Self-Portraiture and Allegory in the Paintings of Seán Keating, 1915–50

by

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**Abstract**

In 1915, Ireland was on the brink of the revolutionary Easter Rising. By 1949, the nation was officially declared a republic, no longer part of the British Commonwealth. These years flank the creation of five paintings by the Irish artist Seán Keating in which the painter has included his own portrait within the various scenes. These paintings, as allegorical self-portraits, allow for a diachronic construction of an artistic identity based on the visual figure's position *vis-a-vis* the dominant ideology of the period. Keating's self-portraits transition from violent nationalist in *Men of the West* through a period of revolutionary disavowal and a flirtation with socialism in *An Allegory* and *Night's Candles are Burnt Out* respectively. Finally, *Ulysses in Connemara* and *Economic Pressure, or a Bold Peasant Being Destroyed* exhibit the artist in the role of an emigrant forced to leave Ireland due to lack of economic and social opportunities. Utilizing Louis Althusser's theory of art and ideology from *A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre,* this thesis argues that Keating's inclusion of his likeness within these five paintings may be understood as a visual commentary on the shifting and tumultuous ideological state of affairs in Ireland during the first half of the twentieth century.

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Brandi S. Goddard
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**List of Abbreviations**

DMSA: Dublin Metropolitan School of Art

ESB: Electricity Supply Board

DORA: Defence of the Realm Act

GPO: General Post Office

ICA: Irish Citizen's Army

IRA: Irish Republican Army

IRB: Irish Republican Brotherhood

ISA: Ideological State Apparatus

ITGWU: Irish Transportation and General Workers' Union

NGI: National Gallery of Ireland

RDS: Royal Dublin Society

RHA: Royal Hibernian Academy

RSA: Repressive State Apparatus

TCD: Trinity College Dublin

UVF: Ulster Volunteer Force

## Introduction

On Easter Monday, 1916 seven young Irish nationalists signed their names to a document proclaiming the establishment of an Irish Republic. These men then led the occupation of the General Post Office (GPO) in central Dublin.[1] Less than three weeks later, all seven signatories were dead, executed by British Crown forces at Kilmainham Gaol. Though the Easter Rising failed, it spurred a movement which would culminate in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 and the establishment of the Irish Free State. Free from direct British interference for the first time in nearly a millennium, Ireland was left to establish itself politically, economically and socially as an independent nation.

Culturally, Ireland had been struggling to reassert the dominance of traditional Irish values and customs for decades prior to the Easter Rising. The markers of Irish identity had been neglected and forgotten during centuries of English-rule. This thesis examines Ireland during the first half of the twentieth century when the creation of a distinct Irish identity was of paramount concern to the nation; more specifically within the visual arts, five paintings from 1915 to 1950 by the Irish artist Seán Keating (1889-1977) will be analyzed in order to reveal the ways in which the artist made use of the artistic device of allegory to depict Ireland's struggle with its newly established independence. Though Keating's paintings exhibit an evolving picture of Irish affairs, more personally, they are also documentary evidence of Keating's own shifting and multivalent self-identity, expressed through the self-portraits he included in these paintings.

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[1] The signatories were: Éamonn Ceannt, Tom Clarke, James Connolly, Seán MacDermott, Thomas MacDonagh, Padraig Pearse and Joseph Plunkett.

## Background: Ireland and the Artist

Seán Keating was born in the small town of Limerick on 28 September 1889, the same year that saw the downfall, through an adultery scandal, of the larger-than-life Irish nationalist Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-91).[2] This was also the year that future revolutionary James Connolly (1868-1916) deserted the British Army, with which he had been stationed in Ireland for seven years. Connolly returned to Edinburgh, where he grew interested in Socialism and Irish nationalism, ultimately leading him to become one of the leading signatories of the 1916 Republican Declaration.[3] Keating died in 1977, a decade in which more than two thousand people lost their lives in the nationalist conflict known as the *Troubles*.[4] The artist's life and career coincided with a turbulent and oftentimes violent period in Irish history; therefore, it is unsurprising that the motifs of independence, war and the state are common in his *oeuvre*.

The issue of independence in Ireland was closely tied to the Labour Union movement, which became a force in Irish politics in the second decade of the twentieth century. In 1913, when Keating was an art student at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art (DMSA), a generalized lockout occurred which is considered by many scholars to be the

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[2] Parnell was arguably the most influential figure within Irish politics in the nineteenth century. He was the elected president of the national Land League, and fought for reforms to the landlord-tenant situation throughout rural Ireland. He was publicly disgraced when it was revealed he had maintained a years-long relationship with the wife of one of his main supporters. It was also found that he had fathered three of her children.

[3] *James Connolly,* History Learning Site, http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/james_connolly.htm, accessed July 9, 2015.

[4] Simon Rogers, "Deaths in the Northern Ireland Conflict Since 1969,"*The Guardian*, June 10, 2010, http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2010/jun/10/deaths-in-northern-ireland-conflict-data. Of the 2092 deaths indicated in this source between the years 1970-9, 1173, or 56% were civilians.

initiation of the period referred to as the Irish Revolution.[5] Spearheaded by Jim Larkin and the Irish Transportation and General Workers' Union (ITGWU), the 1913 Lockout was a point in Irish history during which the working classes rebelled against both their employers and the state to protest the poor pay and squalid conditions in which they lived.[6] The labour movement, along with the Socialist-Republican writings of Connolly, was a major ideological influence on Keating, who held left-leaning political views. However, these appear only rarely and tacitly within his art and writings, due to the fact that they might have jeopardized his position within the DMSA and the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA).

1913 was also the year that both the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Irish Volunteers militia groups were formed. These paramilitary groups, sympathizers to unionism and republicanism respectively,[7] influenced Keating's views on violence and war in regards the Irish situation, and undoubtedly the artist had these groups in mind when he created his first allegorical self-portrait in 1915, *Men of the West* (fig. 1). The period of 1916-23 was extremely volatile and violent within Ireland; however, these issues are not

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[5] See Joost Augusteijn, ed., *The Irish Revolution: 1913-1923* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

[6] Adrian Grant, *Irish Socialist Republicanism, 1909-36* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), 48-9. It is well-accepted by scholars that Dublin of the early twentieth century was amongst the worst places within Europe to reside. See Mary E. Daly, *Dublin, The Deposed Capital: A Social and Economic History, 1860-1914* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1984).

[7] For clarity, these terms, when used with lower-case initial letters, imply the political associations of the groups. Unionists are those who wish to remain loyal to the British state and for Ireland to remain within the United Kingdom. Republicanism is the movement which sought the independence of Ireland from the United Kingdom and the establishment of a completely separate governmental and economic system. Based on these ideological divisions, various unionist and republican movements and organizations undertook missions and campaigns with varying levels of intrigue and violence.

prevalent in Keating's work from this period.[8] In 1924, *An Allegory* (fig. 2), represents a very different perspective than that depicted in the 1915 self-portrait, one which indicates the destruction and hardship that was wrought on the Irish people by nearly a decade of war. Following the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, Ireland's main areas of focus were independence, modernization, and industrialization. One of the great successes of this period was the Shannon Scheme, a monumental dam-building project which saw the construction of the world's largest hydroelectric dam at Ardnacrusha, near Limerick. Keating spent much time at the construction site visually documenting the progress, and the dam provides the backdrop of his 1928-9 allegorical painting, *Night's Candles Are Burnt Out* (fig. 3).

Keating did not create another allegorical self-portrait until the late 1940s. By mid-century, though Ireland had progressed substantially since the 1920s, there was a noted sense of failure in the air.[9] This pessimism is represented in Keating's final two allegorical self-portraits: *Ulysses in Connemara* (1947-50) (fig. 4) and *Economic Pressure, or a Bold Peasant Being Destroyed* (1949-50) (fig. 5). Stifled by traditionalism and government mismanagement, thousands of citizens had been forced to emigrate from Ireland in search of better opportunities. Though Keating never left Ireland permanently, he was deeply affected by the failure of the Free State government to provide for its citizens in the post-independence period. In these five paintings, the artist's formal decisions, choice of subjects, and a contextual study of the period provide compelling evidence to argue that Keating's

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[8] Éimear O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2013), 63-5. During these years, Keating's paintings consist largely of portraits of his wife May (1895-1965), his friends (such as Harry Clarke), and his own portrait. In 1920 he also received a large commission to paint fourteen images of the Stations of the Cross for Clongowes Wood College.

[9] Richard Killeen, *A Brief History of Ireland: Land, People, History* (London: Robinson/Running Press, 2012), 273-4.

self-portraits, as allegories, function symbolically to reveal an ever-changing perspective on the Irish situation.

## Portraiture in Ireland

In 1872, Henry Doyle, president of the National Gallery of Ireland, petitioned the British government for funds to establish a national portrait gallery similar to that which had been established in London in 1856. Doyle's request was denied by Westminster;[10] however, the perceived necessity for a collection of specifically Irish portraits was deemed important, and Doyle went ahead with his plan. He partitioned a single room in the National Gallery of Ireland (NGI) and filled it with artworks depicting the Irish men and women who had contributed significantly to the nation's political, military or socio-cultural development. Springing from these meagre beginnings, the nation's portrait gallery has now been subsumed within the larger "Irish Collection," which occupies six rooms of the National Gallery in Dublin.[11] Portraiture played a prominent role in the search for, and creation of, a national Irish identity in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

The emphasis placed on portraiture as it relates to twentieth-century Ireland is related to the gentrification of the genre at the Royal Academy in Britain, during the eighteenth century, under artists such as Joshua Reynolds.[12] While the idea of a National Portrait Gallery was first seriously considered in the 1840s and 50s, there were important pre-

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[10] Fintan Cullen, *The Irish Face: Redefining the Irish Portrait* (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 2004), 33.

[11] Sighle Bhreathnach-Lynch, "The Irish Collection in the National Gallery of Ireland," *Éire-Ireland* 33, no. 3/4 (1998), 38.

[12] H. Cliff Morgan, "The Schools of the Royal Academy," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 21, no. 1 (1973), 88. Monarchical patronage of the Academy necessitated that portraiture was emphasized during artistic training. Further, those members of the public who commissioned portraits often wished to enlist artists who had a reputation working with the monarchy and aristocracy.

cursors; the "Worthies of England," was the title ascribed to the many portraits and sculptures of eminent British persons which were housed in important private and public buildings throughout the Empire.[13] The creation of the National Portrait Gallery was essentially the nationalization of a collecting practice which had focused on the visual preservation of those individuals considered most important to English history.[14] Even Thomas Carlyle, who was known to have disdained the visual arts, recognized the importance of galleries of portraiture. Carlyle believed that the public display of portraits of accomplished individuals would influence the social and moral behaviour of those who viewed the portraits.[15]

As part of the Empire, Irish portraits (Irish by artist, sitter, or both) were well-represented in the National Portrait Gallery of London, thus the refusal of funds was framed as a need to retain all the relevant portraits in one centralized location from which the entire populace may benefit and learn. However, the refusal may also relate to increasing Irish resistance to British rule and the beginnings of the revolutionary movement which would result in Irish independence.[16] The Irish also recognized their lack of a cohesive Irish iden-

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[13] Paul Barlow, "The Imagined Hero as Incarnate Sign: Thomas Carlyle and the Mythology of the 'National Portrait" in Victorian Britain," *Art History* 17, no. 4 (1994), 517.

[14] The word "important" is used with caution here, as one issue with all state-run portrait galleries involves the selection of those individuals deemed relevant and renowned enough to deserve immortalization within the institution. The National Portrait Gallery in London held strict selection regulations, including a ten-year period following the death of an individual before their portrait may be acquired by the gallery. Conversely, for the Irish National Gallery, Thomas Bodkin, in 1936, based his acquisitions more leniently and on a case-to-case basis depending on the perceived need for posterity, celebrity of the sitter, and authenticity of the portrait. Cullen, *The Irish Face*, 58.

[15] Barlow, "The Imagined Hero as Incarnate Sign," 523-4.

[16] Cullen, *The Irish Face*, 45-6.

tity, or a distinguishing Irish figure, such as William Shakespeare in England, or George Washington in America, around which to construct their own National Portrait Gallery.[17] For Ireland, portraiture came to represent the desire to create an artistic, and by extension, national identity, for the Irish. This identity was to be distinct from Britain and premised on the nationalistic vision of the 'heroes' of the revolutionary movement.

Cementing the connection between the history of British portraiture and Ireland is the fact that William Orpen, one of Ireland's most celebrated artists, also happened to be the most sought after portraitist for the British elite and aristocracy in the early decades of the twentieth century.[18] Orpen and his contemporary and competitor, John Butler Yeats, were commissioned by Hugh Lane, the Cork born art enthusiast and dealer, to visually document the luminaries of Irish society who were intimately involved with the Irish Cultural Revival of the 1890s-1910s.[19] When the Hugh Lane Gallery opened in Dublin in 1908, it devoted three pages of its catalogue to "Portraits of Contemporary Irishmen and Women."[20] While Orpen resided in London most of his career, and avoided involvement in the Irish revolutionary situation, by the time Lane's gallery opened, the role of art, par-

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[17] Cullen, *The Irish Face*, 51.

[18] Éimear O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation*, 50.

[19] Hugh Lane was responsible for the foundation of the first public (and free) gallery for modern art in the world. He bequeathed a large collection of his own works to the City of Dublin on the condition that a gallery be established for the display of these works. Lane died aboard the *Lusitania* when it was bombed by German U-Boats in May 1915. Due to an unwitnessed codicil in Lane's will added before he began his ill-fated trip to America, there exists a legal dispute over many of the Impressionist paintings owned by Lane. These works, which include paintings by Manet, Renoir and Monet, are now shared between Dublin and the National Gallery in London on a continually rotating basis. See Barbara Dawson, ed., *Hugh Lane: Founder of a Gallery of Modern Art for Ireland* (Dublin: Scala Publishers, 2008).

[20] Cullen, *The Irish Face,* 65.

ticularly Irish national portraiture, was an integral aspect of the ongoing creation of a national identity. It was within this social climate that Seán Keating undertook his career as an artist, one who privileged the representation of the "every-day Irish hero" in his *oeuvre*. While Keating produced portraits of important Irish figures such as Noël Browne, President Cosgrave, and Seán Moylan, he created far more images of the oftentimes unidentified men and women whom he perceived as representing true 'Irish-ness.' These works have simple titles such as *Fireman John Conway, The Tipperary Hurler* and, simply, *Men of Aran*.

## Self-Portraiture and Personal Allegory

At this point a note must be made on the usage of the term self-portrait within this study, particularly since the paintings in question do not operate as self-portraits in the traditional sense of the word. Keating's artistic output certainly contains several examples of self-portraits, that are titled as such; however, the five representations studied here may be more accurately described as 'likenesses,' or in the words of Catherine Sousslof, "the visualized physical aspects of a singular human being that correspond to an empirical reality."[21] In combination with Keating's 'self-portraits,' and photographs of the artist, it is possible to indubitably identify the figure of the artist in the allegorical scenes; but, there is nothing inherent within the compositions themselves which would indicate to an uninitiated viewer that they are indeed seeing the artist. In three of the paintings the artist's face is seen only in profile or is vaguely detailed. In a fourth example, Keating's face is completely obscured and invisible to the viewer. In what ways, then, may these likenesses be studied as self-portraits?

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[21] Catherine M. Sousslof, *The Subject in Art: Portraiture and the Birth of the Modern"* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 6.

Portraiture is often theorized as a tension between the duality of the human body and mind, or the "division between the person as a living body and their true or real self."[22] This dualistic gap may be bridged within the five paintings through Keating's use of allegory, a form of metaphor in which symbols are utilized to represent a hidden, latent or subversive message to the viewer. In the case of Keating's paintings, the combination of likeness and allegory allow these paintings to function as specific and timely iterations of a particular expression of identity or opinion. These self-portraits operate as a visually recognizable entry into the painted scenes, as well as explicate the role that is played by the figure of the artist within each painting. Keating often protested against policies and actions of the British and/or Irish governments, and by identifying himself in particular ways within his self-portraits, he was able to align himself with certain causes without being obviously subversive. When the identifiable likeness of the artist is analyzed alongside the symbolism of the allegorical paintings, it becomes possible to re-construct a self-portrait of the artist.

Each self-portrait will be studied alongside the notion of 'personal allegory.' The symbols imbedded within each representation of the artist will be decoded in order to reveal how these works function as a commentary on the socio-political climate of Ireland during the first half of the twentieth century. Important for this study are the philosophical ideas of the Marxist theorist Louis Althusser, and his writings on *ideology* and *ideological state apparatuses*. This thesis will argue that Keating's art subverts the dominant ideology of Ireland, so it is first necessary to establish precisely what is meant by this term.

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[22] Joanna Woodall, ed, *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 9.

Ideology, as understood by Marx and his followers, is defined as "the system of ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group."[23] The dominant ideologies of a culture are those ideas and representations upon which the rules, norms and mores of a society are based; opposing ideologies are present, but are repressed, subsumed or rejected by the dominant. Ideologies shift, transform and are overthrown over time, but there is no way to be *outside* ideology according to Althusser. Art presents an interesting case however; in *A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre*, Althusser notes that he does not consider art an ideology as such, but instead,

> what art makes us see, and therefore gives to us in the form of *'seeing', 'perceiving'* and *'feeling'* (which is not the form of *knowing*), is the *ideology* from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it *alludes*.[24] (emphasis in original)

Further, Althusser states that

> [artworks] give us a view of the ideology to which their work alludes and with which it is constantly fed, a view which presupposes a *retreat*, an *internal distantiation* from the very ideology from which the [works] emerged. They make us 'perceive' (but not know) in some sense *from the inside*, by an *internal distance*, the very ideology in which they are held.[25] (emphasis in original)

Clearly then, based on Althusser's concept of art and ideology, it is possible to study Keating's self-portraits in a manner which engages with the ideologies within which the paintings were created. The way in which allegory operates within these paintings is strikingly similar to Althusser's definition of art, as it also allows us to see, perceive and feel but not necessarily know the underlying ideologies implicit in the works.

## National Allegory

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[23] Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2014), 253.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

In his article "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," philosopher Fredric Jameson presents the argument that all art created within what he terms the third-world is necessarily political, and therefore representative of national allegory.[26] Jameson argues that within capitalist cultures of the western world there is a radical split between the public and the private spheres. However, within the third world and its art, though this split may appear to also exist, there is always a connection between the private and political. As Jameson states, "*the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*"[27] (italics in original). Thus, if one is to assume that Ireland falls within Jameson's category of the third world it is possible to view Keating's serial self-portraiture as containing this national allegory and representing in microcosmic form the political upheaval and constant fluctuations which occurred in Irish society in the period 1915-50.

Scholarship of the last thirty years has shifted somewhat to combat the traditionally accepted canon of Western art and literature, and to include studies of various marginalized groups and peoples. One outcome of this new discourse is a focus on post-colonial nations, of which Ireland is a complex case. It is often overlooked that the English presence in Ireland was initially by invitation. In the twelfth century English support was brought in to settle a battle between warring chieftains. True colonization was initiated

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[26] Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social* Text 15 (1986). Jameson uses 'third-world' descriptively to explain the various and wide-ranging nations which have 'suffered the experience of colonialism and imperialism'. Though some criticize the totalizing essentialism of using this term to describe all 'third-world' nations, it is useful in a case-study analysis such as will be undertaken here. In this sense, Ireland may be considered a third-world country, even though it is widely considered to be within the developed world.

[27] Jameson, "Third-World Literature," 69.

under Henry VIII and later Oliver Cromwell with the Munster and Ulster Plantation schemes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, respectively.[28] This plantation of settlers in Ireland was encouraged by the passage of legislative acts put in place by the Irish Parliament, which was largely made up of the Old-English, the descendants of those who had been settled in Ireland around the time of the twelfth-century invasion.[29]

Despite this colonial interference and foreign settlement, Ireland remained a relatively sovereign land until 1801 when it was finally subsumed within the United Kingdom. Throughout the centuries of English presence in Ireland there was a notable distance maintained between the 'authentically' Irish Gaelic peoples, the Old English settlers, and the English colonizers. The continuing separation of these ethnic groups signifies that despite constant co-habitation there was a resistance and differential of power. The perceived Anglicization of Ireland and the resulting destruction of traditional Irish culture led to attempts to protect the heritage of the nation, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; this was also the time when Irish artists, including Keating, were exploring artistic expression as a means for conveying, and (re-)constructing Irish identity.

To reiterate Jameson's concept of the 'third-world' in Irish terms, following the successful rejection of English rule achieved during the Anglo-Irish War (1921-2), Ireland was tasked with re-establishing itself politically and culturally; having been saturated for so

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[28] Audrey Horning, *Ireland in the Virginian Sea: Colonialism in the British Atlantic* (Williamsburg, Virginia: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 12. While Ulster (roughly equivalent to today's Northern Ireland) is identified with successful English plantation, the Munster (southernmost province of Ireland) scheme was the initial attempt at colonization, beginning in the late sixteenth century. There is not space in this thesis to present all the evidence for Ireland's post-colonial status; however, the introduction to Horning's study provides an overview of historical and recent sources on the topic.

