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## 1. Introduction: Shackles of Heteronormativity Then and Now

In Augusta Gregory's *Grania* (1912), Grania's suitor Finn believes that "love is the disturber" (Gregory 187) and that it will ruin their marriage. He fears that love for another man will take Grania from him, whom he claims as his property. In Eva Gore-Booth's *Fiametta* (early 1900s)<sup>1</sup>, Gertrude, who reluctantly agrees to marry Wilfrid, decides she "must go back to her own people" (Gore-Booth 90). Stereotypes about gender roles and heteronormativity that are depicted in these plays are a key aspect of patriarchal structures, which have been transformed to a certain extent but persist today. Women have been traditionally expected to desire men, marriage, children, and domestic life. Expectations to follow a family tradition of husband, wife, and children can be traced back to the deeply entrenched beliefs in heteronormative values. Both plays address the heteronormative constraints imposed by compulsory heterosexuality, which denies women the right to desire anything other than a traditional heterosexual relationship. A close analysis of the plays shows that love is not the disturber between Finn and Grania, and Gertrude must return to her own people, as it is her only escape from the shackles of heteronormativity. Heteronormativity is the disturber that limits women's individuality and restricts their freedom. The rebellion against patriarchal oppression was particularly intense during the suffragette era, in which the plays *Fiametta* and *Grania* were composed. In light of the current political climate, characterised by the resurgence of right-wing parties and fascism that are actively suppressing women's and LGBTQ+ rights, patriarchal oppression is more violent and dangerous than ever.

Due to male dominance across Irish stages, female playwrights were uncommon in Irish history, though not non-existent. Augusta Gregory was one of the few who

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<sup>1</sup> Sonja Tiernan estimates that "*Fiametta* was most probably written in the early 1900s when Gore-Booth ran a dramatic society as part of the University Settlement, Manchester." (18)

gained enough popularity; Eva Gore-Booth was a lesser-known author. Gore-Booth was a suffragette, while Gregory was not officially politically involved, but was an influential writer and co-founder of the National Theatre. *Grania* has not been staged during the author's lifetime and has not been performed professionally in Ireland. *Grania* was officially revived on the stage in 2024 at the Abbey Theatre. The manuscript of *Fiametta* was not published until 2010, and the play has not been performed to date.

*Grania* and *Fiametta* depict female protagonists who grapple with society's norms and expectations. Both plays deal with the institution of marriage and its consequences for women, which was also central to the Suffragette movement at the time. This thesis aims to examine the character's actions in relation to the heteronormative belief system. Then, I will substantiate my claim that they struggle with the heteronormative expectations of the system. Overall, I will prove my hypothesis that in the plays, the belief system of heteronormativity contributes to the protagonists' inability to flourish as subjects. Furthermore, despite the characters' rebellion against these norms, both plays depict distinct approaches to challenging heteronormativity, which vary in their effectiveness in enabling the protagonists to become subjects. I will apply a queer-feminist framework to pursue the following research questions: How is compulsory heterosexuality established in the plays, and how does this determine their struggles with heteronormative expectations? To what extent are *Grania* and Gertrude perceived as subjects with agency? Do they resist heteronormativity, or do they reinforce their own oppression?

The methodology consists of the use of the lens of queer, feminist, and gender studies to investigate in what way the protagonists challenge heteronormative expectations and whether their actions can be seen as expressions of queer resistance. The gender roles depicted in the plays can be related to Adrienne Rich's concept of

“compulsory heterosexuality”, which will be utilised to evaluate the heteronormative restrictions and coercion experienced by the protagonists. Beauvoir's concept of Othering is pivotal in elucidating the manner in which Grania and Gertrude are invariably juxtaposed with "natural" women, thereby accentuating their uniqueness, yet simultaneously devaluing them as “other”. Butler's conceptualisation of gender constructivism will prove to be instrumental in the classification of struggles relating to gender oppression as well as gender essentialism, a doctrine asserting the existence of distinct, inherent characteristics attributed exclusively to women and men. Both concepts are pivotal in substantiating my claim that heteronormative expectations are inherently harmful due to societal expectations towards women and the imposed structures of binary gender roles. Irigaray's theory of sexual difference and Lorde's concept of the master's tools will be employed to evaluate the resistance of Gertrude and Grania, thereby highlighting the difficulty of resistance in a system of phallogentric<sup>2</sup> thinking. Whilst Gertrude is able to establish a distinct understanding, specifically through her existence as an actress, in which she can find refuge and thrive according to her own conditions, becoming the subject of her own agency, Grania finds herself unable to find alternative tools to rebel against heteronormative expectations. Instead, she stays dependent on the master's tools, which are the very same instruments employed to subjugate her, namely marriage, in order to empower herself as a subject.

In 4.1, I will analyse the protagonists' actions to identify their challenges. I will prove that these are defined by the heteronormative expectations imposed on the women in the plays. Next, in 4.2, I will focus more closely on the concepts “compulsory heterosexuality” and “the master's tools” to analyse the protagonist's actions of

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<sup>2</sup> Phallogentrism is a term that refers to the belief in the phallus as a symbol of power and that characteristics of masculinity are the reference point for defining culture.

rebellion and resistance against heteronormative expectations. Through applying these two theoretical concepts, I will be able to identify underlying structures of patriarchal power and internalised coercion. Finally, in chapter 4.3, by evaluating my results, I will discuss whether the protagonists act in a manner of queer resistance.

### **1.1 From Edwardian to Suffragette Theatre**

The objective of this thesis is to identify the characteristics of the play's protagonists' resistance to heteronormativity, which is inevitably linked to the historical time of the plays' creation: the suffragette movement. Prior to the emergence of determined endeavours to advocate for the enfranchisement of women, as evidenced by the 1890s London stage, the works of female dramatists were perceived by critics as novel and unexpected (Farkas 1). In 1918, Irish women over the age of thirty who met specific property qualifications were granted the right to vote for the first time (Beaumont et al. 1054). It is an indisputable fact that this was a momentous era in history, which is why the analysis of two theatrical works by female playwrights, who engaged with the feminist politics of the era in different ways, is of particular interest. Gore-Booth was a suffragette, and Gregory can be considered politically active and more concerned with literary endeavours. It is imperative to contextualise the plays within their historical era, whilst also acknowledging the socio-political themes they address. However, this approach is not aimed at a comprehensive evaluation of the playwrights as activists, as would be undertaken by historians and biographers. The objective of this thesis is to engage with a close literary analysis of the content of the plays. Nevertheless, the analysis conducted considers the evaluation of the play's narrative and characters as a product of their era. Consequently, the application of the lens of queer theory facilitates the assessment of whether the plays, particularly the protagonists' struggles, can be interpreted as queer resistance, a resistance to heteronormativity. This struggle is also reflected in the suffragette movement, where participants fought against the

oppression of women. This included opposing patriarchal rule, which excluded women from voting, as well as heteronormative beliefs that upheld heterosexual structures, such as the patriarchal institution of marriage. Farkas acknowledges the “women’s movement as a key factor in the development of female-authored drama between 1890 and 1918, a period of exceptional productivity and innovation for female playwrights”(1). While I do not aim to categorise *Grania* and *Fiametta* as suffragette plays, considering the political discourse at the time, most likely, some reflections of feminist politics will be perceived in both plays.

The suffragette movement encompasses a diversity of approaches and political views (Beaumont et al. 1056). A political movement is as diverse as the nature of resistance. Social movements like the suffragette movement promote new ideas and beliefs, and ultimately challenge what is seen as ‘the norm’ in society (Beaumont et al. 1056). Similarly, the plays address challenges to established norms, particularly regarding the subjugation of women.

In Britain, following the Victorian theatre period, the Edwardian period ensued, at a time when Ireland was still considered part of the United Kingdom. Consequently, the most prominent Irish writers staged their plays in London. The fin-de-siècle period was characterised by a significant development in Victorian comedy, exemplified by the works of Oscar Wilde. This development is particularly noteworthy in the context of the social despair resulting from the Irish nation’s struggle for independence from the United Kingdom, which characterised the Edwardian era (Auerbach 10).

The year 1904 marked a pivotal moment in the history of Irish theatre, with the commencement of the Irish Dramatic Revival (Roche 2). This event is often seen in connection with the foundation of the Abbey Theatre, a seminal establishment that would change the landscape of theatre in Ireland (Roche 2). The Abbey was founded and co-led by Gregory and Yeats. Although there were more Irish theatres, the Abbey,

co-led by Gregory and Yeats, was central to the Irish Dramatic Revival. The Irish Dramatic Movement was an organisation that sought to produce new dramatic works; however, it also became involved in a dispute regarding the staging of texts that had already been deemed classics (Roche 5). The existing research suggests that the number of female playwrights involved in this movement may exceed the currently acknowledged figure (Roche 3). Gregory is a particularly notable example, given her prominence in the Abbey's establishment. Conversely, Gore-Booth exemplifies a less well-known female playwright within the Irish Dramatic Revival. Significant was the Dramatic Revival's playwrights' subscription to theatrical experimentation, which Yeats desired to reserve for himself only (Roche 5). The plays of the era contained, in general, an engagement with politics, identity and gender issues (Roche 5). The political aspects of the struggle for independence from England were a prominent feature (Roche 11–12). Nevertheless, the term revival echoed the cultural developments as well as the nationalist movement's intention to revive the Irish language, but most of the plays after 1904 were staged in English (Roche 7).

What are the characteristics of the Irish revivalist plays? In order to answer this question, the legacy of the previous era's significant playwrights, such as Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw, must be considered. It is evident that both are more closely associated with English drama and the United Kingdom in general, albeit most prominently with the London stage (Roche 12). Both dramatists' plays are characterised by their deconstruction of the conventions of the nineteenth-century drama and the depiction of young independent heroines (Roche 16–17). The period was also influenced by the endurance of the Irish melodrama, a genre of which Dion Boucicault was a prominent representative. Indeed, the works of this dramatist were frequently staged during the year of the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899 (Richards 20). Prior to the opening of the Abbey and the publishing of the manifesto of Irish literary

drama, depictions of stereotypical Irish men and women as low-comic figures in plays had already gained popularity (Richards 20). This term is commonly known as stage Irish, which began with the portrayal of Irish characters in the 18<sup>th</sup> (“Stage-Irish” 767). Initially, these characters were depicted as opponents of Britain, but this developed into a less unlikeable portrayal (“Stage-Irish” 767). Nevertheless, stage Irish was still a characterisation “as cards, comic servants and officers in foreign armies, a fair representation of the shifts to which the Irish were driven at the time.” (“Stage-Irish” 767). However, the stereotype of excessive drinking and “opportunism” became less prevalent (“Stage-Irish” 767). These popular plays with their comic or tragic messages already included clear nationalist messages in the plays of the Abbey Theatre (Richards 21). Women’s roles in the more political melodramas were commonly those of heroines in peril or loyal friends, servants or mothers (Richards 27). But overall, melodrama also contained a nationalist agenda of uniting social classes and promoting the bravery of peasants (Richards 28).

Despite gaining the vote, women's societies continued their campaign for gender equality for decades thereafter (Beaumont et al. 1057–58). Moreover, the revolution gave rise to a novel mode of thinking that encompassed persistent protest and activism for gender equality, a phenomenon that continues to resonate in the realm of modern theatre. Some activists at the time were well-known for their endeavours in arts, literature and theatre (Beaumont et al. 1058). Furthermore, the literary movement dealt with the emergence of the figure of the New Woman since the 1890s, in the novel, press and on stage (Farkas 4). It seems to be no coincidence that texts like Gore-Booth’s *Fiametta* or Gregory’s *Grania* were written after the New Woman term had been established.

The New Woman was “one of the signature characters of the late-Victorian period” (Farkas 30). In 1916, it was once described in *The Times* as a “caricature” and

“a defensive response to the prospect of societal change as a result of the rise of the women’s movement” (Farkas 30). But in the fiction of contemporary authors, the New Woman was deemed to be the role model of emancipation (Farkas 30). The term “New Woman drama” was coined and established as a counterpart to the “New Woman novel” (Farkas 30). A first mention of the New Woman in relation to theatre was in audience responses to a first British production of Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* in 1889, printed in the paper “The Pall Mall Gazette” (Farkas 31).

While novelists increasingly engaged with the New Woman archetype, playwrights embraced “the ideal of the Womanly Woman into empowering but traditionally sanctioned characters” (Farkas 5). Farkas contends that “women playwrights were reluctant to engage with the New Woman at all” (7). After 1900, in the era of suffragette and modernist theatre, the depiction in plays developed towards a portrayal of women in their new position in the workforce (Farkas 5). Additionally, women playwrights’ productions were heavily challenged by censorship, and the circumstance that publicly produced plays in Britain had to be submitted for a license first (Farkas 5). This not only posed a challenge for publication and on-stage production but might explain why Gore-Booth’s and Gregory’s plays faced difficulties with publishing and staging at the time. Also, in their time, playwrights had to take censorship into consideration when writing, as the potential of their plays never being performed if they were deemed ‘too feminist’ and not meeting the conventional standard. Additionally, moral and political conservatism was prevalent with theatres and actor managers, who were responsible for the selection of the repertoire, as it promised the most commercial success (Farkas 5). This was another instance that contributed to the limited stagings of feminist plays at the time.

Nevertheless, the historical context, characterised by profound legal and economic transformations, has contributed to the enhancement of the visibility of

theatre written by women (Farkas 7). In the 1890s, due “to legal, economic, and structural changes in the late-Victorian British theatre” (Farkas 7) productions authored by women increased (Farkas 7), paving the way for plays like *Grania* and *Fiametta* to be written.

There were exemplary plays that were staged as suffrage plays, like Elizabeth Robins’ *Votes for Women!* performed in Court Theatre in London in 1907, which started an experimental repertory season (Farkas 75) and can be pinpointed as a starting point of suffragette theatre (Farkas 86). By the time of the outbreak of the First World War, “the ephemeral traces of suffrage theatre disappeared in libraries and archives” (Farkas 75). In the 1980s, feminist scholars began to engage with suffragette theatre again (Farkas 75).

## **1.2 Summaries of *Fiametta* and *Grania***

*Fiametta* begins with Gertrude and Wilfrid discussing the meaning of love, art and life, which quickly turns into an argument about whether they should get married. While they both claim that they are in love with the other person, they have different opinions on marriage. Gertrude rejects the idea of marriage, but Wilfrid believes in the tradition. They arrive at the conclusion that Gertrude will marry Wilfrid under the condition that “if I ever leave you, you will look upon me as dead, and not seek to find me or ask me to come back to you” (Gore-Booth 29) and that he must be “content with the second place” (Gore-Booth 30) as she prioritises her life as an actress over her romantic relationship.

Gertrude’s sister, Val, mostly agrees with her perspective on marriage and is irritated and confused by Gertrude’s decision to marry Wilfrid. In the play, Val talks to Wilfrid about life as an artist, and they discuss Gertrude’s role as a wife while Wilfrid is painting Val. Wilfrid’s mother, Mrs Somers, and his sister, Anna, visit occasionally. Mrs Somers agrees with Wilfrid’s perspective and complains about how difficult it is

for Anna to find a husband. The play follows Gertrude's life as a wife and an actress. While preparing for the role of Fiametta in the play of the same name, her dual life as an actress and a wife is making her miserable. She is exhausted by the demands of her marriage, and, additionally, Seymour, the stage manager, tells her that her acting is worse than before. Furthermore, Signor Castellar, the author of the play, approaches Gertrude and tries to convince her to leave Wilfrid and go with him instead. She rejects his proposal and, overcome with despair, considers suicide. She writes a farewell letter to Wilfrid. However, her sister Val reminds her of her true self, encouraging her to leave Wilfrid and return to her own people, just as Fiametta did in the play. Wilfrid and Castellar find the letter and decide to duel over Gertrude's honour. Before they get the chance, however, Gertrude finds them and stops the duel, explaining that she has gained a new understanding. She leaves them, and by the end of the play, she has gone.

The story begins with Grania, the daughter of the King of Ireland, arriving in Almuin. She is welcomed by Finn, whom she is destined to marry. Grania explains that her father wants her to be married before he leaves her to go to Lochlann. During their conversation, it becomes clear that Grania has chosen to marry Finn instead of the King of Foreign, whom her father wanted her to marry. Grania chose Finn because she had heard that he was gentle. The marriage appears to be a practical arrangement rather than a love match, and Grania seems content with it. That is, until Diarmuid — a kinsman of Finn's — enters the scene. It transpires that he is the man she once fell in love with, but never saw again. Grania, who is now confused and irritated, withdraws from the meeting. Later that night, she returns to confess her love to Diarmuid, but in the dim light of the fire and due to his hooded clothing, she mistakes Finn for Diarmuid. This triggers a conflict: Finn feels betrayed and admits that he has fallen in love with Grania. Diarmuid protects Grania, but still swears loyalty to Finn. They both live in exile.

The second act of *Grania* takes place seven years later. Grania and Diarmuid are now married, but still in exile and constantly chased by Finn. They have a conversation which makes it clear that, for Grania, marriage alone is not enough. She cannot remain in exile forever and wants to return to her people. Diarmuid disagrees and is content with their lonely life. Their conversation is interrupted by a peasant, who is actually Finn, delivering a message. Finn convinces Diarmuid to join the battle against the King of Foreign, thereby separating him from Grania. Diarmuid leaves Grania in order to do so, and in the third act, Finn approaches Grania to claim her. Although Grania refuses to go with him of her own free will, she acknowledges that she has wronged Finn. Then Diarmuid returns from battle, fatally wounded. As she holds him in his dying moments, he does not recognise her, but he remembers Finn and swears his loyalty to him again. Diarmuid betrays Grania by saying, “that would be a very foolish man would give up his dear master and his friend for any woman at all.” (Gregory 210). Grania is so hurt by his words that she falls out of love with him and wants revenge. In order to achieve this, she forces Finn to marry her, even though he no longer wants to, out of respect for Diarmuid. However, she bribes him to stay with her due to societal pressure, and takes revenge by promising to be by Finn’s side when Diarmuid’s ghost visits him. The play ends with Grania and Finn presenting themselves as a couple to Finn’s people.

## **2. Literature Review**

While *Grania* is fairly well-known, *Fiametta* was published posthumously in 2010 and has received limited scholarly attention, offering an opportunity to contribute significantly to the academic field. Scholars have frequently used a feminist lens to investigate *Grania*.

