CHAPTER 11

'I myself delight in Miss Edgeworth's novels': Gender, Power and the Domestic in Lady Gregory's Work

Lauren Arrington

Augusta Gregory used her power in the domestic sphere as a mechanism for effecting change in the public sphere. Her career as a writer was forged by her creative responses to her private life: marriage at the age of twenty-eight to William Gregory; an important love affair with Wilfred Scawen Blunt; the freedom and responsibility that came with being widowed at just thirty-nine years of age. Recently, with a focus on Gregory's relationships with Sir William, Blunt and Gregory's protégé, W. B. Yeats, Lucy McDiarmid shows how, 'surrounded by men and pleasing them, Lady Gregory created a public voice for herself and entered the world of professional authorship'.[1] Similarly, when the Abbey Theatre first toured the United States in 1911, a visit marked by controversy and acclaim, Gregory directed attention to the theatre company's success in terms of 'acts of male gallantry' rather than crediting the part that her own skill and celebrity played.[2] In Gregory's writing, she creates scenarios in which the domestic is a means of empowering and liberating her characters. With attention to the way that she manipulates structures of gender, power and social privilege, this chapter demonstrates how important connections arise between Gregory's work and that of her literary predecessors, whose use of the domestic informs her technique.

Popular and critical interpretations of Gregory's career have been strongly inflected by her autobiographical writing and by others' accounts of her personality, which give the impression of a woman who was capable of high courtesy towards her friends and an unabashed imperiousness towards those she considered to be her intellectual inferiors. In the most recent full-length biography, *Lady Gregory: An Irish Life*, Judith Hill suggests that Gregory's inconsistent 'behaviour' was due to a lack of 'role models':

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> There were powerful women in the theatre, but they were actresses with a license to be flamboyant [. . .] In the absence of an approved style she fell back on an amalgam of family roles. There was the understanding aunt figure [. . .] There was the quietly authoritative mother [. . .] And there was the manipulative wife, getting her own way through flattery and the apparent prioritising of others.[3]

However, even the earliest criticism on Gregory gives evidence of a more sophisticated strategy at work in her writing. As early as 1961, in *Lady Gregory: A Literary Portrait*, Elizabeth Coxhead alludes to two significant antecedents: Jane Austen and George Eliot.[4] I propose a third, and even more important 'role model': Maria Edgeworth, whose innovative narratives are touchstones for Gregory's style.

Specific connections between Gregory and Austen are evident in the intertextual references in *Mr. Gregory's Letter-box, 1813–1830*. There, she writes about Lady Anne Gregory (for whom one of Augusta Gregory's granddaughters would be named): 'I see by his notebook that she was not an old maid perforce, for there is an entry: "Sept. 10, 1817. Colonel R – proposed for my daughter"; then, "19th. My Daughter confined to her bed by Fever, attended by Dr. Perceval." "21st. Refused Colonel R's proposal."' Gregory summarises,

> There is a delightful flavour of Miss Austen about this. Miss Gregory was contemporary with her heroines, and may even have met her suitor at the Bath Pump Room [. . .] But Miss Austen would have brought about a more satisfactory ending, and Colonel R–, like that other Colonel, who, notwithstanding that he 'sought the constitutional safeguard of a flannel waistcoat', was made happy by Miss Dashwood, would never have been sent away in enduring despair.[5]

The wry criticism that Lady Anne 'was not an old maid perforce' and the comparison of her rejection of 'Colonel R' to Marianne Dashwood's reluctant engagement to Colonel Brandon in *Sense and Sensibility* reflects Gregory's privileging of responsibility over romantic feeling. This is a particularly poignant allusion since Gregory's own romantic feelings for Blunt were reignited during his imprisonment in Galway Gaol in 1887, the year before the *Letter-box* was published.[6] Perhaps ventriloquising Elinor Dashwood's sense of humour, Gregory notes elsewhere in the book, 'I am glad that in spite of his usual economy of stops [Mr. Gregory] affords a comma between the words "Frank, washing, Betty, 4*l*. 0*s*. 7½*d*."'[7]

Gregory demonstrates in the *Letter-box* that she is as conversant with Maria Edgeworth as she is with Jane Austen, but before attending to the

explicit connections evident in that text, it is instructive to look to Gregory's earliest work: the prose piece 'An Emigrant's Notebook'. The 'Notebook' was unpublished and undated, but it was almost certainly written during the Land War of 1879–82 and therefore represents some of her earliest writing extant. The title has been subjected to a great deal of speculation: for Coxhead, it points to Gregory's leaving behind of her ancestral house, Roxborough, for London; conversely, Hill asserts that it shows how Gregory 'felt like an emigrant from her past'.[8] The title can also be read as an Edgeworthian gesture, since the 'Notebook' bears numerous similarities to one of Edgeworth's most important novels, *Castle Rackrent* (1800). That novel takes the form of a diary entry written in the voice of one of the Rackrent family's servants, Thady Quirk, whose narrative is complicated by the intrusion of an 'editor' who interprets for the reader particular turns of phrase and local customs. The intermediary voice imposes distance between the reader's and Quirk's points of view and insists on the foreignness of the story and its narrator.[9]