[29] Horning, *Ireland in the Virginian Sea*, 12.

long by English rule and society it was crucial for Ireland to discover once again what it meant to be Irish. Therefore, the national allegory in this instance is the Irish struggle for cultural (alongside political and economic) sovereignty. This is precisely what may be read in Keating's series of self-portraits.

After studying how the figure of Keating within each of the self-portraits is indicative of a 'personal allegory,' each portrait will also be extended to show correlations between the allegorical depictions of the works, and how they relate to the nationalistic struggle of Ireland leading up to and after independence. Ireland, as a post-colonial nation, is one in which the personal is always also political, and this is clearly evident in Keating's allegorical self-portraits.

## Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into three distinct, but closely related chapters. The intention of this project is to examine Keating's paintings as visually encoded representations of the artist *vis-a-vis* the dominant Irish political and social ideologies of his time. The chapters progress chronologically and each addresses one or two of Keating's allegorical self-portraits. These portraits are analyzed formally as art objects, but are also placed within the historical context of the time. While Keating's artistic intention for these paintings may forever remain unknown, there is a distinct ideological trajectory within the works that can be tracked and analyzed.

## Chapter One: Violence and the Irish Nation: *Men of the West*, 1915

### Introduction

In 1915, Seán Keating created *Men of the West* (fig.1), his first overtly political painting relating to the revolutionary republican movement in Ireland. This work was also the first of five allegorical self-portraits created during the artist's career. *Men of the West* is a painting with a shallow background and few characters, but when the symbolic and contextual elements of the painting are analyzed, the political implications of the work become clear. Within this early painting, Keating implicitly visualizes his political allegiances to the Irish nationalist movement by appropriating a portrait of himself, completed by his teacher Sir William Orpen, and placing this representation among symbolic elements which subvert the dominant (British) ideology from which this portrait originated. Following a thorough formal analysis and historical situation of the painting, this chapter will analyze *Men of the West* on two distinct, but related, planes. Firstly, Keating's self-portrait will be studied as a personal allegory, in which Orpen's representation of his student is contextually and symbolically dislocated in order to represent Keating's counter-ideological perspective on the Irish situation. Secondly, the painting will be studied as a national allegory which reveals how Keating's personal depictions relate to the broader contemporary ideopolitical situation of Ireland. Finally, this chapter will conclude by arguing that Keating's painting also interrupts the standard representation of the ideals of British masculinity, making a bold political statement in line with his nationalistic views.

Measuring 97 cm x 125 cm, this oil on canvas painting depicts three male figures who are shown in three-quarter length view. The figures are nearly life-size and dominate

the viewer's visual field; they work to instil a sense of authority, and perhaps threat. The left figure is identifiable as the artist, while the other two men are each created in the likeness of Keating's brother, Joseph (Joe) Hannan Keating (d. 1960). The centre and right figures both brandish firearms, while the artist holds the Irish tricolour flag. All three men are depicted in the traditional clothing of Connacht, the western province of Ireland; more specifically, the figures resemble inhabitants of Aran, a small collection of islands in the Atlantic ocean off the coast of Galway.[30]

Keating's proficiency with the medium of oil is well-represented within this work. The surface of the painting is expressive while also being highly finished. The artist does not attempt to mask his brushstrokes, such as in the representation of his lower sleeve; however, the artist's use of modelling to create the illusion of folds in the fabric of the men's shirts indicates Keating's aptitude for naturalism. The colour palette chosen by the artist is centred on earth-tones with a naturalistic depiction of the materials and fabrics used within the traditional clothing of the Aran islanders. A deep green and rich gold are used within the Tricolour, drawing attention to the centrality of the flag within the symbolic meaning of the work. The Irish sky, depicted in the background, contains sections of pastel blue which work to ease the tension brought about both by the seriousness of the scene depicted, and the threatening black clouds which indicate an immanent change in the weather conditions. The transforming sky is not only symbolically indicative of the coming of revolutionary change, but it also provides a naturalistic representation of the ever-changing Irish skies. As the naturalist and writer Robert Lloyd Praeger wrote in 1939, "The cloudland is indeed so wonderful a creation that Ireland would be a dull place with-

[30] See below for a full discussion of both the clothing of the peasants of western Ireland, and a discussion of the culture and mythology of the Aran islands.

out it: here it is almost always with us, as vital to our enjoyment as is the landscape itself."[31] The lighting within this painting is even and rational, and easily resembles the realistic effects of the sun on a partially overcast day.

Compositionally, the space within this painting is planar and quite shallow, despite the depiction of a large Irish sky. The background is the least well defined aspect of the painting and it is somewhat difficult to differentiate between what is part of the geographic landscape, such as the rocky hills behind the barrel of the central figure's gun, and what is part of the sky. Again, Praeger states, "the western hills and the clouds which are their legitimate accompaniment are inseparable; the eye is carried upwards from the hilltops for thousands of feet into the infinite blue."[32] Keating seems to have intentionally left certain areas of the background undefined, particularly the area between the artist's left arm and the trousers of the centre figure. There are practical explanations for this lack of definition in the background. Firstly, there is a trend within portraiture which deemphasizes the extraneous elements in order to emphasize the sitter. For instance, Joshua Reynold's *Self Portrait* (1780) and Patrick Tracy's *Portrait of John Trumbull* (1784-86) each provide little more than a blank backdrop or generic clouds for the area behind their subjects. Perhaps a more immediate cause for the background within this painting was a legal prohibition which prevented visual depictions of the Irish landscape, legislation which was outlined in the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA).[33] Put in place at the beginning of the first world war, DORA legislation required that artists seek permission to paint outside of their home re-

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[31] Robert Lloyd Praeger, *The Way That I Went: An Irishman in Ireland* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis and Co, 1939), 4.

[32] Ibid

[33] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 49.

gions, as well as forbade them from depicting accurate representations of the Irish coast and landscape, which may have provided critical information to wartime enemies.[34] Consequently, though Keating's scene is representative of the rugged, unsettled Irish coast, it was likely painted within the confines of his Dublin studio.

This work does not have a definable vanishing point. However, the horizontal of Joe's bent arm, the vertical line of the central rifle, and the diagonal of the flagpole held by Keating all create implied lines which direct the viewer's gaze to come to rest on Keating's eyes. The figure of the artist stares back at the viewer with a domineering gaze and a hardened expression. When viewed *in situ*, the near life-size figures are elevated above the viewer, which adds a distinct sense of threat, accentuating the presence of the weapons within the work.

While this work may function well as a conversation piece or partial Keating family portrait, the real strength of the work comes from its allegorical undertones. Allegory, through the use of imbedded symbols intended to reveal a deeper meaning, allows Keating to insert a political significance within the simple composition. *Men of the West* needs to be read as an Irish call-to-arms against British imperialism and the continuing occupation of Ireland. Allusions to the west of Ireland, the tricolour flag, weaponry, and Joseph Keating's ties to the Irish Republican Brotherhood all indicate that Keating was supportive of the nationalist movement, and was also in favour of the use of violence against the English in the fight for Irish freedom.[35]

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[34] Ibid

[35] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 34.

As an object, this painting has a compelling history. Begun in 1915, this work was not exhibited publicly until 1917. O'Connor claims this may have been due to the seditious nature of the painting, which clearly linked Keating to the violent nationalist movement. However, a simpler reason may be that the annual exhibition at the Royal Hibernian Academy was cancelled in 1916 after the Academy's building on Lower Abbey Street in Dublin was destroyed during the Easter Rising.[36] The tricolour flag was likely not present in the initial composition of the painting. This flag was not a common nationalist symbol until it was appropriated by the Republican movement in 1916; therefore, the flag was almost certainly added to the work later. Keating finally exhibited this painting in 1917, alongside four of his other works.[37]

Keating was notably unreliable and vague within his personal diaries; therefore, it is unclear why he originally produced this painting. It seems possible that he may have composed the painting specifically for reproduction as a poster. Newspaper articles from 1919 indicate that Keating's painting was being reproduced in limited edition poster form as a means to raise funds for the victims and families of those affected by the Easter Rising.[38] As an advertisement in the *Irish Independent* newspaper states, "Special editions strictly lim-

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[36] Royal Hibernian Academy, "History", http://www.rhagallery.ie/about/history/ (accessed July 9, 2015).

[37] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 122-3. Also selected for the 1917 exhibition were *Claude Francis Keating, R.A.M.C*, *The Outlandish Lovers*, *Miss Vicars*, and *The Freezing Wind*.

[38] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 122

ited to a small number of copies signed by the artist. Printed in full colour on finest art paper and mounted in a sunk mount on heavy hand-made paper. Price 10/6…"[39]

The organization responsible for the fundraiser was none other than the National Aid Association, a branch of the Irish Volunteer Organization, which was also linked to the IRB. The posters, of which roughly one thousand were produced, were perceived by the government to be seditious, and when discovered, were confiscated and destroyed.[40]

*Men of the West* was exhibited again in 1922, this time at the Royal Dublin Society (RDS), alongside Keating's paintings *Men of the South* and *On the Run, War of Independence*.[41] All three works are political in nature, but were not perceived to be as controversial. This has more to do with the timing of the exhibition, rather than the content of the works. By 1922, Ireland had achieved independence from England; therefore, depictions of Irish struggles for independence were more broadly acceptable than in the prior period, when Ireland was still governed by English forces.

Formally, *Men of the West* appears to be quite forthright in both composition and content; however, the allegorical symbolism of the work, when analyzed in the context of Ireland's socio-political situation, reveals a much deeper significance regarding the personal identity of Keating in relation to the ideological apparatus of the Irish nation.

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[39] "Modern Irish Art: The Men of the West," *Irish Independent*, January 29, 1919, p 1. According to the British National archives, 10/6 (10 shillings and 6 pence) converts to roughly £11 in today's currency.

[40] O'Connor, *Sean Keating: Contemporary Contexts* (Cork: Crawford Art Gallery, 2012), 13.

[41] *Men of the South* and *On the Run: War of Independence,* both now in the Crawford Gallery collection, each depict scenes from the Anglo-Irish war of 1921 and therefore fall into a similar theme of *Men of the West*. However, *Men of the West* contains the only self-portrait of the artist in this grouping.

## Self-Portraiture and Personal Allegory

*Men of the West* is an intriguing case study of self-portraiture because Keating, rather than constructing his own representation, has instead borrowed his likeness from a portrait created earlier by his art teacher and mentor, Sir William Orpen. Much of the allegorical meaning imbued within Keating's self-portrait therefore derives from the symbolic and contextual location of the artist within the painting, as well as the act of appropriation itself.

William Orpen was an Anglo-Irish artist based in London who was a highly respected and sought-after portrait painter.[42] He held a teaching position at the DMSA, but he would typically only come to Dublin for a few weeks at a time, twice a year, to instruct the students.[43] This is where Keating came to know Orpen, and the two developed a very friendly working relationship which lasted until the latter's death in 1931.[44] The curriculum of the DMSA was quite unstructured in comparison to the RHA school or the London Academy; therefore, lessons at the school were largely based around the interests and particular skills of the instructor.[45] Because of this, rather than being modelled by an overarching DMSA curriculum, many Irish artists of the period 1906-1914 were directly influ-

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[42] Lucy Cotter, "William Orpen: Towards a Minor Self-Portraiture," *Visual Culture in* Britain 13, no. 1 (2012), 25. See also Bruce Arnold, *Orpen: Mirror to an Age* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981).

[43] John Turpin, "The Education of Irish Artists, 1877-1975," *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* 13 (1997), 190.

[44] O'Connor, "Emulation and Legacy: The Master-Pupil Relationship between William Orpen and Seán Keating," in *The Concept of the 'Master' in Art Education in Britain and Ireland, 1770 to the Present* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2013), 170.

[45] Turpin, "The Education of Irish Artists, 1877-1975," 191.

enced by Orpen and his English education and style.[46] It was Orpen who taught Keating the importance of painting every day in order to maintain and hone one's skills as an artist. This partially explains why Keating's *oeuvre* contains so many self-portraits, since the artist is always a present and willing model for himself.[47] Orpen, though born in Ireland, spent the majority of his career working in London and is therefore representative of what may be referred to as an English-style portraiture based on that which was taught and practiced at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

Portraiture in England was based on a long tradition of artists creating commissioned images of royalty and the aristocracy in a style which over time filtered down to the middle classes and wealthy industrialists. Speaking of the 'heavily coded' nature of English portraits, Julie Codell writes,

> …portraits embody negotiations among painters, sitters, traditions, and conventions in rhetorics of dress, gender, race, class, props and settings. *Victorians argued that portraits revealed the sitter's character, a union of external and internal articulated in Victorian phrenology and physiognomy*[48] (emphasis added).

Within the English genre of portraiture there developed a relatively consistent and stable visual language and tradition, developed over centuries, which may be seen, for example, in the seemingly disparate figures of Thomas Hudson's *George II of Great Britain* (1744), Joseph Wright of Derby's *Portrait of Sir Richard Arkwright* (1789-90) and James Sinton Sleator's 1916 *Portrait of William Orpen* (figs. 6-8); a monarch, a wealthy industrialist and

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[46] Ibid. Apart from Keating, other Irish artists trained and influenced by Orpen include Leo Whelan, Mainie Jellett, Patrick Tuohy, Mary Swanzy, James Sleator and Harry Clarke.

[47] Éimear O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 52.

[48] Julie F. Codell, "Victorian Portraits: Re-Tailoring Identities," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 34, no. 5 (2012), 494.

an artist are all depicted with a strikingly similar visual vocabulary which works to accentuate the perceived importance of the figures represented.[49]

William Orpen, as a Royal Academician and artist working within the English art institution, was trained under and influenced by this tradition of portraiture. He received his artistic training at the Slade School in London. This education informed his own teaching methods, which focused on life drawing and painting.[50] However, as an Anglo-Irishman, his paintings sometimes exhibit a tension between the artistic tradition within which he worked and his Irish heritage. Lucy Cotter defines this tension as 'minor self-portraiture,' a concept, derived from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's 'minor literature,' which may also be applied to Keating's self-portrait within *Men of the West*.

Minor art, as the term is used by Cotter, is defined as that which "affect[s] a deterritorialization of the norms of the field from within, through a parodic use of the language of the major canon."[51] According to Cotter, this represents a shift in how Orpen operated within the genre of self-portraiture, by emphasizing "how the socio-cultural origins inform the process and conceptual paradigms of [his] painting."[52] By utilizing artistic traditions dating back to the Old Masters in an unfamiliar and non-traditional manner, Cotter argues that Orpen is actually subverting the very artistic methods which he used.[53] For Keating, it

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[49] The similarities in these paintings include the use of a curtain in the background, a seated pose and the presence of accoutrements of the sitter's profession.

[50] Turpin, "The Education of Irish Artists, 1877-1975," 190.

[51] Cotter, "Orpen: Towards a Minor Self-Portraiture," 28. The term 'deterritorialization' is defined in the New Oxford American Dictionary (2nd edition) as 'the severance of social, political or cultural practices from their native places and populations."

[52] Cotter, "Orpen: Towards a Minor Self-Portraiture," 28.

[53] Ibid.

may be argued that his self-portraiture is also subversive, but rather than simple parody of the major canon, his works comment against the very ideology within which the English genre of portraiture existed. In essence, Keating is using English self-portraiture to encourage the use of violence against the English. The subtle distinctions in these two examples of deterritorialization become clear when *Men of the West* is placed in conversation with two of Orpen's portraits, both of which were created within a few years of Keating's.

In 1909, Orpen created a self-portrait titled *The Man from Aran* (fig. 9). The work shows Orpen dressed in the traditional clothing of the Aran islanders, referenced in the title of the piece. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Aran was intimately associated with the survival of free and uninhibited Irish culture and tradition.[54] Thus, the islands also became highly romanticized during the Celtic Revival, when artists, writers and intellectuals, beginning in the 1880s, sought the de-Anglicization of Ireland through a return to the Celtic and Gaelic roots of those who had been pushed to the far west during Cromwellian settlement. Orpen, in this self-portrait, highlights his Irish heritage; however, the painting lacks any real connection to the islands themselves, and does not include any of the political undertones of Irish romantic nationalism. This is surprising considering the political unrest rampant in Ireland at the time, which Orpen surely would have been exposed to during his time in Dublin. The painting instead seems to fall in line with other self-portraits by the artist which may be described as 'costume-play' portraits, rather than strong indicators of an underlying identification with the role in which he dresses.[55]

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[54] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation*, 58.

[55] Other examples of what I term Orpen's 'costume-play' portraits are *Portrait as Chardin* (1908), *The Dead Ptarmigan* (ca. 1909), and *Leading the Life in the West* (1910).

As Anglo-Irish in descent, Orpen existed as cultural outsider to both English culture, and traditional Irish values. During his career as a celebrated portraitist he seems to have embraced his English roots much more than his Irish heritage, and he led a playboy life-style in London, keeping company with many of the most important figures of British high society.[56] Orpen does not attempt to portray himself as a true Irishman, but instead depicts a scene of theatricality and make-believe. He retains signifiers of his position within English high-society through his majestic poise and perfect outfit. To further cement the theatricality of Orpen as an Irish islander, it should be noted that this painting was created as one of a series of portraits, all of which depicted himself or his students in the guise of Aran Islanders.[57] Orpen himself never visited the Aran Islands, though Keating often insisted he should; as a gift in 1915, Keating brought back an assortment of tweed and wool textiles from Aran which both men, as well as Orpen's wife and children, dressed in and paraded around the artist's studio.[58] Orpen seems to have acknowledged his distance from his Irish roots at this time by choosing to produce an almost identical painting to *The Man From Aran,* this time featuring a man whom he perceived to epitomize true Irishness - Keating. *Man of Aran, Seán Keating* (fig.10) represents Keating in Aran-style clothing amidst a shallow planar space with an undifferentiated, blurry landscape background. By replacing himself with the figure of Keating, Orpen seems to be insisting that Keating is the more authentic *Man of the West* though it lacks any other elements which may indicate a position on the political situation within Ireland. As O'Connor notes, "The painting em-

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[56] Arnold, *Orpen: Mirror to an Age*, 8-9.

[57] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 58. Other works in this series included Margaret Crilley in Aran dress, and a portrait of Grace Gifford called *Young Ireland*. All these works exist apolitically, as argued by O'Connor.

[58] Arnold, *Orpen: Mirror to An Age*, 292.

bodies everything that Keating must have expressed to Orpen about his nationalist sympathies and about his attitude to the Aran Islands."[59]

*K*eating created his *Men of the West* later that same year, and it is clearly evident that the artist's self-portrait is taken almost exactly from Orpen's depiction. Keating has changed his clothes and added a hat to his outfit, but everything else is virtually identical, including the strong domineering gaze towards the viewer. What is interesting about this self-portrait is not *how* Keating visually represents himself, but rather, the act of appropriation itself. By usurping Orpen's representation of Keating, and placing it within the nationalistic context of *Men of the West*, the artist has not only chosen to subvert the ideology of British rule in Ireland by endorsing the nationalistic violence against the state, but he has also co-opted a very British artistic institution, that of portraiture, as epitomized by the work of the celebrated portraitist, Orpen himself. This act of self-representation becomes for Keating a political statement, rather than a mere example of masquerade or costume-play.

Within Orpen's portrait of Keating, there is no overt sense of rebellion or subversion exhibited by the artist. Though Orpen would have been well aware of Keating's nationalistic tendencies, these are also absent from the work. This is even more true of the original representation of Orpen as the 'Man of Aran.' However, as soon as Keating places himself within the *Men of the West* composition, the tone of the work changes - this once neutral portrait becomes imbued with an opinion which contradicts that within which the portrait was originally created, and the genre of British portraiture itself.

In *On Ideology*, Louis Althusser states that ideologies,

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[59] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation*, 58.

> do not correspond to reality and, accordingly, constitute an *illusion*, we also admit that they do make *allusion* to reality and that we need only 'interpret' them to discover the reality of this world beneath the surface of their imaginary representation of it[.][60]

This excerpt is relevant for this study in the ways that it may be applied to Keating's use of allegory within his self-portrait. Keating's self-portrait is an illusion, simply an arrangement of paint on the canvas; however, the artist has imbued his self-representation with a very specific naturalism and symbolism which directly correlates with the artist's identity, and which also allows specific nationalistic traits to be attributed to the figure of the artist. Whereas Orpen's *Man from Aran* is read as costume-play, and his depiction of Keating is an acknowledgment of the young artist's 'Irish-ness,' Keating's self-portrait in *Men of the West* is transformed into a symbolic and very political call-to-arms for the people of Ireland. Through allegory, Keating is both alluding to the dominant (i.e. British) ideology of the period, and also indicating his subversion of that very ideology through the appropriation of his own portrait, and a classically British genre of art.

## National Allegory

For Fredric Jameson, literature (understood by extension to include all forms of artistic expression) created within the third-world is necessarily tied to the political situation of that society.[61] For him, national allegory is the process by which works are, explicitly or sub-textually, imbued with the struggles of the nation's people. Simply stated, in third-world works, the personal is political. Having established that Keating's self-portrait in *Men of the West* evolved out of Orpen's portrait of the artist, it becomes necessary to analyze how this act of appropriation functions within the larger Nationalist movement with which Keating had chosen to identify. In

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[60] Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 181.

