CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE LITERARY AND THE VISUAL DIMENSIONS

Among the playwrights of the Irish Dramatic Movement it is John Millington Synge who attracted the attention of the world theatre consistently over the last several decades. It appears today that he integrated different elements of theatre and drama with a new perspective for a nation awakened to fresh ideas embracing politics, tradition, spiritual values, heroism, Celtic explorations and a daring sense of freedom, thereby touching on the total personality of the Irishman. He had an intense conflicting personal life different from the lives of his contemporary dramatists. Yeats came closest to defining him when he said:

He was a solitary, undemonstrative man, never asking pity nor complaining nor seeking sympathy . . . knowing nothing of new books and newspapers, reading the great masters alone; and he was but the more hated because he gave his country what it needed, an unmoved mind where there is a perpetual Last Day, a trumpeting and coming up to judgement.1

"Synge came at the right time as Shakespeare had done."\(^2\) Synge's advent into Irish Theatre was really at a time when the Irish literary Renaissance had a problem of its own—the search for a theatre language potent enough to be physicalised on the stage.

This problem faced by the Irish Renaissance was really that of a pure and perfect dramatic language for the stage. The root of things for the Irish people was to be in their own native country and they must create a language to express their essential desires. As Michael Mac Liammoir states in his introduction to the Synge volume in Everyman's Library, Synge had the fortune of getting a language that was enriched through the double existence, in the Ireland of his day of both English and Irish. But this was not enough. He saw in the contemporary Irish theatre, a theatre of "pallid" words and people "who have shut their lips on poetry."\(^3\) He saw in Europe a deep-rooted tradition of dramatic intrigue, which depended on a complicated plot, moving at high speed around certain stock scenes:

- the confidential document dropped in public, the abducted baby identified by a secret talisman or birthmark; the poisoned goblet passing from hand to hand and being drunk in the end by anyone but


the intended victim. Characters were similarly conventional: heavy father, innocence distressed, rough diamond, jealous husband, faithful friend.\textsuperscript{4}

This type of theatre performance was to be fought against and a new theatre to be created with psychological and linguistic nuances on the stage. That is why Synge said in the preface to \textit{The Playboy of the Western World} that in the happy ages of literature, striking and beautiful phrases were as ready to the storyteller's or the playwright's hand, as the rich cloaks and dresses of his time. Synge seems to have explored to find a theatre language which is rich and living. He believed that "it is possible for a writer to be rich and copious in his words and at the same time to give the reality, which is the root of all poetry, in a comprehensive and natural form."\textsuperscript{5}

Thus he criticized Ibsen whose plays are more realistic and literary than poetic and theatrical.

But Ibsen was really trying to discover a deep structure of feeling in his own native language when he produced \textit{Brand} and \textit{Peer Gynt} in the 1860s. He infused an organic discussion element in his plays, as Bernard Shaw says. The anti-romantic approach presents itself in the poetic quality of his thought structure. But, quite unfortunately, Synge could not experience these deep layers of Ibsenite elements of drama. That may be


why he stated in the preface to The Playboy of the Western World, "one has, on one side, Mallarme and Huysmans producing this literature; and on the other, Ibsen and Zola dealing with the reality of life in joyless and pallid words." 6 This was his sharp attack on Ibsen in January 1907 and in December of the same year he attacked Ibsen again in the preface to The Tinker's Wedding, saying that the work of Ibsen and the Germans would fade out because they are "analysts with their problems and teachers with their systems." 7 Synge's limitation also must be noted here because he categorically condemned one of the strong and modern forces of European theatre without knowing him directly in his own native tongue. Synge might not have got a chance of knowing that Ibsen also had the conscious pleasure in the dance of words that is referred to in book five of Wordsworth's Prelude. Zola's "black poetry" was also far away from Synge who was, to some extent, insular in the assessment of the theatre tradition of Europe and his contemporaries.

However, the European theatre of the nineties was highly influenced by the intellectual and social ideas of Ibsen. While Ibsen's poetic moorings remained unknown, the plays of his middle period--Ghosts, A Doll's House, An Enemy of the People etc.--became popular and he came to be known, through William Archer's translation, as a social revolutionary. Synge, however,

expressed his dislike for this type of plays because they, he believed, could not give expression to the basic poetic desires and visions of the people.

Yeats wrote that the Irish Dramatic Movement was a return to the people, and "I am certain that everywhere literature will return once more to its old extravagant fantastical expression, for in literature, unlike science, there are no discoveries, and it is always the old that returns." It is with this purpose of discovering in "the old" the dramatic strength of Irish language that Synge was sent to the Aran Islands. Yeats later expressed his deep appreciation for the wonderful language of Synge: "I never hear the vivid, picturesque, ever-varied language of Mr. Synge's persons without feeling that the great collaborateur has his finger in our business." These visions must have helped Synge to create a new type of drama which has an existence of its own with the elements of literature and theatre inextricably interwoven.

J. M. Synge's contribution to Irish theatre has been a subject of controversy, with some critics and writers like W. B. Yeats assigning him a place on a par with Sophocles or Aeschylus and some others condemning him as a sensational playwright. Arthur Griffith, editor of The United Irishman, O. W. Firkins, and George Russell vehemently supported the


latter proposition. But now the touchstone of time has proved that Synge's plays deserve better assessment and renewed evaluation because of the different levels of interest displayed by serious and discerning lovers of theatre and drama. Synge is revived and re-read to find multiple layers of meaning which cannot be just classified under a definite genre. The visual and the auditory impact of his plays claim for him a place different from the one reserved for many of his contemporaries.

Synge's plays are notable theatre events as well as literary experiments. They must be approached with a special understanding of the literary, cultural and political Renaissance which brought out the best in the Irish tradition, both auditory and visual. In fact, they have their life and meaning in the Irish culture at its best.

Synge's background was provided by a deep sense of nationalism, an unquenching thirst for freedom and an active movement of demonstrative idealism, quite often manifesting itself in violent resurrection as a means of the freedom struggle. It was a nascent period of some fine values of love, sacrifice, selflessness, heroism, truth and beauty. The old value system of orthodox obedience, suppression, exploitation and religious fanaticism were all crumbling down, giving place to new hopes of the brave new world. All these brilliant and progressive ideals found their expression in the personal, literary and social life of the enthusiastic disciples of the great revolutionary O'Leary and associates.
like W. B. Yeats. The Irish Renaissance is considered to be the result of a creative understanding between O'Leary and W. B. Yeats.

