THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

Beauty and The West:

Sean Keating and the Imaginary 1915-1925.

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by

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INTRODUCTION

> "From which point of view ? Of painting or of Ireland ? or which Ireland - the small farm of the tea, wine and spirit merchants, Fitzwilliam Square or Crumlin, the Gaelic League or the Palace Bar ?"[1]

The above set of questions, the first lines of an article written by Sean Keating in The Bell seem prophetically to outline the problems of both making and writing about art in this country. The pursuit of a modernist (of painting) aesthetic or the elevation of the situational (of Ireland) in art, still rages as a cultural debate today. Many commentators contend that they are antithetical, while others contend that they are inseparably locked.

Sean Keating seems to tentatively hint at the local, but here he is confused by which local ? Irish criticism has firmly relegated Keating not only to the local but to the parochial. In this essay, I will attempt to ascertain where we can situate the work of Sean Keating in the cultural typography that exists within the framework provided by nationalism, colonialism and modernism. I shall be looking at the period 1915-1925.

The remarkable thing that should be said, in relation to such a study, is that no writing done previously, has seriously attempted to place Keating or indeed any other Irish artist of this time into such a framework. Indeed we have no considered art historical texts to consider, only a number of incoherent, unscholarly jaunts with the subtlety of a bull in a china shop and the politics of a golf outing.[2]

In view of this, I can only make excuses for the frequent inadequacies of this text, but it perhaps would be most profitable to think of it as a beginning. The lack of documentation is the biggest stumbling block.

As to why Keating should be the subject of this study is a combination of reasons, first is a personal interest in political art, and in this country that involves in some way an engagement with nationalism. Keating from all perspectives can be termed a nationalist artist. Second is a sense of interest in how Keating has been so emphatically ignored and why. Keating has been ignored by the critical establishment, and this same establishment continues to perpetuate the notion, that there is a lack of a politic in the Irish visual arts tradition. These observations are obviously linked.

Finally, why particularly the period 1915 to 1925? Traditionally this period in the history of the state is marked by three events, the Easter Uprising of 1916, the establishment of the first Dail after the landslide victory of Sinn Fein in the December 1918 election and the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921. These events today have particular relevance due to the ongoing war in the North, and a revision is taking place of the causality of each curcumstance. This is a break through for in the five decades from 1916 to 1966 these events became part of an unquestionable, institutionalised nationalist history.

If one hasn't grown up in those five decades there is often a disbelief in the power of such a history, but it is only through an examination of the present situation in Northern Ireland that we can appreciate its potency. Therefore if the history of this period is being revised and the role of labour, the economic interests of the Catholic bourgeoisie and the determining power of regressive nationalism and church ideology is being revised it is perhaps a fitting time to revise the art history of this period also.

Internationally, the period 1915-1925 was of great consequence with the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the anti imperialist struggles in Afghanistan, Iran and India changing the face of the world and marking the beginning of the end of a period of high colonialism. It also marks a consolidating period for modernism with an extension of activity from Paris to other parts of Europe - Futurists in Italy, the Constructivists in USSR, DADA in Switzerland, the beginnings of the Bloomsbury Circle in London, and the Armory Show in the United States. That these events had no bearing on the practice of art in conventional histories of art in this country is a little difficult to believe.

For Keating himself 1915 marks his first showing in the Royal Hibernian Academy and by 1925 he had garnered himself quite a reputation - being awarded one of the first and largest ever commissions of the new state - to paint the construction of the hydro-electric scheme at Ardnacrusha.

So the purpose of this essay I suppose is a kind of naming process - can we name Keating a nationalist, a modernist, a romantic, as a social opportunist or critic or indeed all of these. I hope to a least go some way towards opening both formal and methodological debate on Keating and through this perhaps offer some new perspectives on our visual culture.

CHAPTER 1

NATIONALISM AND IDENTITY : A DETAILED INTRODUCTION

> "The idea of Ireland allows us to observe and comment upon the fact of Ireland. The reverse is also true. As a result there are no isolated facts, they all subserve the dominant idea". Seamus Deane[3]

That identity and difference are charged political beacons in the cultural typography between imperial powers and their colonies needs no illumination. That this has been the case in the cultural relationship between England and Ireland has only recently come under scrutiny, and as such, a brief outline of this relationship in the period leading up to 1915 may be illuminating.

In 1916 Sean Keating exhibited an t-Iasgaire agus a bhean (see fig. 1) in the Royal Hibernian Academy; it is a rather crude painting of an Aran fisherman with a number of fish, by his side is his loyal and somewhat subservient wife. Both figures are rugged, idealised and could be described by the well worn adage, "noble savages".

On closer examination the painting seems to tentatively depict a kind of cultural difference. A certain estrangement is sensed in the eyes of the subjects. The attention to detail in the clothing (particularly the woman's) and the title in the native tongue places the metropolitan viewer at a distance. Today such a painting would be considered sentimental, overly romantic and almost humorous in its' heroicism. But in 1916 such a painting would have immediately been part of a cultural discourse that had been in place almost continuously since the granting of Catholic emancipation.

To illustrate this point further let us take the woman's clothing as an example. It seems little more than a highly decorative garment, slightly out of place with the attempted realist direction of the painting. But it is far from this, and quite to the contrary is loaded with cultural significance. This costume is the kind that came to be popularised by republican (middle class) women of that period, Countess Markievicz, Maud Gonne and indeed Mary Clancy, wife of the assassinated Mayor of Limerick (see fig 2). Such costumes were fashionable and signified particular political beliefs. That such a seemingly insignificant detail should have such resonances is illustrative of the sophistication of the cultural debate at that time.

As is so keenly pointed out in Writing Ireland[4] the classical episteme or method of acquiring knowledge is based upon difference. Knowledge is acquired by examining the differences between subjects, rather than in pre-classical epistemes where affinities and similarities are the basis of knowledge acquisition. For subsequent (post 16th. century) studies of Ireland, at first by outsiders and later by ourselves, this use of difference as a means of understanding was to have far reaching political functions.

After the achievement of Catholic emancipation in 1829, (" an emancipation for rich catholics" as Frank Ryan was to say one hundred years later)[5], the primary perceived source of injustice became the economic status of the Irish Catholic (or native) community under English rule. It was thus necessary for the ascendancy to formulate ways of supposedly "understanding" its' tenantry to maintain more securely its' right of ownership. It is within this political framework that first studies of the "native" culture were undertaken. Through a basis founded on the difference between the "native" culture and the colonising culture these studies became part of a more global tendency at that time, now known after Edward W. Said as " orientalism".[6]

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards this global project was undertaken by the imperial powers of Europe, not only in Ireland, but in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and South America. This process, as described by Said, has come to inscribe on the colonies sets of related, interlocking identities. These identities not only place and identify the colonies but are constitutive of an understanding of these advanced imperial powers. The colonies become "the other" to the all-embracing, progressive, now constituted "self" of the imperial powers.

This, hand in hand with the weakened and fragmented status of these indigenous cultures under study, (and thus their inability to mount serious opposition) allowed them to be observed, measured, studied, historicised and distorted without altering the dominant relation of observer to observed.[7]

Headed in Ireland by the Royal Irish Academy, these examinations were cartographic, anthropological, linguistic and cultural. They were based on discovering and mapping out the "celtic imagination" without impeding on the "nature" of the already in place relationships of England to Ireland.

Understanding the "Celtic genius" as it has been called became a project to show the ascendancy that by understanding the "natives" (in temperment, imagination etc.) and by "appreciating" this, they could more effectively rule them.

This was the first act in a play of cultural appropriation and re-appropriation that by the end of the nineteenth century was to leave the whole spectrum of Irish culture changed. By proxy the economic status of the "native" population had now expanded into the cultural terrain. That Dublin, Limerick, Cork and Belfast had the worst working class slums in Europe didn't have a "class" significance, but was understood more in terms of the "reconquest of Ireland", in the

words of Connolly. This part of the struggle can be understood as a cultural "war of position".