While Maureen Waters, Lauren Arrington, and Shirley-Anne Godfrey draw connections between *Grania* and Gregory’s personal life, Noelle Bowles and Cathy Leeney analyse *Grania* as a feminist commentary on the nationalist agenda of Ireland,

which pursued the sovereign government of Ireland by its own people. Tsung-chi Chang draws connections between the marginalisation of Irish women through a male-dominated society and the broader currents of twentieth-century cultural nationalism by employing the lens of ethical feminism. Chang contends that the women characters in Gregory's plays deviate from the traditionally immoral behaviour, which was a perspective influenced by male-dominated thinking in society. Thus, Chang offers a more nuanced analysis of the stereotype of women as the immoral characters in Gregory's plays. Noelle Bowles asserts that *Grania* offers a feminist perspective on the nationalist movement and the dominance of men over women. She claims that "Gregory's plays express an awareness of women's marginalised role within the cause of Irish nationalism and object to ways in which women serve as passive symbols of the nation within patriotic discourse." (Bowles 116). Bowles notes that when rewriting the original myth, "Gregory's version eliminates the magical element of Diarmuid's love mark and thereby makes Grania's attraction to Diarmuid a human rather than a supernatural bond; her eventual marriage to Finn is her choice, not the result of capture." (Bowles 126) and argues that Gregory emphasises the female sexual desire and agency of Grania in the play. Leeney asserts that the nationalist agenda may have compromised the gender movement in Irish theatre, a circumstance that *Grania* comments on. This situates *Grania* as a feminist and protest play, questioning the role of women as objects of men's sexual desire, and challenging that men and women are usually perceived as opposites.

Maureen Waters acknowledges the feminist struggle against conventions and the homoerotic element between Finn and Diarmuid in *Grania*. Grania could also represent a redefinition of the role of women with regard to feminine agency. Waters also draws a connection between the play's narrative and Gregory's personal life, which forms a significant part of her analysis. Ultimately, Waters concludes that Grania's

decision to return to Finn prevents the play from offering a deeper exploration of gender. Arrington identifies autobiographical dimensions in Gregory's work, particularly underscoring the assertion of female agency as emblematic of a hidden feminist impulse in her dramatic creations. Moreover, she draws attention to *Grania*'s subversion of conventional gender binaries through the portrayal of the "masculine woman" and the "feminine man," suggesting a deliberate destabilisation of normative gender roles. Shirley-Anne Godfrey investigates how the fact that *Grania* was not staged during Gregory's lifetime can be connected to unconscious gender-based ideologies and the discussion of her personal and professional life. Godfrey briefly engages with feminist scholarship on *Grania*, offering an analysis of the play's legacy within the field of feminist literary studies. She concludes that Gregory's portrayal of a female heroine serves as a direct challenge to prevailing societal norms, destabilising established power structures and asserting a subversive feminist ethos.

Scholars Maria-Elena Doyle, Dawn Duncan, Cathy Leeney, and Jamie Lynn Kuntz investigate the function of myth in *Grania* and address its relation to aspects of femininity and gender. Doyle juxtaposes the mythological writing of Irish women with that of men, illuminating the recurring trope of the woman-as-nation, which in literature is the function that women represent the nation; here, in *Grania*, Grania represents Ireland. Within this comparative framework, she argues that *Grania* appropriates the symbolic power conferred upon her to serve personal ends—an act that Doyle identifies as characteristic of feminist agency embedded within Gregory's dramaturgy. While Duncan contends that feminist critics often interpret myth through the lens of patriarchal structures, she also highlights how their inquiries illuminate recurring motifs within the trajectory of the feminine heroic archetype. Leeney investigates the mythic function and nationalism of Irish identity in the play. This reveals a tension between nationalist and feminist agendas in the play. According to

Leeney, Gregory dramatises the split between the symbolic and the real, portraying women like Grania as caught between mythic sovereignty and proto-feminist desires for agency and self-fulfilment. She asserts that Grania contains characteristics of the naturalist theatre movement, which can be traced to the fact that Gregory “wished theatre to be a serious site for cultural and personal reflection and imagination, so the aim of the naturalist movement was to cut through the complacent clichés and conservatism of boulevard ‘well made’ plays.” (Leeney 158–59). Kuntz analyses gender, sexuality, and politics in relation to *Grania* and how the revision of the myth contributes to the Irish cultural revival. She concludes that the play, among other fellow female writers’ plays is a reflection of the political climate during the Irish Literary Revival and the attempts of women to oppose gender norms and oppression. Kuntz characterises *Grania* as a heroine contending with sociocultural constraints that restrain her agency and sexual autonomy. Nevertheless, she attains intellectual parity with her male counterpart, Finn, and ultimately subverts the patriarchal structures that seek to define her. Paul Murphy offers an examination of *Grania* through the lens of gender and the conceptualisation of women as fantasy objects. He identifies Grania as one of the rare figures in Irish mythology who actively asserts agency—both in her selection of a romantic partner and by making her own political decisions. Murphy ultimately argues that the enactment of sexual and political desire enables Grania to attain an elevated status, which she then leverages to transform her objectified position into a means of self-preservation.

Moreover, there are several scholars who have engaged with *Grania* through a feminist theoretical lens, but they vary in their depth and foregrounding of the character’s challenging of gender roles. Richard Allen Cave explores *Grania* as a theatrical portrayal of ‘strong’ female characters. Although his analysis appears to lack engagement with a nuanced feminist theoretical lens, he nevertheless, like Kuntz,

affirms that Grania reclaims her agency and actively resists the deterministic roles of fate and victimhood. In a more recent study, Lekha Nath Dhakal examines the play through the lens of the emerging concept of the “New Woman,” situating Grania’s character within the sociopolitical dynamics of the period. Dhakal highlights Grania’s defiance of patriarchal expectations, emphasising her expression of individual female desire and her rejection of a submissive role. This resistance is portrayed as consonant with the broader triumphs of the contemporary women’s movement. Shonagh Hill examines *Grania* in relation to idealised femininity and the mythmaking processes that shape female identity, including the trope of the woman-as-nation. Hill argues that Grania’s apparent submission to Finn’s authority is, in fact, a strategic manoeuvre to reclaim agency for her own purposes. Employing the theoretical concept of metamorphosis, Hill delineates how transformative mechanisms within the play destabilise traditional myths of femininity. She ultimately concludes that the female body remains a contested site of articulation and agency, underscoring the corporeal dimension of feminist struggle in Gregory’s dramaturgy.

Melissa Sihra examines the patriarchal frameworks that have shaped female representation and agency within twentieth-century Irish theatre. She argues that Lady Gregory’s literary contributions hinge on a critical negotiation between symbolic femininity and autonomous female subjectivity. Grania, as an exemplary figure, asserts her desires and retains narrative control despite operating within a restrictive cultural space where male-dominated structures prevail. Within this context, a character of Grania’s resolute self-determination remains an uncommon presence in the Irish dramatic tradition of the time.

With respect to analysing Gore-Booth’s *Fiametta*, only limited scholarly research has been conducted yet. Sonja Tiernan published the first official version of *Fiametta* from Gore-Booth’s manuscripts. Tiernan interprets *Fiametta* as a

dramatisation of the destructive consequences of marriage, situating its feminist significance within the broader context of the suffragette movement and early twentieth-century political discourse. She contends that the play challenges essentialist notions of gender by positing its social construction and articulates the trope of the New Woman through the agency and resistance of its young female characters. Moreover, Tiernan emphasises that the depiction of controlling male love functions as a cautionary element, framing the play as a critical examination of the constrictive and potentially damaging nature of traditional marital expectations.

Another scholar engages with Gore-Booth's work more generally: Kenna Neitch discusses Gore-Booth's writing as a feminist author while focusing on how she adapted the Deidre myth. This investigation explores the gender equality that Gore-Booth wants to discuss in Deidre. She engages with the bad/good woman dichotomy, which she wants to deconstruct and how Gore-Booth attributes Deidre agency. Finally, examining Gore-Booth's Deidre as an example, her works represent the critical engagement with patriarchal values and how to use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house.

### **3. Central Terminology from Gender Theory to Queer Resistance**

In order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical concepts of sex and gender, it is essential to briefly review their fundamental principles. Beginning with an examination of Simone de Beauvoir, a seminal figure in the realm of French and European feminism, this study will introduce her concept of woman as the Other, thereby establishing a foundation for Luce Irigaray's notion of sexual difference. Although both philosophers exemplify a gender theory that reproduces a binary tradition (Geerts and van der Tuin 11), tracing both conceptualisations is pivotal in comprehending the mechanisms and patterns behind women's othering and the manner in which societal and interpersonal dynamics influence the notions, as

theorised by Beauvoir and Irigaray. While Beauvoir is seen as an equality feminist who advocates equal rights as a means to free women from oppression, Irigaray's view of "women" discusses feminism of difference in a way that perceives women as specific and different from men and not equal (Geerts and van der Tuin 11).

In addition to these central terms, Judith Butler's notion of gender constructivism will be examined to highlight the issue of gender and attributing fixed characteristics to men and women. In contrast to Beauvoir and Irigaray, Butler proposes a non-essentialist notion of theorising gender that proposes the fluidity of gender and opposes fixed categories of gender. It is imperative to demonstrate how specific characteristics traditionally ascribed to women are socially constructed and merely attributed to claims of tradition or "normality".

Beauvoir and Butler will be utilised to identify the protagonists' struggles with heteronormativity. Adrienne Rich's concept of compulsory heterosexuality offers a valuable perspective on the dynamics that lead to women being coerced into a heterosexual lifestyle. This coercion, in turn, serves to perpetuate the entrenched social construct of heteronormativity, which functions as a mechanism of oppression. Irigaray's concept of sexual difference, which also proposes that women should find a different sphere of understanding separate from men, is crucial to the theorisation of the protagonists' struggle with heteronormativity. Furthermore, it demonstrates that this new understanding can be utilised as a means of resistance. Investigating the protagonists' modes of resistance and responses to their oppression, I will apply Irigaray's idea of a different thinking from a male framework as well as Audre Lorde's notion of the master's tools and the mythical norm. The following concepts will demonstrate the framework and tools utilised by the protagonist in their opposition to subjugation by men and heteronormative oppression. Finally, the term 'queer resistance' will be defined in order to evaluate the protagonists' resistance and analyse

the manner in which it can be deemed a successful resistance or why their struggle prevails.

### **3.1 Patriarchy, Heteronormativity and Phallogentrism**

When theorising concepts in the fields of feminist, gender and queer studies, it is inevitable that three central terms will be used. I will provide my working definitions of these terms before moving on to broader concepts. First, “patriarchy” is a term to describe a system led by male authority and which, in its sex-gender form, is a system of social, political and economic institutional discrimination against women (Humm 200). Patriarchy is defined as women’s subordination to men (Humm 200). When analysing the plays, this will be a crucial term to evaluate the protagonists' struggles with heteronormativity and how this can be traced back to patriarchal discrimination. This term is closely intertwined with the concept of heteronormativity. Therefore, it is important to explain this term and its mutual influence on heteronormativity.

‘Heteronormativity’ entails beliefs that uphold heterosexuality, which normalises a sex and gender binary which not only affects societal views towards sexual orientation but also towards family dynamics (Goldbach et al. 376). This means, heterosexual family structures, like the attraction and marriage between the opposite sex (man and woman), are seen as normal, as well as the expectation of desiring children. Relating this term to patriarchy, patriarchy is a system that encourages heterosexual relationships and discriminates against any non-heterosexual relationship. An example is the institutionalisation of marriage, which favours the mother-father-child dynamic as a traditional heterosexual structure, where men are dominant, privileged and hold power over others in the family simply by being men (Goldbach et al. 377). Thus, patriarchy entails the beliefs of heteronormativity, and at the same time, heteronormativity guides the structures of patriarchal institutions. It is important to note that people who do not deviate from heteronormative expectations

can still struggle with the system because it restricts gender and sexual expression, denying or making it uncomfortable for them to even attempt to act outside these limitations (Goldbach et al. 378). Lastly, mutually influenced by both terms is the concept of “phallogentrism”. The phallogentric perspective entails that the phallus or penis is seen as a symbol of power (Humm 205). In a phallogentric society, masculinity defines culture, with the male experience assumed to encompass all disciplines (Humm 205). Consequently, the experience of women is neglected, and women’s access to knowledge is reduced (Humm 205). Deriving from phallogentrism is the concept of phallogocentrism, which relates the concept of phallogentrism to language and patriarchy. Phallogocentrism means that patriarchy influences language to the extent of a phallogentric structured language that neglects women’s experiences and is built on male knowledge (Humm 205). Phallogentrism influences both heteronormativity and patriarchy. For example, the heterosexual institution of marriage is a phallogentric norm that privileges men and attributes power to them. In this case, marriage is a patriarchal institution that carries heteronormative values and favours and promotes heterosexuality.

### **3.2 Beauvoir’s Understanding of “Woman”**

Beauvoir’s most influential work, *The Second Sex* (1949), interrogates the notion of woman and femininity. Beauvoir challenges the perception that having a womb is necessary for being a woman, thereby critiquing biological essentialism, claiming that even humans in possession of a womb sometimes are not perceived as women (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 3). This observation indicates that the correlation between femininity and womanhood is a contentious issue. She invalidates the prevailing notion that femininity is defined by predetermined characteristics:

“But conceptualism has lost ground: biological and social sciences no longer believe there are immutably determined entities that define given characteristics like those of the woman, the Jew or the black; science

considers characteristics as secondary reaction to a situation. If there is no such thing today as femininity, it is because there never was.” (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 3–4)

Here, Beauvoir challenges the categorisation of women as being perceived as feminine. Overall, she deconstructs the notion of femininity being tied to womanhood. She reiterates evidence found by science that a group of humans, like women, cannot be defined through fixed characteristics, deconstructing the assumption that a woman must inherently be associated with femininity. She argues further: “Yet speaking of certain women, the experts proclaim, ‘They are not women’, even though they have a uterus like the others.” (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 3). She claims here that “woman” is not even necessarily connected to having a uterus. But what does it mean that the concept of woman is not tied to her reproductive ability and traditional conceptualisations of femininity? Beauvoir asks accordingly: “Does the word ‘woman’, then, have no content?” (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 4). It means she has been defined by categories that do not necessarily apply to every “woman”. Of primary significance is the fact that Beauvoir theorised that so far, the content of 'woman' has been defined by the word 'woman' in a manner that differs from that of 'men', and thus signifies an “Other”.

The concept of the "Other" serves to narrow down Beauvoir's notion of womanhood. A woman is defined in relation to a man and is denied the existence as an “autonomous being” (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 5–6). Beauvoir provides the objective that women are not seen as independent subjects and that they lack agency. Man being “the Absolute” (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 6), she is simply “the Other” (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 6). “Woman”, in Beauvoir’s words, is defined through men and as a being different from men. The definition of the female self is inextricably linked to that of the male self. A further issue is posited through the perception of men as the subject and as essential, whilst women are perceived as inessential and as objects (Beauvoir, *The*

*Second Sex* 7). The duality of essential and non-essential beings defines women as a negative version of men, characterised by absence and lack of male qualities.

Another central aspect is that women have unconsciously or consciously internalised the notion of being defined by men and thus perceived as Other. Women need to become conscious of this internalised othering. Beauvoir extrapolates this claim through the master-slave notion. In this relation, the oppressor controls the oppressed, even though both are mutually reliant on one another (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 9). To illustrate this point, one may consider the case of women who engage in care labour for children. These women, despite their role as primary caregivers, often find themselves in a position of subjugation to men, assuming the role of 'the slave'. In contrast, men, too, are reliant on women's child-care services, thereby negating any justification for them to assume a position of authority. The woman in question is coerced into adopting the role of a slave, thereby becoming subjugated to men. Beauvoir's definition of woman as the Other means that woman is an object lacking autonomy. This means they are incapable of making conscious decisions regarding their own identity. As they cannot decide consciously, their lack of autonomy and their identity as the Other is normalised and usually an internalised mechanism. In this way, the oppression of women is seen as "natural" (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 15). Beauvoir delineates that women being oppressed and othered is deemed as "normal" or "natural" by society. The coercion in the master-slave dynamic supports Beauvoir's argument that the "Other" is a naturalised, widely unchallenged state of women's existence.

Following the claim that women have internalised their othering, Beauvoir furthermore appeals to women to work against the process of "othering" and to claim their freedom as subjects (*The Second Sex* 17). In her capacity as an existentialist philosopher, Beauvoir proposes to resist othering and renounce happiness in favour of

freedom (*The Second Sex* 17). In her essay on existentialism, Beauvoir describes the existentialist notion as “surpassing the interior-exterior, subjective-objective opposition” (*What Is Existentialism?* 4). It is evident that, upon thorough examination of her arguments and observations, Beauvoir associates an existentialist lifestyle with the challenging of the oppressive structure that categorises women as Other. This existentialist lifestyle includes prioritising freedom as a subject, overcoming the othering role by realising they are the subjects and choosing this existentialism despite potential unhappiness.

Since Beauvoir’s theory, feminist and gender theory have undergone significant progress. It is therefore essential to evaluate the criticism levelled at Beauvoir’s theorisation in order to ascertain why it remains an effective and central part of gender theory, as it has paved the way for other theorists. Firstly, Beauvoir can be considered an equality feminist (Stoller 91) as she advocates for women to oppose being Othered and rather become autonomous subjects equal to men. In doing so, Beauvoir essentializes the category “woman” as pre-established. This reinforces a binary conceptualisation of gender and has a claim of universality to the category of “woman”, which is critiqued throughout contemporary queer theory, as “woman” is not an identity that is easily defined. Overall, Beauvoir, while encouraging women to become subjects and fight for freedom, establishes a concept of woman, where women are defined in relation to men. While Beauvoir’s theory surrounding gender assumes a man-woman binary, a first development from Beauvoir’s notion was developed through Luce Irigaray’s theory of sexual difference. Sexual difference attempts to isolate the woman as a concept from the patriarchal and masculine-defined language, seeking to define “woman” not in comparison to men but on its own.

### **3.3 Irigaray's Theory of Sexual Difference**

Luce Irigaray's *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985) explores her understanding of gender and sex by extending the previous critique that the subject "woman" remains tied to the definition of what a man is. Irigaray argues that the subject woman is intrinsically linked to matter and nature, but most significantly, to the male (Donovan). She proposes the idea of sexual difference to separate the idea of "woman" from the concept of "men" (Donovan). She endeavours to redefine the gendered notion of "woman" that was, up until then, defined in relation to men, thereby working against the women's necessity to be equal to men.

Progressing from Beauvoir, Irigaray presents an alternative perspective on sex and gender, trying to disentangle women's identity from being tied to men. Therefore, Irigaray critiques Sigmund Freud's view that the "feminine" is inherently defined through a negative and opposite of men (69). While her theory aligns with Beauvoir's approach that women need to challenge their position of inferior object, she elaborates her critique of Freud to establish a different notion of "woman". Irigaray challenges the aspect of "mimicry", meaning that women have or strive for the same qualities and rights as men (Irigaray 76). She proposes that women do not seek sameness with men, as this would associate them with male logic (Irigaray 78). Rather, she asserts that women need to be differentiated from male-centred logic, advocating for frameworks that reflect women's unique experiences and perspectives (Irigaray 78). In Irigaray's theoretical framework, women are fundamentally different from men and cannot be defined through a male frame of reference that includes the notion of equality with men. She suggests "a disruptive excess is possible on the feminine side" (Irigaray 78), arguing for a new knowledge that does not utilize knowledge of the male sphere.