The Irish Renaissance could have occurred without Yeats or O'Leary, but it would have been a different and poorer movement if they had not met: Lady Gregory might have remained the mistress of a great house in County Galway; John M. Synge might have remained a failed Parisian journalist; James Joyce might have become a Jesuit; Sean O'Casey might have remained a labourer and journalist; Frank O'Connor might have died a Cork librarian.10

The Irish Renaissance and its ideals were dramatized by most of the Abbey playwrights. Lady Gregory circulated a letter in which the Celtic and Irish plays were applauded and she insisted with great ambition that they must build up a Celtic and Irish School of Dramatic Literature. They must keep in mind an "uncorrupted and imaginative" audience supporting portrayal of plays upholding the dreams of Ireland, "the home of an ancient idealism."11 This manifesto was to effect a thorough change in the Irish Theatre which developed from James Shirley's St. Patrick for Ireland staged in 1640 and passed through notable and popular playwrights like George Farquhar, William Congreve, the actress Peg Woffington, Goldsmith, Sheridan and Dion Boucicault. With the Irish Spiritual resurrection, the Irish drama which existed primarily


for the English stage after the Act of Union in 1800, was to be reoriented for the Irish stage. The popular and commercial English theatre had much "colour, romance, high-sounding words, deeds of daring and the spirit of sacrifice."\(^{12}\)

But the playwrights of the national theatre movement were not very experienced in stage-craft and the different aspects of play production. For instance, Yeats's play *The Countess Cathleen* is "an elaborate poetic tapestry shaped into a modern version of a medieval morality play."\(^{13}\) Compared to this, Martyn's *The Heather Field* was stronger and more dramatic, depicting the theatre as a place of intellectual argument and social commentary on the problems of the contemporary world. Yeats, who was immersed in Blake, the occult and Celticism must have been seeing the theatre "as a place of reverie and imagination about the timeless world of eternal truth."\(^{14}\)

Most of Yeats's plays have a narrative quality with a mystical vision embodied on the stage "through elaborate poetry, complex symbols and passionate speech."\(^{15}\) A poet's theatre such as he imagined could not succeed; his plays never exercised the power


\(^{13}\) Richard Fallis, *The Irish Renaissance: An Introduction to Anglo-Irish Literature*, p. 89.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 90.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 91.
over a large audience of which he had dreamed. His symbolism and his beautiful language suffocate *The Shadowy Waters, At the King's Threshold, The Unicorn from the Stars, The Hourglass, Deirdre* and other plays. *Cathleen ni Houlihan* is exceptional, compared to the poetic affluence of the other plays. Lady Gregory's *The Rising of the Moon* is close to *Cathleen ni Houlihan* in terms of political idealism. All these playwrights including William Boyle and Padraic Colum tried their best to define the direction and purpose of the modern Irish drama. They all wrote plays about the Irish peasants with a nostalgia for the heroic past and purity of their language. But the Irish theatre would have remained a minor event had it not been for Synge and some of his original plays which caused controversy and riots on issues fundamental to the dignity of art and life in theatre.

The drama of Synge's time was the result of a gradual development from the comedy of manners of the eighteenth century and the melodrama of stock situations of the nineteenth century. There was an eventful theatre experience in Synge's contemporary England. The first decade of the twentieth century which saw the creative output of Synge witnessed the productions of Bernard Shaw, Galsworthy and Granville Barker. The dazzling Irishman, Oscar Wilde, also was very popular with his derivation from Congreve and Sheridan and some trends of the preceding century. These playwrights depended upon a relation between one form of speech and another creating an effective dramatic language prompting T. S. Eliot to say that Shaw's dramatic
language along with Congreve gives us the best prose speech in English Drama. Synge seems to have taken note of the difference between the prosaic dramatic language involving itself in intellectual discussion and a new theatre language suitable for the grand utterance that the theatre essentially needs. He wanted to retain the strength and freshness of the ancient idealism potent and deep enough to provoke sensory images in theatre. That is why he was dissatisfied with the nature of playwriting and method of productions in Ireland as well as in other parts of Europe of his time.

J. M. Synge was different from other playwrights of Ireland in conceiving a theatre for the twentieth century. His life and background were highly dramatic. He was an introvert always looking inwardly and drawing on the deepest recesses of his mind in tune with the wild nature of the Irish tradition. He was born on 16th April 1871 in a Protestant Wicklow family at Rathfarnham and died on 24th March 1909. Within this short span of thirty-eight years he tried to create and leave to the world a legacy which has become a bone of contention in world theatre. His plays demand serious scrutiny from different angles because we find Synge the person and his relation with his mother, girl friends, admirers and critics in theatre, a serious preoccupation with the fundamental issues like age, death, love, time and human relations fused in perfect

rhythmic patterns of stage images. He was a lover of music who, like a tramp, travelled widely in different countries of Europe. He was a Parnellite and a socialist in turn for some time. Quite early in life he was influenced by Darwin's idea of evolution. Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Butler's Analogy and Paley's Evidence of Christianity made a deep impression on his mind. He also studied Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research in Paris. All these paved the way for the creative and original understanding of reality and human experiences. When he took to playwriting and serious study of the complete problem of theatre, this background stood him in good stead. His visit to the Aran Islands in 1898 on the advice of W. B. Yeats tied up the loose and uncertain strands of his thought processes, finally giving a creative motivation or an "objective correlative" for all his creativity later displayed in theatre.

There has not yet been a full-length analysis of this creative motivation and sense of the stage J. M. Synge revealed in his plays. He wrote six plays, excluding the first play When the Moon Has Set which he never published. Synge, unlike many others of his time, calls for a study of a new perspective in theatre in terms of the potentials of stage-craft in his works. The mode of acting, dialogue-rendering, stage movements, gestures, compositions and choreography deserve special study and application in theatre for the production of his plays. The very concept of time and space displayed in The Well of
the Saints, The Playboy of the Western World and in _Deirdre_ of the Sorrows art is different from the one which was in vogue. He was also different in presenting a vision of a realistic and metaphysical expression of life. Yeats would present it as an expression of the supernatural while the others believe in a natural world with the extra dimension of the limited mind of man struggling to find out a meaning for his existence. Synge himself felt this struggle deep at heart and his characters all in varying degrees express this inescapable struggle when caught up in a world of actuality and dream.

