Kirkuk University Journal- Humanity Studies Vol:٧ No:١ year:2012

J M Synge's Realism and His Violent Stage

Dr .Najdat Kadhim Moosa
Kirkuk University

Zaid Ibrahim
Tikrit University

> In writing 'The Playboy of the Western World', as in my other plays, I have used very few words that I have not heard among the country people, or spoken in my own childhood before I could read the newspapers. … The same is true also, to some extent, of the actions and incidents I work with.
>
> (J. M. Synge/ Programme Notes/ January 26, 1907)

Abstract

J. M. Synge is seen as one of the major dramatists who participated in establishing the Irish National drama. However, due to the method through which he presented the characters in his plays, there was a violent reaction from the audience who could not accept what they saw as "offensive" presentation of Irish characters on stage. The following paper traces audience's reaction to these plays.

I. Synge and the Irish Nationalist Audience.

J. M. Synge's career as a dramatist can be described as a struggle between art and politics, between what Synge intended and what the Irish nationalists wanted him to present in his plays. There was a common belief among the Irish public at the early years of Ireland's national theatre (especially the first decade of the 20th century) that Synge was misrepresenting Irish life. His choice to write about the life of the peasantry of the west of Ireland was in itself a problem. Among the many protests during the riots that accompanied the early performances of his masterpiece *The Playboy of the Western World* (henceforth *The Playboy*) in 1907 was that "that's not the west of Ireland."[1] Since the west of Ireland was

the most remote part of the country, it remained uncorrupted by foreign modernity and English influence. Accordingly, the Irish nationalists regarded the Irish peasants of the west as the last living representative of Celtic purity and "of pure Irish virtues."[2] Therefore, during the Irish Literary Renaissance, there were many claims and attempts to present the western Irish peasant as a model of virtue. But a realist like Synge knew that reality contains Irish people "of all sorts."[3] His importance lies in his resolute resistance to such imaginary views of the peasantry.

Ironically, Synge was criticised by the Irish nationalists, who believed that he was portraying the Irish people in the traditional image of the stage-Irishman in order to show them incapable of home-role. The stage-Irishman was so popular in English drama since the eighteenth century. The Irish character was presented on the English stage as a subject of laughter through this image, who was a "drunken, thriftless [figure], with a joke always on his lips and a sentimental tear always in his eyes."[4] But Synge's real intention was to contradict this image by presenting a real picture of Irish life in his plays. Heidi J. Holder indicates:

> What Synge was actually doing, quite methodically, was not resurrecting the stage-Irishman, but attacking his equally false opposite – the unreal, impossible virtuous, benign Irishman so popular with Dublin audience.[5]

Thus, his refusal to present the ideal image was a rejection to revive the stage-Irishman as a subject for comedy. By presenting life in the Irish countryside as it really is, Synge angrily reacted against those who wanted the traditional "false picture of the historical stage-Irishman answered not with the truth but instead with some sort of 'ideal' Irishman who would be equally false."[6] Therefore, he chose the real in preference of the ideal and this is a national intention in itself.

Nevertheless Synge is a playwright who "cares more for his art than does for politics."[7] His reply to the attacks of the nationalist critics was that they "must attack the work of the theatre on artistic grounds or not at all."[8] His criticism of his society is not an attempt on his part to misrepresent his country or draw caricatures from the Irish peasants as his detractors tried to show. He had a sincere admiration for the Irish people as he wrote to his friend Stephen Mackenna after *The Playboy* riots, "I have the wildest admiration for the Irish peasants, and for Irishmen of known or unknown genius"[9], and again to a newspaper critic, M. J. Nolan:

> What it seems so impossible to get our Dublin people to see, obvious as it is [is] that the wildness and … vices of the Irish peasantry are due, like their extraordinary good points of all kinds, to the *richness* of their nature – a thing that is priceless beyond words.[10]

His love for and sympathy with the Irish peasants are everywhere in his travel sketches.[11] Reading in these prose works gives an opposite idea to that which the Irish nationalists had constituted of Synge.

II. Literary Influences.

Much exaggeration had been made of the foreign literary influences on J. M. Synge. It was an attempt on the part of the Irish nationalists to prove that Synge's subjects and characters were not Irish. Such an accusation was not an ordinary thing that could be heard or read by the Irish nationalists in the press of Ireland and easily forgotten for it came at a time (the beginning of the 20th Century) when national revival of Irish past and folklore in literature was called for. The nationalists were aware of the fact that Synge, like the other members of the Irish literary Renaissance, was well-acquainted with foreign literature as a result of his continuous wanderings in Europe; therefore, they exploited

this fact in order to attack Synge's plays. To quote Donna Gerstenberger's remark, those critics wanted to show that Synge was "corrupted by his study of foreign literatures, particularly by the 'decadent French'."[12]

As a matter of fact, foreign influence should not be regarded as a shortcoming in an artist or a dramatist, nor does it mean that a writer should rely on native material in order to be successful. Many famous writers took their materials from foreign origins. William Fay and Catherine Carswell, while defending the source of Synge's *The Well of the Saints* (1905), write:

> All good dramatists have taken their plots from where they could find them. Shakespeare used Italian *novella*; Wilde got the theme of *Lady Windermere's Fan* from *The Family Herald*; and Arnold Bennett … had a box full of old Spanish plays that he dipped into now and again when he was short of ideas.[13]

It was the characteristic of the period, however, and the nature and psychology of the Irish public which made such an influence a deficiency. Although most of the attacks directed against Synge concerning his use of foreign sources in his plays were not subtle, they succeeded in deforming his reputation for a time and made his works the most controversial of the Abbey dramatists.

As far as foreign influences on Synge are concerned, one cannot deny that Synge had a wide knowledge of French, English, German, Italian and classical literature. After graduating from Trinity College, Dublin, Synge completed his study of music and composition at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, and in 1893, he decided to pursue his musical interests in Germany. But later he abandoned this idea after realising that he was too shy to perform in public. Afterwards, he went to Paris and decided to become an interpreter of French literature. This gave him an opportunity to read the works of

famous French and European writers, especially the works of Petrarch, Villon, Cervantes, Molière, Racine and the works of the Elizabethans. The concentration of the Irish public, however, was on the French influence because they knew that Synge resided several years in Paris, the home of many Irish intellectual immigrants.