Irigaray highlights that it is naïve to assume that by simply being a woman one is "outside the phallic power" (Irigaray 81). Women live "within an order prescribed by

the masculine” (Irigaray 81), which means they only know language and terms that were instantiated by the masculine; they have no tools to “analyze their own exploitation” (Irigaray 81). Women live inside the sphere of influence of the phallic power. Inside the phallic sphere, they have to subscribe to the femininity established by men, and they have to be “commodities” or “products”, which prevents them from becoming a subject (Irigaray 84). While this aligns with Beauvoir’s concept of “woman”, Irigaray elaborates her theory and argues that if woman denies the “specificity of her sex” (Irigaray 85), which the male framework enforces on her “identity” (Irigaray 85), society would turn women from objects into “speaking subjects” outside the phallographic language (Irigaray 85). She concludes that the identity and meaning of “woman” remains undefined and uncertain until women are able to express themselves in their own language, a state which has yet to be realised (Irigaray 85). For Irigaray, women are “the sex which is not one,” as they are inherently different from men and their identity remains undetermined within the existing frameworks of articulation.

In order to provide a comprehensive evaluation of Irigaray's theory of sexual differences, it is essential to consider its relationship to the concept of essentialism. Even though there have been some changes since Beauvoir’s theory, Irigaray’s concept of sexual difference strives for a category, a framework that determines women’s identity; this ultimately reinforces the gender binary. Notwithstanding her argument that “woman” is not simply the opposite of “man”, she nevertheless maintains that women and men are two distinct groups. Her theory of sexual difference remains valuable and is more effective when combined with Judith Butler's perspective on gender and sex. Butler's theory eliminates the gender essentialising aspect of a determined gender identity, proposing instead a concept of gender fluidity that challenges the fixed categories of man and woman.

Whilst the validity of this criticism is indisputable, it is nevertheless crucial to exercise caution when assessing Irigaray in relation to essentialism. The employment of Irigaray's sexual difference theory is contingent upon the critical acknowledgement that a binary and essentialising approach to gender is problematic in the context of gender theory. Notwithstanding, her evolution in the field of sex and gender theory remains a significant contributing factor. Her apparent resistance to the dualistic conception of man and woman as posited by Beauvoir can be interpreted as a progression that is, in part, divergent from the conventionalisation of categories. Whilst Beauvoir's philosophy is characterised by an essentialist approach to the binary of woman and man, which is predicated on the male construction of society, Irigaray's essentialism is less direct. It has been termed "strategic essentialism" (Donovan). This means that it is a more nuanced approach that allows for a redefined femininity detached from historically established categories of oppression (Donovan). Strategic essentialism continues to advocate for a unifying category for the concept of "woman", a position that does not entirely abandon essentialist notions but rejects the notion that gender can be reduced to binary categories, as Beauvoir contends. The question of whether this call for a new language and sphere of definition for women would be sufficient to act against oppression remains unresolved. However, this issue has been further developed by another theorist in the context of the sex-gender notion. A significant contribution to this discourse is Judith Butler's theory, which posits that gender and sex are inherently fluid concepts that defy complete apprehension or categorisation of man and woman. To substantiate my definition of queer gender conceptions in the following and ultimately work with the term "queer resistance", I will utilise Butler's theory of gender and her insights on gender constructivism.

### 3.4 Butler's Trouble with Gender

Judith Butler is a philosopher who draws extensively from psychoanalysis, feminist and post-structuralist traditions in their work to engage with the notion of identity (Salih 1). In critical theory, they are usually associated with queer, feminist and gender theory, and they are known for investigating the relation between identity and subjectivity, which are constructed through power structures (Salih 1–2). In their 1990 publication *Gender Trouble*, Butler explores conceptions of "woman" and gender identity, asking how the subject is constructed in contemporary society and the reasons for its failure (Salih 2). In the following discussion, an examination will be conducted of the manner in which Butler's theoretical framework elaborates upon the concept of gender in relation to the notion of woman, with a view to identifying a less essentialising concept of gender identity.

Butler's definition of sex and gender confronts the presumably imminent relationship between those terms and ultimately underscores the influence of culture on both concepts. When bodies are understood as "passive recipients" (Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 11) of an incontestable cultural law, there is a suggestion of gender determinism which is inevitably connected to the anatomy of bodies (Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 11). Butler argues that Beauvoir's notion of becoming "woman" asserts gender as "constructed" but also that there is a form of choice in this becoming (Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 11). Butler observes that Beauvoir's notion of becoming is tied to the cultural compulsion to become one and that this is not necessarily related to the female sex (Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 11). This means that becoming "woman" is not defined by the biological component, as Beauvoir's example of having a womb, but becoming woman is influenced by societal and cultural components that established a concept of a

woman. With this, Butler critiques the body as a passive instance as well as the cultural determinism of gender through biological sex, asserting that gender is not a consequence of sex. Sex is shaped and defined by cultural influences; sex and gender are socio-cultural constructs.

Butler refers to Irigaray, suggesting that the concept of women's identity is characterised by a state of contradiction within the discourse, as there is an absence of a prevailing framework capable of adequately representing them, which renders them as 'unrepresentable' (Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 13). Then Butler poses the question whether female pleasure exists outside the culturally constructed, outside the phallogentric system (*Gender Trouble* 41). If this is the case, they ask whether it makes sense to search for a concept that categorises a woman within the structures (Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 41). Butler asserts that the radical distinction of female sexuality from the phallic system remains an issue as women who are unable to recognise their sexuality as this female sexuality are rejected within this framework (*Gender Trouble* 41). Consequently, this challenges the essentialist and binary conceptions of gender, sex and identity. Butler's objective is to establish an alternative conceptualisation of gender that does not rely on the notion of rigid categories of woman and man, but rather emphasises the fluidity of gender.

This alternative conceptualisation encompasses that gender is considered a social construct which is "inscribed on the surface of bodies" (Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 186). The expression of a socio-political gender is not a choice but a consequence of the formation of society (Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 185). The theory that Butler calls "performativity" is founded upon the Foucauldian concept of body politics (Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 183), positing that each

individual is a constituent of the phallogocentric system and that human agency and existence are inherently constrained by its dynamics (Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 184–85). It can thus be concluded that the gendered expression of identity is inextricably linked to the system. Moreover, Butler's concept of gender performativity can be defined as the series of effects arising from the stylised repetition of conforming or gender-troubling acts (Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 191). A person's expression of identity through the performativity of gender is what constitutes the identity and not the identity that establishes the performance; thus, Butler critiques the materiality of identity as fixed (Tarin 135). Individuals who deviate from the society's expected gender performance are often perceived as challenging established notions of gender. The concept of performativity is intrinsically linked to the notion of gender, insofar as it involves a deconstruction of existing gendered systems and the argument that gender is a system created to categorise individuals' identities in a phallogocentric manner.

When utilising this concept, it is necessary to mention that Butler was criticised for neglecting the material dimension of the body, which Butler themselves addresses in the preface of their work *Bodies That Matter* (2011) (Butler ix). It is vital to retrace their argument in this way, as otherwise the materiality of trans\* individuals would be denied. The bodily transition is essential for trans\* realities, and thus materiality must be acknowledged. Butler's argument is that the term “sex” should no longer be considered a “static condition of the body” (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* xii). It is suggested that the concept of “sex” is not a pre-given entity; rather, it is a concept that is materialised through the implementation of “regulatory norms” (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* xii). Butler's argument upholds that the materialisation of bodies demands the reiteration of societal norms, a process that continually attempts to solidify gender and sexed identities (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* xii). The degree to which a body

materialises through its performative compliance with societal norms is directly proportional to its increased significance or "matters" within the framework of those norms. Consequently, Butler provides a response to the former critiques concerning their conceptualisations of sex and gender. The argument advanced here is that all bodies should matter, yet not all do, thus contradicting the fundamentalist perspective of bodies in society.

### **3.5 Compulsory Heterosexuality and Straight Thinking**

In her 2003 foreword to her essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality" (1980), Adrienne Rich emphasises the necessity for heterosexual feminists to be critical towards ideology which privileges and demands heterosexuality (12). This is a significant observation, particularly in the context of the primary analysis of this thesis, which employs the concept of compulsory heterosexuality to scrutinise the manifestations of heteronormativity that favour heterosexuals and a heterosexual lifestyle. As neither play deals with lesbianism in concrete terms, which is central to Rich's essay, the notion of lesbian experience will be expanded to include the heterosexual chains with which the protagonists struggle. In this section, the argument will be advanced that Rich's assertion of erasure of lesbian existence can be understood as a falsification of heterosexual women's experience (Rich 11).

In the beginning of "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence", Rich proclaims that the books she read, which deal with the social relations of sexes, are problematic but would have been more powerful if they acknowledged lesbian existence (13). In these books, the social reality is that heterosexuality is the presumed preference (Rich 13). While I will argue that *Grania* and *Fiametta* challenge the social relations of the sexes, Rich's theory is central to understanding how the plays effectively do this.

Heterosexuality is theorised as a political institution in Rich's essay. She argues that heterosexuality must be recognised as oppressive and seen as an assumption that has solidified in people's thinking (Rich 17). Why is this assumption political? This assumption, which has become deeply entrenched in the public consciousness and is widely regarded as the prevailing norm, does not emerge spontaneously. Rather, it can be traced back to the prevailing socio-political structure of a patriarchal and male-dominated society.

Rich provides a detailed exposition on the rationale behind women seeking emotional support from men and submitting to their authority.(Rich 18). She emphasises that research up to that point has not alluded to compulsory heterosexuality as an ideology. One example that Rich identifies as a source of male power through the ideology of compulsory heterosexuality is that men do not primarily engage with childcare (18). It is simply a characteristic of compulsory heterosexuality, which normalises women being a mother and child bearer, also means that they are expected to be responsible for the care labour.

Rich employs Kathleen Gough's typology of masculine power in anarchic and contemporary societies as a methodological foundation for the analysis of male power. In her terms, such power is not solely characterised by the production of sexual inequality, but also by the enforcement of heterosexuality (Rich 18). I will be utilising these proposed characteristics of male power to identify structures of compulsory heterosexuality in the plays: to deny women [their own] sexuality, to force [male sexuality] upon them, to command or exploit their labour to control their produce, to control or rob them of their children, to confine them physically and prevent their movement, to use them as objects in male transactions, to stifle their creativeness, to withhold from them large areas of the society's knowledge and cultural attainments

(Rich 18–19). Particularly central for my analysis will be Rich's examples of these characteristics:

1. The “definition of male pursuits as more valuable than female within any culture, so that cultural values become the embodiment of male subjectivity” (Rich 19), which highlights that male opinions, male desires, for example, in art or simply in life. For instance, male desire for a heterosexual relationship is considered more valuable, which is why this has become a widely accepted value system within the broader context of patriarchy.

2. The “restriction of female self-fulfilment to marriage and motherhood” (Rich 19) is a characteristic of male power that denies women to have individual pursuits, to define themselves outside the role of motherhood and wife. Compulsory heterosexuality promotes this idea of marriage and motherhood as the only desirable identity for women.

3. Rich lists “arranged marriage” (Rich 18) as an example of male power being used to force male sexuality upon them. I would even argue that this involves pressuring women to believe that heterosexual marriage is the 'right' and only relationship between a man and a woman. In the analysis, I will show that the protagonists struggle with arranged marriage or are coerced and convinced to agree to a marriage that they clearly appear to reject.

These characteristics are predicated on the premise of restriction and an ideology of heterosexuality that is typically oriented towards men or that devalues women's subjectivity. These characteristics of male power culminate in the unquestioned conviction that it is inevitable to marry men and be sexually attracted to them (Rich 20). It is evident that these practices of oppressive male power serve to deny women the opportunity to question social reality, thereby eliminating the possibility of alternative experiences. In this system of male power, besides the normalisation of

sexual attraction to men by women, Rich also argues that it the male sex drive becomes naturalised.

Rich maintains that the naturalisation of the adolescent male sex drive is reckoned to have no responsibility once it has been triggered (25). The sexual drive of men is regarded as an inherent aspect of their nature, and it is acknowledged as a societal norm; women simply learn to accept it (Rich 25). This, Rich asserts, is responsible for the imbalance between husband and wife, male and female student/employer/family member (25). In this passage, Rich employs the concept of the naturalisation process to elucidate the phenomenon of men rationalising their actions based on their sexual impulse. Rich borrows an observation from Kathleen Barry to employ an analysis that demonstrates how these men attempt to absolve themselves of responsibility for their actions, attributing their actions to external forces, often portraying the victim, who is often female, as having instigated the act (25). This phenomenon exemplifies the manner in which compulsory heterosexuality becomes imperceptible, unquestioned and naturalised.

Now that I have established that compulsory heterosexuality seems to be working invisibly and has to be actively identified to be questioned, I will explain Rich's term of *lesbian continuum*. The term *lesbian continuum* represents a range which is not simply confined to lesbianism but female experience (Rich 27). It includes the bonding against male tyranny and the sharing of experiences, as well as political support between women (Rich 27). The concept under discussion can be defined as the rejection of a prescribed, compulsory way of life and of the male right to access women; it is more than a mere resistance (Rich 27).

Rich posits that the practice of heterosexuality is, for a considerable number of women, a form of deception. Compulsory female heterosexuality, Rich claims, is "The lie [that] keeps numberless women psychologically trapped, trying to fit mind, spirit,

and sexuality into a prescribed script because they cannot look beyond the parameters of the acceptable.” (34). Women still endeavour to appropriate their identity into heterosexual structures even though their true identity deviates from the heterosexual system. She describes it as “the woman imprisoned in prescriptive ideas of the ‘normal’” (Rich 35), which leads to their inability to self-define and fewer opportunities (Rich 35). It is evident that the aforementioned phenomena are not exclusively associated with lesbian sexuality; rather, they are intricately intertwined with the broader context of women's existence, which is profoundly influenced and constrained by heterosexuality. Myths and tales are based on, romanticise and tell the story that women are always tragically drawn to men (Rich 35). This implies that women need men as social and economic partners, as protectors, for sexual and psychological completion and ultimately that heterosexuality is the fundamental social instance of family (Rich 35). There is an absence of choice, a coercion that is unacknowledged (Rich 37) because it is an unconscious lie they live.

### **3.6 The Master's Tools**

Audre Lorde was a black feminist scholar whose work has significantly altered critical theory, especially in relation to feminism, women, and difference. The essays “The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House” and “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” from her 1984 collection *Sister Outsider* are particularly interesting in terms of resisting heteronormativity and challenging patriarchal oppression. In the following, significant notions are employed to situate the examination of resistance and the existence of hidden, potentially unconscious alliances between women and the oppressor.

First, in relation to Irigaray's proposition that women must define themselves outside of phallogentric structures, Lorde's argument agrees with the aspect that women should establish new definitions. Lorde proposes: “It is learning how to stand

alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths.” (“The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” 105). She emphasises the importance of embracing individuals who do not conform to conventional norms, ultimately creating new structures that benefit people outside these structures, too. She advocates for the establishment of bonds and the organisation of these individuals to embrace differences and turn them into strengths.

The preceding assertion might exceed the boundaries of the requisite framework, which posits that women must embrace their differences and strive for a greater cause. However, it is important to note that she does make one salient point, which is non-negligible for my analysis of the plays: “For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” (Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” 105). The issue under discussion is the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of utilising the tools, that is to say, the structures taught by the oppressor, to act against the structure itself. It will only allow the oppressed to temporarily alter the circumstances of the oppression and not bring substantial change (Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” 105). She argues that women who keep identifying with these structures and play by the oppressor’s rule might find this aspect threatening (Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” 105). Consequently, Lorde needs women to reject the oppressor’s regimen and structures to break free from its chains. This aspect will be substantial when discussing how the protagonists resist existing structures in the plays and whether they have succeeded in resisting the norm, or if they just created a temporary fix for their oppression.

Lorde describes the action of opposing the heteronormative with the notion of the *mythical norm*. This is the norm, “which each one of us in our heart knows ‘that is not me’” (Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” 109). She elaborates that this norm is a group of people that has the power in America and is usually “white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure” (Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” 109). Once more, she employs this as a means of highlighting the fact that those for whom this mythical norm does not apply should unite and refrain from engaging in conflict with one another. She highlights that it is uncomplicated, especially for white women, to agree with the oppressor and choose the easier way by trying to be “good enough, pretty enough, sweet enough, quiet enough” (Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” 112) to benefit to a certain extent from the privileges that the oppressor might grant you. But Lorde criticises that this only allows to “co-exist with patriarchy in relative peace” (Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” 112) because the power is still with the arbitrary mind of the man, and should he randomly decide you are not good enough, your relative peace will vanish (Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” 112). Lorde's discourse incorporates the phenomenon of quiet consent, wherein individuals, particularly women, tacitly consent to the subjugation perpetrated by their oppressors, erroneously perceiving safety based on their perceived suitability for the oppressor to refrain from inflicting harm. People are still oppressed, even though in the situation it might seem the straightforward way, in the long run, this alliance with the oppressor is one-sided.

### **3.7 Queer Resistance**

Defining queer resistance, especially when relying on the connotation between sexual identity and queerness, demands nuanced investigation. In general, the characters of

the plays *Grania* and *Fiametta* cannot be interpreted as queer, that is to say, as exhibiting an orientation of sexual identity in the homosexual sense. However, the term queerness is a more extensive conceptualisation that encompasses not only the sexual identity of gay men and lesbians, as previously established by Rich's *lesbian continuum*. My analysis aims to find aspects of queer resistance in a manner that sees queerness as a resistance to the norm but, as in Foucault's theorization, in a productive way: "relations of power are not in superstructural positions, with merely a role of prohibition or accompaniment; they have a directly productive role, wherever they come into play" (Foucault 94). Foucault considers power structures to be not only oppressive and a force that is negative and minimising. After Foucault, power is productive, which is a perception that I will apply to queer resistance, making it a productive power of resistance. This productive power of resistance can create connections between women and liberate people, as will be shown in the analysis. Queer resistance must be defined broadly as an overarching concept beyond sexual categories and in a way that serves a literary analysis.