Synge presented on the stage realistic visuals whose details proclaim a philosophy of life of his dreams. As is well known the naturalistic or realistic, or suggestive realistic approaches were the results of the scientific approach of the second half of the nineteenth century. Synge's study of nature and his interest in socialism, the successful propaganda of communism with the publication of _The Communist Manifesto_ by Marx and Engels in 1848 and of Marx's _Das Kapital_ Vol. I in 1867 and many other supporting factors of national and international phenomena helped the playwright to see through life as merely an objective and natural expression. He also came in the wake of Zola's Naturalist Theatre, Ibsen's shocking realism and other artistic and scientific movements which


18 Ibid., pp. 50-57, 63.
advocated an honest and truthful analysis of the reality of life. Chekhov also was a creative force formulating this trend in his productions of Uncle Vanya or The Cherry Orchard.

But Synge's realistic images reveal, unlike many other trend-setters, a slice of life from the lowest rung of society with an apex of dream and beauty. Like Brecht's Mother Courage trying to supply the army with the means to keep alive, Synge's Bartley is found going to his death in the surf because he can sell a mare and pony at a very good price at the Galway fair. Hauptmann's The Weavers starting with the workers bringing their clothes to the manager, Pfeifer, to be checked and the manager looking at the cloth with the help of a magnifying glass can easily suggest to a modern audience the playwright's merciless analysis of facts to find out reality. It is in this context that Synge appears to be traditionally linked up with the European realists and also a pioneer of "modern" theatre sensibility later developed by Pirandello, Lorca, Brecht, Beckett, Pinter, Ionesco and others.

Synge's plays are all authentic and convincing in terms of the genuine dramatic feeling they communicate because they all give expression to his own personal feeling universalized in dramatic language. W. B. Yeats said that John Synge however was able to give direct expression to his personality and yet retain dignity of dramatic moment, because he found in the material world, and particularly in the life and language of the west of Ireland, the "metaphors and examples" by which he
could express his own emotion and thought. In the Aran Islands "he saw what lay hidden in himself." Synge was able to express himself very well in the symbolic language of the Aran Islands and Wicklow. The artist's mood and the external experiences were properly synchronized in his creative mind. Synge had broken the mould of modern drama in expressing the different moods of his personality.

On a closer analysis of Synge's plays one can find that he has not invented any plot for his play. All have been taken from the Aran stories or from the narrations of past life or from the rich resources of history, myth and ritual. Like Shakespeare he proved himself to be quite original in transforming these given stories or circumstances into successful units of action supported by a definite philosophical stance. This conversion is a matter of great importance to a student of theatre. Where does the change take place in the process of this transformation? Is it in the form or in the content? A comparative study of the sources and the contents of the play reveals the amazing fact that except in certain cases of motivational necessity, the content does not undergo much radical change in perspective from the source. Here the form and content cannot be separated and they together demand a creative co-operation of all the artists in theatre. It is a great credit to a playwright to say that his plays are primarily

meant for theatre. The statement implies that apart from the literary elements of drama the plays abound in elements of stage-craft demanded by theatre production.

First is the concept of a theatre itself which asks for a different space for production and attitude of appreciation. In the case of Synge, this becomes intuitively clear when his idea of theatre develops along with an intensification of the forces of theatre. This concept of theatre mainly revolves round the style of acting which includes body movement, composition and choreography. In other words, the use of space by the actors and the audience is the crux of the problem of deciding upon the nature and style of a play. The scenic design, costume or lighting will automatically come under these headings which are known as the director's design in theatre. The director's design or vision is only an extended design of the playwright who has already seen the events in motion and then distilled them in exquisite literary images in his plays. On the stage these images are aroused or awakened and set in motion similar to the process which took place in the conceptual stage of playwriting. Synge's plays can be converted into visible images on the stage because of their energy, power and strength of suggestion embedded in the literary expression. Each play can be analysed to show how intensely and energetically the characters move about in passionate and provoking circumstances.

It is the energetic actor on the stage who makes the whole play meaningful. Personal emotions have been objectified
through legends, myths, and heroic tales. It seems that Synge had firm faith in the recurrence of mythical life with the result that the past of Ireland and its ancient glory can be found working as an inspiring force throughout his creative processes. The emotion of the glorious characteristics of the past and the spiritual nobility of the theatre must go hand in glove. In *Explorations* W. B. Yeats explained the mode of acting in such a theatre. The actors must move "slowly and quietly, and not very much, and there should be something in their movements decorative and rhythmical as if they were painting on a frieze."\(^2\) But Synge's plays and their method of acting do not wholly subscribe to this idea, because there is more emotional expression required through action and brisk movements in most of them.

Synge's contemporary Irish theatre was very much influenced by superfluous realism and melodrama. But he had purely an artistic approach to combine in theatre "three things, any two of which have come together in the past but never all three—asceticism, ecstasy, stoicism, I desire that we may bring together all three."\(^2\)

Synge's critics were not very discriminating about the artistic and theatrical value of his drama. W. B. Yeats,


George Russell (AE), Padraic Colum, Lady Gregory and other intimate friends in the theatre movement admired him too extravagantly. Yeats, for instance, compared him with Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Shakespeare. He seems to have exaggerated Synge's stature as a world dramatist in order to silence his fanatical opponents and to publicize to the world the ideals of the Irish theatre. This is not to indicate that Yeats was insincere or dishonest in his praise of Synge. But the real quality of Synge's plays, their innate structure and stage-worthiness were not seriously analysed either by him or by any of his supporters in the movement. However, Yeats is the best and the closest friend of Synge, who identified his strength and creativity and showed him the way. His comments on and the defence of Synge's plays which caused riots and disturbance in the Abbey Theatre were very stimulating.