The main body of writing in relation to this "war of position" has concerned the literary tradition. The visual had not gone unnoticed : as a writer in The Nation wrote, "Art can serve nationality, but nationality can endow art like a King's daughter... Nationality can do for painting what it is has done for music, if the artist be as national as the minstrel".[8]

But this piece of writing (with its' sexist metaphors) is sadly the exception rather than the rule, so it is with remorse that I must find recourse to the literary tradition (not because it is more national, but because its' criticism, unlike that of our art, is more developed and well documented).[9]

By the end of the nineteenth century primarily two positions had been mapped out domestically in relation to the cultural debate. For the purpose of brevity I will reduce this into an opposition between William Butler Yeats and Patrick Pearse, though clearly a number of other positions could be articulated particularly around James Joyce. But, due to the fact he was domiciled in Ireland and his commitment to the West, Sean Keating belongs to a tradition more practically within the polemics of Yeats and Pearse.

Both Yeats and Pearse occupy a polemic which evolves around two important factors. They both acknowledge a "quickening" in cultural events after the death of Parnell in 1891. At the centre of this quickening is the idea of a revived language. For Yeats this was the revival of English literature in Ireland, for Pearse it was the revival of the Irish language. Both are important and indeed it is not possible to examine them in isolation.

Also, both writers have within their work fictionalised the pre-colonial history of Ireland in an attempt to see

through their crises. Solutions to contemporary problems are vested in a restatement of pre-colonial Ireland and a realisation of its' fiction ("realisation" is used carefully here, as distinct from "revelation"). Neither Pearse nor Yeats could or would concede that their pre-colonial Ireland was fictional, indeed pre-colonial Ireland was the site of their cultural discourse or at least the origin of such.

Indeed they were not alone in this fictionalising; James Connolly a realist by comparison to Yeats or Pearse, had himself attempted to utilise the powerful appeal of the strong, self-determined Celt and attempted to explain how the Celts lived communally in order to give socialism an authentic origin in our country.[10] Quite obviously the use of such fictions now seems flawed, but in the cultural war of position that had evolved, history had become not only part of understanding the present but a way of giving credence to certain views of the future.

Regis Debray, the French theorist, has outlined the assignation of origin as one of the two "anti death processes" which are necessary in the victory over disorder. "This means that society does not derive from an infinite regression of cause and effect. A point of origin is fixed ....." This obviously can be the Boyne Valley or "the big bang" but, "This zero point or starting point is what allows ritual repetition, the ritualisation of memory, celebration, commemoration - in short, all these forms of magical behaviour signifying defeat of the irreversibility of time".[11] Thus for an identity to be found outside or different to another (England's obviously) a new set of origins had to be invented. Whatever version of our origin was to attain hegemony, their version of the future would too attain such status. Thus we can adjudge the pertinence of the statement quoted from Seamus Deane above.

Where Yeats and Pearse differ maps out the level of sophistication that had evolved in the debate. It is from within the parameters of this debate that I will be examining Keating's paintings. Pearse was keenly aware of the differences between himself and Yeats, he was to say in "The Coming Revolution" : (my emphasis)

> "I am seeking to find not those who have thought most wisely about Ireland" (obviously Burke, Swift, etc.), "but those who have thought most authentically for Ireland, the voices that came out of the struggle itself"[12] (Tone, Lalor, Mitchell, Davis etc.)

Here we see Pearse juxtapose the two traditions within Irish culture at the time, "the Anglo Irish" and the "authentically Irish" but more markedly it articulates the juxtaposition of two positions from which to speak. One can either speak from within a given culture (authentic) or from without it (about it). Pearse very obviously saw himself as being part of the former. Terry Eagleton (after Gramsci) has called these the traditional and the organic intellectual categories.[13] The organic intellectual is "authentic", from the community , he sees only in specifics, whereas the traditional intellectual may come from the community or indeed may not - speaks about the community rather than of it, and tends towards the use of the community for the universal argument. Yeats can thus be classified as traditional although this not entirely airtight.

These distinctions were to determine the nature of our culture post-independence, and indeed we cannot fail to acknowledge these distinctions in relation to Keating's work.

Quite obviously at this point a precursory notice is necessary about the class basis of such notions of authenticity. Liam O'Dowd has been keen to point out in his essay, "Neglecting the material dimension: Irish Intellectuals and the problem of identity",[14] that the study of Irish culture and politics has often neglected the economic in its framework for study. This leaves to specialist economists and financial experts the study of

Irish economics. Now this is certainly the case, with one exception perhaps - James Connolly. Pearse was primarily an educationalist and Yeats a poet, both shunned vigorous approaches to economics and as such relied very heavily on rhetoric. Whether this can be explained away in terms of the prioritization of the cultural and nationalistic I doubt, but it certainly leaves us with a certain critical perspective with which to view their work. Bearing this in mind we shall come to Keating.

CHAPTER 2

BEAUTY AND THE WEST: KEATING AND THE IMAGINARY 1915 - 1920.

From 1911 - 1915 Keating was under the tutorship of William Orpen - an Edwardian society painter with a tremendous reputation as a portraitist. Orpen can be said to belong to a long tradition of academic painting, he studied at the Slade College of Art, probably knew the Bloomsbury Circle, but was largely untouched by their venturings into Modernism.[15] Orpen came from an upper middle-class background, played tennis and was part of the protestant professional community in Dublin. He was largely geared towards London and had no particular affinities with Ireland (apart from birth). He had little time for the Celtic Revival, especially after the behaviour of the Dublin "lumpen" to his friend Hugh Lane.

Keating being from a working-class background in Limerick, certainly wouldn't have fitted in easily with Orpen's social group - but out of his ability in the studio grew a relationship that was to profoundly affect Keating's approach to paint. This led to Keating being invited to London to the Slade College of Art to be Orpen's assistant in 1915. During this period at the Slade, Orpen painted a portrait of Keating entitled, Man of the West , (see fig 3). It is a well achieved portrait, with the physical likeness one would expect from a portraitist of such stature. This portrait by virtue of its title certainly makes clear that Keating's visit to Aran in 1914 must have had an effect on both himself and Orpen - for the title surely is a mocking gesture - so typical of Orpen.[16]

The West of Ireland has been an important site for the Celtic Revival; here could be found a community of native speakers - still living from land and sea - with which one could invest some of the meanings of a

pre-colonial, fictionalised history. The popular myth of course is that these people had been least affected by the colonial metropolitanism raging throughout most of the country. But the economic realities of these communities is often overlooked - the hardship accrued by these islanders is not solely due to the "barren soil" of Robert Flaherty's, Man of Aran , but also to the "uneven development" of the imperialist power.[17] This has been neglected by artists who visit there - in their idealisations of the pre - industrial life style. As should now be obvious now be seen there is nothing inherently anti-industrial about people from Gaeltacht areas - but this didn't fit the cultural agendas of the day.

This has been most frankly indicated in critiques of Synge but similarly the same could be said of the painters Keating, Lamb and Tuohy not to mention Henry. What was important for Synge was that a cultural imposition could be made onto these people and their community - and by neatly ignoring social and economic circumstances posit an alternative to the overpowering popularity of metropolitanism. What struck Keating was the "beauty of the people"[18] and the simplicity of the life there. This is a king of nativism - a return to folklore and the local, a particular kind of Irish late romanticism. The cultural significance of this we shall touch on later, but let us first look at the question of "beauty".

Keating had been trained in an academic manner spending many hours drawing from the Greek statues at the Municipal College of Art - here in the academic tradition "beauty" was based on a framework received from classical values. This would not have been easily visible on the streets of Dublin or London, whereas in Aran where the men by necessity slaved over the land or the sea and the women were tied to their role of sustaining the family, these dimensions were more available. The life appeared simpler there, and this was something to be idealised. Analogies can be found to the

"culture of the body" movement in Europe at that time.

This notion of beauty and simplicity also has strong nationalist overtones. This puts Keating's "west" into a more internaitonal frame.
George L. Mosse in his Mass Politics and the Political Liturgy of Nationalism has said in relation to early twentieth century German nationalism :

> "The actions, symbols and monuments were bound together by an ideal of beauty which derived largely from Greek sources and more specifically from the classical revival of the late eighteenth century. Beauty consists in true proportion which must encourage all varieties".[19]

Mosse here points to the idealisation of a type, a specimen (in our case occupants of Aran - or at least the more rugged ones) that can encompass all or at least be an ideal for all, but which is definable by one. Mosse goes on to tell us that the function of this beauty "was to produce a healthy world beyond the confines of rational consciousness". This brought to light an ideal expressed in greek form. The healthy world beyond the confines of rational consciousness, quite obviously is the healthy world of Aran beyond the dirtied rational consciousness of Dublin and London. This psychoanalytic reference here by Mosse is not coincidental and will be dealt with in more detail later. It is not that Keating saw the people of Aran as physically related to his Greek statues, but conceptually they are linked. For they are both specimens, ideals and necessary symbols for such a cultural struggle. Synge's Aran is not even vaguely as healthy as Keating's, but they are both driven there for similar reasons.

