

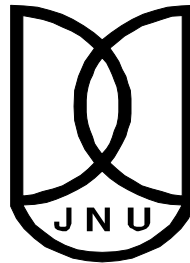
Class, Gender, and the Nation
A Study of the Select Plays of Sean O' Casey and J.M Synge as
Critiques of the Irish Nationalist Discourses.

Dissertation submitted to
Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

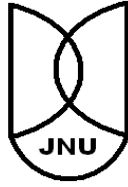
Master of Philosophy

by

Preeti



Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067, India.
2012



Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067, India

Date: 26.07.2012

CERTIFICATE

This dissertation titled “Class, Gender, and the Nation: A Study of the Select Plays of Sean O’ Casey and J.M Synge as Critiques of the Irish Nationalist Discourses”, submitted by Preeti, Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

(DHANANJAY SINGH)
SUPERVISOR

(SAUGATA BHADURI)
CHAIRPERSON

Date 26.07.2012

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

This dissertation titled “Class, Gender, and the Nation: A Study of the Select Plays of Sean O’ Casey and J.M Synge as Critiques of the Irish Nationalist Discourses” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

Preeti
(M.Phil Student)
CES/SLL&CS
JNU

Acknowledgement

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the people who have been instrumental in the successful completion of this work. I would like to show my greatest appreciation to my supervisor Dr. Dhananjay Singh. I cannot say thank you enough to Dr. Saugata Bhaduri and Dr. G.J.V Prasad under whom I completed my coursework for M.Phil for their tremendous support and help. I felt motivated and encouraged every time I met them to clarify my vague research ideas. Without their encouragement and guidance this dissertation would not have materialized.

I would like to acknowledge the infinite number of coffee and tea cups that helped me keep awake and made me work during nights. I'll thank everyone who's been helpful in providing me suggestions about my work. Thankyou everyone for all the encouragement and support.

“Very few people really care about freedom, about liberty, about the truth, very few. Very few people have guts, the kind of guts on which a real democracy has to depend. Without people with that sort of guts a free society dies or cannot be born.”

— Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter I: Nostalgia and the Irish Literary Revival.....	9
Chapter II: Hybrid Women: Multiple representation of Gender in Sean O’ Casey and J.M Synge.....	36
Chapter III: Visitor at my own Doorstep: Censorship Violence and resistance in late nineteenth and early twentieth century IrishDrama.....	66
Conclusion.....	79
Bibliography.....	86

Introduction

Danilov: Here, the men's only choice is between German bullets and ours. But there's another way. The way of courage. The way of love of the Motherland. We must publish the army newspaper again. We must tell magnificent stories, stories that extol sacrifice, bravery. We must make them believe in the victory. We must give them hope, pride, a desire to fight. Yes... we need to make examples. But examples to *follow*. What we need...

[he glances quickly at Khrushchev]

Danilov: ... are heroes.

Nikita Khrushchev: [Khrushchev looks around, then leans in closer to Danilov]
Do you know any heroes around here?

Danilov: Yes, comrade. I know one.¹

“Stories”

Well... We all love stories and heroes in them, don't we? Stories- valorising death and gunshot, bloodshed, bravery and sacrifice. These stories trigger men to leave their lives behind and inspire them to be a part of the war, and to be chivalrous. But these stories also create confederation of men like Septimus Smith², Fredric Henry³, Donal Devoren⁴ and Johnny⁵ who end up living the life of a cripple. Why do we feed stories to masses? The fact is we love beautiful lies because we cannot stand the ugly truth; for there is a strange clout in lie which we feed to masses because masses prefer a beautiful lie than a dirty and crude truth; for reality is excruciating. Just like Synge's Christy Mahon⁶ uses the power to lie and glorify a murder, and gets accepted by everyone, but when he tells the truth he is rejected by the same

¹ These quoted dialogues have been taken from the movie named *Enemy at the Gates*. <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0215750/quotes>> Accessed on 10 July 2012.

² He is Virginia Woolf's character from *Mrs Dalloway* who has developed a psychological disorders due to horrifying experiences in war.

³ The protagonist of Ernest Hemingway's novel *A Farewell to the Arms*, whose disillusionment leads him to run away from war.

⁴ The disillusioned poet and gunman on the run, living with Seumas in the tenements in Casey's *The Shadow of the Gunman*.

⁵ Juno's crippled son in Casey's play, *Juno and the Paycock*.

⁶ Protagonist of Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*

people. The nation builders also, in a same vogue create the mythical and legendary image of the legendary hero by using bombastic and sacred myths so that people have an image to look up to, again a valorised story to look forward to. These stories do affect us through the potent power of literary expression, in both ways. It is because words have a power to affect, influence, shock, stab and hit the intellect of one person as well as of the mob.

The power of expression is very strong. Stories weave embellished words to cover the filth and the dirt of the real truth and to make the ugly truth look beautiful. The author revisits the past through a story, so that people have something to look forward to, to dream of something- Past and Future. For instance, we feed stories to children, to create dreams and a faith in the world; but as we grow up and experience the world, we discover that the stories we are told are nothing but are a kind of lie- a created one that pleases the imagination. This kind of pleasure that one derives from imagining the past and imagining the future is comforting till the time one faces the world that exists outside the world of dreams, nostalgia and imagination. The truth about these stories is that they are not real, although they are good stories, they are imaginary.

Stories are a part of the author's imagination. But these stories matter because they attempt to connect and express the deep conflicts and dilemmas of the individual as well as the age. We create stories, so that we have something to look forward to, heroes and their deeds but as soon as the truth is publicized like in the play, *The Playboy of the Western World* or *The Plough and the Stars*, everything changes; the acceptance turns into rejection, for the truth shatters the beautiful mirror that reflects a kind of lie, and the person who becomes the agent of that truth turns from the insider to the outsider, especially in the rigid idealised community called the Nation. As a result artistes either leave their homelands or they live like outsiders in their own country.

J.M Synge and Sean O'Casey are amongst the league of authors who wrote stories that were about the most un-idealized entities and unsung, unnamed heroes. It was Irish peasantry in the case of Synge and working-class urban poor tenement dwellers in case of Sean O' Casey. They narrated the contentious stories of twentieth century Irish drama. Both are known for their portrayal of unconventional morality, the unmanageable life situations of the working class men and women and of Irish peasantry. Both the playwrights were unique in the way they represented an honest reflection of the conflicted post-colonial era and the identity crisis that came as an unwanted gift from the colonial past. They portrayed not a

glorified picture of the past, but the picture that was fragmented and broken. They were castigated and disowned because they presented not the sweet lie but the ugly truth and thus they were reprimanded by Ireland.

The authors in question shared a very strange relationship with the Abbey Theatre which is also the national theatre of Ireland that was established on 27 December 1904 as a result of the efforts made by authors who wanted to Gallicise Irish culture and tradition. Lady Gregory, W.B Yeats, Sean O' Casey , Edward Martyn, and John Millington Synge founded the Irish National Theatre Society in 1903 with funding from Horniman. The First performances of The Abbey Theatre were staged in the Moles worth Hall.

This research work intends to study the contradictions present in the cultural nationalism that were represented through the famous but most rioted against plays in the history of Abbey Theatre. Primarily, I would mention my stance in questioning the cultural nationalism in relationship to the enmity between the art, artiste and the ideologies like nationalism. When I say Nationalism, I refer to the nationalism that started with the political spirit and then found its way to create a national consciousness through the cultural nationalism. It aimed at creating a national Irish Identity through culture and the past ethnic roots .This model seems a bit problematic when it becomes a hurdle in the way of the artiste and his artistic merit. By saying this I do not intend to say that writers have the license to sabotage the national image, but my point is, realism in art needs its own space to grow, and unfortunately Irish nationalism does not provides its artiste that space, thus they have to leave their country and go to places like England and France where the nationalism is territorial and civic.

The tussle between artistic, creative freedom and ideology has led to the tradition of exiled existence for rootless artistes like James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, J.M Synge and Sean O' Casey.I will also argue in my work how the motif of the feminine body and the feminine image is being reinforced by the leading Irish nationalists and the Irish literary revival, to portray the picture of Ireland as a victimised feminine land. This positioning of gender is very twisted because it leaves no space for progress in terms of national progress and cosmopolitanism. The nostalgia and the craving of the past Celtic identity according to me is a bent concept. So I would argue by critiquing the plays of the select playwrights in the context of Irish post-colonial discourse. Also I would argue that nations rely on the author for the creation of a national and cultural identity through their works, especially in the case of

the Irish National theatre. Here it is pertinent to mention that the national theatre started with an objective not to create political dramas in particular but to provide a platform for Irish playwrights and actors to promote their literary talent. But it went wrong, as I would argue, because art and propaganda, author and the politician make strange bed partners; they can never go hand in hand. The National theatre too ended up rejecting various plays of the playwrights, saying that the plays were not political enough to be acted upon the Abbey stage.