Therefore, the definition of "queer" that is proposed here is one that is drawn from the work of Janet R. Jakobsen, who is opposed to the idea that "queer" is simply a term that can be embodied (Jakobsen 512). First, it is necessary to draw from the previously discussed theory by Butler, who argues that gender is a construct established through social norms. Jakobsen argues that queer is a critique of identity that "resists the normative inscriptions through which bodies are produced" (Jakobsen 512). Jakobsen asserts that the notion "queer" is a resistance to normativity and addresses the problem of embodiment and the normal (Jakobsen 512). The aforementioned detachment of identity and embodiment is not intended to negate an individual's sexual or gender identity. Rather, it is designed to facilitate critical reflection on the manner in which these identities are inextricably intertwined with the

prevailing norms of the system. I would like to define “queer” as a term of resistance, meaning as a concept that represents opposition to the norm, independent from sexual identity.

The regime of the normal, Jakobsen asserts, has complicated relations between each norm and the power structure of normativity (Jakobsen 513). The system has inherent conflicts and resistance, usually does not consider this fact, which consequently makes the resistance to the norm an act that produces unpleasant effects (Jakobsen 513). Thus, as Jakobsen argues, a distinction between norm and the process of normalisation is necessary to unveil power structures (Jakobsen 513). Drawing on the Foucauldian idea of productive power of resistance and a human doing, “queer” must be defined as a verb rather than a non-essential identity (Jakobsen 516). Looking at Halperin’s definition of “queer”, the notion does not refer to something natural or something determined like an identity (Halperin 62). Its meaning originates from the opposition to the norm (Halperin 62). Then Halperin emphasises that it is a positionality, not an identity of essence, and that this positionality allows us to envision possibilities of rearranging the norm, including gender constructions and common knowledge (Halperin 62). Jakobsen draws heavily on Halperin’s *Saint Foucault*, which conceptualises a definition of “queer” that is non-essential, but is rather a way of opposing the norm, or undoing the society’s learned ways. Thus, “queer” is not necessarily gay or lesbian as a practice but can already be ascribed to behaviour that simply is not expected from society; it is a doing of resistance.

Normativity is defined as a field of power, and norms are the instances that are responsible for materialising bodies and particular actions (Jakobsen 517). The connection to Butler and gender construction is explicit here. Then the mechanisms that attach the notion “normal” to norms are called “normalization” (Jakobsen 517). As Jakobsen situates this analysis in the Foucauldian tradition, I will here briefly situate

the power notion in the Foucauldian norms discourse. Individuals in the realm of historical ontology are in a relation to truth as “subjects of knowledge” (Foucault and Rabinow 351), but also in a relation to a field of power which influences how individuals act on others; lastly, individuals are in relation to ethics through which individuals become moral agents (Foucault and Rabinow 351). This means that individuals are always in a power field that influences their behaviour, and they become moral actions through the existence of ethics. In relation to Jakobsen, this signifies that the process of normalisation occurs within a domain of power. Gender, for example, is always influenced by power through societal norms that were constituted over time and became the “normal” binary of man and woman.

Ethics and morals are evidence of how the norms are organised, and this organisation happens through what can be read as normal (Jakobsen 517). This implies, the mere existence that people always discuss right or wrong is evidence for something like morals, and these morals guide us to act according to norms. Disciplinary power controls the norm’s constraining and productive power (Jakobsen 517–18). For instance, norms can be constraining, as they may discriminate against women as the weaker sex and thus situate women in a hierarchy below men. The disciplinary power, then, could be society’s general rejection of an individual if they step outside the common norms, like not behaving femininely enough. The consequence of this behaviour could be exclusion from participation in societal gatherings like a traditional dance. An example Jakobsen uses, which is also central to my analysis, is the normalisation of “heteronormativity”, establishing heterosexuality as the normal (Jakobsen 518), which can also be related to the privileging of heterosexual couples in the traditional dance culture of partnered dancing.

Following a Foucauldian observation of normalisation, Jakobsen concludes that resistance in the queer way is not a resistance to the norm but a resistance to a system of norms that consists of normativity, meaning also a regime of power (Jakobsen 520). Additionally, a mere claim of resistance to the norm does not undo the normativity but moves into another normativity (Jakobsen 520). Consequently, this system of norms and the inherent power relations must be carefully considered to avoid the reproduction of normativity. It seems challenging to reject the notion of a woman in a heterosexual sense, as, according to Monique Wittig's concept of the straight mind, a woman is inherently linked to the heterosexual relationship (Wittig 107). "Woman" does not even have meaning outside the heterosexual system (Wittig 110). This "straight mind" is an organising mechanism that influences every productive concept because they are all related to heterosexuality. Hence, it will not be sufficient to merely resist one norm in the system, but to be aware of the system of norms and establish a resistance to all of those.

There is a reason that "homo" is not a queered conception, as "homo" only exists in the binary opposition to "hetero"; it is restricted to the power structures of normativity (Jakobsen 522). Queering binaries is a challenge as binaries are incoherent and their incoherence also stabilises them and ensures them being effective which can be summarised as a powerful working alliance that functions in favour of the established norm system (Jakobsen 523). Jakobsen concludes that "to queer" as in the verb is to do something differently but also to find a different set of relations that are not related to the system of binary oppositions of the norms (Jakobsen 528). Meaning it is crucial to not reinforce binaries when resisting or opposing norms, or maybe even, in Irigarayan's sense, find a different language or realm to define actions or identities. In conclusion, Jakobsen posits that the question of disentangling norms from normativity in a society characterised by inherent normalisation remains unresolved.

However, she asserts the imperative of persistent interrogation of norms to achieve such disentanglement (Jakobsen 530). It is indeed an open question that I will attempt to articulate and utilise to investigate the two plays that might engage with queer resistance.

#### **4. Struggles with Heteronormativity and the Question of Queer Resistance in *Grania* and *Fiametta***

Considering the theoretical framework that has been established, it is evident that heteronormativity cannot be delineated by a single norm. Heteronormativity is rather a belief system of several norms. The system under discussion is one of power, defined by interconnected norms that have accumulated over time. Thus, the following is a first evaluation of the heteronormative structures in both plays and in what way the protagonists struggle with heteronormativity. Therefore, I will determine the obstacles of heteronormativity in the plays. The subsequent stage of the research will entail the classification and examination of the protagonist's suffering in the context of a patriarchal and male-dominated system. This will be undertaken with reference to the theories related to gender oppression, more specifically to Irigaray's concept of sexual difference, Beauvoir's argument of Othering, and the aspect of coercion due to compulsory heterosexuality as theorised by Rich. Lastly, with my definition of queer resistance, I will analyse how both plays depict the heroines' struggles with heteronormativity and whether the heroines' journey can be considered queer resistance or if their behaviour rather reinforces the beliefs of heteronormativity.

##### **4.1 Struggles with Heteronormativity in the Plays**

###### **4.1.1 *Fiametta***

First, my analysis aims to substantiate Katherine O'Donnell's claim that she made in her foreword to Sonja Tiernan's publication of Gore-Booth's play:

“The anxiety involved in the schooling, regulation and surveillance by which gender and sexual norms are continually encoded and embodied is the focus of *Fiametta*. Gore-Booth's message is clear: (heterosexual) marriage is based on a false ideology whereby women are expected to naturally desire their capitulation of their liberty to their husband's will.” (O'Donnell i)

O'Donnell argues that *Fiametta* can be considered a critique of marriage and the “natural” desire of women to subordinate to their husbands and give up their liberty. My analysis will expand on this assertion and provide an in-depth investigation of heterosexual marriage, patriarchal power, and heteronormative expectations for women. In *Fiametta*, heteronormative life scripts are depicted in the following ways: Getrude's husband, Wilfrid, repeatedly argues that women's responsibility for domestic life and childcare is natural, which creates pressure for Getrude to fulfil these expectations. Getrude's experiences, feelings and opinions are ignored or not considered serious. Her passion for being an actress is considered less valuable than her obligation to fulfil the role of a wife. Gertude is also considered an object and used as a commodity, as a prize in a duel between men for honour, which aims to deny her subjectivity and autonomy.

Getrude rebels against these heteronormative expectations by expressing her own opinions despite the oppositional views of Wilfrid, Castellar and Mrs Somers. Even though Wilfrid continually critiques her behaviour as a wife, she keeps on pursuing her acting career. Getrude realises to trust her own convictions and finds a new understanding of society, and especially the concept of “woman”. With the help of her sister Val, she is strong enough to express her new understanding and leave her husband. In leaving Wilfrid and expressing her understanding of “woman” that is in opposition to that of patriarchal values, she rebels against heteronormative expectations.

From the outset, *Fiametta* offers an implicit indication of the inevitable decline of the relationship between Getrude and Wilfrid, a dissolution that is predicated on

the incongruity of their respective values. When Wilfrid says about his painting that “the values are all wrong” (Gore-Booth 25), he asserts he is overwhelmed by the subject of his painting (Gore-Booth 25). The reason for his irritation is that the painting is, as he says, “abominably painted” (Gore-Booth 25) and he cannot understand why it is “all wrong” (Gore-Booth 25). He does not want to show Gertrude, as he believes that Gertrude will not understand it. Thus, the subject of the painting remains a mystery, but it indicates that Wilfrid is not having an overall problem with the painting, but with Gertrude's values. This foreshadows the ending of the play, where Gertrude gains a new understanding and likewise does not comprehend Wilfrid's values anymore. In their discussion, love and life are central. The dominant question is whether art, as Gertrude argues, should be the primary focus in life or whether the romantic partner should be central, as Wilfrid claims. Wilfrid claims that he cares more about Gertrude than his art. However, he also asserts that she is unkind and accuses her of being responsible for his ruined art and life (Gore-Booth 25). He wishes that she were a little more human and complains of her loving him in a “strange” and “different” way (Gore-Booth 25). This is later repeated in a conversation with Val, where Wilfrid expresses that he thinks Gertrude “is not human at all” (Gore-Booth 59). This calling her “strange” and “different” initially is evidence of othering: Gertrude is different from other women, who would conform to marriage. The choice of these two particular words highlights Wilfrid's commitment to norms and his refusal to accept that some women oppose these norms. By labelling Gertrude as different and “other”, he devalues her in comparison to women who conform to societal beliefs in heteronormativity. Gertrude's behaviour deviates from heteronormative expectations. Nevertheless, the conversation in the beginning ultimately leads to Gertrude agreeing to marry him under particular conditions, which sets the tone of their relationship being restricted by those conditions. Wilfrid, as the male component of this heterosexual relationship,

feels dissatisfied with Gertrude but still asserts his affection for her. He sees her outside the set of norms associated with heteronormative beliefs, with her opposition to marriage. Gertrude says: "Listen, dear friend, you and I love each other, is not that enough for us, who both of us love what is beautiful, it is so perfect as it is, why do you want to spoil it by this foolish marriage. (Gore-Booth 28) Gertrude makes clear that she sees this love as the extension of a friendship, and she believes that marriage will ruin their love and not make it better. The fact that Wilfrid still convinces her to bind herself to him through marriage indicates that Gertrude's challenge is to navigate her love for Wilfrid while struggling with a heteronormative understanding of love being tied to marriage. Wilfrid understands love between a man and a woman in a heteronormative sense, which includes the patriarchal institution of marriage. Gertrude opposes this as she already suspects that she will not flourish in such a relationship. She struggles with the fact that Wilfrid's understanding of love is imposed on her by her accepting to marry him, even though it is not her conviction that marriage is necessary. Wilfrid's othering emphasises this unequal patriarchal relationship, in which men label women negatively as "different" and consequently devalue women's opinions and convictions.

Following this first conversation of the play, it becomes evident that Gertrude struggles with the relationship, perceiving herself as confined in her liberty. This observation is supported by the fact that Wilfrid believes Gertrude to be well-versed in the role of Shakespeare's Imogen, Juliet or Rosalind, yet Gertrude insists that it is the role of Magda:

GERTRUDE: No, it is none of these, it is Magda. Ah! Poor Magda. How I understand her I can hear the very voices that cry out in the silent depths of her soul. I can feel her struggle for liberty and the chains that hold her back. How they surround her with their harsh voices and their intolerable affliction, those terrible people. She who wanted to be far away in the world of dreams! (Gore-Booth 27)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The original punctuation and orthography are employed, despite the fact that they do not always align with contemporary standards.

Gore-Booth deliberately pits the well-known Shakespearean characters, who are often portrayed by actresses, against the New Woman character Magda. It is most likely that Gore-Booth is making an intertextual reference to the heroine of Hermann Sudermann's 1893 play *Magda* (original German title: *Heimat*), in which Magda struggles with liberty upon returning home after a long absence. *Magda* was a popular play in the 1890s and follows the tradition of the New Woman genre by portraying Magda as an independent and self-assured character who opposes patriarchal oppression. This matches the feelings that Gertrude describes when she plays Magda. Gertrude claims that she is fighting for freedom and that the people around her are harassing her with their voices. Gertrude identifies with her and understands Magda's feelings, evidence that she, too, has encountered these feelings of being constrained in her liberty. Wilfrid's assumption that she knows the Shakespearean characters by heart, in opposition to her saying it is Magda, a New Woman character, shows that Wilfrid sees her as more of a conforming woman instead of seeing her struggle for liberty. Utilising phrases like "the very voices that cry out in the silent depths of her soul", "the chains that hold her", and "to be far away in the world of dreams" (Gore-Booth 27) underlines the seriousness of her struggle. Gertrude feels silenced because her soul — representing her true self — is crying out but cannot be heard. She compares her struggle for liberty to being literally held by chains, thereby equating her oppression, the cause of her repressed liberty, with physical restriction. Then, her wish "to be far away in the worlds of dreams" (Gore-Booth 27) expresses that she feels more comfortable, more herself when she is asleep and can dream. Dreaming is an escape for her because in the real world, she is unable to be free. These phrases introduce Gertrude's feelings towards her life, and she asserts that she feels oppressed and that she struggles for liberty. The comparison between Shakespearean characters and the

New Woman character Magda highlights that her struggle is related to Wilfrid not seeing her as she is: She is a woman in the more modern sense of the New Woman, who challenges and opposes heteronormative expectations imposed on women.

The patriarchal institution is responsible for Gertrude's loss of creativity and her flourishing as an actress. Wilfrid responds to Gertrude that love would have helped Magda in her struggles, which Gertrude opposes:

WILFRID: She had never known it. The love I speak of is pure. He who would be worthy of it must be willing to sacrifice the whole world for its sake. For it is founded on Sacrifice like art. Let these two go hand in hand and they will conquer the world.

GERTRUDE: Ah! dear friend, you are wrong, they can never go hand in hand.

WILFRID: Why do you say that? Cannot love be the inspiration of art? I feel it, I know it. With you to help me there is nothing I could not achieve. You and I together could conquer the whole world.

GERTRUDE: And I Wilfrid, I should lose my own soul. Is the world worth such a price? (Gore-Booth 27–28)

Wilfrid indicates that love and art can flourish together and that love inspires art. Gertrude disagrees and sees love and art as not compatible. Wilfrid is unable to understand Gertrude's perspective on their relationship: "he is refusing to acknowledge Gertrude's need to dedicate herself to her work which places her under an intolerable burden" (O'Donnell ii). Elaborating on O'Donnell's assertion, later in the play, it becomes evident that for Gertrude, love ruins her art, here acting, and for Wilfrid, art had not been flourishing for him even before the marriage. The misunderstanding addressed by O'Donnell is evident in both characters' perspectives on art and love. Analysing their different perspectives with Gough's characteristics of male power, which claim that male power enforces heterosexuality and is responsible for the decline of women's creativity, it can be argued that Gertrude loses her creative power by submitting to the patriarchal institution of marriage. Marriage is an institution that serves men and employs heteronormative values that restrict women and grant them lesser rights. This becomes evident when, in Act III, Gertrude confesses

to Val: "You do not understand, work never tires me. I do not want a rest from work. It is the endless worry of life. One cannot have a holiday from marriage." (Gore-Booth 64) She explicitly points out marriage as the reason for her tiredness. The word "holiday" suggests that marriage is work for her, which is generally normalised for women as they are expected to do all the housework and care work in a marriage. In a patriarchal system, women are expected to "stay home" while their husbands are responsible for earning money and going to work. This makes women dependent on men, as they have no financial resources of their own. Furthermore, domestic care is typically considered a woman's responsibility. Additionally, in Act III, Gertrude talks to Val about her performance and explains that Mr Seymour believes that her acting is "suffering" and that she is not her "old self" (Gore-Booth 63). Gertrude, a person of artistic inclinations, finds that matrimony imposes constraints upon her capacity for self-expression and the pursuit of her personal fulfilment. Although she is expected to perform domestic duties, she also works as an actress. This places her under greater strain than Wilfrid, who is not expected to fulfil domestic duties. The analysis shows that the patriarchal concept of marriage is responsible for her worsening condition. It is evidence of her struggle with heteronormativity, which is here related to the unequal duties in a patriarchal marriage.

Gertrude is convinced that love is enough and there is no need for marriage, while Wilfrid is convinced that marriage is necessary for love. Their conflict initially revolves around women beginning to question heteronormative institutions like marriage. Gertrude argues: "You think marriage will bring us happiness. Believe me you are only breaking the window to let in the sun-shine and winter is coming. Ah! Think of one beautiful broken friendship what is there now to shield us against the cold?" (Gore-Booth 28). She indicates that marriage is not necessary for a flourishing romantic relationship; she believes it is a wrong belief that marriage makes a

relationship better. Gore-Booth visualises Gertrude's belief that marriage will ruin their relationship through the metaphor of the broken window and the sunshine. If she were to marry Wilfrid, the window that protects her from the outside world, nature, and the cold would be broken. The "outside" can also be interpreted as signifying society's expectations and norms, which are intertwined with heteronormative beliefs and patriarchal power and are harmful to women. Thus, when the cold air comes in through the broken window, the patriarchal marriage will break up their relationship, and Gertrude will break up too. As it is now, their relationship outside of marriage can let sunshine in through the intact glass. Gertrude believes they don't need to break the window or their relationship through marriage to experience the sunshine, which is a metaphor for the joy they feel in their relationship. She is convinced that Wilfrid is under the illusion that married life will make their love even more whole, while Gertrude believes it will break their relationship. Thus, with her condition to the marriage, she removes the finiteness from marriage. She says: "Promise me on your word of honour then that if I ever leave you, you will look upon me as dead, and not seek to find me or ask me to come back to you. On that condition and no other I will marry you." (Gore-Booth 29). The word "dead" intensifies the seriousness of her condition and highlights that Gertrude's perspective on marriage includes the matter of life and death. If she leaves him, she wants it to be final. She does not want to be bound to him by marriage forever. With her condition, she has the option to leave him, despite the eternal promise of marriage. Wilfrid responds with the argument: "But it is unnatural, it is impossible, you will not want to leave me." (Gore-Booth 29), asserting that marriage's nature is eternal and an inescapable institution through its essence, that one would naturally not want to leave it. Evidently, the limitation arises from his standpoint as a male individual who solely derives benefits from this marital bond. He is convinced that once he is married, he is entitled to the woman he marries till death. For instance,

in the end, he admits that he did not think her doubts of marriage were serious: “What compact? Ah, but that was only nonsense, it never meant anything real, we were neither of us in earnest.” (Gore-Booth 106). He dismisses her doubts about marriage, believing that once she is married to him, she won't want to leave. His ignorance of her perspective and his belief in his entitlement are also reflected in his words before: “You have been no true wife to me at all, you have given me no sympathy — no love — no help.” (Gore-Booth 82). The word “true” marks an absolutism in his attitude and suggests that he believes in the idea of the right behaviour for women as a wife. He has certain expectations of Gertrude, which she does not meet. Wilfrid's male perspective is characterised by a strong sense of entitlement, stemming from a misguided belief that women are content to be subservient to men without the prospect of autonomy. It is noteworthy that Gertrude symbolises the values and struggles of the suffragette movement of that era, which fought against the institution of marriage as an oppressive mechanism that denied women power.