Glossing 'An Emigrant's Notebook', Coxhead argues that it has two shortcomings as a work of literature: 'the faint note of condescension, which prevents [Gregory] doing more than observe her characters from outside, and secondly, the form. What can a series of agreeable anecdotes strung together amount to?'[10] Edgeworth answers this question in the preface to *Castle Rackrent*:

> We are surely justified in this eager desire to collect the most minute facts relative to the domestic lives, not only of the great and good, but even of the worthless and insignificant, since it is only by a comparison of their actual happiness or misery in the privacy of domestic life, that we can form a just estimate of the real reward of virtue, or the real punishment of vice.[11]

Most straightforwardly, the 'Notebook' is a rehearsal of the voices and scenarios that would later typify Gregory's finest drama. However, it attains greater significance when Edgeworth is considered. Gregory's tone becomes not simply one of 'condescension' but also can be understood as one of mediation, much like *Castle Rackrent*'s editor's 'translation'. Rather than positioning herself above and apart from her subjects, Gregory moves back and forth between domestic spaces, from the Big House to the homes of the estate's workers. She takes note of their mannerisms and their stories, gives them a literary rendering, and thereby makes them audible to others. This intercession is fraught with the complications of social class and attendant questions of power, problems that Gregory went on to negotiate in her published work.

Gregory's first publication, the essay 'Arabi and His Household', draws from her early experiments in form and narration and was a result of imperial encounters made possible by her private life. Augusta Persse married Sir William Gregory in 1880 and travelled with him through Europe, India and the Middle East. They arrived in Egypt in late 1881, when the campaign for Egyptian independence was gaining momentum under the leadership of Ahmed Urabi, whose movement would culminate in a British invasion and the defeat of Urabi and his exile to Ceylon the following year. Gregory met the poet and activist Wilfred Scawen Blunt in Cairo in December and had an almost year-long affair with him in 1882.[12] Sir William and Blunt were both sympathetic to Urabi's aims, but it was Blunt who encouraged Gregory to write a defence of him. 'Arabi and his Household' was published as a letter to the London *Times* on 23 October 1882, and a pamphlet by the same name was issued shortly afterward.[13]

Very early in the essay, Gregory demonstrates her self-awareness as a female author. She recounts the words of an 'Englishman' whom she met on her return 'home':

> 'A lady may say what she likes, but a man is called unpatriotic who ventures to say a word that is good of the man England is determined to crush; it may injure us if we speak as we think.' But I [she writes], like Master Shadow, present no mark to the enemy.[14]

This claim to invisibility in the most prominent newspaper of the British establishment is a clever performance of dramatic irony, presenting the political truth of her invisibility and the equally true inverse: her authority as a writer who is published in the *Times*. In a similar vein, she gives a full account of Urabi's political career and his character, all the while claiming, 'I am not writing a history of Arabi.' Rhetorically powerful double-edged truths like this one are characteristic of the clever dialogue in the plays she would later write for the Abbey Theatre.

Gregory presents her motivation for writing to the *Times* as her need to defend a 'family' that is 'simple, honest, hospitable, as I found them, and who are now poor, hunted, in danger'.[15] By drawing attention to the domestic unit and its patriarch, Gregory makes available to her readers the analogy of the political leader as head of the nation, although this is not a meaning that she in any way insists upon. Even so, the potential allegory is important, since the family and the house became a metaphor for the nation during the Irish Revival – and a troublesome metaphor at that. McDiarmid has noted how this essay anticipates Lady Gregory's later

folklore collecting in the west of Ireland, and how it reflects the social privilege that gives Gregory the power to 'serve as the mediator between the little family and the great outside world'.[16] As in the case of 'An Emigrant's Notebook', Gregory does more than record her experiences and introduce her readers to the intimacies of an unfamiliar culture. By bringing the *Times* readership into the private, *haraam*, sphere of Arabi's wife's living room, which Gregory depicts in exquisite detail, she illustrates the potential of women's privileged spaces to effect political change.[17] In her depiction of Urabi's household as 'folk' – through her calculated omission of certain details, including Urabi's multiple wives and the family's photograph of him 'framed in diamonds' – Gregory continues a tradition of Irish writing in which the upper class, and women in particular, are positioned as responsible for the 'improvement' of poor rural families.[18] This is one of the central themes in Maria Edgeworth's work, and one which may have been stressed to Gregory by the artist and social theorist John Ruskin, whom Gregory met through Sir William, and who was a great admirer of Edgeworth's novels.[19]

