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MASTERPIECE



THE IRISH LITERARY REVIVAL

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Abstract

The topic of the Irish Literary Revival has been a popular one for many decades. In this study the subject is approached from the perspective of the writers. What were they trying to achieve: were they after political gain in a struggle towards a free and independent Ireland or were they an elite group which merely rejoiced in the art of writing about nostalgic themes and forgotten lore? And how did they succeed, did they achieve their goals? A literary research through different studies, books and articles as well as an analysis of some of the works of the protagonists yields the explanation that the writers of the Irish Literary Revival believed that art and politics were intrinsically linked; they educated readers about Irish cultural history **and** they used their writing to express their attitudes toward Irish politics. These findings add nuance to our understanding of what the Irish Literary Revival entails and they will contribute to future research on the topic.



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Introduction

Today, Ireland is a country with a bright future regarding its language and traditions, but this optimistic outlook was not always the case. In Ireland's long, bloody and often tragic history, the island was dominated by foreign nations and the population had been exploited and oppressed for over a thousand years. Penal Laws¹ and other measures caused many of Ireland's original religious traditions to disappear and the old culture had almost vanished by the mid-nineteenth century. The Irish population had then dropped to a mere 4 million and the original Irish language was on the brink of extinction.

However, a handful of writers succeeded in restoring and spreading the Irish language and culture in the second half of the 19th century through a movement which is called the Irish Literary Revival. The aim of these writers was to revive the Irish language and culture by producing works about the wonderful Irish (Celtic) heritage. They reintroduced Celtic themes into modern literature and their passionate writing covered many aspects of a Celtic past. In an effort to identify and emphasise many of the originally Irish features they wanted to expose Ireland's very own, unique culture. However, in this process it was unavoidable not to include political discussions regarding the English domination over Ireland. Their works proved to be a highly successful formula to (re)awaken and empower the ever latent nationalist feelings of the people in Ireland. A growing nationalism ultimately contributed much to the establishment of a free and independent Irish government.

There were several reasons why I chose this topic: I wanted to know more about Irish literature, I wanted to learn about the history of Ireland and I was curious about the many aspects of traditional Irish culture. Moreover, I knew I would thoroughly enjoy the Irish atmosphere of peasantry, nature, myths and lore.

My research method for gathering information was by doing literary research. This worked best for me. As the Revival is a thing of the past, research methods such as interviewing people or publishing a survey were out of the question. Besides reviewing lots of available reading materials pertaining to the Revival online I read (history) books and I analysed specific works by W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, John Synge and Douglas Hyde, who were the main characters of the Irish Literary Revival.

¹ A series of laws imposed in an attempt to force Irish Catholics and Protestant dissenters to accept the reformed Christian Faith.

Research questions

Main research question

What were the intentions of the writers of the Irish Literary Revival and how did they succeed in achieving their goals?

Sub questions

1. Which events led up to the ILR
2. What were the writers trying to achieve?
3. How did they try to revive the Irish language and culture?
4. What effects did this have on the people?
5. Did the writers have any political ambitions?

Theoretical framework

Definition

The Irish Literary Revival, also called the Celtic Twilight² was a flowering of Irish literary talent in the late 19th and early 20th century. This literary revival encouraged the creation of works written in the spirit of Irish culture, as distinct from English culture. This was, in part, due to the political need for an individual Irish identity. This difference was kept alive by invoking Ireland's historic past, its myths, legends and folklore. There was an attempt to revitalise the native rhythm and music of Irish Gaelic. The interest in Ireland's Gaelic heritage led to a strong growth of Irish nationalism from the middle of the 19th century, which ultimately resulted in an independent Irish Republic in 1949.

Line of approach:

The ILR³ has been a popular subject for many researchers and, over time, a huge amount of articles and books has been written on the matter, each of these approaching the subject from different angles. For example, the catholic aspect is highlighted and concisely summarised by Frank A. Biletz in *Catholic Churchmen and the Celtic Revival in Ireland*, (Biletz, 2004). In this article Biletz states that the Catholic clergy, including many prominent bishops played a central and on-going role in all phases of the Celtic revival. Clerical involvement in the Celtic revival and activities of Catholic bishops and priests were far more influential in instilling a sense of pride in the national cultural heritage among the masses of Irish people than such elite movements as the members of the Literary Revival.⁴ In *Modernism and the Celtic revival* (Castle, 2009) Gregory Castle examines the impact of anthropology on the work of Irish Revivalists. Castle argues that anthropology enabled Irish Revivalists to confront and combat British imperialism and he shows how Irish Modernists employed textual and strategies first developed in anthropology to translate, reassemble, and edit oral and folk-cultural material.⁵ Another approach is seen in *Fictions of the Irish Literary revival* (Foster, 1987). Whereas the poetry and drama have been studied in depth, Foster focuses on the writers' achievements in

² After Yeats' book *The Celtic Twilight*, which was published in 1893

³ Irish Literary Revival

⁴ Biletz reviews the book *Catholic Churchmen and the Celtic Revival in Ireland, 1848-1916* by Kevin Collins. (Dublin: Four Courts Press. Distributed in the United States by ISBS, Portland, Oregon 2002)

⁵ Description of *Modernism and the Celtic Revival*. (sd). Accessed on July 10, 2013, from Cambridge University Press: <http://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/literature/english-literature-1900-1945/modernism-and-celtic-revival>

fiction because, according to him, “this aspect has been neglected as the fiction of the Revival is so highly diverse”⁶.

An interesting view is given by Dr P. J. Mathews, of University College in Dublin, who in his book *Revival* (Mathews, 2004) “argues against the received opinion that the Irish Revival was a purely mystical affair of high culture, characterized by a fascination for nostalgia, Celtic spirituality, and traditionalism. Instead, he claims that the movement was very progressive and out to use their works to quickly form a gateway to parliamentary politics”.⁷

In trying to establish the intention of the writers of the ILR I will use these apparently contradictory elements and will show how they are not opposites. They were both present and partly true and they made this combination of nostalgia and modern realism highly popular with the people of Ireland. In order to reach my goal I will first include evidence from Irish history which will explain the need to write in the “Irish way”. I will lay down what the ILR-writers were trying to achieve and the effects of their achievements. I will analyse what exactly was considered as typically traditional, nostalgic or “Irish” in their works and in an attempt to bridge the gap between the theory of nostalgic wooliness versus the theory that the members of the Irish Literary Revival cleverly laid out a path of stepping stones by establishing and exploiting modern new ways to make their works known to the public for political gain, I will demonstrate how the main characters were neither political activists, nor were they simply describing and re-activating the past.