[61] Jameson, "Third-World Literature," 69.

1915, the year *Men of the West* was painted, the Easter Rising had not yet occurred, but tensions were high and separatist ideals were being transmitted through groups of radicals and republicans. The DMSA provided a dramatic backdrop of political thinking. Several students left their positions at the school in order to fight with England during WWI.[62] Conversely, other students, such as Willie Pearse and Countess Markievics, held very strong nationalistic beliefs and played pivotal roles in the Easter Rising.[63] Keating was influenced by, and actively engaged with, the nationalist ideals which were propagated at the school, and he felt inspired to create *Men of the West*, his declaration of support for Irish nationalism, even before the Easter Rising brought the violent revolutionary cause into the mainstream.

Within the microcosmic universe of the DMSA in 1915, the dominant ideology that Keating would have been immersed in was a countercultural one - that of Irish Nationalism. In Althusser's terms, Keating was 'interpellated' as a revolutionary nationalist, and this is clearly expressed within *Men of the West*. Interpellation is the way in which subjects are formed by ideology. This involves the 'hailing' of individuals as subjects during which time an individual recognizes that he or she is both a subject and subjected.[64] Subjects are created as such by the interpel-

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[62] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation*, 45.

[63] O'Connor, *Seán Keating in Context: Responses to Culture and Politics in Post-Civil War,* Ireland (Dublin: Carysfort Press Ltd., 2009), 10. Willie Pearse, younger brother of Padraig, was one of the revolutionaries executed following the Easter Rising. Countess (Constance Georgine) Markievics was an Irish politician and nationalist revolutionary who was sentenced to death following her major role in the Rising; however, her sentence was reduced to life in prison based on her gender. She was released in 1917.

[64] Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 188-9. Althusser exemplifies 'hailing' as the recognition which occurs on a street when someone behind you calls your name. This recognition is that it is actually you-yourself that is being hailed. For Althusser, individuals are always already subjects in the same way that a baby is understood to be a human being even before it has been born or seen by its parents.

lation of ideologies; conversely, the function of ideology is precisely this interpellation of subjects who operate within it.

Having been interpellated as a nationalist by his revolutionary surroundings at the DMSA, Keating's paintings during this time were also influenced by his newfound adoration of the west of Ireland, particularly the Aran Islands, which he had first visited with his close friend and fellow art student, Harry Clarke, in 1913. Keating was certainly not the only Irish artist who chose to depict the idyllic and quaint culture of the west, as has been seen; in fact, this had become a very popular motif amongst Irish artists who held beliefs in line with the increasing rise of the romantic nationalistic ideology which had gripped Ireland in the preceding thirty years. In the early years of the twentieth-century, Hugh Lane had declared that artists must work towards the creation of a 'distinctly' Irish form of art.[65] Answering this call, artists such as Keating, Clarke, Paul Henry and Charles Lamb travelled to Connacht and the Aran Islands to depict this so-called hotbed of Irish culture. As Marie Bourke states,

> In turning to the West of Ireland, artists, writers and politicians claimed to have discovered a people and landscape which retained a continuity with its Gaelic past, and also provided a source of new material from which to forge an Irish identity….Artists discovered that by using imagery associated with the West in a new and inventive manner, they were able to develop a body of work that looked distinctly Irish.[66]

Contextually, *Men of the West* and its embedded allegorical symbolism are symptoms of Keating's conversion to the nationalist movement, which was becoming the dominant Irish ideology

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[65] John Mulcahy, "A Gallery for the City: Hugh Lane's Inspiration," *Irish Arts Review* 23, no. 1 (2006), 65.

[66] Marie Bourke, "A Growing Sense of National Identity: Charles Lamb (1893-1964) and the West of Ireland," *History Ireland* 8, no. 1 (2000), 30.

among young, politically-active Irish artists and intellectuals in the years and months leading up to the Easter Rising.

There are only a few other elements within this painting apart from Keating's self-portrait, and these three elements indicate the nationalistic connection between the private and the public that Jameson would identify as 'national allegory': his brother Joe's connection to the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the allusion to the Aran Islands, and the Irish tricolour.

Joseph Hannan Keating, or Joe, was Keating's younger brother and therefore not an unusual choice for model in *Men of the West*. However, as O'Connor notes, Joe was a known member of the Irish Volunteers, and likely also a member of the IRB.[67] The Volunteers were formed in 1913 as a nationalist militia in response to the formation of the unionist Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).[68] Many Irishmen who joined the Volunteers went on to fight and die alongside the British during WWI; however, the more radical amongst them formed the secret military council that would go on to plan and execute the Easter Rising in 1916.[69] The IRB were aided by a small contingent of soldiers known as the Irish Citizen's Army (ICA), which was formed in 1913 to protect strikers during the General Lockout.[70] This army was led by none other than the Socialist Republican James Connolly, a friend of Padraig Pearse and future signatory of the Republican declaration, as well as a major ideological influence on Seán Keating.[71]

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[67] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation, 49*.

[68] Killeen, *A Brief History of Ireland, 242*.

[69] Killeen, *A Brief History of Ireland,* 243.

[70] Killeen, *A Brief History of Ireland,* 244-5.

[71] The Socialist Republican ideals of James Connolly were very influential for the direction of Keating's personal brand of Irish Nationalism. See Chapter Two.

Whether Joe was truly a member of the IRB is irrelevant; what is important here is the perception that he may have been. For Keating to include two representations of his brother indicates a certain level of importance attached to this figure. Keating chose to show Joe twice, when he could have depicted his own portrait three times. Keating himself was not engaged with any militia, and the representation of his brother who likely was may provide a subtle indication of Keating's support of the cause. Though Keating was not militarily active in this period (or at any time in his life), he did join *Craobh an Chéitinnigh*, a branch of *Conrad na Gaeilge*, or the Gaelic League.[72] This organization, founded in 1893, tasked itself with the preservation and renewal of the Irish language, and under its leaders Eoin Mac Néill and Douglas Hyde, worked towards the 'Re-Gaelicization' of Ireland.[73] Keating learned Irish during his time at the DMSA, and would later write articles in this language as an expression of his rejection of English ideology, and a celebration of the traditions and heritage of his homeland. The Gaelic League played a large role in another aspect of *Men of the West* - the focus on rural living in the West of Ireland.

In the 1910s, when Keating created and exhibited *Men of the West*, any mention of the 'west' to an Irish person would immediately have brought to mind the quaint and simple rural area of Connacht, the westernmost of the four Irish provinces. Connacht was the least developed and modernized, but was also perceived as the least infected by English influence and cultural dominance. The Irish language thrived in this area, with the surviving *gaeltacht*, or Irish-speaking areas, all being located in the West. These areas survived as distinctly Irish mainly due to

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[72] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 49. The IRB was quite active within this branch, therefore it became somewhat more militant than other areas of the Gaelic League. It was at a branch meeting that Keating met May, his future wife, in 1916.

[73] Killeen, *A Brief History of Ireland,* 227-8.

Cromwell's plantation demands that the native Gaels, being forcibly removed from their lands in the Northern province of Ulster, go "to Hell or to Connacht."[74] Apart from small holdings of rural farmland, the west was considered too remote and under-modernized to be of any use to the English; therefore, this area remained relatively uninfluenced by the growth of English cultural dominance.

When the Irish nationalists sought to renew the traditional Irish culture to the people, they needed look no further than Connacht, and this area became intimately linked with the Celtic Revival movement. In *Men of the West*, Keating and the other figures are represented wearing the distinctive clothing typical of an Aran farmer or fisherman, which works to both indicate his love and support for the idyllic western Irish province, but also his philosophical support for Connolly's Socialist Republicanism, within which the causes of Nationalism and and the Irish working classes were inextricably linked.

In *Men of the West,* the three men are clothed in *baínín* hats and jackets, an Irish term which translates to un-dyed wool, or the garments made from this wool.[75] They also wear *crios*, a colourful homespun sash which is traditionally woven in the Aran islands and worn over homespun trousers.[76] The clothing of Irish peasants is an understudied field within textile and art history, due to the lack of existing authentic sources. In 2014, the journal *Costume* dedicated an en-

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[74] John Walsh, "Cromwell, Oliver: To Hell or to Connaught," *Irish Cultural Society of the Garden City Area,* http://www.irish-society.org/home/hedgemaster-archives-2/people/cromwell-oliver-to-hell-or-to-connaught.

[75] Sean McMahon and Jo O'Donoghue, eds., "Baínín," *Oxford Reference: Brewer's Dictionary of Irish Phrase and Fable*, http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199916191.001.0001/acref-9780199916191, accessed November 28, 2015.

[76] McMahon and O'Donoghue, eds., "Crios," *Oxford Reference: Brewer's Dictionary of Irish Phrase and Fable.*

tire issue to the analysis of Irish clothing, within which the editor notes the "dearth of sources, both manuscript and object-based, which have been destroyed by war or civil unrest, or physically removed by a governing class based in mainland Britain."[77] Further, as Cally Blackman notes, even in the extant photographs of the peasants of the west, it is clear that their clothing was worn, patched and repaired until it was virtually disintegrated and no longer usable as clothing.[78]

What may be gleaned from the few sources which survive, however, is the fact that due to the popularity of the west as a tourist destination for idealistic nationalist visitors (artists included), peasants along the popular routes would retain traditional clothes and wear them for the visitors and artists, who would oftentimes pay the peasants, providing a source of much-needed income.[79] Clothing very similar to that worn in Keating's painting may be seen in the autochrome photographs of western Irish men taken by Marguerite Mespoulet in 1913.[80] While sources are scarce for the clothing of Irish peasants, what is clear is that this micro-economy, based on the 'dress-up' of the peasants, perpetuated an ideology of the West as being a timeless and idyllic area virtually untouched by time. Keating held a deep regard for the West and visited Aran almost annually from his first visit in 1913, until the death of his wife May in 1965, after which he never again returned to his beloved islands. It may be presumed, however, that when Keating began this painting in 1915, he was likely as influenced by this ideology of the Irish

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[77] Macushla Baudis, "Editorial (2)," *Costume* 48, no. 2 (2014), 140.

[78] Cally Blackman, "Colouring the Claddagh: A Distorted View?" *Costume* 48, no. 2 (2014), 217.

[79] Angela Bourke, "Inner Lives: Creativity and Survival in Irish Rural Life," *Éire-Ireland* 46, nos. 3 and 4 (2011), 8.

[80] Blackman, "Colouring the Claddagh," 228.

peasant as he was by the clothing of the people whom he may have encountered on his occasional sojourns to the west.

The final nationalistically directed symbol in *Men of the West* is the tricolour flag behind Keating. As already mentioned, O'Connor has argued that the flag was a later addition to the work, added after the Easter Rising, during which time the tricolour became synonymous with the revolution and Irish modernity.[81] O'Connor believes, upon close study of the painting, that Keating's left arm originally supported a rifle, which was painted out to include the flag. The history of the flag dates back to 1848, when Thomas Francis Meagher returned with the new design following a trip to Paris where he had interacted with French revolutionaries. Modelled on the French revolutionary flag, Meagher stated, "The white in the centre signifies a lasting truce between the 'Orange' and the 'Green' and I trust beneath its folds the hands of the Irish Protestant and the Irish Catholic may be clasped in heroic brotherhood."[82] The tricolour was not officially the flag of Ireland in 1915, as it had largely fallen into disuse since its introduction by Meagher and the Young Ireland movement. Following the Easter Rising, the flag was adopted by Parliament in 1919, and in 1922 upon creation of the Irish Free State, the Union Jack was lowered from all public buildings, and the tricolour was raised.[83] In 1937 the flag, also known as the 'Sinn Féin' flag, officially entered into the Irish Constitution, with Article 7 stating that "[t]he national flag is the tricolour of green, white and orange."[84] The original composition of the paint-

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[81] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 122-3.

[82]Joseph E. Donovan, "Two Irish Flags: A Comparative Analysis," *Raven* 11 (2004): 75.

[83] Killeen, *A Brief History of Ireland,* 254.

[84] Donovan, "Two Irish Flags," 75.

ing, with Keating brandishing a rifle, may have been more overtly violent and immediately powerful; however, the symbolic inclusion of the Republican tricolour carried a much deeper meaning and intimately connects the figure of Keating with the Nationalist Republican movement.

In "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," Jameson argues that the third-world artist/intellectual is always necessarily also a political figure and revolutionary. This is true of Keating, in certain respects. He was not a soldier, nor did he actively participate in any of the violent events of the Irish Revolution. He did, however, play a great role in the dissemination of the republican ideals, particularly at a time when it was not considered safe to do so.[85] Jameson notes the role of the cultural intellectual, "who is also a political militant, the intellectual who produces both poetry and praxis."[86] Keating, as an artist and an intellectual in colonial and post-colonial Ireland, utilized his specific skill set as an artist to forward the ideas that he so deeply believed, and the ideas that helped shape the future of Ireland as a Free State. *Men of the West* depicts a version of Keating who is prepared to fight for his land, and his particular form of fighting was, as Jameson says, as an intellectual with his (visual) 'poetry and praxis.'

## Constructions of Masculinity

As an overtly political painting, *Men of the West* depicts the rather aggressive figures of Keating and his brother. Inherent within the title and subject matter of this painting is the construction of masculinity in Ireland. The representation of masculinity within this work must be explicated to fully understand how Keating's painted identity represents an ideological break

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[85] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 122-3. O'Connor is surprised that Keating was not arrested for the seditious nature of *Men of the West*, especially his placing of his own image so recognizably central in the image.

[86] Jameson, "Third-World Literature," 75.

with British portraits of the same period. Keating's self-portrait is a celebration of an idealized Irish masculinity centred around ruggedness, strength and a primal connection to the land. Irish masculinity, as represented in Keating's painting, is irreconcilable with the English bourgeois form of masculinity, as represented by Orpen, namely that of the *metropolitan gentleman*. Keating uses masculinity as another way in which to reject the British ideological dominance within Ireland. As an Irishman, the artist could not conform to the restrictive standards of English masculinity; therefore, rather than attempting to fit within this exclusive category, this painting functions as a break from the English standards of masculinity, instead engendering an altogether different masculinity, one based on Irish ideals alone.

In his monograph on Irish masculinity, Joseph Valente notes that masculinity is an ideological category, and one which had been utilized to perpetuate a restrictive form of imperialistic masculine hegemony within Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[87] Valente differentiates between 'masculinity' and 'manliness' within his work. For him, masculinity represents the conventional attributes of a man, such as virility, aggression and physical courage. Manliness is the ability of a man to restrain these base instincts in order to achieve the greater attributes of patience, obedience, forbearance, modesty and a respect for others. He states, "[t]he late Victorian and Edwardian logic of manhood mirrored in reverse the dichotomous stereotype of femininity that was enshrined during the same period."[88] Manliness, as defined by Valente, is a narrowly prescribed acknowledgment of a man's 'animal instincts,' or *thumos,* and the exhibition of self-control required to keep that animality in check. The urban-dwelling upper-class

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[87] Joseph Valente, *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880-1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 2.

[88] Valente, *The Myth of Manliness,* 6.

British gentleman was the only category of man who met the requirements of manliness, and therefore was forwarded as superior to all others.

The constructed nature of British masculinity ensured that only a very small portion of the population was ever able to achieve these ideals, thus allowing the continuation of British imperial hegemony that both explained and allowed the English exertion of power over the colonies. As Valente's 'double bind of Irish Manhood' indicates, it was fundamentally impossible for the Irish to achieve manliness within this ideological construction.[89] For the elite (read: English) metropolitan man, the ideals of manliness were achieved through the training and development of attributes which depended on a fine balance between the restraining of savage expressions of a man's bestial instincts, and ensuring a momentum of action so as not to be construed as passive or submissive, traits associated with Victorian femininity.[90] However, a colonial 'other' such as the Irishman was unable to meet the requirements of manliness. If an Irishman attempted to assert his right to self-determination through violence this was taken as an inability to control the animal instincts. Conversely, too much self-restraint was an indication of passivity and justified the governance and protection of the colony by the English.[91] Irish men and boys, as imperial subjects, were educated in British schools and fought alongside the English in war, but even though they received the same training and education as the English, they were interpellated to understand their own lack and the inherent difference between themselves and their English counterparts. Further, by participating within this ideological framework whereby they were un-

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[89] Valente, *The Myth of Manliness,* 10-11.

[90] Valente, *The Myth of Manliness,* 7-11.

[91] Valente, *The Myth of Manliness,* 10.

able to achieve manliness, the Irish subject recognized and legitimized the very system which excluded him.[92] In a 1912 speech regarding the English education of Irish boys, revolutionary Padraig Pearse stated that the Irish were "not just slaves, but very eunuchs."[93]

When Keating appropriated Orpen's portrait for inclusion for *Men of the West*, he contextually located it within a very different ideological space, one which indicates an altogether different form of masculinity, one more compatible with the revival of 'true' Irish ideals of the west, namely that of the noble peasant farmer. By recognizing the impossibility of an Irishman to meet the requirements of British hegemonic masculinity, Keating not only subverts this ideology, but rejects it altogether. This worked to place the artist squarely within a paradigm shift of the period which sought the creation of a distinctly Irish identity. This ideological break from the dominant ideology is better understood by again comparing Orpen's paintings with Keating's *Men of the West*.

Orpen, though he was of Irish descent, qualified for English masculinity through his Anglo-Saxon heritage and upper-class status within British society. When he paints himself as *Man of Aran*, he is at once acknowledging his mixed heritage, but also maintains a distance from this Irishness by representing English restraint and poise through the use of a theatrical costume. The outfit worn by Orpen is typical of that worn by western Irish peasants in this period; however, his immaculate outfit and the impracticality of his scarf situate him as masquerading as an Irish peasant, rather than identifying as one. The lack of a

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[92] Valente, *The Myth of Manliness,* 19-21.

[93] Padraig Pearse, "The Murder Machine," *CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts*, University College, Cork, http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/E900007-001/, accessed October 15, 2015. This source is a series of articles and talks which were compiled by Pearse in January 1916. The quotation cited was from a lecture Pearse gave at the Dublin Mansion House in 1912.

realistic depiction of the landscape also indicates that Orpen was unconcerned with representing any real connection with the Aran Islands, and allowed the background to operate as a theatrical backdrop. Orpen's staged pose, his metropolitan outfit and the confidence and composure with which he confronts the viewer all exhibit aspects of British manliness, a category with which he was able to identify.

When Orpen depicted Keating as the *Man of Aran*, the representation is ever-so-slightly different, for practical and ideological purposes. Keating is draped in much the same clothing as was Orpen; however, the extraneous flair has been removed and Keating is shown to be more rugged, and perhaps even dirty. Realistically, this may have been an accurate depiction of the artist, as it is well-documented that Keating lived in relative poverty during art school and oftentimes hunted rabbits and other small game in order to feed himself.[94] Without implying that Orpen felt himself racially superior to Keating, it may be surmised from these two works that there was a clear class distinction between the esteemed artist and his student. Orpen shows himself dignifiedly posed and bathed in light, whereas Keating is slumped and resides in shadow, somewhat blending in with the gloominess of the undifferentiated painted background.

Just as the ideology of British masculinity excluded the colonized other, it also did not apply to the lower classes of society. This exclusion mirrors the relationship between Orpen, the wealthy, successful Englishman, and Keating who often struggled to provide food for himself and his family. As Keating once said, "it was typical of the man who had plenty of money and plenty of friends to forget to arrange that I should have some."[95] This

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[94] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 44.

[95] Ibid.

disparity between the thriving metropolitan artist and the struggling art student mirrors socio-cultural variations seen in two examples of Luke Fildes' paintings from the late-nineteenth century. *The Doctor* (1890) (fig. 11) and *The Widower* (1876) (fig. 12) both depict an interior scene taken from a lower class home, and each clearly represents the stark poverty of the families whom reside in these homes.[96] The first painting depicts a doctor who has come to treat an ill child; the posture and composure, as well as the light focused on the doctor, indicate that he is a visitor to this home, one who does not belong to this setting. Conversely, though the *Widower* appears to take on the same caring role as the doctor, he clearly belongs within this scene of poverty. The sparse lighting, instead of highlighting his actions, partially obscures the figure who lacks the stoic pose of the doctor. The man is slumped and somewhat lost within the clothes and work boots which indicate his status as a working-class labourer. The heroism innate within *The Doctor* is absent in *The Widower*, and the hulking figure of the man is somewhat emasculated in comparison to the doctor, particularly in the way he has been depicted holding a child, a domain largely reserved for women. British portraiture, including the work of Orpen, is rife with differentiations such as this, where the English gentlemen is paraded as the ideal specimen, and the lower classes and colonial others are depicted as lesser and disadvantaged. Keating, as a working-class Irishman, did not qualify for this category of English masculinity and *Men of the West* operates as not simply a rejection of, but a complete disavowal and disregard for the exclusive ideological classification.