In *Mr. Gregory's Letter-box*, which was published six years after her husband's death, Gregory's opening of the private onto the public sphere is symbolised by her opening of the material artefact ('a large, iron-clamped leather-covered box'[20]) and by her reprinting, seemingly in totality, correspondence marked 'private'.[21] One of the few critics to write about the *Letter-box*, Hazard Adams, suggests that the book is 'no more than might be expected of the widow of a fairly well-known public servant from an Ascendancy family'.[22] However, Gregory clearly expresses an independent political sensibility and does not merely report the views of the Gregory patriarchy. Writing about the turbulent years leading up to the 1798 rebellion, she disagrees with what she regards as the narrowing of the national movement, the falling away of 'the gentry' and 'Northern democracy', which meant that 'instead of a war for liberty or for justice, [1798] became a war of fanaticism and religious hatred'.[23] This direct expression of opinion develops her allusive introduction to the topic: 'It is curious to look through the accounts for 1798 and see the usual peaceful items [. . .] But there are some signs of the terrors around in "sword-belt and plate", "barracks" and "trimming regimental hat."'[24]

The word 'terrors' sounds loudly, since the rising of 1798 originated in the French Revolution, and its final stage, the Terror, provoked severe anxieties in the Anglo-Irish landed class. Gregory shows how her husband's family – like the Edgeworths – were not excepted from this fear and instability. During the 1798 rising, the Edgeworths were subjected to

suspicion from their landholding neighbours and the rebels; while Richard Edgeworth was a public advocate for Catholic relief, he raised a militia (of Protestants and Catholics) to protect his estate during the rebellion.[25] The sense of pressure from both sides, of being caught between sympathy for a populist movement on the one hand and the sense of duty to an aristocratic tradition on the other, enabled Edgeworth's novels to serve as models for Gregory's understanding of the destabilisation of the Protestant landed class at the end of the nineteenth century.[26] Gregory shows that, like Edgeworth, she is committed to certain democratic values: a sensibility that Mitzi Myers has described as Edgeworth's 'Enlightened meliorism' and opposition to 'sectarian localism'.[27]

The Letter-box shows Gregory's ideas about 1798 in flux, not yet attaining the conciliation expressed in her autobiography *Seventy Years*, where she writes that she is

> thankful that we landowners have been given even a little time to prepare and to work while it is day. It is necessary that as democracy gains power, our power should go; and God knows how many of our ancestors and forerunners have eaten sour grapes and we must not repine if our teeth are set on edge.[28]

Gregory and W. B. Yeats's play *Cathleen ni Houlihan* shows how quickly her attitude to 1798 changed; the shift was probably confirmed by the centennial commemorations of the rising that were held the same year that the *Letter-box* was published, and which reinforced to her the necessity of the landed class taking a leading role in the political transition that was afoot.

The origins of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* can be traced back to the *Letter-box*. In one of Gregory's appearances in the earlier text, she recounts the story of 'an old Catholic nurse' at Roxborough,

> whose eye would flash as she told of the triumphant shouting she had heard in 1798 when it was told at a theatre she had been taken to that the French had landed at Killala. She was only a child herself then, but she remembered how all the audience had stood up and cheered and waved their handkerchiefs at the joyful news.[29]

The nurse's account of being at the theatre and the image of the audience as a cheering crowd evoke the 'cheering' that is heard at the beginning and end of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* and gesture to the play's metatheatrical elements.[30] Furthermore, the *Letter-box* intimates Gregory's interest in playwriting in other ways. At the very start of the chapter 'Orangeism and Emancipation', she writes, 'The dramatic idea, if one may so call it, of

Mr. Gregory's term of office was the emancipation of the Catholics'.[31] Throughout the book, she reprints 'Orange' and Catholic songs as well as witty aphorisms akin to those that she would later use to enrich the characters of her dramas. ('A poet's curse could wither the corn in the ground and make the milk dry in the udders of the cows.'[32]) The use of song in the *Letter-box* also anticipates her essay 'The Felons of our Land', which unambiguously celebrates the 1798 rebellion.[33]

Judith Hill describes the *Letter-box* as 'an apprenticeship in nationalism', but the analogy of a dress rehearsal seems more appropriate.[34] Gregory performs radical arguments before changing into the more familiar garb of an Anglo-Irish aristocrat. For example, she writes,

> Whiteboys, Rightboys, Threshers, Whitefeet, Blackfeet, Terry Alts, these are some of the names of the bands that formed this lawless army. Poverty, want of work, the land hunger, or as it was more simply put, 'the want of a bit of ground for potatoes', seem to have been the chief causes of or excuses for crime. Where landlords lived at home, gave work to their people and treated them fairly, trouble was less acute.[35]