⁶ Foster in his introduction to the book

⁷ *Revival* (Description of the book by Mathews, P. (2004). *Revival, The Abbey Theatre, Sinn Fein, The Gaelic League, and the Co-operative Movement*. Cork: Cork University Press). (sd). Accessed on July 10, 2013, from Notre Dame Press: <http://undpress.nd.edu/book/P00929>

Research plan and methods.

I will do a literary research, which means I will search for, collect, study and use all kinds of reading materials which, I expect, can for a great deal be found on the Internet. I will look for publications, articles in magazines, reports, biographies, non-fiction works and studies on Scholar.google.com. I will frequently need to visit sites such as Wikipedia.org and other Encyclopaedias because those are the likely places to find background information on the topic. In order to get a broader and more thorough knowledge on the subject it is imperative that I read about the history of Ireland. I will read and consult at least one history book. I am going to read at least three works written by ILR- writers in order to find evidence of Celtic themes, words, or references to Irishness, and I will look for evidence of any political propaganda. To substantiate my arguments I will pinpoint typically Irish themes and words as well as political items.

To investigate further, some “fieldwork” will be done during a visit to Ireland. I am going to visit the house of Daniel O’Connell⁸ where I hope to find relevant, historic information for this Masterpiece. For the same reason I am going to visit Lady Gregory’s house in Coole Park⁹. This place houses a museum which recalls some of the ILR’s atmosphere in the form of Yeats’ voice recordings, objects and books. There are pictures and films of plays performed at the Abbey Theatre and a “Yeats nature trail” runs through the woods. Books and leaflets are available at the reception, which enlighten visitors about the importance of the ILR- group.

After I have collected and studied my data, I will use that kind of information which serves my purpose best in order to answer my research questions, and I will incorporate this information into the report.

I expect the combination of reading and visiting to produce fundamental findings. I think the immensity and diversity of the studies I have found on the Internet so far allow me to find an excellent opportunity to achieve my goal.

⁸ Daniel O’Connell, 1775 –1847, often referred to as The Liberator. He campaigned for Catholic Emancipation.

⁹ Coole Park, County Galway, Ireland

Results

Which events led up to the Irish Literary Revival?

The original culture of Ireland had almost vanished, because of the longstanding domination over Ireland by the Vikings, the Normans and the English respectively. An overview of historical facts until 1800 AD illustrates this:

- The Irish Celts arrived in 400 AD and achieved full domination of Ireland with their language and Gaelic culture. Ireland was no part of the Roman Empire and was left to develop in its own way.
- 435 St. Patrick¹⁰ brought Christianity to Ireland.
- 796 Start of Vikings raids.
- 1169 The Anglo-Normans invaded Ireland, and imposed feudal law on the Irish. The Gaels soon learned the Norman ways as they had once learned the Norse ones.
- 1366 In the Statutes of Kilkenny the use of Gaelic ways and language were forbidden, these statutes were generally ignored, causing Richard the Second to come to Ireland to fight the Gaelic chieftains.
- 1541 Henry the 8th proclaimed himself King of Ireland, thereby taking all Irish wealth and goods to England.
- 1690 James 2nd, in an attempt to restore Ireland to its Catholic faith, was defeated by the army of William of Orange at the famous Battle of the Boyne. The English Conquest remained and Ireland became a wholly integrated part of the United Kingdom.
- 1800, the Act of Union dissolved the Irish parliament and formally subsumed Ireland into Great Britain to form the United Kingdom. (McCullough, 2010)
- When in 1800, a great part of Europe was influenced by a movement called Medievalism, which reacted against modernism, Irish people looked back in their fractured history and recognised that Ireland once had a pre-Saxon Celtic heritage.
- In the approximate period from 1800 to 1850, another movement, Romanticism, reacted against modernism and against the Industrial Revolution. “Romanticism validated strong emotions, it elevated folk art and ancient custom to something noble.

¹⁰ St. Patrick features in many stories in the Irish oral tradition and there are many customs connected with his feast day on March 17

Romanticism revolted against existing aristocratic, social and political norms and there was an interest in a natural existence; conditioned by nature in the form of language and customary usage. The Romantic period was associated with liberalism and radicalism, but the long term effect on the growth of nationalism was probably more significant”.

(Romanticism)

In short: a general interest to revert to ancient customs and traditions, the discovery that Ireland had its own past, a “Golden Age” from 400 until 796, and the fact that the Irish had been dominated by other nations for too long, with ages of domination by and submission to a foreign regime which imposed discriminating measures, provoked a new nationalism in Ireland under the influence of Romanticism. Ireland’s mythical, legendary and heroic Celtic past, and its natural environment were the perfect topics for writers in the Romantic period to draw upon and thus a solid and fertile basis from which the Irish Literary could develop was available.

Two noteworthy events which were significant in the run-up to the flowering of the Irish (Literary) Revival must be mentioned, as they present a recognition and justification for the newly awakened interest in Irish culture: Catholicism, the original faith in Ireland, had long been forbidden, but in 1820 Daniel O’Connell founded the Catholic Association¹¹ and reduced membership fee to a penny a month. Membership exploded and thus set the tone for Irish nationalism.

Also, between 1845 -1959 the potato crops failed. “Terrible starvation as well as Black Death and Cholera followed for many years. Some 25% from a population of nearly 8 million died or fled, mainly, to America after the Great Famine. Diseases and emigration had caused the native Irish population to fall by 25%”. (Great Famine (Ireland)).”Hatred grew against the British government which continued to export grain from Ireland to Britain and America”. (McCullough, 2010, p. 149) The effect of the famine on the Irish language was so devastating that the ultimate effort was undertaken to save it from extinction by the writers of the Irish Literary Revival.

¹¹ Set up to campaign for Catholic emancipation.. It was one of the first mass-membership political movements in Europe (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Association)

What were the writers trying to achieve?

