained in great detail in the Irish Nationalist Press, particularly the United Irishman. In its daily reports of meetings, events in Parliament, committees, critiques of plays and other literary works, letters to the editor (as often as not from the people like Maud and Yeats who were most closely involved), this paper proves a fascinating, stimulating and rewarding source of information.

In addition, a grant from the Simon Fraser University President's Fund enabled the writer to spend five weeks in England and Ireland in the fall of 1972 talking to Sean MacBride, Maud Gonne's son, and others who knew her, and reading at the British Museum Reading Room and the National Library in Dublin.

There are few people left now who knew Maud Gonne during the time of her most intense involvement in the Irish political scene and when these few have gone it is to Yeats that we will have to turn to find her. She lives, as he saw her, in his poetry and as "he swayed and swithered between the deep sea of dream and the devil of action,"<sup>2</sup> the reader - like Yeats himself - sees Maud Gonne through many different filters.

The two personalities of Forgael, the

---

<sup>2</sup> Irish Literary Portraits, ed. W.R.Rodgers, (London, 1972), p.4.

leader, and Aleel, the dreamer, were at war in Yeats for most of his life. His need to be a man of action, masterful and direct, often overwhelmed his desire for the way of the philosopher-poet and dreamer. The demands made on him by Maud Gonne's involvement in public life together with the increasing hopelessness of his unrequited passion for her created a terrible conflict. The poet is both Forgael and Aleel and his beloved is seen differently depending on which persona is foremost.

The first image of Maud Gonne to appear in Yeats's verse is in The Rose series of poems. It is three years since their first meeting and Maud is cast in the heroic mould. She is proud and beautiful and does not belong to our world - "the labouring world." We are pale like the waters, and wintry; she is red-lipped, proud and fiery. Looking back years later, the same

image remains constant:

For she had fiery blood  
 When I was young,  
 And trod so sweetly proud  
 As 'twere upon a cloud,  
 A woman Homer sung.

(C.P. p.100)\*

While her lips are red they are also  
 mournful. Her beauty and heroism are praised  
 and marvelled at but there is something dis-  
 quieting about them. Proud Priam was doomed  
 and possibly the same destiny awaits Maud.

A girl arose that had red mournful lips  
 And seemed the greatness of the world in tears.  
 Doomed like Odysseus and the labouring ships  
 And proud as Priam murdered with his peers;

(C.P. p.46)

There are two Helens. The true Helen is  
 the source of warmth and fulfilled passion:

Beloved, gaze in thine own heart,  
 The holy tree is growing there;  
 From joy the holy branches start,  
 And all the trembling flowers they bear.

(C.P. p.54)

---

\* All quotations of Yeats's poetry are taken from  
The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats, (London, 1969).  
 These quotes are identified by the short C.P.  
 and the page number on which the lines appear.

The second Helen is the Helen that the world knows and the Helen who will not face what is really in her heart.

There, through the broken branches, go  
 The ravens of unresting thought;  
 Flying, crying, to and fro,  
 ...  
 Thy tender eyes grow all unkind:  
 Gaze no more in the bitter glass.

(C.P. p.55)

The poet had promised his beloved that his song about her would be weighed "with the great and their pride" (C.P. p.75) and would be believed.

In 1899, ten years after Yeats first met Maud Gonne, he published The Wind Among the Reeds. The heroic image has changed and the poet's song is now of one who has "the will of the wild birds" and is "like the pale cup of the sea/ When winds have gathered and sun and moon burned dim/Above its cloudy rim." (C.P. p.80). Helen, the noble beauty, who moved men to mythic deeds of courage has become a creature of unrest - "Encircle her

I love and sing her into peace." (C.P. p.80).  
 She has become incapable of understanding Aleel's  
 dreaming love and seems to need "embroidered  
 cloths/Enwrought with golden and silver light."  
 (C.P. p.81). She is manipulated by "the Powers  
 whose name and shape no living creature knows"  
 (C.P. p.80), and they have made her harsh,  
 demanding, restless and compassionless.

The publication of In the Seven Woods in  
 1904 coincided with a time of despair and sorrow  
 for Yeats. His hopes for marriage were dashed  
 and the poems reflect first of all his bitterness  
 at what he now considered to be the wasted years

he kneaded in the dough  
 Through the long years of youth and who would have thought  
 It all, and more than it all, would come to naught,

(C.P. p.86)

and, too, a sense of outrage that he had been  
 rejected because his love was too certain - it  
 "grew to be out of fashion/Like an old song."  
 (C.P. p93). The image of Maud is still that of  
 a woman of great strength "so lofty and fierce

and kind/It might call up a new age" (C.P. p.86), but now there is in addition a suggestion of wilful malice and a need to remove her from the pedestal on which she had been placed. She is one of many "women" now and like the rest of her sex who "have given their hearts up to the play." (C.P. p.87).

Six years after In the Seven Woods came the publication of The Green Helmet and Other Poems in 1910. These poems begin the process of looking back and now, perhaps to prove to himself that the years of loving Maud were not wasted, Yeats returns to those qualities which drew him to her in the first place. His beloved is again a woman above all others -

That nobleness made simple as a fire,  
 With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind  
 That is not natural in an age like this,  
 Being high and solitary and most stern?

(C.P. p.101)

At the same time, however, it becomes clear that she will not be fully restored to her former image and that the shadows foretold in the earliest poems have taken hold of her. Maud is a woman



unable to influence the direction of her life and appears to have succumbed to the more destructive manifestations of her personality. "What could she have done, being what she is?" (C.P. p.101) the poet asks, " Was there another Troy for her to burn?"

By the time of the publication of The Wild Swans at Coole in 1919, Yeats had arrived at "the great transformation that had come over him and his work...he could now look back on his first thirty-five years from the perspective of another man."<sup>3</sup> The Maud poems in this volume (Her Praise, The People, His Phoenix, A Thought from Propertius and Broken Dreams), all written for her in 1915, reflect this new mood. It would seem that the desire to walk with "The unperturbed and courtly images" of that civilised and civilising Renaissance society in Urbino is now about to reach fruition

---

<sup>3</sup> Richard Ellmann, Yeats-The Man and the Masks, (New York, 1948), p.217

and Yeats has made the decision to use

... the one substantial right  
My trade allows: chosen my company  
And chosen what scenery has pleased me best.

(C.P. p.169)

Several changes are wrought by this new attitude, chief among them being that Maud is neither mythologised nor symbolised and thus becomes more vulnerable, more understandable and, finally, more human. The Maud of "storm and strife" and the sound of "the outrageous cannon" has been forgiven, if not completely forgotten, and the new vision is contained and summed up in the one line -

She is foremost of those that I would  
hear praised.

(C.P. p.168)

Yeats and Maud are now entering their fifties and growing old - "there is gray in your hair./Young men no longer suddenly catch their breath/When you are passing;" (C.P. p.172). The pain of "that monstrous thing/Returned and yet unrequited love" (C.P. p.174) is also passing into memory (to be further eased by Yeats's

marriage to George Hyde-Lees). His beloved is looked at lovingly and with critical tenderness. For the first time small blemishes are allowed in her great physical beauty

You are more beautiful than anyone,  
And yet your body had a flaw:  
Your small hands were not beautiful,

(C.P. p.173)

There is also a new sense of possession in the poet's withdrawal into memory and the certain knowledge "that I shall see that lady/Leaning or standing or walking/In the first loveliness of womanhood" (C.P. p.173) after death.

"Does the imagination dwell the most/  
Upon a woman won or woman lost?" (C.P. p.222). Collected Poems provides ample evidence of the answer. From their first meeting in 1889 to his death fifty years later, Maud was never far from Yeats's thoughts. She is elevated to Olympian heights and cast down again. "Who can tell/Which of her forms has shown her substance right?" (C.P. p.382). Even at the end of his

life Yeats could not come to a decision. Maud makes two last appearances: as "yet a most gentle woman" (C.P. p.382) and the contrary - "I thought my dear must her own soul destroy/so did fanaticism and hate enslave it." ( C.P. p.392).

Forever characterised in many manifestations and moods by Yeats, Maud Gonne is remembered today more as his inspiration than for her own contributions to Irish history, but she deserves more than this. A powerful and politically creative personality in her own right, she had already accomplished much by the time she met Yeats and in the context of Irish Nationalism was a force of considerable distinction. The Maud Gonne of Yeats's poetry, and the historical Maud Gonne, are by no means synonymous: a fact which, due to the transformation of Yeats's personal emotion into some of his finest lyrics, is too often forgotten.

CHAPTER 1.

The second half of the nineteenth century was marked by a resurgence of nationalism in Ireland as in many parts of Europe. The struggle for independence was waged on a number of fronts with increasing urgency towards the close of the century. A remarkable group of people came together in Ireland, contemporaries of extraordinary ability in the arts and in the political and economic life of the country, who sought to develop a sense of Irishness and a pride in nationality by deliberately turning away from English influence. The fostering of this sense of nationhood, begun in Ireland by the Young Ireland group with the founding of the Nation newspaper in 1842 ( for which Thomas Davis set the intellectual tone), was expanded and cultivated on the literary front by a collection of writers, poets, playwrights and essayists who included Yeats, Synge, Hyde,

George Moore, AE and, for a time, Sean O'Casey, among others.

Politically, the return to the concept of constitutional reform which followed the failure of the attempted Fenian Rising in 1867 received great impetus with the election to the parliament at Westminster in 1875 of a man of outstanding parliamentary ability, Charles Stewart Parnell. Handling with dexterity the disparate groups within the Irish representation in the Commons, and aligning himself with Gladstone and the Liberals who appeared to have a genuine desire for reform, Parnell led the Irish Parliamentary Party to win 85 of the 103 seats allotted to Ireland in the General Election of 1885. His subsequent deposition and early death in 1891 resulted once again in the abandonment of constitutional procedures.

Conditions on the land were complicated by successive failures of the potato crop and the years of famine between 1845 and 1850. The Irish question was exported

overseas with the emigration of thousands of impoverished and bitter peasants mainly to the United States, where an active and resentfully anti-British agitation successfully fueled the growing Republican sentiment in the home country with advice, money and arms. The land war against the Protestant, landowning Ascendancy continued, culminating in the formation of the most successful of various organizations by another remarkable Irishman, Michael Davitt. From the poorest area of Ireland, County Mayo, and a victim of eviction himself at the age of six, Davitt saw his Land League become powerful enough through the agitation of its tenant members to enable Parnell to push through the Act of 1881 which revolutionized the system of land tenure in Ireland.

The census of 1861 showed the population of Ireland to be 5,788,415. Of these just over three quarters were Catholic. The Church was an important factor in the lives of Irishmen and was, for the most part, a conservative influence.

The hierarchy and most especially the two Archbishops of Dublin between the years 1852 and 1921, Cullen and Walsh, sought to preserve the status quo and counselled against the stirrings of Republicanism, fearing its secret societies and militarism. Parish priests, on the other hand, far more closely involved in parish life and personal witness to the distress in the more stricken areas, such as Mayo, very often supported efforts to relieve the misery of their people. Coming as they did from the same farming and trading communities as their parishioners, the clergy at the parish level identified closely with their aspirations.

At this time, too, the Church was the main source of education up to the Secondary level for Catholic Irishmen of all classes. Her involvement in the political as well as the social lives of her people was thus unavoidable, to the dismay of the Anglo-Irish and Protestant minority who feared that Home Rule would inevitably mean "Rome" Rule and a strong



clerical regime. Nevertheless many of the men and women who devoted themselves to the Nationalist cause in the late 1800's and early 1900's actually came from the Protestant minority.

Despite the fact that a woman sat on the throne of England, the Victorian era was not notable for politically emancipated women. Victorians on the whole, especially those of the middle class, distrusted overt social and intellectual eccentricity and for the Victorian woman, home, hearth and domestic responsibility were considered proper and totally fulfilling concerns. In Ireland this attitude was particularly strong especially since it was reinforced by the traditional attitude of the Church towards women and their place in society. In the late 1880's, however, three remarkable women began to be known in literary and political circles in Ireland. Two of them, Lady Augusta Gregory and Constance Gore-Booth Markievicz, came from the Protestant landowning aristocracy, or the Ascendancy as it was called. The third,

Maud Gonne, was the daughter of an Irish career officer in the British army and an English mother.

Maud was born to Colonel Thomas Gonne and his wife on December 20th, 1865, at Aldershot, Surrey, where Colonel Gonne's regiment was posted. He was sent to Ireland shortly afterwards and Maud's sister, Kathleen, was born there. Mrs. Gonne died when Maud was four years old, leaving her husband to bring up his two daughters by himself and making him promise that "he would never send Kathleen or me to (boarding) school or let us fall into the clutches of the aunts." <sup>1</sup> (The aunts were the elderly and strictly conventional relations of Mrs. Gonne). As a result, the two girls had the kind of liberated upbringing which contributed so much to Maud's later sense of independence and her freedom from the constraints of convention.

