Advent of the Everyday Cathleen: Katharine Tynan and Motifs of Irish Identity 1911-1921

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Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

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Abstract

Katharine Tynan (1859-1931), an esteemed author in the forefront of the Irish Literary Revival, frequented the social, political, and artistic circles of colleagues such as W.B. Yeats and George Russell (AE); alongside her male counterparts, she fostered friendships and collaborated in reciprocal mentorships that cultivated and promoted a renewed Irish identity in contrast to England's anglicization of Irish culture, attempting through literature to instill a sense of political, national and cultural pride in Ireland's people. However, in the 1890s, Tynan moved to England and spent eighteen years of her career there before returning home, during which time she became disconnected from the politics of a changing Ireland, resulting in confusion and disillusionment upon her return. This research will contextualize Tynan's unique and important literary contributions during the revolutionary decade in Ireland (1911-1921), one in which she appears politically ambiguous and at times contradictory. Tynan's poems and novels are infused with themes of Irish identity revealed through storytelling, superstition, religion, motherhood, spirit and landscape, and female personifications of Ireland, including her creation of an 'everyday' Cathleen Ni Houlihan.

Introduction

In March of 1916, as Katharine Tynan watched Gregory and Yeats' *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* in the Abbey Theatre, she noted the intense political climate of the audience who watched the Poor Old Woman chanting, enticing young Michael to follow her: 'The gallery and the back of the house broke into tumultuous cheers and clapping of hands, and the soldiers in khaki looked on wondering.'[1] Weeks later, at her residence in County Mayo on the west coast of Ireland, living in fear of a rumored German invasion while the 1916 rebellion was building in Dublin, Tynan reflected that the 'silence of the country, without the occasional railway whistle, ached. You felt as though the earth listened, the Little Old Woman, perhaps, listening with her heart.'[2] In Tynan's novels and poems, female personifications of Ireland dance in between the two extremes of a little woman listening and a parading queen.

Tynan's literary beginnings place her at the forefront of the Irish Revival, yet differences in religious and political beliefs as well as classism created a gap between Tynan and the early colleagues she influenced and inspired. Tynan's perspectives on Irish identity are tied to her political and religious views, and because Tynan frequented English as well as Irish circles, her viewpoints about Ireland's welfare and freedom are complex. Kieron Winterson suggests that the 'ambivalence at the heart' of her writing life stems from the turbulent 1890s, which includes the death of Charles Stewart Parnell, a second defeat of the Home Rule Bill and the retirement of Liberal British statesman and politician Gladstone.[3]

In the previous decade, Tynan took part in the Ladies' Land League and was part of the germination of the Irish Literary Revival, contributing to *Poems and Ballads of Young Ireland* (1888), a potent 'contribution to Irish cultural nationalism'.[4] Tynan, along with Maud Gonne, was a member of the National Literary Society in 1892 and held the office of

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[1] Katharine Tynan, *The Years of the Shadow* (London: Constable, 1919), p. 160 <https://archive.org/details/cu31924028168767/page/n7/mode/2up> [accessed 04 January 2023].

[2] Ibid., p. 190.

[3] Kieron Winterson, '"Old wine in new bottles"?: Katharine Tynan, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and George Wyndham' in *Irish Women's Writing, 1878-1922*, ed. by Anna Pilz and Whitney Standlee (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 156-173 (p. 156) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv18b5gj1.16> [accessed 29 November 2022].

[4] Ibid., p. 158.

vice president.[5] Additionally, Tynan claimed to be the first woman to join the National League after the Parnell split: 'Women had not hitherto joined the League, but I was proposed and elected.'[6] In 1893, Tynan left the comfort of her home, separating her from her father, her greatest political influence, while immersing herself within the culture of the British in England. Tynan also entered the covenant of marriage and began her role as wife and mother, a domestic role that she had evaded in her maidenhood as she frequented literary and political circles with her father. Upon departure from Ireland, Tynan and her father 'exchanged lockets as a parting gift', each pendant containing a picture of the other along with a picture of Parnell.[7] During the final decade of the century, Tynan became detached from Irish politics and was not reignited by political causes until the engagement of her pen pal relationship with British politician George Wyndham, champion of the Land Act of 1903.

By examining feminine personifications of Ireland in Tynan's novels and poems in the revolutionary decade (1911-1921), Tynan's changing and sometimes stagnant political viewpoints can be better understood. L. Perry Curtis, Jr. distinguishes feminine personifications of Ireland as four 'Erins' who are '*monumental*', '*defeated*', '*empowered*' or '*ambiguous*' in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[8] Artists and politicians adjusted the attributes of this female image to support their propaganda or cause, giving her many names. Aurelia Annat observes that 'Tynan's depictions of a feminised Ireland' included the 'maid, mother and hag' and also 'emulated patriotic nineteenth-century romantic literature'.[9] Tynan would have been familiar with the '*monumental*' and '*defeated'* feminine subjects in eighteenth-century Jacobite aislings, their 'mystical visions of an Ireland finally delivered from the Saxon yoke, where Erin could reign without tears alongside Bonnie Prince Charlie'.[10] 'Fidelity to the cause of Home Rule and support for Irish political prisoners were

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[5] Whitney Standlee, '"Affection for England and Love of Ireland": The Altering Landscapes of Katharine Tynan' *in 'Power to Observe': Irish Women Novelists in Britain, 1890-1916* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015), pp. 193-241 (p. 206).

[6] Katharine Tynan, *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences* (London: Smith and Elder, 1913), p. 330 <https://archive.org/details/twentyfiveyearsr00tynauoft/page/n7/mode/2up> [accessed 23 January 2023].

[7] Katharine Tynan, *The Middle Years* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917), p. 101 <https://archive.org/details/cu31924013483072/page/n5/mode/2up> [accessed 03 January 2023].

[8] L. Perry Curtis, Jr., 'The Four Erins: Feminine Images of Ireland, 1780–1900', *Éire-Ireland*, 33 (1998), 70-102 (p. 83) <https://doi.org/10.1353/eir.1998.0007> [accessed 07 March 2023].

[9] Aurelia L.S. Annat, 'Class, Nation, Gender and Self: Katharine Tynan and the Construction of Political Identities, 1880-1930' in *Politics, Society and the Middle Class in Modern Ireland*, ed. by F. Lane (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 194-211 (p. 205) <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230273917_11> [accessed 03 December 2022].

[10] L. Perry Curtis, Jr., 'The Four Erins: Feminine Images of Ireland, 1780–1900', p. 75.

the dominant traits of both *empowered* Erin and *ambiguous* Erin'; Tynan's portrayals of feminine Ireland include these archetypes.[11] She does not represent Ireland solely as a 'young, feminine, and chaste' Erin who is submissive or victimized.[12] Ann Owens Weekes addresses the problem of 'the single lens with which critics' have judged women's writing by 'approaching texts with expectations about the appropriateness of ideas and treatments' based on the male perspective of the world, and the beautiful physical image of the young, chaste Erin is unchanging, regardless of how she is used for a specific political cause.[13] Tynan's political aspirations and ambiguity are aptly expressed through an array of feminine images of Ireland that extend beyond young Erin. In her writing, images of maternity and old age blend with Erin to emphasize the stages of womanhood relevant to Ireland's feminine identity. Tynan furthers such symbolism by establishing these female images of Ireland as relevant to the real, hard-working women of her time, the 'everyday' Cathleen.

Tynan's earliest years in England coincide with her involvement with the *Shan Van Vocht* (1896-1899), a nationalist journal created by Methodist protestant Alice Milligan and Ulster Catholic Alice Johnston who 'modeled their journalistic efforts on the literary and political achievements of the United Irishmen, of an earlier era'.[14] 'Shan Van Vocht' refers to the 'personification of Ireland current in the eighteenth century' which may have evolved from the Cailleach Bhéire, a 'poor old woman' who represented suppressed and downtrodden Ireland and who became the famous subject of a song bearing her name, attributed to the 'rising of the United Irishmen' of 1798.[15] Karen Steele points out, 'that the *Shan Van Vocht* looked to women to cross the divides of class, caste, and national perspective in order to transform Ireland'.[16] Feminine commonalities within the political spectrum of the 1890s such as 'healing nationalist wounds, reconciling religious divisions, mending geographical borders' and eliminating discord among classes were highlighted. These convictions prompted a diverse company of female writers from traditional-minded to radically feministic to weaken 'the social threat of feminine political action by emphasizing that women could

[11] Ibid., p. 97.
[12] Ibid., p. 84.
[13] Ann Owens Weekes, 'Seeking a Tradition: Irish Women's Fiction' in *Irish Women's Writers: An Uncharted Tradition* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2014), pp. 1-32 (p. 2) <https://www.jstor.org/stable.j.ctt130j1b7.4> [accessed 02 December 2022].
[14] Karen Steele, *Women, Press, and Politics During the Irish Revival* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), pp. 28-29.
[15] James MacKillop, 'Shan Van Vocht' in *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780198609674.001.0001> [accessed 10 December 2022].
[16] Ibid., p. 42.

effectively advance their cause within the home'.[17] While Tynan supported traditional female roles, she engaged in a full career outside the home; the creation of both traditional and powerful women within her writing reflects this duality. On the surface, this combination aligns with the values of the founders of *Shan Van Vocht* and may explain Tynan's desire to work with them.

It is important to look at Tynan's growing political ambivalence within this framework. Newly married and away from Ireland, Tynan's politics became opposed to that of her former colleagues as she sustained her family and embraced her solid success in England. Whitney Standlee depicts Tynan's and Yeats' careers as becoming 'counter to one another' due to Yeats' unhappy unrest living away in London and 'longing for just the type of Irish countryside retreat that Tynan had always inhabited' as she immersed herself in her new literary world and role as both homemaker and breadwinner.[18] Tynan began to write novels since they were 'by then the favoured format among the British reading public'.[19] As she became reinvigorated in politics through her support of George Wyndham, her writing began to embrace an old nostalgic, Catholic Ireland while staunch nationalism was growing during the eighteen years she was away. The absence allowed Tynan to believe that if Ireland could be remembered 'from a distance, Ireland could be imagined as a place that could and would be renovated, if it were only treated justly and kindly.'[20]

Tynan's success as a professional author allowed her to interact in the male-dominated literary world and to contribute financially to her family; as a Resident Magistrate in County Mayo, her husband's income was 'not a living wage'.[21] In scholarship throughout the second half of the twentieth century, Tynan has often been criticized for not taking a more active political stance in standing up for Ireland's freedom, a freedom that, in the twentieth century, called for physical rather than constitutional action. Tynan's humility about her own work has also encouraged scholars to reduce her to the rank of a minor poet and sidekick to

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[17] Ibid., p. 43.

[18] Whitney Standlee, '"A World of Difference": London and Ireland in the Works of Katharine Tynan' in *Irish Writing London: Revival to the Second World War*, ed. by Tom Herron, 2 vols (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), I, pp. 70-83 (p. 73).

[19] Whitney Standlee, '"Affection for England and Love of Ireland": The Altering Landscapes of Katharine Tynan', p. 211.

[20] Ibid., p. 232.

[21] Katharine Tynan, *The Wandering Years* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1922), p. 36 <https://archive.org/details/cu31924013483080/page/n5/mode/2up> [accessed 04 February 2023].

Yeats and the Young Ireland poets. Tynan plainly admits that her 'innumerable novels were for boiling the pot', addressing 'the struggle to keep the fire on the hearth for the children and securities and sanctities of home about them'.[22] She defends her own poetry more stridently, referring to it as 'undefiled' but rarely giving herself the credit she often bestowed upon her colleagues. While 'imposter syndrome' was not a coined term in her time, it is worth considering Tynan's place as a highly successful career woman in a male dominated field with reference to her own self-deprecation since she published over a hundred novels, more than twelve volumes of poetry and song, twelve volumes of short stories and many journal and newspaper articles in addition to her memoirs. Was she perhaps afraid of emasculating her husband, having been raised on Catholic Victorian virtues, yet educated and encouraged to move outside traditional female circles by her father?