There was an interest in everything connected to the Celtic past of Ireland. There was a desperate need to elaborate on “Irishness” to restore the crushed feelings of an own identity. What, however, was Irish identity? Irish society had been deeply divided for so long that it was almost impossible to find something that you could call the Irish identity. There were the native Irish on the one hand and the Anglo-Irish on the other, but even within those groups no clear single identity was to be found. Furthermore, both these groups were oppressed by an English ascendancy that imposed on the Irish and English way of life. Therefore, a third identity was lurking somewhere in every Irish person. The idea behind the ILR- movement was to create a new Irish identity out of the old Celtic tradition¹². The writers were aiming at reviving ancient Irish folklore, legends, and traditions in new literary works. “What William Butler Yeats, John Synge, Douglas Hyde, and Lady Gregory wanted to achieve, was a buildup of a Celtic and Irish school of dramatic literature, the renaissance of an Irish culture in distinction to English culture, which was omnipresent in Ireland at that time”. (Watson, 1994) In a joined desire to spread and publish this new literature as much as possible, Lady Gregory became the facilitator of the movement because of her title and money, which enabled her to run classes in Irish, hold Irish-speaking social gatherings and to sponsor publications of contemporary poetry and prose in Irish. Her home, *Coole Park*, served as an important meeting place for leading Revival figures, such as Douglas Hyde, who later became the first president of Ireland. He was so determined to prevent the continuing decline of the native language that he wrote many books in the Irish language himself. Other frequent visitors to the house, driven by the same desire to revive Irish language and culture were W.B. Yeats and John Synge. Synge’s writings are mainly concerned with the world of the Roman Catholic peasants of rural Ireland and Yeats became famous for writing Irish lore, myths, legends and poetry.¹³

Their aim was that more people all over Ireland should become acquainted with the Irish language and culture. They wanted to educate and inspire the people¹⁴. Yeats, therefore, founded the National Literary Society, Douglas Hyde founded the Gaelic League and the *Coole Park* group founded a national Irish theatre, which took form in the shape of the first

¹² Paraphrased from J.M. Synge's *The Aran Islands* in the context of the Irish Literary Revival. (sd). Accessed on July10, 2013, from Syngeweb: <http://www.rackwitz.users4.50megs.com/Synge.html#codeword>

¹³ Summarised from an account by a Coole Park receptionist (2012)

¹⁴ “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” Famous quote by W.B. Yeats (http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/29963.W_B_Yeats)

Irish National Theatre (1899) and was to become the famous Abbey Theatre ¹⁵ later. It was established as a platform for Irish playwrights, which enabled them to bring special Irish topics onto stage. An Irish theatre in distinction to the English theatre was the aim of this venture.

How did they try to revive the Irish language and culture?

The representatives of the ILR often used Celtic myths, folklore, and historic events in their works: “the ancient Celtic tribes knew many legends, stories and poems which they had passed on from mouth to mouth from generation to generation for centuries, usually in rhyme because this was the easiest way to remember the lines. In the 8th and 9th century the first annals of the Celtic history, lore, poetry and legends appeared in writing. The Celtic literary collection consists of some 150 manuscripts which included legal texts, poetry, mythological tales and legends of kings”.(Irish literature)

They used themes and words appealing to Irish feeling, words pertaining to, or indicating:

- Rural notions: rope twisting, kelp burning, threshing of rye, peat/turf bogs, peasantry, wild ponies, (thatched) cottages, poverty, simple living, pampooties,
- Religious traditions: St. Bridget’s day, blessings, St. Patrick, Catholic, priest, monks,
- Food or drink: barmbrack, mead, whiskey, potato, wheaten soda bread, Irish stew,
- Myths and lore: clans, kings, castles, ring forts, dreams and visions
- Nature: mist, rain, grey, cliffs, sea, landscapes, green, shamrock, desolateness,
- Gaelic names: Cuchulain, Muirthenne, Corlan, Fenian, Sidhe, Tara,
- Legends, myths, folklore: leprechauns, giants, fairies, ghosts, the supernatural,
- Entertainment: music, dancing, harp, Gaelic football hurling, fly fishing, drinking,
- Appearance and character: freckles, hospitality, friendliness, simplicity, wisdom, superstition, romantic yearning,
- Nationalism: their own race, Gaelic dream, Ireland,

These themes and words became hugely popular among (upper-class) people with a (semi) Irish background¹⁶. For a very long time they had conformed to British culture, but now they were able to distinguish themselves by the discovery of their very own culture with which

¹⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbey_Theatre

¹⁶ For an extensive overview of which were then popular works, read the introduction of Foster, J. (1987). *Fictions of the Irish Literary revival*. Dublin: Gil and MacMillan., pp. xii-xv.

they could identify.¹⁷ Irish literature became so successful that Lady Gregory proclaimed her intention of establishing a national theatre for Ireland: the Irish Literary Theatre, later the Abbey Theatre (1904) in Dublin. Her friends and writers produced an impressive body of work, much of which was seen on the stage of this theatre. “The initial controversy around the first performance caught the attention of a wide public and the Abbey’s successes have contributed greatly to the awakening and enforcement of Irish nationalism”. (Abbey Theatre in the Irish Literary Renaissance)

(Marked in green is evidence from the list on page 12)

Lady Gregory

A trip to Inisheer in the Aran Islands in 1893 had awoken her interest in the Irish language and in the folklore of the area in which she lived. She organised Irish lessons at the school at Coole and began collecting tales from the area around her home, especially from the residents of Gort workhouse. This activity led to the publication of a number of volumes of folk material and versions of Irish myths, including **Cuchulain**¹⁸ of Muirthemne (from the Ulster cycle, 1902) and Gods and Fighting Men (mythological cycle and **Fenian**¹⁹ cycle, 1904), which she translated into English.

Douglas Hyde

Hyde wrote books and articles and often used themes from the Catholic religion but also from ordinary daily lives of common Irish people.

- Beside the fire
- The songs of **Connacht**²⁰ (**Amráin Chuige Chonnacht**), which comprise seven chapters:
 - **Corlan** and his contemporaries,
 - Songs in praise of women,
 - **Drinking** songs,
 - Love songs,
 - Songs ascribed to raftery,
 - **Religious** songs (chapter 1),

¹⁷ Summarised from *J.M. Synge's The Aran Islands in the context of the Irish Literary Revival*. (sd). Accessed on July 10, 2013, from Syngeweb: <http://www.rackwitz.users4.50megs.com/Synge.html>

¹⁸ An Irish mythological hero, as are Corlan and Dima on the following pages.

¹⁹ The Fenian Cycle is a body of prose and verse around the mythical hero Fionn mac Cumhaill and his warriors the Fianna.

²⁰ A province in the west of Ireland which already existed in ancient Ireland.

- Religious songs (chapter 2).

He sometimes incorporated his political standpoints in his poetry, but subtle, as shown in the poem below. (marked in green)

*ALAS for the voyage, O High King of Heaven,
Enjoined upon me,
For that I on the red plain of bloody Cooldrevin
Was present to see.*

*How happy the son is of Dima; no sorrow
For him is designed,
He is having, this hour, round his own hill in Durrow²¹,
The wish of his mind.*

*The sounds of the winds in the elms, like strings of
A harp being played,
The note of a blackbird that claps with the wings of
Delight in the shade.*

*With him in Ros-Grencha the cattle are lowing
At earliest dawn,
On the brink of the summer the pigeons are cooing
And doves in the lawn.*

*Three things am I leaving behind me, the very
Most dear that I know,
Tir-Leedach I'm leaving, and Durrow and Derry;
Alas, I must go!*

*Yet my visit and feasting with Comgall²² have eased me
At Cainneach's right hand,*

²¹ Place in Ireland, as are Ros-Grencha, Tir-Leedach and Derry in the same poem

²² Early Irish saint, as is Cainneach in the next line

*And all but thy government, Eiré²³, have pleased me,
Thou waterful land.*

(The poet is actually saying that he loves his country, but not his government.)

