

THE CENSORSHIP OF "O'FLAHERTY V.C."

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Lauren Arrington

THE CENSORSHIP OF *O'FLAHERTY V.C.*

When opposition arose to the Abbey Theatre's scheduled production of Bernard Shaw's new play, *O'Flaherty V.C.*, the theater had very little impetus to fight the objections. Ireland was in the midst of a heated debate over the country's involvement in the Great War, and even though Shaw's satire of Irish politics was "evenhanded," as described below, it was nevertheless unwelcome. Shaw and the Abbey had been partners in controversy before, when Dublin Castle, the seat of the British administration in Ireland, objected to the production of *The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet* in 1909. At that time, when Lady Gregory was summoned to the castle, she was able to present the administration with two irrefutable arguments: the Abbey enjoyed the patronage of notable figures in Dublin society, and the theater was in an increasingly firm financial position, contributing "over £1500 a year" to the Dublin economy.¹ The production went ahead in defiance of government opposition and was a great financial success for the theater. Neither of these arguments—patronage nor financial stability—was available to the Abbey in November 1915. An evaluation of correspondence between the Abbey's directors, the financial records of the theater, and the actions taken by the British military and civil authorities in Dublin reveals that the censorship of *O'Flaherty V.C.* was a product of Shaw's protagonist's stance that "no war is right" and the Abbey Theatre's state of financial crisis, brought on by the war, which prevented the theater's directors from risking the production.²

The Financial Crisis

While a detailed examination of the Abbey Theatre's financial circumstances may seem tedious, it is nonetheless vital because the theater's fiscal

straits were a major contributing factor to the successful censorship. The outbreak of the Great War had severe financial ramifications for the Abbey. Tours to England, on which the directors relied to finance the theater in Dublin, were no longer profitable. An unsigned fragment of a letter most likely written by Andrew Patrick Wilson to W. B. Yeats paints a vivid picture:

The Zeppelin raid of Tuesday seems to me to be merely a trial trip. By May raids may be happening every night, or twice nightly for the matter of that, and Londoners will be even less keen to go to Theatres than they are now; and, so far as I can see, it is bad enough now in all conscience . . . we have got to face the fact that practically all the Theatres in London doing anything like decent business just now are doing so at reduced prices. It seems to me then that we have got to consider the advisability of cutting out the entire London season this year. By doing so while gaining nothing else, we might cut down our losses, and that seems to me the most we can hope for.³

As early as September 1914, Yeats and Lady Gregory drafted a letter to the *Irish Times* declaring an impending financial emergency.⁴ Although in years past Yeats in particular had emphasized the aesthetic contribution that the Abbey made to Irish national life, he and Lady Gregory cleverly changed tack: “Leaving aside the loss to the artistic life of Dublin, it would be a considerable industrial loss, and throw many people out of employment at a time when employment is difficult to find.” The letter also included a statement for the fiscal year ending 28 February 1914.⁵ The report listed only expenses, which amounted to over £9,000, and did not include any revenue or receipts. The directors claimed that their small—undisclosed—amount of capital would not “last very long” if the theater continued running at those costs. The greatest expenditure for the Abbey was salaries for the acting company, at £5,793.5.2., underlining the directors’ claim of commitment to the Dublin workforce.

If the public letter solicited any sympathy from Dublin audiences, the appeal raised little actual effect. The Abbey’s mounting debts drew the attention of the Munster and Leinster Bank, and the bank manager approached the Abbey’s accountant, Fred Harris, in February 1915. The theater was overdrawn £185.10.5 on the account for the theater proper and had only £57.17.5 in the company account.⁶ Harris wrote to Yeats to inform him of the bank manager’s visit and to relay questions from the bank’s directors, who requested, “Please report on this overdraft. Who is responsible for the amount? Under what authority was it allowed?”⁷ Harris told Yeats that he had asked the manager for a £150 or £200 overdraft

but that queries must have arisen following the bank's end-of-year report to its head office. Harris suggested that the Abbey turn over its leases to the bank as collateral against the loan, a massive blow to the Abbey's assets. The theater held £2,327.10.0 in stocks, but the economic climate was so poor that Yeats was reluctant to sell because they were unlikely to recover the actual worth. Unable to liquidate its holdings, closure seemed imminent. Yeats wrote from Dublin to his friend Mabel Beardsley: "The day after I got here I had set before me a set of figures showing the effect of the war on the Abbey Theatre. Our auditor said that we must shut up the theatre or start great economies. (Please keep all this to yourself) I am waiting for Lady Gregory's return next week before we decide what to do. I hope to find some means of making a fresh start after the war at the worst."⁸ Lady Gregory was even less optimistic than Yeats. She wrote, "I dont myself think any economies would get us through the season without loss."⁹

Fearing their increasingly precarious financial situation, Yeats conducted a financial review in spring 1915. A recent tour to London had failed and "exhausted the sum paid into the bank to meet liabilities."¹⁰ The directors approximated £415 would be needed in order to meet their obligations until the end of the season. They planned to borrow a further £500 on the theater's mortgage to meet that sum but projected a minimum of £400 loss on the following (1915–16) season. Yeats drafted an official statement in which he outlined the theater's capital and debts, and he compared the receipts from London tours for the years 1911–14.¹¹ The figures shockingly demonstrate the Abbey's reliance on tours to England. A four-week tour in 1911 brought in £482.1.1. Profits from a six-week tour the next year increased drastically to over £1,321, but in 1913, a six-week tour only yielded £433.11.2. That was still a substantial earning compared to 1914, when the Abbey had a net gain of only £21.13.6 from a six-week tour: less than 5 percent of its profits from the previous year and less than 2 percent of its profits for 1912.

During the 1914–15 fiscal year, the Abbey had also been forced to make a significant outlay in order to purchase an adjacent building on Lower Abbey Street when the space that the theater had been renting came up for sale. To protect the theater against increased rent resulting from another buyer purchasing the building, the directors took out a loan for £1,200 from the Munster and Leinster Bank. In his financial statement, Yeats calculated this expense as amounting to an annual savings of £20 after interest, but despite any future savings, the loan only compounded the crisis. At the end of February 1915, the Abbey was £1,210.13.4 in debt.