Furthermore, I intend to inquire the nature of Irish nationalism in context of Ireland and its colonial past, and the identity depiction of the Irish in the select plays of the foresaid playwrights. I will delve into the politics of identity and the national theatre, in portraying the feminine identity that emblemises the female body and the oppressed image that was always connected with it. In opposition to the trend of depicting Ireland with the mythical figure of the female body, J.M Synge and Sean O' Casey depicted in their plays, a league of women who chose not be the victims but preferred to play strong masculine roles and be the bread earners in the family. Thus through these images and portraiture of unconventionally strong but tragic women, I would argue that the playwrights did not commit any blasphemy on the part of the Irish women or on their virtue but instead they, in their image created a strong, independent and liberal image of Ireland. Also that their portrayal was an honest reflection of the world, they were either placed in like the Dublin tenements in Casey's case, or like in Synge who went to live with Aran Islanders. They chose to live in these places and borrowed the experiences to pen down the tragedies, sorrows, crises and conflicts of the Irish peasant class.

In the course of my study I will also try to delve into the Irish Identity question which needs be studied and dealt with in relation to the portrayal of the Irish self. It deserves sufficient amount of attention, as it is important to study what was wrong or right with the severe criticism and the riots that broke out during the performance of *The Playboy* in the first place and *The Plough and the Stars* in the later. To have a deeper understanding of the Irish psyche, I would take recourse to the history of Ireland, to understand the conflict between the various identity groups, and the politics involved in the riots.

I would like to mention here that I chose this topic because it shocked me in the first place how the woman's image is restricted to the victimised self. How she is accepted if she acts being the victimised and the meek one, but is rejected if she says no, like Nora of *The*

Shadow on the Glen. She being a woman is not expected to tell the truth or write about it. It is sad how on the name of national identity the patriarchy targets the woman and her empowered voice. My introduction to the writings of Taslima Nasrin⁷ and Kamala Das⁸ somewhere nudged me to study the politics that has always been linked to the authors who raise their voice as a weapon to defend their truth and their individual identity through their voice. The castigation of the authors from their own country displays how tolerant nations as communities are. Nations, so to say further complicated the scene for me, because the castigation was not just about women authors, it was about a bigger politics, the politics of Nations. Thus I chose playwrights, who were men; part of patriarchy, but who wrote for women, about women and still their works were rejected to be performed on the stage of the Abbey theatre. They broke the norm of the victimhood through the gender portrayal in the Irish literary revival, but were castigated for their works, on the pretext of portraying a blasphemous image of Irish womanhood. In order to understand this aspect of their writing, I will attempt to study the Irish identity and the Anglo-Irish identity in relation to the gender and the class issues, to have a better understanding of the national cultural identity and the cultural nationalism that harped on the Irish Celtic identity.

Doris Lessing wrote in her book, *The Golden Notebook*, “Art is the Mirror of our betrayed ideals.”⁹ To Sean O’ Casey it was the betrayal of the socialist ideals that found expression in his most rioted work, *The Plough and the Stars* (1926). He chose not to be a part of The Easter Rising of 1916 because to him it was favouring blind patriotism and nothing else. Christopher Murray notes that Casey’s characters struggle with the history and their own inability to cope up with the circumstances by inventing and sustaining eccentricities of manner and speech which force others in the community to beware and to make space for them.¹⁰

I would also contend that the authors for the present inquiry lived in their own country but still were considered as foreigners. These were the authors exiled by their own countries, because of their writings as well as their identity. Synge as well as Casey were both Protestants, their take on religion, morality was very unconventional, especially the treatment of morality and their religious issues in their writings. We all know that religion, instead of

⁷ An exiled feminist author from Bangladesh, who was castigated from her country because of her straight forward expression of female oppression at the hands of the patriarchal forces.

⁸ An Indian female author, well known for sexual imagery in her writings.

⁹ This quote has been taken from The book, *The Golden Notebook*, by Dorris Lessing, Harper Collins, 1999, p.435

¹⁰ Murray, Christopher, *A Faber Critical Guide : Sean O’ Casey*, New York: Faber and Faber, 2000, p. 104

breaking the boundaries, has always created deep chasms between the groups; but nation and the feeling of fanatic patriotism attached to it further strengthens the boundaries. It will also attempt to understand how the exiled author recreates past in his imagination when he is in exile, or when he has to leave his own homeland and to go live in places that they do not identify with him or her. My research will aim to understand the question, why in the first place someone needs to recreate the past, when he or she is in exile. Does the exile make him a better artiste? Does he prefer cosmopolitan identity rather than just being an Irish, American or a British?

My concern in conducting this research is to question the form of nationalism that is described as cultural nationalism- nationalism that puts a limit to the creative freedom of the artiste's faculties of expression. In order to do so, I have focussed on particularly those plays which were severely criticised by the Irish audiences and the Irish Nationalists in particular. It is interesting to notice how every controversy and every literary scandal revolves around the image of Irish women. Thus in my research I will inquire how every politics end with the discussion about the gender portrayal in literature, whether the writer is a man or a woman.

The first chapter primarily discusses the Irish literary revival, its characteristics and goes on to introduce the plays and the authors who were castigated by the revival. It will discuss why the plays were rejected. It also deals with the identity conflict between the natives and the non-natives, Irish and the English identity. It will also study how the revival craved for a single Gaelic Irish Identity which was impossible to achieve, keeping in mind the colonial historical baggage. The question of Identity becomes more intricate as the majority of Irish patriots and revivalists were Anglo-Irish. My question is if that was the case where did it go wrong? What was the problem with the looking back in the past with an nostalgic eye model, for seeking an Irish identity?

The second chapter will attempt to study how myths and legends were enforced on Irish women, to create a weak and subjugated picture of Ireland as a nation. I will delve into the reasons why it failed to achieve what it envisaged to achieve. I will attempt to study how the feminine figures in the select plays of Synge and Casey have been used to portray an empowered picture of the second sex. In doing so I will study the aspect of characters that does not present the picture of a stereotypical, ideal woman, but a hybrid version of masculine female in contrast to the feminine male picture of the Irish man living in Mayo. If Pegen Mike is an independent woman, managing her father's inn; Shawn Keogh is a timid

and effeminate man. This aspect is also evident in the plays of Casey. Minnie, Juno, Bessie and Rosie are women who are the unsung heroes living and dying each day in poverty but still trying their best to deal with the sordid existence in the Dublin tenement, men in contrast spend their time doing nothing- they just stay back in the house and procrastinate work, also because of the disillusionment and the failure with the working class socialist ideals. Thus in chapter two I will study gender in context of the Irish national revival and the critique of cultural nationalism embedded in these texts.

In chapter three I will attempt to look at cultural nationalism through a broad perspective that is through the perspective of cosmopolitanism. I will try to locate the position of an exiled author in the context of Nationalism. Salman Rushdie's *Imaginary Homelands* is one of the major texts that I will be making reference to in this chapter, as it looks at the author as an exiled figure, who recreates the past, instead of being nostalgic about it, and thus he raises his creative self beyond the limit of a nation or nationalism of any sort. Furthermore, I would argue that authors in exiles portray a liberal aspect of nations that is cosmopolitanism by accepting what comes in the way, and accepting the new, by learning from the past, dealing with the present. For clinging to the past leads to nothing but nostalgic conflict and dilemma. My prime purpose in this chapter will be to join the idea of nations with the artist and the truth he tries to portray through his art.

The goal of the early national leaders was stasis, not growth- an economy which guaranteed a frugal sufficiency for all. De Valera's pastoral politics owed much to Thomas Jefferson, sharing his hope of having things both ways, of avoiding the savagery of absolute, untamed nature, and also the desiccation of great modern cities. In the ideal Ireland of the nationalists, there was to be massive differences of wealth or status. This would be a world in which men could fertilize and farm the land with machine made most conveniently, elsewhere. By no means ridiculous, this was the state sought by many other leaders, to solve the problem posed by modernity with the right kind of modernity. (Kiberd:295)

The revival was anti-modernist and aimed at a return to the Gaelic past, but as I would argue the history that existed between the past and the future was ignored, as a result of which identity became complicated. The authors who gave an expression to these complications were accused of blasphemy. For they were not supposed to break the norm, they were not supposed to express the conflict of the age, but were expected to glorify the past and write embellished stories, celebrating something which was the thing of the past.