The later critics like P. P. Howe (J. M. Synge), Francis Bickley (J. M. Synge and the Irish Dramatic Movement), Maurice Bourgeois, John Masefield George Moore (Hail and Farewell), E. A. Boyd (Ireland's Literary Renaissance, Contemporary Drama of Ireland), Padraic Colum, H. A. Law (Anglo-Irish Literature), A. E. Malone (The Irish Drama), Una Ellis-Fernor (The Irish Dramatic Movement), L.A.G. Strong (John Millington Synge) and a good number of others appreciatively emphasize "the solid Irish substance of Synge's genius" and the poetic, literary, sociological, anthropological, linguistic, Celtic contributions he made. Thus "his plays are Ireland;
they are mankind; above all, they are Synge.\textsuperscript{22} "Synge's mind is perhaps a little like Shakespeare's."\textsuperscript{23} Robert Lynd pointed out Synge's limitations as a great playwright:

\begin{quote}
He is not the peer of Shakespeare: he is not the peer of Shelley: he is the peer, say, of Stevenson. His was a by-way, not a high-road of genius.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

St. John Ervine's strictures upon Synge portray him as a faker of peasant speech in \textit{Some Impressions of My Elders} (1922). Daniel Corkery (1931) who examines Synge's achievement and significance in the proper context of Irish people and their awakening also leaves the area of his craft in theatre untouched. Even Lennox Robinson, who was a theatre person himself, did not analyse this aspect of the playwright when he edited \textit{The Irish Theatre} (1939). Gratton Freyer understands some of the essentials about Synge when he speaks about his unusual capacity for "emotional sympathy with the humblest of characters in emotions experienced as though for the first time on earth."\textsuperscript{25} In an article "Synge and National Drama" (1954) Brother A. C. O'Connor of the Catholic University of Philippines stressed the fact that Synge's plays are at once a vivid and fascinating reflection of a national


\textsuperscript{24} Robert Lynd, \textit{Old and New Masters} (London: T. Fisker Unwin, 1919), p. 94.

life and excellent examples of the dramatic artistry that will hold the interest of any audience. But here also no serious search for the elements of stage-craft is made.

Gerard Fay, in *The Abbey Theatre* (1958) records that the Abbey besides being a poet's theatre was also a great actor's theatre. The Allgood sisters, Maire Walker, the Fay brothers, Fred O'Donovan, Barry Fitzgerald, F. J. McCormick, J. M. Kerrigan and Arthur Sinclair gave performances which swiftly made clear the distinction of the plays by Synge and Yeats. Some details of production styles, the actors' technique and their method of speaking out Synge's idiom are provided by him without going deep into the structure and pattern of Synge's writings specifically for the stage. Later critics and scholars such as Alan Price (*Synge and Anglo Irish Drama*), Robin Skelton (*The Writings of J. M. Synge*), Ann Saddlemeyer and T. R. Henn whose editions are of immense help to researchers, Dr. Nicholas Grene, Dr. Declan Kiberd, Raymond Williams and a host of similarly brilliant commentators analyse Synge's plays in their own original ways but none of them has attempted a coherent study of the theatre elements which form the auditory and visual images on the stage.

It is imminent, in this context, to stress the qualities of Synge's drama both as literature and theatre; how and why these qualities are inextricable and mutually complementary. It is to be borne in mind that it is only fairly recently that critical methodology has developed more specifically
"theatrical" as opposed to literary criteria. However, theatre is a totalizing actuality which brings literature and drama together.

Drama: Literature and Theatre

Drama is written to be enacted, witnessed and enjoyed in Theatre. It is a group activity carried out effectively in collaboration with many creative forces: Author, Actor and Audience. Drama, Luigi Pirandello says, is "spoken action." The "spoken" part of it is literature and the other, theatre. Both are inseparable and inextricable from each other. A play must be both literature and theatre, "not the one at the expense of the other, but each because of the other." The classical playwrights have instinctively combined both these elements unobtrusively. The very word "theatre" occurring first in the fifth-century B.C. in Greek means a place where things are seen. The audience were known as "hoi theatai," meaning the people who look on, the spectators. Both these "seeing" ideas are integrally associated with drama meaning something that is acted out, a communication through "action." The golden period of Indian, Greek, Elizabethan, Japanese and Roman theatre produced great dramatic literature which was acted out regularly for huge gatherings from different walks of life, who enjoyed it as a meaningful communal art pleasing their eyes and ears and consequently feeding their mind and intellect. Plays as literature

very often survive because of their potential stage-worthiness. The verbal supplements the visual and the aural qualities in theatre.

The literary critic also approves of the stage quality of the play. But he emphasizes the verbal connotations, association of ideas, emotional intensity, imagery, philosophical acumen and the traditional and cultural greatness of the work. A critic of the practical theatre will emphasize the visual and aural elements along with the verbal ones. He will specially note the stage-worthiness of the play, acting styles, audience-response, the entrances and exits of the characters, the individual and group scenes, the innovation of new theatrical ideas and the type of theatre architecture required for the structure of the play. He must also try to correlate the literary qualities with the stage elements. It is this type of approach that is required for exploring the complete structure of the play.

What is spoken and heard always has a motivational actuality. Behind every motivation there is an energetic action emotionally conveyed. "Behind the drama of words is the drama of action, the timbre of voice and voice, the uplifted hand or tense muscle, and the particular emotion." It is proper that Elizabethan dramaturgy is now held in esteem because as in the Greek tragedies it has "a very abbreviated shorthand

indeed for the actual and felt play, which is always the real thing." Eliot makes this point clear when he says that "this is merely a particular case of the amazing unity of Greek, the unity of concrete and abstract in philosophy, the unity of thought and feeling, action and speculation in life." This unity of the philosophical abstraction with the concrete and that of thought and feeling with action in theatre is a difficult task to achieve.

Synge believed in the unity of thought and feeling, the abstract and the concrete as is explained by T. S. Eliot. Whatever he wrote expressed a struggle to unify these opposites. His own personal desires, the spiritual and philosophical attitude, the aesthetic and ritualistic undertones of life—all seem to find expressions in his plays. These ideas are creatively translated into dramatic images on the stage. Synge himself has stated this dimly-felt philosophical stance:

I am yielding up my imagination to the marvellous. These things cannot be understood without an intimate if cautious sympathy, and I long to lift the veil and to see with my own inward sight the pretended symbols of the soul.

This highlights Synge's idea of and his conflict between reason and emotion which runs through all the plays, and finds its explicit expression in The Well of the Saints and The Playboy of the Western World. The love of simplicity and distrust of

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philosophy which is shown in the Aran book, and the love of the marvellous and the "wonders" all display a spiritual struggle for unification.