Forced to consider the viability of the Abbey's future, Yeats proposed two courses of action through which they might cope with the debt. They might reduce the company and continue to operate according to sched-

ule, or they could dismiss the players altogether and let out the building for the use of other companies “until better times have come.”¹² If the Abbey followed the first course of action and continued to operate with a reduced company, the theater stood to lose £220—the cost of retaining the actors while the theater was dark during the summer months. Although it was a substantial figure, Yeats believed that incurring this cost was favorable to closing entirely because the actors would quickly seek employment elsewhere, and the directors would be faced with rebuilding the company from scratch prior to opening for the next autumn’s season. Even though he advocated staying open, Yeats remained pessimistic about the future. He wrote in his financial statement, “We have failed to make the Theatre in Dublin self-supporting, and as we have played out all our most popular pieces it cannot do much better for some time. If we go on as at present I am afraid we must look forward to a heavier loss during the coming winter season in Dublin.”¹³ In hopes of buttressing the theater in Dublin, Yeats considered embarking on a tour of the provinces, but he miscalculated the cost of a tour at £22.¹⁴ Although that figure was a severe underestimation, £22 still exceeded the profits made from the 1914 London tour. In actuality, the Abbey’s manager, Patrick Wilson, projected the cost of the proposed tour at no less than £75 per week. Wilson believed that the Abbey could hope for no more than £50 per week in profits, which would leave the theater with a £100 deficit at the end of four weeks. He wrote that to attempt a provincial tour “would be to court disaster.”¹⁵

By October 1915, the unprofitable tours to England had been reduced to what Yeats described as undignified performances. He wrote to Lady Gregory, who was abroad in America, reporting an incident in which the cast was “pelted with onions . . . [in] some provincial music-hall.”¹⁶ He decided to send the company back home to Dublin, where they might regain both the audience there and their dignity as professionals. The autumn season would include a triple bill featuring *O’Flaherty V.C.*, Synge’s *In the Shadow of the Glen*, and *Duty* by Seumas O’Brien.¹⁷ Shaw’s play was to be tested in Dublin before it was performed in England; Yeats had already begun negotiations with the London Coliseum in hopes of staging it there in January.¹⁸ However, Yeats would soon receive a telegram informing him that the play had to be withdrawn from the Abbey, and in a few short weeks, *O’Flaherty V.C.* would be struck from the Abbey’s schedule.¹⁹

The Recruiting Debate

W. F. Bailey, trustee of the Abbey, raised his objection to the production of Shaw’s new play before he had even read it closely. The title alone would have been enough to arouse his attention: *O’Flaherty V.C., an inter-*

lude in the Great War of 1914.²⁰ Shaw's opposition to the war was well known, so Bailey sent a copy of the play to Dublin Castle in hopes of preempting any controversy. The title would also flag the attentions of the authorities. That autumn, the British army was in the midst of a major recruitment drive in Ireland. In October, the Lord Lieutenant (Lord Wimborne), members of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), the Unionist Party, and the Catholic Church organized the Department of Recruiting for Ireland. At that time, John Redmond, leader of the IPP, advocated the recruitment of all men between nineteen and forty-one years of age.²¹ The *Freeman's Journal* was the mouthpiece of the IPP and, as Ben Novick writes, was "100 per cent behind the recruiting effort."²² The same day that the Abbey announced its production of *O'Flaherty V.C.* in the *Freeman's Journal*, that newspaper also printed an article estimating 1,100 men were needed every week from Irish recruits "to supply the wastage" of the war.²³ The following day, the entire front page of the *Freeman's Journal* was dedicated to a recruitment advertisement that declared, "Irishmen! You cannot permit your Regiments to be kept up to strength by other than Ireland's sons! It would be a deep disgrace to Ireland, if all her regiments were not Irish to a man." The advertisement summoned "50,000 Irishmen to join their brave comrades in Irish regiments."²⁴ (A detachable form that men could complete in order to enlist was even included at the bottom of the page.) As evident from the *Freeman's Journal's* unmistakable position on Ireland's involvement in the war, contrasted with antiwar opinion discussed below, recruitment was a contentious subject, and Bailey's caution was well founded, although his tactics—sending the play directly to the authorities—overshot the mark.

Upon receiving the play, true to Bailey's anticipation, Matthew Nathan was alarmed by Shaw's subject, explicit in the play's title. Although Nathan was undersecretary to the chief secretary, Augustine Birrell, Charles Townshend refers to Nathan as "the real ruler of Ireland," and Nathan's actions in this case bear out the claim.²⁵ In his regular report to Birrell, Nathan notified him of the Abbey's upcoming production, mentioning the play in direct relation to the recruitment drive.²⁶ He reported increased activity in the Irish Volunteers, who had split from Redmond's volunteers in opposition to the war, and noted a heightened danger posed by Sinn Féin. Nathan worried that Lord Wimbourne's goal of getting ten thousand new Irish recruits was destined to fail; "and now Bernard Shaw has sent a play to the Abbey Theatre which will be looked upon as too much a recruiting play by the Irish and as an anti-recruiting play by the English. Its title 'O'Flaherty V.C.' will give you an idea of its nature."²⁷

In addition to the play's general subject of war, the name of Shaw's protagonist would also alert the authorities. O'Flaherty was suspiciously similar to O'Leary, the name of the first Irish soldier to win the Victoria

Cross. Michael O'Leary enjoyed wide celebrity; D. G. Boyce writes that his "rapturous reception in Dublin was only surpassed by that in the British newspaper *Press*, with statements such as 'How Michael O'Leary, V.C. kills eight Germans and takes two barricades'; 'The wonderful story of Michael O'Leary, V.C.'"²⁸ These reports are directly invoked in Shaw's play when General Sir Pearce Madigan chastens O'Flaherty for embellishing his story of "fighting the Kaiser and the twelve giants of the Prussian guard singlehanded" (209). Although Shaw would deny any direct correlation between his character and the real-life O'Leary, the press would doggedly pursue the issue, as will be discussed further, and the seeming correlation between the fictional soldier and the real-life O'Leary would do little to endear his play to either the civil or the military authorities.

Shaw knew that his play was likely to raise objection but not for the same reasons as Bailey feared. When he was completing his draft in September 1915, Shaw wrote to Lady Gregory: "When it came to business, I had to give up all the farcical equivoque I described to you, and go ahead quite straightforwardly without any ingenuities or misunderstandings. The picture of the Irish character will make the *Playboy* seem a patriotic rhapsody by comparison. . . . The idea is that O'Flaherty's experience in the trenches has induced in him a terrible realism and an unbearable candour. He sees Ireland as it is, his mother as she is, his sweetheart as she is; and he goes back to the dreaded trenches joyfully for the sake of peace and quietness."²⁹ Shaw was concerned that his representations of "the Irish character" would raise objections from nationalists similar to the response to Synge's assault on Irish womanhood in the case of the *Playboy* riots in 1907.³⁰ The idea that a young Irishman would be so eager to leave Ireland in order to fight England's war would not rest with a nationalist audience. However, it was the response not from nationalists but from the British administration in Ireland that concerned Bailey. Shaw's condemnation of the war is both overt, as when O'Flaherty tells Sir Pearce that "no war is right," and more subtle, such as when O'Flaherty reports the advice of his priest, Father Quinlan, to Sir Pearce: "'You know, don't you' he says 'that it's your duty as a Christian and a good son of the Holy Church to love your enemies?' he says. 'I know it's my duty to my king and country to kill them' I says. 'That's right' he says: 'quite right. But' says he 'you can kill them and do a good turn afterwards to shew your love for them' he says; 'and it's your duty to have a mass said for the souls of the hundreds of Germans you say you killed' says he; 'for many and many of them were Bavarians and good Catholics' he says. 'Is it me that must pay for the masses for the souls of the Boshes?' I says. 'Let the King of England pay for them' I says; 'for it was his quarrel and not mine'" (209). The Catholic Church officially endorsed the recruiting effort, and Townshend writes that the police watched the "few clergy who spoke publicly against partici-

pation in the war." Although 1914–15 saw a twofold increase in the number of clergy who publicly objected to the war, there were only "fifty-five individuals in late 1915" who voiced objection.³¹ Shaw's dialogue reveals the Church's contradictory position; however, this short speech is Shaw's only mention of the Church in the play and one of his few allusions to the broader issues of the war beyond O'Flaherty's direct experience.