In another passage, about Lord John Russell and his chief secretary, Robert Peel, she begins by depicting a menacing scene: 'Lonely indeed must be the road, deserted the railway station, where two dark figures with short capes and inadequate caps do not sooner or later appear, ostentatiously fingering their rifles and patrolling the Queen's highway'.[36] This slightly sinister image is immediately followed by the concession,

> Sober, peaceable, well behaved, they form a happy contrast to the 'barony constables' of the pre-Peel period, whose only necessary qualification was a certificate of having received the Sacrament at the parish church, and who were obliged to eke out their scanty pay by a recognized game of 'open your hand and shut your eyes.'[37]

The Letter-box balances sympathy for poorly remunerated enforcers of the law with a critique of their 'ostentatious' threats, anticipating her one-act play *The Rising of the Moon* (1907) in which a moonlit night is, improbably, the setting for a farce. In the play, the Sergeant (who prides himself on maintaining the class structure) is persuaded by the fugitive to find sympathy with 'the people'.[38] The comedy is revolutionary in its demonstration that the only ethical behaviour is the betrayal of the structure of power and order. In this way, the play takes a harder line than the *Letter-box*, which excuses the Irish political establishment from fault: 'it was not the bigotry of Protestant Ireland, but of England, that kept its foot for so long on the neck of the "Papist"'.[39]

Near the end of *Mr. Gregory's Letter-box*, Lady Gregory makes a single, telling reference to Edgeworth:

> Miss Edgeworth herself, who writes a whole novel on the evils of patronage [*Patronage* (1814)], cannot even in its pages resist providing for her hero, Mr. Temple, by a Government situation procured by his patron directly from the King. Patronage was in the air, and it will be long indeed before the Irish mind will be convinced that it is now dead.[40]

In fact, patronage was not dead but merely changed, as the institutions of the Irish Revival show; in addition to the Abbey Theatre's origins in the collaboration of Gregory, Yeats and Edward Martyn, the Gaelic League's founding by Douglas Hyde illustrates how Ascendancy privilege facilitated cultural production.

Gregory's ambition to put the Ascendancy in step with everyday Irish life is exemplified in her collection and translation of Irish folklore for English-speaking audiences.[41] Her gender as well as her social class facilitated her access to the subject.[42] In Yeats's introduction to *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, he discusses obstacles faced by the folklore enthusiast:

> be it noticed, if you are a stranger, you will not readily get ghost and fairy legends, even in a western village. You must go adroitly to work, and make friends with the children, and the old men [. . .] The old women are most learned, but will not so readily be got to talk.[43]

When Gregory discusses the origins of the stories she collected, she emphasises her admittance to the domestic spheres of the labouring class, and she uses literary devices in her texts to suggest her proximity to the material. For example, in *The Kiltartan History Book* (1909), rather than using reported speech as she does in 'An Emigrant's Notebook', Gregory uses direct speech in an exaggerated way. The first edition of the book consists of one long quotation, giving the impression that the stories are being relayed verbatim.[44] This is sustained up to Gregory's 'Notes' at the end of the text, where she gives further proof of her propinquity, commenting that the illustrations, by her son Robert, 'are drawn from some delft figures, ornaments in a Kiltartan house'.[45]

In *The Kiltartan Poetry Book*, published ten years later, she puts herself to the fore and places herself more explicitly in the homes of 'the people':

> It was in a stonecutter's house where I went to have a headstone made for Raftery's grave that I found a manuscript book of his poems, written out in the clear beautiful Irish characters. It was to a working farmer's house

> I walked on many a moonlit evening with the manuscript that his greater knowledge helped me to understand and by his hearth that I read for the first time the *Vision of Death* and the *Lament for O'Daly* [. . .] In translating these poems I have chosen to do so in the speech of the thatched houses where I have heard and gathered them.[46]

Like the Poor Old Woman whom she would play in a performance of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* the same year (1919), Gregory disguises herself to her readers, performing as a common countrywoman who frequents moonlit roads and sooty hearths. But it is, of course, Gregory's social privilege that allows her to mediate between 'the people' and her readers. The point was not lost on Yeats, who wrote that *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* (1902) and *Gods and Fighting Men* (1904) were 'made possible by her past; semi-feudal Roxborough, her inherited sense of caste, her knowledge of that top of the world where men and women are valued for their manhood and their charm, not for their opinions'.[47]