William Butler Yeats

Yeats was an Irish nationalist at heart, looking for a more simplistic and traditional lifestyle; one that is displayed through his poems such as 'The Fisherman'. The poem represents Yeats' vision of the ideal Irishman, combining wisdom with simplicity, who lives in close communion with nature, is appreciative of art and fits into the natural landscape of the country.

The Fisherman

*Although I can see him still.
The freckled man who goes
To a grey place on a hill
In grey Connemara²⁴ clothes
At dawn to cast his flies,
It's long since I began
To call up to the eyes
This wise and simple man.
All day I'd looked in the face
What I had hoped 'twould be
To write for my own race*

.....

The Celtic Twilight²⁵

In this book Yeats offers a collection of tales and myths which, as he says himself in the book, he supposedly has heard from a man called Paddy Flynn who insists they are literally true. It

²³ Ireland

²⁴ Province of Ireland, famous for its wild, rugged, beautiful landscape

²⁵ Published in 1902

is a book which is most representative for Yeats' nationalism. It is an attempt to teach the Irish their forgotten folklore. Before this book Yeats had edited *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*²⁶, but in *The Celtic Twilight* he is the author. An analysis as in the above manner would go beyond the scope of this module. To follow every historical name, reference, or thread in each story is not feasible. There are hundreds of them. The poem below, which introduces the collection, is an example:

The Hosting of the Sidhe (First lines)

*The host is riding from Knocknarea
And over the grave of Clooth-na-bare;
Caolte tossing his burning hair
And Niamh calling Away, come away:*

Analysis:

The powerful and wealthy called the gods of ancient Ireland the Tuatha De Danaan, or the Tribes of the goddess Danu, but the poor called them, and still sometimes call them, the Sidhe, from Aes Sidhe or Sluagh Sidhe, the people of the Faery Hills, as these words are usually explained.

Clooth-na-bare: in Irish mythology she was an old woman who turned into a young maiden when she received love.

Caolte: From the Fenian cycle in Irish mythology. He could run at remarkable speed and communicated with animals.

In Irish mythology, **Niamh** is the daughter of Manannán mac Lir. She is one of the Queens of Tir na nÓg, Niamh crossed the Western Sea on a magical horse.

Other proof, besides the huge number of mythical, historical or legendary names, or evidence of typical Irishness is the amount of words which appear manifold throughout the chapters.

- “faeries” appears 27x,

²⁶ Published in 1888

- “ghost” 31x,
- “priest” 17x,
- “god” 42x,
- “Gaelic” 7x,
- “Irish” 9x,
- “Ireland” 21x
- “dream” 16x,
- “vision” 17x

And:

In *The Celtic Twilight* repeatedly fairies take on the shape of animals.

Shape shifting was common among Celtic gods and goddesses who often took the form of their favoured animals. Animals held great significance in the religious beliefs of the Celts. Birds were linked with the gods as bringers of omens and messengers. Swans (Mind Yeats ‘poem The Wild Swans’) in particular, if portrayed wearing gold or silver chains, were supernatural, often gods in bird form.

John Synge

John Synge’s aim was to write about Irish culture because “what has been written, can be read and spread around the island”. Synge’s importance to the Celtic revival lies in his description of typical Irish living. By writing about everything that is considered Irish he hoped to raise awareness and feelings of an own identity and this would help to maintain the Irish culture. John Synge describes in detail the way of living of the Irish people, from kelp burning, potato growing and washing clothes in sea water to the shipping and transporting of Connemara wild ponies, from rope twisting for thatching to the threshing of rye. Within the book many stories and old poems are told by the locals and holds references to Irish legends, myths or manuscripts. It is an encyclopedia of Gaelic life, its customs and traditions and a legacy of what is part of the original Irish culture. Moreover, on almost every page Synge refers to the Irish or Gaelic language by specifically mentioning that a song, a talk, a story was done in this language.

Some “Celtic evidence” (underlined) in the book :

The Aran Islands (Synge, 2006)

Page 1: I am in Aranmor, sitting over a turf fire, listening to a murmur of Gaelic that is rising from a little public-house under my room.

Page 2: The rain and cold seemed to have no influence on their vitality and as they hurried past me with eager laughter and great talking in Gaelic, they left the wet masses of rock more desolate than before. A little after midday when I was coming back one old half-blind man spoke to me in Gaelic, but, in general, I was surprised at the abundance and fluency of the tongue

Afterwards he told me how one of his children had been taken by the fairies

Page 7: (theme poverty) went out through Killeany—the poorest village in Aranmor,

Page 8: We were now in Kilronan, and as we parted they showed me holes in their own pampooties, or cowskin sandals, and asked me the price of new ones. I told them that my purse was empty, and then with a few quaint words of blessing they turned away from me and went down to the pier

and talked with careful English about the history of the Duns, and the Book of Ballymote²⁷ and the Book of Kells²⁸, with the names of which they seemed familiar.

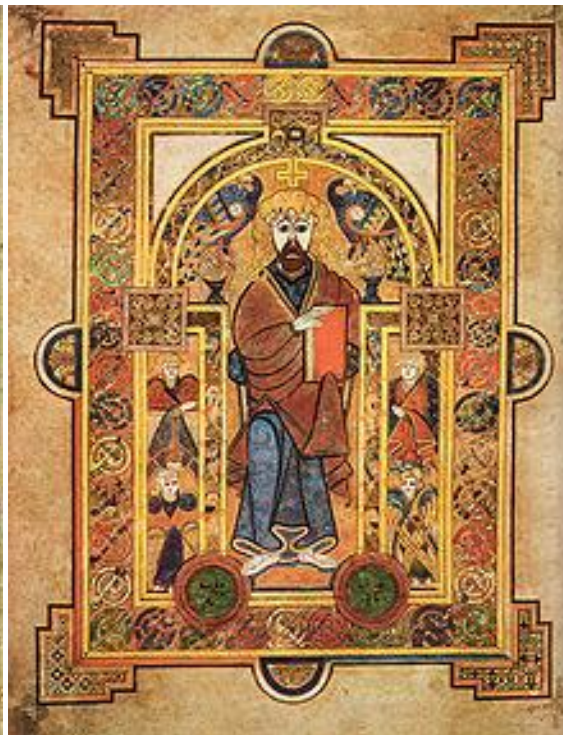
²⁷ The Book of Ballymote named for the parish of Ballymote, County Sligo, was written in 1390 or 1391. The book contains amongst other passages on the life of Saint Patrick, and various genealogies of clans and kings

²⁸ Irish: Leabhar Cheanannais (Dublin, Trinity College Library) Sometimes known as the Book of Columba, an illuminated manuscript Gospel book in Latin, containing the four Gospels of the New Testament together with various prefatory texts and tables. It was created by Celtic monks ca. 800 or slightly earlier. It is widely regarded as Ireland's finest national treasure.