The Danger of "Evenhandedness"

Dan Laurence and Nicholas Grene write that "the play is hardly as dangerous as Shaw makes out" in his letter to Lady Gregory due to the "evenhandedness" of his critique.³² When Bailey read the play again more closely, he realized that the play was not as controversial as he had anticipated, but it was too late to stop Dublin Castle from objecting to the production.³³ In the end, it was Shaw's "evenhandedness" that made the play so problematic for the Abbey to stage once objection had been raised. The nature of the play meant that the theater was unable to pander to the sympathies of the British authorities with any effect or to appeal for nationalist support.

Shaw's depiction of an Irishman desperate to leave his own country for the bliss of the Western Front aside, it comes as a surprise that advanced nationalists would have opposed the production of *O'Flaherty V.C.*, for O'Flaherty is characterized from the first scene as an unenthusiastic participant in the recruitment campaign. Furthermore, Shaw takes a sharp jab at British recruiting propaganda in his references to the marching song "It's a Long Way to Tipperary." In one of her letters in which she attempted to win Shaw over to advanced nationalism, Mabel FitzGerald wrote to tell Shaw that he should support "the right of your fellow countrymen and women to have a Press suited to their mentality and in accordance with their national feelings and not a vapid, atrocity mongering, 'Long Way to Tipperary' Press foisted on them."³⁴ The leader of Sinn Féin, Arthur Griffith, objected to the song because he believed that it associated Irish soldiers with "the immorality of British culture."³⁵ Novick writes, "Piccadilly and Leicester Square, the London highlights of the song, made Griffith think of Babylon and Belshazzar."³⁶ In his play, Shaw has O'Flaherty tell Sir Pearce that he is exhausted by "the calling for cheers for king and country" and the anthems of "God Save the King" and "Tipperary" (206); he would rather be back fighting at the front. Any kudos that Shaw might have garnered from O'Flaherty's rejection of the recruitment cam-

paign would be countered by O'Flaherty's confession that he participated, indeed delighted in, the same "immorality" to which Griffith objected. O'Flaherty tells his mother, "If I ever marry at all I'll marry a Frenchwoman. . . . I've been good as married to a couple of them already" (222).

The presumed attack on the character of Michael O'Leary would be particularly tricky territory for the Abbey to negotiate, as it would also offend both supporters of Ireland's involvement in the war and advanced nationalists. Prior to 1915, antrecruiting propaganda would often target individual Irish recruits as well as recruiting policy, but following the slaughter at Gallipoli in August 1915, attacks on individual soldiers were no longer acceptable. Novick writes, "For advanced nationalism to succeed politically, its publicity organs had to appeal to public sentiment—and from 1915 on, this sentiment was more and more in favour of a party which allowed people to oppose the war without disrespecting the men who fought."³⁷ Although Shaw's representation of O'Flaherty was actually quite sympathetic, it was perceived as targeting an individual soldier (O'Leary) and would therefore raise objection from the antrecruiting camp as well as advocates of the military campaign.

In Shaw's characterizations of General Sir Pearce Madigan and O'Flaherty's mother, he depicts a shallow, predictable ascendancy class as a foil for advanced nationalism. However, Shaw's critique is not an outright mockery of either advanced nationalism or unionism; rather, it is the degree of patriotism with which he takes issue. Before Mrs. O'Flaherty ever appears on the stage, her politics are revealed through a speech that her son makes to Sir Pearce. O'Flaherty says, "She says all the English generals is Irish. She says all the English poets and great men was Irish. She says the English never knew how to read their own books until we taught them" (215). These initial claims are not as ludicrous as they appear at first glance. There was a significant trend of successful Irishmen being appropriated by the English tradition, which Shaw had addressed previously in his "Preface for Politicians" and in the body of *John Bull's Other Island*. In the preface, Shaw posits the Duke of Wellington as an "intensely Irish Irishman" and contrasts him to "Nelson, that intensely English Englishman" before concluding, "I daresay some Englishman will now try to steal Wellington as Macaulay tried to steal Swift."³⁸ Indeed, Wellington's appropriation has been a successful one, and Shaw's reference to Swift foreshadows his own appropriation by English—rather than Irish—literature. Likewise in the text of the play, Larry Doyle tells Broadbent how the romanticizing of Ireland as a Celtic nation disgusts him; Doyle says that the English and the Irish are made of the same stuff, invaded and inhabited by the same cultures. Proudly, Broadbent responds, "True. All the capable people in Ireland are of English extraction."³⁹

Although Mrs. O'Flaherty makes a valid point in her theory of the English appropriation of the Irish, her succeeding claims are cast further and further outside the realm of possibility. Her son reports that she believes that the Irish are "the lost tribes of the house of Israel and the chosen people of God" (215), and while certain religious sects believed (and some still do) that the Ark of the Covenant is buried under the Hill of Tara, the claim to be a chosen people is, of course, Shavian exaggeration. O'Flaherty goes on to say that his mother "says that the goddess Venus, that was born out of the foam of the sea, came up out of the water in Killiney Bay off Bray Head. She says that Moses built the seven churches and that Lazarus was buried in Glasnevin" (215).⁴⁰ Shaw's comic pacing is effective, but more than that, he allows Mrs. O'Flaherty's nationalist zeal to snowball until the force of her original argument is lost, delivering a subtle and effective critique of the shortcomings of advanced nationalism. In that manner, with his deft even hand, Shaw isolated the Abbey from both poles of opinion; neither advanced nationalists nor advocates of recruitment could be solicited for support.