When Yeats writes 'men and women are valued for their manhood and their charm, not for their opinions', his characteristically convoluted syntax might imply that both sexes are esteemed for both traits; Gregory's literary value can therefore be associated with masculine power. Albeit obliquely, Yeats is indicating a key feature of Gregory's mature work: her ascribing of conventionally masculine traits to female characters. Adams notes that this is particularly the case in her 'mythological histor[ies]', and Hawkins argues that Gregory's 'conjoining martial valour and femininity' is a means of empowerment as well as a justification of 'the Ascendancy's inclusion within and hegemony over the Irish nation'.[48] Cathy Leeney counters, 'the plays are shaped to question and pressurize [the] idea' of an Ascendancy patriarchal power structure.[49]

The relationship of gender, power and the domestic becomes clearer by examining Gregory's earliest work, which illuminates how she used her sex and her status to gain cultural capital as a female writer. Her transference of that power to her subjects – the female characters in her folklore and drama, and male and female labouring-class characters in her plays – is a crucial transition in her politics and her literary career. But it was not an immediate transition, nor was Gregory always willing to be transparent about her privilege. In her preface to *Gods and Fighting Men*, a 'Dedication to the Members of the Irish Literary Society of New York', she casually (or, perhaps, cunningly) claims the hero Finn's sentiments as her own: 'We would not give up our own country – Ireland – if we were to get the whole world as an estate, and the Country of the Young along with it'.[50] In Gregory's 'We' the present-day reader cannot help but hear Yeats's 'We

Irish' and its origins in Bishop Berkeley's 'we'. Berkeley, while reformist, was intent on the preservation of the landed class's privileges.[51]

At least by 1913, when *Our Irish Theatre: A Chapter of Autobiography* was published, Gregory was eager to dissociate from Edgeworth:

> I myself delight in Miss Edgeworth's novels, and could keen after Lady Clonbrony's yellow satin chair-covers, pushed out for the sake of 'painted velvet.' But as regards the life of Ireland and the people of Ireland, they are patronising, artificial, taking a bird's-eye view of a simple peasantry, grateful for small mercies, and an impulsive, prodigal landlord, who, repentant, leaves the husks of London, and wins Heaven in eating his own mutton at home.[52]

In her study of the Irish novel, Claire Connolly contrasts the private 'delight' Gregory continued to take in reading Edgeworth with her 'strictly ideological appraisal of the tendency of Irish fiction'.[53] Gregory's devaluing of the nineteenth-century novel, and her choice of folklore and drama as the genres in which she would principally write have the effect of obfuscating any comparisons of her work with the 'patronising, artificial' novels of Edgeworth, however much Gregory may have learned from them. By refusing to place herself in an Edgeworthian literary tradition, Gregory insists that her own work is read as an 'authentic', proximate depiction of the people of Ireland and not tainted by association with a remote, patronising landlord class.

When Gregory writes about misrepresentations of 'the life of Ireland and the people of Ireland', she is most immediately understood to mean labouring people, but her concern with the depiction of women's lives is equally connected, an interrelatedness of gender and class that would be formalised in theories of intersectionality at the end of the twentieth century. Intimations of these politics are perceptible in 'Arabi and His Household' and can be traced at length in the devices of plot, structure and character that Gregory put to work in her mythologies.

The episodic structure of *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* (1902) breaks the narration in such a way as to allow for long segments in which Cuchulain is not in the frame, making room for Deirdre's story to rise to the foreground.[54] This technique is used to a greater degree in *Gods and Fighting Men* (1904), where one of the main themes in the second section of the book is the story of Diarmuid and Grania.[55] Yeats's preface to *Gods and Fighting Men* gives the impression that Gregory's female characters are secondary to the action:

> When he [Finn] has need of their [i.e. the gods'] help his messenger can say: 'There is not a king's son or a prince, or a leader of the Fianna of Ireland, without having a wife or a mother or a foster-mother or a sweet-heart of the Tuatha de Danaan.'[56]

In fact, Gregory emphasises women's agency and independence, not their supporting roles.

In the story of Diarmuid and Grania, Diarmuid has a power of enchantment (a 'love spot') given to him by a woman, and when Grania sees it, she feels 'great love for him'.[57] Crucially, Grania has *already* demonstrated her attraction to Diarmuid, and the sight of the love spot simply confirms her choice. At the wedding feast for Grania and Finn, for whom Gregory tells us Grania has 'no liking', Grania points out various men and asks the Druid sitting near her who they are:

> 'who is that man on the right hand of Oisin [. . .] Who is that beside Goll? [. . .] who is that thin-legged man beside Osgar? [. . .] Who is that proud, hasty man beside Caoilte? [. . .] Who is that sweet-worded man', she said then, 'with the dark hair, and cheeks like the rowan berry, on the left side of Finn?' 'That is Diarmuid, grandson of Duibhne', said the Druid, 'that is the best lover of women in the whole world.' 'That is a good company', said Grania.[58]

Later, after the feast, when Grania is already 'looking out' at Diarmuid, his cap falls, the enchantment works its magic and the tragedy is set on its course.