Wilfrid refers to her being a woman and argues that staying with him is natural in the context of their marriage and thus essentializes her identity to fixed characteristics of loving homemaking. This can be seen in Wilfrid's promise that “when it comes to the time you will love your home, it will all come naturally, you will not want to go, there will be no real difficulty, you are so sweet — so womanly — (*takes her hand*) “ (Gore-Booth 29). The reference to being “womanly” and women's allegedly natural connection to homemaking essentializes their identity as limited to the married life of bearing children and not having any other aspirations in life. This reducing women to only caring about domestic life, exposes how heteronormative expectations limit women to homemaking and care labour. Drawing on Butler's idea of gender constructivism, Wilfrid believes that, although gender is socially constructed, certain behaviours are expected of women in relation to marital life due to the system of

patriarchy. Wilfrid believes that Gertrude will inevitably come to love married life, but his illusion of gendered behaviour in marriage threatens her well-being. Gertrude suspects that marriage will ruin her, which is the centre of their conflict and of Gertrude's struggles.

Another crucial aspect that Gertrude struggles with is that other women have internalised heteronormative customs. As a result, they also want to assert their power over her by aligning themselves with patriarchal structures. This is evident when Gertrude complains about Wilfrid's mother to Val, noting that Mrs Somers is "always hating everything [she] do[es]" (Gore-Booth 65). Here, Beauvoir's argument of internalised othering of women is exemplified. Beauvoir introduced this behaviour of Mrs Somers as internalised othering. Rather than showing empathy towards Gertrude, who struggles with societal expectations of women, with which Mrs Somers should be able to empathise as a woman herself, Mrs Somers supports patriarchal beliefs and Wilfrid's convictions. In her theory of internalised othering, Beauvoir referred to the notion of the master and the slave, whereby oppression is deemed natural. This means that women are coerced into serving their oppressors, which makes them complicit when other women resist the oppressors. The fact that Mrs Somers criticises Gertrude for not acting like a proper wife, according to heteronormative scripts, suggests that she is engaging in internalised othering. Overall, this presents Gertrude with another conundrum in her married life, further contributing to her struggles with heteronormativity.

As the previous analysis has shown, over the course of the play, it becomes palpable that Gertrude struggles with the heteronormative expectations imposed on her through the patriarchal institution of marriage. While so far her struggles were psychological due to fearing a diminishing level of performance on stage, as well as physical due to complaints of exhaustion, another level is introduced, and her struggles

become especially evident when she talks to the playwright of *Fiametta*, and when he compares her to the role in the play. Getrude first complains:

GERTRUDE: The open sky! That is it you are right, dear friend, you are right, that is what I want. Oh, I am smothered I am choked for want of air. Out there are the mountain tops and the silence and the stars. I shall go mad if I do not get away. Fiametta knew it all — she understood — she was right, she was right. (Gore-Booth 70)

Getrude realises that she must be free like she was before the marriage and strive towards “the open sky”. The sky represents the possibilities she had before she was constrained by marriage. Her life felt more like being in the open sky: she could flourish and breathe freely because the sky is full of air. The repetition of the phrase “you are right” highlights the intensity of Gertrude’s epiphany that she cannot stay in the marriage, as it harms her well-being. Gertrude suggests that marriage makes her life miserable, as the constraints of heteronormativity prevent her from breathing freely. The words “smothered” and “choked” metaphorically express her condition in the marriage: It feels like she cannot breathe, and the constraints of marriage “choke” her. The words emphasise the gravity of her situation: Gore-Booth uses these words to refer that air and breathing are just as vital as a woman’s liberty and autonomy. A woman cannot live without these things; she will suffocate in a marriage that imposes patriarchal constraints on her. She refers to “the mountain tops and the silence and the stars”, somewhere she can breathe and indicates that her character in the play, Fiametta, understands her struggles. Gertrude’s realisation that Fiametta is right, and that she must be free of oppression too, is emphasised through the repetition of the phrase “she was right”. The choice of words and the repetition of phrases are evidence that Getrude struggles with the expectations of heteronormativity and patriarchal power imposed on her through marriage.

There are parallels drawn explicitly between Gertrude and Fiametta, who both struggle with life, and Gertrude longs to be like Fiametta, a liberated and flourishing

subject, instead of being confined by marriage. While she realises this, the men in her life only offer her bondage, as Castellar also does in the following conversation:

CASTELLAR: Ah, I have loved you so long, I have loved you so much, we would be free and happy.

GERTRUDE: Oh, it is not true, it is not true, you do not love me.

CASTELLAR: Gertrude, I love you better than anything in the world.

GERTRUDE: That is what Wilfrid said, oh, they are all the same. This terrible love, it is everywhere, everyone is mad with it. Dear friend, I asked you for bread and you offer me a stone.

CASTELLAR: What do you mean?

GERTRUDE: I asked you for freedom, and you offer me a new bondage.

CASTELLAR: I offer you my love — there is no bondage in love. (Gore-Booth 71)

While Castellar seems to support Gertrude, he does not understand that she rejects marriage and the bondage, meaning the patriarchal oppression implied by the institution of marriage. Gertrude compares Castellar's offering of love instead of platonic compassion to a "stone", which cannot nurture her or help her out of her misery, with "bread" being the support and compassion she needs. This highlights that romantic love is not the thing that will help her flourish, or, as in patriarchal society, it will constrain Gertrude. Clearly, there are two different ideas of love at play here. Castellar and Wilfrid's are connected to heteronormative values that imply the necessity of marriage to have secure love, and Gertrude's understanding that rejects these heteronormative constraints. It is a clear struggle for her to be seen outside of the conceptualisations of marriage and maybe even have a new concept of love because the concept of marriage as equalling love does not work for Gertrude. When applying Beauvoir, who argues that a woman needs to be defined differently than just by her reproductive abilities derived from patriarchal marriage expectations, it can be deduced that Gertrude does not feel seen in her different understanding of a woman as a subject of agency, who does not want to be constrained by marriage. This exemplifies that Gertrude's realisation is a depiction of the disentanglement of the understanding of women and love from phallogentric and male concepts. Irigaray suggests finding a

different sphere, which Gertrude seems to attempt in her own way, as will be discussed in Section 4.2 when evaluating her journey of struggling with heteronormativity.

Gertrude also opposes the expectations of a proper wife according to heteronormative expectations and Wilfrid's accusation of her ruining his life. Her argument that she is not responsible for his ruined life relates to Wilfrid's initial false expectation that she wanted to be a wife in the traditional sense. Wilfrid accuses her of ruining his picture, his art, and his life:

GERTRUDE: What is it, what have I done? Your picture, is anything wrong with your picture?

WILFRID: Wrong with it? It is rejected — utterly condemned, you have destroyed it, you have ruined it, you have blasted and ruined my life's work, as much as if you had taken a knife and cut the canvas into strips. Oh you are my evil genius you have brought a curse into my life!

GERTRUDE: Oh, what have I done, Wilfrid, what have I done?  
(Gore-Booth 82)

The repetition of “what have I done” underscores Gertrude's concern for Wilfrid's accusations. This concern shows that she is truly committed to his feelings and their relationship despite his putting her in the shackles of marriage. Wilfrid's anger towards her undutiful behaviour in her role as a wife is accentuated by expressions such as “utterly condemned” and “you have destroyed it, you have ruined it, you have blasted and ruined my life's work” (Gore-Booth 82). The words “ruined”, “blasted”, and “destroyed” are all words associated with final and violent destruction. The terms “ruined”, “blasted”, and “destroyed” are all associated with final and violent destruction. This suggests that Wilfrid believes he is entitled to expect that she acts as a proper wife who subscribes to patriarchal values of marriage. The comparison towards the act of her “had taken a knife and cut the canvas into strips” underlines that he is personally offended and makes her responsible for his rejected art. He labels her as “evil genius” (Gore-Booth 82) and someone who “brought a curse into [his] life” (Gore-Booth 82). These expressions link the figure of Gertrude with behaviours that

are typically ascribed to witches in traditional folklore. Indeed, within the context of folklore, witches are believed to possess the ability to cast spells and curse individuals. This is a misogynistic caricature of women, as it historically derives from witch-hunting practices in which women were unjustifiably hunted and killed. This association highlights Wilfrid's misogynistic and patriarchal beliefs. Wilfrid's understanding of reality is heavily influenced by a patriarchal comprehension of marriage and relationships. Ultimately, marriage oppresses women. Wilfrid's understanding does not entail the perspective that Gertrude feels oppressed. Instead, Wilfrid claims that she does not care enough for him, trying to make her feel guilty for his feelings and his unsuccessful art. Wilfrid attempts to minimize her perspective and her experience as a woman in the relationship, which is connected to his patriarchal attitude. Wilfrid's patriarchal convictions remain a constant struggle for Gertrude.

Wilfrid's conviction of his understanding of the 'true' marriage and his entitlement to her behaving accordingly goes as far as threatening her with murder:

WILFRID: It is women like you that drive their husbands mad. Oh, I could murder you, yes, murder you, as you stand there looking so beautiful, so unmoved, so cold. (...) (Gore-Booth 83)

This passage shows how serious this conviction: The reiteration of the word "murder" in conjunction with the terms "beautiful", "unmoved", and "cold" serve to underscore Wilfrid's incredulity regarding the Gertrude's actions and the profound rage that has been aroused, to the extent that Wilfrid considers femicide. The word "beautiful" is in contrast to the words "unmoved" and "cold" and highlights the commonly assumed misconception that beautiful people cannot act viciously or immoral. This misconception serves to emphasise Wilfrid's belief that Gertrude has deceived him with her physical appearance, thereby underlining the cruelty of her behaviour. This profound display of anger, coupled with the imminent threat of violence, serves to

exacerbate the mounting pressure on Gertrude and offers a poignant illustration of the lengths to which patriarchal power structures may drive men.

Gertrude responds to Wilfrid's anger and threat of murder with rejection and indignation, not accepting that he speaks to her like that. In doing so, Gertrude makes her concept of woman clear and states that: "You have no right to speak to me like that. I am a free woman, and I am your wife." (Gore-Booth 85). The repetition of the phrase "I am" accentuates her certainty in her belief that she can be a free woman and be married. Here, she makes clear that she has a different understanding of their marriage, which includes being a free woman and a married woman. While being married and being a free woman seem contradictory in a patriarchal system, Gertrude's words indicate that she believes both can be true. The conditions she imposed on their marriage make her marital promise to Wilfrid conditional. She communicated clearly that she needs to have the possibility to leave him, if they should marry. In the beginning, Wilfrid agreed to the terms without taking them seriously, which exemplifies Wilfrid's patriarchal power over Gertrude. He disregards her concerns regarding their marital relationship and imposes traditional heteronormative expectations on her role as a wife.

In the end, the struggle with Wilfrid's expectations and heteronormativity makes her physically ill that she is unable to perform and seems visibly changed. This is evident when Val sees her after her fight with Wilfrid, and Gertrude is unable to go back on stage. Val describes her as: "She looked so ill and she seemed so strange. Oh, Wilfrid what have you done to her. She is so changed, so changed." (Gore-Booth 88). After an attempt to go back on stage, Gertrude breaks down, and Val examines that this has to be related to Gertrude's dispute with Wilfrid (Gore-Booth 90). The exact scene where she breaks down is in the scene where she has to say the line "I must go back to my own people" (Gore-Booth 90), which means that she realises that she will have to

leave Wilfrid to go back to people who understand her concept of being a woman. Beauvoir claimed that women need to choose freedom over happiness. Gertrude's suffering thus exemplifies the assertion that freedom inevitably entails the acknowledgement of uncomfortable realities. She chooses to stay true to her passion for acting and her understanding of love and marriage. Wilfrid's attempts to impose marriage upon her are met with fierce resistance, signifying a strenuous and arduous struggle for the protagonist. This realisation ultimately consumes all of her energy, which is channelled into her internal struggle with the marriage and the ultimate decision to terminate it, as she finds herself no longer able to endure the expectations imposed on her by Wilfrid.

In the final act, her struggle with expectations of heteronormativity makes Gertrude consider suicide. Upon being confronted by Val regarding her intentions, it becomes evident that she is contemplating suicide as a consequence of her unfortunate circumstances, which include being in possession of a letter and a sleeping draught (Gore-Booth 93–94). While Val tries to remind her of her individual life she had and the good aspects, she also refers to her intentions as “madness, you are morbid, hysterical” (Gore-Booth 94) when Gertrude gives in and confesses her suicide plans. The accusation with the words “madness” and especially “hysterical” stresses that Val believes Gertrude’s suicide plans are irrational. At the time of the composition of the play by Gore-Booth, hysteria and madness were frequently ascribed as characteristics of women. Women who voiced their opinions or rebelled against patriarchal oppression were often labelled as hysterical, which was then considered a mental illness. Gertrude asserts that killing herself would allow her to return to “nature and the elements” (Gore-Booth 95). Gertrude speaks of nature and suggests that she will become one with nature only after her death. Only when she is dead can she be natural, as Wilfrid wanted her to be. Gertrude’s internal conflict with the natural is

characterised by her struggle with the heteronormative expectations of women, particularly the expectation that women should care for domestic duties. This internal conflict leads Gertrude to contemplate the possibility of death.

#### **4.1.2 *Grania***

In *Grania*, heteronormative life scripts are conveyed in the following ways: Grania has internalised heteronormative conventions to a certain extent, but still shows limited autonomy in navigating the patriarchal values of marriage. Furthermore, Kuntz asserts that “Gregory’s Grania is also an example of a woman attempting to gain her agency in a patriarchal society that would much rather view her as an object or a prize” (39), which I will elaborate on by connecting it to Finn claiming Grania as his possession and normalising that she owes him loyalty and grants her no autonomy in deciding who she wants to marry. Another depiction of heteronormative values in *Grania* is the understanding of the concept of love, which Grania struggles with because she cannot fully agree with the painfulness of love described by others in the play.

Grania rebels against these heteronormative expectations by escaping from an arranged marriage and marrying the man she truly loves. She also repeatedly questions heteronormative beliefs, like the concept of staying isolated with her husband and not participating in society. Lastly, she forces Finn to marry her to have revenge for Diarmuid’s and Finn’s negligence towards her. In the following, I will analyse specific passages to show in detail how she struggles with heteronormative values.

The theme of the husband-wife relationship and the heteronormative conventions surrounding it are established in the play's opening lines. Grania reiterates: “It was my father, before going to Lochlann, said he must leave me in a husband’s care.” (Gregory 181), whereas Finn responds, “Who would protect you if I would not?” (Gregory 181). When Grania explains that she needs to marry a husband because of her father’s orders, Finn immediately implies that a husband like himself

will protect her. This reinforces the common belief at the time of the play's composition that women require male protection. As Grania's father is leaving, he wishes for her to find a husband so she is protected. This places Grania in a position where she can be directed by men and needs to be protected like a valuable commodity. She is given from the protection of her father to the protection of a husband. The application of feminist theory reveals a potential connection between Grania's perceived need for a husband, as influenced by her father, and Beauvoir's concept of women as mere objects. Grania's internalised belief that she is in need of a male figure to provide her with protection, yet is incapable of fulfilling this role herself, engenders a state of dependency on men. This phenomenon can be traced back to a phallogentric worldview and patriarchal power structures. When these concepts are applied to this particular situation, the conclusion that men are more powerful and their opinions are more valuable is reached. This results in women being viewed as objects and men as subjects upon whom women rely. Patriarchy is characterised by a system of suppression that subjects women to the authority of men, as evidenced by the legal binding of wives to their husbands through marriage. Grania seems to be the object of no agency and has to be protected. Grania is quite unquestioning about these orders and customs, which, as Rich argued, also include the idea that women are drawn to men for their economic support and protection. Rich's concept of compulsory heterosexuality theorises that the role of women being mothers and being responsible for childcare is usually considered normal. It is imperative to note that women are obligated to adopt this role exclusively. The economic responsibility of self-sufficiency is atypical for them, given the social expectation of motherhood. This expectation is further compounded by the prevalence of compulsory heterosexuality, which serves to reinforce traditional gender roles and perpetuate societal norms that disadvantage women in order to promote the heterosexual relationship. The normalisation of this role also signifies that they are

unable to provide for themselves and are therefore reliant on men. Grania, having internalised the belief that she must adhere to specific standards of behaviour, may be considered to exhibit unquestioning behaviour in relation to the circumstances under discussion. This can be attributed to the impact of compulsory heterosexuality. This offers women fewer opportunities to define themselves and, consequently, to question patriarchal conventions. Initially, Grania simply accepts what her father tells her. This situation at the beginning of the play is important for understanding Grania's struggle with the heteronormative constraints that, as will be argued later, prevent her from flourishing and defining herself.

Although Grania evidently submitted to her father's orders, she is also presented as having some limited agency: "My father was for the King of Foreign, but I said I would take my own road." (Gregory 181). Grania is depicted as having her own opinions: utilising words like "I would take my own road" signifies that she is able to make a choice even in the delimiting system where men such as her father exert power over her. She seems to have some space for agency as her father has agreed that she choose Finn to be her husband. Consequently, Grania has not only a will of her own but also displays individuality, attributes that seem not to agree with the pattern of suppressing women in patriarchy, which is based on heteronormative values. In relation to Beauvoir's assertion that women should claim their freedom and question the notion of being viewed merely as an inessential commodity when married to men, Grania initially appears to conform to heteronormative expectations that she needs to marry in order to be protected, while still partly asserting her own will and expectations. This opening scene hints at the play's central conflict: Grania is an independent woman with her own will, but she is confronted with the conventions of marriage, which state that husbands are expected to offer protection.