It is from Synge's friends, however, those of the few who knew many things about the playwright, that one can have invaluable confirmations. John Masefield, Synge's closest friend, disagrees with the view that Synge's models in drama are the writers of the French Decadent Movement of the nineties of the nineteenth century, including Verlaine, Mallarme, Huymans and others. Masefield states that the decadents are "the only writers for whom he [Synge] expressed dislike."[14] He stresses the importance of Pierre Loti, who is, according to Synge, the greatest writer of prose, as the real foreign influence on Synge.[15] Loti's writings on the Breton inhabitants inspired Synge, and this might have been one of the things that fired Synge's interest in the Aran islands.

Among the other French writers who had an impact on Synge was Anatole Le Braz, another Breton folklorist. Synge attended one of his lectures on Brittany in 1899, and in an article he wrote on Le Braz, Synge praised him, showing "a considerable knowledge of his work."[16] As Nicholas Grene points out, "it seems possible that Le Braz's Breton enthusiasm reawakened his own … interest in the Celtic culture of Ireland."[17] These are the main foreign literary influences on Synge that most critics tend to emphasise.

The real influence on Synge came from his own country. Critics no longer debate to what extent Synge was influenced by foreign literature as they are interested in showing him as a writer who drew his inspiration from Ireland. In Paris, in 1897, Synge met W. B. Yeats, who directed his talents in the right way, urging him to find his material in his own country:

> Give up Paris. You will never create anything by reading Racine, and Arthur Symons will always be a better critic of French literature. Go to the Aran Islands. Live there as if you were one of the people themselves; express a life that has never found expression.[18]

This was what Synge did, for in 1898, he went to the Aran Islands, a group of stony islands on the west coast of Ireland, visiting them on five successive occasions between 1898 and 1902. There, he lived with the peasants, learned their language, and listened to their stories. Of these visits to Aran, Elizabeth Coxhead writes:

> Synge's … visit to Aran in 1898 was a true Renaissance, a spiritual rebirth. The knowledge he had been subconsciously acquiring during his follow years suddenly came into focus; he looked at these primitive people, and through them, into the heart of humanity. He found an almost untouched peasant culture, with Irish as the universal language, and with an extraordinary beauty and dignity in the bare cottages [and] … the treasure of poems and stories.[19]

His observations of the islanders' life were recorded in his book *The Aran Islands*, which had a great impact on his plays. It, together with his articles on Wicklow, West Kerry and Connemara, is like a source-book of folktales and stories which form the plots and the social background of all of his plays.[20] A close reading of these travel sketches provides not only a further insight into the life of the Irish peasants, but also a deep understanding of their psychology, circumstances and problems which Synge portrays in his plays. Nearly in every public defence of his plays, Synge was careful to show that his plays were based on native peasant life and stories that he had learned in his travels in the Irish countryside.

Though he was familiar with foreign literature, Synge remained independent, and there is no evidence that he based any of his plays on the work of any foreign writer. His work is

fundamentally Irish, and according to him, representing Irish life on the stage is the main goal of a national theatre.[21] Therefore, to accuse him of using foreign sources in his plays is to deny his real contribution to his country.

III. The National Controversy over the Early Performance of *The Playboy*.

There is a general agreement among the critics that *The Playboy* is not only Synge's masterpiece, but also the play that brought him international fame. It was performed for the first time at the Abbey Theatre on January 26, 1907, and aroused riots and organised protests among its Dublin audiences. The story of its production is famous in the history of the theatre. Its first night was dramatic. The first and second acts of the play were applauded, but in the middle of the third act, when the word "shift" (indicating woman's undergarment) was uttered by the hero of the play, the audience broke out in disorder. They hissed and shouted and were so noisy that the directors of the Abbey Theatre were obliged to summon the police in order to keep order in the theatre. Moreover, the Irish audiences demanded the play be withdrawn and the author be killed.

The production of *The Playboy* continued for a week under police protection. It is worth quoting Lady Gregory's memories of the major events that accompanied the early premières of the play in Dublin:

> There was a battle of a week. Every night protestors with their trumpets came and raised a din. Every night the police carried some of them off to the police courts. Every afternoon the papers gave reports of the trial before a magistrate who had not heard or read the play and who insisted on being given details of its incidents by the accused and by the police.[22]

On the last evening of the production, five hundred policemen were required in the Abbey Theatre and its neighbourhood in order to preserve order. One wonders, then, why did the Irish audience find offence in the play and riot against it while it did not deal with any political or national issue?

The Playboy opens at a public house in Mayo on Pegeen Mike, the Shebeener's daughter, who is making preparation for her forthcoming marriage with Shawn Keogh, a local clergyman. Christy Mahon, the hero of the play, arrives seeking a refuge from the police because he thinks that he has killed his tyrannical father with a blow of a spade. Instead of being handed over to the police, he is well-received by the people who treat him with respect and admiration. They also give him lodging and a job. Pegeen falls in love with him because of his daring and poetic speech. In addition, the village girls begin to quarrel and compete to win him. This helps to build up his confidence for before coming to this village he has a weakness in his character because of bad treatment and suppression. He starts to behave like a real hero and he defeats all the villagers in sports. Suddenly, his father, who has been merely injured, appears on the scene with a bandaged head, swearing vengeance on his son and shatters the ideal image of his son in the villagers' eyes. In order to preserve his heroic position and to escape the tyranny of his father, Christy assaults him once again. But now the villagers start to realise the difference between an ornamented story told to them by Christy and a real ugly deed. They, led by Pegeen, turn against Christy, tie and torment him, and threaten to hand him over to the police. But again his father is merely injured. He releases his son, and the two depart together at the end, leaving Pegeen to lament the loss of her lover.

Many issues were raised by the nationalists against the play. The main reason of the riot seemed to be over Synge's use of language. Synge's detractors found the language of the

play rough and crude and argued that the Irish peasants did not speak the way Synge's characters spoke. They criticised the play as being immoral because of its glorification of patricide – a man who is supposed to have killed his father is admired as a hero. They were also offended by the image of Ireland that the play embodied, its attack on the national character, and its continual ridicule of Irish peasants. The peasants were presented as violent law-breakers; therefore, the play was regarded as unpatriotic. The nationalists also objected to the play's portrayal of Irishwomen as corrupt and immoral. In Ireland, they argued, a bachelor never sleeps under the same roof with an unmarried Irish girl. The play was also condemned for its blasphemy because of its portrayal of the Catholic Church (Catholic priests are presented as hypocritical and single-minded).