Regardless of Tynan's own psychology, about which scholars can only speculate, Tynan's portrayal of feminine Irish identity carries the essence of a Cathleen Ni Houlihan. In Tynan's novels, a Cathleen-esque character prevails, a heroine who inhabits all stages of womanhood. She is active, a catalyst for change, and the other characters follow her lead. Tynan's late poetry specifically names Cathleen symbols, including Dark Rose and Silk o' the Kine. Tynan's Cathleen also aligns with the universal mothers layered in her poems. In Tynan's earlier poems of this decade, mothers are both hard-working, protective humans and sustainers of life, powerful enough to enter hell to rescue their lost children. This unique mothering structure creates a female figure who encompasses various stages of womanhood; she is wise, loving and fiercely protective. The maternal Cathleen represents a changing Ireland from within the framework of a woman living in Tynan's time—her own perspective. In that light, Tynan's Cathleen is an everyday Cathleen.

This research restores context to Tynan's complex and symbolically rich work that builds upon some of the excellent scholarship exploring Tynan in the twenty-first century. While the revolutionary decade and Tynan's historical place within it appears messy, it is important to examine Tynan's unique and complex contribution to the ideas of this decade in Ireland, remembering that her vast readership is proof that her views were not alien. As Annat suggests, while her politics 'remained unfettered by specific doctrines', Tynan's perspectives 'remind us that identity is inevitably contingent on self.'[23]

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[22] Katharine Tynan, *The Middle Years*, p. 353.
[23] Aurelia L.S. Annat, 'Class, Nation, Gender and Self: Katharine Tynan and the Construction of Political Identities, 1880-1930', p. 207.

Tynan's allegiance to the British crown and hope for peace between the country of her birth and country of her late residence set her apart from many of her former fellow revivalists. Whitney Standlee illuminates the issue that reminds us that 'notions of authority, rather than of what might be termed authenticity, were of utmost importance in deciding who was permitted to speak on behalf of Ireland, which accounts for a degree of the distance that was placed between Tynan and the majority of the Revivalists.'[24] Perhaps much of the criticism of Tynan's relative political conservatism in the twentieth century is rooted in her unwillingness to let go of memories of the past and to embrace the harsh changing times. As Winterson suggests, 'the period between the first Home Rule Bill and the Anglo-Irish and Civil Wars' in which physical action became the popular tactic of change suggests uncertainty and variability of outcomes; thus, 'it is hard to imagine any individual maintaining an unchanging, unequivocal belief' around Irish freedom and for that matter, Irish identity within the changing spectrum of the time.[25] Deeper perspectives about change often come with hindsight, and Tynan's views shift to a support for Irish independence after the Great War ends.

Early in this revolutionary decade, Tynan published two volumes of poetry: *New Poems* (1911) and *Irish Poems* (1913). *New Poems* includes poems about missing Ireland and longing for home while living in England and also embraces motherhood, while *Irish Poems* showcases disappointment and disillusionment upon returning to Ireland and grief over the loss of loved ones. The contrast between the two volumes reveals the struggle between memory of a place and reality of a place. Tynan emphasizes what she calls the 'Spirit of Place' in various texts, likely inspired by the Latin *genius loci*.[26] The Spirit 'whispers its stories at night in such a heart of England as the fields below Malvern Hills' where dwells 'no desolation of great wars' in contrast to Ireland's 'Spirit of Place', a lonely field that 'breathes of wars and famine and emigration'.[27] The Spirit specific to Ireland shares commonalities with the wandering Cathleen figure in contrast to the gentle, angelic Spirit of

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[24] Whitney Standlee, '"Affection for England and Love of Ireland": The Altering Landscapes of Katharine Tynan', p. 200.
[25] Kieron Winterson, '"Old wine in new bottles"?: Katharine Tynan, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and George Wyndham', p. 170.
[26] Elizabeth Knowles, 'genius loci' in *The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198609810.001.0001/acref-9780198609810-e-2873> [accessed 09 February 2023].
[27] Katharine Tynan, *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences*, p. 63.

Malvern**.** The Spirit of Place as a recurring theme in Tynan's poems will be explored in subsequent chapters.

Tynan's 1915 *The House of the Foxes* represents a shift in Tynan's view of Irish identity in her novels; the novel evokes a darker theme than her previous novels by bringing supernatural elements into play. The story revolves around an age-old curse and rips open the veil between Christianity and superstition. The heroine is both young and wise, and she leads her household with the tenacity of a seasoned mother, challenging stubborn mindsets resigned to fatalism. Written during the Great War, symbols of hope and restoration partner with circumstances of sorrow and defeat, elevating the novel with a greater message to Tynan's wide audience in America and Britain, while reminding Ireland that a new path of peace can be forged—that all who have suffered and sacrificed have not done so in vain.

Late in the revolutionary decade, Tynan's poetry continues to embrace Christian faith, but the disillusionment of missing the beloved Ireland of one's childhood graduates to a full lamenting of those sons and daughters lost to war, and a loss of Ireland. The speaker of such poems is one who can no longer find her place there—the poems are likely autobiographical. One of Tynan's great contributions to the warring years is her war poetry, in which her readers find souls at home with God—heroes who will be honored and remembered as part of Ireland's great story. The Catholic heroism Tynan often places on the subjects of her war poems may be perceived as religious propaganda when compared with the poetry of former friends like Yeats who presents a much harsher view of war. However, Tynan continuously focuses on the emotional toil of war, regardless of political affiliation, throughout her lifetime.

At the end of the Great War Tynan's husband Henry died, and she and her daughter Pamela moved to Dublin. At that point, her views began to shift and she began to understand the revolutionary violence and need for a war of independence, a theme depicted through poems about Dark Rose and The Little Old Woman in Tynan's 1918 *Herb o' Grace*. In *Evensong* (1920), Tynan's early description of Ireland's 'Spirit of Place' comes full circle:

> The Spirit of Place in Ireland is a banshee. She sits with her head bowed to her knees, the long veils of her hair swathing her, and she keens; very quietly she cries her cry of lamentation. There is only one sound of grief we miss in it; that is bitter remorse for sin, for something done that can never be undone, no matter how one breaks one's heart; for the Spirit of Place in Ireland is desolate, but she is innocent.[28]

[28] Ibid.

Tynan's later poems encompass the heartache, homesickness and resolution of loss that were described in her 1913 *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences* as well as the anguish she names 'Ireland of the Sorrows' in her later penned memoir, *The Wandering Years* (1922).[29] Ireland is now beautiful Deirdre unwilling to remain captured, even at the cost of her own life.

The trajectory of Tynan's states of mind and changing Spirit of Place throughout the revolutionary decade show an arc in her writing that, as Annat emphasizes, is reminiscent of the stages of womanhood. The chapters to come are divided as mother, maiden and crone. They examine Irish identity as symbolized by aspects of Tynan's self-image and her engagement with the tradition of feminine personifications of Ireland. Motifs of the everyday Cathleen are painted in fictional heroines in her novels and earlier poems, whereas Tynan often represents a more familiar revivalist Cathleen in her later poems. Motifs of poverty, hospitality, storytelling, superstition, Catholicism, motherhood, Spirit of Place, and grief all invigorate the stages of womanhood amid a changing Ireland, finding residence in homes estranged, homes restored, and homes lamented.

[29] Katharine Tynan, *The Wandering Years*, p. 364.

Chapter One

Mother: Protection and Searching for Home in *New Poems* and *Irish Poems*

In 1904, after Yeats visited the United States, Cornelius Weygandt surveyed Irish writers of the Irish Literary Revival in *The Sewanee Review*, including an observation that in Katharine Tynan's poetry 'the little things of out of doors have the tender colors of Irish landscape.'[30] In 1886, only a few years after the founding of the Gaelic League, Tynan expressed (in *The Irish Fireside)* her view of Irish poetry within the context of the literary revival*:*

> By the Irish note I mean that distinctive quality in Celtic poetry the charm of which is so much easier to feel than to explain...Some of the parts which go to make up its whole are a simplicity which is naive—a freshness, an archness, a light touching of the chords as with fairy-finger tips; a shade of underlying melancholy as delicately evanescent as a breath upon glass, which yet gives its undertone and shadow to all; fatalism side by side with buoyant hopefulness; laughter with tears; love with hatred; a rainbow of all colours where none conflict; a gamut of all notes which join to make perfect harmony.[31]

In Tynan's *Twenty-Five Years*, she acknowledges Yeats as the poet who showed the new young poets the way forward, suggesting he 'did the spade-work' and had 'cleared the ground'.[32] While Tynan places Yeats on a pedestal in her memoirs and gives him credit as her teacher, she clearly influenced Yeats. Yeats' *The Wanderings of Oisin* (1889) 'grew out of a project' that found its beginnings in 'her own Ossianic poem, "The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne"' (1887).[33] Although Yeats was sometimes critical of Tynan's writing, in 1908, Yeats acknowledged Tynan as 'one of the triumvirate' who 'kindled the Literary Revival'.[34]

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[30] Cornelius Weygandt, 'The Irish Literary Revival*', The Sewanee Review,* 12 (1904), 420-431 (p. 427) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27530648> [accessed 29 January 2023].

[31] Richard Fallis, 'The Years of the Celtic Twilight: The 1890s' in *The Irish Renaissance: An introduction to Anglo-Irish literature* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillon, 1978), pp. 55-70 (pp. 56-57) <https://archive.org/details/irishreinaissance0000fall_e8I7/mode/2up?q=tynan> [accessed 19 November 2022].

[32] Katharine Tynan, *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences* (London: Smith and Elder, 1913), p. 225 <https://archive.org/details/twentyfiveyearsr00tynauoft/page/n7/mode/2up> [accessed 23 January 2023].

[33] Whitney Standlee, '"A World of Difference": London and Ireland in the Works of Katharine Tynan' in *Irish Writing London: Revival to the Second World War*, ed. by Tom Herron, 2 vols (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), I, pp. 70-83 (p. 72).

[34] Ibid.

