

The Municipal Gallery Revisited Full Poem

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I Around me the images of thirty years; An ambush; pilgrims at the water-side; Casement upon trial, half hidden by the bars, Guarded; Griffith staring in hysterical pride; Kevin O'Higgins' countenance that wears A gentle questioning look that cannot hide A soul incapable of remorse or rest; A revolutionary soldier kneeling to be blessed.

II An Abbot or Archbishop with an upraised hand Blessing the Tricolour. 'This is not,' I say, 'The dead Ireland of my youth, but an Ireland The poets have imagined, terrible and gay.' Before a woman's portrait suddenly I stand; Beautiful and gentle in her Venetian way. I met her all but fifty years ago For twenty minutes in some studio.

III Heart smitten with emotion I sink down, My heart recovering with covered eyes; Wherever I had looked I had looked upon My permanent or impermanent images; Augusta Gregory's son; her sister's son, Hugh Lane, 'onlie begetter' of all these; Hazel Lavery living and dying, that tale As though some ballad singer had sung it all.

IV Mancini's portrait of Augusta Gregory, 'Greatest since Rembrandt,' according to John Synge; A great ebullient portrait certainly; But where is the brush that could show anything Of all that pride and that humility, And I am in despair that time may bring Approved patterns of women or of men But not that selfsame excellence again.

V My mediaeval knees lack health until they bend, But in that woman, in that household where Honour had lived so long, all lacking found. Childless I thought, 'My children may find here Deep-rooted things,' but never foresaw its end, And now that end has come I have not wept; No fox can foul the lair the badger swept.

VI (An image out of Spenser and the common tongue.) John Synge, I and Augusta Gregory, thought All that we did, all that we said or sang Must come from contact with the soil, from that Contact everything Antaeus-like grew strong. We three alone in modern times had brought Everything down to that sole test again, Dream of the noble and the beggarman.

VII And here's John Synge himself, that rooted man 'Forgetting human words,' a grave deep face. You that would judge me do not judge alone This book or that, come to this hallowed place Where my friends' portraits hang and look thereon; Ireland's history in their lineaments trace; Think where man's glory most begins and ends And say my glory was I had such friends.