The local Irish newspapers devoted much of their columns to criticise Synge's new play, asking to prevent its performance. A reporter from the *Irish Independent* on January 31, 1907 criticised W. B. Yeats for letting *The Playboy* to be produced, and demanded that the play should be withdrawn:

> For the sake of Irish dramatic art and of the National Theatre which we had hoped to see flourishing in our midst, we regret that the road to notoriety has been shortened by the presentation before any audience of 'The Playboy of the Western World'. … The staging of the piece was an act of inexplicable stupidity on the part of the management, on whom the heartiest censure should fall. Mr. Yeats' vapid heroics notwithstanding, we think that the verdict of the first-night audience – as sympathetic a house as actors ever played to – should have been accepted, and the play withdrawn.[23]

In a review of *The Playboy*, the *Irish Times* called the expressions Synge's characters used in the play "offensive to good taste, however true they may be to actual life."[24] While the *Evening Mail* regarded the language of the play as "coarse

and blasphemous" and went on to condemn patricide as an insult to Ireland:

> The parricide represents some kind of nation-killer, whom Irishmen and Irishwomen hasten to lionise. If it is an allegory, it is too obscure for me. … If a man is stupid enough to suggest that the Irish people are cannibals or gorillas, my hand will not fumble for the sword hilt.[25]

"Barbarous jargon" was the *Freeman's Journal* description of Synge's language in *The Playboy.* It accused Synge of casting a slur on Irish womanhood, describing the play as an "unmitigated, protracted libel upon Irish peasant men and, worst still, upon Irish peasant girlhood."[26] *Sinn Fein*, a nationalist's weekly, attacked the play as "a vile and inhuman story told in the foulest language we have ever listened to from a public platform … the production of a moral degenerate, who has dishonoured the women of Ireland before all Europe."[27]

Though he was against any kind of violent protest, Patrick Pearse, the leader of the 1916 Easter Rising, criticised Synge's play and encouraged the Irish public to walk out in protest against it. He argued that this play "was not a play to be howled down by a little mob. It was a play to be left severely alone by all who did not care to listen to it."[28]

The Irish National Theatre was divided into two camps: a camp of supporters led by W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory and William Fay, and a camp of opponents represented by William Boyle, Joseph Holloway and others. Although he confessed of not seeing or reading the play, William Boyle, one of the earlier playwrights who wrote for the Abbey Theatre, depending on some comments in the newspapers, withdrew his plays from the Abbey for a time in protest against the play. He wrote an article to the *Catholic Herald* of London, in which he attacked the play describing it as "gross in conception, coarse beyond possibility of quotation, and false to the verge of absurdity."[29]

When he was asked about the reason behind the riot, Joseph Holloway, the architect who designed the Abbey Theatre and who showed a real interest in the works of the theatre, said that it was "Blackguardism," arguing that: "*The Playboy* is not a truthful or just picture of the Irish peasants, but simply the outpouring of a morbid, unhealthy mind ever seeking on the dunghill of life for the nastiness that lies concealed there."[30]

The directors and the actors of *The Playboy* had to accept the challenge, despite the riots and the many claims of the Irish nationalists to stop the performance and withdraw the play. They defended the play and insisted on going on with its production. W. B. Yeats took the responsibility on his part and showed his courage and loyalty in the face of the angry audience. He was not present at the first night because he was lecturing in Scotland. The following day he returned to Dublin and arranged for more police; but this only infuriated the audiences because the Irish at that time regarded the police as an arm of the English government in Ireland, and thus a symbol of oppression. In addition, Yeats went into law courts to testify against arrested rioters and within few days organised a public debate on the freedom of the theatre, inviting some of the opponents to take part in the discussion. In defence of the play, Yeats debated:

> We have claimed for our writers the freedom to find in their own land every expression of good and evil necessary to their art, for Irish life contains, like all vigorous life, the seeds of all good and evil, and a writer must be free here as elsewhere to watch where weed or flower ripens. No one who knows the work of our Theatre as a whole can say we have neglected the flower; but the moment a writer is forbidden to take pleasure in the weed, his art loses energy and abundance.[31]

Lady Gregory invited a number of students from Trinity College to counter the riots. But those students were drunk and caused many troubles, which reached a climax when some of

them climbed on the stage and sang the English national anthem.[32]

Synge attempted to defend his play in the light of the attacks directed against him. His comments concerning his intention in the play have been a source of confusion to his critics. During the early performances of the play, Synge was interviewed by a reporter from the *Dublin Evening Mail*, but under excitement and irritation, he said that his play was merely an "extravaganza," which has no purpose at all. He defiantly added that whether the play appealed to the audience or not he didn't "care a rap."[33] But later he withdrew these remarks. He sent a letter to the *Irish Times* to correct the impression given to the reporter of this interview in which he wrote:

> 'The Playboy of the Western World' is not a play with a 'purpose' in the modern sense of the word, but although parts of it are, or are meant to be, extravagant comedy, still a great deal that is in it, and a great deal more that is behind it, is perfectly serious when looked at in a certain light. That is often the case, I think, with comedy. … There are, it may be hinted, several sides to 'The Playboy'.[34]

Again, on February 19, 1907, Synge wrote to M. J. Nolan that he wrote *The Playboy* "directly as a piece of life, without thinking, or caring to think, whether it was a comedy, tragedy, or extravaganza, or whether it would be held to have, or not to have, a purpose."[35] However, Synge is an artist and does not state his lessons and intentions directly, but he wants his audiences and critics to draw these lessons themselves. In the same letter he told Nolan, "I follow Goethe's rule to tell no one what one means in one's writings."[36]

The Playboy caused similar riots and organised protests among the Irish immigrants during the American tour of the Abbey Company between 1911 and 1912. Troubles accompanied the company in nearly all the states that they

went to, including New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago and Washington when the play was presented by the Irish players. In New York, the riots were as organised as those in Dublin. The company was threatened and the actors were pelted with potatoes and other things. In Chicago, Lady Gregory was threatened with death if she dared to produce the play. In Boston, there were demonstrations against the play, and the Mayor of Boston was obliged to send his secretary to indicate some of the objectionable statements in the play. Though the latter found that the play was not offensive at all, the play was not performed until many cuts and amendments were made. The opposition, however, reached a climax in Philadelphia, where the whole company was arrested on the charge of immorality.[37]