Book of Ballymote

Book of Kells



What effects did the Irish Literary Revival have on the people?

The influence the Irish Literary Revival on the people of Ireland was tremendous. The variety in the works of Hyde, Lady Gregory, Synge, and Yeats formed a broad platform where all classes in Ireland could draw from.²⁹ Synge's minute descriptions of Irish peasant life, Yeats' reviving of an old mystic era, and Lady Gregory's translations which opened up the Celtic manuscripts to a broad public and Hyde's exposing of the country's own history influenced the (Anglo-) Irish people tremendously. ILR- writers used the new and modern ways of printing to bring their works to the attention of the public and set up publishing companies:

- 1882, establishment of the *Gaelic Journal*,
- 1894, the setup of the *New Ireland Review* a literary magazine,
- 1904, the start of the journal *Dana*,
- 1901, the Irish-language newspaper *Banba*.
- 1906, the founding of Maunsel and Company, which published Irish writers.

These “social media” provided the means for politicians to promote nationalism. While language and literature were at the base, an enormous nationalist movement arose. In the late 19th century, Irish nationalism became the dominant ideology in Ireland. Having a major Parliamentary party in the Parliament of the United Kingdom, they launched a campaign for self-government and this period also saw the emergence of a militant republican movement called the Irish Republican Brotherhood³⁰. Many conflicts followed, such as the Irish Civil War³¹, but finally an Irish Free State was established in 1922.³²

The setting up of the Irish Literary Society (Yeats), the founding of the Irish Literary Theatre (Yeats, Gregory and others), the founding of the Irish literary newspapers and magazines, the works of Gregory, Hyde, Yeats, Synge and others, and the setup of the *Gaelic League* which was founded in 1893 by Douglas Hyde, to encourage the preservation of the Irish language and culture; all formed modern sources to propagate an Irish nationalism.

²⁹ Paraphrased from *Irish Literary Renaissance*. (sd). Accessed on July 10, 2013, from Wikipedia: <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Irish+literary+renaissance>

³⁰ A secret oath-bound fraternal organisation dedicated to the establishment of an "independent democratic republic" in Ireland during the second half of the 19th century and the start of the 20th century.

³¹ June 1922 – 24 May 1923

³² Summarised from *Irish nationalism*. (sd). Accessed on July 10, 2013, from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_nationalism

Did the writers have political ambitions?

The influence of the successful works on the *Coole Park* group was in such a way that it was almost impossible not to get involved in politics. Many nationalists were delighted with the revival of the Irish language among the people of Ireland. The ILR was in fact entwined with the political movement of that time; it was the cultural aspect of it³³. The discovery of a literary past and present was of relevance in the struggle towards an independent Ireland and attracted a circle of nationalists around the ILR – members. Nevertheless, many writers of the ILR tried to revive culture, not to influence politics, but most certainly these connections influenced the writers. Yeats, for example, was personally involved with a woman³⁴ who was an active Irish revolutionary, but he avoided taking a political stance in public. He used his writing as a tool to comment on Irish politics and to educate and inform people about Irish history and culture. “Although early works such as *Cathleen Ni Houliha*³⁵ were acceptable to nationalist opinion, Yeats was soon embittered by attempts to make art subservient to the wider national cause”³⁶.

“His poem *An Irish Airman foresees his death* is a good demonstration how he uses Irish political comments while his focus is on writing good and beautiful poetry. The poem is a work that discusses the role of Irish soldiers fighting for the United Kingdom during a time when they were trying to establish independence for Ireland. Wishing to show restraint from publishing political poems during the height of the war, Yeats withheld publication of the poem until after the conflict had ended”. (*An Irish Airman Foresees His Death*)

An Irish Airman Foresees His Death

I know that I shall meet my fate,

Somewhere among the clouds above;

Those that I fight I do not hate,

Those that I guard I do not love;

My country is Kiltartan Cross,

³³ Paraphrased from *Irish Literary Renaissance*. (sd). Accessed on July 10, 2013, from Encyclopedia2.the free dictionary.com: <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Irish+literary+renaissance>

³⁴ Maud Gonne, 1866 – 1953

³⁵ A one-act play written by William Butler Yeats and Lady Gregory in 1902. It concentrates on the Irish Rebellion of 1798, against British rule in Ireland.

³⁶ Quote 10 on *Ireland, religion & culture*. (sd). Accessed on July 10, 2013, from Multitext: http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/Ireland_religion_culture_1870-1914

*My countrymen Kiltartan's poor,
No likely end could bring them loss
Or leave them happier than before.
Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,
Nor public men, nor cheering crowds,
A lonely impulse of delight
Drove to this tumult in the clouds;
I balanced all, brought all to mind,
The years to come seemed waste of breath,
A waste of breath the years behind
In balance with this life, this death.*

Hydes had founded the Gaelic League, which was set up to encourage the preservation of Irish culture, music, dances, and language. “The formation of the Gaelic League was crucial in the promotion of the idea of an independent Irish nation but he felt uncomfortable with the growing political involvement and resigned the presidency”. (Douglas Hyde)

John Synge was shocked (as can be read in the information available at his museum cottage in the Aran Islands) by the hostile reactions following the opening performance of his play *The Playboy of the Western World* in Dublin at the Abbey Theatre. The mayhem became known as the *Playboy Riots*. “These riots were stirred up by Irish nationalists who viewed the contents of the play as an offence to public morals and an insult against Ireland. Nationalists found the play was not sufficiently political”. (*The Playboy of the Western World*)

Lady Gregory, although she could have exploited her position to obtain political goals, and had many chances to propagate nationalism through her connections and The Abbey Theatre, chose to stage less political plays³⁷ and continued to write and translate for cultural purpose only.

³⁷ An overview of her plays can be found on http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Author:Lady_Gregory

Conclusions

What were the intentions of the writers of the Irish Literary Revival and how did they succeed in achieving their goals?