Synge's idea of literature and idea of the theatre are to be found in close harmony with each other. The areas of his emotional development, spiritual conflict, personal bitterness, frustration, overvaulting ambitions to attain the inaccessible—all make his works deeply emotional and personal. Out of these, he created a world of reality in the theatre. As Colm in When the Moon Has Set says to sister Eileen,

From our harmonized discord new notes will rise.
In the end we will assimilate with each other and grow senseless and old. We have incarnated God and been a part of the world.\(^30\)

This awareness of God and the world in the same person is the motivating force of concretizing the ideals in stage images. This is what gives his plays their authenticity, perceptiveness and stage-worthiness. The unity of the abstract and the concrete, thought, feeling and emotion with action is felt because of his sense of the totality of life. So what he presents on the stage is made meaningful by this total vision of life.

Syngc was always of the opinion that all emotions had neither end nor beginning, they are part of a long sequence of impulse and effect. The only relative unity in art is that of a whole man's lifetime. Hamlet, though seeming complete,

is but the link from Romeo and Lear, as Shakespeare is the link from Chaucer to Byron, and modern literature from classical to what we are approaching.\footnote{31}

This argument reveals that Synge wanted to establish a unity not only between feeling, thought and action, but also between every living object and phenomenon of life. For him, "every life is a symphony and the translation of this sequence into music and from music again, for those who are not musicians, into literature, or painting or sculpture, is the real effort of the artist."\footnote{32} Hence the unity is again not merely between the concrete but between every branch of learning and art, the foundation of which is music. Hence it is to be followed that Synge's visuals on the stage are traceable to his literary principles and then to other areas of fine arts which, when combined, give a deeper structure of philosophical thinking in terms of the unity and continuity of life.

Synge's plays, taken together, show a discreet line of development from the literary to the theatrical. The first play \textit{The Shadow of the Glen} shows more of a literary and mystic level while the last play \textit{Deirdre of the Sorrows}, left unfinished, leaves an impression of containing in it condensed and eloquent theatrical images. From the first to the last there is a gradual evolution of the density of theatrical events and their emotional motivation. He also believed in


the literary greatness of his works. For instance, he comments on his own Shadow of the Glen and Yeats's The King's Threshold saying that plays like these demand an intellectual effort to make them comprehensible, or at least a repeated hearing. The whole interest of our movement is that our little plays try to be literature first—i.e., to be personal, sincere, and beautiful—and drama afterwards.33

Synge's advent into theatre is like a fresh breeze of the spring, so spontaneous and natural. At the same time his theatre experience was limited. As Ann Saddlemeyer points out, His diaries during the eighteen-nineties record only two visits to the theatre, in September 1892 to see Beerbohm Tree's Hamlet in Dublin, and in March 1898 to see a production of Ibsen's Ghosts by Antoine's Theatre libre in Paris.34 The early plays, in spite of their theatrical success, were meant for the reader more than the performer. In course of the development of his insight into the art of theatre, he evolved very quickly his own method of dramatic writing and production and when he was involved in the Irish Dramatic Movement as a director of the Abbey Theatre he created a specific method of native play-production displaying a clear sense of stage-craft. We can here observe "the dramatist in the making and the surprisingly rapid evolution from musician and dilettante student of languages and literature to the practical man of the theatre."35

34 Ibid., p. xii.
35 Ibid.
Unlike many other playwrights of prominence Synge was a great artist by intuition. The fact of his being advised to go to the Aran Islands by W. B. Yeats when they met in Paris in 1896 remains an accidental coincidence. Synge became absolutely transformed by this catalytic contact with the most primitive islands of Western Europe. This was not the only incident which brought out the best in Synge. Whatever was lurking hidden and suppressed in the mind of the lonely Synge found an "objective correlative" in the Aran Islands. Thus his own anti-clerical, mystic, nature-loving, freedom-seeking visions of a dreamer found there an identical background. He had strong convictions about his way of life as a theatre person. Conviction alone cannot deliver the goods because well-meaning intentions without the strength and technical skill to put them into practice will render one's attempts ineffective. Synge had developed by contact, experience and practice a technical know-how of playwriting and play production. He could easily co-ordinate the different faculties for a successful career in theatre. All this was possible because of a feeling of commitment and poetic vision. Hence convictions and co-ordinations are systematically analysed to form certain concepts of permanent values in theatre. These three aspects of a creative movement--conviction, integration or co-ordination and concepts--have to be dwelt upon at length in the context of Synge's attainments, which will help us to study the salient features of his plays as literature and stage-craft.
Synge's Convictions, Concepts and their Integration

Synge's convictions were definitely those of the pioneers of the Irish Dramatic Movement, which were aesthetic, cultural, national, literary, heroic and linguistic. They were to some extent political as well for most of the artists and nationalists associated with it. Synge shared the common conviction of W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn, George Moore and others who were the cause and means of the Movement. At the same time Synge differed from all of them in the sense that he had a very particular poetic vision which was national or political only in a very wide sense of the term. He was perfectly convinced of the necessity of the Irish Dramatic Movement. He lived with the common people and the lowest peasants of the land and drew on them for his works, both dramatic and poetic. Like Yeats,

he began then with the belief that poetry, a spirit and an unassailable essence, lived still in the Irish peasants whose attitude to common life was like that of the great ages of Chaucer, of the Italian Renaissance, of Greece, and of the Elizabethans; and that this spirit revealed itself in the living language which they alone still spoke, and in the heroic and homely, in legend and in daily life.36

Synge believed that a very powerful dramatic literature could be created out of their rich language of the past because the people still have a living imagination. The heroic and legendary

greatness of the native peasants unspoilt by English education can be evoked and a wild joy can be created out of this. Myth also is a part of their heritage which can be tapped to strengthen modern life. The ironies and paradoxes latent in their life can be awakened. Thus there must evolve a dramatic method which takes up only native subjects and a form and language suitable to it. The method of acting, movement, dialogue rendering, costume and stage-designing must be free from the stage techniques of superficial English companies. Consequently, Synge seems to have aimed at a simple and pure theatre with an "apex of beauty."

Out of this conviction came a new attitude of aesthetic appreciation. Una Ellis-Fermor aptly points out the commitment and conviction of Synge in these workshop processes:

We have been watching the living imagination passing into the theatre and there producing living drama, that living drama whose full growth is reached in the work of Synge, which, without the existence of the workshop, would not have been possible.  

Drama being a social and communal art cannot be perfected in isolation.