Critics still remember and are interested in the play for the riots that it aroused in Dublin and in the United States of America and they have made detailed accounts of the events that accompanied the play in its early performances

Finally it is worthy to say something about the sudden shift in perspective towards the plays of Synge. It did not take a long time for the Irish public to take off the nationalist's spectacles and to look at Synge's plays as works of art. The attitude to Synge's plays changed as people began to understand him more. What made Synge's plays more acceptable was that at the time his plays were produced, there was no significant political or military movement promoting Irish nationalism, and cultural nationalism carried a much greater importance to the nationalist community. This period was a time of great social, cultural and political turmoil in Ireland, and thus attitudes and sensitivities changed quickly. Within a few years of Synge's death, the military and political sides of the nationalist movement gained strength again, and the emphasis on culture was lessened. This made the Irish people more willing to appreciate Synge's work on its own

terms, rather than criticising it for disagreeing with a certain political perspective. After six years of the riots that *The Playboy* aroused in Dublin, it was possible to read some favourable public attitudes written in praise of Synge and his work by some of his nationalist critics. Patrick Pearse, for instance, wrote a very admiring essay on Synge and *The Playboy* in 1913, three years before his execution in the Easter Rising. In it, he praised Synge's work and repented of his part in the controversy over *The Playboy*. He wrote about Synge as if he were a martyr who suffered at the hands of a public that did not understand his intentions:

> Ireland … has excommunicated some of those who have served her best, and has canonized some of those who have served her worst … When a man like Synge, a man in whose sad heart there glowed a true love of Ireland, one of the two or three men who have in our time made Ireland considerable in the eyes of the world, uses strange symbols which we do not understand, we cry out that he has blasphemed and we proceed to crucify him.[38]

Now his plays are enjoyed and treated as masterpieces and are taught, imitated and staged not only in Ireland but all over the world.

IV. Violence as a Controversial Issue in the Plays of J M Synge.

Synge was often criticised for introducing violent incidents in his plays. The Irish nationalists were offended by the image of the Irish peasants presented as violent and lawless characters in Synge's plays, and strongly opposed to this image which they were struggling to eliminate. Nicholas Grene states, in *The Politics of Irish Drama*, that:

> A standard British strategy in sanctioning imperial rule was to claim the Irish as naturally, irremediably, anarchic and lawless. Nationalists sought to counter this with a self-image of the Irish

> as inherently law-abiding, honest and upright – 'the people that hate crime probably more than any people in Europe' – with the one honourable exception of political struggle.[39]

They tried to show that the Irish people tend to sympathise with the law-breaker if there is a political motivation behind his crime or act of violence.

The directors of the Abbey Theatre were conscious of the nationalists' sensitivity to violence and lawlessness, and suspected Synge's plays to arouse considerable reaction against them from the nationalists, even when his plays were rehearsed. They had some reservations concerning some of the violent actions and speeches that his plays contained. When *The Playboy* was in rehearsal, for instance, William Fay suggested that the torture scene in which Christy's leg is burnt should be omitted.[40] Lady Gregory, on the other hand, objected to the "too many violent oaths" in the play, and also wanted them to be cut in rehearsal.[41] Though many cuts were made, they were not sufficient, and Synge insisted on preserving many of the objectionable sentences and scenes. Synge often prided himself of his knowledge of Irish life and refused to cut or change anything that he knew to be true as he once wrote to Frank Fay:

> What I write of Irish country life I know to be true and I most emphatically will not change a syllable of it because A. B. or C. may think they know better than I do. … You understand my position: I am *quiet ready* to avoid hurting people's feelings needlessly, but I will not falsify what I believe to be true for anybody.[42]

On more than one occasion, Synge maintained the reality of the violent actions and speeches that he embodied in his plays. In his preface to *The Playboy*, Synge wrote:

> Any one who has lived in real intimacy with the Irish peasantry will know that the wildest sayings and ideas are tame indeed, compared with the fancies one may hear in any little hillside cabin [in the west of Ireland]. [43]

IV.i. The Origin of the Patricide Episode in *The Playboy*.

Like Synge's other plays, *The Playboy* was believed to be foreign in its origin. The Irish rioters claimed that the events presented in the play could not happen in Ireland, especially the idea of patricide, and that the play was the product of the writer's own imagination which was marred by foreign thoughts and influences. Synge was accused of being influenced by the decadents. His nationalist critics argued that the central incident of the play was suggested by Baudelaire. While sitting in a café in Paris, Synge was supposed to have heard Baudelaire saying that he had killed his father. But this story is "impossible since Baudelaire died in 1867, four years before Synge was born."[44]

Synge was very interested in showing the authenticity and Irishness of his sources. In his programme notes which he wrote for the first production of *The Playboy* on January 26, 1907, Synge wrote that "the central incident of *The Playboy* was suggested by an actual occurrence in the west [of Ireland]."[45] The incident Synge referred to is a story that he had heard from an old man in his first visit to Aran in 1898, and was written in *The Aran Islands*. It is about a man who killed his father in a state of nervousness, and then escaped to Aran where he was kept by the Islanders from the authorities for some weeks. A reward was offered for his arrest, but the Islanders remained faithful to their principles, until he was safely smuggled away to America.

In writing *The Playboy*, Synge did not rest only on one source. In an interview with a reporter from the *Dublin Evening Mail*, Synge assured that in addition to the main story that he had heard on the Aran Islands, the play was also suggested by the so-called Lynchehaun case, which was very well known in Ireland.[46] James Lynchehaun assaulted an English woman on whose estate he was living and working in Achill Island, and by the aid of Irish peasant women he was

hidden from the police. He, then, managed to escape to America, where he was regarded as a political refugée and the American courts refused to hand him over to the British authorities.[47] One of the earlier drafts of *The Playboy* contained the following speech of one of the characters, "sure they never laid a hand to Lynchehaun from the day they knew the kind he was."[48] This is evidence that Synge actually depended on this famous story as a source for this play. Both the Lynchehaun and the patricide stories are realistic happenings and one is surprised why the Irish patriots claim that the story of *The Playboy* can never take place in Ireland.