For the first few years after Mrs. Gonne's death the family remained in Ireland,

---

<sup>1</sup> Maud Gonne, A Servant of the Queen, (London, 1974) p.12.

but when Colonel Gonne was posted to India the two girls were sent to live in the South of France, near Cannes. There for six years they lived under the care of a French governess who was also a convinced Republican. As well as imbibing Republicanism from her governess, Maud at this early stage was introduced to the peripatetic life which she was to lead again, to Yeats's dismay, during her years of involvement in Nationalist politics. "In the summer, among the snows of Switzerland; in the winter, in Italy or the South of France. Whenever he could, Tommy (her father) was with us and then we travelled." <sup>2</sup>

In 1881 when Maud was sixteen, Colonel Gonne was posted back to Dublin as Adjutant-General at the Castle and the girls returned to the city to live with him. Maud was introduced to society, began to entertain for her father and to all intents and purposes became the model of the establishment hostess. "She rode, she

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.26.

hunted, she was the Daughter of the Garrison to the life."<sup>3</sup> But because her father treated her as a confidante and as someone mature enough to understand and appreciate more serious concerns, she soon became aware of his sympathies with Irish nationalist aspirations and began to recognize the realities of Garrison attitudes towards the natives, "for (whom) the younger officers hardly concealed their contempt." <sup>4</sup>

While attending weekends at country houses she observed at first hand not only the cruelty of the evictions of tenants from their smallholdings, but also the callousness with which they were treated by some landowners. (At this time the Land League campaigns were at their height and tenants were resisting eviction). There is no question, too, that some landlords were crippled by the failure to pay rents caused by the years of crop failure and famine and were facing serious financial difficulties. There was bitterness on all sides. Nevertheless, Maud's sympathies were engaged,

---

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Coxhead, Daughters of Erin, (London, 1965), p.22.

<sup>4</sup> A Servant of the Queen, p.40.

as they always would be, on the side of the dispossessed; years later she told a reporter in America - "After that I changed a great deal. I began to ask questions, to wonder why things were as I found them, to see if something could not be done. I was done with society. I could not bear it after what I had seen."<sup>5</sup>

Colonel Gonne had by this time decided to leave the army and stand as a Home Rule candidate for Parliament. His untimely death from Typhoid in the early 1880's prevented this and also brought to an abrupt end the society life which Maud, even before her father's death, had been viewing with increasing acerbity. The two girls went to London to live with an Uncle, an unhappy arrangement that ended when Maud began to show symptoms of tuberculosis, the disease that had killed her mother, and she was sent off to France, to the Auvergne, to recuperate. Here, at Royat, she met the man who was to provide added impetus toward a serious involvement in Nationalist politics, and who was also to become

---

<sup>5</sup> Kansas City Star, April 27, 1901. Repr. United Irishman.

her lover and the father of two of the three children she later bore.

Lucien Millevoye was a man in his mid thirties when they met in 1886. He was the grandson of the French poet of the same name and came from a Bonapartist family. A politician and a journalist, he was passionately devoted to the cause of the return of Alsace-Lorraine to the French which he hoped would be achieved under the banner of the Boulangist party at this time being formed by General Boulanger. Millevoye was tall with a dark, soulful aspect and was recovering at Royat from melancholia induced by the recent breakup of his marriage, a fact which did not prevent him paying court to Maud, who both accepted his romantic attentions and revelled in long hours of political discussion.

She was twenty one years old, remarkably free from conventional restraints, and extraordinarily beautiful. Portraits of her do her little justice, softening the character in her face and very often attempting to subdue her to the romantic image

of soft femininity prevalent in portraiture of the time. "I had seen a great life-size photograph of her as a young woman," writes Monk Gibbon, a distant relative of the Yeats family, "but in it her good looks had seemed to me almost too typical. She was the tall, Junoesque, full-bosomed beauty of the time, almost a Gibson girl. Here was nothing unique or special, but simply a fine, handsome young woman such as every Edwardian drawing-room delighted in, a mere social beauty, not that radiant creature whom Hone describes..."<sup>6</sup>

She was nearly six feet tall and made no attempt to minimize her height, instead carrying herself erect and moving gracefully. Her face, clearly defined with a long, shapely nose and wide-spaced eyes, was strongly structured and in old age retained the sharp delineation of its main features despite a mass of wrinkles. Yeats, recalling their first meeting, described her considerable effect on him - "I had never thought to see in a living woman so great beauty. It belonged to famous pictures, to poetry, to some

---

<sup>6</sup> Monk Gibbon, The Masterpiece and the Man, (London, 1959), pp.72-73. Monk Gibbon, Irish essayist, novelist and biographer, was one of the many young aspiring poets and writers who found in Yeats a helpful mentor.

legendary past. A complexion like the blossom of apples, and yet face and body had the lineaments which Blake calls the highest beauty because it changes least from youth to age, and a stature so great that she seemed of a divine race." <sup>7</sup>

Another contemporary, Katharine Tynan, described her thus: " Her extraordinary beauty drew all eyes to her. She was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen and in keeping with her beauty was an exquisite voice. She dressed beautifully as well, and in Dublin, where taste in dress is not a strong point, her dress made her as conspicuous as her beauty. When one met her walking in a Dublin street one felt as if a goddess had come to earth." <sup>8</sup>

Such paeans may sound extravagant but the extent to which they were lavished on her by her contemporaries, male and female, admirer or no, indicate the effect of her physical attributes. "Goddess," "divine," "exquisite,"

---

<sup>7</sup> W.B. Yeats Memoirs, ed. Denis Donoghue, (London, 1972), p.40. Yeats dated these memoirs as a rough draft made in 1916-17. All quotations from the Memoirs, therefore, represent his thoughts some time after the events to which they refer.

<sup>8</sup> Katharine Tynan, 25 Years Reminiscences, (London, 1913) p.318.



"extraordinary" - the adjectives proliferate.

"Golden-haired Isolde," George Moore (no admirer)

called her and Yeats cast her as Helen -

a form

That could show what Homer's age  
Bred to be a hero's wage.

...  
Such a delicate high head,  
All that sternness amid charm,  
All that sweetness amid strength.

(C.P. p.103)

There is no question that her appearance - beauty combined with extraordinary stature, graceful carriage, elegant dress, her voice which was low and musical and which she used to great effect - immediately set her apart. It naturally attracted much attention and in the political world she was about to enter, then even more than now dominated by men, it opened many doors, often enabling her to achieve success where those less favoured by nature might have failed.

At Royat during those months of recuperation Maud began the association with Millevoye which was to be the centre of her personal life for many years. They made a pact to help each other, she for Ireland and he for Alsace-Lorraine,

and England was to be the common enemy. Already anxious to involve herself in some way in the Nationalist cause, Millevoeye's encouragement and his desire to work with her provided the stimulus to action. His knowledge of journalism and his experience in politics would be a source on which she could draw if necessary. And, of course, there was profound personal attraction between them.

In 1887 Maud went to Constantinople to visit friends and on her return to the Continent undertook a mission to Russia where she was to deliver some documents for the Boulangists. This was her first venture into the political life and she accomplished it with some style and no little enjoyment. In St. Petersburg she met the English journalist, Stead, who gave her some advice as to who to see in England about getting into Irish politics. As a result, on her arrival in London she spoke to Michael Davitt in the House of Commons. Although they later became friends, this interview was not a success probably because of Davitt's mistrust of her intentions.

Determined to find some way of helping the Nationalists, Maud now returned to Dublin and went to stay with her old friend Ida Jamieson, of the Unionist whisky family.

Irish attitudes towards women made it very difficult for them to take part in the movements for revival and reform now under way. Maud's old friends were all Unionists ( as those who favoured the retention of close ties with England were called), as was most of upper class Ireland and she was remembered, too, as the "daughter of the Garrison" closely connected with Dublin Castle and the English. In addition Maud's beauty and the elegance and poise produced by birth and training in the ways of "society" tended to induce doubts about her seriousness, as her interview with Michael Davitt had already indicated. Members of her own society were derisive about her intentions and others were mistrustful. Nevertheless she persisted and was finally introduced to John O'Leary by a friend of Ida Jamieson's.

O'Leary played a large part in the

struggle for separatism. Born in Tipperary town in 1830, the son of a shopkeeper, he studied law at Trinity College and then transferred to medicine qualifying in neither faculty. He was attracted to the Young Ireland movement by the Nation newspaper and from his early days of participation in Young Ireland, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and as a spokesman for the Fenians, his intellect and considerable perception were a valuable asset to the Nationalist cause. Imprisoned for five years in 1865 for IRB activities, he was then exiled for fifteen years returning to Dublin in 1885 in time, once again, to assist in the continuing struggle for separatism and in the Irish literary renaissance.

He was a man of strong principle and considerable caution and was convinced that there could be no national awakening without a literary revival, that one could not exist without the other and that Irish writers must be encouraged to seek their inspiration in their own history. He recognized in Yeats the potential to be one of Ireland's great men of letters and it was he

who was responsible for the publication of Yeats's first book of poetry raising subscriptions himself. "... from O'Leary's conversation and from the Irish books he lent or gave me has come all I have set my hand to since..."<sup>9</sup> was Yeats's generous acknowledgement years later.

O'Leary introduced Maud to nationalists and drew her into his campaign to convert Unionists to the cause. He "was keenly interested in meeting any of my Unionist friends who had not been offensive..."<sup>10</sup> and no doubt regarded Maud as well placed to affect some conversions. She visited many people and she and Ida produced an Irish concert which was a success, but she was anxious for some more positive work and accepted an invitation from Tim Harrington, secretary of the Irish National League which concerned itself with the Land War, to go on a tour of Donegal where some particularly bad instances of eviction had occurred. What she saw on this journey showed her a direct way of helping the cause and confirmed her view that Ireland would never prosper until English rule was abolished.

---

<sup>9</sup> Marcus Bourke, John O'Leary, A Study in Irish Separatism, (Tralee, 1967), p.186.

<sup>10</sup> A Servant of the Queen, p.92

Her work for the evicted was to make Maud Gonne famous and it was an area in which all her best characteristics would be used to their fullest.

"She never philosophised about politics," Maire Comerford, who knew her in Dublin in the Twenties, recalled, "but would go to the scene of trouble and try to help the victims." <sup>11</sup> Hers was the kind of mind which wasted no time in deliberation and allowed no obstacles to stand in the way of social action. Where she saw the need she acted immediately and the very speed of this action often forced the desired results. Her bearing, which was that of an aristocrat, and her complete lack of fear enabled her to overwhelm the petty officialdom which often got in the way of action. It is no wonder that the peasantry regarded her as some kind of goddess and that in Donegal she was known as the Woman of the Sidh.\* From the beginning her main concern was to instill into the people she was trying to help an awareness of their rights and the need to stand together

---

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Miss Maire Comerford, Dublin, 1972.

\* The Sidhe were the fairy mounds of Celtic myth, underground palaces inhabited by the Tuathe De - the divine people. The lords of the Sidhe had control of magic and some special mortals were able to make contact with them.

and work to relieve their own misery.

Although the Land Act of 1881 had laid the basis for change in the system of land tenure in Ireland, famine and poverty were still all too common among the Irish tenantry. Michael Davitt writing in 1902 about conditions in County Mayo blamed the evils of the landlord system for the suffering over the years and explained

" ... cattle and not labour were placed on the lands from which the cultivators had been evicted since 1849, while the diminished population were crowded in upon the poorer soil of the country. This, however, was only half the evil. The reclaimed bog-land, or mountainside onto which the people who could not emigrate were compelled to migrate, was rack-rented in defiance of all economic or equitable principles. Without the labour which alone reclaimed such soil and kept it in a state of cultivation, it could not produce a shilling of rent per acre. Rent for such land was, therefore, sheer robbery, sanctioned by law, and evictions carried out for arrears of such legal blackmail, in seasons of distress, differed in one sense only from the common crime of housebreaking..."<sup>12</sup>

Successive failures of the potato crops had led to frightful famine and the emigration from Ireland of millions of people. Those who remained to struggle with the land were abjectly poor and, being unable to pay rents for their tiny cottages and lands, were subject to eviction. These sad and

---

<sup>12</sup> Ireland, A Documentary Record, ed. James Carty, (Dublin, 1951), p.88.

horrible affairs in which old or young, sick or healthy were often left to die under hedges along the roadsides, took place all over the country as they had for many years.

Maud spent the years 1888 to 1890 in ceaseless activity for the victims of the Land War. She had taken some rooms in Nassau Street, Dublin, overlooking the Trinity College playing fields and this was her base although most of her time was spent in Donegal and Mayo. Her income came from an inheritance from her father (his own money and not a British military pension which detractors later accused her of living on). It was large enough to support her fairly comfortably and also to allow her to provide direct financial assistance in some cases to the people she was helping. She also used it to finance some of the schemes she was evolving, for example a co-operative housebuilding venture which she persuaded a Dublin M.P. experienced in these things to undertake with evicted peasants in Donegal.

Stories were beginning to be written



about her in newspapers abroad. Her courage, verve and dedication and again her extraordinary good looks together with her obvious sympathy and passion for social justice provided all the ingredients for these dramatic accounts of a new personality on the Irish scene. There was no question that the peasantry worshipped her and the legend of the Woman of the Sidh spread from county to county so that wherever she went people immediately expected that authority would be overcome, more often than not by the simple fact of her overwhelming presence, and that their conditions would be improved.

All this she did on her own, unconnected with any of the organizations either national or local. She had attempted to join the Irish National League, the Fenians, the Celtic Literary Society and the Contemporary Club (where she had met John O'Leary) but none would have a woman. The direct nature of her work with the evicted reinforced her independence and proved to her that a great deal could be accomplished by

personal effort. It also hardened her feelings about English rule ( or misrule) in Ireland and from this time on she became a passionate advocate of Irish separatism. "I have always hated war and am by nature and philosophy a pacifist," she wrote, "but it is the English who forced war on us, and the first principle of war is to kill the enemy. ...a thousand Irish men, women and children were left homeless and how many of them died that winter I do not know. It surely went into the hundreds, for babies and young children died like flies in the overcrowded workhouses."<sup>13</sup>

Early in 1889 an opportunity presented itself, one that at first she turned down, which was to involve her yet deeper in the active life of separatism and one which revealed another talent hitherto unsuspected. She was asked by Tim Harrington to speak at English by-election meetings at Barrow-on-Furness in Lancashire. The by-election was to be contested on the question of home rule and the evictions and Maud was to provide eye-witness accounts

---

<sup>13</sup> A Servant of the Queen, p.115.

of what was being done in the name of English law in Donegal and Mayo. Her speech was an astonishing success. Again the magnetism of her appearance, the Ascendancy manner, her beautiful speaking voice and her obvious identification with the plight of the dispossessed people she was discussing made an indelible impression on her listeners. She was once again featured in newspaper stories and as she herself said "momentarily I became the fashion in London."<sup>14</sup>

A new field had opened for her and she was to make many speeches in the years to follow becoming increasingly adept at it. This was another area in which she could act independently and her ability moved Yeats to record this description of a meeting she addressed in Paris - "...what a singular scene - this young girl of twenty-five addressing that audience of politicians, and moving them more than all their famous speakers although she spoke in a language not her own... (She) adds the power of beauty to the power of the golden tongue..."<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p,123.