Additionally, in 1930, George Russell credited Tynan as being 'the earliest singer in that awakening of our imagination which has been spoken of as the Irish Renaissance'.[35]

In 1911, after eighteen years of residency in England, Tynan and her family returned to Ireland, and her poetry volume *New Poems* was published. A longing for Ireland, the differentiation of English culture and countryside from that of Ireland, and the connection of unconditional love through motherhood and religious faith are staples of *New Poems*. Just two years later in 1913, a contrasting volume of poetry, *Irish Poems* encompasses feelings of frustration and disappointment toward an Ireland imagined that no longer exists. Themes of loss and guilt weave themselves through poems that explore death, aging, and a desire to return to an older Ireland in connection with landscape and the memories it holds. Both volumes share variations of 'underlying melancholy'[36] and Tynan's desire to create a complex portrait of Irish identity through 'a rainbow of colours where none conflict'.[37]

New Poems explores themes of motherhood and unconditional love in poems such as 'The Mother', the Spirit of Place in poems about English gardens and countryside as found in 'Malvern', and the contrast of England and Ireland in 'The Exile' from *Irish Poems*. In *Irish Poems*, the fog of disillusionment is dominant in 'The Coming Back' and 'The Meeting'. The poet reconciles themes of lost home by embracing the countryside in 'Gorse' and placing Irish identity in congruence with the steadfast land. At this point in Tynan's life and career, Winterson's description of Tynan's poems exhibiting a 'pastoral nationalism' rings true and is a potent image for her seemingly less active political ties at the start of this foreboding decade.[38]

Mothers

Tynan's poems about motherhood exhibit the image of a woman who is not only a nurturer but a protector of the home. She represents universal motherhood and the home

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Richard Fallis, 'The Years of the Celtic Twilight: The 1890s', p. 56.
[38] Kieron Winterson, '"Old wine in new bottles"?: Katharine Tynan, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and George Wyndham' in *Irish Women's Writing, 1878-1922*, ed. by Anna Pilz and Whitney Standlee (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 156-173 (p. 167) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv18b5gj1.16> [accessed 29 November 2022].

itself; she is the source of its health. In 'The Mother', Tynan depicts the role of a mother as all-powerful. She is greater than a human and holds the entire world together for her children. She is their safety, and without her protection their world would fall. She is 'the pillars of the house' and, if she were gone, the 'roof and wall | Would fall to ruin utterly.'[39] It is notable that the woman does not refer to the role of the father as having any significance in the children's lives. Tynan uses parallelism, repeating 'I am' at the start of seven of twenty-four poetic lines; the repetition establishes the power of the mother who speaks, additionally enforced by lines that begin with 'At me' or 'Without me':

> I am the fire upon the hearth,
> I am the light of the good sun.
> I am the heat that warms the earth,
> Which else were colder than a stone.[40]

Tynan elevates the mother's power beyond the structure of home to the elements of nature. She does not simply keep the fire in the home, she *is* 'the fire upon the hearth' and the 'light of the good sun'.[41] Through such imagery, the mother surpasses her human status; she is as old as the elements themselves, and the 'children warm their hands' by her.[42] The mother also describes her love for her children as a form of light, and without that light 'Nor could the precious children thrive'.[43] In the latter part of the poem, the role of mother returns from elemental references to the structure of the physical home, yet the mother graduates from hearth and pillars to the entire home, 'from floor to roof' and as a 'wall against all danger'.[44] References to the mother as the physical structure of the home as well as the source of light for the earth overlap with a Cathleen symbol found in Tynan's later poems, a Cathleen who is a stark contrast to the Yeats-Gregory and Mangan Cathleen who disrupts the home as young men follow her to battle. The mother's final appeal is a prayer to Jesus in which she petitions him to allow her to live long enough for her children to grow up. The

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[39] Katharine Tynan, *New Poems* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1911), p. 38 <https://archive.org/details/newpoems00tynauoft/page/n3/mode/2up> [accessed 11 February 2023].
[40] Ibid., pp. 38-39.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., p. 39.

reference to Jesus is another reminder of the power of motherhood; he is 'Thou Whom a woman laid in manger'.[45]

The reference to Mary at the end of 'The Mother' is more pronounced in other maternal poems by Tynan, such as 'Maternity'. This poem is about unconditional love; the mother reminds her child that there is nothing he can do that will cause her to stop loving him. An embrace will always welcome him home. 'Seeking my sweet', she will find him in the 'heart of hell' if he were to go there; Tynan uses such alliteration to create tenderness, and the couplet structure provides a sense of security for the child she addresses.[46] Mary reinforces the importance of a mother's unconditional love and her power to protect her child. When God asks Jesus who has left his presence, Mary responds, 'Son, 'tis a mother goes to hell, seeking her own'.[47] Mary reveals that all mothers are made this way, reminding Jesus he is 'Body of mine, and soul of mine, born of me'.[48] For this mother, Catholicism is the core of the Irish home.

Tynan uses pre-Christian imagery to enhance the importance of motherhood in 'The Irish Harp'. The speaker, who explains how the harp was created by the Druid Angus, is a person who has lived long enough to experience love and loss. The frame of the harp is made from a 'Druid tree'. Angus is inspired by the 'runes and words' of the birds, the 'bells of the wood' and 'fairy laughter'.[49] The speaker uses sensory imagery to evoke sound in musical couplets to personify the harp:

> The first string sang in its flying
> Of love and laughter and youth undying.
>
> The second string, that failed in its flight,
> Wept for love and the lost delight.
>
> Love and death and the tale is told :
> But the third string has a voice of gold.[50]

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[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., p. 10.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., p. 63.
[50] Ibid., p. 64.

Incorporating images of touch, the narrator further personifies the harp, adding aspects of the feminine and masculine with strings that are ‘Like the hair of a woman, silken and cold’ but are formed like ‘a man’s heart-strings’.[51] This poetic line may further suggest that the speaker is male and that he has suffered heartbreak. The first string represents youth. The second string represents ‘Love and death.’[52] The third string plays a ‘song of forgetting’; it is the narrator’s preferred string because it strums the lullaby.[53] It plays ‘the song of sleep on the mother’s bosom’, ‘sweeter than the songs of silver and gold.’.[54] Tynan uses repetition and alliteration to magnify the beauty and soothing quality of this healing tune. The speaker places the bond between mother and child above all other relationships.[55] The elevated lullaby and importance of maternity expressed in ‘The Irish Harp’ create a pastoral nationalism upheld by the image of Ireland as a great mother, emphasized by the ideals of a Shan Van Vocht who can create change from within the home.

Spirit of Place

Tynan’s Spirit of Place is examined in poems about the Malvern Hills. In ‘Malvern’, the ‘Spirit of Place’ is like an angel.[56] The poetic diction includes strong color imagery, euphony and AABB rhyme. The setting is effervescent with ‘drifts of bluest blue in the grass’ so shiny the sky is reflected upon it.[57] The apple tree is blooming, and its petals shimmer like ‘the ghost of a rose’, hinting at their pale pink color.[58] The color green describes the health of the land; the color white not only describes the Spirit but also the purity of those who rest there. The narrator repeats the word ‘gentle’ four times and ‘still’ three times to establish the ease of the place.[59] Tynan abandons her AABB rhyme in one stanza only, where the narrator makes a mindful observation:

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[51] Ibid., p. 63.
[52] Ibid., p. 64.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., p. 65.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., p. 17.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

> Her tale is gentle, the Spirit of Place.
> There is neither terror nor bitterness.
> Was there War ? Long since it was turned to Peace ;
> Her voice is low as the hum of bees.[60]

The final words in this stanza share bilabial consonants suggesting gentleness, and assonance creates a tranquil mood. Tynan emphasizes the ease of the lives lived in Malvern: inhabitants 'were born, they played, they were lass and lad'; they fell in love, built their homes, had families, 'grew old and died' and now 'Under the grasses lie side by side'.[61] Additionally, in 'A Malvern Garden', using similar imagery, the speaker describes the place as the 'Garden of Heart's Ease' and as the 'Garden of Much Ease'.[62] The 'Spirit of Place' described in 'Malvern' matches Tynan's autobiographical description of it in England, where 'there is no desolation of great wars in the pensive tale, nothing of uprooting, of destruction'.[63]

In 'The Exile' from *Irish Poems*, while Tynan does not use the phrase directly, a contrasting theme of Spirit of Place separates the peaceful spirit that dwells in an easy English countryside from 'a lone field in Ireland where the peewit grieves', a place for which the speaker longs.[64] The English garden is full of nightingales, thrushes and finches, but the narrator's heart is 'Desolate for the blackbird by an Irish hill'.[65] The blackbird is a known Jacobite symbol in Irish literature; Tynan may be hinting at her former days as a young woman back in Ireland with her father, supporting her beloved Parnell. Parnell was known as the 'Blackbird of Avondale' in a popular song about his arrest in 1881.[66] Tynan uses the blackbird image to distinguish the specifically Irish figure whom she has never stopped remembering and honoring—another example of pastoral nationalism. Five years after this poem was published and two years after the Easter Rising, Tynan spoke of Parnell's renewed popularity as 'the incomparable Leader to all sections of Irish Nationalists.'[67]

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[60] Ibid., p. 17.
[61] Ibid., p. 18.
[62] Ibid., pp. 42-43.
[63] Katharine Tynan, *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences*, p. 63.
[64] Katharine Tynan, *Irish Poems* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1913), p. 55 <https://archive.org/details/irishpoems00tynauoft/mode/2up> [accessed 13 February 2023].
[65] Ibid.
[66] Sean MacMahon and Jo O'Donoghue, 'The Blackbird of Avondale' in *Brewer's Dictionary of Irish Phrase and Fable* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), p. 90 <https://archive.org/details/brewersdictionar0000mcma/> [accessed 01 February 2023].

[67] Katharine Tynan, *The Years of the Shadow* (London: Constable, 1919), p. 34 <https://archive.org/details/cu31924028168767/page/n7/mode/2up> [accessed 04 January 2023].

The Irish landscape and its Spirit of Place are turbulent and sacrificial in contrast to the undisturbed Spirit of English countryside; the Irish Spirit of Place is reminiscent of the banshee who 'cries her cry of lamentation' for an Ireland who 'is desolate, but she is innocent'.[68] Here is an example of the narrator's searching for a sorrowful home that no longer exists; the speaker identifies with an Irish Spirit of Place and desires it over the ease of the May gardens of England. The Spirit of Place in Ireland is 'the lonesomest thing you can imagine' and 'someone is always going away'.[69] The stability of the English countryside, where there is 'neither change nor ruin there as time goes by', brings pain to the speaker because it is alien to the melancholy of the Irish landscape as she weeps for her 'country with a lonesome cry'.[70]

Guilt and Disillusionment

Many of Tynan's *Irish Poems* feature a character who struggles to integrate her memories of the Ireland of her youth with the changed Ireland of her middle age. In 'The Coming Back', the blackbird calls as the speaker reveals her regret of being away from lost friends and family for many years. The blackbird chastises her, asking 'why would you trouble to be coming now | When them that sore missed you is past fear and fret?'[71] Birds, winds, flowers, and dusty roads all ask her to 'remember' and not to 'forget'; the author is 'living and walking in the old times' where she meets the dead.[72]

An additional poem from *Irish Poems* explores aging and the past when a middle aged woman confronts herself. In 'The Meeting', the woman walks through an 'ancient town' where she is haunted by a 'darling ghost' who wears a 'green gown'.[73] The speaker alludes to her younger self and is startled at the realization, 'That was my own sweet youth I met | Who knew me not and passed'.[74] The balance between the narrator's wonder and despair is achieved through Tynan's use of alliteration, tempo and a series of questions. The poem is

[68] Katharine Tynan, *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences*, p. 63.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Katharine Tynan, *Irish Poems*, p. 55.
[71] Ibid., p. 11.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., p. 26.
[74] Ibid., p. 27.

written in seven iambic ABAB rhyming quatrains primarily using single-syllable words. The use of alliteration in images like ‘green gown’ and ‘street and square’ emphasizes the comforting tone at the beginning of the poem.[75] Later in the poem, the use of assonance in the phrase ‘long lost and found once more’ embodies the yearning cry often associated with ballads.[76] Tynan creates a nuance of texture by putting a stop at the ends of lines that describe the scenery, the town and the mood of the speaker. Contrast is found in lines written about the youthful spirit; Tynan uses enjambment to create fluidity and increase speed. In the final two stanzas of the poem, tempo changes create contrast between the older and younger versions of this Cathleen figure:

> “Stay, you are...” Is she deaf and blind
> Or hath she quite forgot?
> What chill is in the sun, the wind,
> Because she knows me not ?
>
> As I went down—my eyes were wet—
> Eager and stepping fast
> That was my own sweet youth I met
> Who knew me not and passed.[77]

In the former stanza, in which the speaker is questioning the young ghost’s dismissal of her, Tynan uses ellipsis, caesura, question mark and short phrases to echo the despair of the speaker. In the latter stanza, the speaker continues to trip over her speech, completely stopped as indicated by dashes after two four-word sets, showing her bewilderment. Tynan uses enjambment in prior stanzas to create the flow and vibrancy of the ghost, and in the final stanza, she stretches it through three full lines to create the ultimate contrast between youth and middle age. The poem ends similarly to the Gregory-Yeats play; Cathleen marches away, transforming from an old woman to a young queen while the speaker in ‘The Meeting’ watches her younger self pass her by with no recollection that they are one and the same. The duality of two stages of womanhood is profound as it symbolizes a woman’s disappointment with herself. The stark presence of a Cathleen figure roaming the lines of the poem may reveal further layers of meaning—the character’s disillusionment with a lost, ancient Ireland

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[75] Ibid., p. 26.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., p. 27.

and perhaps Tynan's guilt over abandoning her younger self's political engagement with Ireland.