There are many proofs which show the originality and Irishness of *The Playboy* and which support Synge's argument. W. B. Yeats wrote that in a visit to the Aran Islands in the summer of 1896, an old man told him that "if any gentleman has done a crime, we'll hide him. There was a gentleman that killed his father, and I had him in my own house six months till he got away to America."[49]

Furthermore, William Robert Rodgers related a similar story that he had also heard on one of the Aran Islands about a man who had killed his father:

> He was working in the field, and his father came and checked him – said that he was spoiling the field. Dispute arouse between them, and in anger he [the son] lifted the spade over his head; he didn't intend to kill him, but with anger he gave the blow contrarily, and killed the father. After doing it he was attending the father – it hurt himself more than most others – but he didn't intend to leave the place, only an uncle told him to go on the run and save himself. The uncle sent a boat into Aran with him …[50]

Rodgers even assured that this was the story that Synge had heard on one of the Aran Islands and which he had developed into *The Playboy.*[51] Despite the differences in these accounts,

they are very important in showing how Synge was interested in the reality of Irish life.

The Irish patriots went further in their argument when they claimed that even if there was a man in Ireland who killed his father, the Irish people of the west would neither shelter, nor celebrate him as a hero.[52] But Synge, with his deep first-hand knowledge of Irish life knew that law-breakers found a safe shelter from the police – the representatives of the English occupier on the Irish land – with the Irish peasants. Synge, in *The Aran Islands*, asserted the actuality of the story on which his play was based:

> This impulse to protect the criminal is universal in the west. It seems partly due to the association between justice and the hated English jurisdiction, but more directly to the primitive feeling of these people, who are never criminals yet always capable of crime.[53]

Thus, the peasant's support of this father-killer is a reflection of their psychology, primitive as well as national feelings. By sheltering fugitives and criminals from the law, the peasants felt that they are serving their nationalistic ends, because it was a form of their resistance to the British authorities. When Synge visited the Aran Islands for the first time, the islanders were surprised that he was not a refugée seeking shelter from the police. There are many similar cases of criminals hidden from the police by the Irish peasants. One of these well-known cases is that of "a murderer [who] was successfully hidden by his victim's relatives, who hated the police more than they did their blood enemy."[54] Maurice Bourgeois assures that "even the Irish-born policemen sometimes side with the offender."[55] It is ironic that the Irish rioters could not accept this very reality, while they themselves found offence when the directors of the Abbey Theatre summoned the police to keep order in the theatre, because they looked at the police as a form of colonial oppression.[56]

Synge knew Mayo more than any other district in Ireland and this knowledge helped him in writing *The Playboy*. The people in this place are known for their "violence and extravagance of speech."[57] Therefore, Synge moved the scene from Aran to Mayo because he knew that in this place there was a strong feeling against the government, and that people there readily give refuge "to a fugitive from justice."[58] Anyone who has an enmity with the law is regarded as a hero.

The only extravagance that Synge made in *The Playboy* is that Christy's act of violence against his father is excused, unlike the original story in which the son kills his father in a fit of passion; therefore, the peasants' sympathy with Christy increases. Old Mahon is depicted as a tyrannical villain who does not deserve the audience's sympathy. He exploits his son mercilessly, leaving him working for long hours in his fields and ordering him to carry out whatever he wants. He tries to force Christy into a loveless marriage with the Widow Casey, an ugly deformed ill-tempered hag, who suckled him when he was an infant. Then, as George Bretherton puts it, it is this horror of incest that leads Christy to kill his father.[59] The latter insists on this marriage, arranges and decides it himself and orders his son to follow his decision: "You squinting idiot … let you walk down now and tell the priest you'll wed the Widow Casey in a score of days" (*Plays*, p.196). His intention behind this marriage is to benefit from the pleasures and privileges that this union is going to bring him because the widow is rich as Christy unfolds to the Mayoites: "He was letting on I was wanting a protector from the harshness of the world, and he without a thought the whole while but how he'd have her hut to live in and her gold to drink" (ibid.). This is what makes Christy rebel against his father. His rejection to marry the widow is a rejection of loveless marriages, which are common in the Irish countryside. As Rob Doggett points out, "Rural parents were notorious for compelling their

children, both male and female, to marry unwillingly."[60] Thus, Christy's blow to his father is not a real one, but instead it represents a symbolic blow to convention that makes the Irish peasants slaves to these customs.

In spite of the fact that patricide is morally and religiously unacceptable, it is a common act of violence that might probably happen in all societies and countries. The stories mentioned above provide a contrary view to the critical opinion of the Irish nationalists that this immoral event was unreal. But choosing patricide as a subject for comedy to be presented in front of a hypersensitive Irish public was not a wise choice from Synge.

IV.ii. The Sources of Other Violent Incidents in Synge's Plays.

In his plays, it is obvious that Synge agrees with the view that the Irish peasants legalise and even idealise violence if it is stimulated by political struggle against the English and their representatives in Ireland. In *The Playboy*, Pegeen Mike regretfully remembers Marcus Quin who was engaged in agrarian wars and was well-known for mutilating landlord's ewes.[61] She also regrets the memory of Daneen Sullivan who, as she says, blinded a policeman. But Synge understands the psychology of the peasants and knows that violence is not only politically motivated, but is innate in these people.

In his travels to the east and west of Ireland, Synge shows an extraordinary interest in the violence that he has observed among the peasants, especially in Wicklow, Mayo and Kerry. Violence, in these districts, is characteristic of the life of the people and the stories they tell. In Kerry, for instance, a man interestingly told Synge about an extravagant act of violence of some men when they got drunk, describing it as a "great sport":

> They were all beating and cutting each other on the shore of the sea. Four men fought together in one place till the tide came up on them, and was like to drown them; but the priest waded out up to his middle and drove them asunder. Another man was left for dead on the road outside the lodges, and some gentlemen found him and had him carried into his house, and got the doctor to put plasters on his head. Then there was a red-headed fellow had his fingers bitten through… . (*Prose*, p.275).