<sup>15</sup> W.B.Yeats Uncollected Prose, Coll.& ed. by John P.Frayne, (New York, 1970), p.215.

The year 1889 could be said to have been an auspicious one for Maud. It was during this year that she embarked on two new extensions of her career, one in public speaking and the other, which was to remain a concern for the rest of her long life, the treatment of political prisoners. In this year, too, she met the person who would give her a fame much more permanent than the transitory one of salons and newspapers as well as passionate love and a friendship that would endure for twenty eight years.

"I was twenty three years old when the troubling of my life began," William Butler Yeats recorded later. "I had heard from time to time in letters from Miss O'Leary, John O'Leary's old sister, of a beautiful girl who had left the society of the Viceregal court for Dublin nationalism. ...presently she drove up to our house in Bedford Park with an introduction from John O'Leary to my father."<sup>16</sup>

Yeats had had his first book of poems published the previous year. Frail in health at

---

<sup>16</sup> W.B.Yeats Memoirs, p.40.

this time, dreamy and uncertain of his future, he was absolutely overwhelmed by this extraordinary creature. Her effect on him is still a matter of controversy - "It was only the demon of an incredible will-power within him that saved him from being entirely wrecked by her,"<sup>17</sup> says one side; and "I think that she prevented him from becoming lost in a vague mysticism; and in binding him to the service of Ireland - because it was her service also - she helped to make humanity real to him, as it never seemed to be real and vital to the lad that I remember, pre-occupied solely with himself,"<sup>18</sup> claims the other.

Maud was also twenty three years old when they met and quite accustomed to the fact that the men she met invariably fell in love with her. Yeats was no exception in this respect and, although she never requited his passion, she loved him and relied upon his friendship and recognized his great importance to the world of letters. She held him to her with delicacy and warmth and they shared many deep concerns. Yeats's letters to

---

17 MacLiammoir & Boland, W.B.Yeats and His World, (London,1971), p.37.

18 Scattering Branches:Tributes to the Memory of W.B.Yeats, ed.Stephen Gwynn, (London,1948), p. 8.

John O'Leary after their first meeting are filled with references to Maud and as the association grew he drew O'Leary into his various difficulties not the least of which was lack of money. Although they were the same age Maud was by far the more experienced at this time and was living and working independently. Also Millevoeye was the centre of her personal life, though with typically Irish reticence she kept this to herself . Despite the fact that Yeats soon became her close confidant, he did not learn about Millevoeye's relationship with Maud for some years.

When she had finished speaking at the Barrow by-election, Maud turned her considerable will to the accomplishment of another mission she had undertaken at the request of several of the Donegal families she had helped. This was to get permission from the Home Office to visit some of the men jailed in England in Portland Prison for Land League and Dynamitard offenses. Prison regulations permitted twenty minute visits every four months but many of the families of the prisoners were too far away and too impoverished

to take advantage of these regulations. Some of the men had been ten years in prison under very difficult conditions without ever having had a visit from their families.

There were twenty seven men in all, some sentenced for Land League activities and some for an attempt to dynamite the British Houses of Parliament, and although the treatment for political prisoners was supposed to be somewhat better than that accorded felons, these men were subject to the harshest conditions. "British law and British political procedure are full of such equivocations and hypocrisies," John Devoy ( a Fenian of stature himself imprisoned between the years 1866 and 1871 and then smuggled to America where he continued the fight for separatism), wrote in a newspaper article in an Irish American paper in 1907. "The Fenian prisoners have frequently been told that they were not political prisoners. The political offence of which they had been convicted was called 'treason-felony', so they were treason-felony prisoners and ordinary convicts."<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> John O'Leary, p.126.

Maud obtained permission to visit eight of the men and was accompanied to Portland Prison by an English journalist. She was appalled at the condition of the men she was allowed to see and during the interview a strange thing happened. She heard herself promising the prisoners that they would all be freed and she even foretold the time of their release. "Something spoke through me," she wrote afterwards, "something stronger than myself, and they were released within the time and in the order that I had told them."<sup>20</sup>

Such episodes helped convince Maud that she was in some degree clairvoyant. Her son, Sean MacBride, later confirmed that she did have visions, especially when someone she loved was ill. At these times she would "see" the person in their surroundings and afterwards be able to describe in detail rooms that she had never seen. She was deeply interested in the interpretation of dreams and symbols and she and Yeats had begun experimenting with visits to "the astral plane"; they also attempted to transmit psychic messages to one another though not with much success.

---

<sup>20</sup> A Servant of the Queen, p.130.



She joined the Theosophical Society at Yeats's urging and he seems to have felt that Maud's mystical powers were greater than his own - "My own seership was, I thought, inadequate; it was to be Maud Gonne's work and mine."<sup>21</sup> Their joint participation in the mysteries of the occult was yet another strand in the web that held them together - "Politics were merely a means of meeting, but this was a link so perfect that (it) would restore at once, even (after) a quarrel, the sense of intimacy."<sup>22</sup>

At any rate the plight of the eight prisoners she had seen stirred Maud to even greater activity on behalf of all the treason-felony convicts and working through the Amnesty Association in England and Ireland, she began a campaign of publicising the conditions under which they were held. Using her new-found talent for public speaking she worked tirelessly. Her concern with political prisoners which started with this visit to Portland Prison towards the

---

<sup>21</sup> W.B.Yeats Memoirs, p.124

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.125.

end of 1889 was to continue for the rest of her life. She must have imparted it also to her son, Sean MacBride, who until recently has been Chairman of Amnesty International.

After this she returned to Ireland to continue with the Land League campaign in Donegal. But the symptoms of tuberculosis recurred, no doubt as a result of the harried life she had been leading for the past two years, and she began to haemorrhage. In addition, early in 1890 she was warned that there was a warrant for her arrest because of her land agitation activities and, fearful of the effects of possible imprisonment on her health, her friends smuggled her out of Ireland to France.

During this last period in Donegal (she did not return there for some twenty years) Millevoe had arrived unannounced and unexpectedly to see for himself, no doubt, what all the stories were about. Unfortunately he became ill in Donegal and Maud devoted some time to nursing him. If Millevoe thought to receive a lover's welcome

he was disappointed. "I was surprised and annoyed," Maud remembered, "I didn't like being followed even by a great friend, without being consulted."<sup>23</sup> She was also angry at his seeking to persuade her to leave Ireland and concentrate on public speaking in France. They quarreled and he left for France. At any rate the matter was taken out of Maud's hands by her illness and the arrest warrant. When she arrived at St. Raphael later in the year, she was joined by Millevoye, and they wintered in the sun together, reconciled.

When she had recovered Maud took an apartment in Paris and began to speak at the request of student and other organizations in France on the evictions and the treason-felony prisoners, the main theme of her speeches being English misrule and the separatist cause. She had also begun to write articles for the press at Millevoye's urging and found to her surprise that not only did she enjoy writing these pieces but that they were invariably accepted. Her style was clear and easy, though polemical, and the

---

<sup>23</sup> A Servant of the Queen, p.139.

conclusions she reached for her readers after exposition of the ills she had seen were arrived at directly and without analysis. These are the evils that the Irish are suffering, they are imposed by the English who have no right to do so, we are an oppressed and suffering people, we must act to remove the cause of our suffering, the English must go.

One must admit that Maud was obsessed with the idea that the English were the enemies of Ireland, and sometimes went to extreme lengths to emphasize her feelings. "Her strange and winning beauty together with her aloofness from all things unconcerned with the absorbing interest of her life, made her many enemies," Katharine Tynan remembered. "Personally I have never had any doubt that she saw only one thing, that she was absorbed by an enthusiasm so passionate and sincere that nothing else mattered to her."<sup>24</sup> She continued to expound these ideas in writing and speeches undeterred by the hostility they aroused in some quarters, and indeed, for the

---

<sup>24</sup> 25 Years Reminiscences, p.318.

most part, her endeavours were praised and warmly accepted by those who saw and heard her.

Sometime towards the end of 1890 Maud bore a son to Millevoye. (It has not been possible to obtain documentation that would fix the precise time of the birth). Maud kept her silence as to the more personal side of her life and she later claimed that most of her correspondence was lost in the destruction of her house during the Troubles of 1921. Whether her relationship with Millevoye brought happiness and fulfillment to her life and what her real feelings for him were are questions which are at present unanswerable. One can only speculate about these intimacies. She did confide in Yeats and something of this private side of her life can be gleaned from his Memoirs. Looking back twentyseven years later, Yeats wrote contemptuously of Maud's French milieu, referring to "French Boulangist adventurers and journalist arrivistes of whom she had seen too much..."<sup>25</sup>

In July of 1891 Maud returned to

---

<sup>25</sup> W.B.Yeats Memoirs, p.46.

Dublin and appeared to be in distress. Yeats visited her at her rooms in Nassau Street and she seemed to him to have become "gentle and indolent" through some sort of suffering. He left her to go to Ulster and while there received a letter from her which touched upon her present sadness and told about a dream of "a past life where the two of them had been brother and sister somewhere on the edge of the Arabian desert."<sup>26</sup> Ever one to respond to this sort of mystical appeal, Yeats returned to Dublin immediately and asked Maud to marry him. She rejected him but they spent the next ten days walking and talking. He was moved by a great sense of pity for her - their roles seemed to him to have changed and she to be in need of someone with strength and courage to protect her.

Maud returned to France and Yeats went off to Sligo where he received from Paris "...a letter of wild sorrow. She had adopted a little child, she told me, some three years ago, and now this child had died."<sup>27</sup> This was Maud's son

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p.46

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p.47.

and if Yeats is correct and if Maud was telling him the truth about the time of "adoption" the birth would have occurred in 1888, the year before they met. But it seems more likely that the boy was born after the winter which she and Millevoeye had just spent together and this would account for the distress described by Yeats. She had lost some of her old "hard resonance", he thought, and her face was thin and ill-looking. Even a woman as independent and free from convention as Maud was would surely have been distressed at the birth of an illegitimate child to someone in her very public position. Apart from any personal feelings, scandal in Ireland, where such matters provided titillating gossip, would hinder her work.

In October, 1891, after the death of her son, Maud once again arrived in Dublin, by coincidence on the same boat which brought Parnell's body to Ireland for burial. Indirectly, the death of the great parliamentarian following his fall from power as a result of his involvement in the divorce suit brought against his mistress,

Kitty O'Shea, by her husband, hastened the revival of Irish arts. So much bitterness and hatred surfaced during the Parnell crisis that now people reacted by turning against the ongoing political battles. The idea of a cultural revival which would bolster Nationalism was appealing. The germ of a plan for a new kind of theatrical experience was beginning to bloom and Yeats was expressing himself constantly on the need for a new national literature.

He had finished his play, The Countess Cathleen, which was inspired by Maud and her work among the evicted and he asked her to play the lead. She refused, fearing it would distract her from her work for the Land League, but she was happy that Yeats should have chosen this theme and sought thereafter to encourage him in the writing of what she considered ammunition for the cause.

The relationship between art and politics was to be a matter of serious tension between Maud and Yeats. She felt that by drawing Yeats into the lives of the Irish people and



giving him this contact, she was, so to speak, stabilizing him and providing material for his writing whose incidental benefit would be for Nationalism. He, on the other hand, resisted what he saw as a debasement of his poetic role. Later Maud was to feel some resentment towards Lady Gregory for encouraging Yeats and others to "draw away from too vehement expression of Irish independence. ...Lady Gregory and I were gracious to each other but never friends and in the later struggle in the theatre group - Art for Art's sake or Art for Propaganda - we were on different sides."<sup>28</sup>

Yeats now sought to involve Maud in the work of the Irish Literary Society founded earlier that year with Rolleston and Ernest Rhys in London. "Maud Gonne's share had been clear to me from the first. She was to found branches (of the I.L.S.) throughout Ireland. She had her beauty and her eloquence and enough money to travel, and who could place a limit on her influence in those little country towns where life is so dull," he thought.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> A Servant of the Queen, p.332.

<sup>29</sup> W.B.Yeats Memoirs, p.58.

But Maud had other ideas. Although she did travel around Ireland attempting to set up libraries in the small country towns ( and in fact started three of the seven eventually established), she was soon too involved with her lectures and renewed work for the evicted and the treason-felony prisoners to have the time for literary endeavour. Being a person of strong will and directness, she was of the opinion that action was needed and not more words. The Parliamentary party, composed of the Irish members of the House of Commons, had achieved little and she grew increasingly impatient with the Literary societies which were concerned with rousing people to an awareness of their history through reading about the legendary Irish heroes. "Being young and hasty," she wrote later, "I secretly felt action and not books was needed; I did not then realize how the written word may lead to action and I drifted off to speak at other meetings held on wild hillsides, where resistance to evictions was being organised."<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile Maud and Yeats carried on their experiments in the psychic world. Maud's interest

---

<sup>30</sup> Maud Gonne, Yeats and Ireland, in Scattering Branches, p.19.

in psychical research, however, was not entirely academic; she was hopeful that these studies might prove to be a source for "gaining power to use for the great objective of my life."<sup>31</sup> This single-mindedness which sought to turn everything to political use was no doubt effective in that it focussed all her energies on the cause to which she had devoted her life, but it also severely limited her horizons and left her open to accusations of fanaticism and obsession which were often levelled against her.

