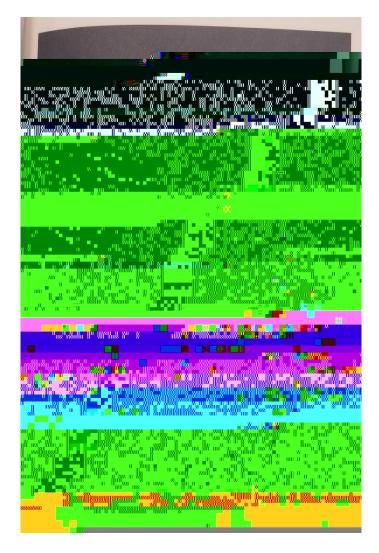
However, in truth these lines contain much poetic licence. Although some Victorian predecessor of POLAR may have noted little tradition of higher education in Kiltartan, Robert Gregory was in no sense an access candidate. His secondary school was Harrow and his was not a family filled with Patricks and Brigids and (Hail) Marys. Although his mother did become, at least culturally, an Irish nationalist, Gregory was like Edmund Burke and Arthur Wellesley born into the Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy that then dominated Ireland in terms of land, language, and political power. Although this dass is now gone the way of Queenstown and world maps daubed with great splashes of pink, it was the social class he remained in throughout his life. He may have been popular with his Catholic tenants Lady Gregory reports them crying outside Mass on the Sunday after the news of his death but the social hierarchy was clear. The First World War was the war of his friends, his class, and his social peers from both school and university. They freely went and freely died. Given his background, it is no surprise that he also did the same.

Gregory s education was conventionally English. He attended Elstree prep school in London, followed by Harrow, and then arrived at New College in 1899. The portrait below³ shows him as he would have appeared as a fresher:



John B. Yeats, Portrait of Robert Gregory [detail], 1899

dl

³ Reproduced from: Rdor Grar rrb ararbs Ir, ed. Colin Smythe (Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1981).

Robert Gregory crashed and died on 23 January 1918 and was buried in the cemetery in Padua. It is unknown whether this was caused by friendly fire, a structural failure of the æroplane, or some sort of pilot error. Many letters of condolence came in to Lady Gregory after his death, ranging from his nurse and the local Kiltartan schoolmaster to the Warden of New College.⁴ Lady Gregory also records the oral tributes of some of his tenants, capturing an authentic Irish diction, Why wouldn t he be happy, being laid in the Holy Ground of Padua where Saint Anthony was a great Saint, and the only one that got leave to help in the nursing of our Lord.

Robert Gregory was survived by his wife Margaret and three children, Richard, Augusta (de Winton) and Catherine (Kennedy). Richard would fight in (but survive) the Second World War.

Joseph Conlon Professor of Theoretical Physics New College

4