Her Small Hands Were Not Beautiful
Maud Gonne in 1897 on a fundraising tour in the U.S.
Her Small Hands
Were Not Beautiful

Poems

by

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IN MEMORY OF
MY GRANDMOTHER
RUTH DOHERTY KIRKPATRICK
(1902-1991)
Americans Breakfast at Bayview, Dublin

When I come down
to serve them sausage and egg,
these women broad in jogging suits,
these men talking golf and directions,
they’re already complaining
about the coffee, the traffic noise.

They puncture fresh tomatoes
and leave them on the plate,
discuss their children loudly.
The vegetarian son gone to Chile
will learn soon enough to eat meat.
They say third world country
like they say burned toast.

If I threw their ample bags
into Dublin Bay, archaeologists
ten thousand years on might find
crabs lodging in the plastic shells
of hair dryers, mollusks mirrored
in compacts, anemones smug
in leather running shoes.

There’d be no evidence then
of these Americans standing on shore,
will-less, the souls gone out of them.
Or of me, alone in the doorway,
wishing myself on an Inishmore cove,
my ancestors having dragged seaweed
across the rocky miles
to cultivate potatoes
with soil they handed up
between the stones.
1. Yeats Plays Golf
Crossing the Border

1

Behind the machine gun,
through the bullet-proof visor,
I might have met his eye,
from the rented car with Dublin plates,
from beside my English husband,
from the line of Ulster Protestants
I’d come from. Almost here,
this very ground.

Weaving through traffic in Derry
we’d somehow got between
two armored cars
with English soldiers hunched over guns.
And then those automatics
swiveled onto us.

I’d heard a Belfast woman
on call-in radio
say a soldier worried his trigger
whenever she hurried past. Walk fast
she’d been instructed. Don’t look at them.
But something keeps me staring
into the leveled barrel.

2

We walk the streets of Derry
in the dusk, the fortressed inner city,
the shops on the town square
all barricaded by steel doors
against bomb blasts
and at the center, a monument
to soldiers in World Wars.
No mention of the fighting here.

In front of the Guild Hall
we stand, awkward beside
the cannon-riddled wall,
reading the town history, official,
and not so clear as words spray-painted
on the panopticon:
From Limavady and Coleraine,
from Castlebar and Ballymoney,
on and on they came,
the Protestant bands
in cobalt blue berets with orange plumes,
Men of Ulster, Pride of Ulster,
with their military faces,
their strange, unseeing stares,
a few accordions, some snares
but mostly marching men with flutes
and the drummer beating wildly.

They teach their young
the loud fierce beat, each band
with boys beside the striding
grown men, and one so young,
bewildered by the sound,
what did he hear as he stumbled
to keep time, almost trampled
in the turning?

In front of us, a young man
cheered, gave thumbs up
to the men he knew
and danced from street to curb,
punching the sky with his fist.
His lager glass rolled
into the street and tightlipped
a woman lifted it from among
the marching feet
onto the windowsill.

Up the last ridge
to our Appalachian home
with the sky ripe and furred
as a peach. Gloaming. The word
in my ears like some tribal memory.
Here is where the Scots-Irish came
three hundred years ago
from County Antrim and Tyrone,
rack-rented, then indentured,
stowed in the bowels of boats,
they came as we come now, weary but grateful
for this mountain-shouldered sky.

But the first night home
when I dream myself in red curls,
I pull them off to the black lengths
of a great-grandmother’s hair.
Cherokee, from among these hills
driven to Oklahoma in tears?

I am that hybrid,
American, firing the shot
that pelts me. I am that other,
a woman, who always makes
her own country
furrow and brick
mortar and till.
In my own dream
I sat on a marble bench.
Above me, impossibly tall,
loomed Yeats, also in marble.
There were others, too,
possibly Eliot, but Yeats
is the one I remember.

Since then I’ve seen his statue
in Sligo. Yeats with insect legs,
winged, his poems inscribed
all over his body, a witty
and irreverent likeness,
the Irish sculptor correcting
my dream, bringing the poet
to scale.

You say I know him better
than you do, but my statues
are stony-eyed, not
a lift or kick in them.

The poem I open is “Prayer for my Daughter”
where I find the terms of the father’s sanction
prayed over a sleeping child--
that she be like Lady Gregory
who gave him Custom. Ceremony.
The spreading laurel tree.
Whatever else, not like the public,
opinionated Maud

Old bellows full of angry wind.

The last time I saw my own father,
he was angry, his voice
thundering behind me as I left
the house. My leaving

was one of those choices
we make to keep living,
though the price was so heavy,
sometimes my knees still buckle,
breath caught in my chest.

I don’t know what it means
to be sanctioned by fathers,
though once, at Thanksgiving,
my father dropped his warrior face
for days, we both did,
and in that fierce love
I felt immortal.

But as for your question,
I think the old wicked man
might have kicked any woman around.
Age burst in him like a boil,
*Why should not old men be mad?*
Having claimed the new poems
with his own mucky wildness,
he finally gave Gonne a reprieve.
Herself a statue in “A Bronze Head,”
*human, superhuman, a bird’s round eye,*
he wondered who’d done her justice.

That’s the most we’ll get from him, I fear.
Kick, stony stare, or measured admission.
Is it my way of finding the father’s sanction
to say that I believe this?
Whatever he said in the poems,
Maud was the one he loved best.
CANAIRE OF INIS CATHAIG

In the end
it must have made a difference
to her that she too could walk
on the water.

She had come from her hermitage
at nightfall, having said nocturns,
with only her staff
and the memory of a forest
without moonlight.

At the Shannon, ice choked
the current. Miles back
her own door stood open,
the coals of her fire
still glowed.

Now let your servant depart
in peace, and she entered
the river, water and ice
swarming her waist.
Nothing to guide her
but the dream of Senan’s island.

How it happened even she
didn’t know, but she leapt
from the crest of one wave
to another toward the island
where monks refused women
the bread and the wine.

And when he came down
to the harbor with his
women may not enter
she knew it was only
a matter of time.
She could stand there
for hours on the brink
of the water.
I am telling this story because, once again, it took a holy woman performing miracles to receive the sacrament from an ordinary man.
MAUD GONNE: FIRST MEETING

She’d come out in her slippers,  
kept a hansom cab waiting.

It was 1889. Bedford Park.  
She rode all the way from Belgravia  
to meet Jack Yeats and his son. Pushy man,  
the father. But this poet  
struggling to paint, she liked

his sad smile. *I make the cloak of Sorrow.*  
Of course she said she loved his poems.  
And that was the one thing he heard.  
Like other men, he was frightened.  
He hid his fingers stained with paint.

