Bernard Shaw and His Contemporaries

LADY GREGORY AND IRISH NATIONAL THEATRE

ART, DRAMA, POLITICS

Eglantina Remport

Bernard Shaw and His Contemporaries

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Bernard Shaw and His Contemporaries
ISBN 978-3-319-76610-2 ISBN 978-3-319-76611-9 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76611-9

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018933061

Cover illustration: Granger Historical Picture Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company
Springer International Publishing AG part of Springer Nature
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

For my mother and father, in gratitude
for our Grand Tours

Acknowledgements

My first words of acknowledgement are to Queen's University Belfast and the Department of Education and Learning of the Government of Northern Ireland for their generous financial support of my research on Lady Augusta Gregory. I am especially thankful to the School of English at Queen's and its former Head, John Thompson, for supporting my research visits to the Special Collections and Archives Division of the Robert W. Woodruff Library at Emory University, Atlanta, GA, and the Albert A. and Henry W. Berg Collection at New York Public Library. I am thankful also for the experience of the vibrant research community both at the School of English and at the Institute of Irish Studies at Queen's between 2004 and 2008. The late Siobhán Kilfeather and Caroline Sumpter have commented on earlier drafts of this work, and generously shared their views on the social and political contexts for nineteenth-century Irish and English history and literature.

The staff members of various libraries have offered kind assistance in the realisation of the present research project. I would like to thank Kathy Shoemaker at the Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Isaac Gewirtz at the Albert A. and Henry W. Berg Collection, New York Public Library, Honora Faul at the National Library of Ireland, as well as the staff of the Special Collections in the main library of Queen's University Belfast, the Old Library of Trinity College Dublin, and the Newspaper Library of the British Library. Nóra Szegedi and Pál Tömöry at the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Arts and Sciences (MTAK)

have been most accommodating, and likewise the staff of the National Széchényi Library in Budapest.

This book would not have been realised without the enthusiasm of my editors Tomas René and Vicky Bates, as well as that of Nelson O'Ceallaigh Ritschel and Peter Gahan, editors of the *Bernard Shaw and His Contemporaries* series at Palgrave Macmillan. Emilie Pine has been supportive in granting permission to publish parts of an earlier article of mine on Lady Gregory and the visual arts that had appeared in the *Irish University Review* in 2011.

Within the Irish Studies scholarly community, I thank: Giovanna Tallone for drawing my attention to Lady Gregory's travel sketchbooks several years ago when information was less readily available; Carla De Petris for those first conversations on Lady Gregory and Italy; Dawn Duncan for encouraging my interest in pursuing research on Lady Gregory and the visual arts; Eamonn Hughes for his advice on the political *tableau vivant* tradition in Ireland; and Lionel Pilkington for his comments on Irish history and social politics. I am very thankful for Deirdre Madden's enthusiasm in the later stages of my writing on the most significant woman dramatist and theatre director of Ireland.

On a personal note, I am very thankful for the support of the following friends and family members: Ágnes Pázmány, Márta Gyapay, Gábor Gyapay, Zoltán Szirmai; Györgyi and Mihály Kocsis; the Hárshegyi family; Yi-ling Yang and Keerty Nakray; Owen O'Neill and Ann-Marie Connolly; and Andrea Velich, Natália Pikli, Judit Friedrich, Ferenc Takács, Győző Ferencz, and János Kenyeres at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. I appreciate the support of my brother Ádám and his family Éva and Laura. I thank my husband Michael for the many years of enriching conversation that helped the research project to blossom, for his unfailing belief in my ability to bring it to completion, and for all the nice times on this long and winding road. I would also like to thank Michael's late mother and his father, as well as his brothers and sisters, for warmly welcoming me to their family. Finally, my mother and father have been incredible in guiding me through life and research; I lovingly dedicated this book to them.

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Introduction

George Bernard Shaw described his friend Lady Augusta Gregory as 'the greatest living Irishwoman'.[1] Shaw praised her in remarkable terms during a speech delivered in London on 3 February 1910:

> If ever there was a person doomed from the cradle to write for the stage, to break through every social obstacle to get to the stage, to refuse to do anything but write for the stage, nay, to invent and create a theatre if no theatre existed, that person is the author of *Hyacinth Halvey*, of *The Workhouse Ward*, and of *The Rising of the Moon*. There are authors who have achieved considerable reputation and success as writers for the theatre, who have not had a tenth of her natural faculty for the work.[2]

Lady Isabella Augusta Gregory, née Persse, was a prodigious and influential dramatist, an amateur painter, and a dedicated social reformer who worked during the period of the Irish Literary Revival. She was co-founder and co-director of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, known at the time as the Irish National Theatre, and was friends with fellow playwrights Shaw, John Millington Synge, William Butler Yeats, and Sean O'Casey. She was a prominent figure of the Home Industries Movement and the Co-operative Movement in Ireland, both of which aimed at improving the living standards and working conditions of Irish farmers and tenants. Through her husband Sir William Henry Gregory of Coole Park in County Galway she was a woman of high social standing, someone who