The Irish Literary Revival was not a period in which writers purely enjoyed writing about mystical affairs, old traditions or Irish/Celtic topics solely for fashionable or spiritual reasons. They were influenced by Medievalism, Romanticism and Nationalism, which made them determined to save their old language and culture when these were almost extinct. The writers used their talents to expose the beauty of Ireland's Celtic heritage. They drew upon Gaelic mythology and had an interest in reviving the long-suppressed Gaelic language and rural native culture to conceptualize Irish national and cultural identity as being separate and distinct from that of the British. In their joined passion not to see the old Gaelic culture get lost, they elicited a wave of new nationalism from the people of Ireland which ended with the proclamation of an independent Ireland in 1922.

The main characters of the Literary Revival (Gregory, Hyde, Yeats, and Synge) were, almost by chance, key to political success: they happened to meet each other frequently at Lady Gregory's house. They seem to have been at the right place and position at exactly the right time. In the quiet environment at Coole Park, County Galway, they found the most fertile environment to express themselves and share their individual thoughts; they influenced and empowered each other. In their common benefactress, Lady Gregory, they found a perfect channel through which they could bring their works to the attention of a wide public. Lady Gregory had access to a circle of people in high and influential places where she could recommend and introduce her works as well as her friends'. Her money enabled her to fund literary societies, magazines and to establish a literary theatre to promote the Irish language. The group had access to modern printing industries.

Lady Gregory did not actively engage in political activities. Douglas Hyde did not set out to become a political leader; he preferred his position as a scholar and writer. Yeats' first priority, although a patriot, lay in his writings. Any political activities undertaken by the protagonists of the Irish Literary Revival were of short term and not based on any reconceived plan. Their intention was to form a modern literary consciousness and involvement in the corresponding current of revolutionary politics.

Discussion

Critics may question my view that writers in the Irish Literary Revival did not aspire after political positions and that they were not aiming at political gain through literature, since prominent political leaders came from the ILS- movement. My comment on that would be that they did not need to. There had been a growing stream of freedom fighters, revolutionaries, nationalists and liberators already active ever since the end of the 18th century. The Irish Revival was multifaceted and the Literary Revival only formed a part of a total awakening interest in Irish issues. Although nationalists, they wanted to keep their focus on literature.

If there is not enough evidence that the writers were not a group of dreaming romantics who indulged in mere melancholic nostalgia, I will point out the fact that the writers wrote **new** Irish works that appealed to the people of Ireland and by doing so succeeded in answering the need for a new Irish identity, based on the old. They were the modern realists of their day, looking to the future and they who used modern ways of spreading literature.

Dr Mathews and his view have not returned in specific words or phrases in this report. I admit I was too busy investigating other sources to form my own idea of what the writers of the ILR were trying to achieve that I more or less “lost him” in the process and followed my own discoveries, which have given me plenty of proof and grounds for my results to counter his ideas.

My list of Irish themes and words may not have been the result of thorough, empirical research, and has no scientific grounds, but it is the result of thorough reading through old, as well as new publications of Irish literature and other publications. I challenge those who try to disagree with the contents of this list and would like to discuss each item with them, as I feel all the mentioned concepts, ideas and words can be easily recognised by any inhabitant of Ireland as being a fully integrated part of Irish identity. However, in my original research, my imagination was sometimes stronger than the facts. In my enthusiasm to prove my points, I tried adding so-called proof later, only to discover that there were no hard facts available.

A point of concern in my report is the way information and data have come about. A literary and literature research can be a risky way of compiling information. On the one hand it is a blessing of our time that worldwide information is available by simply clicking the mouse of a computer. Libraries of the remotest universities, famous or notorious, are accessible. Books, articles, magazines, reports, papers, not to mention documentaries and other visual publications can be consulted. On the other hand it generates such an influx of data that, for the beginning researcher who starts looking for information with an open, eager and innocent attitude, it is virtually impossible to discern which information is of importance, accepted and of standard in the scientific world and which information is dubious. A starting researcher cannot decide which publications are to be dismissed because they come from the hands of fraudulent scientists, below-average students or semi-scholars. Respected sites such as *Scholar.google.com* did not always provide enough information and I had to resort to many random pages. In using *Wikipedia.com* many times I may have found a truthful compromise.

Another danger of this kind of research is the temptation of “bending the facts to one’s idea”. In other words: it was simple to find desired outcomes by skimming numerous publications for much wanted proof. Once I found sentences or paragraphs which corresponded with the ideas I wanted to express, I often stopped reading the entire publication and it is therefore possible that paragraphs are taken out of their context. It is the opposite way of how research should be done; starting point should not be your proof, but the research itself, and then work from that point toward results. Moreover, by practising this upside down method, it is easy to produce any possible outcomes you might desire. It makes it possible to “prove” that the Irish Literary Revivalists were political activists after all, that they were definitely an elite group busying themselves with nostalgic nonsense or whatever else you want to prove.

(Anyway, this malpractice will maintain the discussion regarding the
Irish Literary Revival....)



Recommendations

The Irish Literary Revival has been studied many times, but there is always room to take on a new standpoint and see matters in a different perspective. Times are changing and new perceptions of history may cause different outcomes.

As a result of this Masterpiece new research questions may follow, which could shed a light on my own topic, for example, what was the role of the less known writers of the Irish Literary Revival, such as Standish O'Grady or Lord Dunsany. Equally interesting would be to see how the English reacted to the Literary Revival, or to investigate if there was a strong divide between British literature and Irish literature during the Revival.

For now, I leave it to others to explore and investigate the ins and outs of the Irish Literary Revival.

Reflection and acknowledgments

This journey through the history and time of the Irish Literary Revival has been very interesting and meaningful. It was a huge challenge not to be distracted from the actual research questions, because there were so many different paths to explore. I read ancient manuscripts and strange fairy tales, stories of mysterious kings who once lived in Ireland, and I learned about the worthy Druids which were the magicians, doctors and lawyers of their day. I was moved by beautiful poetry such as the *Wild Swans* poem by W.B. Yeats (1865–1939) where he expresses his fear of losing “Ireland” in the form of swans flying away. I visited his lake (turlough) at Coole Park, and I noticed there were still nine of them:

“THEY HAD NOT FLOWN AWAY”

The more I learned about my subject, the more I became fascinated by “Celtic” works and it generated a deep sense of awe for the Irish people who, at the brink of extinction, successfully saved their heritage and since then, the Irish people have been able to build upon this success in an independent nation for more than a hundred years now.