The Censorship of *O'Flaherty V.C.*

On 10 November the postponement of *O'Flaherty V.C.* was announced in the *Evening Telegraph*, which attributed the delay to "the heavy nature of rehearsals."⁴¹ Around the same time that the *Telegraph* article appeared, Bailey sent a telegram to Yeats informing him that the playbill for 23 November would have to be changed; that bill, of course, included the one-act *O'Flaherty V.C.*⁴² Bailey gave St. John Ervine the same instruction, and Ervine sent a telegram to Yeats, asking him to come to Dublin to help sort out the controversy. Yeats wired back on 12 November to ask Ervine to "be more explicit"; however, Ervine replied to the effect that the matter was too sensitive to risk explicating via telegram.⁴³ In the meantime, Yeats paid a visit to Shaw and told him that the authorities must be responsible for the trouble. Later that day, after Shaw and Yeats had parted, Shaw wrote to Yeats to say that he had sent a telegram to Bailey to inquire further and that Bailey had replied that it was the military.⁴⁴ Shaw also wired Horace Plunkett to inquire about Matthew Nathan's whereabouts, so that he might write to him. Shaw believed that Nathan's rank as a colonel might make him as "useful on the military as on the civil side."⁴⁵ He wrote to Nathan immediately and then reported to Yeats,

The line I took was that the suppression of the play will make a most mischievous scandal, because it will be at once assumed that the play is anti-English; that this will be exploited by the Germans and go round the globe; that there will be no performance to refute this it; and that a lot of people who regard me as infallible will be prevented from recruiting, shaken in their patriotism etc etc. I enclosed a copy of the play in my letter, and explained that I had not presented it for license here because the Lord Chamberlain would not pass the description of the queen, though she herself would like it, and that his refusal would start the same mischief of false reports of my pro-Germanism. I dwelt upon the hardship of the starving theatre, and altogether made a strong & quite genuine case for letting the performances proceed.⁴⁶

This would be the second copy of *O'Flaherty V.C.* that Nathan received—the first having been sent by Bailey. (Ironically, the economic argument that Shaw put to Nathan was the motivation behind Bailey notifying Nathan in the first place.) When Yeats learned of Shaw's correspondence with Nathan, he sent him a copy of the script that had been marked with cuts in negotiations for the Abbey's tour of the play to the Coliseum, discussed above. Yeats suggested to Bailey and to Shaw that in the event that the military would not acquiesce to a public performance of *O'Flaherty V.C.*, they might consider giving “a private performance inviting all Dublin notables & taking up a collection.”⁴⁷

On 13 November, Yeats received a letter from Bailey that was “full of violent opinions against the play and no facts except misleading ones,” as he relayed its contents to Lady Gregory. From that letter, Yeats inferred that “it was Bailey and not the authorities—that he merely surmised that they would object.”⁴⁸ Bailey wrote to Yeats the following day to admit his culpability. He conceded that his first reading of the play was insufficient and that on a subsequent reading, he came to the opinion that “with an ‘educated’ audience it would be all right but the danger is that it may be misinterpreted and the house be made an audience of warring factions.” Bailey went on to say that he would go to speak with Nathan, and “if necessary,” he would “go to see the censor,” by whom he must have meant the Lord Lieutenant, Wimborne.⁴⁹

Following Bailey’s admission, Yeats cultivated a distance between himself and the debate. He wrote an apology to Shaw for assuming that the authorities had instigated the objections and sent a telegram to Ervine to say that he would not go to Dublin.⁵⁰ He then wrote to Bailey to say, “I am out of Saga for the moment. I have spent the day in bed with asthmatic attack & bad cold. Tell Ervine who has been urgent about my going to Dublin.”⁵¹ Although Yeats had a refined skill for developing illnesses at

his convenience, this attack is corroborated by other correspondence unrelated to the *O'Flaherty* affair; nonetheless, the illness provided a timely opportunity for Yeats to resign from the negotiations.⁵² He would later admit to Lady Gregory that he "thought the situation was delicate with Shaw and preferred that Bailey or Irvine [sic] or somebody a little less Shaw's friend should take the decision. I was really very worried about it for I could see nothing except our withdrawal of the play before it was definitely stopped by the authorities."⁵³ To preempt a public intervention by the authorities and to avoid upsetting Shaw, Yeats wrote to Bailey telling him that if Nathan objected to the play, it should be postponed indefinitely.⁵⁴ In passing the blame on to Bailey, Yeats was in part giving him his due for not being honest about having contacted the military in the first place.

At the same time that Yeats was making the decision to quietly withdraw the play, Nathan was writing his regular report to Birrell, discussed above, in which he connected the danger posed by Shaw's play to Lord Wimborne's recruitment drive. Nathan, perhaps anticipating a disinterested response from Birrell, met with Horace Plunkett and Lord Wimborne himself for advice on how to proceed. Wimborne had only been in the post of Lord Lieutenant for nine months, and his presence at the meeting was in his military rather than his censorial capacity—although in this instance, the two were inextricably linked. Wimborne's uneasy position with regard to the Irish recruiting figures would drive his objection to any potential danger that *O'Flaherty V.C.* might pose; Boyce writes that Wimborne was "governed by the fact that the sole purpose of the castle was to keep the British government satisfied that Ireland was quiet."⁵⁵ The officials at Dublin Castle believed that even the slightest provocation arising from the production of Shaw's play could not be risked, and for different reasons—namely, economic—the Abbey directorate concurred.

As demonstrated above, the actual content of the play posed very little threat. In fact, Birrell responded to Nathan's concerns about Shaw's play by saying, "Bernard Shaw's play is a bore," and he advised against censorship of the play "unless really obliged," saying, "The military is not a good authority to which to submit a play. I don't think they would have passed *Henry V*. Does it rest with them? Surely not. If it offends both sides it cannot be very bad. Speaking without the book of words, I say let it alone."⁵⁶ However, as he spent most of his time in England rather than at Dublin Castle, Birrell has been criticized as being out of touch with the nature and pace of politics in Ireland, and his lack of concern over Shaw's play runs counter to his later claim that "the programme of the Abbey Theatre, became to me of far more real significance than the monthly reports of the RIC [Royal Irish Constabulary]."⁵⁷ Although Nathan was obliged to follow his superior's orders, the recruitment drive was so desperate that

the military could not afford any upheaval. Subtlety would prove key if Nathan was to achieve what he believed was necessary—suppression of the play—without disobeying his superior.