Years later she forgot the occasion  
entirely, the leave-taking, and then  
stepping out into Blenheim Road,  
how the wind rose like a keen.  
Dead leaves battened down her loose hair.

Instead, she remembered O’Leary  
filling her arms with books —Thomas Davis,  
Mangan and Ferguson—because she’d said  
*I want to work for Ireland. I want you  
to show me how.* Willie followed her home  
from tea and they spoke of John’s years  
in Portland Jail breaking stones  
after the Rising. In this way the poet  
became confidante, friend. A character  
in her own story.
Woman of the Sidhe

When you were younger
you seemed to care less
about being despised.

Men with porridge faces
damned the Land League
left tenants in ditches,
said, *Let them die*
*These people must be taught*
a lesson and you rose
from their tables, ordered
your carriage, turned
your back on the country house,
the hunt ball, the landlord’s wife.

They hated you for your choice
not to be one of them, though
your face sometimes brought them
back, like moths to flame.

Sir John in Donegal dangled
wife like a diamond pendant
before you, *wife of a liberal MP.*
All afternoon, battering rams
at the doors of those cabins,
an old woman carried out
on a mattress, clutching a rosary,
another too weak to stand, her
day-old infant on the ground.
When he gave you the diamond
on its gold chain, you put it
in the hands of the farmer’s wife,
rent for the year and more.

Arriving with your canaries and finches,
your Great Dane, Dagda, his paws in leather boots,
*Woman of the Sidhe, the poor called you.*
*Soup Kitchens. Letters to the press.*
You wanted to shelter everything fragile and torn.
*New cottages in the countryside.*
*Cakes and porter and fiddlers to warm them.*
But alone in each cramped hotel room,
sleeping upright to breath,
what you hid was the grey lady
in your dreams: *Murderess of children*
she called you, showed you the face
of your dead son.
Undoubtedly Miss Edgeworth

Yeats said that in your youth
you ran wild in Ireland:
cut out squares in a checked tablecloth,
trampled through the glass of hothouse frames
delight in the crash.

Unfortunate genius he called you
because afterwards the boarding school
in Derby did its work so well,
taught you the arithmetic of fear:
your father especially, holed up in his study
or traveling by moonlight to talk botany,
marrying another young wife.

For Yeats you spoke just once in your work,
in your first book, your great genius,
that natural talent for the unexpected
lost in the daily rounds of daughter. Of duty.
Of all those novels written between four
in the afternoon and five.

She could not persuade herself to trust
nature, to set down in tale and novel
the emotions and longings and chances.
But for Yeats this was an abstract regret:
when the woman he himself loved
most in the world got up from tea in 1897
to continue the work she’d begun
(that day, to tend those the police had batoned
in the Jubilee Riot), he told them to lock
the door. He stood up in that club
in Rutland Square, demanding reasons,
explanations. He helped them to bar her way.
Yeats Plays Golf

Multinational

At the shopping mall in Monaghan, I could be anywhere. Not Ireland any longer, but the artificial light of the chain store, that quasi-familiar nowhere, where like deranged fish, we school toward the brand name as if sating could happen here.

My Irish friend meets her husband in McDonald’s while I stroll past everything I already know, Hollywood movies out on DVD, designer t-shirts, low-slung jeans.

I want to cry turn back. Though for now it all looks benign, the old streets still teeming with shop fronts, the sidewalks alive with dailiness, malls are like mint in the garden. Turn your back and a sweet sameness covers every other living thing.
When the fish left its wake on the water
near the shady side of stones and brambles,
she thought of the net she had set in the river.

Under the green leaves of the lismore,
she reached for the net and stumbled
as the fish left a wake on the water.

A fine salmon is much like a lover
whose loss to the currents humbles.
Think of the net set in the river.

Though the table is empty, it’s better
to refrain from the question that trembles
like the wake of a fish on the water.

Trembles and forces an answer:
*What should I have done? What remembered?*
*Is grief like a net in a river?*

Now she chooses the river for lover,
leaves the others their season of troubles.
When the fish leaves a wake on the water,
she thinks of the net once set in the river.

**Villanelle for the Lost**

When the fish left its wake on the water
near the shady side of stones and brambles,
she thought of the net she had set in the river.

Under the green leaves of the lismore,
she reached for the net and stumbled
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leaves the others their season of troubles.
When the fish leaves a wake on the water,
she thinks of the net once set in the river.
YEATS AND THE GARDENER

The day Yeats died, the gardener died too.
They were buried at Rocquebrune side by side.

The poet’s heart failed in the January cold.
Of the gardener we really know nothing.

Perhaps he pruned trees like overgrown poems,
cutting risky bargains with beauty.

Yeats died abroad without blood kin, no
sister or brother or daughter or son.

His wife and his lovers attended.
Of the gardener we really know nothing.

Perhaps his body sang toward loamy ground,
a turning he’d known through each winter.

After the war, when the Irish returned
some say they took the gardener for poet

carried his coffin to Drumcliff Churchyard
as instructed in “Under Ben Bulben.”

Nine years into his death, did the poet
make a great change, his body revising

high and low, the roots of a tree
the gardener loved grown into his heart?

Perhaps when pilgrims travel to Yeats’ grave,
they bend toward a French gardener’s bones.
Yeats Plays Croquet

A tall man with a mallet must bend
to make contact at all, to send
the bright sphere through each hoop,
threading the careful lawn
like a rhyme stitches a stanza.

He made a serious game of it.
What chance did Norah McGuinness have
when she came to tea and was chosen?

Cup suspended between saucer and chin,
her heart beat like Leda’s
as the great man rose like a swan
in his white suit
and made for the field of play.

At first she felt her legs give way,
his voice a long way off,
her head muzzy.

But the sudden blow of wood on wood
brought her back in a white rush.
She aimed and swung and swung again
her body lighter with each hoop
until she saw his face, those fingers
pushing through his hair vaguely.

A strange shudder broke the afternoon
when they both saw she could best him.
What else could she do but loosen her grip,
each shot more askew than the last?
And what could he do, finally winning,
but put knowledge back on with power
and indifferently let her drop.
A wild swing and he’d drop the club,  
walk off in another direction,  
head bowed, hands behind his back,  
for all the world the great poet  
working over a new line,  
he and the ball he’d hit  
having fallen out, parted company,  
this time, perhaps, for good.

Smyllie and Duncan found them  
in the furze bush, clambered  
through ditches, performed  
sleight of hand and the game  
resumed, golf balls appearing  
like fishes and loaves.

Is greatness the will to remake the world  
in the image of desire?  
He had written himself into nobility  
so that the mere mention of taking up golf  
produced young men in an MG,  
a golf bag he called his quiver.  
*Smyllie, this is my quiver*  
and if he’d called the golf clubs  
arrows, no one would have objected.  
He was free to rename the world.