E. Remport, *Lady Gregory and Irish National Theatre*,
Bernard Shaw and His Contemporaries,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76611-9_1

fostered friendships with Sir Henry Layard of the British Arundel Society, Sir Frederic Burton of the National Gallery in London, and Sir John Everett Millais of the Royal Academy of Arts. Sir William had been born into a family in which politics played a hugely significant role, his grandfather having been Under Secretary for Ireland. Sir William had been educated at Harrow School, London, and at Christ Church College, Oxford, and had served as Queen Victoria's Governor of Ceylon. He was known for his commitment to establishing and maintaining the social prestige of the fine arts in Victorian society, being on the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery in London and a Member of Parliament in Westminster.

Shaw's admiration for Lady Gregory arose, in part, out of this rich cultural heritage and the social ideals that she brought to her work for the Irish Revival at the beginning of the twentieth century. One of the most significant influences in this regard was John Ruskin. When the defrocked Irish priest Peter Keegan delivers his famous condemnation of the ethos of 'commercial efficiency' at the end of Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island* (1904), the English businessman Thomas Broadbent replies that Keegan's persuasiveness reminds him of the 'great man' Ruskin.[3] Ruskin, the 'Victorian Sage,' was a profoundly influential social and art critic during the Victorian period, holding the prestigious Slade Professorship of Fine Art at Oxford University between 1870 and 1878, and again between 1883 and 1885. Ruskin had made a name for himself by promoting the social importance of the arts, arguing fervently for the existence of a correlation between their social standing and the condition of society in general. Through his numerous books, pamphlets, and open letters, Ruskin developed a programme that aimed at increasing the social awareness and prestige of the arts in Britain. Through this work, he created a special framework within which artists, workers, and politicians functioned during the late nineteenth century.

Ruskin's theories influenced many diverse social, political, and artistic movements, including the Christian Socialist Movement, the Home Industries Movement, the Co-operative Movement, and the Arts and Crafts Movement. He was convinced that there was a connection between a nation's appreciation of its home-grown artistic talents and the general state of that nation. For this reason, he fervently promoted the work of British artists such as William Turner, John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, George Frederic Watts, William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, and Frederic Leighton. Ruskin was aware, of course, that these artists had read his works and

had appreciated the aesthetic and social ideals that he had formulated in the many volumes of *Modern Painters*, *The Stones of Venice*, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, *Unto This Last*, and *Fors Clavigera*. Ruskin had engrained in these artists a deep love of the visual arts and instilled in them the idea that an artist carried a moral responsibility to the society in which s/he lived and for which s/he worked. In the later nineteenth century, this sense of responsibility became manifest in a number of ways, particularly through the involvement of some of these artists in the Working Men's Colleges of Britain.

Sir William Gregory, John Ruskin, and Sir Henry Layard were diligent in raising public awareness of the fine arts, as shown by their dedicated work for the Arundel Society. Sir Henry Layard's palace on the Grand Canal in Venice—located not far from the one the Brownings would purchase—was visited by many Victorian *art connoisseurs*. Lady Gregory wrote in her memoirs that Sir Henry 'was treated with ceremonious honour by those who recognised the value of his service to archaeology and art' and that '[t]here was no one of distinction among his countrymen there whose gondola was not often at his door'.[4] Ruskin was one of the countrymen who visited him, a man who, in Lady Gregory's words, always 'seemed to be [the British] Ambassador in Venice'.[5] She cited one of his letters on Ruskin's visit in her memoirs: 'Ruskin is here, and in very gentle humour, but in very low spirits'; this was due to Ruskin's old age and his slowly deteriorating physical and mental condition.[6] Ruskin was known for his writings on Venice and Venetian architecture; on this occasion he came to inspect the restoration of the Ducal Palace and St. Mark's Cathedral. Ruskin was satisfied with the restoration work carried out on the famous buildings. Sir Henry wrote that Ruskin thought 'the restorations of St. Mark's [Cathedral] have been carefully and lovingly done' and that 'the new capitals of the columns supporting the Ducal Palace [were] so admirably executed that you would not tell them from the old'.[7]

Lady Gregory understood the significance of Ruskin's remarks. She had read *The Stones of Venice* and during her married years she had undertaken many long walks around the town, searching for buildings or art works that Sir William, Sir Henry, or Ruskin had considered worthy of visiting or viewing. Lady Gregory's friend, the novelist Henry James, wrote that it was customary at the time to walk around the streets and canals holding a copy of Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice*, which James thought to be every visitor's perfect guide to the artistic richness of the

Mediterranean city.[8] Lady Gregory herself was well aware of the aesthetic and emotional significance that Venice held for the Victorian critic, and she appreciated his approval of the work of those artists and workmen who had been involved in the restoration project.[9] Both Venice and the Layard's Ca' Capello, where Enid Layard was instructed in drawing by Ruskin himself, became an important place for Lady Gregory as well.[10] Later in her life, when times were troubled in Ireland, the Venetian palace was where she found solace, a place to which she returned time after time.