> "The only way to be a patriotic Irishman is to do your best to become a perfect man....The perfect country can only be established by individual men and women, who are striving after perfection - perfection not only in an imaginary Irish nation which is outside themselves, but in the actual Irish nation which is within themselves, in their own brains and hearts and sinews, to mar or to make beautiful as they will".[20]

Such notions of beauty, as can be seen from the above passage cannot have been far from the minds of the Sinn Fein Ard Chomhairle. Ideologically we can see the sense in doing this, for by positing health and beauty with the "uncolonialised" this by reverse makes the colonising, the modern and the metropolitan unhealthy. It is by taking a position outside the national consciousness and by making it ordered and desirable that outside colonialism itself can be seen.

It is necessary to say that this may or may not be contradictory of modernism or indeed anti-modern depending on the basis of the politics of the particular nationalism. But it is important to note the entanglement at this stage of nationalism with late-romanticism in a battle against the ruthless utilitarianism of the industrial powers.

Within this cultural framework it is possible to begin an understanding of where Keating spoke from and indeed the complex nature of his "organic intellectualism". His subject works of the period 1915-25 can I think be broken into three distinct phases. Keating as we shall see changes his perspective as the social and political circumstances change.
Obviously such breaks and changes are not as rigid as might be presumed. Identities and histories do not happen in phases, but nevertheless, for the purpose of providing a structural model, I have opted for this format, although I would wish it not to be equated with conservative, biographical (art) histories, for my phases are more social than biographical.

Thus from 1915-1920 is what I will call the imaginary period - here with paintings like Men of the West (see fig 4) and An t-lasgaire agua a bhean we see an imagined struggle, an imagined set of heroes, an "imagined community".[21] From 1921 - 1924 he became increasingly aware of the struggle for independence, paintings like Men of the South (fig 5) and On the Run (fig 6) typify this period with their realism, their sense of the contemporary and their ironic confusion. Finally from 1924 - 1929 he became reinvolved with an imagined, but now technology and progress occupied the space left by nationalism and these works are notable for their lack of utopianism by comparison to the work of 1915 - 1920, although they are largely outside the scope of this essay.

The first or "imaginary" period begins with Men of the West , this painting is a direct reply to Orpen's work of 1915. In 1915 William Orpen painted his only paintings on the subject of the Irish question. They are perhaps his weakest works, yet his most provocative. He began these works Holy Well (fig 7) and Western Wedding (fig 8) after Keating's return to London in 1915. Keating brought with him a number of "bainin" outfits, which he presented to Orpen. Orpen, delighted with them, and no doubt enthralled by Keating's enthusiasm for the West, began these two enormous subject paintings.

They can be characterised by their incongruity and their overwhelming religiosity. They attempt to symbolically represent the west of Ireland, but fail miserably. Orpen wasn't committed to the place or the ideology, as Keating was, and this is obvious from the paintings. They depict a crazy, erratic world of beggars, fiddlers and idle peasants in a landscape more akin to Ypres of his later war paintings, than anything west of the Shannon.

Orpen was to paint one other important painting of Irish relevance at that time; it is a portrait of Keating - aptly titled Man of the West . Within the painting Keating stands side on, his stare addressing the viewer. But Orpen failed to give Keating a background - apparently he hurriedly finished the painting and this explains the lack of setting.

Keating's own first subject painting Men of the West sets out to provide a context for this portrait. He directly references Orpen's work in the placement of the figure on the left - himself. The posture is identical, except now Keating has a context. Carrying the tricolour in the presence of two similar characters with weapons he now addresses the viewer with a deep felt politico/cultural context. These men are the vanguard of the struggle. But which struggle ? First conclusions, of course, are that it is the military struggle of 1916 onwards. But then there is the contradiction of the painting's presumed date, of 1915.[22] Both Potterton and Fowler are quick to point out that the painting was painted (circa) 1917 and this would indicate a direct relation to the rising of 1916. They are in fact correct in this assumption, but as we shall see not entirely because of its relation to Easter 1916. Logistically then the painting could only have been painted after 1916. This is not because of the ideological climate of the time, but more simply because the tricolour on the left of the picture was not in use until 1916, and as such Keating would have had no reason to paint one in before that.[23]

But this leaves one question unanswered: is the painting a direct reference to the upheaval caused by the Easter Rising? Certainly the turmoil may have been contributory, but I have reason to believe that other more cultural conditions may have provided the primary motivation for the work.

As we have seen the painting has a direct reference to Orpen's work. Keating's other major subject work of the period, An t-Iasgaire agus a Bhean , also acts as a reply to the incongruent misplacement of the west in Orpen. But more dramatically there was no fighting in the west of Ireland until 1921 as is stated in Green against Green, there was a chronic shortage of weapons in the west which didn't allow such activities to take place.[24]

Why then would Keating situate his struggle in the West? Consistently Irish critics have played on the romantic nature of the work, and its supposed failure as a painting. Consistently the painting is summarily dismissed and yet this question has remained unasked, not to mention answered. Indeed, why would he even choose to depict himself in identical pose to the Orpen portrait?

These inconsistencies so glaring, under serious examination of the painting, point to a reality outside the conventional criticism of Keating, as first order connotation of romanticised nationalist meaning. As we have seen Keating's work has been affected by nationalist ideology (beauty and the west) but only when viewed in a cultural framework. Thus, it only carries meaning in relation to the nationalist cultural traditions that it operates within. Thus the proposition that first order nationalist propaganda is how Keating's meanings operate would appear to be false. This succinctly moves Keating's work of this first period into "the imaginary"

This means only through an examination of the cultural and political frameworks of that time is it possible to understand the resonant meanings. By operating within a cultural discourse primarily to comment on the political - Keating like many of his contemporaries operates in "the imaginary" .

The imaginary that I use here primarily refers to the excellent title of Benedict Anderson's recent study of nationalism, Imagined Communities[25]; but it also pertains to its psychoanalytic use within the theories of Jacques Lacan. These meanings may be supplementary to Keating's intended readings, for Keating considered himself primarily a "realist". But this does not stop us from extending the intended meanings into a more expansive view of the culture of this time, without breaching with the thrust of that intended. Keating's "realism" deserves here a cursory mention; he would have perceived the composition - the materials and the surface - as subservient if not transparent to the meanings of the image. But the approach I shall be taking is much more reliant on all the cognitive factors; not only the what, but the how and why also.

The fact that the primary realist thrust of the images has been largely ignored is revealing. It is all to easy to rebuke the work for its supposed "idealised, romanticisation" and its naive vision of the West of Ireland. This hints at a politics that I will deal with later. In fact it is not at all easy to discount these paintings for their romanticism especially when compared to J.M. Synge's photographs of the west (see fig 9). We can forego that generalised criticism in this way is ill- thought out, moreover what can now be considered as romantic may not at that time be conceived as such.

Luke Gibbons, in his "Romanticism, Realism and Irish Cinema", illustrates this in relation to Don Boucicault who in Victorian drama attempted a more "real" Ireland on the stage. But years later when the Abbey was founded it was (founded on a premise) intended to destroy the stage Irishry of Boucicault. While Keating is not ideally suited to comparison with Boucicault they share a similar treatment by the critical establishment.[26]

It may be useful here to acknowledge the entangled strains of Irish romanticism at this time. The West was the site of both progressive and regressive romanticism: in regression the west is the austere and beautiful landscape enabling the artist to inscribe an "elemental christianity"[27] - this is prevalent in Pearse, Douglas Hyde, Daniel Corkery, Paul Henry. Progressively the west is the site of a romanticism that by virtue of its romanticism still posits an imaginary wholeness to its vision but at key moments conducts a process of self interrogation and thus disrupts its veracity as historical/cultural document.