Revival

Tynan brings images of motherhood, guilt, disillusionment, longing for Ireland and their integration together in 'Gorse', which she dedicated 'to W.B. Yeats, who taught me'.[78] A poet speaks of 'the gorse on an English common' and describes vividly 'golden cups and the nutty wine'.[79] Tynan may also be the speaker in this poem, the first line beginning, 'Many a year I loved the gorse on an English common'.[80] Regardless of the beauty the narrator paints, she states, 'It is not mine'.[81] In the Irish gorse she finds a 'world of gold and a pearly cloud on a blue abyss'.[82] Ireland is a golden paradise full of a 'golden hill' that is like 'a little breast in gold'.[83] The hill depicted as a golden breast connects images of motherhood and nature found in Tynan's maternal poems and foreshadows a later poem, 'The Secret', in which the speaker seeks out a motherly Cathleen with nurturing breasts to hold and comfort her. There is a 'golden bed' for the lark and the poet's feet find 'golden water'.[84] The bird is not chiding her or representing the past but 'spilling his treasure', his love, upon 'buttercup fields'.[85] The green of spring is waiting just below the golden light, suggesting hope and possibility rather than disappointment and depression. Everything has turned to gold—a river 'flows in and out like a ribbon of gold through the Milky Ways'.[86] The speaker concludes her description of this blooming paradise by revealing that 'this beauty's thine'.[87] Perhaps this poem is Tynan's tribute to her estranged revivalist colleagues, and, if she did hold some guilt around leaving Ireland and adapting to and becoming friends with the English, she attempts to come to terms with it in her verse.

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[78] Katharine Tynan, *Irish Poems*, p. 106.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid., p. 107.
[87] Ibid.

In the early years of the revolutionary decade, Tynan's poetry expresses Irish identity through themes of motherhood, bringing elements of an everyday Cathleen into her portrait of a woman as homemaker and protector who is also a source of light and fire. Tynan's everyday Cathleen shares some character traits with Yeats' *The Countess Cathleen* who, as protector of her own tenants, bargains with the devil, surrendering her own soul to save her subjects. For her good deeds she is welcomed to heaven. Tynan's motherly Cathleen, although not specifically named in these earlier poems, is also a protector of those she watches; she is the structure of her family's home and the source of their health. She will go to hell and back to retrieve her own children with God's blessing just as the Countess Cathleen will travel there for her tenants. While Yeats' Countess represents his belief in a noble aristocracy as a way forward for Ireland, Tynan's Cathleen represents that of a middle-class domestic housewife, similar to the class in which she was raised and in a time for which she longs.[88]

Tynan uses the motif of Spirit of Place to create contrast between England and Ireland. Ultimately, she aligns her characters' catharsis of grief, guilt, and disappointment with the plight of Ireland's history which is woven into the landscape. These themes that place 'fatalism side by side with buoyant hopefulness' show Tynan's desire to sensationalize Irish identity in the vivid landscape imagery of 'Gorse'.[89] Tynan's attempt to return to a truly Irish poem may be a statement of temporary renewed revivalism, revealing a pastoral nationalism that would continue to evolve throughout her novels.[90]

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[88] Ben Levitas, '"A Mesh of Error": Dramatic Alliances, 1898-1902' in *The Theatre of Nation: Irish Drama and Cultural Nationalism 1890-1916* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 37-74 (p. 45).

[89] Richard Fallis, 'The Years of the Celtic Twilight: The 1890s', p. 56.

[90] Kieron Winterson, '"Old wine in new bottles"?: Katharine Tynan, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and George Wyndham', p. 167.

Chapter Two
Maiden: Restoration and Making a Home in *The House of the Foxes*

A symbol of feminine Irish identity resonates through a formulaic personality in the novels of Tynan, represented in young heroines who are the stars of Tynan's stories. At first read, this canon of fiction may appear to be romantic or gothic entertainment; the young heroines may fly under the radar of the reader's imagination as simple, charming young women navigating the traditional domesticity of womanhood. However, a deeper investigation into the aspects of these leading ladies' personalities that peers past the stereotypes of modest, starry-eyed maidenhood reveals a more complex individual who wanders the pages of Tynan's novels; the everyday Cathleen has returned in youthful form. The peasants and aristocrats within these novels live within households that have become dilapidated or dysfunctional, and they mourn the lost days of grandeur and happiness. The young heroines command the household with the prowess of a woman in her middle years—a woman with the gusto of experience in domestic authority and in the nurturing of family. The downtrodden older women in these stories are similar to the middle aged woman in 'The Meeting' who meets her youthful self—someone who no longer recognizes her. In Tynan's novels, the youthful heroines help restore confidence and happiness in their older hostesses as they offer logic, empathy and hope. They provide solutions for change in dark situations that are often befitting a person in her golden years—one who has learned the teachings that come from life experience long lived.

Entering the revolutionary decade, Tynan had already established this female archetype while living in England and writing about Ireland: *The Story of Cecelia* (1911), *Princess Katharine* (1911) and *The House of the Secret* (1910) all share the archetype of a young woman from a modest middle class, returning home to Ireland after having lived abroad, and journeying to an old manor or castle to assist an older woman in need. Whether this common character was intentionally created to encompass all stages of womanhood by Tynan cannot be proven; nevertheless, the young woman in each story is the catalyst in

restoring the older woman to the status of respect or happiness she once knew by reinvigorating the people, animals, architecture and land around her—she incites every person's loyalty, regardless of social class, and each eventually follows her ideals and ways of life. She is a super woman living in a cultural time when women accept traditional submissive roles yet are heralded in literary circles as the hope and delivery of Ireland—someone simultaneously mundane and fantastical.

Highly successful nineteenth-century Irish novelist Sydney Owensen's *The Wild Irish Girl* coined the term 'national tale' with its subtitle in 1806, just six years after the Act of Union was passed, 'which formalized Ireland's status as a colony, politically and economically controlled by England.'[91] Like Tynan, Owensen had Protestant and Catholic ties; Owensen's religious affiliations were split between her parents while Tynan's were split between her father and husband. However, both authors identified with their Catholic culture through their fathers, and both women were breadwinners for their families, publishing large volumes of work. Tynan and Owensen use their main characters to establish Ireland's identity revealing a mystical feminine protector who shines light on the downtrodden, and who unites and inspires the people. Owensen addresses prejudice directly while Tynan presents the Irish in an amiable manner that subtly educates audiences about the respectability of Irish people. Owensen's message is potent in the context of her time, and she creates a Celtic identity in her heroines like Cathleen-esque Glorvina to distinguish the Gael from the Saxon. Owensen would pave the way for authors like Tynan to infuse nationalism into their tales of female heroes who represent Ireland. While Tynan appears ambiguous in the revolutionary decade, she keeps faith in the possibility of a more peaceful, constitutional reality in which Ireland may find autonomy. She was likely influenced by Owensen's tale that 'originates and predicts an Irish nationalism that perpetuates the violence from which it was born' but also suggests a remedy through 'a violent forgiveness'.[92] Tynan creates a fantasy world in her version of a national tale in order to preserve a simpler time that is lost and to which she tries to return in her poetry. Owensen's contemporary, Maria Edgeworth likely influenced Tynan as well with her 'Big House' themes where 'the condition of the house itself often acts as an

[91] Sydney Owensen, 'Introduction' in *The Wild Irish Girl: A National Tale*, ed. by Kathryn Kirkpatrick (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. vi-xviii (p. vii).

[92] Ibid., p. xviii.

extended metaphor for the condition of the ascendancy'.[93] All of Tynan's novels are set in disheveled manors that represent the downfall of a family. Tynan uses such fiction to preserve the past and create an ideological answer for the future, one that is likely futile but brings hope to her readers, and her everyday Cathleens usher the way.

Tynan's disillusionment over having 'returned to the Anglo-Irish having gone away from the Celts', no longer recognizing the Ireland she loved and for which she pined, is likely the reason the novels in the first part of this revolutionary decade are mostly set outside of Ireland.[94] *Molly, My Heart's Delight* 'represented her only Irish-themed output' until Tynan wrote *The House of the Foxes* in 1915.[95] *The House of the Foxes* features the young Cathleen archetype like the aforementioned novels, but the darker mood of the tale shows a shift in Tynan's view of Irish identity amid the backdrop of the Great War. Tynan creates a world steeped in the old Ireland she remembers from before her eighteen-year sojourn in England. She infuses this world with superstition and fear, symbolizing the hardships of her country's plight. Irish identity is examined through a lens of cohabitation between Catholicism and superstition explored and challenged by an everyday Cathleen. Motifs such as storytelling as fear-enabler, animal symbolism and Irish defeat as passive martyrdom dwell inside the spiritual bookends of superstition and Christianity. The complex themes explored, where the lines often blur, represent Tynan's understanding of the differences between people and her underlying hope that the revitalization of Ireland is possible through compassion, forgiveness and collaboration rather than wrathful division. The motifs echo the intent of the *Shan Van Vocht* writers of the 1890s with whom Tynan collaborated as they worked to diffuse discord between classes, religious and political groups through education and peaceful means.

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[93] Ann Owens Weekes, 'Seeking a Tradition: Irish Women's Fiction' in *Irish Women's Writers: An Uncharted Tradition* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2014), pp. 1-32 (p.19) <https://www.jstor.org/stable.j.ctt130j1b7.4> [accessed 02 December 2022].

[94] Katharine Tynan, *The Years of the Shadow* (London: Constable, 1919), p. 1 <https://archive.org/details/cu31924028168767/page/n7/mode/2up> [accessed 04 January 2023].

[95] Whitney Standlee, '"Affection for England and Love of Ireland": The Altering Landscapes of Katharine Tynan' *in 'Power to Observe': Irish Women Novelists in Britain, 1890-1916* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015), pp. 193-241 (p. 232).

Everyday Cathleen: Three Women in One

In *The House of the Foxes*, young heroine Meg Hildebrand returns home to Ireland after serving as a governess in Austria when ‘longing for home positively began to injure her health’.[96] She heads northwest from her County Roscommon home and becomes the companion of Lady Flora Turloughmore of Castle Eagle in County Galway. Lady Flora, an elegant middle-aged woman, is plagued by debilitating anxiety, and her adult son Lord Erris, or Ulick, acts sickly even though there is nothing physically wrong with him aside from a lame foot. They, along with the servants of the household, believe in a ‘doom’ that follows the male bloodline of the family due to a curse placed on their ancestors centuries ago.[97] Head of the house Lord Turloughmore has been out at sea and has not returned home. Over the course of the narrative, pieces of his boat and the bodies of his shipmates begin to wash onto the Galway shore. Meg sustains heartbroken Lady Flora, providing companionship, wisdom and steadfast comfort as the family believes Lord Turloughmore has succumbed to the curse—that no man in the family ‘dies in his own bed.’[98] He will die on the hunt, at war or by tragic accident. When Flora claims her anxiety causes her to live with her ‘heart in her mouth’, Meg bestows great wisdom, asking Flora, ‘why do you, living in the sun, choose to sit in the darkness?’.[99]

While Meg acts as a mother figure to Flora, she challenges the mentality of the domestic workers who add to the anxiety within the castle through their obsessive need to speculate about the doom; she solves the mystery of the disappearance of Lord Turloughmore, eventually finding him barely alive and stowed away in an old tower. In the end, he is able to die in his own bed. The old eccentric woman Julia, who has weaned and reared the noblemen of the house, emphasizes that she knew Meg ‘wor come to this house for its good’ and that Meg has ‘the bravest lookin’ face I ever seen’.[100] The servants of the household believe Meg has come as a deliverer to break the curse; she is the descendant of

[96] Katharine Tynan, *The House of the Foxes* (London: Smith and Elder, 1915), p. 1 <https://archive.org/details/houseoffoxes00tyna/page/n7/mode/2up> [accessed 30 November 2022].
[97] Ibid., p. 8.
[98] Ibid., p. 10.
[99] Ibid., p. 61.
[100] Ibid., p. 46.