Lady Gregory often found herself engaged in conversation about Ruskin's aesthetic and social principles with Sir William's *art connoisseur* friends. In fact, her views on the social function of the arts and the social responsibility of the artist were shaped, in large measure, by Ruskin's social and political thought. *Lady Gregory and Irish National Theatre: Art, Drama, Politics* analyses the many different ways in which Ruskin's teachings shaped Lady Gregory's own aesthetic, social, and political views that subsequently influenced the literary and cultural revival in Ireland. As an integral part of this, I argue that Lady Gregory's way of thinking was fundamentally Ruskinian in character. One of the consequences of this was that her ideals were markedly different to those of her closest friend, William Butler Yeats, with whom she founded the Abbey Theatre in 1904. The book illustrates how Lady Gregory's determination to realise a Ruskinian social and educational programme in Ireland helped the cultural and literary revival to develop and flourish in the ways that it did at the beginning of the twentieth century. This is not to claim that she worked alone in this respect, or that she was the sole driving force behind the cultural developments in Ireland. It is to assert, however, that Lady Gregory had a clear, independent vision, one that was markedly different from that of Yeats, J. M. Synge, Maud Gonne, Annie Horniman, and other figures of the Irish Literary Revival period, including Alice Milligan, Patrick Pearse, and Thomas MacDonagh.[11] She envisaged the possibility of a programme similar in kind to that which Ruskin had envisaged for the British Isles being achieved specifically in Ireland. She was convinced that the implementation of Ruskin's social programme would benefit Irish people immensely, particularly the large swathes of rural people living in various levels of poverty during the late Victorian period.

Of course, Lady Gregory could not realise any such programme in Ireland without the support and assistance of others. Fortunately for

her, at the time there was a consensus among a number of literary, cultural and political figures in Ireland that Ruskin's social and cultural educational proposals should be enacted in Ireland as far as possible. Sir Horace Plunkett, George Russell, Standish O'Grady, and William Butler Yeats were all disciples of Ruskin to varying degrees; they were avid readers of Ruskin's works and were figures who appreciated the significance of his social programme. This was so despite the fact that each of these writers and thinkers had derived a different set of perspectives from Ruskin's vast body of writing, resulting in important differences of opinion among them as regards how best the ideas might be implemented in Ireland. Yet all of these writers accepted Ruskin's notion that the arts should play a central role in any educational programme that aimed at elevating public taste in Ireland, and by doing so, enriching the quality of life for the majority of the Irish population. Spokesperson of the the Irish Co-operative Movement George Russell wrote in *Co-operation and Nationality* (1912) that, in an ideal Irish community, work and art should complement one another, granting Irishmen 'a more intellectual and enjoyable social life' as well as a certain degree of 'political power and economic prosperity'.[12] Later, in *The National Being* (1916), Russell envisaged co-operative communities throughout Ireland with libraries, choirs, bands, and halls for dances and concerts that would become central components of Irish village life.[13] Russell proposed that Irish schools should be decorated with reproductions of well-known pictures, that picture galleries should be established in the larger Irish towns, and that Irish roadsides should be beautified.[14] Russell's ideas call immediately to mind Ruskin's famous Victorian road-building project in Ferry Hinksey near Oxford, one of Ruskin's first attempts to put his social theories into practical usage. Russell's ideas on the decoration of schools and picture galleries recall Ruskin's lines from his open letters to the workmen of Great Britain, published as *Fors Clavigera*. Ruskin wrote that more pictures, sculptures, books, and other 'objects of art and natural history' should be used as decorations in British and Irish schools.[15] Ruskin wished this to enrich the artistic sensibilities of both the school children and their middle-class or working-class parents coming from rural or urban backgrounds.