Caught between two worlds, one half-dead and the other still struggling to be born, the Irish writers sometimes had to pour their thoughts and feelings into incongruous containers. Hence the obsession with the encumbrances of costume in so many texts, prompting Yeats, for example, to resolve to abandon the coats of mythology and “walk naked”(Kiberd:299).

Chapter-1

Nostalgia and the Irish Literary Revival

Ireland is a country like no other. It has a maddening history of invasions and colonisations. It is known for being the land of settlers. A country won and ruled, invaded and colonised by the most powerful imperial power. It became the land of people with immigration legacy; people migrated in great numbers to Britain and the United States in search of peace and rest, which their own land could never provide them. The bulk of population migrated for their own reasons; famine was one major reason and political unrest was another. Irish history provides statistical data on mass exodus of people who left their native land and settled in a various country as migrants. Writers and artistes, unlike others, had to settle in a foreign land, not out of choice but due to severe reaction and ban on their work of art. Some of them are James Joyce, J.M Synge and Sean O' Casey. Joyce was criticised and his novel *Ulysses* was banned; Synge was castigated for *The Playboy of the Western World*, (1907), and Sean O' Casey had to face the ire for many for his plays, particularly for, *The Plough and the Stars*, (1926).

Their works show more committed attitude towards the objective truth, rather than showing loyalties to a particular propaganda or a political party. Amongst these authors are playwrights who were highly criticised and their works banned from being staged at the Abbey Theatre which is Ireland's national theatre. I intend to look at that intrinsic facet of their literary creation that created unrest amongst the Abbey audience. Another primary angle that I will try to investigate here is the issue of the Irish model of nationalism that was prevalent during the appearance of these plays. I would also address the broader perspective of the artiste and his/her creative freedom. I intend to question the freedom to express opinion in relationship to the national discourses that were referred to while interpreting the specific plays.

Nationalism is a complicated process and it becomes more complicated when it comes to the understanding of Irish nationalism. The period between the late 19th century and the

start of the 20th century was marked by political, social and religious upheaval. This era marked the end of political nationalism because of the failure of the Home Rule movement. The fall of political nationalism began with the fall of the cult hero -- Charles Stewart Parnell -- and the rise of the cultural nationalism (Kiberd: 1995). Although the aim of the cultural revival was to create a single Irish identity, it had a restricted scope. Revivalist intellectuals, nationalists and budding authors came together and formed various organisations that helped the country form national identity, an Irish identity that looked back to the Gaelic pastoral past.

The revival gained ground around 1891; i.e., after the death of Charles Stewart Parnell. With an aim of creating and repairing the fractured soul of Irish identity, Yeats endeavoured with the support of his fellow intellectuals, to shape a national identity. He saw theatre as a medium through which a literary resistance could be raised. National Literary Society in Dublin was formed in 1892 with the objective of promoting authors, actors and intellectuals who wrote for Ireland. The Gaelic League was founded in Dublin on 31 July 1893 by Douglas Hyde to promote the Gaelic cultural revival. It was a non-political organisation that aimed at the spread of national consciousness through prose, music and theatre. Artistes and intellectuals of great literary merit like Yeats, Synge, O' Casey and Lady Gregory came together to bind the country together to create the national fabric through their works. This confederation of artistes and writers wrote plays that harped upon the past and historical Gaelic roots. They wrote Ireland in dissimilar ways. If Yeats was a genius in portraying Ireland in legends and myths, Synge wrote of the Irish peasantry and Sean O' Casey wrote about the poor urban working class and their miserable conditions of life in the Dublin tenements.

Ireland at the advent of 20th century craved an all-inclusive cultural national identity which it was deprived of for ages as a result of British colonisation. This national revival envisaged Irish identity as devoid of any Englishness: a single Irish identity, which was quite problematic for Ireland. The Irish and English shared a strange enmity; and the reason was not just colonisation. Nationalism in the late 19th century was about cultivating a national culture through language, literature, folklore, theatre and music. The imagined culture envisaged a national culture, free from the impact of the coloniser in terms of language and identity. With this frame of mind, the pioneers of the revival set out on a journey of reviving and not redefining an authentic identity. This extinction, the sense of the lost identity, and the need to regain the loss, came along with the constant condition of confusion as the Ireland of

19th century was not the same. It was a country with a conflicted identity; the conflict between the natives and the non-natives, Catholics and Protestants and English Irish and Anglo-Irish. Thus it was difficult for Ireland to have a single identity in terms of descent or religion. English colonisation had changed Ireland in ways that seemed irreversible, they had anglicised Ireland through their language and culture. Thus the revival attempted to re-invent Ireland through the Gaelic past. In order to reinvent the lost Irish identity, it became important to reinvent their language and culture. Yeats' imagined Irish identity relied on close identification with the Celtic past and the uncorrupted mind of the pastoral peasant. (Jaime: 8)¹

Ireland of 19th century was a complex comprising natives as well as non-natives. As Watson² mentions, in the period in question, at least three different sets of cultural assumptions and values jostled together – English, Irish and Anglo-Irish. Each of these is united by a common language, but in most other ways co-exists only with considerable tension and strain. (Watson: 15). To undo what had been assimilated in the Irish roots through the impact of the British, the intellectual group aimed at de-Anglicising Ireland. The de-Anglicisation process aimed at looking back at the forgotten Gaelic past. This identity conflict among the natives and the non-natives, Catholics and Protestants further complicated the process of De-Anglicisation. No matter the mass of population was native or non-native, English was spoken more than Irish. Migration was predominant in Ireland from 12th century, and the English settlement further complicated religion in Ireland. It was an Ireland that was struggling to find a way to describe itself, in terms of religion and identity. It was an Ireland in conflict with itself. One can imagine that the aspiration to have strong, single identity came with various complexities. The revivalist moment thus had a restricted theatrical climate. It started off with an experimental spirit, but the works of playwrights like Sean O' Casey and J.M Synge challenged the foundation of cultural nationalism.

After the fall of political nationalism, budding intellectual and literary thinkers of Ireland chose cultural nationalism as a tool to attain what according to them was lost in terms of identity and culture, as a part of being colonised. The Irish in an attempt to not conform to the English became enemies of their own identities. This strange connection with cultural

¹*Joyce the playwright*- Jaime DeLanghe, 2008-web -

<<http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1176&context>>. 20 July 2012

²Watson G.J, *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival: Synge, Yeats, Joyce and O'Casey*. Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1979.

nationalism as ChaimGans³ writes, shares affinities with ethno-cultural nationalism which is most prevalent in the less advanced countries mainly in Central and Eastern Europe including Spain and Ireland. He says that these countries relied on their culture for nationalism because the middle class of these countries was weak, they relied more on the cultural to create a national consciousness and less on the rational and civic aspect like citizenry. In comparison to the ethno-cultural nationalism, territorial civic nationalism which was prevalent in the Western countries like the United States, England and France, where the middle class was very strong, was inspired by the legal and rational concept of citizenship rather than imagination and emotion, and by the conscious development of the Volk and its primordial and atavistic spirit that was the main inspiration of the Eastern European countries.⁴ Ireland at the beginning of the 20th century desired for a national identity that would bind the population in one culture through the formation of Irish identity which the authors of Abbey theatre attempted to provide through the potent power of literary writings in the form of plays. The Abbey chose theatre because it seemed a more potent way of reaching to the masses. But the moment these plays were staged things got extremely politicised and controversial and it resulted into riots.

The nationalist movement placed the Irish soul at the centre of the nationalist agenda and staged plays that sought to seek the rural Celtic image of Ireland (Jaime: 8). The revival movement was distressed by identity clash between the colonised and the coloniser, as Ireland was still struggling with the British impact. The conflict of identity between Ireland and England has been so persistent because it has expressed itself mainly through opposing images. And images, as well as being the raw material of the artiste, are always more powerful than rational arguments (Watson: 16). As Patrick O' Farell⁵ says, the portrayal of Celtic society as savage, impoverished, indolent and brutal, became entrenched in English imagery from medieval times, and provided a moral justification for continued efforts to dominate or destroy the Celts. Christy Mahon of *The Playboy* as a savage and uncouth man exemplified that image; while Rosie's (the prostitute) comparison with the image and fate of Ireland in *The Plough* offended hyper-nationalist Irish sentiments as well as challenged dearly hold notions of sacred femininity in a patriarchal society. Thus it reminded the Irish of their fractured identity. This enmity towards the English race could be measured by the criticism and the violent riots that broke out while *The Plough and the Stars* and *The Playboy*

³Ibid 2..