On 15 November, Yeats wrote to Shaw to say that “the Military Authorities did take action or rather threaten action,” but the threat was delicately employed, since Nathan wrote to Shaw the same day to say that he had read the play with “excitement and great interest.”⁵⁸ Before sending a fuller response to the play, Nathan and Plunkett exchanged copies of their letters to Shaw in order to ensure that they reflected the same sentiment.⁵⁹ Nathan wrote to Shaw again on 16 November to say that after a confidential consultation with both the military and the castle authorities, he believed that *O'Flaherty V.C.* would “do no good either to the Abbey Theatre or to the cause that, at any rate, a large section of Irishmen have made their own.” Nathan advised that the play was postponed until “a time when it will be recording some of the humour and pathos of a past rather than of a present national crisis.”⁶⁰ Plunkett also sympathized with Shaw’s arguments put forward in the play, but he too advocated its postponement. Plunkett wrote that he believed that O’Flaherty’s perspective, broadened by the war, made “a valuable contribution to Irish progress.”⁶¹ Plunkett’s pet project was addressed in Shaw’s play when O’Flaherty tells Sir Pearce, “Stick in this place I will not among a lot of good-for-nothing-divils thatll not do a hand’s turn but watch the grass growing and build up the stone wall where the cow walked through it. And Sir Horace Plunkett breaking his heart all the time telling them how they might put the land into decent tillage like the French and the Belgians” (224). In spite of the likelihood of being flattered by his cameo, Plunkett wrote, “It seems rather a pity to teach the lesson when the attention of the important pupils is elsewhere [i.e., on the war]. When this conscription question ceases to trouble all could laugh and learn.”⁶² Given the political climate, even if the military did not take action against the play, Plunkett wrote that *O'Flaherty V.C.* was sure to incite a riot that would endanger the Abbey. He wrote that he had “chanced to hear” of Bailey’s concern to that effect and that the demonstrations and counterdemonstrations that were sure to arise would not benefit any of the parties involved.

Ervine had tea with Plunkett the same day that Plunkett addressed his letter to Shaw, but even prior to their meeting, Ervine was convinced of the same danger posed to the Abbey as Plunkett expressed to Shaw. Ervine wrote to Yeats to say that he was not concerned “because of the play itself but because of the mixed element in the audience.” Ervine believed that the “Sinn Fein element” would “come on purpose to make trouble,” drawing attention to the play as antrecruiting to suit their own purposes, but that the party would “desert us immediately afterward,” leaving the Abbey to cope with pro-recruitment objections to the production. However, Er-

vine was not prepared to give up on the production entirely. He wrote that Shaw proposed giving a private performance for the military authorities, a variation on Yeats's previous proposal of a private performance for the Dublin elite. Ervine believed that this would be a fruitful course of action and wrote that he was "approaching General Friend on the subject."⁶³

Shaw wrote to Yeats outlining his strategy for wooing the military authorities: "There should be tea for them; and extraordinary care must be taken to have the theatre as warm as possible. And there must be no middle class persons about under any pretext whatever. They must see nobody but the people they see every day; and the more of *them* there are the better, short of overcrowding the generals."⁶⁴ Shaw planned to play the comedy to its height in order to overshadow any potentially controversial satire, and he even conceded to alter "any lines that may jar on the military staff."⁶⁵ However, while the Abbey was still in negotiations with the authorities, the *Freeman's Journal* announced that *O'Flaherty V.C.* had been withdrawn, and the newspaper publicly speculated that the cancellation was due to government interference.⁶⁶ Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory to say that "all would have been as well as possible but for some goose Sinclair or Miss Desmond, it is believed, who put a paragraph in the *Freeman* that the play had [been] suppressed by the military censor."⁶⁷ Though Yeats believed that Ervine would be able to operate a successful campaign of damage control locally, the rumors would have broader implications—reaching as far as America—and the Abbey's reputation, and by extension its opportunities for touring, would suffer.

Shaw wrote to Bailey the day after the report in the *Freeman's Journal* appeared acquiescing to the play's withdrawal. However, he wrote, "I still think, now that the play has been announced, that less mischief might be done by a performance of a carefully cut version than by what would appear to the public as a suspicion suppression, in spite of all possible disclaimers."⁶⁸ Indeed, the "disclaimers" had little effect. Ervine responded to the reports in the *Freeman's Journal* by stating that "no passages had been deleted either by the censor in England, or at the request of the military authorities in Dublin. The latter had not approached the management of the theatre in any way in reference to the production."⁶⁹ Although Ervine's claim was technically correct, in that Bailey had initiated contact with the authorities, the press—quite rightly—was unrelenting in its suspicion.

In his notebook of newspaper clippings, Joseph Holloway recorded the press coverage of the *O'Flaherty* controversy. An article from the *Irish Independent*, which he dates as early as 11 November, states that "a prominent member of the Abbey Theatre Co." denied that the play had been suppressed. The unnamed source described the substance of the play as "Shaw on a barrel banging a tin tray while all the crowd pass on to the

circus" in order to illustrate its harmlessness. The source reiterated that there was "no Censor in Ireland as there is in London," and Ervine was reported as stating that the play was "merely postponed owing to difficulties connected with rehearsals."⁷⁰ The *Star*, in a clipping that Holloway dates from 16 November, also reported Ervine's denial of any "suppression." That article also misreported the Abbey's plans to produce the play at the London Coliseum, claiming that the play was to run at the Coliseum prior to its premiere in Dublin and stating "that it had been so cut up by the Censor [in England] that Mr Shaw would not recognize it as his own creation, and that it could not be produced." The *Star*'s report is unsubstantiated by any correspondence among the Abbey directorate or Shaw.⁷¹ A less sensational, though equally incorrect, report was offered by the *Evening Telegraph*:

The following appears in this morning's "Freeman's Journal":—

It is understood that the new one-act play "O'Flaherty V.C.," by George Bernard Shaw, which was to have been produced next week at the Abbey Theatre, has been withdrawn for the present. The circumstances under which the withdrawal has been decided upon have not as yet been publicly announced. It had been arranged that the play was to be produced at a leading London theatre, and the MS. was submitted in the ordinary way to the official dramatic censor. In his hands, it is understood the play suffered some mutilations, which were, however, from the author's point of view so important that he decided to withdraw it altogether. Having regard to these circumstances it is not improbable that the London decision influenced the determination not to produce the play at the Abbey, where it was under rehearsal.

The *Telegraph* went on to print Ervine's statement that the play was postponed and his rote denial of interference by the authorities. The article concluded, "The play, it is stated, has been interpreted as a skit on a supposed conversation between Lieutenant 'Mike' O'Leary and his mother."⁷²

Throughout their coverage of the *O'Flaherty V.C.* controversy, the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Evening Telegraph* (which were under the same ownership) repeatedly conflated the title of Shaw's play with the name of Michael O'Leary. The *Freeman's Journal* first misreported the title as *Michael O'Flaherty, V.C.* and later as *O'Leary V.C.*, misprints that were certainly a deliberate attempt to inflame opposition from supporters of Ireland's involvement in the war.⁷³ Bailey had predicted, "Some of the Dublin papers on both sides of politics would combine to hound us down if they come to the conclusion that it is intended to depreciate and degrade Mi-

chael O'Leary. Already inquiries are being made as to this point. The title of the play raises suspicion in a city which is placarded with pictures etc of 'O'Leary V.C.'⁷⁴ His fears were realized in the majority of the press coverage, but one newspaper made a point of correcting the misreports. In his notebook, Holloway abbreviates the title of the newspaper as CS, which most certainly stands for *An Cladheamh Soluis*, the nationalist organ owned by Arthur Griffith. On 12 November, that newspaper ran an article stating, "Some of the papers have given the title of the play incorrectly. It is not 'Michael O'Flaherty, V.C.' but 'O'Flaherty, V.C. An Interlude in the Great War of 1914.'⁷⁵ This correction was less likely a defense of Shaw than it was a result of the antagonisms between the two newspapers as instruments of Sinn Féin and the Irish Parliamentary Party. Despite the correction, the *Freeman's Journal* continued to misreport the title of Shaw's play as well as report rumors of government interference.