If the best and most important participants of this movement had not met, if they had not been so talented, if they had not emphasised the beauty and importance of their ancient culture, then a beautiful treasure could have been lost forever. Today, the Irish have more than enough reason to be grateful to those important figures in the 19th century.

*Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.*

W.B. Yeats

I would like to express my gratitude towards the kind and dear ladies at *Coole Park*, County Galway, Ireland, who were so very helpful in showing me around and answering many of my questions.

Harja van der Kooy-Luijs

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Log of hours spent on the module

Date:	Activity:	Numbers of hours
15 June 2012	Find subject, establish research question and sub-questions, write plan of action, email teacher	8 hours
22 June 2012	Find/download/buy/print suitable books/articles. Read Wikipedia sites. Start background reading on “Celtic Twilight”. Plan visit Ireland.	4 hours
27 June 2012	Design portfolio, chapters, etc. Write <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstract • Introduction • Research question (and sub questions • Explanation research plan and methods(reading and finding evidence of e.g. typical Celtic themes, phrases, use of language) 	4 hours
28 June 2012	Read e-book: (34 pages) Synge and the Ireland of his Time, letters and comment by Yeats. Published in 2005 by Gutenberg Project articles, selected important information/make notes. Wrote down drafts, important information, summarised, reviewed etc.	4 hours
5 July 2012	Read The Aran Islands by JM Synge and wrote down evidence in portfolio	4 hours
6 July 2012	Read J Yeats: The Celtic Twilight, mark Celtic evidence.	4 hours
8 July 2012	Researched causes for the Celtic Revival: the history of Ireland on Youtube.com =5x 12,5 min. Summarised its contents.	4 hours
11 July 2012	-Read <i>A Brief History of the Society and Culture of the Celts</i> by Kathryn L. Pierce, 1989 and wrote down main facts/ -Studied <i>Irish Literature Collective</i> and made a start reading some manuscripts. Re-read information on Blackboard : Academic writing, developing a research thesis,	8 hours
13 July 2012	Wrote first chapters in portfolio: Background/reasons for revival, who were involved Re-arranged texts, adapted introduction, studied role of Douglas Hyde, studied “forerunners:” and included them in portfolio.	3 hours

17 July 2012	Watched episodes of <i>Celts documentary</i> part 1,2, 3 http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=1vid-VWZyn8 Wrote Yeats' "evidence" in portfolio.	3 hours
21 July 2012	Reread Dubliners, marked evidence, incorporated Joyce in the Masterpiece.	6 hours
2 August 2012	Visited Derrynane House and exhibition of Daniel O'Connell, visited bookshop and browsed through Celtic legends, bought "History of Ireland" by Joseph Mc Cullough.	8 hours
5 August 2012	Visited Coole Park, House of Lady Gregory where she entertained and conferred with her important guests: Yeats, Sean O'Grady, Bernard Shaw, John Synge.	6 hours
11 August 2012	Read "Me and Nu" (Lady Gregory's two granddaughters describe their grandmother's life at Coole Park) and incorporated findings Ireland in portfolio.	6 hours
13, 14 August 2012	Read "A Pocket History of Ireland"	8 hours
15, 16 August 2012	Read "Gods and Fighting Man" translation by Lady Gregory	8 hours
17 August 2012	Wrote bibliography, adaptations, conclusions Sent in Masterpiece first time	4 hours
May/June 2013	Revising of document	Countless hours
	Preparing and practising PPP, planning and organising venue, inviting people, camera etc.	4 hours
	Presentation, Write report, Round up	10

Explanation and justification of the sources used and not-used

I used mostly older sources for my topic. I could not find any recent studies on The Celtic Twilight. I suppose it is not the hottest topic of the moment.

I used Wikipedia.org lots of times.

My *Pocket History of Ireland* was a well-used source. It contained much of the most important information in a well organised structure. It was a bit coloured, though, in a patriotic sense. (*We-were-so-brave-to-liberate-us-from-the-British-* style)

I decided not to use sarasmichaelcollinssite.com/mccessay1.htm Although this paper contains important differences between James Joyce and Yeats relating to their importance for the Celtic revival I could not use it as Joyce is not included in my report.

I did not use *The Celtic Revival, The Late Nineteenth Century Debate Concerning the Revival of Celtic Culture* by Marie C. E. Burns (<http://www.literature-study-online.com/essays/celtic-revival.html>) as I thought it was a shallow, rambling collection of facts which undoubtedly are the results of thorough research on behalf of the author, but I could not detect any lines of thought or development. It was more like an overview.

I did not use <http://britlitwiki.wikispaces.com/The+Celtic+Revival+and+the+Abbey+Theatre> because it contained encyclopaedic information I was already familiar with and the information was rather short.

I started reading Gregory Castle's *Modernism and Celtic Revival* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) but soon it became apparent that he was going to explore the influence of anthropology on the way Revivalists represented Irish culture, which is interesting, but this did not serve my purpose.

It was difficult not to follow a political line, as so much about the Nationalists can be found in history books and my aim was to demonstrate in my report that the Revival writers did not write out of a purely political motivation,

Appendices:

1. Presentation materials, PowerPoint, music, text etc.

Enclosed separately on USB device

2. DVD of presentation, complete with questions asked and answered

Enclosed separately

3. Evaluation of the presentation

4. Written report Checklist

5. Pictures of Coole Park

3. Evaluation of the presentation

My comments:

1. The plan was to do my presentation in a different classroom with sound boxes fixed to the walls, but due to unforeseen circumstances I was forced to do my presentation in a classroom without any sound boxes at all. This spoiled the effect of my first slide, which contains a nice Irish tune accompanying the lyrics, and would have made an attractive opening of the presentation. Now my audience had to just watch some lines on a slide.
2. There was actually so much to tell about my subject and so little time to talk about it that I had to decide beforehand, during rehearsals, which information needed to be shortened. I decided to reduce the introduction to a few necessary lines; this information would come up further along in the presentation anyhow. I also cut back informing my audience about the theoretical framework, line of approach and research methods because I assumed they would be less interested in these items.
3. I thought it was a pity there was no time to elaborate on anything whatsoever. Elaborating on “juicy” stuff can be so much fun and can really give a boost to a presentation.
4. I was nervous because the presentation had to be quite formal, which meant I had to leave out some of my talents to “draw in the public”.
5. Looking back, I think it would have been better if I had not rehearsed so often. Now the weirdest sentence combinations came about, such as: “The Celts invaded Ireland for 400 years”. There are more shocking examples.
6. Unfortunately, the sound on the DVD is quite poor. I think this may have to do with the fact that I had placed the camera on top of a laptop trolley which was loading at that time. I apologize for that.