To further expand on the subject of this "imaginary" it is perhaps useful to take a closer look at Anderson and Lacan. In Lacan's account of the "imaginary" it is perceived as a state of self deception where a concept of the wholeness and self containment of the individual is maintained. This is begun within the "mirror phase" where the child is granted a wholistic image of itself by its mother, the child then exists with an image of itself, made credible by its relationship to its mother. The child has now entered culture or" the symbolic order" but its conception of itself as whole is false as it only <u>is</u> in relation to the mother. Lacan explains this through an analogy with the "I" which is only constituted in relation to other terms. Thus this imaginary state is false or untrue but is necessary for entry into culture.[28]

Here substituting the colonised for the child and making the mother - the colonial motherland - we can begin to understand the embedded interrelation of the two cultures constituting each "other" by relation to "the other". This analogy if taken hand in hand with what I have said earlier in relation to the study of Irish culture by Britain can usefully explain how terms like "imaginary" and "other" have relevance for colonial situations which Ireland was, and to a large extent, still is.

The "imagined" of Benedict Anderson's book is largely a positive term used to describe the imagined community that can unify communities that might otherwise be separable (by class, etc.) in nationalist struggles.

If we can look at nationalism as a more far reaching objective than "national independence" we may be able to see the necessity of such "imaginary selves". Here it is necessary to refer to yet another discourse; Terry Eagleton writing in Field Day Pamphlets No. 13 has succinctly said, (my emphasis),

> "However indifferent colonialism may be to the nature of the peoples it does down, the fact remains that a particular people is done down as such. And this is the fact that the truth of nationalism illuminates. As with the case of women, then, to attempt to by-pass the specificity of one's identity in the name of freedom will always be perilously abstract. Even once one has has recognised that such an identity is as much a "construct" of the oppressor as one's "authentic" sense of oneself. Any emancipatory politics must begin with the specific, then, but must in the same gesture leave it behind".[29]

Here Eagleton uses a theory of the concrete to base his theory of emancipation - even if this concrete/specific is percieved as merely a "construct", it is where emancipation begins. But he clearly states that once this is overcome the struggle moves on.

> "Ironically then, a politics of difference or specificity is in the first place in the cause of sameness and universal identity - the right of a group victimised in its' particularity to be on equal terms with others so far as their self-determination is concerned....In a further dialectical twist, however, this truth itself must be left behind as soon as it is seized; for the only point of enjoying such universal abstract equality is to discover and live one's own particular difference. The telos of the entire process is not as the enlightment believed universal truth, but concrete particularity".

So Eagleton has taken the "imaginary" of Lacan's identity and managed to reconcile it with liberationism of the fragmented self through a process involving concrete particularity. This lived difference whether

seen in terms of a concrete particularity or as fragmented self are not seen as incompatible; this is an obvious perversion of Lacan.[20] But as I see it is a justifiable one and one which holds out possibilities for a positive outcome from the contradictions both lived and percieved between nationalism, marxism and feminism.

This may seem totally tangential to Sean Keating's Men of the West - but it may provide us with a theoretical framework from which to examine the "imaginary" of the painting. In these terms, for the painting to succeed, it must show a utopian desire (for the whole - emancipation), then it must call this into question, but above all it must transform the cultural debate it is involved in.

We should by now have no problem pointing to the utopian desire within the painting. It quite obviously points to the creating of a new Irishman and a new state. The image doesn't exceed itself by attempting to pre-empt the new regime - depicting more the struggle than the resolution. This is the more unconventional aspect of the work, for it suspends an imagined struggle in such a timeless utopian fashion - constant revolution would be an accurate term to use, but, it does convincingly play between the timeless and the immediate - this could be explained as a generic transformation a placement somewhere between idealism and realism. This is what gives the image its' vitality. Plus of course Keating would have been intellectually stretched to speculate on what the conclusion of this struggle would bring.

As to whether the painting calls its' own verification into question is quite contentious. Joan Fowler has noted that Men of the West is a "blatant counterpoint in composition and form to the artist's highly conservative art school training"[21]; she points to the severe cropping of the painting as the primary cause of this. The severe cropping is quite correctly noted - it is as though the figures could rupture the edge of the

canvas at a movement. Another notable disruption of genre is the contrivance of the poses and the interelation of the figures. They seem uneasily constructed into a group even as if it could be a single figure moving into all positions. This may be exaggerated by the fact of no apparent eye contact between the men and thus no interrelation between them. Yet while they don't interrelate, they possess extraordinary resoluteness and unity.

While the painting may be considered romantic for its' utopian idealism, it is handled in a peculiarly modern way in a number of areas. For example, the surface of the painting is quite jagged and crude - this is quite usual for a number of early Keating's. This was noted by James White. In his 1963 catalogue he summons the surface of the work with the words, "rich in texture - cool in effect", which is accurate but a hardly an adequate description of what is an extremely uneven, rough surface made up of many linear marks of thin paint - illustrating an interest in pattern and surface which

is totally modern, especially when compared to the finished, smooth, varnished surfaces of Orpen.

Also the figures themselves despite their costumes seem surprisingly modern in other ways. It is known that Keating used photography extensively which may explain the figures closeness to the surface of the work, their arrangement into a patchwork of shape and colour without a background. This may explain the percieved modernity of the figures. Although it would be foolish to exaggerate the cognitive possibilities of this in terms of an Irish modernism, it may be now impossible to say that Keating was oblivious to the advances being made in Europe at this time. This is compounded when we look at another less significant painting of that time, An Roinnce (see fig 10) and the treatment of the cliff face in the background. If we do not wish to over-exaggerate the affect of all this, it is surely true to say that from a contemporary perspective such

inconsistencies disturb smooth readings of the painting's romantic utopianism.

Finally the fact of the inclusion of a direct reference to the Orpen portrait, makes quite clear that the work is not to be read as connotator of first order meaning. For, in entering into a critical relationship to another body of work in existence at that time, it quite clearly transforms the nature of its' meaning. Here is not first order historical work outside, or at least attempting to make the fact of its' art, transparent but a work that generates its' meaning by relation to the tradition of its' origin - art making.

A consideration of all these factors would lead us to believe that a smooth reading of this body of work as purely utopian or romanticised within attempting to reconcile the radical inconsistancies within its' generic constitution is no longer possible.

These works' ability to hold these genuine transformations together without losing the intended message or without dissipating into purely vague contradictions or meaninglessness is done by virtue of the "imaginary". The emphaticness of the nationalistic sentiment, yet the sense to see beyond such constructions, give these works their importance. Indeed a fuller reading of Keating's work after this period up until the late forties would I think provide us with sufficient evidence to conclude not an entire ignorance on Keating's behalf of those readings. These factors make these works the most interesting domestically produced art of this period and indeed among the most complete of political works executed in this country this century.

CHAPTER 3

REALISM AND THE STRUGGLE OUTSIDE THE IMAGINARY

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

> "Mr. DeValera said that it was a privilege for him to be called to open such an exhibition. He had been familiar with Mr. Keating's work for many years and he would have come to the exhibition in any case as a tribute to the man who could paint such a fine picture as Men of the South (see fig 5) in which Sean Moylan and others figured. He hoped that future generations would realise the value of this painting which hung in Aras an Uachtarain. It always gave him particular pride when visitors there asked him about its' historical significance. It depicted the whole of Ireland's struggle and he was very sorry that the artist had not painted more of this type of work. He knew that Mr. Keating shared these feelings. Such works were historic and expressed the nobility of the men who fought for freedom. "We can always be proud of these paintings", he said.32

The whole of Ireland's struggle mentioned in the above lengthy but informative quote, we must presume is the War of Independence. The War of Independence of January 1919 to July 1921 demarcates with the work of Sean Keating an important change of direction. If the period 1915 - 1920 (as has been explained) in Keating's work, exists in a second order relation to politics - through a relation to cultural discourse and thus through "the imagined" into politics, the period 1921 - 1924 sees Keating produce two important subject works which abandon this strategy and attempt to place the work into a first order relation to the politics of his day.

The War of Independence can be described not really as a war, but as a series of chaotic skirmishes which made Ireland ungovernable. What is important though in any attempt to understand these paintings from a historical perspective is that in the period between the painting of Men of the West and Men of the South , a profound hegemonic change had swept the country.