The ideologies that Synge was fond of were discovered in the historic movement which was a part of the great struggle for freedom from all the alien conventions of the past: literary, religious, political and cultural. But each fighter

37 Una Ellis-Fermor, The Irish Dramatic Movement, p. 62.
had his own peculiar way of tackling the problem. Theatre was the means of freedom, aesthetic and spiritual, at least for Synge, Yeats, Lady Gregory and a few others. Synge, of course, chose poetic drama because it could free itself from the shackles of conventional realism and vulgar naturalism through freeing itself from naturalistic scenery, and a commercial and conceited approach to play production. Consequently, he could establish more intimacy and emotional authenticity in relation to his audience. The ritual, music, verse and flowing movement in harmony with action chosen by Synge required a particular costume with a pure native colour about it, a genuine facial expression and imaginative stage arrangements. All this is due to a necessity not imposed from outside but a conviction born from within, embracing all aspects of life, personal and social, in the totality of his existence.

**Concepts**

All these convictions and creative elements were sustained by a set of principles and dramatic theories. These theories are found well executed in his plays which were written at different times and periods ranging over a span of about ten years from 1899 to 1909. But these can be put together organically and we can see a well-defined principle of aesthetics controlling the whole body of ideas. His critical and theoretical writings quantitatively fall into a small group of essays—three prefaces, some critical observations on national drama and allied subjects, and a few reviews written in Paris and
later in Ireland when he became very active in theatre. Most of his views are valuable even today because they are related to the genius of the nation and the tradition of the people to be usefully re-created in modern terms. It was not a revival of the Irish tradition that he aimed at. He wanted, on the contrary, a proper interpretation of the ancient values transcending time and place. Hence he was opposed to the Gaelic league which tied to keep the cruder powers of the fresh mind occupied. He opposed 'pseudo-antique fiction and drama. In its place, he wanted to establish the beauty of peasant drama which would release the violent and wild imagination of the people living in touch with certain moods and psychic states of the earth. Greene and Stephens in their biography of Synge quote Synge's noteworthy reply to Mackenna's suggestion that the reality in his plays must be controlled:

On (the)French stage you get sex without its balancing elements. On (the)Irish stage you get the other elements without sex. I restored sex and the people were so surprised they saw the sex only ... no drama can grow out of anything other than the fundamental realities of life which are never fantastic, are neither modern nor unmodern and, as I see them nearly spring dayish, or breezy or Cuchulainoid.38

This indicates his idea of the enjoyment to be derived from drama. He does not intend imposing a concrete and didactic purpose on his plays. He is almost like Keats in this respect.

That is why he wrote against the "playhouse too often stocked with the drugs of many seedy problems." He strongly held the view:

the drama, like the symphony, does not teach or prove anything. Analysts with their problems, and teachers with their systems, are soon as old-fashioned as the pharmacopoeia of Galen,--look at Ibsen and the Germans--but the best plays of Ben Jonson and Moliere can no more go out of fashion than the blackberries on the hedges.

It required artistic equanimity and moral strength to point out the blemishes of such a popular and strong influence as Ibsen in Europe at that time. This is not to imply that Synge sided with the aesthetic movement of "Art for art's sake" led by Oscar Wilde, Walter Pater and others. Walter Pater stressed the moral superiority of art. When it came to Synge, he chose an artistic position in between the purely didactic and the purely artistic. Art must have the function of unconscious teaching besides its normal and due role of providing delight. Synge's complaint is that Ibsen and Zola deal with the "reality of life in joyless and pallid words" for the purpose of awakening the conscience of the people. "On the stage," Synge says, "one must have reality, and one must have joy, and that is why the intellectual and modern drama has failed."

40 Ibid.
In his preface to *The Playboy of the Western World*, Synge emphasizes two elements of enjoyment: pleasure and excitement. The spectator must be mentally free to enjoy a production without any conscious idea of being taught. We should not go to the theatre as we go to the chemist, but as we go to a dinner where the food we need is taken with pleasure and excitement. This concept or theory of art can be seen in his plays where imagination and fancy of the highest order are released in a structure of ideas emotionally strung together. This structure of ideas combined instruction and delight, richness and reality. Synge clarifies his approach to poetic art, when he says:

I have felt that poetry roughly is of two kinds, the poetry of real life—the poetry of Burns and Shakespeare and Villon, and the poetry of a land of fancy—the poetry of Spenser and Keats and Ronsard. That is obvious enough, but what is highest in poetry is always reached when the dreamer is leaning out to reality, or when the man of real life is lifted out of it, and in all the poets the greatest have both these elements. Here the "dreamer is leaning out to reality" or vice versa. This is Synge's own explanation of the romantic pangs of his characters felt in reality. He feels the pain of being thrown on the thorns of life and the ecstasy of bleeding. This is in tune with the moral stance of Shelley who believed that "poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight."43

Thus one can note Synge's authentic position of not completely identifying himself with the romantics but accepting their major points of view in substance. He is not far from the great Coleridge who describes "the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination." In Synge's declaration of his faith and practice these critical insights are recurrent. His plays and poems are imagistic explanations of his theory. He was nourished by the folk-imagination and the fiery fancy of the native people who had been toiling and working in the hot sun and rains with little change for centuries.

The critical writings of J. M. Synge throw much light on his personality. His artistic vision is electrified by a sincere touch of the inner person. True creation is possible only in a unifying context of the individual personality in creative touch with "the psychic state of the locality." That is why he declares, "no personal originality is enough to make a rich work unique, unless it has also the characteristic of a particular time and locality and the life that is in it." Here the dramatist is realistically thinking in terms of


expressing the genuine feelings and dilemmas of the particular class and thereby indicating that no dreamy vagueness is allowed in great art. Oedipus of Sophocles remains personal as well as impersonal, lyrical and poetic because of his being placed in the true psychic authenticity with its oracular and supernatural undertones dovetailed with the social and moral setting of the time. Similarly Synge's Christy Mahon, Sara Casey, Nora Burke and other energetic characters are justified beyond time and space because of their "characteristics of a particular time and locality and the life that is in it."

Synge appears to be one of the greatest myth-makers in modern drama. The peculiar nature of his myth-making is to be applauded when we know that he has created parallel myths of cultural values out of ordinary situations in day-to-day life. This was possible in his case because of his affinity for the particular and the intensity of its expression in universal terms.

All art that is not conceived by a soul in harmony with some mood of the earth is without value, and unless we are able to produce a myth more beautiful than nature--holding in itself a spiritual grace beyond the earthly--it is better to be silent.  