Keating's appropriation of Orpen's portrait located within the Irish nationalistic context works to construct a form of distinctly Irish masculinity which is intimately tied with

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[96] Jongwoo Jeremy Kim, *Painted Men in Britain, 1868-1918: Royal Academicians and Masculinities* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2012), 58-60.

the republican movement. As Catherine Nash notes, the crisis of Irish national identity was also a crisis of masculinity prompted by colonization and modernization.[97] Nash studies how Standish O'Grady, a Protestant-Irish author and historian writing in the first decade of the twentieth century, attempted to address this crisis of identity and gender through a return to the rural by establishing agricultural communes. O'Grady believed that the work associated with urban settings, particularly clerk jobs, emasculated Irishmen. He perceived urban modernity to be "…materialistic, spiritless…feminine, frivolous and sexually disordered."[98] O'Grady's solution to the masculinity crisis was a return to manual labour and the heroic nature of self-reliance associated with living off the land.[99] Though O'Grady disagreed with the Celtic Revivalists that this rural renaissance should take place in the west of Ireland, he did fall in line with the belief that Irish masculinity was intimately tied to the idealized image of the hardworking rural labourer, with a primordial attachment to the land dating back to time immemorial.

Keating's self-portrait in *Men of the West* evolved directly from Orpen's *Man of Aran, Seán Keating*. However, he has also intentionally imbued his rugged figure with a heroic pose which ennobles the rural lower classes, rather than continuing within the British tradition which denigrated and refused them the status of manhood. Keating's *Men of the West* comes to symbolize an authentic and heroic nationalistic masculinity epitomized by the virtues of self-discipline, idealism, exploration, self-sacrifice and natural

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[97] Catherine Nash, "Men Again: Irish Masculinity, Nature, and Nationhood in Early Twentieth Century," *Ecumene* 3, no. 4 (1996): 431.

[98] Nash, "Men Again," 436.

[99] Nash, "Men Again," 443.

leadership.[100] Not only does Keating's form of masculinity represent an ideological break with the British 'manliness' which excluded the Irishman, it also indicates his belief that this masculinity is imperative for the actualization of a real political break with England. Within this painting, the rifles, Joe Keating's status within the IRB and the tricolour flag all indicate an acceptance of, and call to, violence. Expressions of violence within the paradigm of British masculinity nullifies any claim to true manliness, but within the new ideological framework of Keating's masculinity, violence is instead a sign of hyper-masculinity that is required for the emancipation of the Irish.

Self-portraiture is an intimate act whereby the artist constructs a visual representation of his own identity. *Men of the West* is a compelling case in that the artist's self-portrait is taken directly from another artist. By utilizing this portrait, by an upper-class proper English 'gentleman,' Keating is able to subvert the values of the dominant British ideology and instead locate himself within the Irish Nationalist movement. The relative simplicity of this composition becomes more complicated when attempting to reconcile the Irishman's struggle with British imperialism and the search for Irish identity during the initial years of the Irish Revolutionary period. Rather than mindlessly copying the work of his master, Keating was able to both reject and reconstruct the ideological implications of traditional portraiture through the appropriation of Orpen's *Man of Aran*.

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[100] Joseph Nugent, "The Sword and the Prayerbook: Ideals of Authentic Irish Manliness," *Victorian Studies* 50, no. 4 (2008), 592.

**Chapter Two: Free State Beginnings**

In 1915, when Seán Keating painted *Men of the West*, his nationalistic tendencies were clear to the viewer; he believed that violence would be necessary and inevitable in the fight for Irish independence against the English colonizers. However, by 1924 Keating's opinion had changed. A decade of violence and political instability had transformed the aggressive nationalistic soldier of *Men of the West* into the disheveled shadow of a man seen slumped against a tree in *An Allegory* (fig. 2). Ireland had achieved its independence, but not without huge costs. The nation, which can be understood as symbolized by the figure of Keating, had been overwhelmed and all but destroyed. However, as Ireland began to rebuild from the war period and establish itself as an independent nation, conditions improved and the form of the Free State government began to take shape. In 1928, Keating began work on *Night's Candles Are Burnt Out* (fig. 3), another large-scale allegorical painting which contains yet another self-portrait. This work embodies a much different tone and feeling than *An Allegory*, as Keating's self-portrait, seen on the far right with his family, beckons towards a massive industrial project which represents the modernization of Ireland, and a new chance for hope.

None of the self-portraits within this study are described as such by Keating himself, though they are identifiable likenesses of the artist.[101] Whereas the previous chapter differentiated between the personal allegory of the self-portrait, and the implied symbolism of the painting relative to the national context, this chapter will be arranged slightly differently, as the self-portraits within these 1920s paintings are much more deeply imbedded with-

[101] Keating's *oeuvre* does contain several examples of explicit self-portraiture, such as *Early Self Portrait* (1907-11), *Self-Portrait Wearing a Hat* (ca. 1930s) and *Self-Portrait in a Bainín Hat* (ca. 1937-40), all now in private collections.

in an allegorical scene than was the figure of Keating within *Men of the West*. Keating's self-portraits in this chapter will be analyzed as synecdoches within which the body of the artist represents the status of Ireland. Synecdoche is a term from literary theory which describes a trope in which a part is used to describe the whole, or vice versa. Synecdoche may be applied usefully to Keating's paintings in question in order to describe how the symbolism imbued within the figure of the artist represents a broader comment on the nation. The figure of Keating represents the artist's personal ideology, and this ideology is the key to understanding the critical undertones within the paintings. These portraits indicate aspects of Keating's personality and his own opinions, but because the personal and political are so innately intertwined within these works it is more meaningful to study the personal elements in combination with the representation of the national allegory intimated by the figurative body of the artist.[102]

The Easter Rising in 1916 was labelled as the 'Sinn Féin Rebellion,' despite the fact that the political party had little to do with the insurrection itself.[103] The party was founded by Arthur Griffith, a politician and writer, in 1905 and grew out of a proposed policy of the same name.[104] The initial policy, put forward by Griffith, was based on a theory that Ireland should elect and be represented by its own government, but remain linked with Great Britain through the monarchy; however, the party operated on the belief that Ireland owed

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[102] See previous chapter for a thorough description of Jameson's 'national allegory,' and how the personal representation relates specifically to the political situation of Ireland as a third-world nation.

[103] Joseph E.A. Connell Jr. "Arthur Griffith and the Development of Sinn Féin," *History Ireland* 19, no. 4 (2011), 66.

[104] The name Sinn Féin is based on the Gaelic League's slogan *Sinn Féin, sinn féin amháin,* which translates to 'ourselves, ourselves alone.'

nothing to England.[105] The party, upon its foundation, was quickly infiltrated by the IRB who viewed it as an ideal platform for their republican aims. It was only the extreme radicals within the IRB segment of Sinn Féin that were responsible for the Rising; however, following the excessively harsh punishment and execution of those involved, the Sinn Féin party as a whole received an upsurge in support. This reinvigorated the party's political ambitions, and under the new leadership of Éamon de Valera, the "most senior surviving garrison commander from the rising," Sinn Féin became the dominant party within Irish politics.[106]

Following an election at the end of 1918, Sinn Féin established *Dáil Éireann*, or the Assembly of Ireland, as the main political body.[107] Also at this time, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) was officially formed from the former Irish Volunteers, and the shooting death of two Royal Irish Constabulary officers, Patrick MacDonnell and James O'Connell, initiated the Irish War of Independence. This war was not officially sanctioned and organized; rather, it was made up of a series of guerrilla ambushes and retaliations between the IRA and the British *Black and Tans*. These latter soldiers were largely drawn from the physically and psychologically damaged ranks of English WWI veterans, and were notoriously violent and "often drunk."[108] By 1921 the war had reached a violent stalemate, rather than a resolution. Sinn Féin sent a delegation, led by Michael Collins, to Westminster to negotiate

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[105] Connell, "Arthur Griffith and the Development of Sinn Féin," 66.

[106] Killeen, *A Brief History of Ireland,* 249.

[107] Killeen, *A Brief History of Ireland,* 251. Sinn Féin were abstentionists - they refused to take their seats within Westminster in London due to the required Oath of Allegiance to the Queen.

[108] Killeen, *A Brief History of Ireland,* 251. The Black and Tans were responsible for the wholesale burnings of both Cork City and the Dublin suburb of Balbriggan.

an end to the War of Independence, as it has since come to be known.[109] The result of these talks was the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which allowed for the re-creation of a (legally recognized) parliament in Dublin, as well as the establishment of Northern Ireland. The Irish Free State, as the south was known, became a reality in December 1922. However, the terms of the Treaty, which was approved by only a small majority, would spark an even greater level of violence between Pro- and Anti-Treaty forces over the terms, particularly the required Oath of Allegiance.

The Irish Civil War (28 June 1922 - 24 May 1923), though less than twelve months in length, was far bloodier and more destructive than the War of Independence. Ultimately, the Pro-Treaty wing of Sinn Féin, known as Cumann na nGaedheal, took control of the Dáil as the first government of the Irish Free State. This government initiated a period of rebuilding and modernization which was desperately needed after the destruction wrought by nearly a decade of Irish fighting, both against the British and internally against one another. It was this low point in the history of Irish society which Keating represents in his second large-scale allegorical representation, aptly titled *An Allegory*, which he completed in 1924.

## *An Allegory*: Establishment and Exhaustion

*A*s indicated by the title, this is not a typical narrative painted scene, but rather operates on both a literal and a symbolic level. Literally, the painting depicts a small group of people who have gathered on the lawn of an Irish manor home; the figures appear withdrawn and introspective with the only action being the digging of the two men on the

[109] Michael Seamus Collins (1890-1922) participated in the Easter Rising, and was imprisoned in Wales. When Sinn Féin gained control of the government, Collins was elected as Minister of Finance. He was assassinated on 22 August 1922.

right. However, when understood to be an allegorical scene, the conglomeration of several disparate symbolic entities work together to provide a complex construction of Ireland in the period immediately following the civil war.

At 102 cm by 130 cm, the figures within the work are not quite life-size; however, the scene still affects the viewer with its solemnity and sense of isolation. The foreground of the composition is populated by six figures, all of whom play an important role in the construction of the work's meaning. First, the central figure, and lowest in the composition is the identifiable figure of Keating who has slumped against a tree and gazes listlessly out at the viewer. To Keating's left are two soldiers from opposite sides of the civil war, each working independently to dig a grave for the tricolour-draped coffin which lies behind them. The two figures on the far left of the composition represent the clergy and government administration, both crucial elements of the Free State government which have been relegated to the periphery. The immediate foreground is visually dominated by the mother and child figures who, with the figure of Keating, depict a complete family unit.[110] The mother, father and infant create an implied pyramidal form, signifying the strength and foundational nature of the family. Further, the mother, not the father, sits atop the family form, signifying the importance of the mother, and by extension, women, for the continuation of the Irish people.[111] Conversely, the father may be perceived as being powerless and defeated, indicating that Irishmen have been complicit in the destruction of the nation. The

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[110] Keating often used his wife May as a model for his paintings, and photographs exist of her (and sometimes their children) posing for scenes which are later incorporated into paintings. This is true of the mother and child scene from *An Allegory* as well as the family unit from *Night's Candles Are Burnt* Out. O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 88-90.

[111] See below for further discussion of the role of women in both Irish society and within Keating's paintings.

central area of the composition holds a large, gnarly tree known locally as a Scot's Pine, a highly symbolic tree associated with Irish nationalism and the allegorical and geographical history of the nation.[112] Finally, the background contains the bombed-out remnants of a 'Big House,' a representation of the type of home occupied by the members of the Protestant Ascendancy within Ireland.[113] Through the title of this work, and the inclusion of the various symbolic elements, Keating's painting may be read and deciphered as a commentary on the state of affairs of Ireland shortly after the creation of the Free State government.

Formally, this painting is in line with Keating's *oeuvre* as a whole. He continues to paint in a very traditional, academic style which is naturalistic yet also quite staged. The artist's brushwork has been concealed, with the exception of the meadowy area in the mid-ground, which is more painterly than is typical of Keating's works. The colour palette is quite varied but extremely subdued, ranging from the deep browns and blacks of the figures' clothing to the pure white of the infant's blanket. However, overall, there is a notable tendency towards green and golden yellow hues which echo the colours of the draped tricolour flag, and are also representative of the infancy of the Irish Free State.

Light is naturally dispersed within this painting, and appears to come from the centre right. The light shines most prominently on the figures of the central family unit and the sturdy trunk of the Scot's Pine, while leaving the peripheral figures in subtle shadow. This illumination provides a visual hierarchy, perhaps indicative of Keating's perceived impor-

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[112] The tree in the painting was identified as a Scot's Pine by the Tree Council of Ireland. Kay Hartigan, email message to the author, February 18, 2015. See also *Native Species: Scot's Pine*, The Tree Council of Ireland, http://www.treecouncil.ie.

[113] James S. Donnelly Jr. "Big House Burnings in County Cork during the Irish Revolution," *Éire-Ireland* 47, nos. 3 and 4 (2012), 141.

tance of the familial unit and future generations. Light also creates volume within this image, particularly in the folds of fabrics, indicating Keating's aptitude as an artist. As a whole, the painting is not quite cohesive; instead, there is a subtle awkwardness in the positioning of the figures which leads to a sense of disjointedness and isolation. No one in the painting other than the mother, who nurses her child, seems to be engaged in interaction with the others. The figures in the foreground form a pattern of a smooth undulating wave, with the figure of Keating at the lowest point of the wave. As I will argue, the figure of Keating may be understood as a synecdochic allusion to the Irish nation, which lies broken and exhausted following a decade of violence.

This work is considered to be one of Keating's greatest masterpieces and is also a jewel of the National Gallery of Ireland (NGI) where it now resides. However, when the work was first exhibited at the 1925 Royal Hibernian Academy annual exhibition, it drew mixed reviews. Thomas Bodkin (1887-1961) went as far as to refer to the work as a "problem painting," criticizing the "harsh palette" and describing the work as "enigmatic."[114] Despite this criticism, the painting was deemed successful enough to be taken on a tour of the United States where it was displayed at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh as well as in St. Louis. The painting appears to have been acquired by Sir Alec Martin, an Irish art enthusiast, in the late 1920s and kept in his private collection until he presented it to the Friends of the National Collections of Ireland in 1952. After this point, the painting was

[114] Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch, "Crossing the Rubicon: Seán Keating's *An Allegory*," *New Hibernia Review* 12, no. 2 (2008), 121. Bodkin was an Irish barrister and art critic who was deeply interested in the status of the arts within Ireland. He was elected as the director of the National Gallery of Ireland in 1927.

shown in a retrospective exhibition of Keating's works at the RHA in 1963, as well as being shown in Moscow in 2007.[115]

When Keating created self-portraits, he depicted himself realistically and naturally. The artist did not significantly vary his portraits physically; in fact, when he appears he is always easily identifiable. Keating sported a beard for his entire life, and he is oftentimes shown wearing a hat or cap. What does differ in these representations, however, is what may be called the circumstances of the self-portrait. Keating placed his likeness within very complex nationalistic scenes which work to indicate his shifting allegiances and loyalties. As covered previously, *Men of the West* depicts Keating as a virile, aggressive soldier who advocates violence and the tactics of the paramilitary IRB in the quest for Irish sovereignty. The figure of Keating dominates the composition, and towers over the viewer. Following the realization of such violence during the revolutionary period, the figure of the artist appears again, nine years later, in *An Allegory*. By this time, the artist appears frail and old beyond his years. Keating was only thirty-five when he painted this work, but seems to have intentionally depicted himself to be much older. Sighle Breathnach-Lynch argues that this allows the artist to visualize the "deep personal effect on him of the civil war."[116] She goes on to state that Keating's use of the academic allegorical painting to represent personal opinions on the current state of Irish affairs was somewhat unorthodox for the period. Keating, as the deflated spent figure crumpled at the base of the tree, reveals his personal condemnation of the warfare which has nearly destroyed Ireland in the decade since he initially called for the use of violence. *An Allegory* stands as a reversal of

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[115] *Online Collection*, National Gallery of Ireland, http://www.nationalgallery.ie, accessed October 4, 2015.

[116] Bhreathnach-Lynch, "Crossing the Rubicon," 123.

the allegorical meaning imbued within *Men of the West*. This reversal represents not a contradiction between the two works, but rather the culmination of lived experience which has altered his perceptions. The impetuous naiveté of youth is replaced by disillusionment with the Republican ideals.

The figure of Keating is a fitting entry into the composition, as he is both identifiable and centrally located within the scene. The portrait of the artist matches the visual likenesses of his other self-portraits, as well as photographs taken throughout his life; however, this particular portrait shows a weathered man who has been deeply affected by the events of the war period. The drooping lines of his face intimate a weariness that far exceeds the years of his life. The artist has been stripped of the youth and bravado which he embodied in *Men of the West*, and instead he has chosen to represent himself as a visual evocation of the self-imposed destruction of the Irish nation.

Keating, apart from being an artist, was also a prolific writer. He published articles and presented radio broadcasts frequently throughout his later career.[117] He wrote 'The Slave Mind of Ireland,' the first of many articles, in the same year that *An Allegory* was painted. This work was published within a compilation titled *The Voice of Ireland: A Survey of the Race and Nation from All Angles by the Foremost Leaders at Home and Abroad,* which Frances Flanagan refers to as being (at the time of publication) "the major official book of recent Irish history…includ[ing] revolutionary reflections in the form of short

[117] A selection of Keating's other articles and broadcasts include "A Talk on Art" (1931), "Snobbery in Art" (1931), "Art as a Career" (1931), "Art Does Not Get a Chance in Ireland!" (1936) and "A Spanking for Intellectuals" (1940).

memoirs and articles from both civil war factions, without label of explicit distinction."[118] Keating's article provides a searing condemnation of the attitude of the Irish people who had perpetuated the destruction of the nation during the civil war. This article works as the literary equivalent of the visual *An Allegory* and provides further evidence of the artist's shifting ideology in the period between 1915 and 1924.

In "The Slave Mind of Ireland," Keating attacks the collective inaction and self-excusing nature of the Irish people which he argues has led to the continuing colonization by the English despite the recent achievement of freedom. He defines a slave as "a man who lives in permanent subjection to men, or circumstances, or institutions which he despises."[119] It can be effectively argued that the collective "Irish slave mind" is precisely that which is visualized by Keating in the figure of himself in *An Allegory*. The slumped man is an allegorical slave to the failed revolution which had seemed to hold much promise for the Irish citizens. Further, the man is also slave to the Free State government, which to Keating appears to be nothing more than the same hierarchically-dominated institution as English rule, but with different faces, now Irish, filling the various roles.[120] The inactivity of Keating within the painting mirrors the "average decent Irishman' who is a "disappointed perfectionist, who is either always going to do things right next week, or who

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[118] Frances Flanagan, *Remembering the Irish Revolution: Dissent, Culture and Nationalism in the Irish Free State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 12. Publication information for the original: William George Fitz-Gerald, ed. *The Voice of Ireland: A Survey of the Race and Nation from All Angles* (Dublin: Virtue and Co., 1924).

[119] Seán Keating, "The Slave Mind of Ireland," in *Seán Keating in Context: Responses to Culture and Politics in Post-Civil War Ireland*, ed. Éimear O'Connor (Dublin, Carysfort Press, 2009), 71.

[120] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2013), 139.

has definitely, although subconsciously, decided that it is a 'rotten world anyhow'".[121]

When speaking of national allegories, Fredric Jameson acknowledges the difficulties faced by post-colonial nations, such as the Irish Free State in the 1920s. He states,

> [I]t [is] not difficult to identify an adversary who [speaks] another language and [wears] the visible trappings of colonial occupation. When those are replaced by your own people, the connections to external controlling forces are much more difficult to represent.[122]

Here Jameson touches on an aspect, which may be called the 'internal enemy,' that has relevance for an analysis of *An Allegory*. Keating, as representative of the Irish State, is not shown triumphantly celebrating the defeat of the English within Ireland; instead, the figure appears deflated. So much time and effort had been invested into the colonial wars that Ireland was left spent and isolated without the necessary will or skills required for establishment of the Free State. Keating, in this work, is commenting on the newly independent Ireland and criticizing it for its lack of independence in practical matters.

Compellingly, Keating has chosen the backdrop of the painting to be the estate of an Irish "Big House," a remnant of the colonial past.[123] The manor itself is represented in a state of disrepair and destruction. Much of the Protestant Ascendancy, which the Big House symbolically represents, fled Ireland early in the revolutionary period; however, they maintained the lands and continued to commercially farm the property, as well as

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[121] Keating, "The Slave Mind of Ireland," 71.

[122] Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature," 81.

[123] The Big Houses, as they are called by the Irish, were occupied by the landed aristocracy, who were typically English Protestants. The settlers had been planted on the land at the expense of the Irish Catholics who were pushed off the land and into the far west province of Connacht.

hold high positions within Ireland under the British Crown.[124] During the Civil War, nearly two hundred Big Houses were burnt by the IRA and other rebel groups.[125] The backdrop for Keating's painting is a very realistic depiction of an abandoned estate which would have been a common sight in the lands surrounding Dublin in 1924. This Protestant Ascendancy estate can be understood, in combination with "Slave Mind," as indicating Keating's figure as resigning himself to the current state of things. As he says, "[w]e find an excuse for slackness in the general rottenness of things…"[126] Ireland had defeated the English colonizers through brute force, but rather than taking pride in the conquest, the nation has instead collapsed amongst the rubble of the old order of things.