On 18 November, Shaw gave a statement to the *Manchester Guardian*, reprinted in the *Freeman's Journal*, in which he appealed that the press, "if they must circulate an unfounded report, at all events to make it clear that the author has no more desire to discourage recruiting in Ireland than the military authorities themselves."⁷⁶ Shaw's syntax here allows for the interpretation that Shaw was expressing the view that he had "no more desire to discourage recruiting" than he had desire to discourage the military. Regardless, that point was not picked up in the press. Instead, the editor of the *Freeman's Journal*, W. A. Brayden, printed a note following Shaw's statement that drew attention to his omissions:

We are glad to give publicity to the declaration of Mr G. Bernard Shaw that he has no desire to discourage recruiting in Ireland. We appreciate his unwillingness to gratify the Germans, who have since the war began derived a good deal too much satisfaction—which no doubt he would argue was misplaced—from some of his publications. We are not aware that anybody has stated that "the Castle authorities" had intervened to stop "Michael O'Flaherty, V.C." Everybody in Dublin remembers the case of "Blanco Posnett." The belief in Dublin among people likely to be well-informed was that the military authorities had intervened, and perhaps it is not by accident that Mr. Shaw, while so specific in his denial of the intervention of "the Castle authorities" (which was not asserted here), makes no such specific denial as regards the military. He is good enough to say that "there will be no attempt to disregard the wishes of the military authorities." There is no doubt that this is both correct and obvious.⁷⁷

The tactical aversions upon which Shaw and Ervine had relied in their statements to the press were no longer effective. On 19 November, Ervine

gave a statement to the *Freeman's Journal*, which also ran in the *Evening Telegraph*, rejecting the assertion that not only Dublin Castle but also the military had "made any suggestion" to the Abbey "concerning the play." He conceded that the authorities had been privy to the text of *O'Flaherty V.C.*: "The play has been read by a number of Irish and English gentlemen, some of them officers in his Majesty's forces, and all of them have taken pleasure in reading or listening to the play." However, Ervine continued to maintain that the cancellation was due to the "heavy nature of rehearsals."

Lady Gregory was abroad in America during the entire episode, and Yeats finally wrote to her on 19 November to notify her of the recent events. He wrote, "The military authorities have been as courteous and obliging as possible and everybody professes to be a friend of the theatre, especially Nathan. Meantime the play is postponed."⁷⁸ Perhaps aware that the battle was not to be won and that the inevitable postponement that Yeats had recommended could not be avoided, Shaw issued a statement that was carried by the *Irish Independent* on 20 November. If audiences were not to see *O'Flaherty V.C.* performed, he was intent to set the record straight regarding what was and was not the subject of his play:

The hero of my play is an almost entirely ignorant Irish peasant lad who has been greatly startled and disillusioned by the spectacle of the great world which has been opened up to him by his travels and his warfare. It must be quite clear from the rapid promotion of Lieut. O'Leary to his present rank—a promotion which would be impossible in the case of a man, however brave, of the O'Flaherty type—that the gratuitous identification of O'Flaherty with O'Leary is extremely annoying to me, and may possibly be offensive to Lieut. O'Leary. I can only take this opportunity of offering him my apologies, protesting that I am entirely innocent in the matter.⁷⁹

Newspaper reports during the two-week furor were repetitive: the same accusations of government interference and the same denials by Shaw and Ervine. The *Evening Herald*, however, struck right to the core of the issue in the last recorded press report of the controversy: "Mr Shaw takes his ounce of self-advertisement out of the business, but poor jokes at the expense of the Army and the Victoria Cross are not relished in England or Ireland just now. It is surprising that Mr Yeats, with his government connection, should have lent himself to producing the play."⁸⁰ As discussed above, Yeats stayed away throughout the negotiations over the play; although his reasons for remaining in England were first due to illness and later due to his desire to avoid compromising his relationship with Shaw, his political associations certainly factored into his decision. A

year later, he would have his pension threatened by claims that he was pro-German, and although he was not under that particular assault in November 1915, Yeats was conscious that he had to maintain good relations with government officials, for both his personal interest and that of the theater.⁸¹

The same day that the *Evening Herald* article appeared, Matthew Nathan sent his regular report to Augustine Birrell. Item number six was the matter of Shaw's play. Nathan wrote, "Bernard Shaw's play has quietly dropped not after I had received two very decent letters from him & written him the one of which I enclose a copy." In the next paragraph, he wrote, "I enclose the recruiting figures (C) which show that 6,050 men enlisted between 10/10/15 & 15/11/15 of these 957 came from Dublin and 1,535 from Belfast. This is no very glorious result of the campaign."⁸² The sequence of Nathan's report illustrates the underlying logic that associated Shaw's play with the recruiting campaign in Dublin. Following his report to Birrell, Nathan wrote to Shaw on 23 November in a gesture of goodwill to say that he "should like to see the play produced here with certain elisions to avoid hurting excited susceptibilities . . . especially if at the time it is put on the recently inaugurated recruiting campaign, now meeting with a certain measure of success, shall then have spent its novel force."⁸³ The suggestion that the play might bolster the recruitment drive was a stretch of the imagination, but the consideration with which Nathan dealt with Shaw's play resulted in a lasting friendship between the two men. *O'Flaherty V.C.*, however, would not be produced in 1915.⁸⁴

In sending a copy of *O'Flaherty V.C.* to Dublin Castle and inviting government interference, W. F. Bailey was fulfilling his role as trustee of the Abbey, in that he was acting in what he believed was the best interest of the theater. If the play was censored and the production suppressed in advance of its debut, the Abbey would be spared a public controversy that would likely alienate a substantial portion of the audience—the stalls, as he articulated in his letter to Yeats. Government intervention might also force the play's withdrawal and prevent the theater from incurring further losses if the play was forced to close in the middle of its run. St. John Ervine's recollection of the controversy, although rather dramatic in its characterization of Bailey, reveals the financial pressures that motivated events:

The Abbey, like all theatres, was working under great difficulty. We lived from hand to mouth. A wet night would send our receipts almost galloping down. Summary closure of the theatre would be ruin. Yeats was in London, and Lady Gregory was in America. I had no one to give me counsel, except Bailey, an excitable little man, whose advice was that the play should be withdrawn, for the present

at any rate. So we withdrew it, a decision I now deeply regret; for there is little in this very entertaining piece that can be called inflammable, although, heaven knows, the Irish do not need much to set them on fire.⁸⁵

Indeed, Ireland did not need much to set it on fire in the hothouse of political unrest over the British recruitment drive. Although Augustine Birrell and Matthew Nathan pursued the policy that “action should not be in excess of what was absolutely necessary” in terms of suppressing seditious publications, the Abbey’s financial crisis was so severe that a strong suggestion from Dublin Castle that it was not in the Abbey’s best interest to produce Shaw’s new play was enough to force the theater to back down.⁸⁶ With suspicion and accusation mounting in the press, the debate over recruitment growing more and more inflamed, and the Abbey facing a seemingly insurmountable debt with few patrons left and little to no opportunity for touring, *O’Flaherty V.C.* was effectively censored.