Yeats left the Theosophist group and was initiated into MacGregor Mather's Order of the Golden Dawn, and he now persuaded Maud to seek initiation as well. She became a member in November, 1891, but her association with the Order was shortlived. She found herself "oppressed by the drab appearance and mediocrity of my fellow-mystics."<sup>32</sup> In addition she discovered that some of MacGregor Mather's ritual made use

---

31 A Servant of the Queen; p.256.

32 Ibid, p.257.

of Masonic emblems. Since Freemasonry was considered a British institution in Ireland, and because Mather's use of Masonic symbolism convinced her of a connection between the two, she resigned from the order, much to Yeats's disappointment.

Her withdrawal from physical participation in the rites of occult societies in no way affected her cultivation of what she considered her psychic powers. Apart from her dreams and visions and the visitations caused by her "powers," which she describes at some length in her book, she believed strongly, as did Yeats, in the "powerfully alive and invisibly peopled" land of Ireland. They shared the dream for a Castle of Heroes which was to be established on an island in Lough Key. To this castle the finest young men and women in Ireland would come for spiritual instruction that would unite them more closely with the magical land. Only those whose lives were dedicated to Ireland would penetrate the castle.

The next two years were busy ones

for Maud and her time was divided between London, Dublin and Paris. Many hours were spent with Yeats not only discussing their dreams for the Castle of Heroes but drawing him more and more into the sphere of her own activities. Her lectures and writing in France seemed to be producing a great deal of sympathy for the Nationalist cause, and Nationalist circles in Dublin were now more convinced of her seriousness.

In November, 1894, Maud left Southampton on the first of three lecture tours to America, this one under the auspices of the Clann-Gael, the American society of expatriate Irishmen. The tour was to raise money for the Amnesty Association to help in their efforts on behalf of the treason-felony prisoners. She travelled on the same ship as the Arctic explorer, Nansen, and the two became friendly. They were both going to America to lecture - four lectures a week, the same schedule for both of them - but Nansen broke his contract after two weeks telling Maud that he had "not

been able to stick it' the banquets and the receptions were worse than the lectures." Maud, however, did "stick it": "the tour, lectures, receptions, handshakings, banquets and all for a month; but I put a tariff on the banquets of a hundred dollars for prisoners, for every banquet I attended. In a month I had 1000 pounds for the Amnesty Association and went home tired but content."<sup>33</sup>

In 1895 Maud bore Millevoye another child, a daughter whom she name Iseult. This child was described to those who knew of her existence as an adopted niece, and was cared for in Maud's French residence which was managed by an elderly French widow in Maud's absences. Four years after the birth of Iseult Maud finally broke with Millevoye for two reasons. It became clear that he had abandoned their pact made in the first days together and joined the Clemenceau party which was pro-English. And, too, he had become involved with another woman, an opera singer.

---

<sup>33</sup> A Servant of the Queen, p.190.

In February of 1899 Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory from Paris - "I have had a rather depressing time here. During the last months, and most of all while I have been here, she has told the story of her life," how she had been deeply in love with Millevoye and had become his mistress many years ago. "She was often away from him, for sexual love soon began to repel her, but was for all that very much in love." The boy was born - "she thought that sexual love was only justified by children"<sup>34</sup> - and if he hadn't died she would have broken with Millevoye. Seeking to replace the lost child she conceived Iseult but, since her birth, had lived apart from her lover although she still felt a duty to him. Now it was all finished and she turned to the faithful Yeats as confidant but refused another offer of marriage from him.

In March, 1894, Yeats's play, The Land of Heart's Desire, had its first production in London. "Into this fairy play Yeats put the vague desire for an impossible life which he

---

<sup>34</sup> W.B. Yeats Memoirs, p.133.

attributed to Maud Gonne."<sup>35</sup>

It was in August of 1896 while visiting Edward Martyn at his home, Tulyra, in Galway, that Yeats met Lady Augusta Gregory and first visited her home, Coole. The story of his relationship with Lady Gregory, his affection for her house and increasing reliance on its soothing atmosphere is well documented. Augusta Gregory was the patroness that Yeats needed so badly now. "She had called on me in Dublin - a queer little old lady," Maud described her, "rather like Queen Victoria." <sup>36</sup>

Lady Gregory recognized Yeats's stature at once, as had John O'Leary, and proceeded to provide him with the healthy and stable surroundings that he came to need more and more for his creative work. Coole fed his desire for the ambience of those country houses seen in his youth, "set amid natural beauty and the activities of the servants and labourers who seemed themselves natural, as bird and tree are natural."<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Hone, W.B. Yeats 1865-1939, (London, 1965), p.107.

<sup>36</sup> A Servant of the Queen, p.332.

<sup>37</sup> W.B. Yeats Memoirs, p.102.



She was one of those small, robust capable women, not generously endowed with good looks or charm, who create an antipathy that seldom accrues to women like Maud Gonne despite the similarity of their independent natures. "The inevitable and quietly dominating Lady Gregory," Oliver St. John Gogarty called her.<sup>38</sup> She "demanded either servility or respectability from all her acquaintances. Neither (James) Joyce nor I had pliant knees so we kept each other company."<sup>39</sup> "She seemed to have recognized her need in Yeats at once," wrote George Moore, "foreseeing that he would help her out of conventions and prejudices, and give her wings to soar in the free air of ideas and instincts."<sup>40</sup> It is true that Yeats opened new doors for Lady Gregory, but her gifts to him were manifold.

Maud worried increasingly that Lady Gregory and her Ascendancy milieu would remove Yeats from the world of ordinary people and that

---

<sup>38</sup> Oliver St. John Gogarty, W.B. Yeats: A Memoir, (Dublin, 1963), p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> George Moore, Vale, (New York, 1923), p. 148.

he would be seduced by the comfort and "ceremony" \* of aristocratic life away from what she believed to be his true work for Ireland. Sean MacBride recalled how years later when Yeats used to visit them in Normandy in the time of Maud's exile from Ireland, the whole household used to tease him because of his tendency to like the aristocracy too much and because of his attraction to the aristocratic way of life. "She judged people by whether they were for or against the cause," he said about his mother, "and so she was cool to Lady Gregory who, she felt, was a bad influence on Yeats because of her Ascendancy outlook."<sup>41</sup>

During the period of the next three years, 1897-1903, however, Yeats was still more involved in public and non-literary activities than he (or probably Lady Gregory) would have liked. "We had already begun a work together

---

\* "Ceremony" is Yeats's own word "for what he values most in an aristocratic organization of society, as he envisaged it on the model of his own relationship with Lady Gregory." Donald Davie, Michael Robartes and the Dancers, in Donoghue & Mulryne, An Honoured Guest, p.83.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Sean MacBride, Dublin, 1972.

that for me was to be most wasteful," he recorded.<sup>42</sup> The anniversary of the 1798 Rising under the leadership of Wolfe Tone was at hand and Maud was one of the members of the Committee to organize its celebration. She drew Yeats into this work, which was being carried out under the Chairmanship of O'Leary, and involved him in the many parades and meetings it produced, culminating in the Dame Street incident referred to by George Moore - "A few years before Miss Gonne had proclaimed '98 to a shattering accompaniment of glass in Dame St."<sup>43</sup> (Some of the parades were broken up by the police and both Yeats and Maud were witness to scenes of violence).

Although the memories of this time were painful ones for Yeats because he felt he was being distracted from his own, more important creative work, the experience he gained now was to be invaluable later on when he embarked on his lecture tour to America in 1903, and when certain

---

42 W.B.Yeats Memoirs, p.108

43 George Moore, Ave, (London,1911), p.102.

of the Abbey Theatre productions (notably of Synge's Playboy) required him to quell angry crowds. He became adept at controlling meetings and quite masterly in his public addresses.

The Wolfe Tone Centenary Committee had two other members who became great friends and supporters of Maud. Arthur Griffith was born in Dublin in 1871 and trained as a printer. He left the country to find work and returned to edit a new weekly paper which made its first appearance in March 1899, the United Irishman, of which John O'Leary and Maud along with three others were directors. This newspaper was to make a great impact on the advocates of separatism, an impact largely due to the nature and talent of its editor.

Griffith was an aggressive little man with a good opinion of himself. He had a few close friends but was on the whole avoided and disliked by many who feared his sharp tongue and quick temper. He used his paper with savage wit to advance the separatist cause and was often

in trouble with the authorities for his denunciations of Dublin dignitaries and others who, he felt, were too respectful to the British. He was very active in the founding of Sinn Fein, which translated means "Ourselves," and from the ranks of which came many of the Irish Volunteers who fought in the Easter Rising.

The other member of the Committee was James Connolly, the Irish labour leader who was to be executed for his part in the Rising. Three years older than Griffith, Connolly was born in Edinburgh of Irish parents who had emigrated to find work. His young life was poverty-stricken and until he was asked to go to Dublin as paid organizer (at one pound a week) for the Dublin Socialist Society, he worked as a carter in Edinburgh. An ardent socialist and widely read in economics, he worked extremely hard to organize the labouring proletariat in Irish cities along with the docker, Jim Larkin. His strength and magnetism, as well as Larkin's, played a large part in the Dublin strike of 1913

which, although unsuccessful in achieving its immediate aims, did show the workers the strength of unity and the potential power of the strike weapon.

Maud made another lecture tour of the States in 1897 to raise money for a monument to Wolfe Tone which was to be erected as part of the '98 Centenary celebrations. On her return to Ireland she was immediately absorbed in the preparations of the Committee, and also in renewed work for the peasantry. The crops had failed again and famine was widespread.

She worked together with Connolly and Griffith composing leaflets (see appendix) in which they encouraged the people of the stricken countryside to steal the sheep from the fields, explaining that it was no sin to steal if their children were dying of hunger. Maud once again bought food for the starving and helped organize plans for rebuilding the razed houses of eviction victims. In later years during one of her many lectures describing

the events she had witnessed at this time she is quoted as having said, "During the Irish famine of 1897, I visited several of the cabins of the poor, and I was the eye-witness of many a heart-rending sight, and knowing only too well, as I did, how utterly useless any appeals to the justice of England would be, it occurred to me, as I looked upon those poor starving creatures, that I who did not know what hunger was, I who had never suffered as they suffered, might become, as it were, the expression of their thought and of their will. I selected the district of Erris for my experiment, as it was far from any railway and, consequently, could not be placed in a state of defence by the English at a moment's notice..."<sup>44</sup>

This was the famous episode that took place at Belmullet in North Mayo. She arrived there to find the people listless, weary and in the throes of famine. Relief work, which paid pitifully, was not being properly portioned out and the Board of Commissioners who handled these affairs was unresponsive to the misery of

---

<sup>44</sup> United Irishman, February 22nd, 1902.

the peasantry. Maud managed to gather a crowd of 10,000 people and with the sound of their feet shuffling in the dust outside, went in to face the Board with a list of demands (which included a raise in the amount for relief and employment of women on relief) which were dismissed at first as ridiculous. However, as she was quick to point out, the sound of all the people outside, the fact that reinforcements were far away and the fact that she would see to it that the people fought for their lives if necessary soon changed the Commissioners' minds and the demands were granted. All of them.

Her intervention at Belmullet was repeated again and again in other places and was aimed at getting the people to act for themselves and to make them realise that what had been achieved and what could be achieved depended on their own unity and strength of purpose.

It is interesting to note in passing that in many of these encounters Maud found devoted allies in the local Catholic



priests. While their Bishops and Archbishops fulminated against the Nationalists, the men at the parish level, faced with the terrible conditions of the people, did all they could to help.

CHAPTER II

The Boer War broke out in 1899 and the Nationalists were of course entirely on the side of the Boers. Recruiting was going on in Ireland for the English army and Maud took up the anti-recruiting campaign with gusto. In late January of 1899 she once again arrived in New York "to deliver a series of addresses on the present war" <sup>45</sup> and also to raise money for the United Irishman which Griffith had started with ten pounds. His paper reprinted an account of Maud at work from the Chicago Chronicle of March 4th, 1900 - "A woman's voice, a woman's intensity of spirit roused the great audience ... The flashing eyes, the earnest tones, the imperious bearing of the tall slender figure swayed the throng... No man ever lashed the English lion nor woman ever scorned

---

<sup>1</sup> The United Irishman, January 13th, 1900.

an enemy more than did the 'Irish Joan of Arc'." <sup>2</sup>

The rest of the year was spent lecturing and writing for the anti-recruiting campaign. Yeats writing to his sister, Lily, in November, 1899, says - "Ireland seems to be really excited and I am not sure that Maud Gonne may not be able to seriously check enlisting. She is working with extraordinary energy." <sup>3</sup> Maud continued to travel between Dublin, London and Paris and despite the hectic nature of her schedule still found time to spend many hours with Yeats discussing the theatre and their mutual interest in the occult as well as their joint efforts for the anti-enlistment crusade.

On April 7th, 1900, the United Irishman reprinted an article by Maud recently published in her own small French newsheet, L'Irlande Libre, entitled The Famine Queen. (See appendix). 1900 was Queen Victoria's Jubilee year and she was to make a visit to Dublin, the news of which was greeted with

---

<sup>2</sup> United Irishman, St. Patrick's Day Supplement, 1900.