At the beginning, Grania shares her beliefs and convictions about love, suggesting that she doubts whether love has to be painful. She even regards classic love tales to be “foolishness” (183): “There was one of a lover who was made go through fire for his sweetheart’s sake, and came out shivering. And one that climbed to his darling’s window by one golden thread of her hair.” (Gregory 183). She assesses these depictions to be related to rather than pain. She notes that “it might be pleasing thing to have a lover that would go through fire for your sake.” (Gregory 183–184), which means that her conception of love is characterised through the lover’s heroism. This is also one of the mythical characteristics referred to by Rich: women are tragically drawn to men for protection, and heroism is a stereotype that is being retold, for example, in tales, which contribute to prevailing compulsory heterosexuality in a patriarchal society. Grania’s perspective on love appears to be conflicted, exhibiting an acknowledgement of its potential for pain while simultaneously expressing admiration for a lover who endures challenges for his affection. Her beliefs are influenced by retellings of classic love stories, which reflect women needing to be saved by men. This can be related to Rich’s assertion that women are “imprisoned by prescriptive ideas of the ‘normal’” (35); the stories that are told and the customs that are exercised in society are mostly patriarchal. Women such as Grania can only draw from these patriarchal experiences. Consequently, they are drawn to believe that this constitutes the sole and “right” way to exercise love. For Grania, this means that her lover has to go through hardship or even fire to be with her, risking his life to appear heroic. The idea that men need to be heroic in order to protect women is a masculine stereotype that perpetuates the heteronormative values of men needing to protect women, consequently portraying Grania as a weak woman in need of protection. She appears to equate love and romance with the damsel-in-distress stereotype, which ultimately makes her dependent on men.

Furthermore, in her conversation with Finn, it becomes evident that the previously discussed depiction of painful love, where a lover goes through fire, is tied to characterising women and men in a stereotypical manner:

FINN. There are many such tales and there are more in the making, for it is likely the tearing and vexing of love will be known so long as men are hot-blooded and women have a coaxing way.

GRANIA. I asked the old people what love was, and they gave me no good news of it all. Three sharp blasts of the wind they said it was, a white blast of delight and grey blast of discontent and a third blast of jealousy that is read. (Gregory 183)

Finn explains that men have been and still are “hot-blooded” (Gregory 183) and women still are “coaxing” (Gregory 183), ascribing stereotypical features to the genders, such as men being unable to control their impulses and women being seducing and persuasive. This signifies that Finn believes that some characteristics are inextricably linked to being a woman and a man. This can be related to Butler’s theory of gender determinism, which implies that men and women have predetermined characteristics; this can not only be related to appearance but also to their behaviours or inner characteristics. These predetermined characteristics of gender go hand in hand with Butler’s theory of gender performativity, and that people are expected to perform according to their gender and if they deviate from that are often perceived as challenging established notions of gender. So, Finn expects men to be aggressive and passionate about loving women and women to be seductive and unreliable with loving men. Grania rejects the idea that love is painful and joyless. However, she does not directly oppose Finn’s statement about the characteristics of men and women; she just seems dissatisfied with this categorisation, saying “they gave me no good news of it all” (Gregory 183). As previously mentioned, she does not see the passion of a lover going through fire for her as negative or painful, but rather states that it is “pleasing” (Gregory 184) to her when a man is obsessed with her in this way. This illustrates Grania's belief that love is passionate and even irrational, and that lovers should be

prepared to die for it. In the play, these characteristics of gender identity are challenged to a certain extent, as will be analysed in the following sections.

But their discussion of love ends with Finn stating that “I am very glad to have done with it [the heat of love] now” (Gregory 184), confirming that their union has nothing to do with passionate love. Grania agrees that she “will never know an unhappy, unquiet love, but only love for you that will be by my side for ever.” (Gregory 184) and thus, confirms that their union is not the love of passion and pain that they talked about, it is simply a match of convenience. This validates the previous statement that women need a husband to ensure their safety, and thus her father sought for Grania to have a husband when he leaves. Overall, these arguments show that Grania, while having internalised some conceptions of love and man and women that seem stereotypical, seems to navigate her own perceptions of life, choosing this convenient match for her marriage. Up until that point, she does subscribe to the heteronormative expectations of women needing protection, although this attributes a limited agency to her within the constraints of patriarchal thinking.

Finn claims ownership of Grania, objectifying her and restricting her freedom.

He states that:

FINN. I think, indeed, she will be a right wife for me, and loyal. And it is well that is so, for if ever any man should come between her thoughts and mine I would not leave him living, but would give him the sorrow of death.

DIARMUID. There is no good lover in Ireland but would do the same, and his wife or his sweetheart failing him.

FINN. [...] But can I bring this young girl to be satisfied with that one love? (Gregory 187)

This passage resembles the situation in *Fiametta*, in which Wilfrid threatens to duel with the playwright as he suspects him of being romantically involved with Gertrude. It is asserted by Finn that he would be willing to take the life of any individual who stood in his way and prevented him from being with Grania. This claim is similar to that made by Wilfrid regarding Gertrude. In an attempt to keep them and claim the

women as objects reserved for them, they objectify women and restrict their freedom. This is what both Grania and Gertrude struggle with: men claiming property of them to control them. This action can be characterised using Gough's list of characteristics of male power enforcing heterosexuality. They use women as objects in male transactions, fighting over them with the aim of killing each other and claiming the woman as their prize. In this manner, Grania and Gertrude are transformed into commodities, becoming the property of their respective male partners. In the event of another male expressing interest in a woman, or of a woman claiming to love another man, the men will engage in combat with the man of their desire in order to protect their property.

This phenomenon serves to reinforce patriarchal power structures by undermining women's autonomy in determining their romantic partners. Finn's wanting to control Grania's choice of a romantic partner is confining. He even admits that he doubts that he can bring her to be satisfied with only one love, fearing she will choose someone else. He forces her to only love him and would even use violence to make sure of it, which is an expression of patriarchal power. Diarmuid agrees with Finn's statement, reinforcing the patriarchal power that this is what any good lover would do. By removing her free choice of partner, Finn creates a conflict in the play and forces Grania to struggle with her own heteronormative beliefs.

Rather than attributing free will and agency to women, Finn claims that it is the arbitrariness of love that is responsible for women's unfaithfulness. Finn says that "the story-tellers make out that love is the disturber; that where it is on the road it is hard to be sure of any woman at all or any friend" (Gregory 187). Finn argues that it is love that causes women to be unfaithful and people to be disloyal. Ascribing this arbitrariness to love instead of acknowledging that women are subjects of their own minds and can choose their partner freely, he uses the unpredictability of love to justify

women's behaviour. But this disrespect of their individuality ultimately leads to women's limited freedom and agency. Just like in *Fiametta*, the different conceptualisations of love, which are tied to a heteronormative understanding of a relationship between man and woman, play a crucial role. Finn and Wilfrid's traditional, heteronormative understanding of love is inevitably tied to marriage, which they see as a way of binding a woman to them forever and possessing her. In this way, they are able to exert absolute power over women by justifying marriage as a matter of love, while suppressing women's liberty. When relating this to Rich's argument based on Gough's list of male power that enforces heterosexuality, this understanding of love and marriage makes women mere objects for men's purposes. Additionally, Finn aspires to control Grania and keep her loyal through the patriarchal constraints of marriage, which bind Grania to him. While for Wilfrid it is rather a vehicle to try to restrict Gertrude's existence to home-making and motherhood, these conceptualisations of love as justification are another issue for Grania and Gertrude, as they deny them their liberty and individuality. Consequently, these concepts of love are part of their struggle with heteronormativity.

Grania struggles with heteronormative expectations when she considers suicide after Finn finds out that she is in love with Diarmuid. She states that "It is on me the blame is entirely! It is best for me to go out a shamed woman. But I will not go knocking at my father's door! I will find some quick way to quiet my heart forever." (Gregory 189) Rather than acknowledging her independence, she admits that her actions were against societal norms. Instead of returning to her father and facing his shame, she wants to kill herself. Even though she could acknowledge that she has the right to choose her own partner, she has difficulties with navigating the heteronormative expectations and consequently resorts to killing herself. This emphasises the profound impact that societal norms and heteronormative expectations exert on her. The

prospect of suicide is another parallel to *Fiametta* and is a consequence of patriarchal oppression, which expects Grania and Gertrude to marry someone against their will.

In Act II, Grania is married to Diarmuid, and while being content being married to him, Diarmuid demands that she dedicate her love exclusively to him. He asks her:

GRANIA. I am well content indeed with my comrade and my man.

DIARMUID. And did you love me ever and always, Grania?

GRANIA. Did I not tell you long ago, my heart went down to you the day I looked from the high window, and I in my young youth at Tara. (Gregory 192)

While Grania is content to marry the man she loves, Diarmuid insists that she must dedicate herself entirely to him to ensure her everlasting faithfulness and prevent her from ever desiring another man. This claim is an exertion of male power, based on a patriarchal understanding of love and marriage, which diminishes Grania's liberty by preventing her from ever entering into other romantic relationships. While this might seem an unproblematic situation if Grania is content with it, ultimately it denies her the freedom to choose differently. If she does not willingly submit to loving Diarmuid forever, he most likely will force her. Thus, Diarmuid asking her to reassure him that she loved him forever implies an entitlement on her that makes her an object that he possesses.

Grania, while asserting that she always loved him, is confronted with Diarmuid only deciding to marry her when another man makes an advance. Grania states that "It was not love that brought you to wed me in the end." (Gregory 193) and that "No, it was jealousy, jealousy of the King of Foreign, that wild dark man, that broke the hedge between us and levelled the wall." (Gregory 193). Here, Grania struggles with the fact that Diarmuid only agreed to marry her when another man made advances, again making her an object of male entitlement, of their territorial claims on her. She also rejects the idea that love is initially tied to marriage, as she denies that he married for love but to assert male power over her. Diarmuid responds that "It was rage that

cracked me, when I saw him put his arms about you as if to bring you away.” (Gregory 193). He does not deny that love was not the reason he married her, which again makes love a minor aspect of their relationship rather than a power relation. While this may be seen as romantic and a manifestation of true love, it also reveals that he sees Grania as an object that men can claim, and that he must ultimately claim by marrying her. Grania is challenged by Diarmuid’s objectification, which stems from the idea that men should possess and thus marry women.

Grania again admits that she is pleased by Diarmuid’s jealousy and territorial behaviour when another man makes advances, which signifies internalised heteronormative patterns of women being confined to being objects. Grania claims that, “It was myself that struck your hand down. I was well pleased seeing you in that rage of anger” (Gregory 194), whereas Diarmuid argues that, “If I had known that, it is likely I would have killed you in his place” (Gregory 194). This passage shows that she approves of his anger towards another man making advances towards her. However, her striking his hand down also shows that she is conflicted about violence and fighting over her. In response, Diarmuid considers the option of killing her if he had known that she prevented him from slaying the king. This shows that it is more important to him to fight another man in a matter of territorial claim over a woman than caring for Grania. His objectification of Grania and the characteristic of male power that he sees her as an object of male transactions is evident.

Grania mirrors Diarmuid’s claims and also wants Diarmuid all for herself. Grania says that “There is nothing that will come between us now. You are entirely my own” (Gregory 194), with which Diarmuid agrees (Gregory 194). This signifies Grania’s internalisation of a partner’s property claim. In reality, Diarmuid is in a position of power to make those claims; Grania, however, is in a subordinate position within the heteronormative patriarchal system. Realistically, her claim of Diarmuid will not have

consequences if he decides to leave her, making it paradoxical that she still subscribes to the heteronormative system of owning her partner. However, as Beauvoir argued, it is precisely this notion of coercion and internalised compliance with mechanisms that suppress women without their being fully aware of it.

In Act III, Grania is confronted with the idea that men's behaviour is justified by naturalism. This leads her to further withdrawal from heteronormative expectations. When Finn confronts Grania with the aim of claiming her as his wife, he states:

FINN. Foolishness brought me here, and nature.

GRANIA. It is foolishness for a man not to stop and mind his own estate.

FINN. A wild bird of a hawk I had, that went out of my hand. I am entitled to it by honest law.

GRANIA. I know you are meaning well. But hearken now and put yourself in a better mind. It is a heavy punishment you put upon us these many years, and it is short till we'll all be in the grave, and it is good for you leave us to go our own road.

FINN. A queer long way I would have walked for no profit. Diarmuid is gone out from you. There is nothing to hinder me from bringing you away. (Gregory 203)

On the one hand, Finn admits that he is foolish, but on the other hand, his argument is founded on the argumentation of men's nature. Grania responds to his argument that he is indeed foolish that he does not leave Diarmuid and her alone, following them around for all these years. This highlights the irrationality of following a woman simply because he claims that he is entitled to her because it is 'natural'. His comparison of the situation to "A wild bird of a hawk" (Gregory 203) makes his conviction of men being entitled by nature as if women here were wild birds to tame. He claims it is "honest law" (Gregory 203), which combines the government-regulated law, an instance that society usually has to conform to, with honesty as a virtue. Thus, he justifies his actions by appealing to the law, referring to his pursuit of justice for himself and his actions to be genuine. Although the law is not always honest, his argument is based on men's sense of entitlement and their "natural" oppression of women.

Furthermore, the only thing that can convince him not to claim Grania is another man. Here, Finn refers to Diarmuid, again treating Grania as an object or commodity to be dealt with between men.

In contrast to Finn's aggressions, Grania's resistance to his attempts to force her into marriage and his sense of entitlement because she was promised are mild and devoid of emotion. She responds to him, asking whether she would have liked that he married someone else: "It would have been best. I would be well pleased to see you do it yet." (Gregory 204). Although Finn might have expected Grania to be resentful, she remains calm, indicating that she is not interested in a love match with him at all. Grania states that "And if we are, it is not the same as a marriage on that day we left Almhuin would have been." (Gregory 205). While she might have thought differently at first about a practical match, when she agreed to marry Finn for practical reasons, as she had not yet met anyone she loved, she realised that she had no interest in a practical marriage. This raises the question whether marriage can be an institution free of oppression. It is a bond typically infused with hierarchy and, in a heteronormative sense, controlled by binary and heteronormative concepts of men and women. Although Grania appears to contradict Finn's claims about marriage, she does not fully recognise that marriage itself might be the problem. She navigates Finn's offence within the phallogentric structures she is familiar with, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **4.2 Sexual Difference, Coercion, and the Master's Tools: the Journey of Suffering**

### **4.2.1 *Fiametta***

In *Fiametta*, the concept of sexual difference is explicitly exemplified in the conversation between Mrs Somers and Wilfrid about Anna's unmarriedness and her "difficult" nature. When Mrs Somers says, "Yes, she is pretty, but girls have to be

downright brilliant nowadays to make up for not being men” (Gore-Booth 42), she emphasises that girls are the Other. According to Beauvoir, the concept of the "Other" is predicated on the notion that women are perceived as being distinct from men. This distinction is often accompanied by a devaluation of women as being less valuable in comparison to men. This is what Mrs Somers underlines with her comment that Anna has “to make up for not being men”: it shows that women are always defined in relation to men and being less valuable than them. In contrast to men, who are considered valuable and who are the subject, women are defined in relation to men as lacking male qualities. Relating this to Irigaray’s notion of sexual difference, which is also tied to her critique of Freud that women are merely negative versions of men, sexual difference is exemplified in Mrs Somers' assumption that women have to be “brilliant” to be considered equal. Women such as Anna are continually compared to men and are expected to demonstrate that their qualities are at least as good as those of men, which are presumed to be "naturally" superior. Irigaray’s sexual difference is the fact that women are different from men and cannot be defined in comparison to them. Thus, Mrs Somers's argument that women must demonstrate an even greater degree of "brilliance" to be considered equally valuable to men indicates her belief that women are defined by their absence of male qualities and their being “Other”. Irigaray's sexual difference theory posits that women such as Anna should embody a distinct identity, independent of phallogentric notions that equate male qualities with superiority. The notion of sexual difference posits that women and men are inherently unequal. This is evidence that young women, as Mrs Somers believes, are in constant comparison to men in a negative way. In the following, I will show that Gertrude’s behaviour is also constantly assessed and can be analysed through Irigaray’s theorisation of sexual difference.

The life of an artist is characterised by individuality, which is contrasted with marriage, which everyone supposedly aspires to unless they are not human. Castellar argues with Val:

VAL: Yes, she looks tired, does she not? She is too much worried with small things, Oh, it is all a mistake. Artists should not marry.

CASTELLAR: You think an artist should not be human Mlle?

VAL: Only not individual.

CASTELLAR: Individual life can bring such happiness to one or two.

VAL: And is not art the joy and the glory of the whole world, should not one be ready to sacrifice one's own happiness for that? (Gore-Booth 48)

Val's response, "only not individual", to Castellar's question whether artists should not be human, implies that Gertrude should not pursue a married life for her individual life's happiness. Val argues that Gertrude's happiness is tied to devoting herself to artistry. This discussion implies that marriage at the time of the composition of the play does not allow an artist to thrive, and if one is a passionate artist, one cannot be married, which confirms that marriage is an institution that prohibits women from thriving in their creativity, which is again a characteristic of asserting male power to enforce heterosexuality. Reducing women like Gertrude to their role as a wife and cramping their creativity makes them most likely to pursue happiness outside of marriage. It is evident that individuals within this demographic are devoid of the necessary knowledge and opportunities to identify alternative forms of happiness that diverge from the conventional heterosexual matrimonial practices with which they are thoroughly familiar. Castellar elaborates that Wilfrid willingly convinced Gertrude to get married to him, even though he was most likely aware that she would be unable to be an artist that way:

VAL: If I were a man and loved an artist like Gertrude, I would help her to shut out every distraction, I would not let my love interfere.

CASTELLAR: Ah. Mlle. You are a woman, you are unselfish, you do not understand, a man's love is different. It is selfish, exacting, jealous. (Gore-Booth 48)

Castellar describes Wilfrid as “selfish, exacting, jealous” (Gore-Booth 48), which leads Val to argue that the only happy woman is “The one that no man loves. Who would not pay a great price to be rid of jealousy, selfishness, exaction?” (Gore-Booth 49). The words that Castellar uses to describe Wilfrid emphasise that Wilfrid’s actions were only serving him and did not consider Gertude’s perspective. Val’s response underlines that Wilfrid’s characteristics are insufferable. Considering Tiernan’s argument, that “[t]he play is a warning that marriage will deprive women of their independence and their individuality” (17), it can be argued that the conversation between Val and Castellar is essential in supporting this assertion. Val concludes that a passionate, artistic woman like Gertrude can only be happy if she is free from the boundaries of marriage. Here, when applying Irigaray’s notion of sexual difference, it can be argued that a woman’s existence is only full, only happy, if separate from men. A woman can only be happy when she is safe from male love, which is, in the case of how Wilfrid has just been described, tied to more than selfishness, namely, exaction, which is an expression of male power over women. In marriage, male love, which is selfish, exacting and jealous here, is ruining the individuality of women as they claim authority over them. For example, Wilfrid convinced Gertrude to marry him despite her doubts. The idea that a woman's individuality is threatened by marriage is reiterated later in a conversation between Val and Wilfrid:

WILFRID: You see Val, when people marry they undertake certain duties to one another.