The tree on which Keating leans, a Scot's Pine, has traditional associations with Irish mythology and nationalism reaching back to the ancient times, as it is the only pine native to Ireland.[127] According to the Tree Council of Ireland, the Scot's Pine was nearly wiped out in Ireland during the wholesale clearing of land for agriculture; however, the species was re-introduced from Scotland and planted in large swathes beginning in the mid nineteenth century.[128] This type of tree is very resilient and able to thrive in hostile environments, a symbolic quality that may also be applied to the Irish people. However, Keating's representation of this type of tree on an Ascendancy estate subtly draws attention to a specifically colonial element. While these trees have long associations with the Emer-

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[124] Donnelly Jr., "Big House Burnings in County Cork, 141.

[125] Donnelly, "Big House Burnings in County Cork," 142.

[126] Keating, "The Slave Mind of Ireland," 71.

[127] Kay Hartigan, Tree Council of Ireland, email message to the author, February 18, 2015.

[128] *Native Species: Scot's Pine*, The Tree Council of Ireland, http://www.treecouncil.ie.

ald Isle, following deforestation of the island, they generally appear only in distinct groves which have been planted on Ascendancy estates to provide the manor with privacy and seclusion from the surrounding areas of farmland; therefore, what had traditionally been a symbol of Irish nationalism became transformed into something that is associated with English rule within Ireland. The trees had become linked with the symbol of the Big Houses, representing English order, improvement and superiority within Ireland.[129]

Keating's figure at the base of this important tree indicates Ireland's tradition, but also the cultural usurpation which had occurred under England. In 'The Slave Mind of Ireland,' Keating states, "[w]e have no literature, nor art, nor language…We know we can do everything, but we cannot decide to do anything…We are not even vulgar in our own way, but must copy the Englishman at his lamentable worst."[130] By depicting himself on the land of the Ascendancy, this painting seems to state that Ireland is not truly independent from England, but rather has been unable to move forward following the wars. Keating associates this immobility of the Irish nation with "that paltry confusion of ideas which associates comfort, order and culture with luxury, Imperialism and decadence."[131] In order to move forward, according to Keating, Ireland was required to understand that not all niceties are sinful, and enterprise does not always entail the exploitation of the workers. Ireland had achieved independence, but in the process had nearly destroyed itself, and for what? To lie amongst the ruins of the old ways, and continue to blame everyone else for Ireland's problems.

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[129] Anna Pilz and Andrew Tierney, "Trees, Big House Culture and the Irish Literary Revival," *New Hibernia Review* 19, no. 2 (2015), 70.

[130] Keating, "The Slave Mind of Ireland," 72-3.

[131] Keating, "The Slave Mind of Ireland," 73.

Keating's self-portrait in *An Allegory* is a visual representation of the same concerns he expressed within "The Slave Mind of Ireland." These works, in combination, reveal not only his condemnation of the violence of the civil war, but also an aggressive declaration that Ireland is no better off, nor more free from English influence, than it was prior to the War of Independence and civil war. "The Slave Mind of Ireland" concludes by prescribing action to combat stalemate, "[u]nless we take off our coats and dirty our hands, if need be, we Irish are doomed and damned to the bottomless pit of futility. And we shall have nobody to blame but ourselves."[132] In theoretical terms, Keating is calling for the Irish nation to overcome what Jameson refers to as "cultural imperialism," a "faceless influence without representable agents" which is responsible for the "failures of contemporary third-world societies."[133] Keating's self-portrait, representative of his own disillusionment with violence, stands in as a symbol of the entire Irish nation, which he sees as having collapsed under the pressure of its own nationalistic desires. The remedy is ideological, as well as political, independence. Keating again states, "[w]e find an excuse for slackness in the general rottenness of things; but that ought to be our reason to think and work and plan, to be hard on ourselves, to look at ourselves, even if the sight makes us sick."[134] Keating has heeded his own advice within *An Allegory*, which represents all that he has criticized; he has taken a cold, hard look at the Irish nation, the sight of which leaves him disillusioned and cynical.

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[132] Keating, "The Slave Mind of Ireland," 74.

[133] Jameson, "Third-World Literature," 82.

[134] Keating, "The Slave Mind of Ireland," 71.

## *Night's Candles Are Burnt Out*: Irish Industrialization and Modernity

A mere five years after *An Allegory* and "The Slave Mind of Ireland," Keating completed his next allegorical self-portrait, another large-scale symbolic scene titled *Night's Candles Are Burnt Out*. This painting represents a shift by Keating to represent a scene of optimism, as he was enamoured with the industrialization and modernization undertaken by the Free State government in the late 1920s; however, it is not without ideological criticism as well, as is the case with nearly all Keating's works. In 1929, President W.T. Cosgrave officially opened the Ardnacrusha hydroelectric dam. This massive modernization project was initiated in 1923, and was the largest project yet undertaken by the Free State government, and would remain so until well after WWII.[135]

Keating was intensely interested in the electrification project, which was located near his hometown of Limerick. In the summer of 1926 he had requested a leave from his post at the Department of Education in order to visit and document the construction site; unfortunately his request was refused. Keating was not deterred, and he instead visited the site on numerous occasions during his time off and on weekends from 1926 until 1930.[136] The result is a series of beautiful paintings, as well as studies, sketches and drawings, of the construction site and workers, including the allegorical *Night's Candles*.[137]

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[135] Andy Bielenberg, "Keating, Siemens and the Shannon Scheme," *History Ireland* 5, no. 3 (1997), 43.

[136] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation*, 159-63.

[137] Some examples of the other works, all of which date from 1926-30, are *The Bunkhouse*, *Commencement of the Tailrace, Construction of Navigation Locks,* and *Der Oberman* which, apart from *Night's Candles,* contains the only other representation of a woman in the collection of dozens of works. All of these works are now within the permanent collection of the Electricity Supply Board (ESB), a testament to the importance of the artist's representation of the monumental construction project.

In 1924, when Keating painted *An Allegory,* the future of the nascent state was uncertain. Cumann na nGaedheal, under the Easter Rising veteran Cosgrave, had taken control of the government and was responsible for establishing the institutions of the Free State. This government, installed during the revolutionary period, ultimately reverted to an ultra-conservative platform with intimate connections to the Catholic Church. Initially, the ambitions of the state were small, such as the establishment of an unarmed police force known as the *Garda Síochana* or Guardians of the Peace.[138] The government also built new schools, settled on a design for Free State stamps and currency, and worked towards a national electrification scheme.[139] The latter was by far the largest and most ambitious modernization project undertaken by the Free State government, and signalled also the first attempt for a nationalized electrification scheme in Europe.[140] Upon completion, the Shannon Scheme, named for its location on the Shannon River, provided electricity to the vast majority of Ireland, and Ardnacrusha was briefly the largest hydroelectric dam worldwide.[141]

Similar in size (103 cm x 127 cm) to *An Allegory*, *Night's Candles* is a large painting with a complex, crowded composition representing the chaos associated with a large construction project. This work contains many individual elements which are symbolic of a

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[138] Killeen, *A Brief History of Ireland,* 255.

[139] Sorcha O'Brien, *"Images of Ardnacrusha: Photography, Electrical Technology and Modernity in the Irish Free State*." in *Ireland in Focus: Film, Photography and Popular Culture*, eds. Eoin Flannery, Michael Griffin and Colin Graham (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009), 72.

[140] Paul Duffy, "The Pre-History of the Shannon Scheme," *History Ireland* 12, no. 4 (2004), 37.

[141] Ardnacrusha would quickly be surpassed as the largest dam when construction on the Hoover Dam was completed in 1936.

larger aspect of Irish society. The central figure is a distinguished businessman or entrepreneur representing industrialization and progress. He gazes down his nose at the gunman to his left, who gestures mockingly towards the businessman.[142] These figures, according to Keating, "symbolize the constant antagonism between the business elements and the extremists, which hinders the material progress of the State."[143] Situated in the bottom right corner of the canvas is a bespectacled clergyman, similar to the figure found in *An Allegory*. This time the priest is buried in a thick book, which he reads by candlelight. Rounding out the foreground of the painting are two aged workers, each resting against an old wagon, one drinking from a large jug. Behind them, a younger man symbolically extinguishes an old oil lantern, representing the dawn of the modern era and the coming dominance of electrical power brought on by the hydro dam.

Incongruously, a skeleton hangs from the scaffolding in the left mid-ground. Clothed in garb that would have been recognizable to the contemporary audience, the hanged figure represents the death of the stereotypical 'Stage Irishman.'[144] Ever drunk and characteristically goofy, the cultural icon of the Stage Irishman was an indicator of Ireland's inferiority to its colonial powers, even if it was a stereotype that was present within Irish theatre itself. By showing the stage-man as dead and decomposed, Keating indicates a new beginning for the Irish people in which they will no longer be seen as drunk and

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[142] Éimear O'Connor, *Seán Keating and the ESB: Enlightenment and Legacy* (Dublin: Royal Hibernian Academy, 2012), 47. Within his description, Keating identifies these figures as the Capitalist and a gunman, presumably referring to an *Irregular*, or IRA soldier.

[143] O'Connor, *Seán Keating and the ESB*, 48.

[144] O'Connor, *Seán Keating and the ESB*, 47. The 'Stage Irishman' is a recognizable theatrical character trope present within British theatre from the late sixteenth century. See Florence R. Scott, "Teg: The Stage Irishman," *Modern Language Review* 42, no. 3 (1947).

disorderly, but rather as modern, independent and both culturally and technologically evolved. The skeleton may also be an homage to the construction of the dam itself, during which several workers were killed. One scene in particular stands out, when a Bavarian foreman was robbed and murdered by an Irish worker, ultimately resulting in the latter's death by hanging in Dublin.[145]

Keating, once again, has included a family group, which is based upon his own growing family. They are seen on the far right gesturing towards the focal point of the entire scene - the Ardnacrusha dam, which would prove to be the pinnacle of Ireland's industrialization for the next several decades. Beyond the dam, increasingly obscured by the atmosphere is the rugged Irish landscape through which the Shannon River flows, making the hydroelectric project possible. Keating's recognizable profile is present within the painting as the father figure of the family group, which also contains May, and two young children. The Keatings' son Michael was nearly two when the work was completed, and May was pregnant with their second child, Justin, while she posed for the sketch for this work.[146] The family appears to be mesmerized by the massive scale of construction, as was Keating himself. Though this family is not as central within the composition as that in *An Allegory*, it still remains clear that the family unit was an extremely important element of the developing Irish state, and that Keating's own growing family was foundational to his opinions and perspective of the new Free State.

Formally, this oil on canvas painting is similar to *An Allegory* in that it utilizes a naturalistic representation of the figures within the landscape, depicted in Keating's usual

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[145] O'Connor, *Seán Keating and the ESB*, 48.

[146] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 87-9.

academic style.[147] Brushstrokes are highly polished and painterly details are kept to a minimum, except perhaps in the blurry aspects of the background where the artist has utilized atmospheric perspective to indicate great distance. The scene recedes logically with a realistic sense of depth. The characters within the frame form a U-shape, which works to draw the viewer's eye to the central focus, the dam itself, and the modernizing entrepreneurial spirit which makes such a project possible. Compositionally, the lines created are mainly vertical such as in the stand-alone figure of the businessman, and the two columns of figures appearing on either side of the dam. The peripheral edges are crowded, while the interior of the scene is left clear.

The colour palette includes mainly earth tones, signifying the dirtiness of a construction site, but also the earth from which a project such as this is made possible. Splashes of blue, red and green accent the scene through the various outfits of the figures. The colourful clothing worn by May provides the brightest point of the colour palette used by the artist, but also indicates an early example of the increasingly bright colours and bold patterns in Irish clothing, largely influenced by fashions from the United States.[148] May's modern outfit indicates the overall modernization of Ireland, and is far removed from the clothing worn by Keating's western Irish peasants.[149]The light is somewhat theatrical in this painting and illuminates the scene from the right front. This bathes the businessman and the dam in light, while also obscuring the clergyman and the gunman slight-

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[147] While this painting is stylistically of an Academic style, as will be argued later, the subject matter may be considered to be closer to an anti-academic realist depiction such as was popular in the Soviet Union in the early twentieth century.

[148] Orla Fitzpatrick, "Coupons, Clothing and Class: The Rationing of Dress, 1942-1948," *Costume* 48, no. 2 (2014), 248.

[149] See Chapter Three for a discussion of the symbolic use of clothing in Keating's depiction of the West of Ireland.

ly. Light is used symbolically and signifies the coming dawn of modernization and industrialization for Ireland.

It is not surprising that Keating would find a project of this magnitude so intriguing, but it is of interest that the image he created of the site is far different than his other allegorical self-portraits which are typically damning criticisms of the state. Andy Bielenberg goes so far as to state that *Night's Candles* works as a propagandistic statement for the Free State, produced for the government which had commissioned Keating to create a series of works documenting the construction.[150] However, O'Connor has recently refuted the claim that Keating was commissioned to create these pieces, and the propagandistic qualities of the work may be called into question when one analyzes several symbolic elements within that contribute to its greater meaning. Keating, in the painting, is clearly indicating his support of the dam project, and the image works to instil a sense of wonder for the viewer and the future generations of Ireland, as represented by the children of the artist. Keating is also, however, subtly critiquing the Free State government, which he perceived to have fallen short of the Socialist Republic which was called for by James Connolly.[151]

To this day the Shannon Scheme is still celebrated as an engineering marvel and admirable feat performed by the Cumann na nGaedheal government. Keating was clearly fascinated by the project, as he chose to spend much of his spare time during the construction years at the site, documenting the progress with photographs, sketches and paintings. It appears that his opinions regarding the Free State government, which were so critical within *An Allegory*, now included a sense of optimism inspired by the government's

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[150] Bielenberg, "Keating, Siemens and the Shannon Scheme," 45.

[151] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 161.

foresight and dedication to such an immense project so early in the nation's independence. However, the situation is made much more complicated when one considers subtle aspects of the painting which allude to an ideological contradiction between Keating's seemingly optimistic view and some symbolic elements which indicate an imbedded subversion of the optimism which is depicted. This subtle, subtextual ideological disconnect is characterized within *Night's Candles* in three ways: the focus on state-run industry, similarities to Soviet Socialist Realism and the representation of Keating's family group within a Socialist publication.

In Berlin in 1922, Irish engineer Thomas McLaughlin began paid research, under the German firm Siemens, looking into the possibility of a large-scale nationalized hydroelectric project in poorly-developed Ireland. By 1925, the Dáil had approved Siemens' contracts and construction began on the Shannon Hydroelectric Scheme, which was completed in 1929.[152] The project employed thousands of unskilled Irish workers during a period of severe economic depression within the country, as required by McLaughlin in the Siemens contract.[153] When it opened on 29 July, 1929, the Shannon Scheme was heralded as a great national success, and used as an indication that the Free State government could in fact stand on its own two feet as an independent nation.[154] However, the Shannon project was an exception, rather than the rule, of Cumann na nGaedheal's industrialization and modernization projects in the first decade of independence. While the project was a great success, it was a highly abnormal undertaking considering the extreme economic conservatism which characterized the government in this period. Thus, rather than

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[152] Duffy, "The Pre-History of the Shannon Scheme," 37-8.

[153] Bielenberg, "Keating, Siemens and the Shannon Scheme," 46

[154] Bielenberg, "Keating, Siemens and the Shannon Scheme," 44.

praising the government enterprise as a whole, Keating may instead be indicating his approval of the abnormality within the bureaucracy which allowed for this project, as well as the nationalization of Ireland's electricity under the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) established in 1927. In 1922, there were more than one hundred disparate electrical supply companies operating within Ireland, and many more private enterprises. Under the ESB, most of these operations were subsumed into a proto-national corporation with centralized operations and administration. The main opposition to the project came from those who viewed the project as "creeping socialism by the back door."[155] However, it is likely that this 'creeping socialism' is exactly what impressed Keating about the Shannon Scheme project, rather than the governmental apparatus as a whole which he had clearly criticized in the past.

In the 1920's Keating, as an employee at the DMSA, was required to self-censor his radical left-wing political views in order to keep his job and to avoid raising suspicion under the strict censorship rules which had been put into place under the conservative Free State government.[156] However, it is clear that he held Socialist, and even Communist sympathies. May worked as a secretary for Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, a radical feminist who was an advocate for Irish republicanism and socialism within Ireland.[157] The couple even met at a meeting of the *Craobh an Chéitinnigh*, the most radical branch of *Conradh na Gaeilge (*the Gaelic League), a nationalist organization. Later, Keating was invited by the Irish Friends of Soviet Russia, an organization of which May was a member, to travel to the Soviet Union as a cultural delegate of Ireland. Found among his personal papers were

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[155] Duffy, "The Pre-History of the Shannon Scheme," 38.

[156] O'Connor, *Seán Keating in Context*, 20.

[157] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 79.

documents and pamphlets from the Socialist Party of Ireland (SPI), including the party's manifesto.[158] Considering this evidence which indicates Keating was, however closeted, in fact a Socialist, clearly he would have been impressed with the nationalization of electrical utilities, and the government undertaking of the Shannon Scheme project. This idea is strengthened by analyzing Keating's paintings of the 1920s in relation to the growing genre of proletariat art and Socialist realism.

In 1922, only three years after the couple married, May left Seán and spent several months in Hamburg, Germany. It is unclear the reason for their separation, but based on personal correspondence, O'Connor argues that May may have left Ireland for political reasons. It is possible that, as part of her role with Sheehy-Skeffington, May traveled to Hamburg as an Irish delegate to the Communist International meetings, though the exact nature of her trip remains unclear.[159] In this period, Keating became a founding member of the 'Radical Club,' a group of artists and intellectuals who met at the salon of Dublin art collector David Egan.[160] Fellow Radical Club member, Harry Kernoff, a friend of the artist and his wife as well as a member of the Irish Friends of Soviet Russia, was greatly interested in art education in the Soviet Union and the political value of art in forwarding socialism among the masses.[161] Despite the lack of direct evidence of Keating's affinity towards Soviet culture during this period, it may be assumed that the close connections of his wife and acquaintances to that culture indicates Keating himself would also have been familiar with, and interested in, Soviet art and its role in forwarding the socialist agenda of the rev-

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[158] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 101.

[159] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 82.

[160] O'Connor, *Seán Keating in Context*, 22.

[161] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 93.

olution. Though Soviet Realism would not become indoctrinated as the government-sanctioned art in the Soviet Union until 1932, well after Keating painted *Night's Candles*, his work does bear resemblance to the types of paintings being done by Russian realist painters in the same period.[162]

Proletarian art, or Socialist realism as it is broadly known, became popular in the late-nineteenth century with the works of Ilya Repin and the *Wanderers*. This type of revolutionary, anti-academic art gained popularity again in the 1920s, after the Bolshevik Revolution installed the socialist regime into power, under Vladimir Lenin.[163] This genre of Realist art, popular throughout Europe, emphasized the conditions of the working classes and the importance of equality. While *Night's Candles* presents a somewhat optimistic vision for the future of the Irish Free State, it also follows a trend of socialistically-minded ideals such as state-owned institutions, emancipation of the workers and an implicit revolutionary streak which is largely absent within British and Irish Academic painting during the same period.

Perhaps the clearest indication of Keating's association with socialism in this period is his use of the same family group from *Night's Candles* within a sketch for the frontispiece of a socialist publication, *The National Ideal: A Practical Exposition of True Nationality Appertaining to Ireland* by Joseph Hanley (fig. 13).[164] This work, published in 1931, was a culturally nationalistic treatise which extolled the virtues of a socialist ideolo-

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[162] See, for instance, the works of the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AKhRR) or the Society of Easel Painters (OSt).

[163] Paul Wood, "Realisms and Realities," in *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars*, eds. Briony Fer, David Batchelor and Paul Wood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 264.

[164] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 92.

gy as applied to Ireland. Keating's illustration utilizes the family group, but instead of gesturing to the Ardnacrusha site, they point towards a glowing mandorla which contains the Soviet hammer and sickle imposed onto a Christian cross, indicating the deep connection within Ireland of the Catholic faith, an element which was inseparable from Irish political ideology. Ireland would never embrace the political ideals of socialism or Communism on a large scale; instead these ideologies remained on the fringes of society. However, Keating's paintings must be interpreted through a socialist lens, as it is clear that he held such political sympathies during the period in which he painted *Night's Candles*.

Keating's National Symbolism and the Ideological State Apparatus

Althusser's Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) are those extensions of the State which allow the 'self-regulation' of subjects, not through repressive means such as the police or legal system, but through successive systems of societal 'norms,' which are obeyed unwittingly by the subjects who wish not to be conceived as deviant. Among the ISAs identified by Althusser are scholastics, religion, politics and associatives (organizations such as trade unions), family, culture and publishing. These apparatuses are present in society and work in distinct ways to shape and regulate subjects by instilling the dominant ideology within them. Simply put, ideology consists of socially constructed ideas and norms which regulate the identity and behaviour of individuals. Ideology interpellates its subjects through the institutions of the ISAs, the non-repressive branches of the State. The role of the ISAs is to ensure the continuation of the dominant ideology within a society, such as the reactionary Republicanism which characterized the Cumann na nGaedheal government of the 1920s.