And aren’t we?  
Shall we drop  
what we’re doing, retrieve  
the odd ball, shoulder our quivers,  
set off to ask the animals  
their proper names, redraw  
the boundaries of nations  
so that contours of the land  
dissolve the lines drawn on maps?  
Believe me, I know what I’m asking.

When Yeats discovered the young men  
sought to remake each green afternoon  
in the image of his desire,  
he produced a half-crown  
from his pockets
for each golf ball surely lost,
keeping some account of the price
paid by others
for arranging the world as he wished.
2. **Maeve Married**  
**A Sequence**

*I demanded a strange bride-gift such as no woman before me had asked of a man.…*  
—from “Táin Bó Cúailnge,” Book of Leinster

*Because she wanted a life  
as filigreed with wonders  
as any man’s, they decided  
she couldn’t have loved him.*
How to account for her?
Daughter of a High King?

Shall we give birth that privilege,
apply chromosome to gene
like a knife to a leek?

But accidents of birth solve nothing.
They are flame to a sharp stone.
Born a warrior or raised one,
she heard the usual complaints:

I would never give in
to a woman, be under
a woman’s rule.

Following the lead
of a woman has brought us
to this distress.

Even Ailill insisted: Good
is the wife of a good man.

Reduced to anatomy,
she felt like a trout
cut on red sandstone.

Is it any wonder
she took up seduction
and the sword?

He left her
the hard choices.

Three enchanted monsters
in the shapes of cats.
Three men, competing,
of course.

Who’s best?
Conall and Laegaire
climb the rafters. Cuchulain,
as usual, strikes when provoked,
sits through the night, watching.

Who wins?

Ailill’s voice slips
like a sword off stone:

danger in whatever judgement.

She’s left holding
the bronze, silver, and gold.

3

This much seems clear:
Maeve never thought the love
of a man alone could save her,

but Ailill released her from fear.
He loved her directly as daylight.

Together they built a house
of oak, fitted with bronze,
red yew carvings.

Flocks of white birds
might rise from the Hill of the Sidhe
withering all they touched,
enchanted pigs could trample
the earth barren.

But Ailill and Maeve shone
like bronze pillars,
struck and vibrating.

4

They both understood desire
for a beautiful woman,
her skin soft as feathers,
her mouth the beginning
of the world.

When Angus Óg
described years of longing,
they felt their own pulses
beat like wings. A woman

in their district,
hair the color of sky
at dusk.

Who cares she was nothing
but trouble, under some fool
enchantment, one year herself,
the next a wren, herself again,
then pheasant or starling or sparrow.

Listening to Angus Óg’s desire,
their hearts rose up like song.
Later they gave their bodies
to each other as if
they themselves might be more
than earthbound flesh.

And though some thought it
merely politic when Maeve and Ailill
forced the secret of her spell,
it was more impulse than plan.

They flew toward consummation,
flutter of tongue, hum of thigh.
Not themselves, they made
themselves utterly at home.

And Angus Óg became a swan,
which was, after all,
the variety of bird his beloved
had most recently become.
She was blamed for the weakness
of the men of Ulster

as if her strength
could only be stolen,
an easy theft, from men.

But their own cruelty
betrayed them.

When enemies closed in,
the men of Ulster felt
their arms refuse to lift swords.
Pain seared their bellies
and their legs trembled
as if they had been walking
for days.

They were cursed for forcing
a woman to outrun horses.
They had threatened her.
Her husband would die.

When she fell to the ground
and gave birth, the boy and girl
awash with blood, her cry pierced
the bodies of birds and lodged
in the ringed trunks of trees,

lodged in the throats
of the men themselves
who were suddenly spent.

Neither making life nor taking
life, they felt weak.
But Maeve had nothing to do with it.

Fergus was different.
He walked away from king and country
for love of a woman
he could not have.
Like a serpent swallowing
its own tail, Maeve asked him
for what would dissolve
armies and thrones
if every man gave it,

love beyond borders, the heart
opening to what it most needs,
another heart to change it.

When Ailill understood
that his wife’s body
was not entirely his own,
he responded with tact,
even wit. Carving a sword
from oak, he slid it into Fergus’
sheath, lifted the real blade
from among scattered clothes.
The hilt caught in Maeve’s
robe, and for a moment
Ailill felt the earth
tilt, an ache in his body
deeper than sleep.

She had never met a man
who neither feared nor desired her.

When he came to Connaught
with the men of Ulster,
the sound of their horses
was like thunder on the roof.

Dark, he wore crimson, a brooch
of inlaid gold. Over his shoulders
a shield rimmed in silver.

His confidence scoured her
like a loud wind in winter.
He had lain with women of the Sidhe.
He had never lost a battle.
She offered food, ale, vats
of cold water, a ready bed.
He looked through her
as if she were mist.

Later when Maeve sent armies
against him, and Cuchulain had killed
many men, she imagined kneeling
before him, her arms circling his thighs,
her mouth busy, his voice unharnessed
from its burden of strength,
wild and ungovernable.

8

Didn’t she speak to the eel
of every color? She dipped
the bronze cup into the river
and brought up the mauve head,
the saffron tail:

_What way is it with you?_

For a moment
she was only herself
in love with the world.
The story alone was enough:

Two swineherds transform into eels
and are drunk down by cows.
The cows give birth to bulls,
the white-horned and the Brown.

Men in the bellies of bulls.
Brilliant eels speaking.
The whole of life, enchanted,
before her

and she chose the game
of status.

_What will happen to me
after I get the sway
over Connaught?_
Here is the hardest thing:
to change the old ways
of living.

Knowing what she knew
about women reduced to flesh,
Maeve bartered her daughter
anyway: sixty black-grey horses
with golden bits and twelve milch cows
with red-eared calves.

She sat past dark
with her daughter's lover,
playing chess, her gold queen
catching the last of the light,
the young man's hands beautiful
against the white bronze of the chessboard.

His dark hair curled at his jaw.
They argued about the marriage portion.
When their eyes met, she felt
a chilled wave.

Candle flames lanced
emeralds and rubies.
The dinner hour lapsed

and she forgot husband and kingdom,
forgot her own daughter,
her body bolder than the future.

Was it her unkissed lips
that drew her to Ailill's plan?
When Fraech left her check-mated,
hungry, the silver pawns scattered,

she recalled the prophecy:
*death by water* the Druids said.
How unmeasured the desire
that led her to the bank
of that river, Fraech flailing,
water snakes thick in the current.
If only he hadn't begun

*Good is the wife of a good man.*

She might have chosen silence.