Notes

1. Lady Augusta Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre* (Gerrards Cross, UK: Colin Smythe, 1972), 84–96. The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, who resided at Dublin Castle, had the right to censor plays, although he seldom exercised the capacity since he was generally occupied with more pressing issues. The case of *The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet* is a rare example of interference on the part of the castle, and its failure to have any effect undoubtedly stymied future interferences and affected the way in which the castle dealt with the Abbey and Shaw in the case of *O’Flaherty V.C.*

2. G. B. Shaw, *O’Flaherty V.C.*, in *The Collected Works of Bernard Shaw*, vol. 15 (New York: WM. H. Wise and Co., 1930), 199–227. All further citations are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text by page number. Although *O’Flaherty V.C.* is referred to as “suppressed” in the correspondence discussed below, the word *censored* is also accurate and is particularly poignant with regard to the way that *O’Flaherty V.C.* fits into the recent reevaluations of stage censorship in Ireland. See Peter Martin, *Censorship in the Two Irelands, 1922–1939* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006); and Joan FitzPatrick Dean, *Riot and Great Anger: Stage Censorship in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).

3. Unsigned fragment, n.d., Berg Collection, New York Public Library (NYPL). On verso, Lady Gregory, *Memoirs* (folder 25), Berg, NYPL.

4. W. B. Yeats and Augusta Gregory to the editor of the *Irish Times* (typed letter signed), September 1914, Berg, NYPL.

5. Unsigned typescript, n.d., Berg, NYPL.

6. The Abbey’s account was divided into the “theatre proper,” which referred to the buildings and other physical components of the Abbey, and the “company,” composed of the actors and administration.

7. Harris to Yeats, 3 February 1915, MS 13068 (17), National Library of Ireland (NLI), Dublin.

8. Yeats to Beardsley, 28 March 1915, MS 13068 (17), NLI, Dublin.
9. Lady Gregory to Yeats, 23 June 1915, T.L.S. 65B3995, Berg, NYPL.
10. Abbey Theatre, Statement, "I have been going into our finances with Wilson," n.d. [1915], Berg, NYPL.
11. MS 13068 (17), NLI, Dublin.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Yeats to Lady Gregory, 13 October 1915, Accession letter #2777, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*, InteLex Electronic Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
17. Yeats to Lady Gregory, 7 November 1915, Accession letter #2800, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*.
18. See Yeats to Lady Gregory, 13 October 1915, Accession letter #2777, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*.
19. One month prior to the planned premiere of *O'Flaherty V.C.*, the Abbey's financial crisis had escalated to the point that the directors were considering giving the theater over to "the nation," but W. F. Bailey, the Abbey's trustee, disagreed with the proposition. See Yeats to Lady Gregory, 30 October 1915, Accession letter #2793, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*. Bailey's objection was based on the belief that "national representation" would affect the freedom of the theater, citing the history of political objection to Synge's plays. Yeats believed that Bailey's motives were less altruistic and that in actual fact, the trustee did not want to share his position of authority with anyone else, including potential government representatives. Although Yeats and Bailey held opposite views over government involvement in the Abbey, both of their beliefs required espousing a certain measure of conservatism with regard to the staging of plays. Yeats would be concerned with the need to remain in good standing with the government, while Bailey would be intent on avoiding any controversy that might have a negative impact on finances. These conflicting attitudes would cooperate in the censorship of *O'Flaherty V.C.*
20. The subtitle, *A Recruiting Pamphlet*, was only added later for the 1930 authorized version of the play and was not present in 1915. For examples of the misattribution of the 1930 subtitle to the 1915 version, see Stanley Weintraub, *The Unexpected Shaw* (New York: F. Ungar, 1982), 161; and Lucy McDiarmid, *The Irish Art of Controversy* (Dublin: Lilliput, 2005), 119. For the correct dating of the subtitle, see Dan Laurence and Nicholas Grene, eds., *Shaw, Lady Gregory and the Abbey: A Correspondence and a Record* (Gerrards Cross, U.K.: Colin Smythe, 1993), xviii.
21. Ben Novick, *Conceiving Revolution: Irish Nationalist Propaganda During the First World War* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2001), 21.
22. Ibid., 26.
23. "Protestant Primate," *Freeman's Journal*, 29 October 1915, 10.
24. Recruiting advertisement, *Freeman's Journal*, 30 October 1915, 1.
25. Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (London: Penguin, 2006), 25.
26. Nathan, memorandum to Birrell, 14 November 1915, MS Eng. C. 7033: 12, Augustine Birrell Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
27. Ibid.
28. D. G. Boyce, "'That Party Politics Should Divide Our Tents': Nationalism, Unionism, and the First World War," in *Ireland and the Great War*, ed. Adrian Gregory and Senia Paseta (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 193.
29. Shaw to Lady Gregory, September 1915, in Bernard Shaw, *Collected Letters, 1911–1925*, ed. Dan H. Laurence (London: Reinhardt, 1985), 309.
30. Although the "audience broke out in disorder at the word shift," as Lady Gregory

famously telegrammed Yeats, and Sinn Féin's objections, led by Arthur Griffith, were partly based on the opinion that Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Synge represented moral degeneration in Ireland (see R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats: A Life*, vol. 1 [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997], 359–64), nationalist objection was also rooted in Synge's subversion of the heroic myth, which formed a basis of nationalist ideology. See Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* (London: Vintage, 1996), 166–71.