Each of his plays can be considered as a myth of this kind because the themes have been taken from nature and developed into forces in collective consciousness. The Playboy of the Western World is the best example in question. All the plays

have a glimpse of the supernatural, the mysterious and the mystic elements of nature and the grace of a parable narrating beautiful tales for all times.

Everything Synge wrote and spoke about in relation to theatre art finds an echo in his critical theory and practical experience. His views were not palatable to the orthodox and the visual elements of his plays were shocking to some sections of the audience. His overall approach is philosophical in a precise and modern sense. Most of the characters of his plays are men and women uprooted, homeless and struggling to find their own place in this strange phenomenon of life. These characters are not unhappy about their existence but they are restless, trying to discover their identity in terms of a community of people who look at them with dismay and suspicion. Synge believed that "Man is naturally a nomad . . . and all wanderers have finer intellectual and physical perceptions than men who are condemned to local habitations." No wonder Synge has faithfully portrayed the characters of the tramp (The Shadow of the Glen), the tinker couple (Tinker's Wedding), Martin Doul and Mary Doul (The Well of the Saints) and Deirdre (Deirdre of the Sorrows). Among these Deirdre is not a nomadic type like the others, who, like Synge himself, have no anchorage in any system of society. Synge has a special fondness for these characters because:

there is something grandiose in a man who has forced all kingdoms of the earth to yield the tribute of his bread and who, at a hundred, begs on the wayside with the pride of an emperor. The slave and the beggar are wiser than the man who works for recompense, for all our moments are divine and above all price though their sacrifice is paid with a measure of fine gold. Every industrious worker has sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, perhaps served him in chalices of gold. 48

This conception of life devoid of artificial modern systems is preferred by the playwright as well as by his leading characters. This natural life appears to be more consoling and rewarding than the modern one. Urban society is thus spiritually written off by Synge, maybe following in the footsteps of Wordsworth who was a sustaining source of strength to him. 49

According to Una Ellis-Fermor, Synge had deep affinities for mysticism. Synge managed in his theories and practice to blend nature-mysticism with dramatic expression. He seems to give a definite shape to nature in all the plays. In Riders to the Sea nature is represented by the sea. In The Shadow of the Glen the tramp inspires Nora to go out with him into the green pastures which will display different moods of singing, dancing, smiling, punishing and saving. It is mother-nature for Nora. The Well of the Saints presents another aspect of Synge's concept of nature which exists at two levels, the visible and the invisible. In The Tinker's Wedding and in The Playboy of the Western World nature is the inspiring


background without which the plays have little meaning. Nature with all its different colours, dark and bleak, is the "poetic protagonist" in *Deirdre of the Sorrows*. No other dramatist of the Irish Dramatic Movement has made such intensive use of the physical and metaphysical levels of nature for creating meaningful moments and situations as Synge. The playwright himself is a staunch lover of nature with a deep sense of its changing sounds and colours. The plays are replete with the suggestions of an active nature responding to different moods and temperaments born out of conviction and not accepted as an extraneous imposition. "It is not ornament. It is woven deep."\(^{50}\)

**Integration**

Synge had strong convictions regarding a native original Irish theatre inspired by the rich sources of ancient glory and the spiritual strength of the nation. This was to be executed in terms of a dramatic language in literature, potent enough to be translated into stage images, which was a creative task. English was not strong enough to communicate the imaginative fire of the native folk. The Irish Dramatic Movement had succeeded in discovering a new language for the medium of the stage. Synge was able to effect a dramatic co-ordination of various strands of his life in this newly discovered medium. First he co-ordinated in his writings the spirit of European culture without any reservation. His experiences in Italy,

\(^{50}\) Una Ellis-Fermor, *The Irish Dramatic Movement*, p. 171.
Germany, France and the Aran Islands all went to forge a new form of drama itself. The genius of Shakespeare, Webster, Moliere, Racine and the great Greeks has always been a point of creative contact for him. La Comedie Francaise and Commedia dell'arte must have definitely prompted his imagination.

Another important element Synge integrated into his works is the past of Ireland which represented a positive system of values. Its tradition of bards, singers, minstrels and storytellers is creatively absorbed into his writings and since these elements are related to movement and practice they can be easily physicalized on the stage. The idea of vagrants and tramps is also well used in the plays. The quality of myth-making is attained in most of Synge's plays by their dependence on the eternal creative forces and poetic vision of a great race.

The most important integration is to be found in his own personal life associated with the theatre. The major preoccupations of his personal life such as love and frustration, his attitude towards women represented by Alice Owen, Cherrie Matheson, Therese Beydon, Margaret Hardon, Edie Harmar, Rosie Calthrop and Molly Allgood, his relationship with his loving mother who was always trying to bring back her son into the ever consoling faith and other autobiographical and psychological phenomena have also been integrated into his writings.

This creative integration is a part of the poetic practice of the playwright made possible by the conviction
that "we must found good literature on a living speech," which was very helpful for creative artists like Yeats, Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn and George Moore. Yeats's *Cathleen ni Houlihan* and *The Pot of Broth* display the characteristic strength of the idiom. Synge also imbied the true spirit of the native idiom. He was very much indebted to Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* which formed a part of Synge's "daily bread." Later, seeing its strong impact in *The Well of the Saints*, George Moore hailed the play saying that "Mr. Synge has discovered great literature in barbarous idiom as gold is discovered in quartz, and to do such a thing is a great literary achievement." Here Synge is found transforming the ordinary peasant speech into heightened poetic drama of condensed images. Boyd is of the opinion that Synge "had so completely identified himself with the life of the people, and so thoroughly coloured his vision with the Gaelic spirit of its original conception, that he could create where others reported." This creative co-ordination is the hall-mark of Synge who has thus established a very personal style for his art which is quite impersonal. All these elements are bound together by a poetic conviction which is discernible in his practice in the theatre.


52 In a letter published in *The Irish Times* on 13 February 1905.

These convictions, concepts and integration of dramatic principles are supported by Synge's practice in theatre. All his plays have the possibilities of literary, linguistic, metaphysical, mythical and national interpretation while they are examples of the universal and the eternal in man. The special credit of Synge is that unlike his counterparts in the Movement he transformed these ideals into perfect stage images. This was possible for him because of his emphasis on drama and theatre irrespective of the political and revolutionary fervour of the age. His indifference to active propagandism led W. B. Yeats to the statement that Synge was incapable of thinking a political thought. He was more concerned with the art of the theatre than any other aspect of life. His plays are hence concentrated poetic pictures in motion.