Contemporary sources root this change in the events from 1912 to 1918. Until 1912 the main goal on the agenda for Irish politicians (at least outside the north-east) was the granting of Home Rule. This became the primary legacy from the Parnell years and constituted the main priority of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Between the years 1912 and 1916. Home Rule became a very real possibility in the minds of the Irish people, and was welcomed as such, except for the Loyalist community predominantly in the north-east. By 1918, the Irish Parliamentary Party had suffered a catastrophic defeat at the hands of a new party - Sinn Fein - and in tear filled eyes of many an Irish historian thus demarcates the arrival of "self determination", (if only partial) on the political agenda.

If Keating's Men of the West can be seen in an allegorical relation to the politics of Irish freedom at the time of the Easter Rising - the imagined - then by 1918 this "imagined" could no longer be defined as such; it had exceeded its' cultural parameters and had become part of a perceived political reality. A number of (causal) events had allowed this counter-hegemony to take hold.

The rise in the cultural revival and the politicisation of same (Conradh na Gaeilge, The Gaelic Athletic Association, etc) and following from this a belief in a genuine need for self determination. This ordering and internalising of the assigned and constructed identities is the entry of the state into culture as granted by the colonial-mother in Lacanian/Saidian terms. This speeding up in events is noted by Pearse and Yeats and culminates in the peaks of the cultural revival - the 1916 Rising. The Rising itself was a shock to the forces of convential politics (the Irish Parliamentary Party) and even within the structure of physical force nationalism (the Irish Republican Brotherhood). The failure of Home Rule to materialise at this time, largely due to British engagement in World War I and the political filibustering of Lloyd George, served to mobilise a

dissatisfaction among the Irish middle class who had not seen any of the material benefits of the war, especially when compared to their Protestant counterparts in Ulster.[33]

Within the north-east, by 1914, it began to look as though Home Rule would be granted and this served to mobilise the Loyalists of Ulster who sought to protect their material and cultural interests. Home Rule from a northern Loyalist perspective would have diminished the ability of Ulster industrialists to free trade with Britain and would place Ulster under the supervision of southern Roman Catholics which gave vent to unrest. This led to the mobilisation of forces for the protection of Ulster - the Ulster Volunteers.

In the South, the way in which rebellion was repressed - the manner in which martial law was imposed with the internment of large numbers and the use of the Defence of the Realm Act to create martial law - led to mass civil unease and dissatisfacuion with the political and military regime. An interesting example of events at this time was the establishment of the Limerick Soviet in April 1919.[34]

What this led to was a change in the hegemonic order (in 1916, Pearse would not have got a crowd if he spoke publicly, Connolly for example was booed when he spoke in Limerick, but by 1918 they were national heroes). As Gramsci has said, for revolution to occur there must be reason for the masses to be profoundly disappointed in the efforts of its' elected body, so much so that they lose faith in its' goals. This occurred in Ireland between 1916 and 1918 and independence rose on the political horizon eclipsing Home Rule.

With this in mind the War of Independence itself became the inspiration for two subject works of great significance Men of the South (see fig 5) and On the Run (see fig 6). What makes the works significant is that they attempt to establish for Keating a first order

relation to politics, also coming from this they demarcate a change of approach from the earlier work. Gone is the romanticism - the imagined, the holistic and the self reflective, and in its place we find a "realism". Hard edged and unashamed we find Keating attempting to depict the struggle itself.

The first painting of the two to be executed was Men of the South . It was exhibited in the Royal Hibernian Academy of April 1922 which points to the fact that the painting must have been begun in the July 1921 - December 1921 truce. This is important for a number of reasons. The painting depicts several leading members of the North Cork Brigade of the IRA : these men were extremely active in the War of Independence and by 1921 would have been sought after by the British authorities. This, coupled with the fact that Keating should have immediately begun the painting in the truce period, indicates his eagerness to record the event in a real way as soon as possible. The sheer dangerousness for him in painting these people shows not only his will to paint them, but their willingness to be painted. After all, Keating was quite capable of painting from models, as we have seen, but that on this occasion he didn't follow this impulse points to his motivation being primarily a documentative "realist" one.

Keating's relation to republican or nationalist politics at this time isn't recorded. It is noted that he was a close friend of Sean Moylan of the North Cork Brigade, he was a fervent speaker of Irish and we can only presume that he must have had some sympathies with the forces of insurrection. This was not unusual for those at the Municipal College of Art at that time.[36]

But clearly Keating's eagerness to record and document the struggle puts him in a different framework than his contemporaries, for in so doing he attempts to put his work into a first order political discourse on par with Easter 1916 or September 1913 by W.B. Yeats.[37]

Perhaps the most perceptive thing said about the painting is by DeValera, quoted above. DeValera says "it depicted the whole of Ireland's struggle" which is largely ironic when we examine the painting. For in the painting we find not the conviction and unity of Men of the West but a strangely disjointed image - a composite of portraits. This is anything but holistic - which is similar or could be compared to the Irish history taught in our schools - disjointed, uncausal, and basically the story of a number of heroes and villains. This certainly would explain why the painting has been so gladly appropriated into the ideologies of the establishment. But this is as far as conventional criticism of the painting goes - condemning it to the back lot of Irish art. This refusal of causality in criticism of the painting is patently obvious and worrying.

What I will attempt to do is point to a number of major inconsistencies within this view and perhaps the reasons for these, to then place the painting back into a new framework.

Firstly, let us speak of the painting's subjects. Keating did not choose to depict the well known faces of the struggle - the conventional heroes if you will - here there is no Michael Collins, no Dan Breen, no Sean Treacy : Keating was commissioned to paint Sean Treacy at this time and could have included him in the painting. In not doing this Keating states his intent to represent a group of individuals who were largely responsible for the main body of activity during the War of Independence. An t-Oglach official organ of the IRA, commented significantly on the war effort in March 1921 :

> "In other parts of the country.....things are still very unsatisfactory. It effects no credit on the volunteers in these districts that they should leave the gallant men of the south to bear the brunt of the enemy's activities and thus make the miliatry problem much simpler of the enemy".[38]

I cannot make more forcefully the argument for Keating's choice; he was quite aware of the potency of depicting such a group. These men after all were at the centre of the struggle. Although it would be ridiculous to credit Keating with referring to the above quote in his titling, it certainly points to the keeness of his perception and choice.

Not only did (what I have called) the hegemonic changes allow Keating to work with this new subject matter but it also allows into his work a different critical perspective and criticality. This can be outlined most clearly in relation to the paintings of the preceding period.

A number of features distinguish Men of the West and An t-lasgaire agus a Bhean , as we have seen the images exist in the imagined - by using the image granted by the colonial mother and using this to open up a gulf in meaning - by using "the healthiness" of the subjects, the treatment of garments and the disarming stare to speculate on a militant "otherness" . Also by their utopian content they circle back into a nationalist imaginary - that of a future state where the needs of the people would be served. Finally, what makes these images special is their ability to disrupt such readings and point to the fact of their constructedness.

Men of the South by comparison breeches with this whole cultural discourse. Keating firstly does not attempt to distance his viewers with a sense of otherness, certainly the images are militant but in a way that directly refers to the struggle itself and not the cultural potency of difference. Men of the south are very ordinary by comparison, they do not possess the same "healthiness", and the disarming stare at the viewer is missing. They are much more of the people than archetypes for them. We need only look at Sean Moylan in the painting, he wears spectacles, his hair is roughly clumped and he is far from what could be called handsome. Obviously this is quite easily explained in

that these are real people, and Keating's primary impulse is that of a portraitist. Stemming from this we may note that Keating's politics in the work has shifted. Certainly in Men of the West , Keating portrays himself and certainly refers to Orpen's portrait, but his handling of it puts the figures into more an archetypal frame than Men of the South . So instead of creating a politic within the image, Keating attempts to depict or represent a politics outside the frame.

Within the work we can also ascribe the lack of utopian content evident in the earlier work, here is a disjointed series of portraits executed separately and then placed together. A regular technique used for group portraits (including Men of the West) except here Keating doesn't quite find the formula to unite his characters. The utopian content of Men of the West , with the flamboyance of the tricolour, fixed stares, Lee Enfields and conviction extraneous to the parts of the work but evident in its totality, here, in Men of the South , is totally absent. Keating drops the speculative time gazing utopianism of the earlier work to place Men of the South within a very specific time , rooting his image to that particular struggle. This is perhaps more evident in On the Run which is, not coincidentally, subtitled, War of Independence 1924 .