But when he said, *You are better
today than the day I married you,*

she saw a gored bull in the twilight.

*I was good before I ever
had to do with you*

and with that the great tally began,
how many horses, what price
the jewels, which robe finer,
her property set beside his,
as if a world that had wounded her
could finally settle her worth.

Even the white-horned bull,
calved in Maeve's herd, refused
to be owned by a woman, chose
Ailill's herds instead.

The war in the north came to this:
she went looking for a bull
better than his, though his bull
had once been hers.
A portrait of Maud Gonne by Sarah Purser, 1896
3. “Her Small Hands Were Not Beautiful”
Voices in the Act of Remembering
Maud Gonne

Maud Gonne (1866-1953) lifelong [Irish] nationalist, was born in England.
—Caitriona Clear, Encyclopedia of Irish History and Culture

The poet W.B. Yeats fell in love with her, immortalizing her in verse.
—Margaret Ward, Dictionary of National Biography, Missing Persons

[Gonne’s] devout faith centred on the ‘holy trinity’ of the people, the land, and the spirit of the nation.
—Karen Steele, Maude Gonne’s Irish Nationalist Writings, 1895-1946

[W]ho can tell / which of her forms has shown her substance right?
—W. B. Yeats
Micheál MacLiammóir, the actor friend

you can work it out

1917 I was only a boy
I had expected

a tall rose I was confronted by
a black orchid

she looked older than she was
unlike many beautiful women

the bones of her face
imperishably beautiful her eyes

would have been so beautiful if they hadn’t had this strange
anger in them like a tigress golden eyes golden hair going grey
deep black whether for her husband whom she didn’t love or for Ireland

I have never made up my mind

Francis Stuart, the son-in-law

she always seemed to sail into a room as I recall it

in long black draperies well I don’t think I spoke much
I was rather overawed

and she had this manner if you’re critical you’d call it effusive

if you like it you’d call it outgoing pretty un-Irish

it was new to me extraordinary activity ceaseless activity

always something dramatic in the air she lived I think very much

you know in a state of semi-excitement it was always, always, always

something of the greatest importance
Imogen Stuart, the granddaughter-in-law

this terribly tall and willowy woman
those long limbs
very old and dilapidated
of course
I have never met
anything before or after
like her

Hilton Edwards, Micheál MacLíammoir’s English lover

a very gracious and charming lady
quite an amazing person
shall I say
obsessed
a lady obsessed
there’s no question
about that
but always
very gracious
I’ve never found anything
any anti-English feeling
personally
a great quality I’ve noticed
in all the Irish people
I’ve met everybody
from politician to gunmen
sometimes both combined
certainly never against me
personally

Seán McBride, the son

she used to read me chunks of Irish history
we had a house at the seaside
lots of friends
from Ireland
a very happy cheerful
kind of life

Louisa Coghlan O’Brien, the IRA secretary to Seán McBride

so I wouldn’t know
when
I first met her
she was always there
Her Small Hands Were Not Beautiful

if you know what I mean

...coming time can say,
‘He shadowed in a glass,
What thing her beauty was.’

[Gonne’s] father was an army officer and her mother died when she was five. The family then moved to Ireland, a country that Gonne adopted as her own.

—Clear

Imogen

she was first and foremost I think an eccentric
strongly pro-German [during both World Wars]
she wasn’t interested in anybody very much only herself
and her own thing you know she loved her grandchildren

but I don’t think she took much personal interest in anybody

Seán

the assassination of the Archduke I remember mother being
very worried
a trainload of dying and wounded arrived
somebody who’d immediately organize a hospital there mother pretty well
running it the wounded and dead unloaded on the quays
I'm a very apolitical person to keep off the subject. I think I sang *God Save the King* to her on one occasion we were discussing how foolish to debase national anthems usually a means of getting the audience out of the house singing them out after every performance I think it was MacLiammoír who pointed out foolish of the Irish to follow suit one should save the national anthem for a significant occasion I found myself singing and suddenly I thought my god, I'm singing “God Save the King” to Maud Gonne MacBride but I must admit she didn’t bat an eyelid.

*Micheál*

always in black I can’t remember her in any other color this cadaverous look about her this unexpectedly light voice you know she spoke like that very pleasant the most beautiful manners I’ve ever known in any lady

*She is foremost of those that I would hear praised.*

Educated privately at home, Gonne was given an unusual amount of freedom at an early age.

—Clear
**Louisa**

They were terribly friendly but they were not exactly on each other's wave length. Madame Markeviecz was the militant type and no soft stuff with her. Madame [Gonne] McBride was so gentle, so thoughtful, so kind. They would both be ascendancy types and I tell you ascendancy types they don't treat each other with any difference only Irish peasant types getting up off their knees as we all were would have any class feeling like that or a necessity to touch the cap or anything like that no, ridiculous.

**Seán**

She had a set income investments you know from her family.

Colonel Gonne died in 1886 and on her twenty-first birthday Maud inherited a substantial income. —Ward

**Francis**

Unlike many mothers her vital interest was not the marriage of her daughter we went off without her knowledge she certainly did disapprove very much so.
then we came back after a time and got married and then of course
there was the black and tan war in which we were all engaged
I remember going round there one day the place had been ransacked
by the troops obscenities had been scrawled
she accepted it the marriage I don’t say we ever got on very well
we had nothing in common whatsoever but I never found any resentment

In 1887 [Gonne] went to France, where she published *L’Irlande Libre (Free Ireland)* and took part in the extreme [French] nationalist Boulangist movement along with her lover, Lucien Millevoye, with whom she had two children, Georges (1890-1891) and Iseult (1894-1954).

—Clear

Francis

I would call her rather a one-tracked mind but not petty
she wasn’t a petty woman she had breadth
emotionally quite a breadth she read articles constantly and newspapers
she must have read at one time quite a lot of French novels
she listened to a lot of music loved Wagner a lot of other music
she wasn’t intellectual her world was neither the world of the artist
nor less of the scientist it was a world I would say of the emotionally
committed she had people around her fanatically committed to groups
somewhat frustrated
this was a sort of compensation
extraordinary
the feeling I got of extraordinary lack
emotional
sensual lack I suppose that is fairly obvious
I mean
her relationship was largely other than sexual
older men
being
or two

They were unable to marry (Millevoye, a Roman Catholic, was separated from his wife) but their ‘passionate alliance’ against the British empire lasted fifteen years.

—Ward

she cried into this ear / ‘Strike me if I shriek.’