In Gregory's folklore, she often inverts conventionally gendered virtues. In *Gods and Fighting Men*, Diarmuid, not Grania, is given the predicament of choosing between love and duty.[59] On several occasions, Diarmuid is described as 'comely' and 'beautiful'; when Finn, chasing the lovers across Ireland, finally catches up with them, he says to Diarmuid, 'it is a pity all the women of Ireland not to be looking at you now, for your great beauty is turned to ugliness, and your comely shape to uncomeliness'.[60] Whereas Diarmuid and Finn are driven by the emotions of love and jealousy, Grania is motivated by intellect. When she and Finn first meet, he quizzes her to test her reputation for quick thinking: '"What is quicker than the wind?" said Finn then. "A woman's mind", said Grania.' Gregory adds, 'And indeed she was telling no lie when she said that'.[61]

In Gregory's play based on the same story, *Grania* is given sole billing. She is commanding, frank, and expresses piercing insights about the relationship between respect for women in the public and private spheres. 'Listen to me', she demands of Finn:

> it was not till you saw another man craving my love, that the like love was born in yourself. And I will go no more wearing out my time in lonely places, where the martens and hares and badgers run from my path, but it is to thronged places I will go, where it is not through the eyes of wild startled beasts you will be looking at me, but through the eyes of king's sons [. . .]

> For it is certain it is by the respect of others we partly judge even those we know through and through.[62]

Richard Allan Cave describes *Grania* as 'the bleakest of [Gregory's] tragedies that records how a woman's creative strength is transmuted into a self-destructive force when its potential goes unrecognised in a society where values are of masculinist definition'.[63] Indeed, scholars have long identified a feminist strain in Gregory's drama, but an integrated study of Gregory's plays and prose, with *Gods and Fighting Men* as a particularly salient example, shows how Gregory does not merely critique the 'masculinist' values of society but also offers scenarios in which more fluid identities are at play. She presents readers with a feminine man and a masculine woman, and both virtues are valued, putting into practice Yeats's line, 'men and women are valued for their manhood and their charm'.

Prior to the long quotation of Grania's song with which Yeats ends his essay 'Dramatis Personae', he sums up Gregory's character: 'in her life much artifice, in her nature much pride, [she] was born to see the glory of the world in a peasant mirror'.[64] Roy Foster contrasts Yeats's 'energetic' autobiographical style with Gregory's that is 'faintly coloured and mannered', which is surprising given John Quinn's prediction that Gregory's memoir would be 'like a Manet painting'.[65] Paige Reynolds accounts for Gregory's literary style by suggesting that it 'reflects the form of her many Abbey scrapbooks' and is 'an awkward attempt at journalistic accuracy'.[66] Reynolds's connection between the literary work and the material artefact – the memoir and the scrapbook – intimates a link to a fundamental aspect of Gregory's early literary career: a notebook; a letter-box; a journalistic account of a man, his family and their possessions. Gregory's 'mannered' and at times documentary prose style attempts to bring the reader as close as possible to the lives that she encountered, and the material detail that she incorporates into her texts both proves her authority and occludes her difference. The materiality of Gregory's domestic worlds is less glamorous than 'Lady Clonbrony's yellow satin chair-covers', but it is equally seductive.

Notes

1. Lucy McDiarmid, *Poets and the Peacock Dinner: The Literary History of a Meal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016 [2014]), 75; for the 'cold cash actualities' of Gregory's patronage of Yeats, see 'Patronage and Creative Exchange: Yeats, Lady Gregory and the Economy of Indebtedness', in *Yeats and Women*, ed. Deirdre Toomey, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 168–204.