There are a number of hegemonic reasons for this shift. These clearly tie Keating to an advanced social view. Primarily is the fact that the timeless utopianism of the imagined in the earlier work is now for Keating starting to fit into place. The struggle has begun, so duly he shifts from imagined format to realist. This retrospectively may look like opportunism, but there were no guarantees to Keating's change for when it happened the struggle like so many others could have been crushed placing these works into a largely nostalgic frame - but this was the risk. Perhaps this could be seen as the structural flaw of the work at this time for in Keating's eagerness to give up the imagined,

he foolishly let the negating edge slip and needless to say the work has been now firmly institutionalised. (But Keating was not to know that the struggle for the imagined could take such a cruel twist as it did. In one of Keating's only statements on politics he said that like many of his generation he had shed a tear for what happened after 1926, this is made more cruel when we see Keating's own personal investment in the imagined).[39]

But Keating isn't merely satisfied to portray these men and he leaves in signs of earlier disruptions, which take the image beyond merely a group portrait. It is no coincidence that these figures are disjointed when put together, this has significance for the meaning of the work. Frances Ruane attempts to close off this reading, by saying that Keating was technically unable, often to construct groups within a space in his paintings.[40]

This clearly isn't true for when we look at Homage to Hugh Lane of two years earlier (1920), we can see that Keating is more than competent at the appointed task. But in Men of the South the figures are not a group. Even in scale they are inaccurately conceived. The cognitive reasons for this could be many but let us rule out technical inadequacy.

Let us return again to De Valera's quote on "the whole" of the struggle. This whole that DeValera refers to is not quite as unified as DeValera suggests by the use of the term. Inadvertently here we find DeValera pointing to the paintings power of construction.

Tony Woods of Dublin No. 1 Brigade quoted in Green against Green has said, "Between the scraps, it was an extraordinary unreal war, part-time civilians and youngsters pitted against a real army".[41] The nature of the guerilla warfare waged was that it primarily relied upon a knowledge of locale and secrecy, as a result the struggle was disjointed, ununified and quite often chaotic. This chaotic struggle, I would posit is the determining factor in the sense of disunity of the

painting. Here we see Keating's "realism" give way to more adequate analogous depiction of structure; this structure is quite apparently capable of being mapped on the struggle itself. There was no centre to the struggle, quite often nobody knew what was going on and there was no underlying sense of strategy. Retrospectively this is why the war was successful; for they did not beat the British in any sense of the word but made the country largely ungovernable. The high cost for this lack of unity of course is the civil war and the profound disappointment of all radicals involved in the struggle including Keating himself. The unreality of the struggle can largely be viewed in On the Run , (this I will talk about later).

The last key factor in coming to an understanding of Men of the South is the largely unheroic manner of presentation. Certainly these men are fighters, and certainly they carry the struggle, but they do not possess the idealism and presence of the figures in the earlier work. This unheroic depiction runs contrary to the way the painting was received by the critical establishment,[42] and also contrary to the manner in which these men were becoming heroes. Ernie O'Malley has said, "Many of us could hardly see ourselves for the legends built up around us".[43] Men of the South clearly depicts these people and in that sense could be accused of contributing to this idolatry. These men or military leaders became the heroes of their localities, the personification of Irish nationalism and often forces in local government. (Dan Breen or indeed Sean Moylan are good examples of this). But depicting surely does not make the artist wrong. Keating's impulse as we have seen was different to this, it was not his business to speculate on the idolation that was to befall these people and formally the painting, firmly discounts any accusations of hero making. They are depicted warts and all, disunified and unheroically. It is in this that we find Keating's criticality of this phase.

On the Run : War of Independence is the second important "realist" work of this phase, it is much more coherent and unified as an image than Men of the South . Here portraiture is not the genre, but, more a tradition of Social Realism typified perhaps in the work of Millet or Courbet. Strictly social-realism as a genre has become discredited (and is strongly associated with authoritarian regimes - Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany) and rightly so as there is no formal transformation and no formal resistance to incorporation into the dominant ideology. But at this time it was still seen as progressive politicaliy - making art about real people. In Ireland there were strong links with the European tradition through painters like Walter Osbourne and Frank O'Meara. Although their social - realism had proliferated into a largely unpolitical observance of bourgeois activities. Keating's construction arrives out of that tradition but with a number of major differences.

Primarily is its overtly political subject matter, even though as with Millet or others it doesn't signify a politic within the work, but in its use of title it significantly differs from anything by Millet. Instead of being called "Men reading in a yard", it is called On the Run : War of Independence . This specificity is not what we have come to expect from such traditions.

Secondly what is remarkable about the work when compared to the tradition it arrives out of is the shallowness of what Stephen Heath calls "Narrative Space".[44] When compared to Millet's The Peasants , we can appreciate the closeness of the figures to the surface of the painting. This puts the viewer in a participatory situation to the subjects of the painting, than Millet's deep space, which puts us much more in a observational role.

What is supremely ironic about the painting is the juxtasposition of title and image, for On the Run suggests a tension, suspense and fear. But in the image,

the figures are largely disinterested and almost bored. This boredom purveys the real boredom, that must have ensued the in-between times that Tony Woods refers to above. This sense of the unreality to the war is clearly well conceived and related to the actuality of the situation.

Significantly On the Run was painted two years after Men of the South and displays perhaps a certain unsureness on Keating's behalf, of the vigour and eagerness displayed in the earlier work. Here again it is not difficult to relate this unsureness to the confusion and uncertainty that must have prevailed in the hegemonic circumstances at the time - during the Civil War.

This unsureness was to entirely vanish in Keating's work of the next period, which is primarily allegorical. Here he reinvests in the imagined of the previous work although this time without the rugged unseen utopianism. Allegory and Night Candles Burn Out display a distrust of the now worn out vestiges of the previous nationalism. They are almost a call to rebuild - technology now takes the place of self determination as indeed it did later in the life of the state. Perhaps the most avid display of Keating's moving on is his treatment of the illustrations for Playboy of the Western World by J.M. Synge - they display none of the utopianism of Men of the West or An t-Iasgaire agus a Bhean . Indeed Keating did not even use this opportunity to paint Aran people, instead he did most of the works in Dublin. But it would be far too easy to continue to generalise in this way about Keating's work and patently this has been the problem all along. Too much generalisation, too little empirical examination.

CHAPTER 4

GENERIC CONFUSION OR TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

Sean Keating's work has gone largely unwritten about as I have said earlier. In the light of this and the brevity of this study it would be foolish to make any great claims either for his importance or indeed for this piece of writing. But despite this we can go some way towards an understanding of some of the motivating factors involved in the work.

As we have seen, nationalism is one of the key motivating factors of his work at this time, and this is underlined by a sense of modernity which is equally hard to ignore. This fits with other arts of a nationalist fervour and places Keating in an interesting international frame. Ritchie Robertson has said in his essay,"Nationalism and Modernity: German Jewish Writers and the Zionist Movement",[45] that nationalism can be ascribed to modernisation the transition from village to city, plough to factory, from traditional to modern society. He goes on to say that inscribed within nationalism is the transition from a type of society which is small scale, close knit, co-operative, governed by tradition and often unified by shared religious practices to society which is large scale, urban, anonymous, competitive and bureaucratic in which problems are not solved by consulting tradition but by rationally working out an efficient solution, where religion has become private and society as a whole is largely secular. Robertson is quite right in that his is a inherent part of the nature of nationalism but he has left two telling absences. He has ruled out the possibilty of a national - socialist movement or to be more accurate republican - socialist by linking nationalism to a transition from one outmoded means of

production to another, but he doesn't see the possibility for this to go one step further. An interesting case in point might be Mexico or indeed the now lost possibility of an Israeli socialist republic. Cuba and Albania might be suitable examples of such a success.

Also Robertson unintelligently ignores the colonial problem which complicates most nationalist struggles and their problems of identity.

From an Irish perspective the chance for a socialist-republic was lost somewhere between Connolly's death in 1916 and the Fianna Fail electoral victory of 1932 but continues to lurk on the political horizon fortunately not yet forgotten. Largely we have moved into the modernised society that Robertson has described but significantly not as smoothly as Robertson predicted either. The problem of colonial identity and the relation of church to state still plague us.