<sup>3</sup> The Letters of W.B. Yeats (1887-1939), ed. Allan Wade, (London, 1954), p. 327.

outrage by the Nationalists. The Famine Queen was part of Maud's response to this visit and its publication caused the proscription of this issue of the paper, much to her delight. Shortly after this there appeared an article in a Unionist paper called The Dublin Figaro accusing Maud (falsely) of accepting a British government pension, awarded so it was stated because of her father's service in the English army. She won a libel suit against the paper and the author of the article.

On Easter Sunday, 1900, Maud and a group of women friends held the first meeting of a new revolutionary society which they called Inghinidhe na hEireann, Daughters of Erin. This group was for the women, for so long excluded from all the political societies in Ireland. Its aims were to encourage young women to an awareness of their Irish nationhood through literature, music, drama and painting, and to foster an understanding of the history and political future of Ireland. Teachers were brought in to lecture the women; among them the two

brothers Fay who were to be closely connected with the direction and management of the Abbey Theatre for many years. From Inghinidhe as a result of the work of these two men, came the great actresses of the Abbey in its early heyday.

Inghinidhe immediately joined in the work of anti-recruiting and began to organize the immensely successful Patriotic Treat, another of Maud's responses to the visit of "Old Vic" (as she always referred to the Queen) in April. A party for Queen Victoria had been arranged in Phoenix Park which some 15,000 schoolchildren were to attend. Maud and Inghinidhe started work on a counter-party for the children of "patriotic Irishmen." This party is remembered to this day by some of its participants who still live in Dublin. It was enormously successful and anywhere from ten to twenty thousand of Dublin's children took part. "It was the biggest thing yet organized by the Nationalists," says Elizabeth Coxhead, "and it proved to them that they could organize." <sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Daughters of Erin, p.47.

On November 10th, 1900, John MacBride, who led the Irish Brigade which was fighting in the Boer War, arrived in Paris. A County Antrim man, MacBride was something of a hero to the Nationalists for his exploits in South Africa. Inghinidhe had made an Irish flag for the Brigade which had been sent to the Transvaal and now Maud, who was in Dublin at the time, hurried over to meet him with her old friend and compatriot in the cause, Arthur Griffith, and a delegation befitting an Irish hero home from the wars.

MacBride "was a wiry, soldierly-looking man, " she wrote, " with red hair and skin burnt brick-red by the South African sun."<sup>5</sup> The Brigade had been disbanded and MacBride had come back "hoping there would be something doing in Ireland."<sup>6</sup> He was a simple man of no great intellect but of undoubted courage, and his stories of the successes of his Brigade and the Boers in outwitting the English army fell on receptive ears.

---

<sup>5</sup> A Servant of the Queen, p.319.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.305.

It was just a year since Maud had made the final break with Millevoye and she was attracted by this authentic hero and his tales of the exploits of the Irish Brigade. Griffith urged MacBride to go to America to lecture and MacBride persuaded Maud to go with him. The idea was to encourage the Clan-na-Gael to take the opportunity of England's commitment to the Boer War to help raise revolution in Ireland. Maud was going to raise money for the United Irishman ever in need of funds. They arrived in New York at the beginning of March, 1901, and the United Irishman reprinted reports from the American papers on their progress. MacBride was described by the American press as "a very modest and unassuming man. He is rather small in stature but possesses nervous energy, keen intellect and all the characteristic physical vigour of the race." <sup>7</sup> Maud left the tour earlier than she was expected to and returned to Europe.

Meanwhile Yeats, managing to overcome the distractions that his love for Maud had involved him in, was deep at work in the theatre. The first

---

<sup>7</sup> United Irishman, March 16th, 1901.

production of The Countess Cathleen, the play written for Maud in 1891, opened in Dublin on May 8th, 1899, under the auspices of the newly-formed Irish Literary Theatre. Rehearsals for this production were not without difficulties, one of the problems being Yeats's unfamiliarity with the workings of the professional theatre. By 1902 he was far more experienced and in this year the Irish Literary Theatre became the Irish National Theatre with Yeats as President and AE, Douglas Hyde and Maud as Vice-Presidents. Two years later they took possession of the Abbey Theatre, generously funded by the English Miss Horniman, and the rest is history.

On April 2nd, 1902, Yeats's Cathleen ni Houlihan opened at St. Teresa's Hall, Dublin. Maud, who had joined a theatrical company for a brief time during the months after her father's death when she lived with her Uncle, had agreed to play the old woman. She made an extraordinary impression and not only because she brought such a magnetic presence to the part. W.G. Fay, later of the Abbey



Theatre, said, "She had not Miss Farr's technical skill nor her experience of playing before an audience, but she had a natural gift for reading poetry, and combined a fine voice with a magnetic personality. To Yeats's verse she gave a vitality that has not been equalled since."<sup>8</sup> A member of the audience recorded this impression - " She looked like a very elderly goddess and came through the door of the cottage bent nearly double, the stage being so small and the door of the set so low. Her great height made the other actors look like pigmies."<sup>9</sup>

That Yeats had learned from his experience with his earlier play is borne out by Maud's acknowledgement of his part in the success of this production. "...He was a marvellous teacher, and if the first performance of Cathleen ni Houlihan has been unequalled since, it is because Willie himself worked at those rehearsals..."<sup>10</sup> But Maud's playing of the old woman seems to have been the key to the success

---

<sup>8</sup> W.G.Fay, The Poet and the Actor in Scattering Branches, p,125.

<sup>9</sup> Beatrice Lady Glenavy, Today We Will Only Gossip, (London,1964), pp 27-28

<sup>10</sup> Maud Gonne in Scattering Branches, p.28.

of this production. Edward Martyn summed up her contribution in a letter to the United Irishman on April 19th, 1902 - "Miss Maud Gonne showed a mastery over the difficulties of the art to which none of the other performers could lay claim. She was intense; she was poetical; and by her sheer talent saved the disaster which otherwise must have come to destroy the high poetic significance of the play by reason of the low comedy-manner adopted by another actor."

The success of this play renewed Maud's belief in Yeats's importance as a propagandist for Nationalism and increased her feelings of anger against Miss Horniman and Lady Gregory who, she felt, were influencing him too strongly towards the "Art for Art's Sake" position. Eventually, to Yeats's distress, the Abbey Theatre gave way to financial considerations and began to compromise his own high ideals by choosing plays that it was felt would attract a large paying audience. "It (the Irish public) becomes jealous ... when it recognizes...the free mind, the mind that plays with life and expresses great things lightly. It distrusts

all that is not plainly organized and determined,  
all that is not plainly logical work." 11

Late in 1902 Maud became a Roman Catholic. While at Royat in 1886 she had met a French priest, the Abbe Dissard, who had made a great impression on her. This was the priest who would receive her into the Church and who would stand by her in her later troubles. Maud attributes her conversion partly to the fact that her belief in the spirit world had conditioned her to accept the Church "as the repository of spiritual knowledge and sometimes I longed for its protection and guidance." Her psychic powers sometimes frightened her and she believed that in the shelter of the Church she need not fear them. She also felt strongly that a cause such as the one she had chosen to support should have more than just a temporal base - "I cannot conceive a material movement which has not a spiritual basis." 12

The fact that the Nationalist movement was largely Catholic and that by joining the Church she was taking the final step in abandoning her own class and birth may also have been a consideration.

---

11 W.B.Yeats Memoirs, p.169.

12 A Servant of the Queen, p.267.

Her friends among the peasantry had been praying long for such a conversion but the attitude of her peers may perhaps have been summed up best by Connor Cruise O'Brien - "I remember three good Republican ladies (of whom Maud Gonne was one). I thought of them as Protestants, and so did everybody else, though I believe that two of them were converts to Catholicism. Such conversions, however, were not taken very seriously, socially speaking. Catholics, if they were Republicans, took such conversions simply as further establishing what very decent friendly Protestants these people were. Non-Republicans, especially Protestants, took the conversions as a further and superfluous proof that the people concerned were cracked." <sup>13</sup>

Early in 1903 Maud suddenly announced that she was going to marry John MacBride. The news came as an utter shock to Yeats who, as one of the oldest of her confidants, might have expected to have been told in advance. Her close friends begged her not to do it. She was thirty eight years old and for twenty years had been living

---

<sup>13</sup> Connor Cruise O'Brien, States of Ireland, (New York, 1972), p.114.

as an independent career woman with a schedule so packed with commitments that she was hardly ever very long in one place. She was strong-willed and used to making her own decisions and her total involvement in public life - travelling, lecturing, writing, organizing - would seem to have precluded the kind of wifely devotion that a man like MacBride would have expected. Iseult was eight years old and the household in France was a firmly established one, geared to Maud's absences and operating around her timetable.

The two were absolutely unsuited to each other. It is possible that the remonstrances of their friends and families against the union only increased Maud's determination. Iseult "had cried when I told her I was getting married to MacBride and said she hated MacBride." <sup>14</sup> The groom's mother had written begging him not to do it - "I have seen Maud Gonne. She is very beautiful...but she will not make you happy." <sup>15</sup> His brother went even further and very sensibly exposed the root of the problem - " Maud Gonne

---

<sup>14</sup> A Servant of the Queen, p.317.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p.318.

is older than you. She is accustomed to money and you have none; she is used to going her own way and listens to no-one. These are not good qualities for a wife." 16

Even Tommy, Maud's father, appeared to her in a dream warning her not to do it. But her independence - in this case one might call it self-willed, headlong indulgence - prevailed. "Consumed" by the revolution, as Yeats remarked, even in its most superficial aspects, she determined to marry. As Arthur Griffith had warned her, MacBride was "full of conventions" and once she became his wife she would have been expected to submerge herself in that role as a good Irish wife would have done.

They were married on February 21st, 1903, at the Church of St. Honore d'Eylan, in Paris. The columns of the United Irishman for that month give glowing accounts of what appears to have been a "patriotic wedding." Fiery speeches were made, the marriage was celebrated

---

16 A Servant of the Queen, p.318.

by the Irish Brigade chaplain, flags of the Brigade and one specially made by Inghinidhe were carried, and toasts were proposed to the independence of Ireland. The celebrant described the bride as " one of those women who rise scarce once in a century to sacrifice themselves for their country..." 17

They honeymooned for a few weeks in Spain and Normandy and on their return Maud plunged again into her old life. In May she was back in Ireland continuing as before with the work there, attending meetings, writing and lecturing, active on the Board of the Irish National Theatre and in the middle of the year again involved in protest meetings, this time against the proposed visit of the new monarch of England, Edward VII. In addition she found the time to write a one-act play called Dawn 18 which was published in the October 29th, 1904, issue of the United Irishman, though there is no record that it was ever produced. (Set in a "ruined, roofless cottage by the roadside on

---

17 United Irishman, February 28th, 1903.

18 Lost Plays of the Irish Renaissance, ed. Robert Hogan and James Kilroy, (Dublin, 1970).

the edge of a bog," this very brief play encapsulates Maud's feelings for the evicted and concerns a small family who are starving and a Stranger who offers rescue, at a price).

The marriage was a disaster. Late in 1903 Yeats wrote Lady Gregory " I have just heard a very painful rumour - Major MacBride is said to be drinking. It is the last touch of tragedy if it is true." <sup>19</sup>

In 1904 Maud's son, Sean, was born and she sought a dissolution of the marriage. Her suit was supported by the Abbe Dissard who had received her into the Church. The reasons for the dissolution are not known, but the result was that Maud could not return to Ireland where her husband was now living for fear of losing her son to him. She remained in France, in her Normandy house at Calvados, for thirteen years until the execution of MacBride for his part in the 1916 Rising permitted her return.

Yeats was a frequent visitor during these years and became very fond of Iseult, so much

---

<sup>19</sup> W.B.Yeats Letters , p.414.



so that he asked her to marry him in 1917. Iseult's health at this time seemed to have been a matter of much concern and Yeats writes of her melancholia and unhappiness. He assumed guardianship of her, writing to Lady Gregory in September 1917, " ...I Will ask (George Hyde-Lees) to marry me. I shall however make it clear that I will still be friend and guardian to Iseult." <sup>20</sup>

The Normandy household saw more of Maud in these years, her travel being curtailed by the fact that she could not go to Ireland and in 1914 by the start of the First World War. Sean was growing up and Yeats described him as "very clever and to my amusement has begun to criticise his mother's politics. He has a confident, analytical mind..." <sup>21</sup> In the early part of the war Maud busied herself nursing the French wounded but the Rising in Dublin on Easter Monday, 1916, changed everything. Sixteen of the leaders of the Rebellion, including John MacBride, were executed by the British. Maud's reaction to the Rebellion as reported by Yeats was that

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, pp.632-633

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.630.

" 'tragic dignity has returned to Ireland'. She had been told by two members of the Irish party that ' Home Rule was destroyed!' She thinks now that the sacrifice has made it safe." 22

The death of MacBride also meant that Maud could now return to Ireland and she made immediate plans for herself and her family to do so. Yeats helped to get passports for them to go to England but on arriving there in September, 1917, they were served with a notice under the Defence of the Realm Act forbidding their return to Ireland. They stayed in England for a time and eventually managed to get to Ireland by stealth.

These were terrible years for Ireland. The day by day executions of the sixteen men who were considered to have led the Rising had the effect of turning the generally ambivalent, and even hostile, attitude of many Irishmen towards the rebels to sympathy. Sinn Fein was widely credited with having organized the Rebellion, though in fact the main conspirators had been members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

---

22 Ibid, p.613.

Sinn Fein was reorganized in 1917 and Eamon de Valera, just released from imprisonment for his part in the Rising, became its leader. A policy of seeking international recognition of an independent Irish Republic was enunciated but it was not clear how this was to be achieved.

In May 1918, the new Viceroy, Lord French, issued a proclamation proscribing Sinn Fein for allegedly being in communication with the Germans. Seventy three of the leading Sinn Fein activists were arrested, among them Maud Gonne, who was taken to Holloway Prison for Women in London. Possibly due to Yeats's intervention with the Viceroy's Chief Secretary Maud was released on the grounds of ill health and returned to Dublin.