Ruskin was well familiar with social conditions in Ireland. Following an invitation by John and Maria La Touche of Harristown in County Kildare, Ruskin visited Ireland in 1861. While his first comments on the state of the Irish countryside were far from complimentary, his first

impressions of Irish men and women induced in him a great sense of sympathy. Later, during the Home Rule debate, Ruskin wrote an open letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette* (1886) in which he stated that Irish people were 'artistic', 'indefatigable', 'witty', and 'affectionate', and that these characteristics should be taken into account in any programme that the British government would seek to enact in addressing the social and political problems of the country.[16] Ruskin added that, in seeking to understand the 'Irish character', educated Englishmen would be well advised to consult the writings of Maria Edgeworth. Of Edgeworth's *Ormond*, *Ennui* and *The Absentee* Ruskin asserted that they 'contain[ed] more essential truths about Ireland than can be learned from any other sources whatsoever'.[17] When assessing the impact of Ruskin's thought on Lady Gregory's social ideals, it is important to keep in mind this impact that Edgeworth had on Ruskin, recognising the precedent of the early nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish female novelist for the late nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish female dramatist and mythographer. Ruskin was a devoted reader of Edgeworth's novels, keeping them at his bedside, along with works by William Shakespeare, Lord Byron, Walter Scott, and Thomas Carlyle. Indeed, he would read from Edgeworth's novels to his guests who stayed at his home in Brantwood.[18] Ruskin admired the general sentiment of her novels as well as her use of the Hiberno-English dialect. Furthermore, Ruskin knew of the close friendship between her and his favourite author, Walter Scott. Ruskin was always keen to observe the thematic and stylistic similarities and differences between the fictional works of two of his favourite writers.

Although significant, these connections between Scott and Edgeworth would not have deepened Ruskin's love of her novels had it not been for what Ruskin perceived as Richard Lovell Edgeworth's dedicated work to alleviate poverty on his Irish estate in County Longford. Ruskin considered the work of Maria's father to be one of the finest examples of benign landlordship throughout the British Isles: on the Edgeworth estate there were, in Walter Scott's words, 'but snug cottages and smiling faces all about'.[19] Written by an avid admirer rather than by a stern critic of Richard Edgeworth's social experiments, Scott's comments were, of course, sentimentalist. Nevertheless, Scott genuinely intended to convey how differently the Edgeworth family approached social and educational issues in Ireland to their landowning contemporaries in the country, many of whom were absentee landlords indifferent to the welfare of their tenants. As admirers of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's

theories, the Edgeworth family proposed a programme for educating Irish children (both Catholic and Protestant), which was regarded by other reformers of the period as decidedly unconventional, if not radical. Seeing the circumstances of those who lived in abject poverty, the Edgeworth family sought to combine the education of children in theoretical and devotional aspects with the acquisition of practical skills. Their intention was to enable children to acquire practical skills while developing them intellectually and to influence their parents' behaviour at home and at work. As Helen O'Connell observes, the Edgeworth *père* was even engaged in parliamentary debates on the suitable forms and means of educating Irish children. Some of the principles of his *Practical Education* (1798)—a book he had co-written with his daughter Maria—were later used in the proposal that the Board of Education submitted to the British government in 1812.[20] The Edgeworth proposal inaugurated a long period of debate, during which Chief Secretary Robert Peel proposed that government funds should be channelled into voluntary, non-denominational educational organisations.[21]

Established by John David La Touche, Arthur Guinness, and Samuel Bewley, the Kildare Place Society was one such organisation, receiving large amounts of funding from the British government. O'Connell writes that although the Kildare Place Society was accused of proselytisation, especially during the Second Reformation of the 1820s, it was known that Repeal campaigner Daniel O'Connell had served on its first Board of Commissioners.[22] By this time, however, debates had been ongoing regarding the state of schooling in Britain and Ireland, especially in relation to the introduction of a National School System. This debate developed many social, political, dogmatic as well as religious aspects during the first half of the nineteenth century, partly because the issue of creating a new school system in Ireland became entangled in discussions over the political future of the country. Astutely, Maria Edgeworth had hinted at this problem in her 1809 novel *Ennui*, a novel that she wrote as a political allegory of the Act of Union between Britain and Ireland. *Rousseauisme* at its foundation, *Ennui* is a novel in which the characters of McLeod, Hardcastle and Lord Y—offer various alternative perspectives on the improvement of circumstances for Irish men, women, and children through learning.

Ruskin wrote the volumes of *Modern Painters* and *The Stones of Venice* in the context of these nineteenth-century debates on education. What Ruskin added to the debates was his persistent insistence