Micheál

I didn’t really know her well until about the 1930s she used to come and see us
we had a flat in Dorset
I remember the way she loved
I mean
a low chair

every time she’d mention England
she’d bash her fist

England lived definitely

in the coal cellar Ireland

lived somewhere in the roof she’d say strike a blow for Ireland

and point this long hand up at the ceiling

Hilton

fanatical in her manners
in her whole attitude but

I’m not going to criticize

obviously it was very sincerely felt

somewhat extremely expressed
Back in Ireland in the 1890s, Gonne took part in the on-going land campaign, focusing media attention on hunger and poverty in Donegal. In 1900 she founded Inghinidhe na Héireann (Daughters of Ireland), a nationalist organization that concentrated on the teaching of the Irish language, support for Irish manufacturers, and anti-recruitment activities.

—Clear

**Louisa**

I was 9 or 10
or something when she came to live I'm not quite sure
she was only on the periphery of my life no personal contact with her
at all come in and say hello how do you do and Madam's here and so
Madam had a shell card industry I'm sure you've heard of it
started off to help the poor people women's husbands were in jail
needed some work so she must have run out of poor people to help
or something anyhow she asked my two sisters
to come help her with it I'll tell you one thing
Madam would have nothing to do with the jam factory
wouldn't have been her thing she was artistic no jam
wouldn't have been her thing

1890 [Gonne] refused membership in Celtic Literary Society, National League, and Irish Republican Brotherhood (because of her gender).

—Steele

**But O! twas bitter wrong**
**If he could pass her by**
**With an indifferent eye**
Francis

the black and tan war especially it was really life and death struggle
between armed troops and the occupying power a woman like Maud Gonne
bound to be on the periphery and I should nearly think
rather in the way she did write a lot and spoke a lot
I should imagine her value would have been abroad America France
but how far that was valuable really I don’t know

Her United States lecture tour in 1897 raised the largest sums ever amassed for the [Amnesty Campaign], [which was dedicated to the release of political prisoners in England and Ireland as well as the support of their families].
—Steele

Francis

my impression was the impact was far more on the side of helping the families of prisoners
meetings in O’Connell Street every Sunday with her friend Madame Despard
on the question of prisoners their conditions and there I think she really did have an impact probably even was a thorn in the side of the Free State O’Connell Street had some ruins
they would speak as I recall it on these ruins opposite the Post Office
both of them a great many working class women sons or husbands
perhaps in prison or underground would attend
Mrs. Despard rather strained
very placid had the money which Maud Gonne didn’t really have
very left wing whereas Maud Gonne wasn’t

1897 [Gonne] gives first public open-air speech at socialist meeting organized by [James] Connolly in Dublin.
—Steele

*Though she had young men’s praise and old men’s blame,*
*Among the poor both old and young gave her praise.*

**Micheál**

Mrs. Despard agreed with Maud Gonne in political matters
did a lot of work with her speeches certain things they were known
in what we called Dirty Dublin the lowest spheres of Dublin society
as Maud Gonne Mad and Mrs. Desperate

**Francis**

Maud Gonne wasn’t you see in my judgement
Maud Gonne was not at all to the left she was a right wing nationalist
with Millevoye and the Boulangusts purely right wing her admiration for Hitler
right wing Yeats insofar as Yeats had any outlook well I don’t think
she had any for its own sake any interest in Fascism

*Human, superhuman, a bird’s round eye*
Micheál

she was an extraordinary creature
always reminded me of that terrible line of Yeats’
about the whole sex
probably unfair to them if one can be unfair to them
when one gives an idea to a woman she will turn it into a stone

he filled her with
a romantic love for Ireland she thought of nothing else
she was
the most complete fanatic I have ever met [she’d say]

Willie was so silly
absurdly exaggerating I was very pretty you know

always got my clothes in Paris
the average Irish revolutionary woman is so
dowdy so bad for the cause
I reproached myself for not
patronizing Irish industries at the same time
better to look as well as one could
so I got my clothes in Paris
then my dear son was born thereabout

her mind used to wander a bit

In 1903 Gonne married John MacBride, who had fought with the Boers against the British. Their only child, Seán, was born in 1904, and a year later, they were acrimoniously divorced.

—Clear

It’s certain that fine women eat
A crazy salad with their meat.

Seán

my mother gave me long talks afterwards about my father
it was all praising him you know
Micheál

she had one fabulous story nobody will believe

Could you, could you find that letter from

Mr. Oscar Wilde thanking me for trying to rescue him from prison

I don’t know if you know Mr. Wilde who after all was the son of Speranza why should he languish in an English jail?

why why why she hit the floor came out with a most elaborate sort of Monte Cristo escape story files put into loaves of bread and then they would row him down the river get him into a boat cross the Channel to France Willie inspired her asking her to sign a petition saying “innocent” “wrongly accused”

Willie, Mr. Wilde is not innocent but I will sign a blow against England why should be languish in an English jail? it did no good they took not the faintest notice the plan was to row him down the river and Yeats said in a boat with painted oars and I said Willie, we must be practical and so when I wrote this story about Maud Gonne I took it to her

ah, you’re far too sweet about me like Willie you exaggerate

but dear Micheál that story about poor Mr. Wilde complete and absolute fable you must have dreamed it I never

1908 Gonne’s mystical marriage to Yeats resumes. They become lovers briefly. —Steele
I might have thrown poor words away
And been content to live

Imogen

he was just another dearie one of those dearies she had

Micheál

she was very wonderful really I don't mean
intellectually wonderful her brain stopped too short too suddenly
far too romantic to be a great intellectual her interest in what she called
the occult she nearly got mixed up with Alistair Crowley
you know the black magician

Thereafter, Gonne divided her time between her house in Normandy, where Seán was mainly reared, and Ireland, where she continued to campaign politically, presiding over the foundation of Inghinidhe na Heireann's newspaper, Bean na hÉireann (Woman of Ireland) in 1908.

—Clear

Francis

the one to me really human trait was her fondness for cooking

Micheál

she was blissfully indifferent to anything she ate or drank
or anything at all except clothes full of a rather worn majesty
her clothes were well-worn French exquisite material exquisitely cut
gold ornaments on her hair looked the part of the life always

**Imogen**

I don’t think she had any sense of humor in fact she was a most talented person could act could paint could draw she did the most beautiful flowers so much style such wide interests a renaissance person

**Micheál**

a grand romantic dottiness she’d say wonderful things hunger is the most sacred thing of the world hunger for freedom she believed there was such a thing as freedom which fascinated me because I don’t, you see maybe in heaven the first thing normal people do heterosexuals do if they’re really in love is to bind themselves by bonds the instinct to bind oneself to things she wasn’t free she was sworn to Irish freedom she was no more free than anything than that wretched cat you know

**Hilton**

Micheál and I are so well rehearsed whatever differentiations in the truth of our versions we reconciled these into a consolidated front by now ha ha by sheer rehearsal our versions are now agreed
Micheál

I don't know whether she would be too tall
to be an actress
Sarah Bernhardt she told me encouraged her
I don't think she was lying
I don't think she was a liar at all
I heard her mention Iseult yes with great affection
and Sean when I said wasn't she proud of him or something
she said he must go his own way we all do in the end
no she was strange difficult to describe her so purely a figure
of romance stepped out of “Wind Among the Reeds”

She looked in my heart one day And saw your image was there

Francis

I wouldn't call her a passivist I don't think
she was one of those women who revelled in violence she had nursed
the wounded in Paris during the war I won't say it's an act now Why
would I?
I mean
she did do a certain amount of hovering around beds of the wounded in her house
I don't think she could do much but
she did what she could
1918  Escapes to Ireland in disguise (January)…. Arrested on 19 May on suspicion of being party to a pro-German plot.