These people clearly feel a kind of delight in violence and in the suffering of others, which Synge incarnates in his plays. In *The Well of the Saints*, two blind beggars, Martin and Mary who are the hero and heroine in the play, are told by the villagers about some deadly events as being wonderful scenes, even before they have their sight restored. When Timmy the Smith, one of the characters, speaks about a miracle that will happen in their village, Martin predicts that it will be a murder, whereas Mary delightly foresees, "Maybe they're hanging a thief, above at the bit of a tree? I'm told it's a great sight to see a man hanging by his neck, but what joy would that be to ourselves, and we not seeing it at all?" (*Plays*, p.135).

The Well of the Saints shows that human violence has no limits. Even animals are prone to that violence. Martin accuses Timmy the Smith of plucking the feathers from his living ducks, "leaving them running round in their skins, in the great rains and the cold" (ibid. p.148). This scene, however, is not the product of Synge's imagination; Synge saw a similar event while he was on the Aran Islands: "Sometimes when I go into a cottage I find all the women of the place down on their knees plucking the feathers from live ducks and geese" (*Prose*, p.163). Nevertheless, such violent scenes are not randomly included in this play, but they are intentionally used by the playwright to reflect the lack of love and mercy in a bourgeois society and to destroy the world of dreams that the two beggars have built.

The Aran Islands contains similar incidents which describe the islanders' cruelty to animals. Synge depicts how the islanders tie down the heads of donkeys "to their hoofs to keep them from straying, in a way that must cause horrible pain" (ibid.). He comments, describing the nature of these people: "Although these people are kindly towards each other and to their children, they have no feeling for the sufferings of animals, and little sympathy for pain when the person who feels it is not in danger" (ibid.).

In *The Playboy*, one can find many similar instances of the villagers' cruelty to people and animals. In addition to the patricide and the torture of Christy that take place in the play, many violent incidents are narrated by the characters. Jimmy Farrell, a villager, has hanged his dog leaving it "screeching and wriggling three hours at the butt of a string" (*Plays*, p.184); the Widow Quin, a village widow, is said to have killed her own husband and buried her children; the village boys, as the Widow Quin says, have stoned a madman "till he ran out, raving and foaming, and was drowned in the sea" (ibid., p.216); Sarah Tansey, one of the village girls, has "yoked the ass-cart and drove ten miles to set … [her] eyes on the man [who] bit the yellow lady's nostril on the northern shore"[62] (ibid., p.194); and Pegeen terrifies Christy when she describes how the people will enjoy seeing him hanged:

> It's queer joys they have, and who knows the thing they'd do, if it'd make the green stones cry itself to think of you swaying and swiggling at the butt of a rope … the way you'd be a half an hour, in great anguish getting your death. (ibid. pp.199-200).

Instead of abhorring these violent actions and stories, the villagers, in this play, listen to them with amusement and admiration, and seem to enjoy them as heroic rather than criminal deeds.

Finally, it would be illogical to claim that Synge is an admirer of violence. He is against any kind of violence, and when he was in Paris, he retired from the Irish League mainly because of his hatred of political violence. As Alan Price illustrates, Synge is not interested in violence "for its own sake" in his plays.[63] Evidence of this can be found in *The Playboy* in which the father is not really killed, as it happens in the source of the play, but he is merely injured and the play ends with father and son reconciled. Thus, violence in Synge's plays, is not made or invented, but it is real and Synge's intention, as a realist, is to show it as an actual aspect of the life of the rural Irish people.

Notes

1. Nicholas Grene, *The Politics of Irish Drama: Plays in Context from Boucicault to Friel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.97.
2. Chris Morash, "All Playboys Now: The Audience and the Riot," in *Interpreting Synge: Essays from the Synge Summer School, 1991-2000*, ed. Nicholas Grene (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2000), p.144.
3. Steve Wilson, "'His Native Homespuns … Become Him': Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* and Performative Identity," *Midwest Quarterly*, Vol.48, No.2 (Winter, 2007), p.246.
4. Lady Augusta Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), p.302.
5. Heidi J. Holder, "Between Fiction and Reality: Synge's *Playboy* and Its Audience," *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol.14, No.4. (Spring, 1988), p.541.
6. Donna Gerstenberger, *John Millington Synge* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), p.34.
7. Mohammed Baqir Twaij, "The Controversy about the First Performance of Synge's *The Playboy of the Western*

World," *Babylon Journal of Humanities,* No.1 (November, 2002), p.14.

8. Declan Kiberd, *Synge and the Irish Language* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1979), p.236.

9. J. M. Synge, *The Collected Letters of John Millington Synge (1871-1907),* Vol.1, ed. Ann Saddlemyer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p.330. Mackenna (1872-1934) was an Irish translator and nationalist. He met Synge for the first time in Paris and after that they became best of friends.

10. Ibid., p.297.

11. Joseph Devlin, "J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* and the Culture of Western Ireland under Late Colonial Rule," *Modern Drama*, Vol.41, No.3 (fall, 1998), pp.382-83.

12. Gerstenberger, p.35.

13. William G. Fay and Catherine Carswell, *The Fays of the AbbeyTheatre: An Autobiographical Record* (London: Rich and Cowan, 1935), pp.166-67.

14. John Masefield, *John M. Synge: A Few Personal Recollections with Biographical Notes* (Letchworth: Garden City Press Ltd., 1916), p.31. John Masefield (1878-1967) is an English poet, playwright and fiction writer.

15. Ibid., p.13.

16. Nicholas Grene, *Synge: A Critical Study of the Plays* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1975), p.21.

17. Ibid. John Wilson Foster and Gregory Castle make detailed accounts of the influence of Le Braz and Loti on Synge, especially on his travel book *The Aran Islands*. They also try to compare Synge's prose works with those of Le Braz's and Loti's. See John Wilson Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), pp.94-113, and Gregory Castle, *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.98-133.

18. William Butler Yeats, "Preface to the First Edition of *The Well of the Saints*," in *Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1961), p.299.

19. Elizabeth Coxhead, *J. M. Synge and Lady Gregory* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1962), p.8.

20. In a letter to Leon H. S. Brodzky (1883-1973), a journalist and playwright, in 1907, Synge wrote, "In 1898, I went to the Aran Islands – I had known the Co. Wicklow peasantry – we always spend every summer there – intimately for years – and found the subjects of most of my plays there." (Quoted in J. M. Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol.4, *Plays*, Book2, ed. Ann Saddlemyer [London: Oxford University Press, 1968], p.xi).

21. See Ben Levitas, "Mirror up to Nurture: J. M. Synge and His Critics," *Modern Drama*, Vol.47, No.4 (winter, 2004), p.576.