As national allegories representing Fredric Jameson's 'internal enemy,' both *An Allegory* and *Night's Candles Are Burnt Out* include characters which are representative of various Irish ISAs. Keating represents these institutions in such a way that the figures become symbolically critical; therefore, they may be seen to embody Keating's subversion of the very ideology which the figures themselves represent. These characters include the Irish clergyman, the soldier and the nuclear family.

One character that appears in the two paintings is the figure of the bespectacled clergyman. In *An Allegory*, the man is located on the periphery of the work and dons a solemn expression. In *Night's Candles*, a similar priestly character is depicted in the bottom right corner, reading by candlelight. In each image the priest's face is hidden behind large, thick glasses which have been interpreted to represent the myopic, or short-sightedness, of the Irish Catholic Church.[165] When the civil war was over and the devastation of the nation was realized, the new government resorted to a deep conservatism which included an alliance with the firmly entrenched cultural institution of Catholicism. The Church had a long history within Ireland, and with this alliance the new government felt it could achieve a sense of stability which was required for the governance of the nation.[166] Though May was a self-declared agnostic, there is no evidence to indicate that Keating was outright anti-Catholic; however, he does criticize the role of the Church and its close relationship to the Irish government. In *An Allegory*, the priest is inactive as he stands by passively, literally twiddling his thumbs. Keating's mere inclusion of the Church's represen-

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[165] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 25.

[166] Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, "The Politics of Gender in the Irish Free State, 1922, 1937," *Women's History Review* 20, no. 4 (2011), 574.

tative within the work indicates the Church's complicity in the civil war which had brought the nation to the verge of destruction.

Keating goes further in criticizing the church within *Night's Candles*. Here, the clergyman struggles to read by candlelight, apparently uninterested in the modernization project which will provide electrification to the whole of Ireland upon its completion. Perhaps the largest opposition to the Shannon Scheme came from the Catholic Church, which viewed the project as costing too much money, funds which could be better spent on social services such as providing housing within the inner city of Dublin.[167] While this is an admirable desire, the criticisms levelled by the Church at the project again represent their myopia: the electrification of the country would improve the standards of living for Irish citizens, perhaps more so than the simple provision of government aid money. Keating's representations of the Church within these works function as a criticism of the conservative yoke of the new government and the consolidation of its alliance with the Catholic Church which he perceived to be backwards-thinking and shortsighted.

*An Allegory* and *Night's Candles* also predominantly feature figures which are identifiable as soldiers. *An Allegory* depicts a Free State soldier and an 'Irregular,' or a member of the anti-Treaty IRA forces.[168] Within this painting the soldiers are responsible for digging a grave, which can symbolically be viewed as a grave for the Irish revolution which they had fought, as represented by the Tricolour flag which drapes the coffin. These figures symbolize the civil war and the haphazard fashion with which they are digging the grave is representative of the futility of a war which had been fought after Ireland had already

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[167] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 161.

[168] Irish Military Archives, email message to the author, February 23, 2015.

been declared sovereign. Rather than identifying himself as a revolutionary soldier, as he had in *Men of the West*, Keating appears to have discarded his military jacket, which lies crumpled in the foreground, mirroring the figure of the artist himself. Several years later, in *Night's* Candles, Keating has still afforded a revolutionary soldier a central spot within his composition. The man, who carries a rifle, is easy to identify as an extremist, likely an IRA man.[169] The businessman's face is bathed in light, thus representing progress and the coming 'dawn' of Irish society as 'night's candles' are extinguished. Conversely, the soldier's face is darkened by a shadow which is distinctly caused by the pose he takes in order to mock the businessman.[170] Clearly, Keating intends to depict this soldier as being rather foolish, indicating that the paramilitaries, and the ideological militarism that they forwarded, are now hindering the progress of the new nation.

The final ideological state apparatus is perhaps the most important to Keating: the family. Not only does the family in these paintings represent Keating's personal identity as a husband and father, but the 'mother and child' motif is one that has great symbolic meaning in Irish mythology and visual culture. This motif appears very distinctly in both of the allegorical paintings. In *An Allegory*, the female figure is highlighted within the scene as she gazes down towards her swaddled infant, seemingly oblivious to everyone other than her child. Similarly, the only female figure in *Night's Candles* is also a maternal presence, as she holds a young child while her husband cradles another of the family's young children. On the surface it appears that Keating's representation of women in these paint-

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[169] As previously mentioned, Keating describes this figure as a gunmen. The figure is also very similar to the 'Irregular' soldier in *An Allegory*.

[170] This gesture is referred to as 'cocking a snook' in the United Kingdom, and the 'five-fingered salute' or 'thumbing one's nose' in North America. It is a generally pejorative gesture of disrespect.

ings falls precisely in line with that expected by the Free State government in the 1920s. According to the policy and actions of the deeply conservative Cumann na nGaedheal government, women were expected to remain within the domestic sphere with an emphasis on child-rearing.[171] Elizabeth Frances Martin argues that the women depicted by Keating in these paintings work to propagate the ideals of the Free State, which re-emphasized the domestic role of women after they had been afforded very public positions during the revolutionary period.[172]

There are, however, slight indications that Keating disagrees with the Free State's ideological perspective on women. By locating the mother figures so prominently within each of the paintings, Keating emphasizes and literally foregrounds the importance of women and their role within the republic. While Keating clearly sees the maternal role as central for women, it is not in the same passive and secondary manner as women were regarded within Free State ideology. This is clear through the artist's placement of the women; they are compositionally higher, and more dignified, than the complementary male figure, which is Keating himself. Symbolically, particularly in *An Allegory,* this may be representative of the opinion that men were responsible for the destruction of the nation through war, and women will be there to regenerate and to nurture it back to health.

The role of woman as healer has a long history within Irish culture and folklore, and dates back to the pre-colonial period when Irish society was matriarchal. Gaelic-Celtic mythology contained many goddess figures, such as Goddess Brigid, the Celtic deity of love and fertility. She would later be enveloped within Catholicism as the important

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[171] Elizabeth Frances Martin, "Painting the Irish West: Nationalism and the Representation of Women," *New Hibernia Review* 7, no. 1 (2003), 32.

[172] Valiulis, "The Politics of Gender," 569-70.

Irish Saint Brigid.[173] Moving into the modern period, it was Catholicism which led to much of the regression of the rights of women within the Irish Free State. During the revolutionary period, there was a certain level of fluidity of gender roles, and women were considered to be relative equals with men in the fight for independence.[174] The Free State government, in an attempt to regain stability, solidified its relationship with the Catholic Church following the Civil War, and incorporated many Christian values within its government apparatus. Paired with the domesticity of women forwarded by the Church, the Free State government also installed new legislation that was aimed at repressing the rights of women in light of the 'Modern Woman" movement which was taking place elsewhere. Marie Hammond Callaghan notes that

> [d]espite the granting of equal suffrage to Irish women in 1922, women lost numerous rights under the Free State including, worker's rights on an 'equal footing' with men in the labour force; the right to serve on juries; and access to divorce. In the 1930s, the diminishment of Irish women's status under the Republic continued as they were forbidden access to information on contraceptives and lost further rights as workers under a marriage bar and protective legislation.[175]

These restrictions on Irish women may be viewed in light of the wholesale rejection of English culture; Irish-Catholic ideology viewed the nation's women as "pure and virtuous" in comparison to "scandalous" English women, who were always "drinking, smoking, in paid employment, living on their own and practicing birth control."[176] By restricting female access to all these so-called vices, Ireland could not only differentiate itself from its former colonizer, but it could also claim to be better than England.

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[173] Marie Hammond Callaghan, "Margaret Clarke's *Mary and Brigid*, 1917: Mother Ireland in Irish Art and Nationalism," *Atlantis* 22, no. 2 (1998), 101.

[174]Valiulis, "The Politics of Gender," 569.

[175] Hammond Callaghan, "Margaret Clarke's *Mary and Brigid,*" 108.

[176] Valiulis, "The Politics of Gender." 575.

The Irish nation was also often personified as a women in need of assistance. Historically, Ireland as a nation had been gendered as female, stemming from the predominance of Goddess worship on which much Celtic mythology was based.[177] However, following colonization by the British and moving into the Victorian period, the representations of Ireland-as-Female lose the strength associated with the Celtic goddesses and instead take on the symbolic role of a passive young woman in need of protection and help from the colonial rulers. These kinds of depictions appear frequently within colonial publications, particularly illustrated newspapers. Images such as *Fenian Pest* (fig. 14) were very common, where Ireland is shown in the guise of *Hibernia*, a beautiful yet helpless young woman who is dependent on *Britannia*, the wise and noble personification of England, for protection. This particular image is noteworthy in that *Hibernia* is in need of protection from the 'Fenian Pest,' the rowdy nationalists who were deemed responsible for the unstable political situation resulting from their republicanism.[178] These kinds of images influenced Irish depictions of their own nation, even within a culturally nationalistic period such as the Celtic Revival. For instance, W.B. Yeats' 1902 play *Cathleen ní Houlihan*, based on Celtic mythology, is the story of a family who willingly offers their son to the revolutionary fight in order to protect a mysterious woman, actually the spectral personification of Ireland, who comes knocking on the family's door seeking aid and the blood-sacrifice of Ireland's men. Even in the plays of Yeats, an avowed nationalist, the image of the Irish na-

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[177] Martin, "Painting the Irish West," 34.

[178] The Fenian Pest in this image is a standard representation of the Irish people from the period. Irishmen were depicted as drunken apes, which was an indication of the scientific thought of the time which presumed the Irish were on a lower evolutionary level than were the English. The caption on this illustration alludes to England's preference to ignore issues which arose in Ireland. See Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

tion gradually shifts from that of a strong goddess figure to one who is dependant and passive.

When women are the focus of Irish works of art, they are typically depicted as peasant women imbedded within the landscape of the west of Ireland.[179] These kinds of works indicate the symbolic feminization of Ireland, as well as the importance of the west in the battle for Irish culture; however, these two factors are often conflated, with the landscape symbolizing also the fertility and passivity of Irish women.[180] In *Night's Candles*, Keating has the female figure gesturing out towards the landscape - in this case, the female still embodies motherhood and a connection with the landscape. She is not, however, shown as a passive figure; rather she is quite active within the composition, just as the landscape towards which she gestures is also an active one (the land provides the water which will be responsible for the creation of energy). Though these paintings still fall within the standard motif of women and landscape, they may be seen to provide women with much more agency and activity than was provided to them under Free State legislation or common in the broad representations of women in the Irish visual arts during the same period. This in itself is revolutionary considering the repression and regression of women's rights which was underway at the same time as the Free State government was working to consolidate its power following the revolutionary period.[181]

The 1920s were a period of transition for Ireland. The long-fought battle for sovereignty had finally been achieved, but not without great expense. Keating's allegorical self-

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[179] Such works include Margaret Clarke's *Mary and Brigid* (1917), Charles Lamb's *The Quaint Couple* (1930) and Maurice MacGonigal's *Mother and Child* (1942).

[180] Martin, "Painting the Irish West," 33.

[181] Hammond Callaghan, "Margaret Clarke's *Mary and Brigid,*" 108.

portraits from this period embody the contradictory nature of the Irish Free State during its first decade of existence. While the government struggled to rebuild and modernize, these works provide a glimpse into the complicated process of destruction and rebirth. Far from being propagandistic, as Bielenberg argues, Keating's paintings instead contain quite scathing, albeit well-hidden, criticisms located directly alongside his optimistic vision of the future.[182] Though *Night's Candles* represents a relatively optimistic point of Keating's allegorical portraits, economic hardships and government ineptitude during the next decade would force Keating to again question the abilities of the Free State government, a view expressed within *Ulysses in Connemara* and *Economic Pressure, or a Bold Peasant Being Destroyed*.

[182] Bielenberg, "Keating, Siemens and the Shannon Scheme," 45.

**Chapter Three*:* Leaving Connacht: Keating's Rejection of Free State Nationalism, 1947-50**

Between 1947 and 1950, Keating completed two paintings, nearly identical in subject matter, which each function as evidence of a counter-ideological shift which was underway in Ireland. *Ulysses in Connemara* (fig. 4) and *Economic Pressure, or a Bold Peasant Being Destroyed* (fig. 5) are paintings which may be understood to complete an ideological circle in which the artist has returned to the geographic west of Ireland. After more than three decades, Keating again depicts an allegorical scene representing the ideology of the rural Irish peasant. This theme was at play in *Men of the West*, but was absent in both *An Allegory* and *Night's Candles Are Burnt Out*. Within *Ulysses* and *Economic Pressure*, the artist returns to the Irish nationalist myth of *Men of the West* and these later works function as both criticism and rejection of the ideals perceived to have resulted in the poor conditions and emigration which plagued Ireland in the 1940s.

This final chapter will apply Pierre Macherey's literary method to Keating's final two allegorical self-portraits. Macherey's method will allow a complete exploration of the period covered in this thesis (1915-50) and provide conclusions drawn on the nature of the allegorical representations forwarded in the final two works. The previous chapters have alluded to the relationship that Althusser believed existed between ideology and art, and which is described in *A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre*. However, what has as of yet been neglected is a thorough analysis of the mechanism by which an artwork becomes imbued with the ideology which it exhibits. This mechanism, referenced in Althusser's letter, appears in the form of *Lenin, Critic of Tolstoy*, a work of Marxist literary criticism by Althusser's student and friend, Pierre Macherey. Macherey extends Althusser's views on ideology and the ISAs into the domain of literature, and his work provides a schematic

model for the elucidation of the ideology from within which the works of art themselves are produced.

Stemming from the title of Lenin's article, "Leo Tolstoy: Mirror of Russian Literature," the concept of literature as a mirror appears as a central element in Macherey's chapter "Lenin, Critic of Tolstoy."[183] For Macherey, the mirror is utilized as an analogy with which to describe how a work of literature embodies and reflects the context within which the work was created. This notion of art as mirror is also a motif which is prevalent in the field of art history. During the early Renaissance, the 'ideal' painting was that which was perceived to produce a near-perfect illusion by utilizing innovations in naturalistic representation such as linear perspective, as if the scene were a reflection in a mirror.[184] Rejecting this emphasis on illusionism, Macherey takes pains to note the incomplete and disjointed nature of the reflection which is produced within a work of art, due to the necessary bias of the artist and his own immersion into the context that is being depicted. According to Macherey, "the mirror extends the world: but it also seizes, inflates and tears that world. In the mirror, the object is both completed and broken: *disjecta membra*."[185] The work of art, therefore, is unable to depict the reality of the situation within which it exists; instead, what appears is a distorted and unintentionally selective image which provides much more information on the artist and the historical situation than on that which

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[183] Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*," Geoffrey Wall, trans. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 105-135.

[184] Yvonne Yiu, "The Mirror and Painting in Early Renaissance Texts," *Early Science and Medicine* 10, no. 2 (2005), 187.

[185] Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, 134. Disjecta Membra is Latin and translates to 'scattered fragments.'

is depicted. In Macherey's words, "the writer is not there to articulate the total structure of an epoch, he gives us, rather, an image, a unique and privileged glimpse."[186]

Ultimately, Macherey provides a system of analysis which works to reveal the ideology within which a work of art was created. First, the historical context must be studied (from without, rather than within the work itself). This will reveal the conditions which led to the creation of the work, as well as the function of the work within these conditions. This level of analysis provides a general overview of the context for the creation of the work, as well as a distinction between the relevant ideologies affecting the production of the work. Secondly, the work itself is to be studied as a mirror, but as the type of mirror described by Macherey which is only able to reflect the context in a disjointed and fragmentary manner. Macherey notes that the "the work contains its ideological content, not just in the propagation of a specific ideology but in the elaboration of a specific form."[187] Therefore, an analysis of the formal elements of the work is also necessary in discerning the connections that exist between the historical context and the work itself. Finally, the study of the context and the form allows for an investigation into the *mirror* itself, or that scene which is specifically depicted within the work, and the series of ideologies which have led to its creation. Again, quoting from Macherey, "a historical period doesn't spontaneously produce a single, monolithic ideology, but a series of ideologies determined by the total relation of forces. *Each ideology is shaped by the pressures upon the class which generates it*"[188] (my emphasis). These three components of Macherey's methodology (historical context, form and content) will be utilized in order to elucidate how Keating's final

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[186] Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, 113.

[187] Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, 116.

[188] Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, 115.

two allegorical self-portraits represent the evolution of his personal ideology in relation to the national Irish ideologies which were also in flux during this period.

Within the context of this analysis, it is most suitable to begin with an introduction of the form and materiality of *Ulysses in Connemara* and *Economic Pressure* in order to situate the works, which will then be analyzed using Macherey's method to focus on two specific elements of the works. Studied first will be the historical context of the paintings which may also be equated with national allegory. Secondly, it will be argued that Keating provides a personalized, and prescriptive, allegory in the self-portraits of these paintings.

Form and Materiality

*Ulysses* and *Economic Pressure* are pendant paintings, identical in shape and size and similar in subject matter, and may be considered as a pair to one another. Pendant literally means hanging, and implies that works of this type are intended to hang near or next to one another. Historically, pendant pairs have taken the form of complementary narrative scenes, or husband and wife portraits.[189] Keating's production of two such large-scale pendant images may indicate that before completing work on *Ulysses*, the artist's perspective on the situation had changed to the point that he felt the need to alter his subject matter. Both works depict an oceanside scene in which a small group of people wait on the shore for the arrival and/or departure of a ship. The landscape is typical of the rocky western Irish coast which was the historical departure point of ships transporting emigrants to Britain or North America. The oars of the boat and the open suitcase in the foreground of *Ulysses,* and the embrace of the couple in *Economic Pressure* imply a subject of travel,

[189] *Pendant*, Tate Gallery Britain, http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/p/pendant.

particularly that of emigration, which was a common occurrence in Ireland in the 1940s.[190]

Keating began *Ulysses in Connemara* in 1947, an oil on hardboard work of a large scale, measuring 121 cm by 121 cm. Keating took three years to complete this work, and it does not seem to have been commissioned.[191] The work was purchased by a private collector for £250 in 1952 when it was on exhibition at the Royal Scottish Academy, and the work remained within this collection until it was again sold at auction in 2007.[192] Compositionally, the painting is grounded by a large boulder in the centre mid-ground, which is flanked on either side by an ensemble of figures who occupy a relatively symmetrical and stable space within the work. The two figures on the bottom right of the scene (portraits of the artist and his wife) appear contemplative and perhaps even sorrowful; however the scene as a whole gives a sense of excitement and anticipation. The woman standing in front of the boulder bears a distinct wide smile, and a man waves his hat towards the ship. The direction of the ship implies that it has just departed the shore, and is beginning toward its destination. A small shrub sprouts from within the stone, and its branches create an implied diagonal line which reaches out towards the ship, as if to symbolize the poten-

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[190] Mary E. Daly, *The Slow Failure: Population Decline and Independent Ireland, 1920-1973* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006).

[191] O'Connor notes that Keating tried to mitigate economic strain on the RHA by creating several works of the west, popular with collectors, and then putting these works up for sale to bring in funds. Thus, this painting was likely created on speculation and composed from the mind of the artist, rather than being dictated by a commission. O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation*, 235.

[192] Author Unknown, "Keating Hits Fever Pitch in Leyburn," *Antiques Trade Gazette*, April 10, 2007, http://www.antiquestradegazette.com/news/2007/apr/10/keating-hits-fever-pitch-in-leyburn/. *Ulysses in Connemara* went on auction in 2007 where it was valued at between £30 000 and £50 000. The painting sold, surprisingly, into a private collection for £400 000, a record for both the artist, and the auction house.

tial of the ship's passengers to grow and flourish at their destination. The colour palette, particularly that of the large sky, also imbues the work with a sense of optimism and happiness. The subtle pastel colours and the playful lines of the clouds represent a joyful attitude, which echoes the seemingly jovial actions of the crowd gathered on the shore.

The title of this painting, *Ulysses in Connemara*, draws some very compelling connections between the subject matter and the historical context. Connemara is a geographically defined region of the western portion of the island which is known for its rugged shoreline and rocky terrain. It raises immediate connections with the idealization of the western Irish peasant and the refusal of British hegemony which has been covered at length in previous chapters. The use of *Ulysses* in the title, however, is not quite as easy to parse, particularly since there seems to be no clear indication from the artist why he chose to title the work in such a way.