Sir Dominick Hildebrand who treated the original curse-caster and victim, the shape-shifting herbalist Biddy Pendergast, with kindness as she suffered a horrible death, torn apart by foxes coaxed by a witch-hunting Turloughmore. Meg inherits the land through marriage after she regenerates peace, although she has been functioning as steward of it since her arrival with a sense that 'this house of a shadow that had chilled other people had gathered her like a daughter'.[101] Healing comes to the family when Meg marries the son who has accepted that he is a strong, capable man. An everyday Cathleen has restored the land and gained the respect of the peasants and the newly redeemed aristocrats. While Meg exhibits aspects of womanhood beyond her years, she literally transforms everyone and everything around her for the better. She may not appear as an old hag, but she certainly embodies the Cailleach Bhéirre's command of the land, layering elements of the sovereignty goddess within the final events of the story; the land that was owned prior to her arrival is no longer the same land.[102] The castle's healthy energy now matches its superb decor. Meg has reclaimed the home and the land, and through this reconstitution of the environmental setting and her marriage to Ulick, she gifts it back to him.

Animals: Otherworldly Instigators and Messengers

On the evening of the large sea storm during which Lord Turloughmore's boat crashes, the servants and family hear wild geese screaming. Meg acknowledges the symbolism of wild geese in the decor of the house as logical in that they 'must have been of the Wild Geese, those Irish who fought for King James against King William and, after the Treaty of Limerick, sailed away from Ireland and took service to the armies of France and Spain and Austria.'[103] Following Meg's discovery of foxes and geese etched in the windows of the house, she recollects seeing wild geese flying in patterns in the autumn sky on occasion. However, Old Julia recalls that on the night of the former Lord Turloughmore's

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[101] Ibid., p. 85.

[102] James MacKillop, 'Cailleach Bhéirre' in *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780198609674.001.0001> [accessed 10 December 2022].

[103] Katharine Tynan, *The House of the Foxes,* p. 30.

fatal boat crash in Galway 'the wild geese was flyin' agin the windows of the house, batin' wid their wings fit to break them into smithereens'.[104] Julia further explains the late Turloughmore's kindness to animals, saying there were 'more than Christians fed from Castle Eagle in the winter', so it is rightful that the animals would also mourn him, claiming 'it might be their spirits that was in it that night.'[105]

In Celtic myth and iconography, geese are often 'associated with war' and are 'associated with warrior-gods' due to their 'watchful and aggressive nature'. In *The House of the Foxes* their war-like symbolism is represented in the departure of brave men from Ireland at a time of defeat following the Treaty of Limerick in 1691.[106] The house is clothed in the imagery of wild geese; all hope has departed from it and the house weeps over this abandonment as Lord after Lord of the Turloughmores is taken away from it, never to die peacefully within its walls. Tynan's love for Charles Stuart Parnell in the late nineteenth century extended into the twentieth century; the wild geese symbolism connects King James II to Parnell. Through this imagery, Tynan also reminds her modern readers of her 'Jacobite passion of loyalty for our born King of men', referring to Parnell.[107] Writing this novel while one of her sons is fighting in the Great War, Tynan's account of the departure of great young men may be felt by modern readers who identify with Tynan's later account of the fear of her sons' demise, 'that at any moment they might be dead or dying, so that our friends had ceased to send us telegrams, knowing how the sight of a telegraph boy would make one's heart leap and fall as though it were dead'.[108]

While the wild geese have a direct reference to the departure of the 1691 Jacobite army, birds in general are associated with the divine, often appearing as 'servants and messengers of the gods' in Irish literature.[109] Meg and other inhabitants of the manor hear the crying of the wild geese and heed their flapping about night after night, but the geese are never physically observed. One evening, upon hearing pounding on the window, Meg opens

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[104] Ibid., p. 51.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Miranda Green, *Animals in Celtic Life and Myth* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 214.
[107] Katharine Tynan, *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences* (London: Smith and Elder, 1913), p. 349 <https://archive.org/details/twentyfiveyearsr00tynauoft/page/n7/mode/2up> [accessed 23 January 2023].
[108] Katharine Tynan, *The Wandering Years* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1922), p. 1 <https://archive.org/details/cu31924013483080/page/n5/mode/2up> [accessed 04 February 2023].
[109] James MacKillop, 'Birds' in *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*.

it and a single pigeon, exhausted by the storm, falls into the room. Upon realizing the bird is not a wild goose but a pigeon, Meg tells Lady Turloughmore that 'the dove has flown into the ark', reassuring her through Christian metaphor, that God is delivering a message of hope.[110] The pigeon, injured, becomes a pet and loving companion to Lady Flora on the night of a terrible storm that will bring the pieces of a boat to shore along with bodies of drowned men, sealing the curse and doom bound to the Turloughmores and likely confirming the death of the senior Lord of their household. Near the end of the story, as Meg walks toward the sea, she hears gulls 'screaming loudly' and as she reaches a cliff above Little Beach, the pigeon hops onto the edge and begins to coo contentedly.[111] Puffins and gulls amplify their sounds along with the cormorants. The loyal pigeon suddenly flies away. As Meg searches for the vanished pigeon, she finds her way to the tower where she discovers the shipwrecked but living Lord Turloughmore. The pigeon's role as messenger has come full circle as he departs from the story.

The etymology of pigeon and fox prove curious in relation to sainthood. Tynan's lifelong devotion to Catholicism is already layered into the symbolism of the wild geese and King James II along with the strong Christian faith of main character Meg. The Old Irish word 'colmán', meaning woodpigeon or ring-dove, is similar to the Old Irish 'colomb' or 'colum', and is a 'popular name in early Ireland borne by at least 234 saints', including Saint Columba, a revered saint in Ireland with strong associations to the sea.[112] 'Crimthann', the Old Irish word for fox, a popular name in early Ireland, was associated with 'many kings of Munster, at least ten figures in the Fenian Cycle, and at least one saint'.[113] 'Colum Cille', or 'Columba,' adopted the name 'Colum', or dove, when he became a Christian.[114] Prior to his conversion to Christianity, he was called, 'Crimthann', meaning fox.[115]

These two ancient animals and their etymology symbolize the old and the new, and in Tynan's story, if the fox represents a curse, then the dove allows conversion from doom to deliverance. Is the pigeon a messenger of the old gods of Irish myth, or is it a messenger of

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[110] Katharine Tynan, *The House of the Foxes*, p. 78.
[111] Ibid., p. 282.
[112] James MacKillop, 'Pigeon/Dove' in *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology.*
[113] James MacKillop, 'Fox' in *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology.*
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.

the Christian god? Irish identity is often depicted by Tynan as a mixture of both traditions, honoring the ancient lineage that begins with oral storytelling and travels all the way to her twentieth-century pen. At the beginning of the novel, when Meg tells Old Julia of her sighting of the foxes during her first night at the castle, Julia reacts in terror, insisting the incident was nothing more than a dream. Julia believes that Meg's seeing the foxes is impossible because she is not a Turloughmore but a Hildebrand, that any appearance of them is a terrible omen that should never be shared with the family, and she exclaims that Meg would 'have no right to see them.'[116] At the end of the novel, the foxes are no longer perceived as threats. They are a source of positive change and seen as auspicious to have appeared upon Meg's arrival. On a national and cultural level, Tynan's blending of the lines between curse and remedy thematically suggests that there is a bridge that crosses a division—that the sins of one family can be shared and understood by those who once sat in opposition to it. The scars of a bloodline need not become a territorial identity that enables sickness and holds people down.

Superstitious Christianity: Old Habits and Curses

Tynan's novel poses the question: are families doomed by curses? Are they destined to pay the price over and over for a deed done by an ancestor centuries ago? Does one bad deed outweigh all the good deeds of the people to come? This theme is a starkly relevant subject during the revolutionary decade in which Tynan is writing: Ireland is stumbling through oppression, revolution and war in a vicious cycle while trying to foster change and hold onto a less-anglicized past. In addition to Charles Stuart Parnell, Englishman and politician George Wyndham was also one of Tynan's great heroes for Ireland because of his Land Bill act of 1903. Additionally, Tynan admired Wyndam's love for Ireland; he regarded himself as one of many 'men whom Ireland must have wooed before she won them, for they

[116] Katharine Tynan, *The House of the Foxes*, p. 78.

would have come with no prepossession in her favour.'[117] In 1905, Wyndham offered words of hope for Ireland in a letter to Tynan:

> You must never for one moment allow yourself to believe that Ireland is unlucky or that she brings ill luck. It is rather that it is harder to get them right when they go wrong, in Ireland as elsewhere. The great thing is to be quite sure that — (quoting Robert Browning) "All we have hoped and dreamed of good shall exist, not in its semblance but itself." If enough people believe that a great many will live to see it. Your books help me to believe this.[118]

Amid the backdrop of the Great War, when Ireland is politically divided over the engagement by Irish men in the war and Home Rule has been stifled again, the quote brings to mind the curse of Castle Eagle, a metaphor for a seemingly doomed Ireland, forced to relive the disappointment of stagnant Home Rule progress and subservience to the British crown. Wyndham's gratitude and affirmation that Tynan's novels inspired his passion for Ireland's welfare places her as a literary and constitutional Cathleen. It is likely that Fiona MacLeods's admiration of Tynan's 'delicacy of emotion and execution' in her poems and novels and Wyndham's inspiration are echoes of Tynan's extensive readership.[119] Tynan constructed narratives in which vicious historical cycles are resolved by positive thought and action, likely providing optimism to more readers than just Wyndham.

Meg consistently challenges the Turloughmore household concerning the supposed curse; she believes they enable it. Old Julia admits that it is 'a terrible thing to live in a house where you can't be happy for one minnit for fear of what'll happen'.[120] Meg's Catholic faith disallows a belief that God would punish the family, and she rejects any sense of superstition concerning the matter, all the while battling an unease as she feels haunted in that place. Logic and reason are constantly at battle with a countryside that seems alive with spirits. Meg wrestles with this conflict within herself, but she always resolves her fear of these haunted stories with the realization that 'Faith is to live in the sun. Superstition is to sit in the darkness.'[121] Meg chides her household early on, explaining:

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[117] Katharine Tynan, *The Middle Years* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917), p. 224 <https://archive.org/details/cu31924013483072/page/n5/mode/2up> [accessed 03 January 2023].
[118] Ibid., p. 228.
[119] Ibid., p. 129.
[120] Katharine Tynan, *The House of the Foxes*, p. 44.
[121] Ibid., p. 74.