The General Election held in December of this year was a triumph for Sinn Fein and, by inference, Republicanism. Over seventy percent of the Irish seats were won by Sinn Fein candidates. In January, 1919, Sinn Fein members still at liberty constituted

Dail Eireann, the Irish parliament, and in their first session the Irish Republic, proclaimed at the Rising, was re-proclaimed.

The savagery of the last two years of British rule in Ireland, the proscription of the Dail, the campaign of terrorism devised by Michael Collins resulting in the unleashing by England of the mercenary Black and Tans and the intensification of the war between them and the Irish Volunteers now known as the Irish Republican Army, are matters of record. On December 6th, 1921, the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed for Ireland by five men, among them Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins. It established the Irish Free State as a Dominion in the British Empire, giving it the same status as Canada, and also established Partition. The Treaty provoked a civil war between the extreme anti-Treaty Republicans led by de Valera and the more moderate Free-Staters who included the signatories of the Treaty, Griffith and Collins, which raged for the next two years until the end of May, 1923, when de Valera declared a ceasefire.

Maud had bought a house at 73 Stephens Green in Dublin in 1917, and was once again active helping the families of prisoners and protesting publicly against political detentions. In 1922 she was a member of the Irish White Cross, founded by herself and others in 1920 for War Relief in Ireland, President of the Dublin Relief Committee and Secretary of the Prisoners Defence League. She helped organize aid for refugees fleeing from "pogroms" in the North and argued hotly over this with her old friend, Griffith, and Michael Collins who thought that these refugees should not be encouraged to come to the South as it would damage the prospects of an eventual plebiscite on Partition. "Both Collins and Griffith believed in the promise they had been given of a plebiscite," she wrote later in a magazine article. "I doubt if they would have signed the Treaty but for that promise. They both relied on that plebiscite to stop Partition." 23

The Prisoners Defence League was organized to raise money for food and clothing for prisoners and their dependants, and, by a

---

23 The Capuchin Annual, 1943, Dublin, pp.320-322.

constant series of vigils outside prisons and parades through the streets of Dublin, to publicize the conditions of prisoners and to keep the people aware of what was going on inside the walls. It was a thorn in the flesh of the Government, which was a Free State Government by now, and a source of much confrontation with the police. An eye-witness of some of these demonstrations has recorded this description of Maud in the thick of things - " Madame MacBride's quality shows most clearly in her conflicts with 'authority'. It is inspiring to see her walk through a police barrier while inspectors are anxiously assuring her that it is quite impossible to get through that way. Now she has won the right to disregard cordons, to penetrate police courts and prisons. Once the police tried to prevent her speaking at a protest meeting outside Mountjoy Prison by urging the horses of the lorry on. As a result, the moving lorry and speaker gathered enormous crowds at every step. Finally in despair, the police took the horses away, and after having helped to gather the audience, left her with it..." 24

---

24 R.M.Fox, Rebel Irishwomen, (Dublin, 1935), p.18.



1. Maud Gonne in old age, from a photograph by Horvath.

She was fifty eight years old now but the pitch of her activity can be judged by the fact that in January, 1923, she was jailed briefly by the Cosgrave Government (Cosgrave had succeeded Griffith who died in 1922) for her activities with the Prisoners Defence League. Her son, who was nineteen at this time, remembers this, her second imprisonment, with dismay because of worries about her health. \*

At the beginning of January, Yeats had been appointed to the Senate of the Free State Government and he and Maud had quarreled seriously as a result of his acceptance of a position in a government "which voted Flogging Acts against young Republican soldiers still seeking to free Ireland from the contamination of the British Empire..."<sup>25</sup> Despite this quarrel, which prevented their meeting again for several years, Yeats set about helping the imprisoned

---

\* Sean MacBride remembered that Maud had been in disagreement with him during this period. She was prepared to accept the 1921 Treaty as being more than the Nationalists had hoped for. Sean had espoused the Republican side and, he said, she came around to his way of thinking.

<sup>25</sup> Scattering Branches, pp.24-25.



Maud although he felt bitter about her attitude. "The day before her arrest she wrote to say that if I did not denounce the Government she would renounce my society forever. I am afraid my help in the matter of blankets, instead of her release, (where I could do nothing) will not make her less resentful," he wrote to Olivia Shakespear on January 5th, 1923. "She had to choose... between broomstick and distaff and she has chosen broomstick - I mean the witches' hats..." 26

She was released from Kilmainham Prison and returned undeterred to her relief activities. Her house in Stephens Green was burnt down during a battle between Free Staters and their opponents and with her good friend, Mrs. Despard (sister of the Viceroy, Lord French), she now bought Roebuck House at Clonskeagh on the outskirts of Dublin where her son has lived ever since.

With the end of the Civil War she

---

26 W.B. Yeats Letters, p. 697.

seems to have curtailed her public life somewhat and retired to Roebuck House which was then surrounded by country fields. Later, during the Depression, she and Mrs. Despard organized some of the local girls and set up a jam making concern at Roebuck House, which was so successful, according to Maire Comerford, that it was eventually bought out by a Dublin factory to kill the competition.

In 1938 the first part of Maud's autobiography titled A Servant of the Queen was published. The breach with Yeats had healed and in this year she saw him for the last time when she visited him at his house, Riversdale, outside Dublin. "...I saw Willie at Riversdale just before he left Ireland for the last time," she wrote, "as we said goodbye, he, sitting in his armchair from which he could rise only with great effort, said 'Maud, we should have gone on with our Castle of Heroes'..." 27

Out of the anguish of that "most desperately unsuccessful and yet poetically

---

27 Scattering Branches, p.24.

fruitful of courtships"<sup>28</sup> which endured for more than a quarter of a century came a series of poems of great beauty. As he had promised her

The people of coming days will know  
About the casting out of my net,  
And how you have leaped times out of mind  
Over the little silver cords,

(C.P. p.64)

and today it is as the inspiration for much of Yeats's love poetry that she is remembered. "You make beautiful poetry out of what you call your unhappiness..." she had told him. "Poets should never marry. The world should thank me for not marrying you." <sup>29</sup> Despite the fact that time and again she rejected his offers of marriage, his devotion remained constant for some twenty eight years, and it says much for the warmth and delicacy of her nature that she was able not only to inspire such a passion but to retain his friendship for so long.

In 1947 she had the satisfaction of seeing her son, Sean, by this time an eminent Senior Counsel at the Irish Bar with a reputation for successfully defending IRA men who had run afoul of the Government, form a new party, Clan

---

<sup>29</sup> Daughters of Erin, p.44.

<sup>28</sup> Harold Bloom, Yeats, (New York, 1970), p.56.

na Poblachta. This party won ten seats in the General Election of 1948, enough to give them two places in the Cabinet. One of these went to MacBride who became the Minister for External Affairs in the Coalition government led by John Costello. The Republican MacBride shepherded the repeal of the External Affairs Act through the Dail resulting in the formal inauguration of the Republic of Ireland on Easter Monday, 1949, thirty three years after the Rising.

The last years of Maud's life were spent writing and receiving the many people who came to Roebuck House to see her. An announcement in the Irish Bookman of August 1946 promised publication of a second volume of "reminiscences" on which she was working at the time, as well as an "important long essay on Prison Reform, a subject to which Madame MacBride has given a life's keen interest."<sup>30</sup> The second book of memoirs was never published and Maud died on April 27th, 1953, at the age of eighty eight.

---

<sup>30</sup> Irish Bookman, Vol.1, August 1946, pp.17-19.

CHAPTER III

"She had to choose between the broomstick and the distaff," said Yeats. Maud's lifelong concern with revolutionary politics catapulted her into a hectic and male-dominated world. Organizing, agitating, participating in the public manifestations of Nationalism - these were activities that she undoubtedly enjoyed but that would have tended to emphasize the less feminine aspects of a character engaged in what the Victorian era would have considered the male prerogative. That the choice, as Yeats put it, was between the broomstick and the distaff only makes clearer the difficulties which confronted women who wished to contribute to public life and had the capacity to do so. They ran the risk (and even today this feeling still exists) of being considered untrue to the

rather rigidly defined roles that femininity prescribed for them and, because of the nature of their chosen areas of activity, were criticised for attributes that when exercised by males were accepted without comment.

A case in point might be the repeated references to Maud as someone who was seeking sensation and attention during her long life in the public eye, and therefore casting doubt on her seriousness of purpose.

She was a young girl ( just twenty) when she began to involve herself in the political and public life. That she was activated by what she had seen and heard in Ireland during her young years there cannot be in doubt. It is one thing to witness and deplore injustice but to reject the easy and materially comfortable life which could so easily have been hers, for the endless travel, harassment, danger and uncertainty of Irish Nationalist politics bespeaks a determined commitment. Nor was it a commitment that she

ever abandoned even during the worst times. She had to endure the dismay of her family and friends many of whom would have nothing to do with her once she had made the choice. "Her family accepted her but ignored her doings," recalls Sean MacBride, "but her friends and members of her class detested her for letting the side down."

"She was a woman so beautiful as to be a symbol of beauty," says Richard Ellmann.<sup>1</sup> This beauty which opened many doors and drew so much attention to her had its disadvantages. The very attention that it attracted was attributed to her conscious quest for admiration, though it seems most unlikely that anyone as extraordinarily beautiful as Maud would have needed to pursue attention. Her good looks very often caused mistrust and even her old friend, John O'Leary, was at times both patronising and distrustful - "She is no disciple of mine; she went there to show off her new bonnet," he remarked on hearing that against his wishes she had gone to Tipperary on a campaign.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Ellmann, Yeats: The Man and the Masks, (New York, 1948), p.162.

<sup>2</sup> John O'Leary, p.207.

Yeats, George Moore and others in the Irish literary world sometimes wrote of her as a wild and even neurotic creature, unable to control her emotions and deeply involved in revolutionary politics, not out of rationally based conviction but from a desire for glamour and excitement. This one-sided picture, however, is contradicted by much testimony both from those who she helped and those with whom she worked.

The Russian revolutionary, Bakunin, writing in 1869, gave the following description of the nature of the revolutionary: "The revolutionist is a doomed man. He has no personal interests, no affairs, sentiments, attachments, property, not even a name of his own. Everything in him is absorbed by one exclusive interest, one thought, one passion - the revolution." This is a description of a fanatic, and if one applies it to Maud, the gulf between mindless fanaticism and serious commitment so much a part of her life, becomes obvious.

She had many personal interests and many close attachments with both men and women.



While her efforts were directed towards making things difficult for the English and she was, of course, absorbed by this interest, it did not prevent her from forming close and long-standing relationships of a warm and happy nature. She had households of various sizes to run and children who remember her with affection. She never threw a bomb, and although involved in many events which erupted in civil violence during which she showed remarkable courage and unflinching spirit, she never resorted to violence herself. Although it may sound paradoxical in view of her determinedly revolutionary activities, she seems to have been far from totally obsessive or even fanatical, both of which pejoratives suggest a violent and destructive nature. The means she used to further her aims were non-violent - writing and lecturing - and constructive - her work with the Land League. She was motivated by anger, certainly, but an anger produced by her own direct observation of social injustice. Furthermore it was an anger humanized by compassion, and although she sought the overthrow of an

established regime, she had no desire for personal power.

The underlying theme of all the facets of Maud's involvement was her conviction that Ireland must be free. It is true to say that she was obsessed with the idea that the English were the enemies of Ireland and it should also be said that she went to great and irritating lengths to emphasize her feelings. Monk Gibbon recalls a visit paid to Maud by his father during that particularly bitter period when the Black and Tans were operating, when she demanded that he speak either French or Irish so as not to "sully their lips with the English language at the moment." <sup>3</sup>

Beautiful, charming, compassionate, impetuous, hard-working, well-organized, one-track minded, sometimes silly; she was all of these and more. The nature and extent of her achievements and some aspects of her persona have already been detailed. But what of her character as it appeared to the people who knew

---

<sup>3</sup> The Masterpiece and The Man, p.72.

her and worked with her? I spent some time talking to Maire Comerford, now old and arthritic and living by herself in a small, cluttered house just outside Dublin, and to Maud's son, Sean MacBride, at Roebuck House.

Thin and white-faced with deep black shadows round his brown eyes, Mr. MacBride proved to be a charming man, quiet and courteous, with great strength of character and much self-confidence. His life has to a great extent followed that of his mother. A convinced Republican, he too was jailed during the Troubles. His passionate concern for the plight of political prisoners has caused him to spend much of his later life involved with Amnesty International of which he was Chairman until recently. Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1974, he is at present the United Nations Commissioner for South West Africa, or Namibia as it will be known.

We talked in the living room of Roebuck House in which Maud lived until her death and which is still full of her possessions.

A painting of her as a baby hung on the wall between two full length windows with deep white embrasures, and above it one of her mother, a fine looking woman with a well-defined face and masses of dark hair swept off her face. Two large dogs barked outside the window and we began the conversation with talk about her animals.

There are many stories about Maud and her animals and in this respect she has been accused of using them to draw attention to herself. She travelled everywhere with an enormous Great Dane called Dagda who was very useful as a protection and, on occasion, as a hindrance to officialdom bent on preventing her from giving an impromptu speech. Yeats wrote to Sturge Moore in 1916 from Maud's house in Normandy - "I am living in a house with three and thirty singing birds, which for the most part have the doors of their cages open so they alight on the table during meals and peck the food from the dishes. There is also a Persian cat, a parrot, two dogs, two rabbits and two guinea pigs and a Javanese cock which perches on Madame Gonne's chair..."<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> W.B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore - Their Correspondence (1901-1937), ed. Ursula Bridge, (London, 1953) p.25.