⁴Ibid 2.

⁵O' Farell, Patrick, *England and Ireland since 1800*, Oxford University Press, London 1975.

of the Western World were staged. The reaction to these plays also exhibited how the native-Irish reacted to the presentation of the peasantry, on the stage of Abbey theatre, which was supposed to be a political institution created for the revival of distinct Irish culture (Levitas: 2)⁶. The revival of the lost Gaelic identity was in a way shattered when the public rejected these works. The works instead of glorifying the high ideals, portrayed the far from ideal facts of gloomy peasantry. These plays portrayed the taboos and the superstitions of the ancient Celtic society in order to revive the Celtic past. It was this Irish identity that had been anglicised through 800 years of colonisation and oppression. The impact of the British rule had fractured the Irish identity as well their perspective on how they looked at their self. The British cultural impact was grave on the Irish culture and psychology. The attempt to recreate that lost identity was not an easy task, especially with the fractured culture that came with the broken mirror of identity. The mirror could have been fixed but the cracks in the image perceived after the fixture would be visible. These marks made Irish realise the brutality through which their identity was being splintered by the English race.

The riots and the criticisms of the writings that seemingly depicted the Irish as a foil to the Irish identity depicted how brutal the effect of colonisation was. The genteelness and sophisticated mannerisms were always seen with the opposing images of the savageness and the wildness of the Irish race. This resulted in a reaction that even a slight mention of the foil characteristics of the English was relentlessly criticised. Thus, in reacting against the stereotypical image of The Englishman, the average Irish became so defensive that he forgot his own identity. The Irish identity actually became more about the reaction against the English Model rather than being an identity of its own. The same sort of thing happened when the de-Anglicisation process started. The de-Anglicisation started in a reaction to exterminate the English impact on the Irish culture and society by impression of the promotion of the native language and to revive the Gaelic culture. But not all the cultural revivalists thought and agreed on the point whether it would bring in any remarkable change in the Irish situation and the identity. Some of the revivalists thought that it was just inappropriate. Kiberd writes:

If the hopes of the Gaelic Leaguers are fulfilled – an event that it needs hardly be said of the greatest possible unlikeliness though it is not impossible – and Ireland begin to speak and write generally in Irish several centuries must pass before the country in general can have assimilated the language perfectly enough to produce anything that has real value as literature.

⁶Levitas, Ben. *Theatre of Nation: Irish Drama and Cultural Nationalism*, (1890-1916). New York: Oxford UP, 2002.

Meanwhile, we will lose the new feeling for English they have gained after three centuries of linguistic disorder. (Kiberd:219)

Ireland at the advent of 19th century was a fractured nation-struggling from various social, economic and political upheavals. The Irish revival was in other words the search for the lost identity, an identity that was always looked upon as the foil for the superior coloniser. The cultural revivalists thus attempted to recreate this identity- an identity free from the shadow of the coloniser, which seems to be an impossible dream to attain, because of the long history of British colonisation and the plantations of the Anglo-Irish people in Ireland: population belonging to the ascendancy class in Ireland. The phenomenon of plantations complicated the stance of creating one single all-inclusive identity. The feeling of enmity was a natural reaction which sprang from the brutality of the English rule. The baggage of a broken identity was heavy, but because Ireland was now an emerging new nation with a mixed population, a lot of hard work needed to be done in terms of identity. As Ireland was a Catholic nation, there was always a tussle in accepting the non-natives with Protestant faith. The population that was part of Protestant ascendancy class was never accepted by the other class, given the fact that they were seen as the agents of the English Crown. This strange relationship of non-acceptance further made the identity question more conflicting. The revivalist movement also, in some ways, ignored the chaotic history of the nation. They while portraying the nostalgia of the Celtic past and the imagination of future, forgot that the murky history of the nation had led to the failure of the cultural nationalistic movement.

As a part of the cultural national revival and Irish nationalism, The Gaelic League promoted an identity that was based exclusively on Gaelic culture. It promoted the Irish language because by 1890 less than one per cent of the population spoke monolingual Irish and only fourteen per cent spoke Irish at all. Despite the efforts of the League to revive the culture and identity, inventing New Ireland with a single identity, that too Gaelic, seemed quite problematic in the creation of a strong Irish nation. There was seemingly a problem with the return to the historical past model, because acquiring Irish consciousness through the spread of language and the culture among the masses would not actually create a strong nation; not the nation that the nationalist leaders dreamt of. The anti-modern movement that looked upon reviving the Celtic past was as fractured as the Irish identity that ignored various elements of modernity. Irish nationalism, Kiberd comments:

In Theory, two kinds of freedom were available to the Irish: the return to the past, pre-colonial Gaelic Identity, still yearning for expression if long denied, or the reconstruction of a national identity, beginning from first principle all over again. The first discounted much that had

happened, for good as well as ill, during the centuries of occupation; the second was even more exacting, since it urged people to ignore other aspects of their past too.⁷

The ignorance of the past created more chaos and confusion in the Irish psyche, it was like there was a broken link between the past and future. The bridge that joined these two ends seemed broken; just like their identity. An overview of the revivalist movement presents that the missing link between the Celtic past and the future dream of a strong, nation ignored what lay between the past and the future. It was muddy and chaotic, and guilt ridden historical baggage (Toibin:65)⁸. Moving ahead in the future without working on the problems of the present was what Yeats had done. The cultural nationalist movement was bent because it did not keep an account of the baggage that came with the history. It was not easy to unshackle the English influence that had gripped the island and its people for ages. The de-Anglicisation of the Irish culture seemed one possible solution, but not the absolute one. Making use of the power of literature was another solution, which found its way through the Abbey stage. The Abbey emerged as the stage and powerful mechanism in the nation building process.

Synge, as it has been mentioned earlier, shared his disagreement, a sort of cold silence when it came to nationalism that was taken forward by the writers and the playwrights of the revival moment of which he was a part. He believed in what he called a temperate nationalism. This quality of Synge's expression can be seen in his works, his objectivity in portraying what he saw and heard while living on the Aran Islands. The way he has portrayed gender, knowing that he would be castigated, displays his loyalty to art, rather than the political propaganda of the national theatre. His plays portray the dichotomy that undermines the same chimera of femininity that is present in the rhetoric of Irish nationalism (Cusack: 143). The way he looks at culture, language and nationalism is anti- nostalgic, unlike Yeats who looks back upon the Celtic past and mythology, which does not rely on the past in absolute terms. His sense of national identity is predicated upon present conditions and situations. This is again an objective, non-prejudiced and open perspective on Synge's part that makes him a better creative artiste.

The Abbey authors used the power that was vested in the very potent pen of writing to create a fictive pastoral past, which ignored questions that should have been addressed; questions that were more important than glorifying the imagined past for imagined future. This was the reason why the portrayal of the real questions invited criticism in the form of

⁷Kiberd, Declan, *Inventing Ireland*, p 286.

⁸Tóibín, Colm. *Lady Gregory's Toothbrush*. Dublin: Lilliput, 2002.

riots. Authors like O' Casey, Synge and Joyce did not idealize the Celtic past, but addressed larger questions on the stage of Abbey Theatre; among those questions were the rootlessness of the artiste, gender, modernism in art etc. Abbey became a platform for political propaganda and the artistic concerns were dished out of the window, because they were not political enough for the national theatre. However, this restricted attitude of Abbey was one of the reasons why Joyce separated himself from the cultural nationalistic moment. To him an artiste was never a propagandist. As Seamus Deans writes:

Joyce...sees his role as that of the artist who will not...be distorted in the glass of communal desire. He will be the true artist. He will escape false representation and, in doing so, come to terms with the medium in which this representation has been made –the vexed medium of a language which carries within itself the idea of the re-presentation in one form of a culture which initially existed in another, earlier form. (Deane: 33)