There are several sources from which *Ulysses* may have come, and it is perhaps possible that this ambiguity was intentional on the part of the artist. Ulysses is the latinized form of Odysseus, the hero of Homer's epic cycle *The Odyssey*. This work recounts the long, disjointed journey of the hero Odysseus as he returns to his throne in Ithaca following the Battle of Troy.[193] The implication here is that Keating perhaps chose to reference Ulysses as an indicator of the lengthy, complicated journey attached to emigration, and the search for one's (new) home. There is a distinct Irish connection to this work in that Ulysses is also the title of an extremely successful Irish-modernist novel by famed writer James Joyce. *Ulysses,* published in 1922, is a modern day adaptation of Odysseus' journey which follows the protagonist, Leopold Bloom, throughout the course of a single day, dur-

[193] Padraic Colum, *The Adventures of Odysseus and the Tale of Troy* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1918).

ing which time Bloom's adventures mirror those of Odysseus. Keating would certainly have been aware of Joyce's novel, though whether he had read the story remains unknown. More connections may also be made between the title and subject of the painting. Ulysses was the name attached to a ship of the late eighteenth century which ferried emigrants from Scotland and England to new homes and jobs in the United States. Detailed records of the *Ulysses* indicate that a great majority of those onboard in 1774 were emigrating due to 'high rents and oppression,' a situation which will be argued as being very similar to that in Ireland in the 1940s.[194] The connection to United States immigration is strengthened, perhaps coincidentally, by the name of the eighteenth president of the United States, Ulysses S. Grant. Grant was a key figure in the Union victory over the Confederate forces, and was also president during a period of high Irish immigration in the decades immediately following *An Gorta Mór,* or the Great Famine. Irish emigrants went in droves to the United States, by which they would become one of the most highly represented immigrant groups in the demographics of the United States.[195]

The *Ulysses* of the title also bears a notable relationship to the Ulysses Syndrome, a medical condition which is often diagnosed in immigrants. Though this diagnosis was unlikely to have been made in the 1940s, the condition is embodied by the scene created by the artist. The syndrome, named after Homer's Ulysses, is characterized by both psychological and physical symptoms which manifest in immigrants who have dealt with extreme stressors due to their relocation. The stresses include

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[194] Harold A. Ralston, "Records of Emigrants from England and Scotland to North Caroline, 1774-1775," *Olive Tree Genealogy,* http://www.olivetreegenealogy.com/ships/ncarship05.shtml.

[195] Terrence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 18.

> forced separation, dangers of the migratory journey, social isolation, absence of opportunities, sense of failure of the migratory goals, drop in social status, extreme struggle for survival and discriminatory attitudes in the receiving country.[196]

Though the application of Ulysses Syndrome to an exploration of Keating's paintings from this period is somewhat anachronistic, it does perhaps provide some insight into the clear shift that occurred in the depictions of *Ulysses* and the much darker mood and composition of *Economic Pressure*.

*Economic Pressure* presents much the same scene as *Ulysses*. The work, of the same materials and dimensions, was begun two years after *Ulysses*, and both were completed in 1950. They were also both exhibited at the RHA exhibition of that year.[197] *Economic Pressure*, in comparison, depicts a much darker interpretation of Irish emigration represented by the sombre colour palette, the emotionalism of the remaining group and the death of the formerly thriving shrub.

The vibrant pastels of the sky and reflecting waters in *Ulysses* are replaced in *Economic Pressure* by a subtle and sombre palette of greys. This indicates, in practical terms, a shift in the weather on the unpredictable western Irish coast, and an impending rainstorm. More symbolically, however, the shift in colours also invokes a sense of renewed pessimism for the viewer. While *Ulysses* may represent the optimism of the welcome opportunity that emigration provided, *Economic Pressure* seems to symbolize the void left behind by all the people who had departed. In *Ulysses,* the open suitcase in the foreground suggests that one of the figures (represented by Keating and May) may be departing. This

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[196] L. Diaz-Cuéllar Alba et al., "The Ulysses Syndrome: Migrants with Chronic and Multiple Stress Symptoms and the Role of Indigenous Linguistically and Culturally Competent Community Health Workers," (2013), http://www.panelserver.net/laredatenea/documentos/alba.pdf.

[197] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation*, 249.

notion is strengthened by the embrace of the couple in *Economic Pressure*. This embrace also indicates that only one of the couple is leaving, implying the separation, and perhaps destruction, of a family. The shrub, which sprouts from the boulder, at first indicated the excitement and rejuvenation of new beginnings within *Ulysses*, but has since died and exists within *Economic Pressure* as a skeletal form of its former self. The title of this painting does not allow for the same ambiguity of interpretation as *Ulysses*. Keating has made it very clear in his title that economics, and the failure of the Free State, have resulted in the large-scale emigration of Irish citizens, and the destruction of the life of the western peasants which for so long had represented the strength and idealization of the distinct Irish identity.

The emphasis on emigration within both paintings is strengthened by the presence of three examples of Irish boats, each of which has a slightly different symbolic connotation. The boats in question are the curragh; the Galway Hooker; and the nineteenth-century trans-atlantic migration ship which earned the grisly nickname 'coffin ship.' The Connemara curragh along with its distinctive slender oars is shown in the foreground of both *Ulysses* and *Economic Pressure*. This boat is a traditional fishing vessel with origins dating back as far as the first century BCE, and which was a common sight across the shorelines of the west of Ireland.[198] Constructed from a "single animal hide stretched over a wicker basket-like framework," the design of these small vessels has changed little over the centuries.[199] These boats were utilized by the western peasants as they were small, maneuver-

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[198] Chuck Meide and Kathryn Sikes, "Manipulating the Maritime Cultural Landscape: Vernacular Boats and Economic Relations on Nineteenth-Century Achill Island, Ireland," *Journal of Maritime Archaeology* 9, no. 1 (2014): 118-19.

[199] Ibid.

able and handmade, which made them accessible to the poor population in these areas. The curragh in Keating's paintings seems ready to take emigrants out to board the larger ships in the distance, and the distinctive 'bull-nosed' oars rest on the shore in the foreground. The curragh was an integral part of Irish coastal life, and Keating's inclusion of the small vessel stands in as a symbol for the traditional way of life that was being left behind by emigrants.

Along the horizon in *Ulysses,* slightly obscured by the atmosphere is a representation of a 'coffin ship,' an allusion to the period of the Irish Famine, when hundreds of thousands of Irish people fled or were forced to leave Ireland due to starvation, disease and unemployment. Demand for emigration was so high in the 1840s that many shipowners subverted the *Passenger Act* laws, and crowded as many people as possible onboard, providing little to no food or care during the duration of the journey, which could last as long as six weeks.[200] According to modest estimates, up to a third of the emigrants died aboard the coffin ships, though true numbers are impossible to calculate as passengers were typically undocumented and the bodies of the deceased were simply thrown overboard.[201] Keating's inclusion of this type of ship (which clearly would not have sailed in 1945), is a visual reminder of the Famine, the period of highest emigration in Irish history. The ship also symbolizes a 'loss of roots' and cultural identity which was suffered by many

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[200] Sean McMahon and Jo O'Donoghue, eds., "Coffin Ships," *Oxford Reference: Brewer's Dictionary of Irish Phrase and Fable*, http://www.oxfordreference.com./view/10.1093/acref/9780199916191.001.0001/acref-9780199916191-e-1257?rskey=fK3aSw&result=1

[201] Marguérite Corporaal and Christopher Cusack, "Rites of Passage: The Coffin Ship as a Site of Immigrants' Identity Formation in Irish and Irish-American Fiction, 1855-85," *Atlantic Studies* 8, no. 3 (2011), 344.

who were unwillingly forced to leave the country of their birth.[202] The slave ships, in Irish cultural memory, represent a memorial to the thousands who died aboard, but "are not merely places of death, but also places of transition."[203] The coffin ship is a damning visual representation of how, by the 1940s, emigration had become a way of life for far too many Irish citizens.

The final vessel depicted by Keating is a sailboat in *Economic Pressure*, which replaces the coffin ship seen in *Ulysses*. While only the front portion of the boat is depicted, it appears to be similar in style to the Galway Hooker, a unique and ubiquitous sailing vessel used for fishing the Galway Bay.[204] These boats were used for centuries by fishermen and traders dealing on the west coast of Ireland, but by the mid to late-twentieth century they had become largely ceremonial.[205] The hooker in Keating's painting appears to operate as another visual reminder of the Irish culture of the west coast which was sacrificed by those who left.

Throughout his work Althusser makes it clear that to be outside of ideology is a logical impossibility. With regards to art, this manifests itself in what he terms the 'aesthetic effect,' which operates not within the artwork itself, but during the reception of the work

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[202] Corporaal, "Rites of Passage," 346.

[203] Corporaal, "Rites of Passage," 354.

[204] Timothy Collins, "From Hoekers to Hookers: A Survey of the Literature and Annotated Bibliography on the Origins of the Galway Hooker," *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 53 (2001), 66.

[205] Sean McMahon and Jo O'Donoghue, eds., "Galway Hooker," *Oxford Reference: Brewer's Dictionary of Irish Phrase and Fable*, http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199916191.001.0001/acref-9780199916191-e-2198?rskey=GK2YQ4&result=1, accessed November 28, 2015. A Galway Hooker named St. Patrick carried Patrick Pearse to the Aran Islands in 1913 when he was involved in the formation of the Irish Volunteers. This same boat also sailed to America in 1986, the only Galway Hooker that successfully made the trip.

by the audience. Even though Althusser purports his analysis to work towards the production of a 'scientific knowledge' of art, as he notes in *Cremonini, Painter of the Abstract,* "the work of art cannot fail to exercise a directly ideological effect."[206]

As observed by Thomas Albrecht, the ideological effect produced by the perceptions of a work of art is precisely the element of criticism which allows the reader/viewer to believe that art is able to distance itself from the ideology within which it resides.[207] Thus, the so-called 'distantiation' from ideology is simply another form of ideology, that of the 'aesthetic effect.' Albrecht takes note of what he calls this 'double-bind' which occurs within Althusser's theory. The issue is that, through the perception of art which allows the illusion of distance from which to study ideology, the critic is placing himself again inside another form of ideology, that of the aesthetic.[208]

What also must be noted is that the meaning imbued within a painting by the artist is virtually unknowable to a viewer. One may speak of knowing the 'intentions' of an artist, but this form of knowledge is impossible; instead, the viewer or critic must rely on one's own interpretations. These understandings are mediated, not only by the 'aesthetic effect,' but also by the ideologies and histories which he or she brings into the interpretation. In order to counter the disconnect between this unknowable meaning and the search for an interpretation, Althusser posits an extreme emphasis on reading and a nuanced understanding of both the production of the work and the immediate situation from which

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[206] Louis Althusser, "Cremonini, Painter of the Abstract," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Ben Brewster, trans. (London: NLB, 1971), 220.

[207] Thomas Albrecht, "Donner à voir l'idéologie: Althusser and Aesthetic Ideology," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 14, no. 2 (2004): 14.

[208] Albrecht, "Donner à voir l'idéologie," 19.

the work was inspired.[209] This provides the transition from an analysis of the formal aspects of Keating's paintings, into the second and third elements of Macherey's methodology: the historical context, and later, the study of the subject matter of the work itself.

Failure and Fianna Fáil

After completing *Night's Candles are Burnt Out* in 1929, Keating did not create another allegorical self-portrait until nearly two decades later when he painted *Ulysses in Connemara* and *Economic Pressure*. This break mirrors a period of stagnation within Ireland, both economically and socio-culturally, which plagued the period of the *Fianna Fáil* government under Éamon de Valera. In the period that these two paintings were created, Ireland achieved full Republic status (1949); however, the situation of the Irish people was one characterized by un- and under-employment, emigration, and a noted lack of support from the government for arts and culture, an issue on which Keating criticized the government and advocated in favour of art. The emotive shift which occurs between the two paintings mimics the pessimistic attitude that Keating, and much of the Irish population, felt towards the isolationist and regressive policies of the Fianna Fáil government. In other words, these two paintings may be seen to function as descriptive national allegories which represent a disapproval of the Irish regime which had allowed the defining feature of the nation to be that of constant and continuous emigration.

When Keating created *Night's Candles are Burnt Out*, he was clearly inspired by the large-scale industrial evolution of the nation through the Shannon Electricity Scheme. However, twenty years later when his pendant pair was completed, there occurred a noted reversal of this optimism, with both paintings showing instead a somewhat emotional and

[209] Albrecht, "Donner à voir l'idéologie," 21.

dismal scene of national exodus. Historical context is critical for understanding the creation of a work of art ; therefore, it is necessary to analyze just what had occurred in the period between *Night's Candles* and *Economic Pressure*.

Cumann na nGaedheal ran virtually unopposed in Irish politics throughout the 1920s; that is, until Sinn Féin splintered in 1926. Due to irreconcilable differences regarding the Oath of Allegiance, Fianna Fáil, the newly founded party, was able to compete with Cumann na nGaedheal as they were no longer restricted from parliamentary participation. The charismatic Easter Rising veteran Éamon de Valera was head of the newly founded Fianna Fáil party (an Irish name which translates to 'Soldiers of Destiny') which surprisingly won thirty-five percent of the vote in a 1927 snap election.[210] This new party embodied extreme anti-Treaty sentiment, and formed the government officially in 1932 upon winning the election which unseated Cosgrave and his Cumann na nGaedheal government.

The true conservatism of de Valera became immediately clear with the policies he forwarded. Initially, the actions of the government were supported by Irish people across the political spectrum. De Valera abolished the requirement of stating the Oath of Allegiance in the Dáil, strengthened the relationship of the state with the Catholic Church, and rewrote the Constitution in 1937.[211] He even went so far as to ignore the boundaries which had been created between Ireland and the north.[212] His governmental policies were extremely insular, based on de Valera's desire for an Ireland which was entirely self-sufficient and largely modelled on the idealization of the hardworking rural Irish farmer. Part of

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[210] Killeen, *A Brief History of Ireland,* 255.

[211] Killeen, *A Brief History of Ireland,* 263-68.

[212] Ibid.

this quest for self-sufficiency was an extreme increase in tariffs, which were matched by the British in response to the Irish withholding of annuities due to England under the Anglo-Irish treaty. The result was an economic war between the two nations.[213] De Valera intended to strengthen home industry and the social institutions of the nation enough to justify the high tariffs, but a lack of private financial support meant that the burden of those costs fell on the government itself. These investments into Irish industries initially saw an increase in production and income; however, it was not nearly enough to compensate for the money invested in the services combined with the income lost from imports and exports.[214] Ultimately the state was barely able to maintain the institutions as they were, and it was the 'superfluous' institutions such as those in the culture and arts portfolio which suffered. Keating, as part of his administrative role in many of Dublin's artistic institutions, regularly spoke out against the lack of governmental support for the arts in both published articles and radio broadcasts.[215]

Surprisingly, Ireland remained relatively unscathed during WWII while the rest of Europe was plagued by warfare and destruction. Ireland held an official policy of neutrality, though an Allied win was helped along by the detention of Germans who landed on Irish soil and the missions of Irish troops who fought alongside the British, though in an unofficial capacity.[216] Supplies were often scarce throughout Ireland, with bread, tea, sug-

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[213] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History,* 111.

[214] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History,* 112.

[215] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History,* 118.

[216] Killeen, *A Brief History of Ireland,* 267.

ar, fuel and tobacco amongst the items which were rationed. Automobiles were often indefinitely parked, and the horse-drawn carriage resurrected.[217]

Overall, wartime for Ireland was very much business as usual, largely due to the continuance of the isolationist policies of de Valera's government. The emphasis on self-sufficiency and the ideology of the idealized rural farmer meant that little had changed for the people since the late nineteenth century. The census of 1946 indicated that four of five homes were without special lavatory facilities, and only one in twenty homes had any indoor facilities at all.[218] Conditions such as this were tolerated due to the overarching dominant ideology of the suffering peasant which was forwarded in an official capacity by the government; however, by the mid 1940s things began to change drastically, particularly when the government was no longer able to censor all forms of outside influence. Hollywood cinema, especially, awakened within the Irish population the understanding that they existed in conditions far below the standard of other developed nations. Whereas economic necessity had been the predominant cause of emigration from Ireland to this point, what soon developed was a widespread desire to leave Ireland in search of better opportunities, not just in work but also in life.[219]

There is much more that may be said about the condition of Irish politics in the time period between *Night's Candles* and *Ulysses*; however, what needs to be emphasized is emigration, that great theme which is so predominant in each of Keating's late allegorical self-portraits. Within his methodological investigation of Lenin and Tolstoy, Macherey notes the importance of understanding the historical background which compelled the

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[217] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History,* 136.

[218] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History,* 139-42.

[219] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History,* 142.

creation of the work, as well as the project of the work itself.[220] Similarly, this study focuses on decoding the connections between Irish emigration and the artist's depiction of that emigration. Having taken the general historical information into account, there appears to be two distinct forms of emigration which were occurring at the time. The first of these forms is the type of emigration which is based strictly on socio-economics, which necessitated that those who were unable to find work were forced to leave Ireland. The other form of emigration, already alluded to, was that which became common in the 1940s, and which saw both young men and women actively choose to leave the country, not simply because of the lack of opportunities afforded them in their homeland, but also in search of a better quality of life than that which was available to them in Ireland.

On a presidential visit to his ancestral homeland in 1963, John F. Kennedy famously stated, "Most countries send out oil or iron, steel or gold, or some other crop, but Ireland has had only one export and that is its people."[221] The Irish population reached its peak in the census year of 1841, in which the population was 6.5 million. Within a decade the nation lost 1.5 million due to combined effects of the Famine and emigration. This downward trend continued unabated until it reach a record low of 2.9 million in 1946.[222] Population levels wavered around this level until the 1960s when population growth again began to increase until it reached 4.5 million in the 2011 census, roughly equivalent to the

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[220] Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production,* 106-7.

[221] *Irish Emigration History*, University College Cork, http://www.ucc.ie/en/emigre/history/, accessed November 28, 2015.

[222] *Population 1841-2011, Population by sex and Census year*, An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh/Central Statistics Office, http://www.cso.ie/multiquicktables/quickTables.aspx?id=cna13. For comparative accuracy with figures after Partition, these population figures include only the southern 26 counties, and not the 6 northern counties which make up Northern Ireland.

population in 1861. The population levels of the twentieth century did not drop as greatly as those of the previous century, but the population was stagnant, even considering the large family size which was typical of Irish Catholic families. This stagnation, combined with the fact that secondary school was not free until 1968 created a strong factor of social immobility, meaning that children had very little opportunity to advance beyond the class of their parents.[223] Emigration subsided slightly during the 1920s and early 30s, and this led to a spike in unemployment, indicating the inability of the state to deal with even a stable population.[224] Fianna Fáil did very little to stop the high levels of emigration, particularly amongst the younger people who were dissatisfied with the strict conservatism of the nation.

Governmental policy included a strict emphasis on retention of the (dying) Irish language; antagonism to Modernist arts and literature, including a ban on the exhibition of art containing nudes; strict censorship regulations monitored by a Catholic Board; and a wholesale ban on the sale and importation of artificial contraceptives.[225] This deep conservatism resulted in very unusual ideas regarding the causes of emigration, including several examples of both newspaper articles and court documents associating the mass emigration of young women with the sinister influence of urban dance halls.[226] In the years 1926-46, emigration rates were 6/1000 of the Irish population, with the western provinces losing the most people (initially to the larger urban areas of Dublin and Cork, and later to Britain and

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[223] Killeen, *A Brief History of Ireland,* 271.

[224] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History,* 117.

[225] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History,* 114-16.

[226] Bryan Fanning, *The Quest for Modern Ireland: The Battle of Ideas, 1912-1986,* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008), 47.

North America).[227] The effects of governmental policy in this period are succinctly stated by Terrence Brown,

> The impulse to seek self-sufficiency that characterized the 1930s, representatively expressed in the attitudes and policies of de Valera, was it is necessary to stress, a noble one… At its most positive the urge toward self-sufficiency reflected a belief in Irish life, in its dignity and potential and in the value of a secure, self-confident national identity. That such idealism could be maintained only by ignoring the dismal facts of emigration, economic stagnation, individual inhibition, and lack of fulfilling opportunity was its crippling flaw…[228]

Keating, an astute social observer, was keenly aware of the clash between Irish traditionalism and the invading modernity of creeping internationalism brought on by radio, cinema and travel. Between the paintings of the 1920s and those of the late 1940s, Keating's works begin to show indications of a national allegory which is unstable, conflicted and ever-shifting. This dichotomy is well-represented in two allegorical paintings (without self-portraits) he created in the 1930s.

*Homo Sapiens*, *An Allegory of Democracy* (fig. 15) is a complex and confusing image centred on the same bespectacled clergyman from *Night's Candles,* surrounded by ornamental regalia and headwear. The dumbstruck figure chooses to don a simple tin helmet and gas mask as he hovers dramatically over the New York City skyline. This painting, completed in 1930, coupled with his description of the work as "a 'universal' depiction of man, singularly unimproved in 'mind or body' by his activities over time" may perhaps indicate that Keating himself was ill-at-ease with modernity, particularly that in which his visual protagonist feels compelled to don headwear which is iconic of warfare.[229]

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[227] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History,* 118.

[228] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History,* 118-19.

[229] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation*, 143-44.