> We are in the hands of God. I can't believe that it is He who goes on punishing innocent people for one cruel and wicked action done hundreds of years ago. If the Earls of Turloughmore have died as they have died, it is because they have taken more risks than other men.[122]

Deeper into the story, when Meg is separated from friends out in the Irish countryside, she doubts her religious conviction momentarily: 'She felt herself drawn from the safe, comfortable feeling of being in the hands of God, of which she had talked to others. She was drawn from that strong stay into a border world of the terror that flies by night.'[123]

Irish identity is a mosaic of old stories, superstition and Catholicism interwoven into the land. Meg admits that she was once believed to have the gifts to become a medium and was taken to a seance. She recounts a feeling that 'she must resist, lest something should take possession of me and I no longer have control over myself.'[124] One of the poets in the room convulses and claims he knows someone in the room is resisting the group and she must be removed. Meg, like Tynan, has returned homesick for her country. She imbibes the mystical folklore and imagery that is infused in the stories of the countryside, yet she holds strongly to her disbelief in anything outside her Catholic faith. Meg refers to the setting of the seance as a 'famous salon' called 'Madame Desanges'.[125] The image of poets and philosophers at the salon of Desanges in *The House of the Foxes* parallels Yeats' anecdotes in his letters to Tynan about Madame Blavatsky's theosophical salon and his neo-pagan gatherings.[126] Tynan paints a similar anecdote from her own life when a medium summons a man who claims to have a message for her. She admits:

> Well, I confess that I was vaguely perturbed. They were urging me. I had a sudden fear. Supposing that one were to step out of safe-keeping, away from one's own happy beliefs and faiths, into those queer places, might not harm come? The message remained undelivered.[127]

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[122] Ibid., p. 45.
[123] Ibid., p. 276.
[124] Ibid., p. 115.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Katharine Tynan, *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences*, p. 269.
[127] Katharine Tynan, *The Middle Years*, p. 97.

Tynan's father often mused upon the teachings of his grandparents. When he explained that he did not believe in ghosts, his grandmother said, 'You don't see them, child, because you're not good enough to see them.'[128] In *The House of the Foxes*, in a counter argument to Meg's claim that if she were to 'accept all those superstitions, I should call myself a devil-worshipper,' servant Kate replies, 'Doesn't eh best blood in Ireland—ay, an' the best-livin' people, believe in it? It isn't exactly the work of the divil ayther. 'Tis some power that lies between them that's nayther God nor divil'.[129] Kate suggests that an aspect of Irish identity hovers somewhere between modern Christianity and the pre-Christian mythic and folkloric traditions. Irish identity is found in storytelling itself, where magic can thrive, where fairies can play tricks on angels; Meg balances out the mystical claim with the reminder that the obsession of fixating upon the story of the curse only enables fear and strangles the quality of life.

Upon realizing Lord Turloughmore would die in his bed rather than out at sea and that doom was no longer looming over Castle Eagle, Meg concludes that 'the foxes did not come for a death'.[130] Ulick claims he 'never believed in the omen of the foxes', yet it is only after his father's return and the supposed curse is lifted that Ulick is able to take responsibility for his health and become the strong man he actually could have been all along. Earlier in the story, Ulick acknowledges his desperation and Meg's power when he urges, 'I hope we will not drive you away with our evil spirits, for yours are all good, good enough to banish ours, to exorcise them'.[131] Perhaps Tynan's message is a 'repudiation of Irish fatalism', a reminder that change comes slowly, bit by bit, century by century, and that once the fear of a curse is removed, it is easier to move forward since new choices can be made.[132] At the beginning of the novel, Meg learns about a 'Lord Turloughmore in the time of James the First' who pursued a supposed witch on his lands.[133] According to Meg's godmother, he 'would have been glad enough to try her for witchcraft as he had seen it done in England; but we had no

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[128] Katharine Tynan, *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences*, p. 2.
[129] Katharine Tynan, *The House of the Foxes*, p. 107.
[130] Ibid., p. 307.
[131] Ibid., p. 93.
[132] Whitney Standlee, '"Affection for England and Love of Ireland": The Altering Landscapes of Katharine Tynan', p. 233.
[133] Katharine Tynan, *The House of the Foxes*, p. 8.

witches in Ireland and we burnt none : we left the burning to the next world if there was burning to be done.'[134] Following that path, he brought terror to the Irish. The novel's moral suggests that many good men and women over time have suffered as they tried to right wrongs for Ireland; their efforts were silenced because they were brave and daring in their cause for their country. They were not cursed, and all who work for Ireland's restoration belong to a lineage of sacrificial heroes.

False Lineage

Tynan's fiction beholds a world where the old and new can exist as one—where Christianity can blend with mythology. Birds act as messengers, companions and healers through their mythical and Christian symbology. Through allusions to Columba's conversion to Christianity in the Old Irish names for pigeon and fox, the power of curse-lifting is wrapped up in conversion of old thoughts and ways that no longer serve a family worn down by a long history of struggle; they finally renounce their victim mentality, rejecting a false lineage of fatalism. Whether it is the deliverance from unhealthy thought patterns or the arrival of a heroine that erases the doom, change finally comes. Tynan challenges Irish concepts of identity through her fiction, suggesting that 'Irish' is multi-dimensional and not limited to one political or national calling or one social class. In 1915, for Tynan, this middle ground just might be the panacea for cohesion between ambivalence and animosity, ushering in freedom from disillusionment in a dynamically changing, unstable time.

[134] Ibid.

Chapter Three

Crone: Lamentation and Losing Home in *Herb o' Grace* and *Evensong*

Tynan's poetry in the early 1910s examines the power of the role of motherhood and the struggle of looking to one's past to heal a perceived loss of identity, integrating disappointment with newfound hope in unchanging landscapes. Mid-decade, Tynan explores a similar archetype in her novels through her youthful heroine, an everyday Cathleen who summons a household to follow her to choose health and deliverance over superstition and doom. In the late poems, Tynan's Cathleen mourns the loss of the men who have followed her most warlike presentation, a cry like that of the banshee associated with Tynan's Irish Spirit of Place.

After the Great War ended, Tynan's husband died, and she and her daughter returned to Dublin. In Tynan's 1918 poetry volume, *Herb o' Grace*, a shift can be discerned from her allegiance to the British crown to her support for Ireland's independence and the war it required. Half of the poems center around the loss of lives in the Great War and how those losses affect the living. Tynan examines contrasting reactions around faith and loss in poems like 'The Great May' in which the poet assures the living that the fallen are living triumphantly in paradise, and 'A Colloquy' in which a mother pleads to another woman to look after her son when she goes to heaven; the mother has no plans to go to paradise because her memories of her son are on the earth where he fought for 'A Mad king's pleasure'.[135] Politically charged poems like 'The Vision (*Katia : Easter Sunday*, 1916)' honor descendants of Lord Edward Fitzgerald and George Wyndham, featuring the Three Kingdoms as all three of their affiliated saints carry a fallen soldier to his eternal home in heaven. The poem's subtitle shows Tynan's support for the British crown in the Great War, the Katia siege taking place only one day before the events of the Easter Rising in Ireland that Monday.

The second half of *Herb o' Grace* contains poems about something new stirring—a war for independence that is personified by 'The Little Old Woman' who mystically summons men to battle. Interestingly, Tynan pairs the crone-like Cathleen who is followed

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[135] Katharine Tynan, *Evensong*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1922), p. 63 <https://archive.org/details/evensong00tynauoft/mode/2up> [accessed 14 December 2022].

by men into battle with a mother figure. Even in her warlike state, she is an old, eccentric woman who mourns all of her sons. Seeing the intense poverty upon her return to Dublin, Tynan remarked that ‘The Irish Rebellion of 1916 had a good many of the ill-paid Civil servants in its ranks. Disaffection to England has been largely kept alive in Ireland by the ill-paid school teachers. A hungry man is a dangerous man, as Shakespeare knew.’[136] Referring to James Connolly and the Rising, Tynan argues in hindsight that ‘Something violent had to be done, he felt, to win justice for the people, to draw attention to their evil case, to frighten good comfortable folk.’[137] Perhaps she partially included herself in that very observation about ‘good comfortable folk’.[138]

In her 1920 *Evensong*, Tynan’s weariness over war is the overarching theme along with her discomfort living in an Ireland where she can no longer fit in with the mainstream culture. When Tynan returned to Dublin, she felt the tension and distance from many colleagues and friends with whom once she shared stories and broke bread. While supporting the War of Independence, the emotional toil of another war and grief over lost friends as well as her husband continuously plagued Tynan. She acknowledged that the ‘suffering, that beautifying, that revealing light which bathed so many people in those sorrowful days was perhaps the true light’, but Tynan was saddened by its temporary warmth; quickly the ‘veil was down, the curtains drawn’ and ‘once more those who had come closer than lovers walked separate and apart.’[139]

In ‘The Secret’ the speaker calls to a mother figure who is ‘Kathaleen’, ‘Dark Rose’ and ‘Silk o’ the Kine’ to comfort her like a child because she can no longer find a place in her world.[140] Annat reflects that at this point in Tynan’s life, she ‘must have found her position increasingly uncomfortable’ because ‘she was a conflation of Irish nationalist and British subject’.[141] Remembering the Easter Rising, Tynan described her disbelief at the initial news and her fear that she would relive the ‘Land League days, and the days of the Invincibles’, recalling that when she lived close to Kilmainham Jail she ‘prayed not to wake till late’

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[136] Katharine Tynan, *The Wandering Years* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1922), pp. 34-35 <https://archive.org/details/cu31924013483080/page/n5/mode/2up> [accessed 04 February 2023].
[137] Katharine Tynan, *The Years of the Shadow* (London: Constable, 1919), p. 78 <https://archive.org/details/cu31924028168767/page/n7/mode/2up> [accessed 04 January 2023].
[138] Ibid.
[139] Katharine Tynan, *The Wandering Year*s, p. 60.
[140] Katharine Tynan, *Evensong*, p. 15.
[141] Aurelia L.S. Annat, ‘Class, Nation, Gender and Self: Katharine Tynan and the Construction of Political Identities, 1880-1930’, p. 205.

because she could hear the 'tolling of the death bell' during hangings.[142] Tynan's dismay at seeing young, hopeful men she knew as children take up Ireland's cause and die is evident in the poem 'The Call' where the speaker prays for the protection of all young men, not just her own. The narrator's need to protect has shifted from the younger mother in *New Poems*: like the banshee she can hear the cries of all the men of war, and she prays for their safety, her own soft keen becoming a prayer of hope that might bring them home or find them rest.

Grief: Acknowledged and Reasoned

Tynan's late poems observe the state of men who survive the war and return home, differentiating their physical condition from that of their spirits. In 'Quiet Eyes' from *Herb o' Grace*, religious faith and the innocence of Ireland attributed to Ireland's Spirit of Place join together to bring healing to the forlorn men who return home from war alive. The narrator distinguishes the soul from the body, creating contrast by using soothing alliteration and harsh sounds: the young men long for 'quiet things' like 'A bird that softly sings', while their dreams are full of 'horror and grief intolerable'.[143] Underneath the changed state of the men is the 'innocence' of the eyes of a child that still linger.[144] While that innocence is associated with their childhood, it is perhaps connected to the innocence of Ireland. The narrator uses heavy, stressed syllables in words like 'war-worn and deep-lined' to evoke the states of the post-war men, contrasting those images with alliteration and lyrical vowel sounds in words like 'satin smoothness', an attribute no longer present in their faces.[145] Emphasis on the soul resting safely and apart from the worn body is achieved through repetition and assonance as the speaker concludes that 'The soul looks from its hidden place | Unharmed, unflawed, unhurt'.[146] Tynan's Spirit of Place, the banshee crying out, is without sin, and the young men who have returned home have remained pure in the speaker's mind.