31. Townshend, *Easter 1916*, 78.
32. Laurence and Grene, *Shaw, Lady Gregory and the Abbey*, xix.
33. Yeats to Shaw, 15 November 1915, Accession #2812, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*.
34. Mabel FitzGerald worked as Shaw's secretary before she married Desmond FitzGerald, who was instrumental in the nationalist movement and later served as a minister in the Free State. See *Memoirs of Desmond FitzGerald, 1913–1916*, ed. Fergus FitzGerald (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1968), 182.
35. Novick, *Conceiving Revolution*, 165.
36. Ibid. In addition to cliché references to "Paddy" and his "Irish Molly O," the extra wartime verse would have been particularly offensive to nationalist morality: "That's the wrong way to tickly Mary, / That's the wrong way to kiss! / Don't you know that over here, lad, / They like it best like this!/Hooray pour le Français! / Farewell, Angleterre! / We didn't know the way to tickle Mary, / But we learned how, over there!"
37. Ibid., 59.
38. Bernard Shaw, *John Bull's Other Island* (London: Penguin, 1984), 12–13.
39. Ibid., 80.
40. Twenty years later, James Joyce would invoke the resurrection of Charles Stuart Parnell, one of the most famous residents of Glasnevin, in the Hades episode of *Ulysses*. Power and Hynes stand before "the chief's grave," and Power says, "Some say he is not in that grave at all. That the coffin was filled with stones. That one day he will come again" (James Joyce, *Ulysses* [New York: Vintage, 1990], 112).
41. Joseph Holloway, notebook of newspaper clippings, MS 4426, NLI, Dublin. The *Evening Telegraph* was a weekly paper owned by the *Freeman's Journal*. The *Freeman's Journal* played an integral role in the controversy over O'Flaherty V.C. For the political affiliation of the *Evening Telegraph*, see Virginia Glandon, *Arthur Griffith and the Advanced-Nationalist Press: Ireland, 1900–1922* (New York: Peter Lang, 1985), 268.
42. The exact date of this telegram is unknown, but it is mentioned in Yeats to Lady Gregory, 19 November 1915, Accession #2818, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*.
43. Yeats, telegram to Ervine, 12 November 1915, Accession #2806, and Yeats to Lady Gregory, 19 November 1915, Accession #2818, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*.
44. Shaw to Yeats, 12 November 1915, MS 13068 (26), NLI, Dublin.
45. Ibid.
46. MS 13068 (26), NLI, Dublin.
47. Yeats to Shaw, 13 November 1915, Accession #2809, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*.
48. Yeats to Lady Gregory, 19 November 1915, Accession #2818, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*.
49. Bailey to Yeats, 14 November 1915, in Laurence and Grene, *Shaw, Lady Gregory and the Abbey*, 108–9.
50. Yeats, telegram to Ervine, 13 November 1915, Accession #2807, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*.
51. Yeats to Bailey, 15 November 1915, Accession #2813, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*.
52. For evidence of Yeats's illness, see Yeats to Alick Shepeler, 17 November 1915, API Huntingdon. Courtesy of Professor John Kelly.
53. Yeats to Lady Gregory, 19 November 1915, Accession #2818, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*.

54. Yeats to Bailey, 14 November 1915, Accession #2811, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*.
55. D. George Boyce, "Guest, Ivor Churchill, First Viscount Wimborne (1873–1939)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33597> (accessed December 2, 2006).
56. Leon " Broin, *The Chief Secretary: Augustine Birrell in Ireland* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1969), 152.
57. R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland* (London: Penguin, 1999), 431. The Royal Irish Constabulary was an armed, barracks force with jurisdiction over the whole of Ireland outside of Dublin.
58. Yeats to Shaw, 15 November 1915, Accession #2812, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*; Nathan to Shaw, 15 November 1915, MS 465: 319, Matthew Nathan Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
59. Nathan to Plunkett, 16 November 1915, MS 465: 319, Matthew Nathan Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
60. Nathan to Shaw, 16 November 1915, MS 465: 320, Matthew Nathan Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
61. Laurence and Grene, *Shaw, Lady Gregory and the Abbey*, 110–11. Laurence and Grene refer to a typed letter signed in the British Library. An unsigned copy of the letter also exists: MS Eng. C. 7022: 236, Augustine Birrell Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford. These folders contain letters and memoranda from Matthew Nathan, who must have forwarded his copy of Plunkett's letter to the chief secretary.
62. Ibid.
63. Ervine to Yeats, 16 November 1915, MS 13068 (17), NLI, Dublin.
64. Laurence and Grene, *Shaw, Lady Gregory and the Abbey*, 110.
65. Shaw to Yeats, 17 November 1915, MS 13068 (17), NLI, Dublin.
66. "'O'Flaherty, V.C.' New Play Withdrawn," *Freeman's Journal*, 16 November 1915, 8.
67. Yeats to Lady Gregory, 19 November 1915, Accession #2818, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*.
68. Shaw to Bailey, 17 November 1915, MS 13068 (17), NLI, Dublin.
69. "'O'Flaherty, V.C.' Abbey Manager's Statement," *Freeman's Journal*, 17 November 1915, 2.
70. Holloway, notebook, MS 4426, NLI.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Laurence and Grene, *Shaw, Lady Gregory and the Abbey*, 108–9.
75. Holloway, notebook, MS 4426, NLI.
76. "Mr. Bernard Shaw and His New Play," *Freeman's Journal*, 18 November 1915, 4.
77. Ibid.
78. Yeats to Lady Gregory, 19 November 1915, Accession #2818, in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*.
79. Holloway, notebook, MS 4426, NLI.
80. Ibid.
81. Yeats to Lady Gregory, 10 September 1916, Berg, NYPL. Courtesy of Professor John Kelly.
82. MS Eng. C. 7033: 233, Augustine Birrell Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
83. Nathan to Shaw, 23 November 1915, MS 465: 385, Matthew Nathan Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
84. *O'Flaherty V.C.* premiered in February 1917, in Treizennes, Belgium, on the Western Front. See David Gunby, "The First Night of *O'Flaherty V.C.*," *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard*

Shaw Studies 19 (1999): 85–97. *O'Flaherty V.C.* was finally produced by the Abbey company in 1920, as Foster notes, “when the world had changed. Even then they risked it only in London” (*W. B. Yeats*, ii, 29). Connolly notes that when the BBC broadcast the play in 1924, with Shaw reading all the parts, it was “relayed across all regional stations except Belfast” (“GBS and the BBC: In the Beginning [1923–1928],” *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies* 23 [2003]: 87). These developments underline the political sensitivities prevailing in partitioned Ireland regarding Irish participation in the Great War. When *O'Flaherty V.C.* was finally staged in Dublin by the Abbey in November 1927, a review in the *Irish Statesman* noted, “It is odd that *O'Flaherty, V.C.*, has had to wait twelve years to salute the Dublin public. His uniform has faded a bit in that time and his decorations grown a little tarnished. The targets, too, are for the most part down and some of his shots go wide, but the old soldier is not dead and there is a sufficient deposit of wit-salted truth in the sketch to keep it alive as long as war endures. Nothing in our post-war mentality seriously disturbs Mr. Shaw's predictions about it, but his characters are out-moded” (C. P. C., “At the Abbey,” *Irish Statesman*, 26 November 1927, 281).

85. St. John Ervine, *Bernard Shaw: His Life, Work and Friends* (London: Constable, 1956), 471.

86. For Birrell's policy on censorship, see O'Briain, *The Chief Secretary*, 121–22.