—Steele

In 1918 she spent time in Holloway Gaol with Constance Markievicz and Kathleen Clarke; she was also imprisoned during the Civil War of 1922 to 1923, in which she took the Republican (anti-treaty) side.

—Clear

*the minds that I have loved,*

*The sort of beauty that I have approved,*

*Prosper but little*

Seán

she had to promise she wouldn’t go
to Dublin

and they wouldn’t even say she could go back to Paris

she was bent

on getting back to Ireland

and then mother got to taking

Turkish baths for her rheumatism again

you see

and they’re very long

so she was taking a Turkish bath

—I-Square

some place

around there

and they naturally got to know that Turkish baths lasted

for about three hours three or four hours and they’d go

have a drink in the meanwhile you know

and my job was I watched

the Scotland Yard man

I would wake up and make my way

to where the Turkish baths were

watch the Scotland Yard man

going off to the apartment

usually about two hours and so finally

when D-Day came

she came out of the Turkish bath 15 minutes
Her Small Hands Were Not Beautiful

after she’d gone in
in the old fort wall
in the east end of London
and there she was duly 
disguised and all that
as a very old woman
bent up
white hair and very bent up
she was perfectly easy to disguise
she went from London
by Liverpool or some odd way
and then
she came here
she was arrested
sent to Holloway

Josephine was in London with me then
in Woburn Place
and she used to
cook dishes and bring them over
to Holloway Jail

Louisa

I went to work
as Seán’s secretary
for the IRA
she was still active in what we call
the movement
I mean she was going her way about it
not in the IRA as such
but because of Seán she would always know
what was going on
all that kind of thing
and Madam made speeches every Sunday morning
you know
she’d go to O’Connell Street herself and Mrs. Despard

and make speeches
she did it all the time on behalf of the prisoners
there were still political prisoners up to 1932 when DeValera got in
she was against DeValera

she was for DeValera  no, I’d have to give a lot
of thought
to what her feelings were

1922  Gonne joins Peace Committee, converts home to makeshift hospital for injured Republicans and helps establish Women’s Prisoners’ Defense League, serving as Secretary.

—Steele

Francis

she never got up
mornings  I’m speaking now of Roebuck house
where
she was already an old woman
she only got up
at lunch
I remember
going to her room with Iseult
and she would have a bottle
of white wine
she would be in bed reading
articles
or writing  the canaries
would be chattering
singing

As though a sterner eye looked through her eye

Louisa

my recollection of her in those days  she was in bed
she never got up
very early  but she scribbled away
she was always
writing  and Anna her grandchild
I’d never seen her pay much attention
Her Small Hands Were Not Beautiful

to children before

but she adored Anna

and Anna was always

running in and out

coming up and that

and Madame was always there

writing  I’ve never seen her in that she wasn’t

writing

she would lie there  writing, writing, writing

and an awful lot of people

thought she was dead  when she needed people

when she was lying in bed

Hilton and Micheál  they were so good to her

you know

just coming and sitting and talking

with an old lady in bed

Hilton

she knew that Micheál

was an Irish scholar

writer of Irish

lover of Irish

lover of Irish things  I think she accepted me more

because I was a friend

I cannot claim

myself  to have made any effort specifically

for Ireland

I’m a professional  happened to be here

I hope it’s good

for the town and the country  I would be sailing under

mostly false colours

if I said I did  though I think Micheál  one the other hand

had this purpose

she recognized  I was assisting him

rather than

retarding him  she let a little bit  [of] the tar from the brush hand

rub off on me  I was grateful
Micheál

she was disappointed in Yeats I think
because he wouldn’t
he couldn’t
God help him unnatural basis
for a man passionately in love
physically in love
with a woman to be offered friendship instead of
you know somebody looking for Michealangelo given a stone marker

_Willie only interested me in his poetry when it was about Ireland_

she couldn’t accept his love poems
the awful thing she said

_you see, Willie could have done so much more for Ireland_

Yeats suffered deeply

he was miserable about her

Many people know of Gonne only as the inspiration for some of W. B. Yeats’s finest love poems, but though she was fond of “poor Willie,” as she called him, she played a much greater part in his life than he did in hers.

—Clear

O she had not these ways
When all the wild summer was in her gaze

Seán

Yeats

she was fond of him
she had a great respect for him
as a writer a poet
contempt for his political viewpoints
she thought he was looking for too many honors a snob yes

who cowtowed
who liked cowtowing to British aristocracy

he was being ruined
by too much flattery in England
The execution of John MacBride after the 1916 Rising elevated Gonne’s nationalist status as a 1916 widow and enabled her to return to Ireland with Seán.

—Clear

Francis

yes, always, always
the widow’s veil, black
it seems to me
wound round forehead to back
she said it was
her uniform

Louisa

Seán doesn’t laugh so much
but then he’s on a different plane
you know very few traits in common
except for one they believed
their own propaganda
if that means anything to you Madame
never tried to be accepted
by anybody
self taught she hadn’t got much
formal education
but very well-read
from her time in Paris and with Yeats
and all these types but her formal education practically nil I’d think
when she wasn’t writing
she was reading Irish history and James Connolly
and all that

Seán

I got myself tangled up in the IRA and things
she was afraid for me
you know she was always worrying
something would happen to me you see
I remember being in Donegal impressed and frightened at the devotion of the people you walk into a house and people kneel down and kiss her dress and so on

Or else I thought her supernatural

Micheál

she loved to travel with caged birds let them out on the night before the election all that symbolism a romantic fanatic a very beautiful one like so many not only fanatical people Winston Churchill Padraic Pearse half-blood half blood of the enemy Maud Gonne was half English