The second of the allegorical works is titled *Sacred and Profane Love* (fig. 16) which indicates the cultural collision of modernity and traditionalism within the urban Irish centre during the 1930s. The scene depicted is that of a Dublin sidewalk, the background of which is dominated by a cinematic poster indicating the invasion of Hollywood. Well-dressed young women on the far left, representative of the 'Working Woman,' glance back at a duo of men who seem to have caught their eye. These homogenous gender groups perhaps allude to the tendency for of the younger generations to delay marriage in order to establish oneself in a career .[230] Conversely, the newly public role of women during this time may also have initiated misogynistic behaviour on behalf of the men who felt that their public domain was being infringed.The gaze of the 'singles' is interrupted by the central family group, who have stopped so the mother can wipe the nose of her young son, to his great embarrassment.[231] This somewhat humorous scene, in combination with the title of the work, reads as a commentary on the traditional family unit and the shifting demographics of the Irish people.

*Sacred and Profane Love* depicts an urban scene with a crowd that appears to be modern and contemporary to the time that Keating painted the work in 1937. Conversely, the figures within *Ulysses* and *Economic Pressure* appear at once both outdated and timeless. The clothing worn by the figures indicates the traditional, yet transitional, nature of the western coast during the 1940s. The men and women don simple outfits which are typical of those worn by the Irish peasants of the West. The clothing is simple, yet very

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[230] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History,* 117.

[231] O'Connor, *Seán Keating:* Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation, 145-46. Keating is not present within this allegorical work, though the mother and child are modelled after May and Justin, who was seven at the time this painting was made.

well-maintained and may be viewed as the 'fancy' dress of the peasants. However, even for the west of Ireland in this time period, the clothing is slightly antiquated. As Caitriona Clear notes,

> In the Irish-speaking areas of the west from the early twentieth century…an attachment to traditional dress coexisted quite comfortably with sharp awareness of trends in fashion conveyed through newspapers and magazines, as well as through contact with emigrants.[232]

Further, based on accounts of rural farmer's wives in the 1940s, Clear continues, "[women] wore navy hats and caps to Mass in the winter and, in the summer, navy box-pleated skirts, frilly linen blouses and hats, their long hair pulled back tightly and held with an ornamental comb in a bun at the back."[233] Though the figures within *Ulysses* and *Economic Pressure* appear well-dressed, they do not exhibit the clothing which seems to have been common in the period in question, nor do they epitomize the modern and internationally-influenced style which was common in the urban areas, such as that exhibited within *Sacred and Profane Love*. Rather than the "[s]louch hats, shirtwaister dress, rayon suits, Cuban-heeled shoes and a silhouette of square shoulders," the women in these paintings wear the clothing typical of the late-nineteenth century peasant women.[234] This subtle, but symbolic, allusion to the traditional clothing of the peasants works to emphasize the western location of these figures, a geographic connection which is crucial for the meaning of the work. Though Keating had previously held much pride and admiration for the west of Ireland, these paintings allude to the idea that the idealistic myth of the western peasant must be left behind if Ireland is to succeed in the modern

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[232] Caitriona Clear, "'The Minimum Rights of Every Woman'?: Women's Changing Appearance in Ireland, 1940-1966," *Irish Economic and Social History* 35 (2008), 69.

[233] Clear, "'The Minimum Rights of Every Woman'?," 74.

[234] Fitzpatrick, "Coupons, Clothing and Class," 241.

world. By the late 1940s, it is clear that Keating's paintings have generally shifted to depict an exodus not only from the west of Ireland, but also from the idealized traditionalism which had been so predominant in Irish society.

## Rejecting *Men of the West*

When Keating began work on *Ulysses in Connemara*, his work depicted the notion that there was a brighter future behind emigration, but with *Economic Pressure*, what came to be shown is a negative representation of emigration that was perceived to be destructive to both those who leave as well as those who are left behind. By locating these paintings in Connemara, in the west of Ireland, Keating has placed these works within the tradition of depicting the west as an idealized area where true Irish identity thrives. However, the theme of emigration implies that it is time to leave behind this idealized and unrealistic nationalist ideology. In essence, these paintings represent, in allegorical form, a rejection of the ideology which was prominent in *Men of the West*. The West is no longer depicted as a place for which men should stand up and fight, but instead becomes a transitional place from which people must depart. Keating, by including his own self-portrait among the emigrant figures, is offering a personal, and suggestive, allegory to the viewers. Keating is prescribing an abandonment of the myth of the west of that Ireland, that which privileged the creation of an Irish identity at the neglect of all else, for fear that Ireland will continue to be left behind as the world moves forward.

According to Macherey, once a thorough historical analysis of the situation of the production of the work is completed, the remainder of the study is to focus on the subject of the work itself, as well as the situation of the artist. As he notes, "the writer is not there to articulate the total structure of an epoch; he gives us, rather, an image, a unique and

privileged glimpse."[235] Further, he emphasizes that all works are determined by one, or likely several, competing ideologies which are equally "shaped by the pressures upon the class which generates it."[236] Macherey notes that though Tolstoy was of the landed aristocracy, his works establish a deep connection with the ideology of the peasant, working from within this philosophy that was not his own, but with which he chose to identify.[237] In this way, Keating may also be seen to represent a similar ideology, that of the noble, rural western Irelander. Macherey makes it clear that the artists themselves do not create these ideologies, but instead reflect and distort them, as if in a mirror. Though clearly not of this class, nevertheless, Keating's works locate him within this position both visually and through a reflection of the ideology of the peasant. *Ulysses* and *Economic Pressure* are both scenes of the peasantry and the west with clear thematic links to the issue of emigration. The artist depicts this theme by using his own portrait as an example of what I term a 'personal prescriptive allegory,' or an ideological suggestion to the viewers.

The self-portraits of the artist in these two works are both very passive images. In *Ulysses,* an identifiable Keating is seated in the bottom right of the composition. He does not appear to be interacting with any of the other figures, though the woman seated nearest him is a representation of his wife, May. The silent, pensive figure sits on the shore contemplating the implications of leaving his beloved Ireland, or conversely, the prospect of losing his wife to emigration. The scene in *Economic Pressure* is more active, and leads the viewer to assume that the time for contemplation has ended and it is now time for departure. Keating's face is not represented in this painting, but through association with its

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[235] Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production,* 113.

[236] Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production,* 115.

[237] Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, 114.

pendant piece, the artist is again identifiable within the work. Like all of the self-portraits studied to this point, this scene is not a record of actual events, but works allegorically. It may be argued that by inserting himself within this scene, the figure of Keating stands in for the artist's opinion and beliefs that the time had come for a departure from the west of Ireland; he intended this, not in a literal sense, but as a metaphor for his belief that the isolationist and backwards-thinking ideology of the Irish west had stunted the development of the nation.

Since the time of the Gaelic Revival, there had been an emphasis on the ideology of Irish identity, one which had favoured a rediscovery of Irish history and culture, as well as a return to the westernmost areas where this culture still existed. It was within this ideology of the west that Keating allegorically symbolized himself in *Men of the West*. This myth of the struggling yet noble peasant was also predominant in the policies of the government, with near disastrous results for both the Irish economy and the socio-cultural well-being of the people. These painting operate as an all-out rejection of this ideology. This return to the metaphorical scenery and landscape of *Men of the West* operates not only as a rejection of violence, as was forwarded by *An Allegory*, but now a complete disavowal of the whole belief that the key to Ireland's success was to be found in the idealized notion of the poor Irish peasant and the western province. The double signification of this work represents both the historical fact of emigration from Ireland, as well as the figurative 'fleeing' from the west.

The stagnation of the 1930s under Fianna Fáil resulted in a lack of artistic or cultural innovation during the same period. Even the Irish literary institution, the epitome of the arts within Ireland, which had for decades been on the forefront of innovation, seemed

struck by a "post-revolutionary disillusionment," with very little experimentation taking place.[238] However, there did remain a consistent undercurrent, particularly within the Irish short-story, which was distinctly opposed to the "nationalistic self-congratulation" that engulfed the nation in this period.[239] Keating himself participated in this counter-ideological culture through his visual art, but also through his numerous publications, particularly in an article titled "Painting in Ireland Today" which was published in December 1950, the same year his pendant paintings were exhibited at the RHA.[240] Within this article, Keating is noticeably critical of Irish artistic institutions, the lack of governmental support for the arts, and the stifling of artists by official censorship. He wrote in his distinctive sarcastic and critical language of the Irish 'national ballyhoo' which was a permanent activity of the state, and he equated the 'artificial antithesis' of art and modern art with Loch Ness monsters and flying saucers.[241]

*The Bell*, the monthly literary and socio-cultural magazine in which Keating first published "Painting in Ireland Today," was an extremely important source for the ideological shift which was underway during the early 1940s. This shift was spurred on by the destruction being wrought upon the nation by the ultra-conservatism of the government. *The Bell*, under editor Seán O'Faoláin (1900-91), was named after a nineteenth-century Russian journal, *Kolokol*, which dealt with many of the same issues which plagued Ireland. The Russian publication was blatantly against government, censorship and isolationism, thus

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[238] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History,* 128.

[239] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History,* 122.

[240] Seán Keating, "Painting in Ireland Today," in *Seán Keating in Context: Responses to Culture and Politics in Post-Civil War Ireland*, ed. O'Connor (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2009).

[241] O'Connor, *Seán Keating in Context*, 145-46.

providing a perfect model for the Irish literati-rebels.[242] O'Faoláin, an established author who had been silenced by censorship regulations in Ireland, forwarded *The Bell* as a counter-ideological source which had as its goal the introduction of international politics and issues to the sheltered Irish people, as well as an emphasis on the depraved conditions under which the Irish people allowed themselves to be kept.[243] The journal commissioned 'experts' to contribute articles within the area they were most knowledgable; thus, Keating as an established artist, administrator and activist, was asked to write on painting. Keating begins his article rather brashly, "[f]rom which point of view? That of painting, or that of Ireland? Or of which Ireland…? Or might it be from the point of view of the artist who is not usually concerned with the other points of view?"[244] Keating seems to be mocking the very notion that there is a cohesive Irish painting that could be described; further, he even seems to be questioning the unity of the nation itself. The last statement of the quotation is clearly a reference to Keating himself, who regularly managed to get himself into heated debates and awkward situations due to his provocative demeanour and audacious personality.[245] These qualities also allowed Keating to act as the mouthpiece for the arts within Ireland.

Alongside his teaching duties at the DMSA and his private commissions, Keating sat on the council of the RHA, and was an elected academy nominee to the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Ireland, the Arts Advisory Committee of the Municipal Gallery

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[242] Fanning, *The Quest for Modern Ireland,* 42.

[243] Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History,* 154.

[244] O'Connor, *Seán Keating in Context*, 145.

[245] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation,* 198-219.

and the Haverty Trust.[246] These positions ensured that Keating had very little spare time, and they were all largely uncompensated. However, Keating was clearly passionate about the situation of the arts in Ireland, and used his status as a well-known figure to raise awareness and action for the artistic institutions. He viewed the artists of the late-nineteenth century, those of the Celtic Revival, with great admiration, but he also felt that it is was this stiff adherence to a century-old artistic ideology which stunted the development of the arts as a whole. He therefore used his skills as an artist to dictate to the people just what he thought needed to be done to remedy the situation. This suggestion ultimately came in the form of *Ulysses in Connemara* and *Economic Pressure, or a Bold Peasant Being Destroyed*.

Keating's act of creating the solemn and critical images of Irish emigration re-situated himself on the same rocky shores of the west coast; however, Keating is no longer armed to fight for the west. Now he is bidding his farewell to the idealized landscape which had created decades of stagnation and insular politics. The myth of Irish nationalism which called for a return to the west, a bastion of 'true' Irish culture, is rejected within these works. The paintings represent the solemn despair of those who were forced to leave Ireland, but they also contain an element which indicates that choosing to stay in the ideological West of Ireland may have far worse consequences.

[246] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation*, 223.

**Conclusion**

Seán Keating retired from his position as President of the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1962 in order to spend more time with his family.[247] Despite his retirement, he continued to produce paintings and participate in art politics until shortly before his death in 1977. His final solo exhibition was held in 1973, at the age of eighty-four, at the Kenny Gallery, in Galway.[248] Later that year, Keating appeared on Gay Byrne's popular Irish television show, *The Late Late Show*, resulting in a wave of requests for commissioned portraits which Keating dutifully fulfilled even though he suffered from increasingly poor health. Despite his failing vision and deteriorating condition, Keating continued to paint right up until his death. He died in hospital on 21 December, 1977, aged 88.

Through the analysis of Seán Keating's five allegorical self-portraits, this thesis has sought to demonstrate the multivalent operations of ideology within painting. By utilizing Louis Althusser's theory of ideology, Fredric Jameson's concept of 'national allegory,' and Pierre Macherey's methodology of criticism, it has been demonstrated that Keating's works operate within a multitude of shifting ideologies which correspond to various stages in Ireland's revolution, independence and successive politico-economic challenges combined with the ever-changing personally held beliefs of the artist himself.

Ideology, as understood by Althusser, exists within all aspects of life, Art, however, is a unique example in that it appears to exist at distance, and this theoretical removal allows art to reflect the ideology within which it was created. This theoretical space between the work itself and the ideology provides ample material with which to understand the

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[247] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation*, 260.

[248] O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation*, 283-87.

ideologies implicit in the creation of such works. Keating's allegorical self-portraits, five works which span much of the long career of the artist, are multi-level compositions which work to reveal the dominant ideologies within Ireland, and also provide material upon which an analysis of Keating's own, unstated, ideologies may be undertaken. Not only do Keating's paintings often function as a subversive commentary on the dominant ideology, they also reveal how, in Jameson's words, the third-world artist always necessarily imbues personal representations with elements of the political situation.

As a young idealistic man in 1915, Keating created *Men of the West*, a blatantly militaristic image which forwarded the west of Ireland as the basis for Irish independence and identity. This violent nationalism gave way in the 1920s to a more subdued, and oftentimes disappointed, perspective on the revolution and its use of violence to install a somewhat impotent and reactionary government. *An Allegory* and *Night's Candles* are no longer specifically situated in the west, nor do they proffer the same ideological emphasis on the idealized noble peasant. By 1950, Keating has returned to the west with his final allegorical self-portraits, *Ulysses in Connemara* and *Economic Pressure, or a Bold Peasant Being Destroyed*. Though the geographic location matches that of *Men of the West*, there is a very different ideology implicit in these works. Keating rejects the west as the solution to Ireland's problems, and instead represents himself as an emigrant, indicating his belief that Ireland's future lies away from the romanticized version of the rocky shores of Connacht and its noble inhabitants.

For Althusser, it is impossible to be 'outside' of ideology, but it is possible to analyze artworks in relation to the ideologies within and against which they were produced. The artwork of Seán Keating is highly ideological in its representation of a strong, noble

Irish identity; however, his idealism was consistently out of synchronization with that of the dominant ideologues governing Ireland. Keating was not someone to mask his feelings or hide from controversy, and of this his paintings are clear evidence. Despite his criticism and dissent, Keating adored and cherished his homeland, and this admiration is revealed in the way that his paintings do not overly sentimentalize his subjects; rather, the artist utilizes his public position to visualize his nation's shortcomings while at the same time prescribing action for the future.

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**Appendix One: Figures**

Figure 1. Seán Keating, *Men of the West,* 1915. Oil on canvas, 97 cm x 125 cm. Crawford Art Gallery. Reproduced from Hugh Lane Gallery, www.hughlane.ie (accessed July 9, 2015). © Seán Keating / SODRAC (2016).

Figure 2. Seán Keating, *An Allegory*, 1924. Oil on canvas, 102 cm x 130 cm. National Gallery of Ireland. Reproduced from Crawford Art Gallery, http://www.crawfordgallery.ie (accessed August 26, 2015). © Seán Keating / SODRAC (2016).

Figure 3. Seán Keating, *Night's Candles Are Burnt Out*, 1928-9. Oil on canvas, 103 cm x 127 cm. Gallery Oldham. Reproduced from BBC, Your Paintings, http://www.bbc.co.uk (accessed August 26, 2015). © Seán Keating / SODRAC (2016).

4. Seán Keating, *Ulysses in Connemara*, 1947-50. Oil on board, 121 cm x 121 cm. Private Collection. Reproduced from Éimear O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics, and Building the Irish Nation* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2013), 154. © Seán Keating / SODRAC (2016).

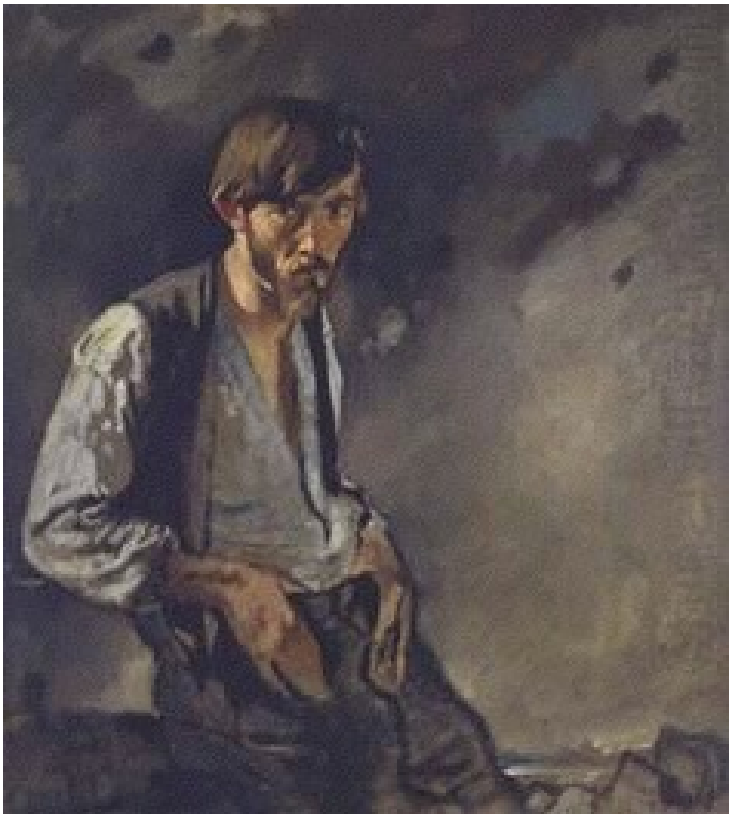
Figure 5. Seán Keating, *Economic Pressure, or a Bold Peasant Being Destroyed*, 1949-50. Oil on board, 121 cm x 121 cm. Crawford Art Gallery. Reproduced from Éimear O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics, and Building the Irish Nation* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2013),154. © Seán Keating / SODRAC (2016).

Figure 6 (left). Thomas Hudson, *George II of Great Britain*, 1744. Oil on canvas, 219 cm x 147 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London. Reproduced from Wikimedia Commons (accessed November 12, 2015).

Figure 7 (right). Joseph Wright of Derby, *Portrait of Richard Arwkright*, 1789-90. Oil on canvas, 126 cm x 102 cm. Private Collection. Reproduced from Wikimedia Commons (accessed November 12, 2015).

Figure 8. James Sinton Sleator, *Portrait of Sir William Orpen RA, RHA* (1878-1931), ca. 1916. Oil on canvas, 97 cm x 92 cm. Crawford Gallery, Cork. Reproduced from Crawford Gallery, www.crawfordartgallery.ie (accessed November 12, 2015).

Figure 9. William Orpen, *The Man From Aran*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 119 cm x 86 cm. Private Collection. Reproduced from Wikimedia Commons, www.commons.wikimedia.org (accessed July 9, 2015).



10. William Orpen, *Man of Aran, Seán Keating*, 1915. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Limerick City Gallery. Reproduced from Eimear O'Connor, *Sean Keating: Art, Politics and Building the Irish Nation* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2013), 59.

Figure 11. Luke Fildes, *The Doctor*, 1890. Oil on canvas, 166 cm x 242 cm. Tate Gallery, London. Reproduced from Tate Gallery, www.tate.org.uk (accessed July 9, 2015)

12. Luke Fildes, *The Widower*, 1876. Oil on canvas, 169 cm x 248 cm. Art Gallery of New South Wales. Reproduced from Gallery of New South Wales, http://www.art-gallery.nsw.gov.au (accessed July 9, 2015).


Figure 13. (Left) Seán Keating, *Dia, Tir is Teanga,* Frontispiece for the *Nationalist Ideal*, 1931. Private Collection. Reproduced from Éimear O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics, and Building the Irish Nation* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2013), 92. © Seán Keating / SODRAC (2016).

Figure 14.(Right) John Tenniel, *Fenian Pest*, illustration in *Punch Magazine*, 3 March, 1866. Reproduced from Wiki Commons, http://www.commons.wikimedia.org (accessed August 26, 2015).

Figure 15. Seán Keating, *Homo Sapiens, An Allegory of Democracy,* 1930. Oil on Canvas, dimensions unknown. Private Collection. Reproduced from Éimear O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Art, Politics, and Building the Irish Nation* (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2013), 144. © Seán Keating / SODRAC (2016).

Figure 16. Seán Keating, *Sacred and Profane Love,* 1937. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Private Collection. Reproduced from *Crawford Art Gallery*, http://www.crawfordartgallery.ie (accessed October 23, 2015). © Seán Keating / SODRAC (2016).