Keating's work as we have seen contains within it all these keys to understanding our history, or perhaps history contains all the keys to understanding Keating's work. What makes Keating's work so interesting is not its historical correctness but the structural flaws and glitches that collide supposed contradictions and override easy reading. In the work of the first period we see that its utopianism is constantly kept in check by force of the formal inconsistencies. In the second "realist" phase of the work we can clearly ascribe the inability to see beyond that given moment and its confusion, and in the later modernised work (although I haven't spoken of this at length) we can re-inscribe an unutopianised imaginary which disrupts a purely technological reading of the work.

These confusions, glitches and errors of genre make Keating, not the demonic monolith of the worst of nationalist inspired art, but an interesting example of what attempts at depicting a politic can become. We

should not shunt Keating off at the first opportunity as has been done, time and time again by our " leading historians" , but we should adopt an attitude of sensitivity. Sensitivity on matters such as nationalism are at a premium and the academic reprisals and counter-reprisals we have seen of late have not helped this. Edna Longley and Brian McAvera spring to mind at this juncture.[46]

Finally on the notion of a nationalist art practice, a recent debate between Frederic Jameson and Aijaz Ahmad in the pages of Social Text , outlines what Jameson calls the inherent "national allegories" of cultural production outside the first world.[47] Jameson states that this develops out of the appropriation of predominanlty Western machinaries of representation (or the granted image of the colonial mother), with one of their determinants being the radical split between private and public, poetic and political, between the world of classes, economics and secular power and the world of sexuality and the unconscious. Jameson goes on to say that in " third world " cultural discourses these categories are effaced and collapsed creating what he calls a "national allegory".

What is important about this, as pointed out by Aijaz Ahmad, is this classification "third world", and the process of naming that Jameson has entered into. For in naming something in this way he usurps their possibility for opposition. Thus a new critical colonialism is set in place. For by naming and identifying " third world " discourses in this way Jameson puts himself in the position of the authoritative interpretor of the role of " third world " culture. This is supremely dangerous, for it merely reaffirms the colonial addage coined by Sartre, "Western culture has the word, all others are only allowed to use it".[48] In light of this I hope that this brief study of Sean Keating can be seen not as a "naming", but merely as a pre - christening piss up.

FOOTNOTES

1. Sean Keating, Painting in Ireland Today, The Bell , Dec, 1950.
2. A good example of this would be Bruce Arnold, A Concise History of Irish Art Thames and Hudson, 1983 Seamus Deane, Celtic Revivals ,Faber and Faber, 1985, p. 19

4. Cairns and Richards, Writing Ireland , Manchester University Press, 1988.

5. Sean Cronin, Frank Ryan ,Repsol Skellig, 1985.

6. Edward W. Said, Orientalism ,Peregrine 1985

7. It is no coincidence that main studies of the Irish language did not begin until after the famine when Irish could no longer have oppositional status.

8. Anonymous, The Nation ,31 May 1845,quoted in Cyril Barrett, "Irish Nationalism and Art 1800 - 1921," Studies, Winter 1975

9. There is nothing wrong I think, with using comparative studies to understand the visual arts, but the frequency of literature as the comparison for Irish Art sadly reflects the state of Irish criticism and is beginning to set in place a new colonialism, those of the "word" colonising by naming "those of image"... i.e. see, R. Kearney & Bill McCormack.

10. James Connolly, Labour in Irish History , New Books, 1983, (ppxxvi - 5)

11 Regis Debray, "Marxism and the National Question", New Left Review, Sept - Oct 1977 pp 25-41

12 Patrick Pearse, The Coming Revolution p.246 quoted in, Seamus Deane, Celtic Revivals ,Faber and Faber 1985 p 69.

13 Terry Eagleton, "British Bars", in Radical Philosphy , Summer 1988, p 44-45

14 Liam O'Dowd, "Neglecting the material dimension: Irish Intellectuals and the problem of Identity", Irish Review ,No. 3 pp 8 - 17

15. Bruce Arnold, Orpen : Mirror to an Age , Fakenham Press, 1981

16. Orpen also painted himself in a hunting outfit called Man of Aran , the absurdity of his gesture the appropriate English hunting outfit befits his attitude to the cultural revival.

17. Neil Smith, Uneven Development, quoted in Edward Said, Yeats and Decolonisation Field Day, 1988.

18 Keating, quoted in Liam Maritn, "Fireside chat with Sean Keating" (source unknown, in possession of Michael Keating, artists' son)

19. George L. Mosse, Mass Politics and the Political Liturgy of Nationalism in Political Nationalism the Evolution of an Idea ,Ed. Eugene Kamenka, Arnold 1976,pp 51 - 52

20 Anonymous, The Ethics of Sinn Fein 1917 p 1 quoted in Maurice Goldring, Faith of our Fathers Repsol Publishing 1987, p 22

21 Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities Reflections on the origin of the spread of Nationalism Verso 1986

22 James White. Sean Keating Retrospective ,Catalogue, Municipal Gallery Dublin, 1963

23 G. A. Hayes McCoy, History of Irish Flags ,Academy Press 1979.

24 Michael Hopkins, Green against Green ,Gill and Macmillan 1988

25 Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities Reflections on the origin of the spread of Nationalism Verso 1986

26 Luke Gibbons,"Romanticism, Realism and Irish Cinema" in Cinema and Ireland by Gibbons , Rockett & Hill, Routledge, 1988
Routelegge 1988.

27 Ibid p154

28 Jacques Lacan,"The Mirror Phase",in, Sexuality in the Field of Vision .Jacqueline Rose and Juliet Mitchell, Verso 1986.

29 Terry Eagleton, Irony and Commitment ,Field Day 13 1988 p 10

30 Lacan would not necessarily see the resolution of such a problem by an emphasis on concrete particularity, for Lacan such particularities don't exist outside of language. Opposition is close off here, so for the purpose of this argument let me say that it is more beneficial to go beyond this view.

31 Joan Fowler, Men of the West, in Critics Choice Municipal Gallery Dublin, 1988

32. Eamon DeValera's speech on the opening of Mr. Keatings Retrospective Exhibition, Irish Times, 9th May, 1963

33 See, Kennedy, Giblin and McHugh, The Economic Development of Ireland in the Twentieth Century Routlegge ,1988 pp 3 - 29

34 Jim Kemmy, "The Limerick Soviet" in Limerick Socialist 1976 pp 26 - 34 also Liam Cahill, The Limerick Soviet: Syndicalism in Ireland , O'Brien Press to be published October 1989

35 Interviews by author with Michael Keating, artists son and John F. Kelly long time friend and colleague of Keating.

36 Interview by author with John Turpin.

37 W. B. Yeats, Collected Poems London 1950

38 Quoted in Michael Hopkins, Green against Green ,Gill and Macmillan 1988 p 10

39 Interview with John F Kelly,RHA,by author.

40 Frances Ruane, Allied Irish Banks Collection Catalogue , 1986

41 Michael Hopkins, Green against Green ,Gill and MacMillan 1988 p 9

42 See, DeValera cited above.

43 Cited in Michael Hopkins, Green against Green , Gill and MacMillan 1988

44 Stephen Heath, " Narrative Space in Cinema", Screen , Vol. unknown

45 Ritchie Robertson, " Nationalism and Modernity: German Jewish Writers and the Zionist Movement",in Visions and Blueprints ,Ed. Edward Timms Manchester University Press 1988

46 Edna Longley, " Hoisting the flag over holy ground" Irish Times January 21 1989 and Brian McAvera,"A Reply to John Roberts," Artscribe ,February 1988 and Brian McAvera. "Art, Politics and The Irish," Art Monthly . October 1988 -

47 Frederic Jameson,"Third World Literature in the era of Multinational Capitalism" in Social Text, Fall 1986, and Aijaz Ahmad,"Jamesons Rhetoric of Otherness and the National Allegory", Social Text, Fall 1987

48 Jean Paul Sartre, Preface to Frantz Fanons, Wretched of the Earth ,Penguin,1986 p 10

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig 1 An t-Iasgaire agus a bhean 1920