Louisa

she had this monkey hated everybody but herself stand on your hair she was always talking about I couldn’t have made the name up Dagda and there was a cat called some Irish word always talking about her father Tommy she called him her separations from him and ill treatment from the aunts I don’t think it scarred her in the end but she suffered it was a political marriage regret is too big a word because she’d have Sean as a result she was never going to love anybody except the Millevoye man she had a horror of drink I think this was a result
Her Small Hands Were Not Beautiful

of MacBride’s
she wouldn’t say much against him except this
she would refer to this
horror of drinking oddly enough
for a woman who has
a reputation
a dark class woman she wasn’t
she didn’t seem to have any interest
in sentimental attachments to men
whatever you know
I couldn’t do without male company
there’s so many women in Ireland you know all unattached
and you find yourself going around in a herd of women I don’t care for it
I mean
I must have the cut and thrust of the male mind

Micheál

what Yeats said
in one of his poems
that her small hands were not beautiful
she had beautiful hands
small nervous
quite beautiful hands with those awful brown patches
that I’m getting now
beautifully shaped hands I thought
he thought
more of her beauty
I imagine than I would have done I only knew
one photograph
the period of her great beauty the nineties
the first years of this century she was more boldness and passion and temperament
than any of those actual great beauties
the other pictures all spoiled
I admit by beribboned and befeathered hats
a very, very pretty woman
I couldn’t quite see
this greatest beauty since Helen

Imogen

I always thought Iseult
much more beautiful

Sarah Purser’s portrait of the young Maud is in the National Gallery of Ireland
and a bust of her by Lawrence Campbell stands in the Hugh Lane Gallery.
Neither does justice to her extraordinary beauty.
—Ward

*But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,*
*And loved the sorrows of your changing face.*

Francis

she had a peculiar rather haggard
type of figure and face
not strange but memorable
you looked into her eyes
you never forgot them

Scán

she used to laugh quite a bit
but not a great deal you know
rather serious and rather happy
she’d get angry with traitors
she worked terribly hard always
with the British
he came to the house in the British uniform
and she just let fly
Micheál

I heard her at the corner
off of O'Connell Street
mounted on a wagon on a pile of sugar boxes
fellow rebels!
the Russians have the Czar under lock and key
and I wish to God
we had our own King George
in the same place
and off she was taken
by the British police

A Helen of social welfare dream
Climb on a wagonette to scream.

Seán

she was closely involved
with the celebration of '98
I know this because everywhere I go
not now so much
as 20 years ago
this old man comes up to me

Oh Seán, there's the day your mother
unveiled the statue

Louisa

I was only a little girlie around the place
she was dying took her a long time to die
she wasn't able to get up at all for a long, long time a year
you know
she broke her arm or her hip went into hospital she got pneumonia
and she didn't want to get better
she wanted to die then
and they said no
they couldn’t let her die they had new drugs
the world’s greatest beauty
now she was nothing we used to talk about this naturally
I was never beautiful
how can you take it you’ve had the whole world at your feet there she was lying in bed
people thought she was dead I used to sit with her quite a lot especially towards the end I don’t remember all that much because it was so sad so emotional
she used to talk about Willie the early days the shenanigans they used to be up to taking these drugs and all that they tried everything you know in the way of excitement she’d tell me this thing about leaving her body you know she was full of that stuff not drugs or anything she gave that up very quickly she was afraid she really became afraid induced to leave their bodies
and she’d look at it it might not want to come back going around up there forever she was terribly fond of him she’d smile and say poor Willie but she never loved anybody except this Millevoye she never did love anyone else she had these three children two the one that died when I’m in the coffin she says over in the drawer go over and put your hand in and take out a little pair of booties and put those in the coffin with me don’t tell don’t let anyone else know I had great trouble getting them into the coffin without anybody knowing

And I that have not your faith, how shall I know
That in the blinding light beyond the grave
We’ll find so good a thing as that we have lost?
Seán

she was quite religious  you know
very impressed with
St. Francis of Assisi
we spent about a week
in Assisi
her father
she talked about him a lot
and he would treat her as a grown-up
saying to her  
never be afraid

that created a bond  between them
but she was always telling me
she talked about him quite often
telling me so & so
so & so  so & so

Micheál

an over-tall woman as a rule  is an embarrassment
to herself as to all
and then to the world
Maud Gonne was the only
very tall woman  I’ve ever known
who loved her height
she revelled in it  Yeats did too

Louisa

there’d be no reason of my having  anything of hers
she was never all that nice to me
she was a very benevolent woman
so kind
I don’t remember her
ever saying anything against anybody
unless it was DeValera and the sort
I never heard her  personally
be cross or nasty about anybody
maybe I’m wrong  I don’t know
maybe since time’s gone this far
I can’t remember it
Micheál

her description of meeting Wilde  
_he said I looked like a water lily_  
in the letter he wrote from prison  
thanking me  

your suggestion is  
_most romantic  most kind_  

but I feel too depressed  
in body and mind  
to undertake such strenuous exercise  

as your adventure seems to me to suggest  

it was all that way with her  
it was all so emotional  

she was quite  
quite wonderful  

Markeviecz didn’t seem to mind dirt  

smells the reality of poverty  
would have distressed Maud Gonne  

she was of  
a more delicately aesthetic balance aesthetic nature  

her mistake  
if she made a mistake she was meant really  
to be an artist

Seán

oh my mother and my wife got along  
absolutely they took to each other  

the whole time  
old age she accepted it  

that was that you know  

and there’s nothing you can do about it  
right up to her death  

she was very  
careful about her appearance  

terribly keen on gardening  
pets in the house  

always the birds used to sing  

lots of canaries and dogs  
and ordinary household things like cooking  

you know she was an excellent cook
she used to really enjoy that
    put in quite a lot of work at it
most of her friends were political as well      political and personal
    she was very fond of Connolly
James Connolly      you know
had a big influence on her
    I think she didn’t like
particularly
    she liked Con[stance]
    but she didn’t think much of her pictures

Maud Gonne hated being a ‘prisoner of old age.’
    — Ward

*old bellows full of angry wind*

**Louisa**

    if you have to think about if another person
    laughs or not it must mean they possibly didn’t
there was never any upstage stuff
    on her part but she had this regal bearing

**Micheál**

    she’d throw her head back
    and laugh I can’t remember
at what but I remember her laughing

**Francis**

    I would never complain
about her she treated me with mostly
    in many cases with
kindness
    she was interested
    in gardening
    in collections of plants
In miniature Japanese trees
a collection of birds
I rather think people

certainly in my case who keep pets
make a certain fuss over them
they don’t have close relationships
with other human beings