1. Language

(Use of English should be at C1 level of CEF, which is near-native. This means that grammar needs to be virtually free of mistakes, pronunciation should be near to perfect and the use of vocabulary should be formal.)

My own assessment:

I am a bit disappointed here. I noticed I have slipped back to the bad habit of slightly using “intrusive R”. My “trap vowel” isn’t low enough and the “strut vowel” isn’t either. I hear my grammar mistakes. Incongruence, ...(but of course I hope you won’t notice because of the irritating humming noise of the recording)

Vocabulary was adapted to the audience, who are not all fluent in English, but sometimes this led to the wrong choices. For example saying “things” instead of a more formal word.

2. Delivery

The speaker should have good contact with the audience, good eye-contact and good flow and variation of speech. There should be no tics or distracting habits

I think (eye) contact with the audience was good. There was a reasonably good flow and variation of speech, although I expect I would have performed better under “normal” circumstances (=without this constraint of a camera following every movement and recording every word for grading purposes). A distracting habit may have been the “going through my hair” several times. For this was a simple reason: my son had gone off to France that morning and had taken the hair gel with him. I also would have liked to use a remote control; this device avoids bending over the key board all the time to press the Enter button in order to bring on the next slide.

3. Visuals

Visuals should be clear, impressive and perfectly managed and introduced. The visuals used illustrate the speaker's points in a clear way.

I think these were OK. I had often written complete sentences on the slides which I read out loud literally. I had done this on purpose. The audience could read along and I feel this supported their understanding of the language and of my points. My own pictures, taken in Ireland and incorporated into the presentation, were quite charming as background images

4. Structure

The topic should have a perfect introduction with the main points of the findings. The structure should be easy enough to be remembered well. And the different parts should be logically connected, signposted and presented. The conclusion should have a strong connection to the introduction and body of the presentation.

My opinion: the introduction may not have produced the main points of the findings, but I did explain that in my comments above. I think it was a well structured presentation, logically connected, signposted and presented. I think the conclusion had a strong connection to the introduction and body as well. I even repeated my main research question to recall the purpose of the presentation. When I asked my audience after the presentation if they could reproduce what I had tried to convey , they could easily do so.

5. Content

The speaker has selected the most relevant points from the research to present and gives professional explanations of the topics researched. In case the audience is less aware of some of the results / implications of the research the speaker will adjust her / his explanation in such a way it is understandable and relevant to the audience.

The presentation should neither be too short nor too long. Selection is of the utmost importance.

I think this part was OK.

4. Written report – checklist

Name: Harja Luijs _____
Title report: The Irish Literary Revival____
Date: June 2013 _____

! A report is a formal text in which you give an extensive account of an activity. Checklist has to be filled in by the student him- or herself (ticking off the boxes) and handed in together with the report. If the checklist is not handed in, the work will not be assessed.

! Parts with an ☐ * are so-called **killing points**. If **more** than five killing points have been ticked, the report has to be corrected on all insufficient parts and handed in again together with the previous version.

I = Insufficient S = Sufficient

I	S
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1. Front page

☐ Author, student number, subject

	v
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2. Title page

v

3. Title page

I S

- ☐ Title is specific
- ☐ Author(s) (in alphabetical order)
- ☐ Place, date
- ☐ Teacher

	v
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	v
	v

4. Table of contents

- ☐ *All parts of the report (sections, sub sections) are mentioned and numbered
- ☐ *Page reference is correct
- ☐ Table of contents is well-organized

	v
	v
	v

5. Introduction

- ☐ *Introduction is effective (catching)
- ☐ *Thesis/research question is clear and specific
- ☐ Contains acknowledgements, if necessary
- ☐ Contains reasons for writing the report
- ☐ *Structure of the paper is indicated (short outline of every chapter)

	v
	v
	v
	v
	v?

6. Body: structure of chapters and sections

- ☐ *Titles of chapters and sections are numbered and clearly differ in layout
- ☐ Chapters and (sub) sections have appropriate titles
- ☐ Every new chapter starts on a new page
- ☐ *Chapters have a clear introduction

- ☐ New paragraph is indicated by an extra space
- ☐ No hard return within paragraphs
- ☐ *Appendices are numbered
- ☐ *Appendices have fitting titles
- ☐ *Appendices are correctly referred to in the text
- ☐ *Pages are numbered
- ☐ Recommended: line interval 1.5, font Arial or Times New Roman, size 10 or 12
- ☐ *The text contains no plagiarism³⁸

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6. Language

- ☐ *Grammar/spelling is correct
- ☐ Wording is coherent, simple, direct and active
- ☐ Correct punctuation
- ☐ *Complete sentences, no telegram style

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7. Conclusions (and recommendations)

- ☐ *Conclusions (and recommendations) are based on arguments mentioned in the chapters
- ☐ Brief and to the point
- ☐ Do not contain new information

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³⁸ See appendix 1 - Plagiarism

8. Bibliography

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| v | | |
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9. Sources

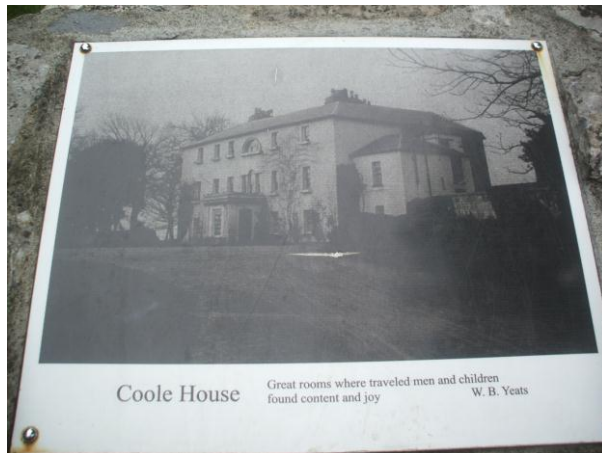
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10. Further requirements

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5. Pictures of Coole Park



Picture taken 4 August, 2012, the house where Lady Gregory lived, was demolished after WW 2, but a plaque and this picture has been placed on the spot from the same viewing point.



There is a museum inside the Old Stables at Coole Park, dedicated to Lady Gregory. Her story is told through the eyes of her granddaughters. Among many other interesting things, the voice of her friend Yeats can be heard, reading one of his own poems.



There is a film of a play in Abbey Theatre, around 1910. Picture taken on 5th August, 2012.



The Abbey Theatre as it was at the beginning of the 20th century

The Wild Swans at Coole

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty Swans.
The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.
I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,
The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trod with a lighter tread.
Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.
But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?

William Butler Yeats



(Coole Park, 6th August 2012, I saw 9 swans in total that day)