2. Paige Reynolds, 'The Making of a Celebrity: Lady Gregory and the Abbey's First American Tour', *Irish University Review* 34:1 (Summer 2004), 81–93, at 81–2.
3. Judith Hill, *Lady Gregory: An Irish Life* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 179.
4. Elizabeth Coxhead, *Lady Gregory: A Literary Portrait* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 38.
5. Lady Gregory, ed. *Mr. Gregory's Letter-box 1813–1830* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1898), 10.
6. For a discussion of Blunt's imprisonment in Galway Gaol and Gregory's 'grá' for him, see McDiarmid, *Poets and the Peacock Dinner*, 80–8.
7. Gregory, *Letter-box*, 5.
8. Coxhead, *Lady Gregory*, 27 and Judith Hill, *Lady Gregory: An Irish Life* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2005), 57; in Taura S. Napier, 'Lady Greogry's "Emigrant's Notebook": Autobiography, Narrative, and the Anglo-Irish Book Trade', *LISA* 3:1 (2005), 11–21, James Pethica is quoted regarding the notebook's composition: 'She may have written some parts sooner after marrying, but winter 1883 is the moment she returns to Ireland and more particularly to Roxborough, her family's estate, for the first time as an "emigrant"', 11.
9. See, for example, the first footnote explaining the 'long great coat' described by Thady, which the editor identifies as a 'cloak, or mantle', a garment 'of high antiquity'; the editor then provides a long quotation from Spencer describing the mantle's usefulness for outlaws, rebels and thieves, thereby directing the reader to regard 'honest Thady' with some scepticism; Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*, ed. George Watson, introduction by Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995),7–8; see also the Glossary, which, as Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick notes, has the effect of positioning the editor as a 'competing narrative voice'; *Castle Rackrent*, xxiv–xxv.
10. Coxhead, *Gregory*, 29.
11. Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*, 2; this passage serves as the epigraph to Anne Owens Weekes's chapter 'Maria Edgeworth: Domestic Saga', in *Irish Women Writers: An Uncharted Tradition* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2009), 33.
12. For a discussion of Lady Gregory, Sir William and Blunt in relation to Urabi and the Egyptian nationalist movement, see McDiarmid, *Poets and the Peacock Dinner*, 70–5.
13. Lady Gregory, 'Arabi and His Household', *The Times*, 23 October, 1882, 4; Lady Gregory, 'Arabi and His Household' [pamphlet] (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co, 1882).
14. Gregory, 'Arabi and His Household', 4; McDiarmid notes that with the reference to *Henry IV, Part 2*, Gregory establishes 'her insignificance as well as her Englishness', *Poets and the Peacock Dinner*, 72–3.
15. Ibid.

16. McDiarmid, *Poets and the Peacock Dinner*, 72.
17. For a discussion of Gregory as a participant in 'Irish Orientalism' and her use of an 'elite class position' to link 'domestic space and political action', see Andrea Bobotis, 'From Egypt to Ireland: Lady Augusta Gregory and Cross-Cultural Nationalisms in Victorian Ireland', *Victorian Internationalisms* 48 (November 2007), https://ronjournal.org/articles/n48/from-egypt-to-ireland-lady-augusta-gregory-and-cross-cultural-nationalisms-in-victorian-ireland/.
18. For the detail of Urabi's photograph, see McDiarmid, *Poets and the Peacock Dinner*, 74.
19. For the Edgeworth family's philanthropy, see Helen O'Connell, *Ireland and the Fiction of Improvement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); for John Ruskin, Maria Edgeworth, and the Gregorys, see Eglantina Remport, *Lady Gregory and the Ruskinian Ideal: Art, Drama, Politics* (London: Palgrave, forthcoming).
20. Gregory, *Letter-box*, 1.
21. Ibid., 2.
22. Hazard Adams, *Lady Gregory* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1973), 25.
23. Gregory, *Letter-box*, 16.
24. Ibid., 5–6.
25. See Kirkpatrick, introduction to Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*, xxii for a concise discussion of the Edgeworth family's politics.
26. Rita Felski asks, 'Why not acknowledge that works of art can serve as cultural reference points for interpretation as well as objects to be interpreted?' *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2015), 168.
27. Mitzi Myers, 'War Correspondence: Maria Edgeworth and the En-Gendering of Revolution, Rebellion, and Union', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 22 (November 1998), 74–91, at 79 and 84.
28. See Lady Gregory, *Seventy Years: Being the Autobiography of Lady Gregory*, ed. Colin Smythe (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1974), 284. There is a compelling connection between the *Letter-box* and Gregory's autobiography; she concludes a long section in the *Letter-box* on Lord Talbot by writing, 'Well, the world is seventy years older since then. The Catholics have not sold England to the Pope. The House of Lords still stands. Nonconformists are decently buried and the ghosts of good Churchmen have not come out of their graves. The sun has not yet set upon the Empire. // 'The wine is older now, but the walnut trees bear fresh fruit. The elders of another generation sit and hear each other moan, and shake their heads over the Local government and Welsh Disestablishment that will bring the world to an end. // '*E pur si muove*. And we still live and plant roses'; *Letter-Box*, 289, underlined emphasis mine.
29. Gregory, *Letter-box*, 48.
30. W. B. Yeats, *The Hour-Glass, Cathleen ni Houlihan, The Pot of Broth: Being volume two of Plays for an Irish Theatre* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1904), 35–6,

41–2, 46, 57; for a study of the manuscripts that prove Gregory's authorship, see James Pethica, '"Our Kathleen": Yeats's Collaboration with Lady Gregory in the Writing of *Cathleen ni Houlihan*', in *Yeats Annual 6*, ed. Warwick Gould (London: Macmillan, 1988), 3–31 and Deirdre Toomey, ed. *Yeats and Women* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 205–22; also see Toomey, *Yeats and Women,* 403–18 for Pethica's transcription of the manuscript drafts of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* showing Yeats's and Gregory's contributions.