Louisa

now Madame was funny actually

the only person I heard her say anything against was Stuart
when the second child was born she berated Stuart
for saddling Iseult with another child it was so unlike
Madam

so unlike her she adored Iseult
possibly she was sorry

about the whole thing for Iseult’s sake you know
if anything touched on Iseult
she’d get very cross

Micheál

you see

her own lovely book
Servant of the Queen the astonishing statement
of a charming child
she found in Paris called Iseult a very sweet
dedication to Micheál MacLiamoir

and his great work for Ireland that had to come in
I who was mad about the 1890s oh yes, poor poor Aubrey Beardsley
such a delicate boy such a talent
but she wasn’t really interested
back to Ireland

before you could say knifed you know
Louisa

Iseult was a strange person
she suffered from being illegitimate
and they hid it for a long time
saving Iseult saving Sean
because they said terrible things
about Madame you know
in Irish politics horrible names
they put stories around
she was just a prostitute
one man in her life and she was so faithful to him
but she was always leaving him
coming to Ireland to work for Ireland and just
leaving him

They have spoken against you everywhere,
But weigh this song with the great and their pride;
I made it out of a mouthful of air,
Their children's children shall say they have lied.

Micheál

I came up with floods of Irish how wonderful
he's talking Irish she didn't think it was as important as I did
political freedom as she called it was everything she said
Micheál dear talk about the beauty of old age don't believe a word of it
it's hell endlessly wonderful she was very fond of Hilton
he's so sympathetic he's so charming I keep forgetting
he's an Englishman

Hilton

I have to repeat the word
Her Small Hands Were Not Beautiful

obsession
knowing her particular obsession
her great courtesy and kindness
to me
because I wouldn't have been at all surprised
a person thinking as she does
like she did
so extremely had been a little
frigid towards me
but there was no question of this
in fact it was markedly
the other way

All that sternness amid charm
All that sweetness amid strength

Louisa

she was deeply religious very deeply religious her conversion
to Catholicism was a big thing in her life it went against everything
that was happening all around her with her own people
very religious
very emotional when I think of her
and her dying it was the first time anything like that had happened to me
I shook for days
the priests were there
and I was sitting with her when she
I'd never seen anybody die before

Gonne died at Roebuck House, her Dublin home, 27 April 1953, surrounded by her family.
—Ward

Why, what could she have done, being what she is?

Micheál

I honestly don't feel there's much more I can tell you
Glossary

In July of 1973, Irish studies scholar Conrad Balliet interviewed a number of Maud Gonne's family members, friends, and acquaintances. The largely unpublished transcripts of these interviews now reside in the Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. The poem “Her Small Hands Are Not Beautiful” has been found in the interviews as a sculpture might be found in an intriguing piece of granite. Most words and phrases appear in the poem in the same order as they appeared in the interviews. Each speaker is indicated by name at the first appearance and by his or her relationship to Gonne; through compression, selection, interleaving, and the physical arrangement of lines on the page, the poem distills my sense of the speakers' feelings about Gonne. I have also included commentaries by historians and other scholars as well as quotations from W. B. Yeats's poems. Finally, mine is only one poet’s interpretive, impressionistic act. Many more readings are possible.

Speakers in the Poem

Micheál MacLíammoir, Gonne’s actor friend: Born in London in 1899, Alfred Willmore reinvented himself as a Cork native, adopting an Irish name with the persona, and working as a prominent actor in the Irish theater for 50 years, where he acted in over 300 roles. With his life partner, Hilton Edwards, he founded the Gate Theatre in Dublin in 1928, and he also cofounded the Irish-language theater, An Taibhdhearc, in Galway. He was the author of 13 plays, and he appeared in many films and television drama. At the time of his interview with Balliett, MacLíammoir was 74 years old. He died four years later, in 1978.

Hilton Edwards, another of Gonne’s actor friends: Micheál MacLíammoir’s lover and life partner, Edwards was born in London in 1903. Settling in Dublin, he was an influential actor, director, and producer, and along with MacLíammoir, he founded the Gate Theatre in Dublin in 1928. He directed MacLíammoir in the role that made him internationally famous, that of Oscar Wilde in The Importance of Being Oscar. Edwards was 70 at the time of his interview with Balliett.
Francis Stuart, Gonne’s son-in-law: Married to Gonne’s daughter, Iseult, between 1919 and 1939, Stuart was a novelist born to Ulster Protestant emigrants in Australia in 1902. After the early death of his father, his mother returned with him to Ireland. He was the author of 20 novels, most famously *Black List Section H* (1971), and he became a controversial figure because of his involvement in the 1930s with the Nazis. Stuart was 71 when Balliet interviewed him, and he lived for 97 years, dying in 2000.

Imogen Stuart, Gonne’s granddaughter-in-law: Born in Berlin in 1927, Stuart married Francis and Iseult’s son, Ian, in 1951 and moved to Ireland where she is now well-known as a sculptor. Her work in stone, wood, and metal can be found in many public spaces across Ireland, especially in churches. She currently resides in Dublin, and she was interviewed by Balliet when she was 46.

Seán McBride, Gonne’s son: Born in France in 1904, MacBride remained in France until his father’s execution by the English after the Easter Rising of 1916. He returned to Ireland with Maud Gonne MacBride at twelve and joined the IRA during the 1919-21 War. During his lifetime, he was a Chief of Staff for the IRA, an Irish government minister, and a prominent international figure. Continuing his mother’s work for political prisoners, he was a leader in Amnesty International; he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1974 and the Lenin Peace Prize in 1977. He was 69 when Balliet interviewed him.

Louisa Coghlan O’Brien, a family friend and the IRA secretary to Seán McBride (No photo available)
Raised in the nomadic subculture of the U.S. military, Kathryn Kirkpatrick was born in Columbia, South Carolina, and grew up in the Phillipines, Germany, Texas and the Carolinas. Today she lives with her partner, Will, and their two shelties in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, and she currently holds a dual appointment at Appalachian State University as a Professor in the English Department and the Sustainable Development Department. She has a Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Studies from Emory University, where she received an Academy of American Poets poetry prize. Her poetry collections include *The Body's Horizon* (1996), selected by Alicia Ostriker for the Brockman-Campbell award; *Beyond Reason* (2004), awarded the Roanoke-Chowan Poetry Prize by the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association; *Out of the Garden* (2007), a finalist for the Southern Independent Booksellers Association poetry award; *Unaccountable Weather* (2011); and *Our Held Animal Breath* (2012), selected by Chard DeNiord for the Brockman-Campbell award. As a literary scholar in Irish studies and the environmental humanities, she has published essays on colonialism, post-colonialism, class trauma, eco-feminist poetics, and animal studies. Her edited collection, *Border Crossings: Irish Women Writers and National Identities*, was published by the University of Alabama Press in 2000.