To Joyce, the National Theatre ignored other forms of representations and harped on the perfect image of an imagined past Celtic culture, which was a mere illusion, through the perspective of an artiste. This sort of drama that was anti-modern was termed by Joyce as “dwarf drama”, a drama that lacks creative freedom and ignores the needs of art in favour of political agenda (Jaime: 14). Irish national theatre, in defending itself against the English identity, dissected itself from any sort of artistic exchange, which means that it was very narrow in its approach. It became the theatre of isolation: narrow and restricted. Yeats wrote Ireland in myths and legends, personified Ireland as a mother figure in his *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*. In contrast to Yeats, Synge, in portraying Ireland, painted Ireland in the vibrant image of a maiden. He tried to do away with the nostalgic and victimised image of Ireland that was imprinted in the national Irish history, unlike Yeats, who portrayed Ireland as an old motherlyfigure in need of rescue by her nationalist Irish sons. Unlike Yeats' Cathleen, Synge painted the assertive and outspoken Pegeen Mike of *The Playboy* and Nora of *The Shadow in the Glen*. These women were different from the archetypal image of Ireland portrayed in earlier literature. If Yeats presented the Irish motherland image in mythical colours, Synge paints her in wild and vibrant colours, giving her a new and revived character; a character that has become stoic as well as strong with the adversity of the situations. This new and revived identity was an epitome and a model of what Synge wanted for Ireland, a non-nostalgic, progressive perspective toward the nation-building process. His objectivity and his fidelity to the objective truth lies in his writing truth and questions that he confronted while he was living with the people of Aran Islands. Synge writes:

These strange men with receding foreheads, high cheek-bones and ungovernable eyes seem to represent some old type found on these few acres at the extreme edge of Europe...where it is only in wild jests and laughter that they can express their loneliness and desolation.⁹

O' Casey in appraisal to both Yeats and Synge, wrote Ireland in dark hues. He wrote about the squalid, petty and poor existence of the tenement dwellers. His stories and plots came from historical events like the Easter Rising, Irish Civil war and army assassins in Dublin at the advent of the 20th century. His plays present not gallant and glorious deeds but the disillusionment and the helplessness present in the war-torn Irish proletariat society. Neither Synge nor O' Casey, in creating the national identity among his audience, looked back to the Gaelic past in absolute terms. Unlike Yeats they blended the present with the past, in a way learning from the past, not clinging to it, keeping in mind the historical baggage that came with the colonisation, and the contemporary condition of the Island. Both of them wrote of Ireland and were different from other Abbey writers, in a way that their loyalty to the art was more than any political propaganda, which sanitised the dirty truth.

Synge was different from O' Casey in the sense that the subject matter of the former was not taken from Dublin politics, it was more about the Irish peasant pastoral; presenting the conditions of peasants and their conditions - his writings had a touch of humour. O' Casey in comparison wrote about what he criticised in politics. His plots were based on historical events and civil wars in Ireland. They depicted the poor urban dwellers of Dublin. Again, here we can notice that he did not idealise or celebrate anything, as there was nothing to celebrate in a country that was torn apart by politics and civil war. Thus his plays are studies of his disillusionment with socialism in the first place and with nationalism in the second. Synge termed his concept of nationalism as temperate as Robin Skelton¹⁰ mentions it. Synge as a writer and a playwright had his own concept of Ireland and its regeneration which he mentioned when he resigned from the Irish League in April 1987 to Maud Gonne. He wrote:

The primacy is clear: politics explains culture and culture illustrates or reflects politics. You know already how widely my theory of regeneration for Ireland differs from yours and most of the other members of *JeuneIrlande*. I do not wish to enter the question which of us may be in the right but I think you will not be surprised to hear that I cannot possibly continue to be a member of a society which works on lines such as those laid down for the *IrlandeLibre*. I wish to work in my own way for

⁹Kiberd mentions this quote in his chapter-'*Inventing Irelands*' and quotes Synge's prose, p.287.

¹⁰Skelton Robin, *J.M Synge and his World*, New York. Viking Press, 1971

the cause of Ireland, and I shall never be able to do so if I get mixed up with a revolutionary and semi-military movement.¹¹

Synge was not a nationalist in stringent terms, unlike Irish politician and writer Arthur Griffith, who founded and later led the political party Sinn Fein. Synge was an isolated soul; he wrote about Ireland with his Anglo-Irish solitude. His most controversial and most celebrated play *The Playboy* presented to his audiences and his fellow playwrights that he was neither a politician nor a publicist. The play was relentlessly disparaged by nationalists like Griffith, who commented that the play was not political enough to be shown on the Abbey stage. Here one may ponder, was there any presence of Englishness in the play regarding the English morality that led to the riots or was it the use of 'Shift'¹² in the play that offended the public. The answer was, as Watson mentions, that Synge celebrated what was not idealised. He celebrated their savagery and their violent mannerism as peasants. He in describing them broke the stereotypical images of gender as well as the norm. Instead of portraying women as victims, as the trend was, he painted Nora and Pegeen Mike as women who take decisions for their life. He also portrayed timid and effeminate men like Shawn Keogh and MichealDara, and broke the myth of gender by portraying masculine women of great physical as well as moral strength, like Nora, Maurya and Pegeen. Unlike Yeats, O' Casey's women and Synge's women make their way out from the dark and uncertain existence. They are the women who work hard to earn the livelihood for their family, and thus are different from the idealised image of Irish femininity. They are not emblems of weakness, but stand for strength in the face of tragedy.

Synge's creation and depiction of women was very liberal and way too ahead of the age, which was also a thing too difficult to swallow for the nationalists. Synge painted Irish women not in contrast with women whom he saw on far distant lands from his travels, but he portrayed them in the vitality of the spirit which he saw in Irish women, when he was living on the Aran Islands. This liberal image of women was not appreciated by nationalists as the scope of the Abbey theatre was very political and limited. It opposed whatever was remotely experimental or progressive and raised questions steeped in patriarchy. In other words, Abbey theatre appreciated the docile, repressed and victimised image of Ireland in women. For example, Nora's husband Dan accepted her only when she was submissive, repressed and

¹¹Greene and Stephens 1959, 62–63- Greene, David H. & Stephens, Edward M. "*J.M. Synge 1871–1909*" The MacMillan Company New York 1959.pg 69-72

¹²Word used for women's undergarment by Synge in his play, *The Playboy of The Western World*, which created a lot of controversy in Abbey Theatre.

docile and once she started asserting her own choice, she was thrown out of the house. This stance provides two positive possibilities for the women. First, till the time the woman clings to her repressive and submissive self, she could not find identity for her own self. Although she was safe and secure within the confines of domesticity, she had no identity of her own. Second, being thrown out of the house due to the assertion of her choice, she had been liberated from the dull and loveless married life, now she could revive her identity through the new way that she chose for herself. This set of understanding again directs us to the sort of identity Synge was trying to convey to the revivalist visionaries, who relied on the secure option to attain the repressed identity of being Irish, relying on the Gaelic tradition. For Synge, the traditions needed to be revived and liberalised with new ones for new opportunities and the formation of a national identity.

Synge's Nora presents the idea of a new identity for Ireland. Her marriage to Daniel Burke symbolises Ireland's marriage to the tradition and the old Gaelic cultural roots and the tradition that has started to rot like their marriage. The institution of marriage was suffering from stagnancy due to clinging to the nostalgic past of traditions in the case of Nora and Gaelic roots in the case of Ireland. It needed a liberal awakening in doing away with reacting violently to the Englishness of their long term coloniser. Ireland needed the model where it could amalgamate the Gaelic tradition harmoniously with liberal needs of the contemporary times, which were mandatory for a nation to become a Nation. But because the Abbey theatre followed the classical model of theatre, the play was seen as a slur on the face of Irish women, as she chose to leave with the tramp for a better but uncertain life on the road. Synge envisaged the idea of the Irish Nation through his plays and literature, where people had a spirit to live their lives with dignity, the same dignity that Nora attained, by doing away with the old and stagnant tradition, to emerge as a strong woman. As a writer of an emerging nation, Synge tried to convey his perspective on nation, which was never interpreted the right way, instead he was castigated by nationalists on various pretexts. In the following chapters of the thesis, these aspects would be dealt in detail. In his writings one can find the description of an ideal community and society. Particularly in the *Aran Islands*, as McCarthy writes:

To the extent that the recovery of a coherent community is associated with the desire to resurrect the sense of national cultural identity, this emphasis on the stability and coherence of the past, and on the importance of a model of community based on the heroic tales, is one of the most salient features of the Irish Renaissance. It is not, however, an important aspect of Synge's work: the only model of a coherent community to be found in the plays is the one in *Riders to the Sea*, a contemporary (although highly archaic) society in which people are bound

together through their common struggle against the destructive forces of Nature.(McCarthy, p.168)¹³

Synge's plays were nationalistic in their own distinct way, but were manipulated by the extreme as well as narrow politics of the Irish nationalism, and were thus rejected by the Abbey audience of Dublin. The pretext of the riots was the rendering of the women characters. Now this aspect of the riots highlights the rigid patriarchal structures of Ireland during that period. It was still patriarchy which decided what was appropriate to be displayed on stage and what was not. Politics and gender discourses at that point of time were as rigid as the nationalistic model where women wooing men using rough language were considered inappropriate. If vulgarity was one reason, adultery on the part of Irish women was another. A detailed study of the reasons explains that Synge's plays were rejected also because of his identity as a Protestant writer. On top of that, he belonged to the ascendancy background. It was based on the assumption that he is not familiar with the Celtic roots and hence unfamiliar with the Irish culture too. This argument does not hold water as one cannot expect exactness of detail from a creative writer, for plays are not biographies and documentaries, they are fiction. *The Playboy* was his portrayal of peasantry, a part of what he heard from the islanders, about a man who killed his own father. While writing the story, one can expect that a writer would add his own pieces of imagination; he might pick and choose from what he sees around him. Thus, in doing so, Synge played with the plot of *Glen* as well as of *The Playboy*. He experimented with his characters and created them without seeking the acceptance from the nationalists. He was castigated because he presented a type of women which was never presented in Irish Literature, his women were not victims and his plays were not political enough to be staged in the Abbey Theatre according to Arthur Griffith.