VAL: Have they no duties to themselves?

WILFRID: They two are one, they have no longer any separate existence. That is the beautiful Christian ideal of marriage.

VAL: It is not beautiful, it is merely absurd. Why should people throw away the best thing they have, their individuality. How can two people be turned into one? It is as absurd as the Athanasian creed. (Gore-Booth 60)

Val repeatedly insists that humans should keep their individuality instead of being bound to one other relationship through marriage, which is underlined through the repetition of the word “absurd”. Wilfrid’s reference to Christian ideals confirms that

his ideals are based on conservative and traditional values that serve to confine women in their individuality. Applying the notion of sexual difference, Irigaray's argument that women are tied to men becomes apparent. According to Wilfrid, the Christian ideal of marriage means that people are no longer separate and lose their individuality. Irigaray argues that if women lose their individuality in marriage and become indistinguishable from their partner, they are unable to define themselves, which she considers problematic for women.

The conversation between Castellar and Val in Act II suggests that men have a different understanding of reality, limited by the belief that marriage is an institution that does not harm women. Val recognises:

VAL: And yes it is not true. Wilfrid is not selfish or exacting by nature. It is only that he does not see what he is doing.

CASTELLAR: Could you not tell him?

VAL: It is useless trying to tell people things they cannot understand.

CASTELLAR: Why do you say he cannot understand?

VAL: He does not understand himself. How could he understand Gertrude? Men never understand themselves, that is why so many marriages are miserable. (Gore-Booth 49)

Val opposes the "nature argument" by arguing that men "never understand themselves, that is why so many marriages are miserable" (Gore-Booth 49). This phrase indicates that men do not question their role and their privilege in marriage. Men such as Wilfrid do not understand themselves, as they do not question their role in society, and not questioning their role makes marriages miserable for women. Men do not question the institution of marriage critically because it benefits them and does not limit their individuality or oppress them, as is the case for women. The framework of patriarchal and heteronormative structure serves Wilfrid; there is no need to seek a different understanding of customs. This ignorance can be connected to men relying on the system of patriarchal power while women struggle with patriarchal oppression. Women are trying to define themselves outside this system, which is why Gertrude is constantly framed as unnatural by Wilfrid. In Wilfrid's view, Gertrude's behaviour is

unnatural because it does not align with his patriarchal values. Wilfrid is unable to think outside the male system or even acknowledge that Gertrude has a different understanding of herself that deviates from what Wilfrid believes is natural.

Gertrude's life as an actress offers her a new way of defining herself, a new conceptualisation for herself that fulfils her, which can be considered a version of a new language to understand and express herself. Gertrude explains to Wilfrid:

GERTRUDE: Yes, that is just it. When I am in the world, or even when I am alone with you the fire smoulders down in my heart, and my soul is nothing but a heap of gray ashes. When I go out on the stage then I feel that the elemental powers are abroad. The flames in my soul are fanned by the dreadful Wings of Fate. They leap up to meet the lightening ! My soul is transfigured in the crash of tragic forces!

WILFRID: And yet if you feel like that in the midst of stage thunder and lightening, surely in real life among real actions ..... [sic!]

GERTRUDE: Ah, that terrible necessity for action. Real actions are so small — so narrow — on the stage we do not act, we translate our thoughts into words, great and beautiful and wise words. The illusion of action is around us, but we have no occasion for deeds. (Gore-Booth 53–54)

She states that her “soul is nothing but a heap of gray ashes.” (Gore-Booth 53) when she is with Wilfrid or generally in “this” world, alluding to the world where she is unhappily married to Wilfrid. It is a world that dictates customs and norms, so that marriage is normalised. This means she doesn't feel alive, as alluded to by the words “a heap of grey ashes”, which are used to describe her soul. In contrast, on stage she feels the power, almost electric like lightning, she claims on stage “we translate our thoughts into words” (Gore-Booth 54), meaning on stage she is in a context, where she is able to speak and express herself, while in the real world, off the stage, she has no words, no language to express herself, to feel this powerful. Through the lens of Irigaray's theory of sexual difference, the stage functions as an escape. The stage is a space for language that can express Gertrude's feelings and her understanding of existence. Considering previous analysis that Gertrude struggles with heteronormative expectations, the stage is a space that is untethered from masculine, phallogocentric thinking and where Gertrude feels alive. Although she is only on stage for a short time, during which she

feels alive, this indicates that Gertrude is searching for a language, in which she is understood and can express herself. This confirms the Irigarayan theory that women need a separate sphere from masculine language in which to define themselves once they recognise their oppression. In her journey of struggling with the heteronormative expectation and traditional marriage, this is her attempt to escape heteronormative structures.

From Wilfrid's perspective, Gertrude is alienated from being a woman. Her concept of "woman" shows that she is searching for an alternative to the inherent patterns of compulsory heterosexuality to define herself. This becomes evident in a conversation with Val: Wilfrid asserts that Gertrude "is so strange she is not really like a woman at all" (Gore-Booth 59). Val replies that "So few women are" (Gore-Booth 59). While Wilfrid represents a heteronormative conceptualised thinking of "woman", asserting that it is natural for women to "undertake certain duties" (Gore-Booth 60), Val maintains a different perspective, which challenges heteronormative values. She therefore asserts that not only does Gertrude's behaviour deviate from Wilfrid's concept of woman, but very few women fully agree with Wilfrid's perspective. Through the lens of compulsory heterosexuality, their discussion suggests that Wilfrid holds the common perception of women at that time, shaped by women being coerced to strive for a heterosexual relationship and patriarchal values. This perception prevents women from thinking outside the societal patterns that compulsory heterosexuality reinforces. Compulsory heterosexuality normalises women becoming mothers and getting married, while denying them the opportunity to explore alternative lifestyles. Val's observation that few women are content with a life determined by heterosexual values suggests that this predetermined lifestyle prevents women from defining themselves, since they may not identify with the traditional institution of marriage or other imposed structures associated with heterosexual relationships. This denies them

opportunity and self-fulfilment, as alternative ways of life are considered “unnatural”. Val portrays Gertrude as a woman who seeks alternative concepts of partnership and womanhood because she suffers from the structures imposed by compulsory heterosexuality.

When Val convinces Gertrude not to kill herself, she reaches a new understanding of reality, infused with self-confidence and the freedom to love without constraints. This new way of thinking is not based on heteronormative values. The following passage demonstrates Gertrude’s development of a new thinking:

VAL: Did you not understand. Oh, you must understand. It is not too late, it is time now. Don't you see, it is you who must kindle a flame in the soul of the future.

GERTRUDE: Give me the flowers (*she takes them and begins to walk up and down*). Ah, they are very beautiful. . . They are like the rose leaves that the angels scattered and that turned into little flames as they fell. . . The little flames. . . They seem to have some curious power about them too. . . a mysterious fragrance. . . I could almost fancy that they would scare away the fiends that torment my soul.. . (*She sits down and buries her face in the flowers, murmuring*). The little flames, the little flames. . . (*VAL watches her silently, after a minute she looks up and speaks dreamily*). There are some beautiful thoughts in the world. . Ah. . . (*She throws down the flowers suddenly and starts up*). Val, Val, what have you done to me. Something must have happened. . . You have changed me. . . The flowers have bewitched me. Everything seems different. . . My soul is full of courage... I am beginning to understand.. . (Gore-Booth 98–99)

First, Val urges her how important it is for her to have a different understanding, which is emphasised through the repetition of the word “understand”. Val reminds her that it is not too late for her and that “it is you who must kindle a flame in the soul of the future” (Gore-Booth 98). This phrase underscores that her new thinking can be like a fire, her fire comparable to her finding her passion and herself again. The fire will revive her soul and give her the energy to live again in the future. Her words resemble Beauvoir’s demand that women should claim freedom and choose resistance by recognising that women should not stay in their role as Other and mere object of men’s desire. The rose leaves falling resemble Gertrude’s emotional state which is worsening,

but when she compares them to the rose leaves that angels scattered and which turn into flame, her passion and motivation seem to return to her. She is inspired by the flame that is metaphoric for the fire in her soul that has returned. Like being “bewitched” by the flowers, again alluding to the aforementioned topic of women being witches, her realisation might just be witchcraft. This witchcraft is necessary for Getrude to find the new meanings and to free herself of heteronormative and patriarchal understandings and oppression. While the label “witch” was used to oppress women during the historical time of the witch hunts, here it is a vehicle to free Getrude. The flower that seems to bewitch her saves her by giving her a new understanding. Val’s encouraging words are effective as Gertude says to Val that “You have changed me [...] my soul is full of courage... I am beginning to understand.” (Gore-Booth 99). Gertrude has gained a new understanding, a new courage of resistance and towards her future. She begins to understand the “meaning in these things” (Gore-Booth 99), which reveals to her a new understanding of herself and helps her to define herself.

Her new understanding of herself becomes more evident in the final scene after the fight between Wilfrid and Castellar, which almost escalates to a duel between the two. Gertrude has to calm both men down and declares that they are “strange creatures” (Gore-Booth 104) and not wise, which is confirmation of her new understanding and new confidence towards her new knowledge. She now recognises that the patriarchal values are wrong, which strengthens her own understanding. This is exemplified when she asserts that she does not understand their argument of honour, as it sounds to her like slavery (Gore-Booth 105). In the passage, she questions the men’s convictions and values to fight for honour:

CASTELLAR: As a man of honour, I had to fight. I did not wish to.

GERTRUDE: I do not know what you mean by honour, it sounds like slavery. Wilfrid, Wilfrid you at least are free, how could you do such a thing, what should I have done if you had been killed? (Gore-Booth 105)

Gertrude does not understand why they would decide to kill each other for honour. Her irritation is accentuated through the repetition of “Wilfrid”. Ultimately, this means for Wilfrid to fight for a woman, to treat her as a commodity — a concept that Gertrude has now overcome and rejected. She no longer subscribes to the patriarchal concept of viewing women as objects or commodities. Lastly, responding to Gertrude, Wilfrid asserts:

WILFRID: Dear Gertrude, people change. And my death would have meant freedom for you.

GERTRUDE: I do not change like that, and I do not need freedom, I am free already, as free as the air and the sunshine. (Gore-Booth 105)

Wilfrid wanted to free her by getting killed in the duel, but Gertrude rejects his justification as she liberates herself with her new understanding. The passage further demonstrates that her new understanding is what gave her freedom. Men have no power over her by giving or taking freedom from her. The phrase “as free as the air and the sunshine” circles back to the beginning, where she felt like there was not enough air for her, when she still let herself be defined by patriarchal norms like that of the marriage bond. Now that she has freed herself from patriarchal patterns, Gertrude has access to air and sunshine. Sunshine signifies positive feelings and warmth. Access to air implies her ability to breathe again. Her new understanding is that there “can be no bondage when one’s soul is free” (Gore-Booth 105). Her soul is free because “[...] I mean that one's soul has freedom in itself and no one can enslave it.” (Gore-Booth 105). She now understands that she is free and that her soul is her own, so the love of others cannot enslave her, which is what Wilfrid attempted to do. As for Wilfrid, Gertrude asserts that: “You are weak, Wilfrid and dependent, that is because you have not yet found out the destiny that is in your soul.” (Gore-Booth 106). She indicates that a relationship or marriage, which binds and enslaves you, is one that takes away your

freedom, which is an aspect that Gertrude suspected from the beginning. Now, she is certain of this and has come to understand it. The ending words, spoken by Castellar, make her realisation definite: “I know, I know, it is the end of the play, the end of ‘Fiametta’ the last words (*very slowly*) ‘She has gone back to her own people.’” (Gore-Booth 108). She has decided to fully go back to her life as an actress and leave Wilfrid and the bondage of marriage; she goes back to ‘her’ people, who are people who think similarly, who have an understanding of a woman who needs to be free. Gertrude has taken full agency, has become a subject, and sees through the oppression of patriarchal power and heteronormative values now.

#### **4.2.2 *Grania***

In the first scene, the concept of love and the “conventional” characteristics associated with men and women are discussed. Waters comments on Grania engaging with these conventions and asserts that “[t]he heroine's psychology is more like that of a modern woman, struggling to define herself against conventional strictures and realising that breaking with these will cost her a great deal of pain” (17). The “conventional strictures” are the ideas and heteronormative ideals that are told in *Grania* that make Grania question her perspective on love. Grania struggles with the idea that love is solely painful and cannot define herself through that perception of love. Despite agreeing with the conception that lovers going through fire is pleasing, she is aware of potential misconceptions as she expresses disbelief that “It being so bad a thing, why, I wonder, do so many go under its sway? That should be a good master that has so many servants and is so well obeyed.” (Gregory 184). This suggests that she is aware of some form of coercion, i.e. a system that establishes conceptions of love. Furthermore, it implies that love could be different if it were not constrained by pain and unhappiness. Especially her reference to the “master” (Gregory 184) and “slave” (Gregory 184) relationship makes her identify love to be the source of power that coerces people to go through

pain. However, Grania's scepticism is evident, as she questions the validity of such notions. In this passage, the concept of the master's tools, theorised by Lorde, is exemplified. Grania identifies a discrepancy between her concept of happiness, which is not associated with pain, and people's behaviour when they are in love, namely, going through pain. The reference to the "good master" means there is a force that coerces people to go through pain for love. In this case, the conception entails a romanticised depiction of love, where lovers go through fire, which can be traced back to ideals of masculinity and the image of women needing to be saved. Both these ideals of masculinity and women's helplessness are patriarchal values as they serve to oppress women. As Lorde asserts, it is implausible to expect individuals to comprehend or conceptualise ideas that lie beyond the confines of the prevailing system, as they have been historically restricted to utilising the conceptual frameworks and instruments imparted by the master. Therefore, Grania's uncertainty is logical, yet her ability to extrapolate and formulate hypotheses regarding the underlying factors, such as the potential influence of a patriarchal system, appears to be unfeasible. While Grania does not detect these influences, utilising Irigaray's claim of sexual difference and women needing to find their own conceptions of women, Grania's doubts of the image of love presented to her may provide the first impulse for the formation of her own conceptions. As will be discussed in the last chapter, Grania's actions of resistance do not likely entail those of a concept of sexual difference, as she mostly uses the master's tools to exert resistance. Ultimately, Grania's behaviour suggests that the capacity to think beyond the confines of the system or identify its mechanisms as an individual in a subordinate position is quite challenging.

In Act II, Grania begins to express reservations regarding the plan that she and Diarmuid have devised for living in exile and in solitude. Hill maintains that "the central women [in *Grania* and *The Mai*] live in exile, yet attempt to negotiate

expression of their embodied subjectivity” (104). Grania’s “embodied subjectivity” initially manifests through her resistance to expectations that she should be content with her marital relationship in exile. Grania argues:

GRANIA. I have not had the full of my life yet, for it is scared and hiding  
I have spent the best of my years that are past. [...]

DIARMUID. You never asked to be brought to such a place in all our time  
upon the road. And are you not better pleased now than when we dragged  
lonely-hearted and sore-footed through the days?

GRANIA. I am better pleased surely – and it is by reason of that I would  
wish my happiness to be seen, and not to be hidden under the branches  
and twigs of trees.

DIARMUID. If I am content here, why would not you be content?  
(Gregory 195)

While Diarmuid expresses contentment with his marriage to Grania and the solitary life with her, for Grania, this life is not fulfilling. This suggests that the marital relationship is not sufficient to ensure her contentment. While in the initial phase, her primary concern appeared to be the act of being in the company of Diarmuid; she is now displaying indications that this is no longer sufficient. Grania states that she longs to be acknowledged and wants to be with people again:

GRANIA. It is time for you to have attendance again, and good company  
about you. We are the same here as if settled in the clay, clogged with the  
body and providing for its hunger and its needs, and the readying for  
dinner to-day and the providing of the dinner for to-morrow. It is at the  
head of long tables we should be, listening to the old men with their jokes  
and flatteries, and the young men making their plans that will change the  
entire world.

DIARMUID. That is all over for me now, and cast away like the husk from  
the nut. (Gregory 195–196)

Grania articulates a yearning for a more fulfilling existence that extends beyond the confines of matrimony in solitude. Grania is unable to thrive and attain fulfilment within the context of her marital union. Grania compares their situation to that “here as if settled in the clay, clogged with the body and providing for its hunger and its needs” (Gregory 195), which underscores her feeling of being stuck and feeling “clogged” just like the texture of clay can dry out and clog holes; she feels as if stuck in

clay in this isolated marriage. As Finn had previously predicted, Grania is depicted as being in a situation where such love is insufficient for her. However, when viewed from Grania's perspective, who struggles to find fulfilment in isolated matrimony, it becomes evident that her aspirations are dismissed by Diarmuid, who is entrenched in a phallocentric societal structure designed to subjugate women. Grania has begun to adopt a stance of resistance against the heteronormative constraints imposed upon her, signifying a refusal to adhere to the expectations of exclusivity and submissiveness within traditional gender roles.

Her marriage to Diarmuid isolates her, diminishing her happiness. This can be interpreted as a further allusion that pursuing heteronormative values harms her, as she embarks on a journey of exile for the sake of love and matrimony. The chosen course of action results in her opting for a solitary existence, as she remains in the company of Diarmuid, despite the evident challenges of exile. The marital bond has been shown to demonstrate that this is not an accurate reflection of her conception of contentment. Furthermore, her marriage entails the necessity of isolation with her husband. This can be interpreted as an allusion to women being confined to a solitary life in marriage, as it confines them to not making other connections with people, especially in a more than platonic way. It is implied that marriage is connected with loneliness, and Diarmuid's disagreement that this makes her unhappy is evidence of his patriarchal values. His patriarchal values deny Getrude her own opinion and her subjective experience. Being trapped in this situation also excludes her from society, which Grania expresses to desire when she says: "It is at the head of long tables we should be, listening to the old men with their jokes and flatteries, and the young men making their plans that will change the entire world" (Gregory 195–196). In relation to the characteristics of male power that enforce heterosexuality, one characteristic is the withholding of women from participating in society, and Diarmuid convincing Grania

to isolate herself with him is evidence of his male power. Grania is unable to participate in society, form new connections, and gain new knowledge.

In Act III, Grania uses the argument of nature to oppose Finn's beliefs. Finn wants her to come with him of her own will, whereas Grania responds: "That will be when the rivers run backward." (Gregory 203). She states that she can't come to him of her own free will, adapting Finn's nature argument ("Foolishness brought me here, and nature." (Gregory 203)) by using the image of streaming rivers to show him that her wish to return to him is against the natural flow inside her. On another level, when resorting to the theory of phallogentric language and Irigaray's argument that language is only created by men for the benefit of men, Grania uses the same language as Finn, the language of the oppressor. He uses language to justify his sense of entitlement, while Grania shows that it goes against nature for her to come to him. She follows this idea, arguing that her coming to him of her own accord would be as unnatural as rivers flowing backwards. Elaborating on this, Grania's argument alludes to Lorde's theory that the master's tools, in this case the concept of naturalism employed by men within the phallogentric structure, can be utilised by the oppressed against their oppressors. To what extent using the same tools as the oppressor is efficient will be discussed in the following chapter. For now, it is evident that Grania uses the same weapons used against her to oppose Finn's nature argument.