upon the importance of the fine arts in education and social formation. While Ruskin accepted the necessity of combining theoretical learning with practical instruction in schools and 'other educational establishments', he felt that too much emphasis was being laid on practical skills in the Industrial Revolution era, with too little emphasis on the aesthetic cultivation of children's tastes and stimulating their interest in literature, drama, painting, and design. Through her readings of Rousseau, Edgeworth, Scott, and Ruskin, Lady Gregory had become familiar with all the major issues involved in this debate on social formation. While of course she belonged to a socially privileged, Protestant land-owning class in Ireland, like her literary forerunner Maria Edgeworth, she was keen to explore new possibilities for improving the conditions of the tenants who rented the land on the Big House estates. She knew that selling Coole Park was never an option she could contemplate, as her personal circumstances and those of her country were changing during her lifetime. She was, however, concerned to improve the quality of life and working conditions for tenants on the Gregory estate and indeed for those tenants on other Big House estates during and after the period of the Land Agitation. She found that Ruskin's social and cultural ideas offered a way to achieve this goal at both local and national levels. In this study I explore the ways in which she went about realising the multifaceted social and educational programme that Ruskin had hoped to see implemented in the British Isles as a whole. In so doing, I adopt an interdisciplinary approach in drawing attention to the variety of Lady Gregory's life experience that resulted in her involvement in the worlds of art, archaeology, antiquarianism, theatre, local industry, co-operative enterprise, and constitutional politics.

As for the content of the book, the chapter "'My Education': Sir William Gregory, the *Grand Tours*, and the Visual Arts" reconstructs Lady Gregory's own education in the fine arts during the years of her marriage to Sir William. Sir William organised a number of *Grand Tours* of European museums and art galleries for his young wife; this occurred for a number of reasons. For one thing, he derived great pleasure from seeing beautiful artefacts displayed in stunningly designed buildings. For another, he felt compelled to widen his wife's horizons on matters relating to the visual arts, ranging from their history to their possible social functions. This was so because conversations in the upper echelons of Victorian society often revolved around the arts, influenced to a great extent by Dr. Heinrich Schliemann and Sir Henry Layard's

new excavations in Greece and the Middle East. Drawing on previously unpublished material from her holograph diaries, travel notes, and travel sketches, the chapter "'My Education': Sir William Gregory, the *Grand Tours*, and the Visual Arts" examines the ways in which Lady Gregory broadened her knowledge of the latest developments in the fields of art and archaeology, and the ways in which this knowledge was beginning to shape her thinking about art as well as about colonial politics. Significant in this regard is her status within late Victorian society: knowledge of the fine arts and ability to draw were generally considered as indicators of a woman's social status. As wife to a Trustee of the National Gallery in London and a Member of Parliament in Westminster, Lady Gregory was expected to be knowledgeable about the state of the arts both in Britain and in Continental Europe. The chapter "'My Education': Sir William Gregory, the *Grand Tours*, and the Visual Arts" ends with an analysis of the multifaceted social and theoretical debates concerning painting, sculpture, and architecture in Victorian England. As part of this, the infamous Whistler-Ruskin trial of 1878 is considered in some detail because theorists and historians considered this event as the epitome of the debate on the true function and value of the arts. This trial will receive more attention in later chapters of the book, when the focus turns towards Lady Gregory's friendship with the young aspiring poet William Butler Yeats and their joint efforts to establish a National Theatre in Ireland.

The chapter "'The "whorl" of Troy': Celtic Mythology, Victorian Hellenism, and the Irish Literary Revival" considers the principle of *noblesse oblige* as a guide to evaluating a new phase in Lady Gregory's life following the death of her husband in 1892. As Sir William's widow, she began editing the biography of her husband and the letters of his grandfather, who had acted as Under Secretary for Ireland at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However accurately or not, she portrayed both men as politicians who cared for the welfare of the people of Ireland, in what she presented as deeply challenging times for both the Anglo-Irish political *élite* and the British administration in Ireland. Lady Gregory positioned Sir William's family at the heart of a social reform movement that, in her interpretation, the socially concerned politicians of the era had hoped to realise in Ireland. Partly because of these biographical works, Lady Gregory was successful in establishing herself as a distinguished member of the Gregory family of County Galway. By the end of the 1890s, she was not only a prominent member within late Victorian English society but

also one of the leaders of the literary and cultural revival that was underway in Ireland. She compiled materials for two further books, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* of 1902 and *Gods and Fighting Men* of 1904. Through these works, she hoped to educate the reading public in Irish mythology and promote *noblesse oblige* as a principle to be adopted by leaders from all sections within Irish society and by British political leaders dealing with the pressing issues of land reform and Home Rule. Lady Gregory's attitude to the compilation and dissemination of ancient legends is compared with the intentions of authors of earlier collections, with those of Eugene O'Curry in *Lectures on the Manuscript Material of Ancient Irish History* (1861) and Standish O'Grady in his multi-volume work, *History of Ireland* (1878–80). Furthermore, my chapter "'The "whorl" of Troy': Celtic Mythology, Victorian Hellenism, and the Irish Literary Revival" considers her mythical compilations within the context of the Victorian art world when the theatre was regarded as an important dimension of the educational role of the arts. This dimension was evident in Frank Benson's production of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* in Oxford in 1880, a performance that exerted a significant influence on the theatre reform movement in England as well as on the dramatic movement in Ireland that would culminate in the foundation of the Abbey Theatre in 1904. Katherine Newey, Jeffrey Richards, and Anselm Heinrich have investigated Ruskin's multifaceted influence both on the Baliol Hall production in Oxford and the wider theatre reform movement in Britain in the last decades of the nineteenth century.[23] The invaluable and ground-breaking study of theirs, however, calls for further investigations, particularly with regard to the theatre scene in Ireland before the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