Tynan addresses the longing for those who have passed away with the arrival of spring. In 'Flower O' The Year' (*Herb o'Grace*), spring is blooming and even though 'The

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[142] Katharine Tynan, *The Years of the Shadow*, p. 192.
[143] Katharine Tynan, *Herb o' Grace: Poems in War-Time* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1918), p. 16 <https://archive.org/details/herbogracepoemsi00tynaiala/page/n5/mode/2up> [accessed 11 December 2022].

[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid, p. 17.

primrose and the daffodil weather | Is here', the magic of rebirth cannot be felt.[147] The young men of war have not come home and 'since they come not it is cold'. Tynan creates a similar sentiment in 'The First Thrush' from *Evensong* which is likely an homage to her late husband. The speaker remembers when the thrush began to sing and how she and her love 'thrilled to hear Spring's voice—The wild hope, the wild cheer!'.[148] Yet her heart is 'now a wingless thing', and she looks to her love in heaven to remember the call of the thrush; he, now knowing the thrush's meaning, waits there while she sits alone on Earth.[149] Tynan's description of the speaker as a 'wingless thing' creates contrast to the thriving thrush and is reminiscent of the pigeon who falls exhausted into Castle Eagle during the Galway storm in *The House of the Foxes*.[150] The pigeon is an invalid mirroring the disheveled state of Lady Turloughmore but is also a messenger of hope and strength; this dual presence of wounded bird and symbol of promise is encapsulated in both the speaker and the lover in heaven in 'The First Thrush'. The wood-pigeon also appears in the poem 'Wings in the Night' (*Herb o' Grace*) as it witnesses birds flying through the night. The birds on land are awakened by the noise of such birds, 'The wood-pigeon lamenting | For Sorrows not her own'.[151] The mysterious birds are 'But souls of the men on the wind, | Seeking the mother's breast' as they return home 'from the fields of slaughter'.[152] The bond between mother and child is intertwined with imagery of men's souls flying, an image prominent in *The House of the Foxes* when the memory of wild geese flying haunts Castle Eagle. The wood-pigeon in the poem and the novel is an observer of the spiritual activity on the land. The wood-pigeon, or dove, a symbol of hope, signifies that light can be found in the darkest and most desolate of places.

In 'The Call' (*Evensong*), acknowledgment and reassurance come together to find purpose. The mother archetype stretches from the everyday domestic into a larger sphere. The scope of protection includes men outside of the isolated home the mother keeps. Post-war grief haunts the woman as she hears a voice calling to her, pleading 'Mother, Mother!' in

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[147] Ibid., p. 8.
[148] Katharine Tynan, *Evensong*, p. 11.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Katharine Tynan, *Herb o' Grace: Poems in War-Time*, p. 91.
[152] Ibid.

the night.[153] She wakes in fear because she cannot know if it is the voice of her own son a few rooms away or if it is a soldier 'From East or West in some sore need'.[154] She wonders if it is the dead sons crying out to her, but regardless of who calls, they 'would have the power to wake | Me in the grave' to come to the aid of the one in distress.[155] A sense of urgency sets the tone of the poem through the repetition of the word 'quick', used three times in reference to the cry of a lost son.[156] In the aftermath of war, with sons traumatized, lost or deceased, the instinct to protect all children remains strong in this mother. The universal mother archetype blends with Cathleen as the mother yearns for all lost sons of Ireland.

Faith: Justified and Questioned

The breadth of Tynan's work is interwoven with Christianity as an abiding hope and source for redemption and an ultimate home for the weary who are faithful. One of Tynan's great contributions to the years of the Great War are her poems along with letters she wrote to those who were grieving: 'at one time I was writing a hundred letters a week to the bereaved of the War'.[157] One of Tynan's most popular poems during such years was an earlier poem called 'Flower of Youth' which was printed copiously and quoted by priests from the pulpit. The poem presents a heroic optimism about the sacrifice of soldiers in war, for 'When they come trooping from the war | Our skies have many a new gold star.'[158] The death of the soldiers elicits a celebration as the narrator exclaims that 'They shall be young for ever. | The Son of God was once a boy', and the men are forever young as they 'run and leap' and spend eternity in 'great joy'.[159] The poem's first printing in 1914 created the stir that resulted in the many letters that were sent to Tynan, inspiring her to respond to each one received, and the poem's popularity was maintained by priests who continued to reference it in their sermons as late as 1918.[160] A similar heroism is painted in Tynan's *Herb o' Grace* poem

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[153] Ibid., p. 41.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Katharine Tynan, *The Years of the Shadow*, p. 176.
[158] Katharine Tynan, *Flower of Youth: Poems in War Time* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1915), p. 54 <https://archive.org/details/flowerofyouthpoe00tyna/page/n3/mode/2up > [accessed 15 January 2023].
[159] Ibid.
[160] Katharine Tynan, *The Years of the Shadow*, pp. 175-176.

entitled 'The Vision (*Katia : Easter Sunday*, 1916)'. The poem extends Tynan's admiration of George Wyndham by paying tribute to his nephew, Hugo Francis, who died on the battlefield at Katia. Extending the connection further, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, the subject of Tynan's 1916 historic novel about the 1798 rebellion was the great-great grandfather of Francis.[161] At the time of such events, Tynan happened to be writing a historic novel about Lord Edward: 'Oddly enough, I was writing of the other Rebellion. I had begun *Lord Edward, a Study in Romance*, some five days before the outbreak of the Rebellion of 1916.'[162] The timing of Hugo's fall was coincidental with the Ireland Easter Rising, but Tynan's admiration for Lord Edward, thus extending to Parnell and to Wyndham, and her continued allegiance to the British crown enforce the poem's politically charged message supported by Catholicism, and it sits in contrast to poems like Yeats' 'Easter Rising, 1916'.

In Tynan's 'The Vision', a mother has a vision of her son dying and 'goin to heaven in battle'.[163] She views the place where he dies, a place that is 'sad' and 'parched, without shade', using imagery that is dark and foreboding in the first three quatrains.[164] Her son is a 'Christian Knight' who falls 'In Paynim thrall', a pagan or non-Christian cultural place.[165] He is a knight for Christ and his country, so a 'light burns in the cloud' and St. Andrew, St. Patrick and St. George, the patron saints of the Three Kingdoms, arrive.[166] Following their arrival, the poem shifts and evolves into a lighter tone, including majestic transformation in this scene; the fallen soldier's 'banner floats upon the breeze' and he is wrapped in it 'Like a gold fleece', immortalized as he strikes his enemy down.[167] The soldier is resurrected, and the tempo increases with a repetitive declaration that 'He's won the day, he's won the day!'.[168] Now, the Knight rides to paradise as the mother awakens, referring to his safety with God as 'Easter Day'.[169] Catholicism and love of country create the sainthood of the war hero through this dynamic rise in the poem. In contrast, Yeats' meditation upon the violence and sacrifice of the Easter Rising in Ireland paints a murkier picture. Yeats concludes that 'A terrible

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[161] Kieron Winterson, '"Old wine in new bottles"?: Katharine Tynan, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and George Wyndham' in *Irish Women's Writing, 1878-1922*, ed. by Anna Pilz and Whitney Standlee (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 156-173 (p. 163) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv18b5gj1.16> [accessed 29 November 2022].

[162] Katharine Tynan, *The Years of the Shadow*, p. 192.
[163] Katharine Tynan, *Herb o' Grace: Poems in War-Tim*e, p. 61.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid., p. 62.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.

beauty is born' from the violence that has made ordinary men into revolutionaries that awaken Ireland to a new path forward.[170] The poet questions, 'Was it needless death after all? | For England may keep faith | For all that is done and said. | We know their dream'.[171] The juxtaposition of these two poems written around two separate events occurring almost simultaneously and their political opposition shows the tense climate among the Irish following such events, yet Tynan and Yeats shared common ground in their ambivalence and confusion surrounding the Easter Rising. Tynan later comes to terms with the decision of the leaders of the rebellion to use violence for change.

In her 1920 *Evensong,* Tynan continued to grapple with the horrors of war and the heartache it brought to people. In 'In Time of War', the speaker acknowledges the grief of all people who lament those lost in war; all are welcome into the stable of the Christ child. The people's 'dearest hopes are slain' and their tears 'Have drenched the bloodied earth'.[172] It is Christ who can soothe the suffering and on 'the Child's breast shall be laid | The world's grief as one tortured head'.[173] In 'The Great May' from *Herb o' Grace*, the narrator looks to Christianity as the healing balm for sorrow. In contrast to 'Flower O' The Year', spring is a positive metaphor for the eternal glory of the men who have died; in the despair of a 'sad world in pain', spring arrives and 'She Comes new garlanded'.[174] The narrator paints 'a May-world past compare' for those who mourn and reminds them that they will see their loved ones again because they are 'Raised up and triumphing'.[175] This type of reasoning and comforting is consistent with Tynan's poetic reflections about war. However, in 'A Colloquy' (*Herb o' Grace*), Tynan creates notable contrast and acknowledges the questioning and rejection of faith that often follows tragic loss. Structurally, Tynan creates an intense conversation between two speakers who may be the same person and who are struggling to reconcile the positive memories of life with the reality of death. The plaintive speaker sits in profound grief, embittered by her son's sacrifice 'to serve some Mad king's pleasure | And his dreams and hopes in the dust'.[176] She petitions that because 'your God is kind and just' that he should 'atone | And the dark ways be made plain' since the young man 'was killed in

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[170] William Butler Yeats, 'Easter Rising, 1916' in *Michael Robertes and the Dancer* (Dundrum: Cuala Press, 1920), p. 9 <https://archive.org/details/michaelrobartesd0000yeat/page/n3/mode/2up> [accessed 29 January 2023].
[171] Ibid.
[172] Katharine Tynan, *Evensong*, p. 55.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Katharine Tynan, *Herb o' Grace: Poems in War-Tim*e, p. 39.
[175] Ibid., p. 40.
[176] Ibid.

a quarrel not his own!'[177] She will not meet her son in heaven. She is content to stay forever on Earth where her life held 'all my joy | In my Love, my Light of home.'[178] Tynan uses commands to highlight the first speaker's impassioned speech, contrasted by the second speaker's simple questions. The second speaker completes the dialogue of the poem with reassurance that the first speaker will one day be in heaven and that her child will be waiting for her nonetheless. This interpretation of Tynan's poem features a Cathleen symbolism similar to that in 'The Meeting' from *Irish Poems*; two women, likely the same person but at different ages, wrestle with one's longing for the past and the other's acceptance of reality. It is surprising that within *Herb o' Grace*, 'A Colloquy' is placed directly following the heroic and triumphant poem, 'The Vision'.

The Little Old Woman: Firebrand and Banshee

In 1916, soon after watching the audience at the Abbey Theatre become enthralled by the Gregory-Yeats *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, Tynan feared German invasion at her home in County Mayo and referenced the 'Little Old Woman, perhaps, listening with her heart'.[179] After the Great War, as Ireland began its assertion of independence, Tynan's poems shifted from heroic sacrifices in the Great War to the growing battle for Ireland's freedom. The second half of *Herb o' Grace* shows this shift with the appearance of poems like 'The Little Old Woman' in which an old crone sings 'her lovesong like a falling keen'.[180] She travels in the dark playing a 'magic air' on her harp as she lures men to follow her.[181] Commonly used in Tynan's poems, the phrase 'Love and Delight you are' is attributed to 'the Dear Black Rose'.[182] The poem is written in five ABAB rhyming quatrains with punctuation at the end of each line in the first three stanzas, creating a hypnotic rhythmic affect. However, Tynan increases the intensity of this Cathleen's power to lure men away in the last two stanzas using enjambment:

> The Little Old Woman she is begging bread ;
> She shall never go hungry while the ages pass,

[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Katharine Tynan, *The Years of the Shadow*, p. 160.
[180] Katharine Tynan, *Evensong*, p. 80.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid.