As their discussion progresses, it becomes apparent that Grania will not voluntarily accompany Finn. She appears to be coerced into submission, unaware that she is being oppressed by him. When Finn recounts what wrong she has done to him, leaving him and that his reputation is that he is "withered, and loathsome in a woman's eyes" (Gregory 206), Grania responds, "I have a great wrong done to you, surely, but it brings me no nearer to you now." (Gregory 206). This implies that she agrees she should have obeyed rather than followed her own path of marrying for love. She

acknowledges that her refusal to comply with Finn's orders was wrong. This agreement can be interpreted as an internalised and coerced consent, given that she has been socialised in a patriarchal system with heteronormative beliefs which promote heterosexual marriage, where a woman is expected to marry a man chosen by her father, rather than for love. Thus, she sees her own choice against an arranged marriage as wrong, and consequently, Grania has internalised the heteronormative values as right.

In the final scene, Grania subverts the conventional portrayal of marriage by engaging in an action which can be considered a form of reversed gendered oppression. By compelling Finn to marry her, Grania challenges the established trope of marriage at the time and introduces a scenario where she forces a man to marry her. Instead of Finn having the power to choose his wife, she has the power to convince Finn to marry her. This action is a result of the following circumstance in the play: Following the death of Diarmuid and his pledge of allegiance to Finn alone, rather than to Grania, she experiences a sense of betrayal from both individuals who had previously expressed their intention to marry her. It becomes clear that Grania was an object of transactions between Finn and Diarmuid all along, as also maintained by Doyle: "Grania's opinion seems to matter very little in a world where she becomes merely an incitement to the men's dispute with one another" (40). Finn's decision to relinquish his intention to marry Grania, stemming from his respect for the deceased Diarmuid and his wife, signifies a prioritisation of his sense of obligation towards the dead over his claim to Grania's hand in marriage. Grania was merely an object that Finn felt he had the entitlement to claim due to patriarchal structures. Finn demonstrates that his allegiance is rather with a dead man's entitlement to a woman, because he was married to her, than with Grania, thereby underscoring Finn's prioritisation of external obligations to other men over Grania's personal desires for autonomy. When Diarmuid

swore loyalty to Finn, Finn began to respect his Grania. Finn would not have respected her if she had not been married to Diarmuid. Hence, as a consequence of the two men respecting each other but never Grania, she realises that neither man loved her but wanted to claim her as an object. She sees through their actions and decides to take revenge:

GRANIA. You are craving to get rid of me now, and to put me away out of your thoughts, the same as Diarmuid did. But I will not go! I will hold you to your word, I will take my revenge on him! He will think to keep your mind filled with himself and to keep me from you, - he will be coming back showing himself as a ghost about Almhuin. He will think to come whispering to you, and you alone in the nigh time. But he will find me there before him! He will shrink away lonesome and baffled! I will have my turn that time. It is I will be between him and yourself, and will keep him outside of that lodging for ever! (Gregory 212)

The repetition of the word “I will” in this passage emphasises not only Grania’s rage but that she has finally claimed her power as a subject instead of following men’s orders. To prevent Diarmuid’s ghost from seeing that Finn respects him by not marrying Grania, she forces Finn to marry her. The threat of marriage, which Finn had made against Grania throughout the play, is now being used by Grania. She marries Finn to disrupt his loyalty to Diarmuid, thus disrupting the narrative of phallogentric, patriarchal oppression that is usually used against women. In this situation, Finn is forced into marriage against his will. Grania overturns the gendered oppression that forces women to marry men against their will. Nevertheless, she operates within the confines of heteronormative structures. Employing Lorde’s theory of the master’s tools here, she can’t overcome suppression, since she also places herself in a situation in which, as a woman, she is inferior to her husband. She attempts to use the master’s tools to take revenge, but it is not efficient enough to dismantle the master’s house. Grania’s actions can be considered an insubstantial attempt at vengeance, given that she is still putting chains on herself.

### **4.3 Queer Resistance or Reinforcement of Heteronormativity**

I defined the term "queer resistance" as an opposition to established norms, particularly in relation to heteronormative values. The practice of queer resistance can be understood as a challenge to conventional standards and expectations, particularly those related to gender and sexual identity. In essence, a refusal to conform to societal norms produces societal turmoil, discomfort and inconvenience. Consequently, it can be deduced that individuals who engage with queer resistance are compelled to overcome adversity and exert considerable effort to employ this resistance. Queer resistance is not a simplistic endeavour; when contextualised within Beauvoir's theoretical framework, it can be considered to signify the decision to prioritise resistance over personal contentment in pursuit of freedom. The protagonists of the plays are depicted as struggling against the prevailing norms. However, to what extent can their actions be categorised as a form of queer resistance? In the following, I will discuss the previous research results in relation to the nuanced concept of queer resistance.

*Fiametta* depicts Gertrude as a woman who has difficulties with the concept of marriage. Notwithstanding her reservations, she acquiesces to Wilfrid's proposal of marriage yet stipulates specific conditions that grant her the possibility of not entirely adhering to the conventional notions of matrimony. If she decides to terminate the relationship, Wilfrid is not expected to pursue her. The efficacy of this approach is contingent upon Wilfrid's adherence to the stipulated guidelines. In considering the context of heterosexual marriage, which is the prevailing social norm that Gertrude rebels against, her initial expression of queer resistance is not immediately discernible. She conforms to the prevailing norms, albeit with reservations. It can be argued that her actions are indicative of a queer resistance, yet they do not represent an unequivocal expression of such resistance.

Similarly, Grania is depicted as a character who also appears to place a high value on her liberty. Consequently, she experiences difficulties in consenting to marry Finn purely for pragmatic reasons. Whilst initially expressing approval of the pragmatic marriage, her perspective rapidly changes upon encountering Diarmuid, for whom she develops strong affection, leading her to desire a relationship with him. Throughout the course of the play, Grania can escape her engagement with Finn, yet she still harbours a desire to be married, thereby engaging with an institution that is significantly influenced by heteronormativity. Conversely, she perceives marriage not as a restrictive institution. The act of her marrying Diarmuid seems to be her true desire. Therefore, in a manner akin to Gertrude's rejection of a specific form of matrimony, namely the arranged marriage, she nevertheless engages with a patriarchal institution. Grania's actions of queer resistance manifest in her struggle with her marriage to Finn. This act of queer resistance is ultimately overshadowed by her desire to marry Diarmuid. It can be posited that both characters grapple with societal expectations, thereby exemplifying the oppression experienced by women within such structures, particularly in the context of patriarchal oppression. Neither character manifests overt indications of queer resistance at the outset. However, these characteristics undergo a transformation throughout the course of both plays.

While the results obtained in *Fiametta* demonstrate the applicability of the theory of sexual difference to Gertrude's navigation of the internalised patterns of compulsory heterosexuality, Grania's responses to heteronormative beliefs exhibit characteristics consistent with Lorde's concept of the master's tools. Gertrude is seeking to establish her own sphere of understanding. This is illustrated by her identification with the character on stage and the life of an actress, as opposed to the role of a wife. Ultimately, Gertrude departs from Wilfrid, opting to pursue an independent life guided by her own principles. This action signifies her attainment of

a new comprehension, one that is distinct from the heteronormative understanding. In accordance with Irigaray's proposition that women need to be described through a language and through notions detached from those of men, this detachment is exemplified through Gertrude's new understanding of the concept of "woman". Gertrude's novel comprehension signifies a defiance of heteronormative principles and a deconstruction of prevailing norms. She rejects patriarchal behaviour like Wilfrid's duelling for honour or his belief that love is bondage, she deconstructed those by claiming the illogical and constructing her own understanding of love. Upon initial observation, this may be regarded as a paradigm of absolute queer resistance, as her novel comprehension challenges the heteronormative expectations of women that are rooted in the internalised compulsory heterosexuality notion. However, it is imperative to recognise that normativity constitutes a regime of power, wherein norms continue to manifest in bodies and actions. Consequently, through her novel comprehension, Gertrude not only opposes but also establishes new norms. Furthermore, her new understanding can be understood in terms of Irigarayan categories, which reveal a binary opposition between the heteronormative understanding and Gertrude's new understanding. This binary opposition also represents a critique of Irigaray's theory of sexual difference, that the claim of sexual difference still entails essential categories of "man" and "woman". The application of Jakobsen's lens of queer resistance to Gertrude's new understanding demonstrates that the endeavour to undo normativity is not entirely successful but rather results in a mere shift of normativity to a different sphere. In Gertrude's case, the denouement of the play evinces an act of queer resistance whilst maintaining the inherent consequences of subverting norms that engender new ones.

This leads me to the question of whether it is possible to have a queer resistance that does not automatically call for another act of queer resistance to prevent a new

establishment of normativity. Is it feasible to establish a queer resistance that does not inherently necessitate another act of queer resistance to avert the establishment of normality? It is probable that the response to this question will be that queer resistance is infinite, always creating more need for resistance, although this has yet to be conclusively demonstrated in research beyond the scope of this thesis.

Grania's assertion of revenge by making Finn marry her against his will can be considered a manifestation of the master's tools. Her action is a demonstration of how norms are organised in a regime of power. Grania's subversion of gender norms ultimately serves to stabilise the original norms. Although she uses heteronormative marriage to enforce his own oppressive norms on Finn, she also traps herself in this arrangement. She does not deconstruct normativity but uses the same mechanism that served to oppress her to harm Finn. Whilst this may be regarded as an endeavour to demonstrate queer resistance, Grania's actions do not fully align with the principles of such a position. Despite her observations regarding men's respect for other men in terms of marriage and entitlement, as evidenced by previous results, her actions do not unequivocally demonstrate a commitment to queer resistance. The combination of the concept of queer resistance with the theory of the master's tools proves that queer resistance is not solely a matter of recognising one's oppression in the play, but also of possessing the appropriate tools to establish a resistance. The utilisation of the very same instruments that were employed for the initial oppression is arguably inadequate.

## **5. Conclusion**

Theatre plays usually reflect the discourse of the society in which they were written. This thesis investigates two Irish plays written by women during a time of political turmoil and the suffrage movement. Grania and Fiametta deal with topics that were highly relevant to this movement. Patriarchy, both historically and in the present day, is responsible for people's suffering, particularly that experienced by women.

Ultimately, my analysis of both plays confirms the hypothesis that the belief system of heteronormativity prevents women from flourishing as autonomous subjects.

This thesis traces why and how Getrude and Grania struggle with becoming autonomous subjects in the plays. My central insight remains that compulsory heterosexuality is part of internalised and harmful thinking in the heteronormative belief system. The application of Rich's theory of compulsory heterosexuality to the protagonists' actions and responses towards heteronormative expectations has elucidated that the normalisation of a heterosexual relationship, along with the associated concepts of marriage, domestic responsibilities, and subjugation to male authority, constitutes a pivotal element in the struggles of Gertrude and Grania. The results show that heteronormativity also determines perspectives of men and women on love and its connection to marriage, a notion that is repeatedly challenged by the protagonists. In essence, the male characters in the plays embody a heteronormative perspective on love and marriage. They are depicted as uncomprehending, and their actions are not aligned with the interests of the female characters. Rather than serving as a supportive figure, the male characters often assume an antagonistic role, thereby exacerbating the female characters' struggles and amplifying their suffering.

The analysis reveals that both Gertrude and Grania undergo a shift in mindset, leading to a re-evaluation of their thinking and their position within society, especially in their role as women and wives. While Gertrude exhibits pronounced doubts about heteronormative expectations associated with marriage from the outset, Grania demonstrates a lesser degree of opposition to heteronormative values in the initial stages. However, as the play progresses, Grania cultivates an explicit sense of individuality and exhibits a resistance to heteronormative structures. This character development consequently evolves into a resistance to heteronormativity. While Gertrude's resistance is a novel understanding of herself and her values, Grania realises

that men will stay loyal to their fellow men in times of adversity and will never choose a love for a woman over their comrades.

The final chapter underscores the significance of conducting a nuanced analysis. Through the theory of queer resistance, I applied a nuanced evaluation of the character's actions of resistance, which makes the claim possible that queer resistance is not a matter of the absolute in the plays. The most significant finding is that queer resistance cannot simply be viewed as a matter of oppression and resistance. The issue is multifaceted, as resistance can lead to the establishment of new norms, the creation of new binaries and the emergence of new forms of oppression. In *Fiametta*, Gertrude discovers a new way of understanding that enables her to break free from the traditional heteronormative expectations of womanhood. However, this new understanding again creates norms and a belief system of norms. Queer resistance is a method of resistance that carries with it the potential to engender new forms of essentialism by establishing new norms and expectations for women. The investigation of *Grania* demonstrates that, in certain instances, the efficacy of queer resistance may be diminished when employing the very tools of the oppressor. While initially her behaviour of rejecting traditional views of love seemed to be of queer resistance, subsequent analysis indicates that the resistance in the form of forcing marriage on Finn is, in fact, a form of oppression that has been reversed, resulting in the re-imprisonment of Grania within the same structures as before.

Analysing these plays with a queer and gender theoretical lens proves that gender inequality related to the normalisation of the heterosexual relationship has been addressed in Irish plays around 1910. Looking at the political situation of the regression of women's rights in the world, this is still a crucial issue. It is also notable that, while Gregory did not publicly advocate for suffrage, her play exhibits prominent suffragist themes. It is evident that Gore-Booth's political standpoint as a suffragette is

reflected in her play. I believe that the plays are an appeal to women to organise themselves and fight alongside people who understand their subjugated position, as Gertrude realises, saying, "I must go back to my own people." (Gore-Booth 90). The analysis of both play texts has contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the broader context of Irish women's playwriting during the specified period. This is a particularly relevant area of study given the overt disregard of Irish women's playwriting at the time. Consequently, it is imperative to apply further analysis and reappraise texts such as Gore-Booth's *Fiametta* and highlight their significance in women's and queer history by applying gender and queer theory.

Despite the engagement with subjects such as women's discrimination, subjugation to men and the harmfulness of heteronormative beliefs, I am convinced that it is necessary to focus on positive prospects of this research. First, the existence of Irish women's plays that engage with subjects of women's oppression and reflect the values of the suffragette movement suggests the presence of further relevant texts for analysis in this context. The concept of queer resistance can be employed to identify texts that demonstrate characteristics of resistance to heteronormativity, thereby confirming the ongoing struggle of Irish women and the expression of this struggle in their playwriting. This finding substantiates that women have historically employed written expression as a means of resistance, and it is reasonable to assume that further literary evidence supporting this assertion is likely to be discovered.

Contrary to Finn's assertion that love is a disruptive force, I am convinced that love has the potential to unite women and other individuals, fostering the formation of communities that challenge traditional heteronormative attitudes. I am confident that by finding our people, we will be able to organise ourselves and make a difference.

(30.016 words)

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## 7. Appendix

### Abstract

Augusta Gregory's *Grania* (1912) and Eva Gore-Booth's *Fiametta* (early 1900s) depict female protagonists who challenge heteronormative expectations, particularly in relation to marriage. This thesis aims to examine the recurring patterns of women's resistance to compulsory heteronormativity in the works of these Irish playwrights. Although both authors were motivated by different biographical influences—Gore-Booth as a radical activist and Gregory as a writer primarily focused on literary endeavors—their plays exhibit both similarities and differences in their portrayals of women grappling with marriage, individuality, and independence. Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, Adrienne Rich's terminology of compulsory heterosexuality, Luce Irigaray's claim of sexual difference, and Audre Lorde's concept of the master's tools are essential to expose the play's protagonists' inability to become autonomous subjects. This analysis will determine whether the protagonists in the plays act in a manner of queer resistance and in what way they reinforce normative expectations of women. Therefore, the protagonists' actions regarding the shackles of heteronormative expectations towards women in the play will be analysed. This paper will specifically contribute to the study of female authored Irish plays which remains an ongoing focus within feminist and Anglophone studies. While *Grania* is relatively well-known, *Fiametta* was published posthumously and has received limited scholarly attention, offering an opportunity to make a significant contribution to the academic field.

## **Zusammenfassung**

Augusta Gregorys *Grania* (1912) und Eva Gore-Booths *Fiametta* (Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts) konfrontieren ihre Protagonistinnen mit heteronormativen Erwartungen, insbesondere in Bezug auf die Ehe. Diese Arbeit untersucht die wiederkehrenden Muster des Widerstands von Frauen gegen die Erwartung von Heteronormativität an Frauen in den Werken dieser irischen Dramatikerinnen. Obwohl beide Autorinnen von unterschiedlichen biografischen Einflüssen motiviert waren – Gore-Booth als radikale Aktivistin und Gregory überwiegend als Schriftstellerin –, weisen ihre Stücke sowohl Ähnlichkeiten als auch Unterschiede in der Darstellung von Frauen auf, die sich mit Ehe, Individualität und Unabhängigkeit auseinandersetzen. Judith Butlers Theorie des Genderkonstruktivismus, Adrienne Richs Begriff der „compulsory heterosexuality“, Luce Irigarays Konzept der „sexual difference“ und Audre Lordes Konzept der „master’s tools“ sind zentral, um aufzudecken, dass die Protagonistinnen des Stücks damit kämpfen selbständige und individuelle Subjekte zu werden. Die Analyse wird zeigen, ob die Protagonistinnen in den Stücken in einer Art „queer resistance“ handeln und inwiefern sie normative Erwartungen an Frauen verstärken. Die Handlungen der Protagonistinnen werden in Bezug auf die Fesseln der heteronormativen Erwartungen an Frauen in dem Stück analysiert. Diese Theses trägt spezifisch zur Erforschung von irischen Theaterstücken weiblicher Autorinnen bei, welche nach wie vor ein Schwerpunkt der feministischen und anglophonen Studien ist. Während *Grania* relativ bekannt ist, wurde *Fiametta* posthum veröffentlicht und hat bisher nur begrenzte wissenschaftliche Aufmerksamkeit und Analyse erhalten.

### **Declaration of Independence**

I hereby declare that I have written this thesis independently and have used only the sources and aids indicated. All text passages and lines of thought taken verbatim or in spirit from other works are identified by precise indication of the source in the form of annotations or in-text citations. This also applies to sources from the Internet, where the URL and date of access are also given. I am aware that any case of plagiarism will result in the non-assessment of the entire course and must be reported to the Director of Studies. Furthermore, I confirm that I have not already submitted this work for assessment elsewhere.