22. Gregory, p.115.

23. "The 'National' Theatre," *Irish Independent*, Thursday, January 31, 1907, p.4.

24. "Public Amusements: Abbey Theatre," *Irish Times*, Monday, January 28, 1907, p.7.

25. "First Night at the Abbey Theatre," *Evening Mail*, Monday, January 28, 1907, p.2. Quoted in James Kilroy, *The 'Playboy' Riots* (Dublin: The Dolmen Press Ltd., 1971), p.13.

26. "The Abbey Theatre: *The Playboy of the Western World*," *Freeman's Journal*, Monday, 28 January 1907, p.10. Quoted in Kilroy, pp.7-9.

27. Arthur Griffith, "All Ireland," *Sinn Fein*, February 2, 1907, p.2. Quoted in Anne Enright, "Bad at History," in *Synge: A Celebration*, ed. Colm Tóibín (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2005), p.122.

28. Quoted in Kiberd, *Synge and the Irish Language*, p.250.

29. Quoted in David H. Greene and Edward M. Stephens, *J. M. Synge: 1871-1909* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1959), pp.261-62.

30. Robert Hogan and Michael J. O'Neill, eds. *Joseph Holloway's Abbey Theatre: A Selection from His Unpublished Journal, Impressions of a Dublin Playgoer* (Carbondale: South Illinois University Press, 1967), p.81.

31. W. B. Yeats, *Plays and Controversies* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), p.192.

32. See Adrian Frazier, *Behind the Scenes: Yeats, Horniman, and the Struggle for the Abbey Theatre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p.215.

33. J. M. Synge, "I Don't Care a Rap," in *J. M. Synge: Interviews and Recollections*, ed. E. H. Mikhail (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1977), pp.40-41.

34. Synge, *Collected Letters*, p.286.

35. Ibid., p.297.

36. Ibid.

37. For more details about the riots that accompanied *The Playboy* in the United States of America, see Gregory, pp.169-253. See also John P. Harrington, "The Playboy in the Western World: J. M. Synge's play in America," in *Playboys of the Western World: Production Histories*, ed. Adrian Frazier (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2004), pp.46-59; John P. Harrington, "The Abbey in America: The Real Thing," in *Irish Theatre on Tour*, eds. Nicholas Grene and Chris Morash (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2005), pp.35-51. And Lucy McDiarmid's "The Abbey and the Theatrics of Controversy, 1909-1915," in *A Century of Irish Drama: Widening the Stage*, eds. Stephen Watt, Eileen Morgan and Shakir Mustafa (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp.57-71.

38. Quoted in Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), p.167.

39. Grene, *The Politics of Irish Drama*, p.90.

40. Fay and Carswell, p.212. Randolph Parker believes that the torture scene is very important to the Mayoites to make them differentiate between the gallous story told and ornamented to them by Christy and the dirty deed of killing his father. (See Randolph Parker, "Gaming in the Gap: Language and Liminality in *'Playboy of the Western World*'," *Theatre Journal*, Vol.37, No.1 [March, 1985], p.81). It is the product of Synge's realism, i.e., his attempt to show violence as a part of the life of these people.

41. Gregory, p.134.

42. Synge, *Collected Letters*, p.91.

43. J. M. Synge, *The Plays and Poems of J. M. Synge*, ed. T. R. Henn (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1963), p.174. All quotations from Synge's plays are from this edition and will be followed by page numbers within the text after the abbreviation *Plays*.

44. Russell E. Davis, *Riders to the Sea and The Playboy of the Western World: A Critical Commentary* (New York: American R.D.M. Corporation, 1966), p.17.

45. Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol.4, *Plays*, p.363.

46. J. M. Synge, "I Don't Care a Rap," in *J. M. Synge: Interviews and Recollections*, p.41.

47. See Greene and Stephens, p.242.

48. Quoted in Ibid.

49. W. B. Yeats, "J. M. Synge and the Ireland of His Time," in *Essays and Introductions*, pp.337-38.

50. W. R. Rodgers, "J. M. Synge," in *J. M. Synge: Interviews and Recollections*, ed. E. H. Mikhail (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1977), p.117. Rodgers (1909-1969) was an Irish Poet and BBC producer and scriptwriter.

51. Ibid.

52. See Kilroy, p.10.

53. J. M. Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol.2, *Prose*, ed. Alan Price (London: Colin Smythe, 1982), p.95. Subsequent

references to all Synge's prose works are from this edition, and will be inserted parenthetically in the text with page numbers preceded by the abbreviation *Prose*.

54. Davis, pp.17-18.

55. Maurice Bourgeois, *John Millington Synge and the Irish Theatre*. (New York: Haskell House, 1966), p.203.

56. For a fascinating account of the Irish public's attitude to the police see Paige Reynolds, "The First Playboy," in *Playboys of the Western World*: *Production Histories*, ed. Adrian Frazier, pp.25-28.

57. Eugene Benson, *J. M. Synge* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), pp.112-13.

58. S. S. Mathur, *J. M. Synge: The Playboy of the Western World* (Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, n. d.), p.39.

59. George Bretherton, "A Carnival Christy and a Playboy for All Ages," *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol.37, No.3 (Autumn, 1991), pp.327-8.

60. Rob Doggett, "The Three Fathers of the Past: A Sociological Reading of *The Playboy of the Western World* and the Playboy Riots," *Colby Quarterly*, Vol.33, No.4 (December, 1997), p.291.

61. Eugene Benson indicates that in Mayo, where *The Playboy* is set, "boycotting is widely practiced" (Benson, p.144). The "maiming" of landlord's ewes, therefore, can be looked at as a kind of political violence. It is one of the forms of resistance as it is understood by the primitive poor evicted tenants, who are involved in agrarian wars against the landlords who are, according to them, the symbol of the oppressive colonial power. See Lionel Pilkington, *Theatre and the State in Twentieth Century Ireland: Cultivating the People* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p.58.

62. The word "yellow" here is a reference to English. It is another proof that Synge depends on the Lynchehaun case as

one of the sources of *The Playboy* because Lynchehaun attacked his employer by biting off her nose (Grene, *The Politics of Irish Drama*, p.91).

63. Alan Price, *Synge and Anglo-Irish Drama* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1961), p.119.

Bibliography

Benson, Eugene. *J. M. Synge*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982.