The chapter "'Ní neart go cur le chéile': Education, Social Reform, and the Abbey Theatre" addresses the connections between Lady Gregory's engagement in the Irish Home Industries and Irish Co-operative Movements along with her efforts to build a suitable repertoire for the Abbey Theatre. Ruskin had argued that the fine arts and the theatre were capable of (re-)forming people's characters to the end of a general improvement of the quality of life throughout society. Lady Gregory drew on this perspective when creating the repertoire of the Irish National Theatre. Some of her own plays of rural Ireland focus directly on the theme of character formation, a question that was central to the Co-operative Movement from the 1890s. Plunkett's and Russell's objectives for the Irish Co-operative Movement were indebted to Ruskin's ideals formulated in the aims of his St. George's Guild that

dated back to the late 1860s and early 1870s. Indeed, Plunkett and Russell followed more closely in Ruskin's footsteps than did the leaders of the Co-operative Movement in England. Of course, social problems in Ireland, where the majority of the population worked in the agricultural sector, were profoundly different to social problems in Britain, where most of the working population belonged to the industrial sector. Nonetheless, Ruskin's ideas on social (re-)formation resonated with critics and reformers on both sides of the Irish Sea. William Morris's lecture 'Factory Work' from 1884 advocated the idea that factories should become 'palaces of industry' where workers could cultivate their 'love of art' and 'sense of beauty and interest in life' and where children could learn the 'pleasure' and 'honor' for working for one's community. These sentiments were in many respects akin to those of George Russell, formulated in his seminal work on the aims of the Irish Co-operative Movement, *Co-operation and Nationality*.[24] In their own ways, Ruskin, Morris, and Russell envisaged an alternative social system in which the arts contribute to the improvement of the working conditions and the living standards of men and women, be they farmers in Ireland or manual labourers in British factories. Lady Gregory, for her part, shared the view that the arts should be used as instruments of social reform. Furthermore, under Ruskin's influence, she was of the view that the theatre itself should be utilised as a vehicle for fostering progressive social change. In this aspect, her views differed significantly from those of her co-directors at the Abbey Theatre. She aimed to establish an institution that could realise in an Irish setting the ideals of some of her contemporaries who believed, along Ruskinian lines, that both theatre as an institution and plays themselves could bring about a general change of character within Irish society. William Archer and Henry Granville-Barker, for instance, were two of her contemporaries who intended to establish a theatre with character-forming effects. As the Chapter "'Ní neart go cur le chéile': Education, Social Reform, and the Abbey Theatre" argues, the imprint of Ruskin's outlook was evident in their 1904 proposal to found a National Theatre in London, featuring a wide selection of plays from William Shakespeare to Henrik Ibsen.

Continuing the examination of Lady Gregory's plays from my chapter "'Ní neart go cur le chéile': Education, Social Reform, and the Abbey Theatre," the chapter "'See a play as a picture': The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the Sister Arts, and the Irish Plays" investigates the influence of Ruskin's aesthetic philosophy (intricately entwined as it was with

his social thought) on Lady Gregory's own work as playwright and theatre director. More precisely, the chapter looks at the staging of Lady Gregory's, Yeats's, and Synge's plays at the Abbey in the decade preceding the First World War. This is examined within the context of Victorian debates on the relationship between the Sister Arts. Ruskin enjoyed narrative *tableaux*, artworks that were didactic in nature; he was particularly taken with stage performances that employed the kind of *tableaux* that he had encountered in the paintings of Leighton, Watts, Alma-Tadema, and Burne-Jones. Back in the 1880s and 1890s, their works were seen as contributing to a wider theatre reform of the nineteenth century, particularly in their use of historical realism, a new trend in theatre that was inspired in large measure by the archaeological findings of Schliemann and Layard. Ruskin was greatly impressed by another kind of the narrative *tableau*, that painted by artists of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Given her knowledge of art and aesthetics acquired during those Grand Tours of Continental Europe, Lady Gregory understood that the generation of Pre-Raphaelite artists aimed at renewing a long-standing narrative tradition, one that dated back to the masterpieces of Jan van Eyck, Diego Velázquez, Peter Paul Rubens, and William Hogarth. She herself made use of this narrative tradition in painting when composing her plays or when planning stage designs for performances. The chapter "'See a play as a picture': The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the Sister Arts, and the Irish Plays" contrasts her idea of theatre and staging with that of Yeats and of Synge, setting their different approaches against the latest developments in British theatre against the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century period. This allows a comparison to be drawn between the work of the Abbey directors and that of their contemporaries Frank Benson, Henry Irving, Herbert Beerbohm Tree, and Edward Gordon Craig.