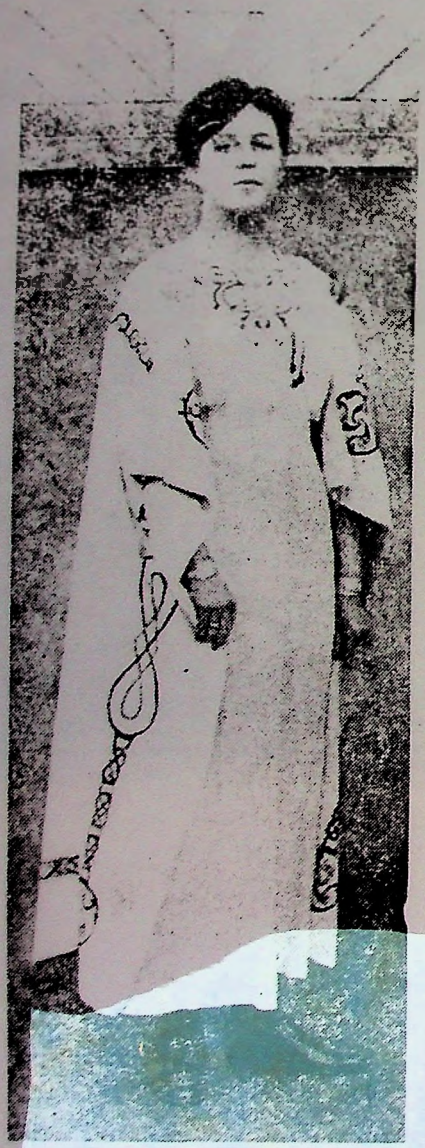

Fig 2 Mary Clancy : Wife of assassinated Mayor of Limerick

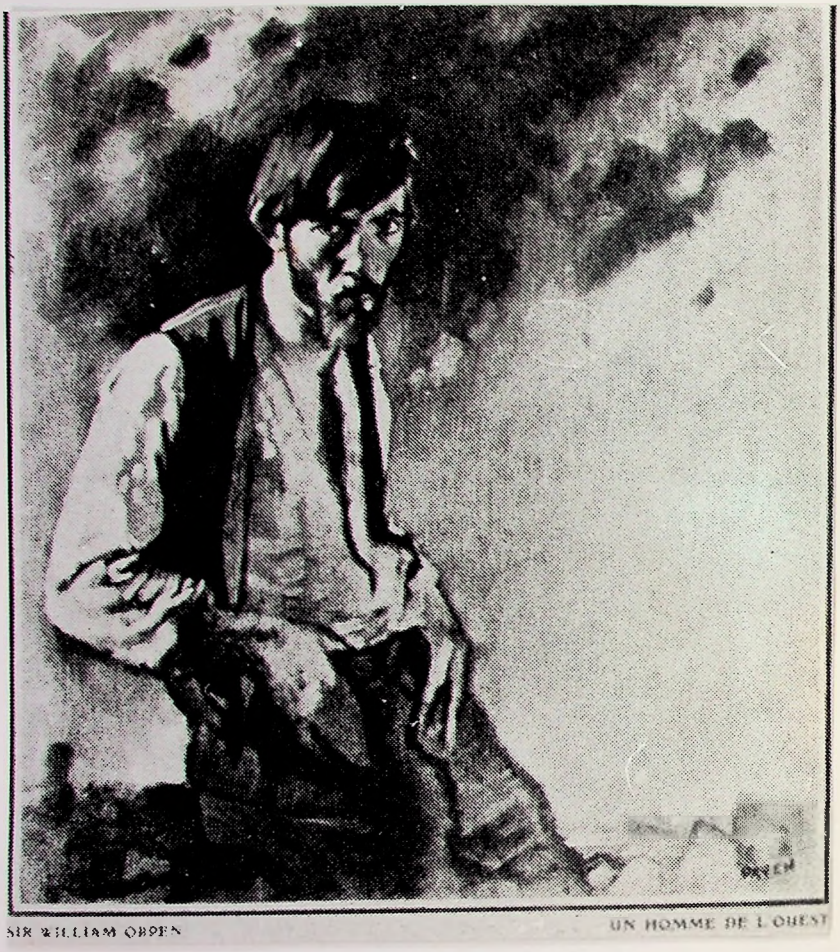

Fig 3 Man of the West : Orpen 1915

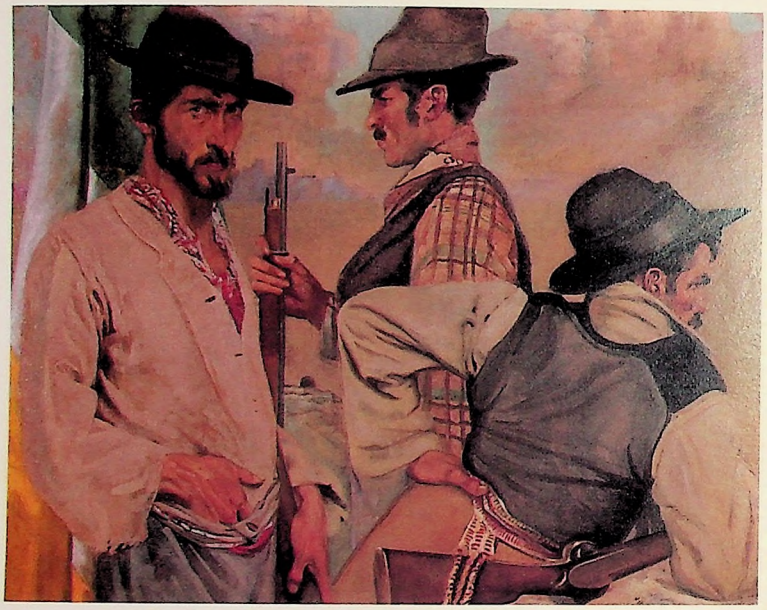

Fig 4 Men of the West : 1916-17

Fig 5 Men of the South : 1921-22

Fig 6 On the Run : War of Independence 1924

Fig 7 Holy Well : Orpen 1915

Fig 8 Western Wedding : Orpen 1915

Fig 9 Photograph of Aran : J.M. Synge

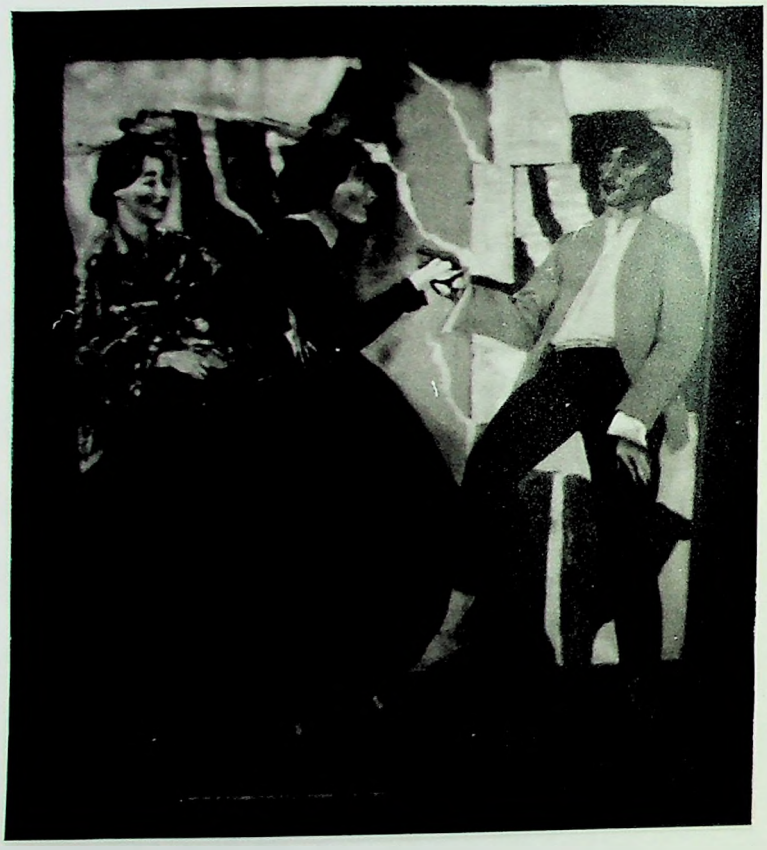

Fig 10 An Rainnce : 1918

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