Her son recalls Maud's attachment to animals as being absolutely genuine and not an affectation. "Animals and I always understood each other; I was never afraid of them and they never hurt me," she wrote.<sup>5</sup>

Maire Comerford remembered that a relation of hers had seen Maud at a ball with a cockatoo on her shoulder and this seemed to Miss Comerford to "set the tone" for people's thinking of Maud as a "showbox." This incident while seeming to give the lie to MacBride's assertion of lack of affectation, should be more readily be taken as evidence of a certain flamboyance which was very much a part of Maud. People knowing of her attitude towards animals were always giving them to her, recalled her son, and once she was given a lion cub to add to the menagerie.

Maud seems to have had an easy and fearless approach to people. "She was able to talk to people of any level," Maire Comerford said, "and the poor people loved her for her compassion." Her great height and elegant appearance and her

---

<sup>5</sup> A Servant of the Queen, p.12.

obvious familiarity with Society might have created a barrier between herself and many of the people she encountered from all walks of life. That this was not the case attests to the unaffectedness and genuine feeling for people which was so much a part of her. On the other hand, she never hesitated to make conscious use of her status when it meant overcoming an obstacle especially one put in the way of her attempts to relieve distress.

Time and again Maud's beautiful speaking voice is mentioned. "Before I could catch a clear glimpse of her beyond the heads and shoulders of her audience, I heard her voice. It was a voice no man forgets. Never had I heard a voice like it; not from any woman, unless perhaps from one of the renowned Abbey actresses; not from any woman speaking to people in broad daylight about the business of their homes and city... She gestured neatly with a precise economy. ...she could use a worn rhetorical name like Cathleen ni Houlihan so that it meant something living." <sup>6</sup>

Maud remembers herself as being "terrified"

---

<sup>6</sup> Francis MacManus, The Delicate High Head, in The Capuchin Annual, Dublin, p.128.

of extemporaneous public speaking. But her son recalls that she never prepared a speech; she would talk over what she was going to say beforehand and then speak with great effect. She had no fear of public speaking, though contrary to what one might expect, crowds and meetings wearied her. She would go full tilt at whatever she was doing, spending all her time and effort on it, and then collapse. "I was worn out when I got back to my little flat in Paris where I stayed lazily in bed for a fortnight, reading novels and answering no letters," Maud wrote.<sup>7</sup>

She was deluged with correspondence, MacBride remembers, and was meticulous about answering these letters. She did so herself and on the same day the letter arrived, if possible. Despite her frequent absences and the work that awaited her at home, her son remembers Maud as an attentive and loving mother, very anxious that he should know Irish history and culture and doing her best to teach him Gaelic without much success.

---

<sup>7</sup> A Servant of the Queen, p.236.

It is interesting to compare Maud Gonne to that other well-known woman revolutionary of the time, Constance Gore-Booth Markievicz. The writer spent a cold and dark afternoon at Lissadell, the Gore-Booth home in Sligo in November, 1972. Not one of the more beautiful Irish country houses, it has fallen into disrepair and the contrast between the withdrawn and somewhat eccentric coldness of Lissadell and the warmth and comfort of Roebuck House seemed to embody the difference between Maud and Constance.

One feels eccentricity in everything that Markievicz did. She appears to have been disorganized and impulsive, thoughtless and not a little silly. Descriptions of her households and the way life was lived in them sound uncommonly like the "pads" so well known today, with people coming and going at all hours, staying and leaving. There was disorder, dirt and poor food. Her attempts to start collective farming ended in disaster mostly because of her own lack of intelligent planning and the chaos that always surrounded her. She was indeed "consumed by revolution" in a way



that Maud never was. Her biographer, Sean O'Faolain, says of her - "She would rally to a cause where there was something striking in the atmosphere surrounding it, and she would abandon a cause where the ordinary and commonplace quenched the drama... Her other defect was that she worked with blunted weapons; her mind was neither patient, nor trained, nor deep, nor able. Her intellect may have been shinningly honest, but it was not clear or powerful. It was not even reliable." <sup>8</sup>

Maud's concern for the plight of prisoners involved her from the time she first saw the treason-felony prisoners in England in 1889 to the end of her life. The same is true of her efforts to help the poor, and of her commitment to Republicanism. She was persistent and undeterred by attempts to stop her. Maire Comerford remembers how in the late 1920's Maud and others of the Prisoners Defence League held meetings outside Irish prisons every week,"and simply changed the name of the group and moved up the street when officials appeared with proscriptions."

---

<sup>8</sup> Sean O'Faolain, Constance Markievicz, (London, 1967) pp. 201-202.

Secondly, it could not be said that Maud's "weapons were blunted." Her mind was "patient" and even "deep", and had absorbed training of a sort through her association with people of the stature of O'Leary and James Connolly and, of course, Yeats.

It is true to say, as Sean MacBride did, that her commitment was an emotional and not an intellectual one although he pointed out that she had good political awareness. Yeats later pinpointed this characteristic difference between himself and Maud in a poem called The People.

'You, that have not lived in thought but deed,  
Can have the purity of a natural force,  
But I, whose virtues are the definitions  
Of the analytic mind, can neither close  
The eye of the mind nor keep my tongue from speech.'

(C.P. p.170)

An article written on Maud's death in April, 1953, says " She was in no way intellectual; she was not even of the blue-stocking type. A woman with a one-track mind, she could, or would talk about nothing except the manifold sins ... of the British in Ireland." Though she was not a woman of great intellect, Maud appears to have been very intelligent.

The article goes on to say " For all that, ... there was something that other women lacked. It may have been charm; it may have been just femininity; it may have been that indefinable quality known as breeding. For no matter how violent or unreasonable... she was always, and obviously, a lady." <sup>9</sup>

She seems to have accepted both praise and criticism with equanimity. The lavishness of the praise does not seem to have changed her essential composure; and the criticism, which was at times harsh and intensely subjective, did not deter her. Although as she wrote " I never used to indulge in self-analysis and often used to get impatient with Willie Yeats, who, like all writers, was terribly introspective and tried to make me so," <sup>10</sup> she had a fair knowledge of her limitations. "I always realised I was not a leader because I could work effectively only by intense concentration of my whole being on some particular point to the exclusion of all other." <sup>11</sup>

Unlike Constance, Maud was always a "fussy dresser" to quote her son, and did not in

---

<sup>9</sup> In an article signed Nichevo, Irish Times, April 1953.

<sup>10</sup> A Servant of the Queen, p.308.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.218.

any way lose her femininity always retaining great charm and elegance. He remembers that her households were run with order.

As she was in self-exile in France at the time of the Easter Rising in 1916, one can only speculate as to what her part in it might have been had she been in Dublin. Con Markievicz, of course, donned uniform and pistols and fought alongside the men in Stephens Green. Again, according to Sean MacBride, and contrary to the Yeats family's first impressions of her on that day in 1889 when she descended on them at Bedford Park praising warlike things, Maud did not revel in war but had come to the conclusion that talk had achieved nothing and that the only thing that would bring results was action. " It was my philosophy of life applied to art and politics. I never willingly discouraged either a dynamiter or a constitutionalist, a realist or a lyrical writer. My chief preoccupation was how their work could help forward the Irish separatist movement." <sup>12</sup>

"She was not one for the guns like Con Markievicz, who revelled in it," Maire Comerford confirmed.

---

<sup>12</sup> A Servant of the Queen, p.170.

If Yeats has played little part in these pages, it is because that is a true reflection of his position in the more personal side of Maud's life. He was her confidant and friend and she spent a great deal of time with him in the pursuit of their joint literary and political endeavours. He loved her passionately and proposed to her regularly but was always turned down. "I never at any time considered marrying him," Maud told Virginia Moore. "I loved him yes, but not in that way."<sup>13</sup> Sean MacBride recalls the subject of her marriage to his father as being so painful to her that it was very seldom discussed. John MacBride was a soldier and a man of action and her attraction was one of opposites, he thought.

As Yeats moved through the various stages of passion and rejection to reflection in later life, he not only found a new sense of possession in memory

... when I look death in the face,  
 When I clamber to the heights of sleep  
 Or when I grow excited with wine,  
 Suddenly I meet your face.

(C.P. p.174)

but could look back on a body of work in which his Helen is forever characterised for future generations the way he saw her.

---

<sup>13</sup> Virginia Moore, The Unicorn, (New York, 1954), p.38.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

WORKS BY W. B. YEATS

- The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats. London: Macmillan, 1969.
- The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats. Ed. Peter Allt and Russell J. Alspach. New York: Macmillan, 1968.
- The Collected Plays of W. B. Yeats. London: Macmillan, 1952.
- The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats. New York: Macmillan, 1953.
- A Vision. New York: Macmillan, 1961.
- Essays and Introductions. New York: Macmillan, 1961.
- Per Amica Silentia Lunae. London: Macmillan, 1918.
- W. B. Yeats Memoirs. The original unpublished text of the Autobiography and Journal. Ed. by Denis Donoghue. London: Macmillan, 1972.
- Uncollected Prose. Coll. and ed. by John P. Frayne. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.
- A Packet for Ezra Pound. Dublin: Cuala Press, 1929.
- Pages from a Diary written in 1930. Dublin: Cuala Press, 1944.
- The Death of Synge and other passages from an old diary. Dublin: Cuala, 1928.
- The Letters of W. B. Yeats (1887-1939). Ed. Allan Wade. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954.
- Some Letters from W. B. Yeats to John O'Leary and his Sister. Ed. Allan Wade. New York: New York Public Library, 1953.

Letters on Poetry from W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley.  
London: Oxford University Press, 1964.

W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore; their correspondence  
1901-1937. Ed. Ursula Bridge. London:  
Oxford University Press, 1953.

Letters to Katharine Tynan. Ed. Roger McHugh. Dublin,  
1953.

Estrangement - Fifty Thoughts from a Diary kept by  
W. B. Yeats in 1909. Dublin: Cuala Press,  
1926.

WORKS BY MAUD GONNE MACBRIDE

A Servant of the Queen. London: Victor Gollancz, 1974.

Dawn. In Lost Plays of the Irish Renaissance. Dublin:  
Proscenium Press, 1970.

"Responsibility", Irish Review, I (December 1911) 483-5.

"Letters of the Month: Fascism, Communism and Ireland",  
Ireland Today, iii, (March 1938), 241-4.

SECONDARY WORKS CITED

Bloom, Harold. Yeats. New York: Oxford University Press,  
1970.

Bourke, Marcus. John O'Leary. A Study in Irish Separatism.  
Tralee: Anvil Books Ltd., 1967.

Brown, Malcolm. The Politics of Irish Literature. From  
Thomas Davis to W. B. Yeats. Seattle: University  
of Washington Press, 1972.

- Coxhead, Elizabeth. Daughters of Erin. London: Secker and Warburg, 1965.
- Donoghue and Mulryne. An Honoured Guest. London: Edward Arnold, 1965.
- Ellman, Richard. Yeats: The Man and the Masks. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1948.
- Fox, R. M. Rebel Irishwomen. Dublin: Talbot Press, 1935.
- Gibbon, Monk. The Masterpiece and the Man - Yeats as I knew him. London: Rubert Hart-Davis, 1959.
- Glenavy, Lady Beatrice. Today we will only gossip. London: Constable, 1964.
- Gogarty, Oliver St. John. W. B. Yeats: A Memoir. Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1963.
- Gwynn, Stephen. Scattering Branches. London: Macmillan, 1940.
- Hone, Joseph. W. B. Yeats 1865-1939. London: Macmillan, 1965.
- Jeffares, A. Norman. A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats. California: Stanford University Press, 1968.
- Macliammoir, Michael and Boland, Eavan. W. B. Yeats and his world. London: Thames and Hudson, 1971.
- Moore, George. Ave. London: Heinemann, 1911.
- Vale. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923.
- Moore, Virginia. The Unicorn. New York: Macmillan, 1954.
- Saul, George Brandon. Prolegomena to the Study of Yeats's Poems, New York: Octagon Books, 1971.
- Tynan, Katharine. 25 Years: Reminiscences. London: Smith-Elder, 1953.
- Unterecker, John E. Yeats: A Collection of Critical Essays. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963.



GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barker, Dudley. Prominent Edwardians. London: Allen and Unwin, 1969.
- Bowra, C.M. Memories 1898-1939. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966.
- Clarke, Austin. The Celtic Twilight and the Nineties. Dublin: Domen Press, 1969.
- Coxhead, Elizabeth. Lady Gregory. A Literary Portrait. London: Macmillan, 1961.
- Dolmen Press. Yeats Centenary Papers. Ed. Liam Miller with a Preface by Jon Stallworthy. Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1968.
- Ellmann, Richard. The Identity of Yeats. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- Eminent Domain. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Ellis-Fermor, Una. The Irish Dramatic Movement. London: Methuen, 1954.
- Gibbon, Monk. Inglorious Soldier. An Autobiography. London: Hutchinson, 1968.
- Gillain, L. Henres de Guerite. With a preface by Maud Gonne. Paris: 1893.
- Gogarty, Oliver St. John. As I was Going Down Sackville Street. London: Sphere Books, 1968.
- Gonne, Maud. Dawn in Lost Plays of the Irish Renaissance. Ed. Robert Hogan and James Kilroy. Dublin: Proscenium Press, 1970.
- Grigson, Geoffrey. "Yeats wanted to marry her", John O'London's Weekly, (November, 1938).
- Hall and Steinman. The Permanence of Yeats. New York: Macmillan, 1958.

