III. GRAFTS AND TRANSPLANTS
“Words cannot tell my delirium, my madness” – thus George Moore exclaimed on first hearing *Tristan and Isolde* in 1892, a few days after attending a Drury Lane production of Wagner’s *Rheingold* at the instigation of his friend and collaborator in the Irish Literary Renaissance, Edward Martyn.¹ As he later recalled in *Hail and Farewell*, he had initially been reluctant to accompany Martyn: “For Wagner was reputed unmelodious and difficult to all except the most erudite, and fearing that I should be bored for several hours by sounds which would mean nothing to me, I began to seek excuses … but the moment the horns gave out the theme on the Rhine my attention was arrested, and a few minutes after it was clear that new birth awaited me.”² This “new birth”, stimulated further by repeated visits to Bayreuth during the mid- to late 1890s, spawned new ideas in Moore. Wagner and Bayreuth had already featured in his works prior to his initiation in 1892, but had then, in quasi-anticipation of Max Nordau’s *Degeneration* (original German edition, 1892; English translation, 1895), served to signal dysfunctional psychologies. Thus the Martyn-inspired protagonist of *A Mere Accident* (1887) and “John Norton” (*Celibates*, 1895) embraces a Wagnerian aesthetic in order to sublimate passionate impulses in his life, thereby fortifying his

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² Moore, *Hail and Farewell*, 152.