Finally, the chapter "*The Light of the World*: Christianity, Cultural Politics, and Constitutional Reform" examines the politics of her plays during the ten years prior to the rebellion in Dublin of Easter 1916. Only a small number of her many dramatic works have been taken by Irish critics as illustrating her political attitudes, the consequence of which is that her commitment to Irish nationalism has been mostly overstated as has been the influence of advanced nationalist politics in Ireland on her vision for Ireland's future in terms of Irish-British relations. Lady Gregory's political views have even been set alongside those of the radical and militant Irish Republican Patrick Pearse, leader of the Easter Rising, Head of the Provisional Government, and signatory of the

Proclamation of the Irish Republic, read out in front of the General Post Office on Dublin's Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street) on Monday, 24 April 1916. Lady Gregory and Pearse did indeed share certain views. Both regarded the prominence of the fine arts in Irish society as crucial to character formation and social development, and art and drama as fundamental to the education of Irish children. Pearse included these ideas in the educational programme of the schools of St. Enda's and St. Ita's, where teaching of devotional matters was combined with the teaching of art, literature, and science in both the Irish and the English languages. Playing fields, gardens, a handball-court, an open-air gymnasium, an art room, a museum, a library, a science laboratory, an infirmary, a playroom, and a school chapel also served the cultivation of young Irish minds, and corridors were beautified with artworks by Jack B. Yeats, George Russell, and Sarah Purser.[25] No doubt, St. Enda's school was Pearse's unique and remarkable achievement; however, it may well be regarded as a particular realisation of all the educational reform plans that had been the subject of so much debate through the course of the nineteenth century in both Britain and Ireland. Over time, however, Pearse's politics turned revolutionary, while Lady Gregory's remained reconciliatory, indicating strikingly different approaches to the idea of a brighter future for Ireland. My study takes serious account of Ruskin's, Pearse's, and Lady Gregory's Christian faith when evaluating their political thought, drawing attention to the writings of Ernest Renan, Rev. John Wesley, Cardinal John Henry Newman, as well as the ideas of the La Touche and Cowper-Temple families in Ireland (close friends of Ruskin). At the end of the chapter "*The Light of the World*: Christianity, Cultural Politics, and Constitutional Reform," Lady Gregory's politics of reconciliation are considered in detail in relation to aspects of the Home Rule policies of the Irish Parliamentary Party leader Charles Stewart Parnell as well as those of British Prime Ministers William Gladstone and Herbert H. Asquith from the 1880s to the 1910s.

As regards the time frame of the book, Katherine Newey and Jeffrey Richards have drawn attention to the impact of the First World War on the reception of Ruskin's aesthetic ideals in Britain.[26] Tim Hilton, Sarah Atwood, and Stuart Eagles have made similar observations with respect to the reception of Ruskin's educational ideals in Britain, although none of them consider the case of Ireland.[27] With the outbreak of the European war, a new chapter in Britain's imperial history began, one that would include the stories of independence movements taking hold in various

parts of the Empire. Lady Gregory herself had to end a chapter in her own life-story during the Great War: her son Robert died on the Italian front fighting against the armed forces of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918. Losing her son in the war marked for her the beginning of the drawn-out affair in which she eventually lost her home at Coole Park. Robert's widow, Margaret Gregory, inherited the residence and its lands after his death but had no interest in keeping the estate within the Gregory family. Within the literary scene in Ireland, as the country was about to enter upon a new chapter in its history, disagreements between actors, directors, and managers turned into bitter rivalries over the running and the financing of the Abbey Theatre as it tried to establish for itself the position of Ireland's National Theatre.[28] Furthermore, Lady Gregory was slowly losing her closest friends and allies, those upon whom she had come to rely in past times in realising the artistic and social programme that Ruskin had envisaged for the British Isles.

For years, she had campaigned with her nephew, the art collector Hugh Lane, for public funding to establish a Gallery of Modern Art in Dublin; an endeavour which testified to the deep imprint that her years spent visiting Continental museums and galleries had left on her and the strength of her commitment to Ruskinian ideals concerning art that had expounded in the nineteenth century. Tragically, Hugh Lane died on board the *Lusitania* when it was hit by a German torpedo off the southern Irish coast as it was crossing the Atlantic Ocean in May 1915 on a journey from New York to England. Following the end of the Great War in 1918, the Irish Co-operative Movement was damaged severely as the country entered into a violent struggle to attain independence from British rule. Plunkett and Russell could not prevent the destruction of co-operative creameries, meat factories, and linen halls during the Anglo-Irish War of 1919–1921 and during the bitter civil war that followed the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921. Despite the enormous changes that Ireland underwent during this era, Lady Gregory never ceased to believe that realising some aspects at least of her artistic and socio-economic ideals in Ireland remained possible. In a truly Ruskinian fashion, she stuck to her conviction that the arts and the theatre should work towards the betterment of society and should facilitate progressive social reform, enriching the quality of human life in creative and co-operative ways. This book is an evaluation of her far-ranging achievements as a playwright, a theatre director, and a social reformer during the turn-of-the-century period.