- Henn, T. R. The Lonely Tower, Studies in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats. London: Methuen, (University Paperbacks), 1969.
- Jeffares, A. Norman. W. B. Yeats. Profiles in Literature. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.
- with K.G.W. Cross. ed. In Excited Reverie. A Centenary Tribute to W. B. Yeats. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965.
- W. B. Yeats Man and Poet. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966.
- Kain, R. M. Dublin in the Age of W. B. Yeats and James Joyce. University of Oklahoma Press, 1962.
- Kee, Robert. The Green Flag. A History of Irish Nationalism. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972.
- Kermode, Frank. The Romantic Image. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957.
- Loftus, Richard J. Nationalism in Modern Anglo-Irish Poetry. Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964.
- McCann, Sean. The World of Sean O'Casey. London: New English Library, 1966.
- MacManus, Francis. The Yeats we Knew. Thomas Davis Lectures. Cork: Mercier Press, 1970.
- "The Delicate High Head", Capuchin Annual, (1960), 127-132.
- Marcus, Phillip L. Yeats and the Beginning of the Irish Renaissance. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970.
- Masefield, John. Some Memories of W. B. Yeats. Dublin: Cuala Press, 1940.
- Murphy, William. The Yeats Family and the Pollexfens of Sligo. Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1971.
- O'Brien, Conor Cruise. States of Ireland. London: Hutchinson, 1972.

O'Casey, Sean. Autobiography Book 3. Drums under the Windows. London: Pan Books Ltd., 1972.  
First published 1945.

Autobiography Book 4. Inishfallen Fare Thee Well. London: Pan Books Ltd., 1972. First published 1949.

O'Connor, Frank. An Only Child. London: Pan Books, 1970. First published 1961.

My Father's Son. London: Pan Books, 1971.  
First published 1968.

The Big Fellow. Michael Collins and the Irish Revolution. London: Corgi Books, 1969.  
Published 1937.

O'Driscoll, Robert. Ed. Theatre and Nationalism in 20th Century Ireland. Toronto: University of Toronto, 1971.

O'Faolain, Sean. The Irish. London: Penguin Books, 1947.

Constance Markiewicz. London: Sphere Books, 1967.  
First published 1934.

Parkinson, Thomas F. W. B. Yeats Self-Critic. A Study of His Early Verse. California: 1951.

Patmore, Brigit. My Friends When Young. London: Heinemann, 1968.

Plunkett, James. Strumpet City. London: Panther Books Ltd., 1971. First published 1969.

Rodgers, W. R. Irish Literary Portraits. London: B.B.C., 1972.

Robinson, Lennox. Ed. Lady Gregory's Journals. 1916-1930. London: Putnam, 1946.

The Irish Theatre. Lectures delivered in Dublin in 1938. London: Macmillan, 1939

- Ronsley, Joseph. Yeats Autobiography: Life as Symbolic Pattern. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968.
- Senior, John. The Way Down and Out. The Occult in Symbolist Literature. New York: Greenwood Press, 1968.
- Seward, Barbara. The Symbolic Rose. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.
- Stallworthy, Jon. Between the Lines, Yeats's Poetry in the Making. Oxford: Press, 1965.
- Skelton, Robin and Saddlemyer, Anne. The World of W. B. Yeats: Essays in Perspective. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965.
- Stauffer, Donald A. The Golden Nightingale. New York: Macmillan, 1949.
- Ure, Peter. Yeats. London: Oliver and Bond, 1967. First published 1963.
- Towards a Mythology: Studies in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats. New York: Russell and Russel, 1967.
- Wilson, F.A.C. W. B. Yeats and Tradition. New York: Macmillan, 1958.
- Younger, Calton. Ireland's Civil War. London: Fontana, 1970. First published 1968.
- Young, Ella. Celtic Wonder Tales. Illustrated by Maud Gonne. Dublin: Maunsel and Co., 1910.
- The Rose of Heaven. Dublin: 1920.

MISCELLANEOUS

The United Irishman, 1899-1903. National Library,  
Dublin.

"Somewhere in This City", a poem to Maud Gonne by  
Padraic Fallon, The Bell, XVII, 11, (February,  
1952), 12-15. Trinity College Library, Dublin.

"Reviews of a Servant to the Queen", Irish Ecclesiastical  
Record, LXXIV, (November, 1950), 468-489.

Dublin Magazine, XIV, iv, (December, 1939), 92-3.

Studies, XXXIX, (June, 1950), 225-6, Trinity  
College Library, Dublin.

The Horgan Album, containing letters and autographs  
donated to the National Library, Dublin, and  
not yet catalogued in 1972.

MS 5919 in the National Library, Dublin, containing two  
letters from Maud Gonne to Hone discussing the  
loss of her letters from W. B. Yeats.

# THE RIGHT TO LIFE AND THE RIGHTS OF PROPERTY!

"The use of all things is to be common to all. It is an injustice to say this belongs to me, that to another. Hence the origin of contentions among men." — **HIS HOLINESS POPE CRESCENTIUS.**

"God created all things that their enjoyment might be common to all, and that the earth might become the common possession of all. Only unjust usurpation has created the right of private property." — **BISHOP AMBROSIO.**

"Let them know that the earth from which they sprung, and of which they are made, belongs to all, and cannot be sold that therefore the soil which the Lord has given them, belongs to their common use." — **HIS HOLINESS POPE GREGORY THE GREAT, 600 A.D.**

"It is an age of social battlings for justice to all men, for the right of all men to live in equal comfort, becoming rational creatures, to all of whom birth into the world gives title to a sufficiency of the things of the world." — **ARCHBISHOP HUNT ON ST. BARNABAS. (See Catholic Times, November 3, 1893.)**

"In case of extreme need of food, all goods become common property." — **CAPITAL PLANNING.**

"If rulers exact from their subjects anything by use of force against justice, it is robbery like the doings of highwaymen. Hence (St.) Augustine says, 'Justice apart, what are kingdoms but organised brigandage.'" — **ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. (Summary Theologica.)**

## FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

At the present juncture, when the shadow of famine is already blighting the lives of so many amongst us, when famine itself in all its grim horror has already begun to claim its victims; when the cry for food for the starving Irish people is once more arising to the heavens; we desire to offer a few words of calm advice to those amongst you in whose homes the pinch of starvation is actually present, in hopes that we may move you to action before it is too late; and in order to point out to you your duty, whether as fathers, as sons, as husbands, or as Irishmen. In the year 1847 our people died in thousands of starvation, although every ship leaving an Irish port was laden with food in abundance. The Irish people in that awful year might have seized that food, cattle, corn, and all manner of provisions before it reached the seaports, have prevented the famine, and saved their country from ruin, but did not do so, believing such action to be sinful, and dreading to peril their souls to save their bodies. But in this belief, we now know, they were entirely mistaken. The very highest authorities on the doctrines of the Church agree that no *human* law can stand between starving people and their **RIGHT TO FOOD**, including the right to take that food whenever they can find it, openly or secretly, with or without the owner's permission. His Holiness Pope Leo XIII. has lately recommended the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas as the very best statement of Catholic doctrine on Faith and Morals. Listen, then,

119.  
to what St. Thomas teaches on the rights of property when opposed to the right of life. In "Summa Theologica," Question 66, Article 2, he asks:

"Is it Lawful to Steal on the Plea of Necessity?"

And answers:

"The institution of human law cannot abrogate from natural law or divine law . . . therefore the division and appropriation of goods that proceeds from human law cannot come in the way of man's needs being relieved out of such goods . . . Hence St. Ambrose says: 'It is the bread of the hungry that you hold back, the clothing of the naked that you keep in store, the ransom and deliverance of the unfortunate is contained in the money that you bury in the earth.' If, however, a need be so plain and pressing that clearly the urgent necessity has to be relieved from whatever comes to hand, as when danger is threatening a person and there is no other means of succouring him, *then the man may lawfully relieve his distress out of the property of another, taking it either openly or secretly.*

"To use the property of another, taking it secretly in a case of extreme need, cannot, properly speaking, be characterised as theft, because what one takes for the support of life is much his by sheer necessity."

LIBRARY OF IRELAND.

If this is a correct statement, and coming from such a source, we are sure you will not venture to call it in question. What is your duty to yourselves and those dependent upon you? British Law—always on the side of the rich against the poor—tells you to die of hunger rather than infringe the rights of property. But Divine Law tells you that your right to food is greater than any human law, that to die of hunger while there is food within reach is an act of suicide, and will be adjudged as such, and the common sense of humanity outside these islands stands ready to aid you, in purse or otherwise, once you show your determination to stand by your rights as men.

We ask you, then, fellow countrymen, by all you hold sacred, by your devotion to your wives and children, to your fathers and mothers and, last but not least, by your love for your poor motherland, whose hope is in you, to rouse yourselves in this awful crisis of your fate, and **BE MEN**, and, like men, take with the strong hand, if need be, that which rightfully belongs to you—the food without which the famine-stricken corpses of the poor children of the Irish race will once more bestrew the land—and show the world that you are resolved never again to let the sun shine upon the spectacle of Irish men and women dying as dogs would die—of hunger in sight of food.

MAUD GONNE.

## APPENDIX ii

The United Irishman, April 7th, 1900

The Famine Queen

"The Queen's visit to Ireland is in no way political", proclaims the Lord Lieutenant and the English ministers. "The Queen's visit has no political signification and the Irish nation must receive Her Majesty with the generous hospitality for which it is celebrated", hastens to repeat Mr. John Redmond and our servile Irish Members, whose nationality has been corrupted by a too lengthy sojourn in the enemy's country. "The Queen's visit to Ireland has nothing at all to do with politics", cries the fishmonger Pyle, whose ambitious soul is not satisfied by the position of Lord Mayor and who hankers after an English title. "Let us to our knees and present the keys of the City to her most gracious Majesty and compose an address in her honour". "Nothing political, nothing political, let us present an address to this virtuous lady", echoed 30 town councillors, who, when they sought the votes of the Dublin people, called themselves Irishmen and Nationalists, but who are overcome by royal glamour.

Poor citizens of Dublin! Your thoughtlessness in giving your vote to these miserable creatures will cost you dear. It has already cost the arrest of sixteen good and true men and many broken heads and bruised limbs from police batons. For you have realised, if somewhat late, the responsibility of Ireland's capital and, aghast at the sight of th men elected by you betraying and dishonouring Ireland, you have, with the courage which makes us all proud of you, raised a protest and cried aloud: "The visit of the Queen of England is a political action and if we accord her a welcome we shall stand shamed before the nations". The world will no longer believe in the sincerity of our demand for national freedom. And, in truth, for Victoria in the decrepitude of her 81 years to decide, after the absence of half a century, to revisit the country she hates and whose inhabitants are the victims of the criminal policy of her reign, the survivors of 60 years or organized famine, the political necessity must have been terribly strong. For after all she is a woman and, however vile and pitiless and selfish



her souls may be, she must sometimes tremble as death approaches when she thinks of the countless Irish mothers who, shelterless under the cloudy Irish sky watching their starving little ones, have cursed her before they died.

Every eviction during sixty-three years has been carried out in Victoria's name and, if there is a justice in heaven the shame of those poor Irish immigrant girls whose very innocence renders them an easy prey and who have been overcome in the terrible struggle for existence on a foreign shore, will fall on this woman, whose bourgeois virtue is so boasted and in whose name their homes were destroyed.

If she comes to Ireland again before her death to contemplate the ruins she has made it, it is surely because her Ministers and advisers think that England's situation is dangerous and that her journey will have a deep political importance. England has lived for years on a prestige which has had no solid foundation. She has hypnotised the world with the falsehood of her greatness. She has made great nations and small nations alike believe in her power. It required the dauntless courage and energy of the Boers to destroy forever this illusion and rescue Europe from the fatal enchantment. Today no-one fears the British Empire. Her prestige has gone, done before the rifles of a few thousand heroic peasants. If the British Empire means to exist she will have to rely on real strength and real strength she has not got.

England is in decadence. She has sacrificed all to getting money and money cannot create men nor give courage to her weakly soldiers. The men who formerly made her greatness, men from the country districts, have disappeared. They have been swallowed up by the great, black, manufacturing cities. They have been flung into the crucible where gold is made. Today the giants of England are the giants of finance and of the Stock Exchange who have risen to power on the backs of a struggling mass of pale, exhausted slaves. The storm approaches. The gold which the English have made out of the blood and tears of millions of human being, attracts the covetousness of the world. Who will aid the pirates to keep their spoils? In their terror they turn to Victoria, their Queen, for she has succeeded in amassing more gold than any of her subjects. She has always been ready to cover with her royal mantle the crimes and

turpitude of her Empire. And now, trembling on the brink of the grave, she rises once more at their call.

Soldiers are needed to protect the vampires. The Queen issues an appeal in England. The struggling mass of slaves cry Hurrah! But there is no blood in their veins, no strength in their arms. Soldiers must be found, so Victoria will go herself to fetch them. She will go over to Ireland, to those people who have despised gold and who, in spite of persecutions and threats, have persisted in their dream of freedom and idealism, and who, though reduced in numbers, have maintained all the beauty and strength and vitality of their race.

Taking the shamrock in her withered hand, she dares to ask Ireland for soldiers; for soldiers to protect the exterminators of their race. And the reply of Ireland comes sadly but proudly and not through the lips of the miserable little politicians who are touched by the English canker, but through the lips of the Irish people.

"Queen, return to your own land. You will find no more Irishmen ready to wear the red shame of your livery. In the past they have done so from ignorance because it is hard to die of hunger when one is young and strong and the sun shines; but they shall do so no longer. See, your recruiting agents return unsuccessful and alone from my green hills and plains, because, once more, hope is revived and it will be in the ranks of your enemies that my children will find employment and honour. As to those who today enter your service to help in your criminal wars, I deny them. If they die, if they live, it matters not to me; they are no longer Irishmen".