Griffith suggested that the play lacked artistic merit, because it was neither adequately political nor uniquely Irish: "When drama ceases to be national, it will also cease to be artistic, for rationality is the birth of art" (Kopper, *The Shadow of the Glen*:27)¹⁴. The Irish Times further charged that *The Shadow* was not up to the high standards of drama in Ireland: an extraordinary choice of subject for a society that claims to have a higher, and purer standard than ordinarily accepted in things dramatic (Kopper, *The Shadow of the Glen*: 26).

¹³Patrick A. McCarthy, *Synge and the Irish Literary Renaissance*. In: Edward A. Kopper, Jr. (ed.), *A J.M. Synge Literary Companion*, Connecticut, 1988.

¹⁴Ibid 13.

Griffith also suggested that the play lacked artistic merit in celebrating what was not idealised at all. Synge about his type of drama says:

I do not believe in the possibility of 'a purely fantastic, unmodern, ideal, breezy, spring-dayish, Cuchulainoid National Theatre'... 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, rarely spring-dayish, or breezy or Cuchulanoid.¹⁵

He knew that just looking back to the historical past would not provide a solution to the present situation of Ireland, which had become complicated with the pace of the centuries of colonisation, immigration and the natural calamities like The Great Potato Famine. To Synge Irish identity had changed, altered and revived with the changing waves of history. It was, and it is still difficult to define what is Irish and what one means by Irishness. The riots of 1907 and the riots of *The Plough and the Stars* proved once again, that native Irish population never accepted Anglo- Irish ascendancy class writers Irish enough to comment or write about the country they were born and brought up into. This created a void within the psyche of the individual as a writer who was trying to revive the nation's image, where he was not sure enough of his own identity as an individual. The reason was Anglo-Irish solitude. One of the leading reasons why *The Playboy* was rejected was Synge's ascendancy Anglo-Irish background, which never made him qualified to write about Ireland. To the native catholic Irish nationalists, he was not familiar enough with the Gaelic roots.

The Irish cultural revivalists tried to heal the fractured ends and recreate identity through national literature. Creating an Irish consciousness was one of the objectives of The Abbey theatre as the national theatre of Ireland. The de-Anglicisation was more about elimination of the sense of shame of the native speakers. As Ray Foster mentions:

Whereas parliamentary leaders from O'Connell to Parnell had envisaged self-government untrammelled by British maladjustment but enlightened by British virtues, the 'Irish Ireland' movement aimed to 'de-Anglicize' the Irish in preparation for the pseudo-Gaelic social order. The language revival was initiated in the 1870's and 1880's by the sprinkling of enthusiasts, often with the Trinity college connections; amongst whom was Douglas Hyde who founded the Gaelic League in 1883. The Gaelic league did much to eliminate the sense of shame formerly felt by many native speakers, and to teach the rudiments of the language to school children and enthusiastic clerks and shop assistants in provincial towns.¹⁶

De-Anglicisation of the culture became such a big deal to the cultural nationalists because the English imagined Ireland as the land of buffoonery. The language was also a form of invasion to Irish, thus the superior-inferior connection in terms of identity always

¹⁵Greene and Stephens 1959, 157

¹⁶ Ray Foster, *The Illustrated history of Ireland*, p225.

haunted the Irish. Broken and fractured culture thus became the legacy and an inseparable part of the Irish consciousness. As a result of this conflict, the Irish question always haunted the Irish intellect. It was not just the Anglo-Irish ascendancy writer who felt this solitude; in one way or the other the natives also felt the same conflict. This was one of the reasons why Ireland became a demoralised nation.

Ireland may be regarded as the first English colony and as one which because of its proximity is still governed exactly in the old way...the people itself has got its peculiar character from this, and despite all their national fanaticism the fellows feel that they are no longer at home in their own country. Ireland for the Saxon! That is now being realised. The Irishman knows that he cannot compete with the Englishman, who comes with means in every aspect superior: emigration will go on until the predominantly, indeed almost exclusively, Celtic character of the population is all to hell...But through consistent oppression they have been artificially converted into an utterly demoralised nation and now fulfil the notorious function of supplying England, America, Australia, etc., with prostitutes, casual labourers, pimps, thieves, swindlers, beggars and other rabbles.(Watson :19)¹⁷

Synge and O' Casey could understand the stance of Ireland in a better fashion through their writings because they themselves have felt the feeling of lost identity. Both the authors were Protestant. Wherein Synge belonged to the middle class ascendancy background, O' Casey belonged to the working class. The Anglo-Irish solitude was always at the back of their minds and it also served as a background for their plays. This very isolation of not being accepted by the Catholic native Irish, created a void in their writings, which is visible in their writings. The insecurity of being the stranger in the house was always at the back of their minds.

If this was the story of the Irish Protestants-'Irish' who were not natives - so called Anglo-Irish, the native Catholic Irish population was no better. Their own personality and mentality suffered from uncertainty, as Daniel Corkery mentions:

Everywhere in the mentality of the Irish people are flux and uncertainty, our national consciousness may be described in a native phrase, as a quaking sod. It gives no footing. It is not English, nor Irish, nor Anglo-Irish; as will be understood if one thinks awhile on thwarting it undergoes in each individual child of the race as he grows to manhood...For practically all that he reads is English; what he reads in Irish is not worth taking account of, it does not, therefore, focus the mind of his own people, teaching him the better to look about him, to understand both himself and his surroundings. It focuses instead the life of another people. Instead of sharpening his gaze on his neighbourhood, his reading distracts it, for he cannot find in these surroundings what his readings have taught him is the matter worth coming upon. His surroundings begin to seem unvital...At least his education sets up a dispute between his intellect and his emotions...What happens the neighbourhood of an Irish boy's home- the fair, the hurling match, the land grabbing, the mass- he never comes on in literature, that is, as he

¹⁷Watson gives reference to a letter written by Engels to Marx.
Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Selected correspondence*, 1846-95, London, 1935.

told to respect and learn...In his riper years, he may come see the crassness of his own upbringing. But of course the damage is done.¹⁸

Yeats approached this aim by creating a culture through literature, by painting the myths and the legends he found in the ancient Irish oral tradition, and thus glorifying the image of Ireland as a sacred Mother figure. Other authors and playwrights wrote about their motherland in a different fashion, but it does not imply that they did not write for the cause of Ireland. What is a nation and nationalism in the context of literature produced by writers and artistes, who don't imagine the imaginary invisible boundaries, but write about people they see and with whom they share common work and experiences?. When we say nation or nationalism what do we refer to? To Synge, it was different and to Yeats it was different. Yeats was among the playwrights and the poets who played a significant role in creating the national fabric for the emerging Free Nation. His plays were more mythical, whereas Synge was more devoted to writing an account of people's lives. His plays were based on the account of the folk stories that he heard from the islanders. In writing about their lives, he gave an account of people he saw and thus he painted them.

O' Casey wrote about the people living in Dublin tenements. His play was also one of the most rioted plays in the history of the Irish Theatre. In *The Plough and the Stars* he not only sabotages the political nationalist movement, but presents before the readers and the audience his indictment of the Rising of the 1915. In the play, O' Casey presents how the Easter Rising was absolutely condemned by the working class because the so called patriotic movement did nothing good to the proletariat class. His socialistic ideals were shattered and he also did not take part in the Easter Rising. The socialism of 1913, which ended up with sheer disillusionment was a result of the failure of the Dublin lockout and the strike. O' Casey's loyalties to the Irish cause can be proved through his own attitude towards Gallicising himself in the first place.