Bourgeois, Maurice. *John Millington Synge and the Irish Theatre*. New York: Haskell House, 1966.

Bretherton, George. "A Carnival Christy and a Playboy for All Ages." *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol.37, No.3 (Autumn, 1991): 322-34.

Castle, Gregory. *Modernism and the Celtic Revival*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Coxhead, Elizabeth. *J. M. Synge and Lady Gregory*. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1962.

Davis, Russell E. *Riders to the Sea and The Playboy of the Western World: A Critical Commentary*. New York: American R.D.M. Corporation, 1966.

Devlin, Joseph. "J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* and the Culture of Western Ireland under Late Colonial Rule." *Modern Drama*, Vol.41, No.3 (Fall, 1998): 371-84.

Doggett, Rob. "The Three Fathers of the Past: A Sociological Reading of *The Playboy of the Western World* and the Playboy Riots." *Colby Quarterly*, Vol.33, No.4 (December, 1997): 281-94.

Enright, Anne. "Bad at History." In *Synge: A Celebration*. Ed. Colm Tóibín. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2005.

Fay, William G. and Catherine Carswell. *The Fays of the Abbey Theatre: An Autobiographical Record*. London: Rich and Cowan, 1935.

Foster, John Wilson. *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987.

Frazier, Adrian. *Behind the Scenes: Yeats, Horniman, and the Struggle for the Abbey Theatre*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Gerstenberger, Donna. *John Millington Synge*. New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964.

Greene, David H. and Edward M. Stephens. *J. M. Synge:1871-1909*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1959.

Gregory, Lady Augusta. *Our Irish Theatre*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913.

Grene, Nicholas. *The Politics of Irish Drama: Plays in Context from Boucicault to Friel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

----------. *Synge: A Critical Study of the Plays*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1975.

Harrington, John P. "The Abbey in America: The Real Thing." In *Irish Theatre on Tour*. Eds. Nicholas Grene and Chris Morash. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2005.

----------. "The Playboy in the Western World: J. M. Synge's play in America." In *Playboys of the Western World: Production Histories*. Ed. Adrian Frazier. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2004.

Hogan, Robert and Michael J. O'Neill, eds. *Joseph Holloway's Abbey Theatre: A Selection from His Unpublished Journal, Impressions of a Dublin Playgoer*. Carbondale: South Illinois University Press, 1967.

Holder, Heidi J. "Between Fiction and Reality: Synge's *Playboy* and Its Audience." *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol.14, No.4 (Spring, 1988): 527-42.

Kiberd, Declan. *Inventing Ireland*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1995.

----------. *Synge and the Irish Language*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1979.

Kilroy, James. *The 'Playboy' Riots*. Dublin: The Dolmen Press Ltd., 1971.

Levitas, Ben. "Mirror up to Nurture: J. M. Synge and His Critics." *Modern Drama*, Vol.47, No.4 (Winter, 2004): 572-84.

McDiarmid, Lucy. "The Abbey and the Theatrics of Controversy, 1909-1915." In *A Century of Irish Drama*: *Widening the Stage*. Eds. Stephen Watt, Eileen Morgan, and Shakir Mustafa. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000.

Mathur, S. S. *J. M. Synge: The Playboy of the Western World*. Agra: Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, n. d.

Masefield, John. *John M. Synge: A Few Personal Recollections with Biographical Notes*. Letchworth: Garden City Press Ltd., 1916.

Morash, Chris. "All Playboys Now: The Audience and the Riot." In *Interpreting Synge: Essays from the Synge Summer School, 1991-2000*. Ed. Nicholas Grene. Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2000.

"The 'National' Theatre." *Irish Independent*. Thursday. January 31, 1907.

Parker, Randolph. "Gaming in the Gap: Language and Liminality in 'Playboy of the Western World'." *Theatre Journal*, Vol.37, No.1 (March, 1985): 65-85.

Pilkington, Lionel. *Theatre and the State in Twentieth Century Ireland: Cultivating the People*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

Price, Alan. *Synge and Anglo-Irish Drama*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1961.

"Public Amusements: Abbey Theatre." *Irish Time*. Monday, January 28, 1907.

Reynolds, Paige. "The First Playboy." In *Playboys of the Western World*: *Production Histories*. Ed. Adrian Frazier. Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2004.

Rodgers, W. R. "J. M. Synge." In *J. M. Synge: Interviews and Recollections*. Ed. E. H. Mikhail. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1977.

Synge, J. M. *The Collected Letters of John Millington Synge (1871-1907)*. Vol.1. Ed. Ann Saddlemyer. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.

----------. *Collected Works*, Vol.4, *Plays*, Book2. Ed. Ann Saddlemyer. London: Oxford University Press, 1968.

----------. *Collected Works*, Vol.2, *Prose*. Ed. Alan Price. London: Colin Smythe, 1982.

----------. "I Don't Care a Rap." In *J. M. Synge: Interviews and Recollections*. Ed. E. H. Mikhail. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1977.

----------. *The Plays and Poems of J. M. Synge*. Ed. T. R. Henn. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1963.

Twaij, Mohammed Baqir. "The Controversy about the First Performance of Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*." *Babylon Journal of Humanities*, No.1 (November, 2002): 1-20.

Wilson, Steve. "'His Native Homespuns … Become Him': Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* and Performative Identity." *Midwest Quarterly*, Vol.48, No.2 (Winter, 2007): 233-46.

Yeats, William Butler. *Essays and Introductions*. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1961.

----------. *Plays and Controversies*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924.

واقعية J . M . synge ومسرح العنف لديه

د. نجدت موسى كاظم
استاذمساعد
جامعـــة كركـــوك

زيد ابراهيم
مدرس مساعد
جامعـــة تكريـــت

الخلاصة

يعد جي ام سينج على انه احد الكتاب المسرحيين الرئيسيين الذين ساهموا في تأسيس المسرح الوطني الايرلندي ، إلا انه بسبب الطريقة التي قدّم بها شخصيات مسرحياته ، حدثت ردود أفعال عنيفة من قبل المشاهدين الذين لم يقبلوا ما شاهدوه على خشبة المسرح لأنهم عدوه مسيئاً. يتناول البحث الحالي ما تم من رد فعل لدى مشاهدي هذه المسرحيات .