With the love of her lovers she shall be fed
    And their hearts lie under her feet in the grass.

They go from the lit board and the fire of peat
    And the dreams and the longing stir in the blood.
Sweet to be poor with her, yea, death is sweet,
    For the Dear Rose of Beauty in the beggar's hood.'\

Adding to the increased tempo and fluidity of line, Tynan uses repetition in 'love of her lovers' to intensify this Cathleen as she feeds upon the dedication of the young men.[183] The 'dreams and the longing' result in the finality of death, and in the penultimate line, the sweeping tempo comes to a halt with caesura as the speaker emphasizes that 'yea, death is sweet'.[184] This presentation of Cathleen is somewhat similar to the image of the Poor Old Woman in the Gregory-Yeats play, but this Cathleen never reveals her crown or her youth. She is content to play the crone with her crown concealed.

In the poem 'Menace' from *Herb o'Grace,* a crone-like Cathleen is named Dark Rosaleen who is 'the banshee in the night' keening for the men who have died for her cause.[185] Tynan switches from her common use of quatrains to quintains with an ABABB rhyme scheme. Through metaphor and personification, Tynan creates a world where 'trees are clad in grass-green silk' and 'the land is white as milk'; birds sing while the old woman keens as a distraught mother.[186] The narrator tells Dark Rose to take comfort in God's judgment of the Irish: God will be kind to them and care for them, along with saints like Patrick, 'Columcille, Kieran and Bride'.[187] Alongside God and Mary, who is 'Queen of the Gael', is the Catholic martyr and Irish saint Oliver Plunkett, victim of the 1678 Popish Plot who was beatified by the Catholic Church in 1920, the year of the volume's publication. This nod to current events and integrating the little woman with Catholicism is a telling political statement. The combination of Christianity and pre-Christian images echo motifs of the mother in *New Poems* and the wise maiden in *The House of Foxes.* If Ireland's despair and Spirit of Place is looked upon with defeat by this Dark Rose, like Meg Hildebrand, the narrator reminds the mourning Rose that she is in God's love and protection—after all, she

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[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid., pp. 80-81.
[185] Katharine Tynan, *Herb o' Grace: Poems in War-Tim*e, p. 88.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid., p. 89.

represents the Irish cause, and as Tynan says of the 'Spirit of Place' in Ireland, the Irish are 'innocent'.[188]

Tynan's poems about lamenting a home lost and the despair of no longer finding comfort in one's country are potently expressed in *Evensong*. In 'The Secret', the speaker longs to return to old Ireland, a great mother, naming her 'Rosaleen', 'Kathaleen' and 'Silk o' the Kine.'[189] While the symbolic images or names of Kathaleen and Rose have appeared in Tynan's previous work, the inclusion of Silk o' the Kine adds an additional layer to the speaker's longing for rest. While Silk o' the Kine is a 'personification of Ireland', the imagery of the poem may include Jacobite symbolism, alluding to the time of Parnell.[190] The song 'A Dhroimeann Donn Dílis' ('Oh faithful white-backed brown cow'), although unknown in date, was published in Hardiman's *Irish Minstrelsy* of 1831 and is 'Jacobite in sentiment'.[191] The narrator longs for a relationship with this Cathleen/Ireland that she holds most dear. Tynan's desolation and disillusionment is well-described in *The Wandering Years:*

> Perhaps the Great War is too near and I know too much about it to believe in war again. Perhaps age has chilled my pulses. Perhaps the movement is too young for me. I have no fanaticism, and a spice of fanaticism is needed to make war with any kind of conviction. Yet I yield to no one in my love for the country and the people; and, if a long period of years lived out of the country has taught me that no cause and no people are altogether black or altogether white, it is a knowledge that comes to most of us with chilling age.[192]

Tynan's poems often feature short rhyming phrases, yet in 'The Secret', each line varies from twelve to sixteen syllables in length, double her typical length of phrase. There are twenty lines in the poem with no breaks or stanzas, yet they feature Tynan's commonly applied ABAB rhyme structure. The longer phrases without stanzaic breaks create the texture of a monologue, simulating space and a sense of journey from the poem's beginning to its end. The speaker longs to reach a lost Ireland of her memory, one she knows she can only find in death. The woman's secret is her joy in knowing that her days are running out, and that when death comes, she will lie in the arms of the Mother Ireland of her dreams, an

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[188] Katharine Tynan, *Twenty-Five Years: Reminiscences*, p. 63.
[189] Katharine Tynan, *Evensong*, p. 15.
[190] Sean MacMahon and Jo O'Donoghue, 'Silk of the kine' in *Brewer's Dictionary of Irish Phrase and Fable* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), pp. 748-749 <https://archive.org/details/brewersdictionar0000mcma/> [accessed 01 February 2023].

[191] Ibid.
[192] Katharine Tynan, *The Wandering Years*, p. 135.

Ireland she can no longer find in her current life. The 'little joy that stirs' inside her 'sings so low to herself her secret ditty' about her numbered days.[193] Tynan uses images of the banshee in other poems about Dark Rose, and in 'Menace' refers to her as 'the Woman of Death'.[194] Perhaps the speaker in 'The Secret' hears the soft song of the banshee now that she is close to death; the song is comforting, luring her through her journey as she seeks rest in the arms of Mother Ireland. Tynan uses opposition in the middle of the poem to elevate the longing of the speaker for rest from her weariness. Her 'hunger' for this Mother Ireland 'turns hard for me the softest of ways' and 'the sweetness of honey is bitter'.[195] Additionally, Tynan uses repetition of color and texture with alliteration to create the Ireland that is beyond her reach with 'silver hills' and 'dew-drenched meadows', 'eyes grey', 'grey skies', 'silken hair' and 'silk-soft rains'.[196] Instead of vibrant colors like the blues and greens painted in other poems, there is a mysterious, almost colorless veil that differentiates this place from the landscape she physically inhabits. Mother Ireland is fully personified by the speaker in the final four lines:

The milky breasts of you, Rosaleen, and the mouth of honey,
The mother eyes of you, Silk o' the Kine, dewy and mild,
And the quiet heart of you, Kathaleen, that is dark and sunny,
Draw me home to rest with you, in your arms—a child.[197]

The three stages of womanhood resonate in the last four lines. Rosaleen resembles a youthful mother in her nursing years. Silk o' the Kine portrays 'mother eyes' that are 'dewy' which depict the richness of seasoned motherhood. Kathaleen has a 'quiet heart' that is both 'dark and sunny', reminiscent of the little old woman Tynan describes in the spring of 1916 after having seen the Gregory-Yeats play at the Abbey Theatre.[198] In 'The Secret', the themes of Tynan's late poems come together much like the themes of her earlier poems in 'Gorse' from *Irish Poems*. The speaker, with life's battle scars, acknowledges her grief by rejecting the world in which she can no longer find a home. She actively seeks solace in an ancient, authentic Ireland that is no longer found in her physical world, a reality she finally accepts. She hears the secret hum in her own heart; once a lament, it is now a joyful promise,

[193] Katharine Tynan, *Evensong*, p. 15.
[194] Katharine Tynan, *Herb o' Grace: Poems in War-Tim*e, p. 88.
[195] Katharine Tynan, *Evensong*, p. 15.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.

reminding her that her separation from her true home is now brief. Soon she will return to the Mother.

Conclusion

In the spring of 1910, the editor of *The Irish Monthly* acknowledged the exclusion of three prominent Irish female authors from a lecture 'on Irish Novelists in the Irish Literary Society' in Dublin.[199] The editor notes that 'the omission provoked no protest' from any of the speakers and was his reason for featuring the three women in his article.[200] One of the three authors was Katharine Tynan. This research, like the editor of *The Irish* Monthly, aims to better represent Tynan's importance in the literary history of Ireland and to further build upon some of the established twenty-first century scholarship on Tynan's work.

Tynan was a successful author, breadwinner, dedicated mother and spouse at the start the revolutionary decade—a decade in which she would return to an Ireland full of unease, war and loss. The speakers in Tynan's poems range from everyday mothers protecting their homes to characters seeking solace in the cradle of a symbolic Mother Ireland. The archetype of the universal mother in earlier poems of the 1910s overlaps with that of a maternal and crone-like Cathleen in later poems. Universal mothers are young, hard working protectors in their nursing years but their power originates from an older source of light for the world. The young heroines in Tynan's novels are portrayed with gumption—they transform downtrodden households with the gusto often seen in a seasoned domestic housewife and the insight of a woman in her golden years. In Tynan's late poems, the Cathleen archetype is directly named; whether she lures men to war or mourns for them, her queenly status is always disguised. Perhaps Tynan's explicit naming of these Cathleens aligns with her shifting perspectives around national politics and Ireland's fight for freedom alongside her nostalgia for the Ireland of her youth. As a more general personification of Ireland, Cathleen encompasses all three stages of womanhood, becoming the great Mother in whose cradle the weary may rest.

While Tynan hoped for constitutional reform through the actions of politicians like Parnell and Wyndham, and supported Irish participation in the British army during the Boer War and the Great War, her ambivalence and disillusionment toward the events of the Easter Rising eventually shifted, and she supported the War of Independence. Tynan's poems and

[199] Matthew Russell, 'The Literary Output of Three Irish-Women', *The Irish Monthly*, 38 (1910), 200-202 (202) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20502786> [accessed 28 January 2023].

[200] Ibid.

novels focus on themes of feminine Irish identity through the everyday perspective of a woman of her time—a woman who frequented the male-dominated circles of her field while being the caretaker and pillar of her own home. Tynan's novels and poems reveal that Tynan's perspectives on Irish identity are tied to her political and religious viewpoints, and her long-lasting and wide readership suggests many people identified with her own journey through the revolutionary years. In a decade of much confusion and fear, Tynan's work reveals an array of changing mindsets where one overall message remains clear—the old, ancient Ireland of youth and dreams is innocent. Motifs of maternity, storytelling, religion blended with superstition, disillusionment and integration of hope with landscape all reinforce the advent of an everyday Cathleen.

L. Perry Curtis, Jr. states that after 1916, the female symbol of Ireland was both 'angelic and triumphant—a symbol of both war and peace'.[201] Tynan's Irish motifs demonstrate that dual themes are an ever-changing yet authentic part of Irish identity; it is likely her own shifts between action and passivity are an expression of that duality. This research is important to modern revivalist criticism regarding female perspectives on feminine personifications of Ireland, especially one as rich and as multi-faceted as Tynan's. Tynan's personifications of her beloved home paired with everyday imagery of a real woman's life are vital viewpoints that warrant further exploration. The Gregory-Yeats *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, an iconic representation of Erin in the revolutionary decade, was initially credited solely to Yeats, likely due to 'the persistence of a stereotypical view of Lady Gregory as merely Yeats's patron, Abbey Theatre factotum, and accessory to genius, rather than as an artist whose assistance and counsel he valued and sought'—a stereotype also commonly attached to Tynan.[202] A deeper understanding of Irish identity will resonate in modern scholarship as the lens continues to change and bias toward female authors is allayed. A contemporary perspective on female personifications of Ireland is crucial to understanding women's contributions to Irish literature, including everyone from the little old woman to the parading queen.

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[201] L. Perry Curtis, Jr., 'The Four Erins: Feminine Images of Ireland, 1780–1900', *Éire-Ireland*, 33 (1998), 70-102 (p. 95) <https://doi.org/10.1353/eir.1998.0007> [accessed 07 March 2023].

[202] Pethica, James, '"Our Kathleen": Yeats's Collaboration with Lady Gregory in the Writing of Cathleen ni Houlihan' in *Yeats and Women*, ed. by Deirdre Toomey (London: Palgrave Macmillon, 1997), pp.205-222 (p. 205) <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-25822-2_6> [accessed 23 March 2023].

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