To be completely Irish, he studied and became fluent in the Gaelic language and changed his birth name of John O' Casey to Sean Cathasaigh; he began to write satiric sketches to amuse the Club members; he helped organize and played in the O'Toole Pipers' Band; he went on pilgrimages to the Wolfe Tone shrine at Bodenstown; he joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the secret organization dedicated to the overthrow of British misrule.¹⁹

His connection with working class institutions was one of the reasons why he chose to write about the suffering and the strife of the proletariat class that suffered at the hand of the

¹⁸Corkery Daniel. *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* (Mercier Press, Cork, 1966. Org published in 1931)

¹⁹Krause David p 29.

political nationalism of the 1916. His attempt to write for Ireland was to write the objective sad truth that was lying behind the politics of militant nationalism. He as a socialist believed, as David Krause mentions:

O' Casey may have been right in his assumption that, as far as the exploited and abused workers were concerned, insensitive Irish capitalism was a more immediate enemy than long-standing British imperialism, but he lost the fight and decided to resign from the Citizen Army. It should come as no surprise, then, that O' Casey, the isolated socialist, was disinclined to take part in the nationalist rising, a decision based upon an act of conscience, not cowardice as many back-biting nationalists have charged.

The so called call for the blood sacrifice related to the patriotism of Pearse had ignored the principles of Socialism, which created more disillusionment towards nationalism because he looked upon Patrick Pearse²⁰ as an epitome of enlightening ideas. Although O' Casey had reservations about Pearse and Connolly in 1916, he also had strong admiration for Pearse as an enlightened teacher with progressive ideas and dedicated to Gaelic culture, both of which O' Casey shared. (Krause: 30)

What actually led to sheer disillusionment and disappointment for O' Casey was the shift of his idealistic leader James Connolly's loyalties from socialism to Republican Nationalism. This shift in the ideological orientation led the whole socialist movement at a dead end. Although David Krause is of the opinion that Socialism and Nationalism are two vital aspects of democratic principles, the disappointing part of the Rising was that it separated or rather one can say that it bifurcated the two ideologies so badly that one part was left in a state of complete abandonment. Socialistic ideals felt like they have been abandoned by their mother. As a result of this, the proletariat class did not approve of the militant nationalism. However heroic it was to others, it was not supported by the socialist class. Connolly's abandonment of socialism left the proletariat class with no leader.

It is difficult to understand the almost revolutionary change that was manifesting itself in Connolly's nature. The Labour movement seemed to be regarded by him as a decrescent force, while the essence of nationalism began to assume the finest elements of his nature [T]he high creed of Irish nationalism became his daily rosary, while the higher creed of international humanity that had so long bubbled from his lips was silent for ever, and Irish Labour lost a leader.²¹

This disillusionment and anger is presented by O' Casey in his much rioted against play *The Plough and the Stars*. If Synge celebrated the most unidealised form of peasantry in his plays,

²⁰ An Irish Nationalist.

²¹ P. Cathasaigh, *The Story of the Irish Citizen Army* (Dublin and London: Maunsel, 1919), p. 52.

O' Casey presented the most idealised and celebrated forms of ideologies like socialism falling apart at the hands of nationalism and patriotism. Through plays he presents the politics that lies behind big sacred ideologies of fanatic nationalism as the most misleading aspects of these ideologies in relation to the Irish history of struggle for independence. His indictment of the Rising triggered severe reaction from the Abbey audience, which reminded everyone at the theatre of *The Playboy riots*. No matter how intelligent this indictment was for a disillusioned socialist leader like O' Casey, the audience for sure discarded the play as an attack on the heroic image of the republican-nationalist. The way O' Casey juxtaposes the most miniscule conversation of the characters drinking and wheedling about their menial life problems and poverty, with that of the nationalistic leader's speeches was considered by the audience as an insult to the nationalistic ideals of the Easter Rising. Words have always been the last weapons of the disarmed and the elaboration of a compensating inner world of the fantasy is a feature of the psychology of the most colonised (Foster: 280). To O' Casey, writing was one form where he could present the conflicts of the urban poor, living in the slums, and through each of them, he presented a part of his own self. He represented Rosie's miserable existence in a war-torn Dublin and depicting in her the sordid image of Ireland which had lost its ideal and pure character.

His characters in one way or the other speak O' Casey's mind. For instance, the Young Covey in *The Plough*, speaks socialist ideals when the nationalistic leader is addressing the crowd. Covey in reaction to the speech addressed the crowd saying:

The Voice of the Speaker: The last six teen months have been the most glorious in the history of Europe. Heroism has come back to the earth. War is a terrible thing, but war is not an evil thing. People in Ireland dread war because they do not know it, Ireland has not known the exhilaration of war for over a hundred years. When war comes to Ireland, she must welcome it as she would welcome the Angel of God.

[The figure passes out of sight and hearing f L.]

The Covey Howards all present}. Dope, dope. There's only one war worth havin' :th' war for th' economic emancipation of the proletariat.

The Covey- [in a superior way}.The sooner the better. It's alia lot o' blasted nonsense, comrade.

The Covey. That's all dope, comrade; th* sort o' thing that workers are fed on be th' Boorzawzee.

Covey. What does Karl Marx say about th' Relation of Value to th' Cost o' Production?

Fluther [angrily]. What th' hell do I care what he says? I'm Irishman enough not to lose me head be follyin' foreigners!²²

Fluther, the carpenter represents the failure of socialist ideals and ideologies and the disillusionment with big and sacred terms like Marxism, Socialism and Nationalism. O' Casey held a mirror to the squalid conditions of the Dublin tenements during the politically and socially imbalanced phase. It was unlike W.B Yeats, who chose to look back upon the Celtic past for the adoration of the Irish nation as a mythical figure. His characters also represent the tragedy of the existence of the people living in the tenements. His themes, plots and characters resemble his own disillusionment with the political nationalism of the era. His writings were not just an expression of his disillusionment with political scene, but also his liberal depiction of women. From the bitterness of poverty and from the love of humanity, Sean O' Casey created works of drama and prose-poetry that sang of freedom's exuberance and reviled spiritual penury. The way he represented women in tragic colours, shows how sensitive he was while depicting the gender roles played by women.

Synge like O' Casey and Yeats blended myths and reality of the Irish life to create a unique picture of Irish identity, which faced strong criticism on the ground of credibility and was said to be anti-Irish. As a consequence, *The Playboy* was rejected for screenplay at Abbey Theatre. All the above mentioned authors had their own unique style of writing Ireland, whether it was mythical or legendary, realistic or tragic.

The portrayal of Ireland differed as the individuality and artistic talent of the author was different. With Yeats it was mythical, so he mythologized Ireland as a mother figure. Synge portrayed his heroes and heroines in an anti-heroic way and celebrated the Irish peasantry by celebrating what was not idealised. O' Casey on the other hand was a realist, he wrote about the struggles of the working class, their tragedies and disillusionment in the war like situation in Dublin on the advent of the 20th century. O' Casey's women played unconventional roles, whereas Synge's female characters were wild, passionate, strong and tragic. Synge's plays were also rejected by the Abbey audience on the ground of accuracy...

Obviously it is absurd to judge his work simply as a representation of Irish life, and condemn it out of hand if it is considered inaccurate. Yet, it is not just accidental that Synge 'knew Irish life best,' and his plays more than incidentally Irish. What did being Irish mean to Synge? . . .²³

²²Sean O' Casey *Three Dublin Plays*, Introduction by Christopher Murray. Faber and Faber.p 191.

²³Synge: *A Critical Study of the Plays*, by Nicholas Grene, (London: Macmillan, 1975)

Synge was accused of not being familiar with the Irish culture and being anti-Irish by nationalist leader Arthur Griffith. Here, it may be argued in defence of Synge, as to who actually qualifies to be called a Nationalist: the one who has a glorified political nationalist propaganda or the one who goes to an island and writes about the lives of people and celebrates the simple facts of their lives. Synge writes.