Notes

1. Dan H. Laurence and Nicholas Grene, eds. *Shaw, Lady Gregory and the Abbey* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1993), 66.
2. Laurence and Grene, *Shaw, Lady Gregory and the Abbey*, 63. My italics.
3. George Bernard Shaw, *John Bull's Other Island* (London: Penguin, 1984), 160.
4. Lady Augusta Gregory, *Seventy Years* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1974), 172.
5. Gregory, *Seventy Years*, 171.
6. Gregory, *Seventy Years*, 172.
7. Gregory, *Seventy Years*, 171.
8. Henry James, *Italian Hours* (London: Penguin, 1995), 8.
9. Ruskin was often critical of the quality of restorations carried out on famous buildings; Lady Gregory was glad to hear that, this time around, the art critic was pleased with the workmen's efforts.
10. Lady Layard and Lady Gregory referred to 'Ca' Cappello' as 'Ca' Capello'; the book retains the spelling they used.
11. R. F. Foster examines the varied nature of the drama scene in Ireland at the beginning of the twentieth century, pointing out the significance of smaller and provincial companies and playhouses in the building of a revolutionary atmosphere in Ireland. Foster's study offers no indication that Lady Gregory could be regarded as a member of these revolutionary 'generation-units', to use his term. R. F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890–1923* (New York: Norton and Company, 2015), 8, 24, and 75–113.
12. George Russell, *Co-operation and Nationality* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1982), 41. The idea was stated earlier by Plunkett in *Noblesse Oblige*. See Horace Plunkett, *Noblesse Oblige, An Irish Rendering* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1908), 12.
13. George Russell, *The National Being* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1916), 48.
14. For the schools, see Russell, *The National Being*, 49; for the picture gallery, see *The National Being*, 146; for the beautification of the roadside, see *The National Being*, 49 and 149, and *Co-operation and Nationality*, 44. For Ruskin's ideas on school reform, see J. A. Hobson, *John Ruskin, Social Reformer* (London: Nisbet, 1899), 252 and 255.
15. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, eds. *The Works of John Ruskin*, vol. 30 (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), 5. Hereafter, Ruskin, *Title of the individual work* volume number of collected works.page number. Example using the source for footnote: Ruskin, *The Guild and Museum of St. George*, 30.5.
16. Ruskin, "The Irish Question," 34.582.

17. Ruskin, "The Irish Question," 34.582.
18. Ruskin, *Elements of Drawing*, 15.227 and Ruskiniana, 34.700.
19. Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*, 27.520.
20. Helen O'Connell, *Ireland and the Fiction of Improvement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 66. Differing markedly from previous ones, the new proposal of the Board of Education included the idea of establishing a state-supervised educational system, one that would provide children with both theoretical and practical learning, and one that would be set up along strictly non-denominational lines. Whatever the practicality of this proposal, it was immediately conceived of by many in Ireland as reducing the influence of religious education and secularising the educational system in a seemingly irreversible way. For these reasons, the proposal was fervently opposed by the Roman Catholic Church, fearing the loss of its social influence established through the network of local schools, hedge schools, and Christian Brothers schools.
21. O'Connell, *Ireland and the Fiction of Improvement*, 66.
22. O'Connell, *Ireland and the Fiction of Improvement*, 67.
23. Katherine Newey and Jeffrey Richards, *John Ruskin and the Victorian Theatre* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Anselm Heinrich, Katherine Newey, and Jeffrey Richards, eds., *Ruskin, the Theatre and Victorian Visual Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
24. William Morris, *Factory Work, As It Is and Might Be* (New York: New York Labor News Co., 1922), 21 and 26–27.
25. Joost Augusteijn, *Patrick Pearse: The Making of a Revolutionary* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 159.
26. Newey and Richards, *John Ruskin and the Victorian Theatre*, 208.
27. Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Later Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 594; Sarah Atwood, *Ruskin's Educational Ideals* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 164; and Stuart Eagles, *After Ruskin: The Social and Political Legacies of a Victorian Prophet, 1870–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 245.
28. See for this Lauren Arrington, *W. B. Yeats, the Abbey Theatre, Censorship, and the Irish State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).