Synge shows a remarkable development from his early plays to the later ones. Even though all the plays were mostly conceived in a very short span of time around 1901-3, they took clear form and dramatic structure in a quite leisurely fashion. The Shadow of the Glen and Riders to the Sea are epigrammatic and dramatic expressions of a particular mood and of people caught up in their dilemma. These plays have more of a literary mellifluence and poetic utterance. At the same time these poetic utterances suggest to the director concrete ideas of stage movement, composition, pose, gesture, mood and choreography. The dialogue has many resonances which can be
translated into dramatic actions on the stage. As we go along, it seems that the visual quality gains the upper hand. This is the experience one gets in the *Tinker's Wedding* where not much philosophy is spoken. It is full of action, and action alone.

A good example of stage craft is found in the improvising technique of creative dramatics used in the structure of *The Playboy of the Western World*. Here the acting possibilities keep the literary flourish under control and whatever is uttered by Pegeen Mike and Christy Mahon in their romantic oblivion has a strong bearing on theatrical events or happening on the stage. *The Well of the Saints* envisages a new concept of theatre which is abstract as well as concrete. *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, the last of Synge's plays, projects all the potentials of a poetic theatre—where philosophy is on a par with concrete thought, feeling and emotions with action.

Thus after having become a director of the Abbey Theatre along with W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory, Synge learned much about the possibilities of the stage and its limitless potential for bringing out the hidden actions behind the dramatist's words. The great actor and director Willie Fay approvingly comments on the theatrical awareness of Synge when he says, "he was a great joy to work with, for he had a keen sense of humour and plenty of patience and above all he knew what he wanted, and when he got it said so."54 He firmly established in collaboration with the artists, a style which insisted on

simplicity, purity and seriousness in dialogue-rendering, movement and stage-setting. This method later came to be known as "The Abbey Method" which is a special kind of acting and the company selected to interpret the programmes which were all familiar with the ways of the Irish peasantry and

in their acting take care to keep close to the actual movements and gestures of the people for as much as these plays are portions of Irish life, so are they put upon the stage with a care and accuracy of detail that has hardly been attempted before.55

Synge and his company were meticulous about the quality of production in the Abbey Theatre. But the meaning of a play, even though it is immutable, can appear differently to a different audience placed in a changed sociological and psychological condition. For instance, the twentieth-century audience who have seen Beckett's Waiting for Godot and Endgame and Ionesco's Chairs, The Maids etc., will have a different interpretation of the plays because of the enriched experience through these decades. Modern theatre which is more of a non-verbal means of communication can thus find deeper meaning in Synge's plays which present an existential anguish sustained by strong images. The theatrical devices are only to explore the latent ideas and meaning. Great playwrights of the past like Aechylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Shakespeare thus undergo creative changes on the modern stage. Synge with his

practical and imaginative awareness of the stage and its problems has poetically strung together a miraculous world of meaningful ideas. The colours, sounds, silences, pauses etc., suggested in the plays have unlimited scope for a director to create co-related images for his audience. The objects used by the characters in the play will have eloquent meaning for the actors and directors. For instance, the white board and the rope in Riders to the Sea, and the tin can and the ring in The Tinker's Wedding may assume symbolic significance on the stage. They appear to be as suggestive as the purple path, trampled by Agamemnon in the classical Greek play. These properties point out the spatial relationship and the total pattern of the play. The "two hour's traffic of the stage" is made highly significant by Synge for whom in his later plays the words are the mere tip of a vast network of context. The medium of the director is the body and the voice of his actors, and by this means he has in a very limited space and time, to build up a complex of relationships and communications of sufficient depth and interest to capture his audience. It is through these stage devices that the suggested nuances and the unfulfilled desires of the characters are all revealed.

As a playwright this aspect of Synge's genius has not received proper attention and critical appreciation from any because, as the tradition goes, most of the critics have been carried away by the literary, linguistic and myth-making experiments effected by Synge like a magician with full control
over his medium. But very few are aware that Synge wanted to create a new theatre with practical applications of his principle on the stage. Thus he took great care to rewrite his plays, to effect relevant, though minor, changes of a punctuation or of a word or a slight shift of emphasis on the meaning, or change in the time and place of entrance. He silently watched rehearsals, almost like a selfish tiger with its cub. He offered suggestions of acting, movement, postures or gestures, when required. Play production thus became a means of creative involvement for Synge who struggled hard to express himself meaningfully in terms of modern theatre.

Scenic approach and visual image

The attempt at seeing the presence of the stage in drama is not very new. But there has not been any serious study of Synge's plays on the lines of a thorough scenic approach which is essential for the study of drama. As Ronald Peacock explains:

> drama is an art; it is imagery for eye and ear and mind; it shows a characteristic intertexture... It incorporates the visual images of scene and persons, it uses words in dialogue, which may however, include many uses of speech, emotive, analytic, declamatory, exclamatory, rhetorical, descriptive, lyrical, musical and so on.\(^{56}\)

It implies that visual as well as auditory images are the means of scenic expression. Synge's images appear to be eloquent and theatrically expressive because they are compact symbols of everything developed in the actions and speeches of his characters.

The purpose of my thesis is to probe into the organic nature of Synge's literary qualities transformed into dramatic situations, visualized as stage events, characters with their unmistakable gait, their gestures, their speeches and their changing moods and facial expression. This analysis will try to assess Synge's plays and show how far is his drama dramatic? What do the words contribute to the performance? Does the literary form correspond to the scenic and theatrical? How are the visual images effectively charged with thematic significance?

The ensuing chapters deal with a critical study of the literary qualities of Synge's plays and their elements as potential forces of physicalization on the stage through poetic images of visual and aural dimensions.

What follows will be, consequently, an examination of his development as a practical dramatist through a consideration of his six plays. Thus the emphasis is mainly on the latent forces of his works for action on the stage. A play is good or great to the extent to which it can motivate and move the actor on the stage. Hence the relevance of movements, compositions, posture, gesture etc. demanded by the texts will be the highlights of the thesis. The choreographic patterns necessitated by the dramatic situation and their creative processes will be analysed to unravel the human relationship and the playwright's world view. More than any other playwright of the Irish Dramatic Movement Synge's plays call for a serious scrutiny in terms of their peasant quality, visual patterns of
stillness and movement, and auditory suggestions of striking images—all leading to the inevitable acceptance of a certain philosophical stance in modern theatre.