31. Gregory, *Letter-box*, 14.
32. Ibid., 26–7.
33. Lady Gregory, 'The Felons of Our Land', *Cornhill Magazine* 8 (1 Jan 1900), 622.
34. Hill, *Lady Gregory*, 127.
35. Gregory, *Letter-box,* 92.
36. Ibid., 45.
37. Ibid.
38. The Sergeant declares, 'It's those that are down would be up and those that are up would be down, if it wasn't for us'; later, the Man cajoles, 'Sergeant, I am thinking it was with the people you were, and not with the law you were, when you were a young man' (Lucy McDiarmid and Maureen Waters, eds. *Lady Gregory: Selected Writings* (New York: Penguin, 1995), 364, 370).
39. Gregory, *Letter-box,* 29.
40. Ibid., 270.
41. Gregory writes, 'This discovery, this disclosure of the folk learning, the folk-poetry, the ancient tradition, was the small beginning of a weighty change. It was an upsetting of the table of values, an astonishing excitement. The imagination of Ireland had found a new homing place'; *The Kiltartan Poetry Book* (London: Putnam, 1919), 10.
42. For a discussion of the dynamics of class and gender in relation to Gregory's folklore collecting, specifically the comparison of proselytising and folklore gathering, see Lucy McDiarmid, 'Lady Gregory, George Moore, and Gathering Folklore', in *George Moore: Dublin, Paris, Hollywood*, eds Conor Montague and Adrian Frazier (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2012), 53–70.
43. W. B. Yeats, ed. *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (London: Walter Scott, 1888), xi–xii.
44. In the 1926 edition of *The Kiltartan History Book* (London: T. Fisher Unwin), Gregory claimed that the history contains not 'one word of my own; all comes from the lips of the people'; for a discussion of the veracity of this claim, see Maureen Murphy, 'Lady Gregory: "The Book of the People"', *Colby Quarterly* 27:1 (March 1991), 40–7, at 42. McDiarmid reads Gregory's invisibility in the folklore collections as 'almost a kind of self-effacement'; see 'Lady Gregory, George Moore, and Gathering Folklore', 63.
45. Lady Gregory, *The Kiltartan History Book* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1909), 52.
46. Lady Gregory, *The Kiltartan Poetry Book: Prose Translations from the Irish* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1919), 11–12, 16.

47. W. B. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, ed. William H. O'Donnell and Douglas N. Archibald (New York: Scribner, 1999), 336.
48. Adams, *Lady Gregory*, 64; Hawkins quoted in Cathy Leeney, *Irish Women Playwrights, 1900–1939: Gender and Violence on Stage* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 25.
49. Leeney, *Irish Women Playwrights*, 25.
50. Lady Gregory, *Gods and Fighting Men: The Story of the Tuatha de Danaan and of the Fianna of Ireland* (London: John Murray, 1905), viii.
51. For a discussion of the difference between W. B. Yeats and Berkeley's uses of the construction 'We Irish', and the limits of Berkeley's reformist agenda, see Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1996), 120–5.
52. Lady Gregory, 'The Irish Theatre and its People', *Our Irish Theatre: a Chapter of Autobiography* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1972), 140; quoted in Claire Connolly, *A Cultural History of the Irish Novel, 1790–1829* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 20.
53. Connolly, *Irish Novel*, 21.
54. Adams, *Lady Gregory*, 49.
55. For a discussion of the structure of the book, Gregory's translation of the lives of the gods, and her faithfulness to the medieval source material, see Mark Williams, *Ireland's Immortals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 407–8.
56. Gregory, *Gods and Fighting Men*, xiii.
57. Ibid., 346.
58. Ibid., 345–6.
59. Ibid., 348.
60. Ibid., 392.
61. Ibid., 345.
62. *Irish Folk History Plays* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), 32.
63. Richard Allen Cave, 'Revaluations: Representations of Women in the Tragedies of Gregory and Yeats', *Irish University Review* 34:1 (Spring–Summer 2004), 122–32, at 132. See also, Maureen Waters, 'Lady Gregory's "Grania": A Feminist Voice', *Irish University Review* 25:1 (Spring–Summer 1995), 11–24; Noelle Bowles, 'Nationalism and Feminism in Lady Gregory's "Kincora", "Dervorgilla", and "Grania"', *New Hibernia Review* 3:3 (Autumn 1999), 116–30; Dawn Duncan, 'Lady Gregory and the Feminine Journey: "The Gaol Gate", "Grania" and "The Story Brought by Brigit"', *Irish University Review* 34:1 (Spring–Summer 2004), 133–43.
64. Yeats, *Autobiographies*, 336; for a discussion of this portrait, see R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life*, vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 490–1.
65. Ibid., 491.
66. Reynolds, 'The Making of a Celebrity', 91.