When I was writing *The Shadow of the Glen* some years ago, I got more aid than any learning could have given me from a chink in the floor of the old Wicklow house where I was staying, that let me hear what was being said by the servant girls in the kitchen. This matter, I think, is of importance, for in countries where the imagination of the people, and the language they use, is rich and living, 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. In the modern literature of towns, however, richness is found only in sonnets, or prose poems, or in one or two elaborate books that are far away from the profound and common interests of life.²⁴

Synge's theory of drama was different from that of W.B Yeats, because instead of valorising the Celtic history or mythologizing it, he chose to present the rough and the bleak side of Irish life. He portrayed the condition of Irish peasant women and through the introduction of a tramp figure in her life, he introduced the risky but adventurous aspect to the female protagonists of his plays who are living a bleak and a dull life in an isolated world. The tramp's introduction to Nora's life also presents that Synge aimed not for revivalism in Irish life but aimed at revitalising it (Cussack: 147)²⁵. Cussack also mentions the exile element saying that Nora's departure with the tramp, although closes the doors of the house, it opens her world to a wide world, thus the exile is also a fertile existence for her. Instead of choosing the militant nationalism or any propagandist ideology, Synge chose to explore what was ignored by the revivalists. He chose to offer a new perspective. In portraying Nora, he portrayed the picture of a woman repressed and colonised, but to seek her new identity, she needed to step out, explore the uncertainty that comes with taking decisions and progression of life. Nora epitomises Synge's idea of Ireland, in contrast to Yeats' Cathleen. Nora chooses the uncertainty of a vital and fertile future in comparison to the closed and the certain life in Glen, which again brings us to the proposition that Synge's idea of Nation as a community was modern and wider than that of Yeats. His characters are also in a flux, not restricted and rigid. They get over the victimisation and look at the better side of life. The walking out of Nora was not appreciated by the nationalists and the play was criticised.

²⁴Synge, J.M, *The Playboy of the Western World: A comedy in three acts*, Boston: J.W. Luce, 1911.

²⁵George Cussack, *The Politics of identity in Irish Drama*. Routledge. New York, 2009.

A patriotic journalism which had seen in Synge's capricious imagination the enemy of all it would have young men believe, had for years prepared for this hour The preparation had begun after the first performance of 'The Shadow of the Glen,' Synge's first play, with [his] assertion that he had taken his fable and his characters, not from his own mind . . . but 'from a writer of the Roman decadence.' . . . the frenzy that would have silenced his master-work was, like most violent things, artificial, that defence of virtue by those who have but little . . .²⁶

To Synge this was his way to work for Ireland, to portray the life of the Island dwellers, to describe what he felt and realized through the colour of the Irish life. If it looked crass, he wrote it was crass. He wrote about what they talked about, what they grieved about and what they sang and enjoyed about. *The Aran Islands* is a fine example of this. He came back to Ireland, thinking that he is coming back to his homeland, but he actually came back to an Ireland that always considered the Anglo-Irish authors as non-natives. Synge came with the Anglo-Irish solitude and identified with the isolation of the people who lived on these islands. Synge understood the fact very well, that birth did not guarantee 'Irishness' (26: Watson) when his play were interrupted by the crowd. Watson says:

One qualified only on the grounds of descent, religion or politics, and usually needed the combination of all three for native acceptance. This is not fair, and this is certainly put in an awkward position the Anglo-Irishman whose family might have lived in Ireland for several generations. But this is how the Catholic natives felt, and how many of them still feel.²⁷

The Playboy was attacked by the nationalists because of vulgar and open portrayal of the explicit scenes, where women were presented using the most vulgar language, particularly the scene where the word *Shift* has been used. But as Synge mentions in the preface to his play..

In writing THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD, as in my other plays, I have used one or two words only that I have not heard among the country people of Ireland, or spoken in my own nursery before I could read the newspapers. A certain number of the phrases I employ I have heard also from herds and fishermen along the coast from Kerry to Mayo, or from beggar-women and ballad singers nearer Dublin; and I am glad to acknowledge how much I owe to the folk imagination of these fine people. Anyone who has lived in real intimacy with the Irish peasantry will know that the wildest sayings and ideas. In this play are tame indeed, compared with the fancies one may hear in any little hillside cabin in Geesala, or Carraroe, or Dingle Bay.²⁸

In the above mentioned lines Synge mentions that he used words that he heard from the people of the islands. The question to ponder here is whether Synge as an artiste was more loyal to the art than the nation by writing about the people and culture. To understand the

²⁶W. B. Yeats, *J. M. Synge and the Ireland of His Time, Essays and Introductions* , New York: Collier Books, 1968.

²⁷Watson p26.

²⁸These lines have been taken from the Preface to *The Playboy of the Western World* by Synge..

portrayal of peasant rural life in *The Playboy* and *The Shadow*, one needs to experience the life of these people, which Synge did and which the nationalists did not do. The nationalists, in their refusal to familiarise with the peasant class life depicted in Synge's writing, actually rejected the existence of the life that was being portrayed. The stories of the Mayoites²⁹ and their superstitions and fears were violent. The portrait of the people living on these islands have been presented without the sanitisation of the manners, because the islanders were not acting being defensive about what they were and what they were not; they were what they were. The play was rejected, as mentioned by Yeats.

On the Monday night no words of the play had been heard. About forty young men had sat in the front seats of the pit, and stamped and shouted and blown trumpets from the rise to the fall of the curtain. On the Tuesday night also the forty young men were there. They wished to silence what they considered a slander upon Ireland's womanhood. Irish women would never sleep under the same roof with a young man without a chaperon, nor admire a murderer, nor use a word like 'shift'; nor could anyone recognise the country men and women of Davis and Kickham in these poetical, violent, grotesque persons, who used the name of God so freely, and spoke of all things that hit their fancy.³⁰

The rejection of the play was quite hypocritical on the part of people who criticized it on behalf of the nationalists and the people who participated in the riots. This can be argued because the Irish national politics denied the validation of the identity of people who were being presented and talked about in these writings. These people were part of Ireland but were not defensive about their own identity, like people who were living in the politicised Dublin.

This defensiveness on the part of Irish identity was always present in the writings of various authors. But is the nature of nationalism so perverted that although we live within the same geographical boundary, we are not familiarised with the people and their manners in another coast or part of the country, or is what Anderson says is correct about the nation? He says, it is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow, members meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. This makes the concept of nation imagined, which further results in the clash of the real and the imagined. Nationalists criticised Synge because he wrote about real Ireland, the unidealised Ireland; not the imagined one, not the nostalgic one, not the defensive one. Instead he painted in colours that could be felt when touched, not thought and imagined.

²⁹The people living on the coast of Mayo in the play *The Playboy of the Western World*.

³⁰Yeats W.B., *J. M. Synge and the Ireland of His Time, Essays and Introductions*, New York: Collier Books, 1968.

Aiming for single and all-inclusive society where all belong to one religion and community is a false aim to pursue, because for the single identity, people were ignored and thus did not recognise the identity of their own people in rejecting the portrayal of the Irish peasantry. In rejecting the representation of these subaltern groups, did not the nationalists and the politics of nationalism ignore the voice of their own people? This question and the conflict regarding the identity of the Anglo-Irish descent was always a part of Synge's psychology that created the Anglo Irish solitude in his writings. One can notice the tamed expression he opted while writing about the natives, because of the conflict and the tension between the natives and the Anglo-Irish writers. Watson provides an answer to this conflict by saying..

The short answer to the question of the tensions between Yeats and Synge and their audience or readers is that Yeats and Synge were Anglo-Irish, and the Anglo-Irish were suspect in the eyes of the natives.(26:Watson)

To the native Irish, the Anglo-Irish was always the other, the one who worked as the agent of the English. This English connection was enough reason for the natives to hate them. They were always seen as the agents of the English Crown, who according to the Irish possessed no right to comment on the culture of the native Irish life or peasantry. Thus, the Anglo-Irish identification became a very difficult task and because of this deep conflict regarding the identities their plays suffered severe criticism. L.P Curtis comments on Irish identity:

Of the many pejorative adjectives applied by the educated Englishmen to the Irish, perhaps the most damaging, certainly the most persistent were those which had to do with their alleged unreliability, emotional instability and mental disequilibrium.³¹

The superior-inferior relationship, which the English pictured with the set of denigratory images, created a gap between the Gaelic descendants and the ascendancy class too deep to cross.³² Synge had a very sceptical attitude towards political as well as cultural nationalism. He always maintained indifference towards nationalistic activities and leagues like The Gaelic League. He was quite sceptical of the effects of de-Anglicization. According to him, the attempts to standardise Irish would destroy the living language rather than preserve it³³. He says....

³¹See Watson p18

³²Ibid 24.

³³Ibid 25.

Modern peasant Gaelic is full of rareness and beauty, but if it was sophisticated by journalists and translators [...] it would lose all of its freshness”³⁴

Synge could not find himself sharing affinities with Gaelic nationalism because of the conflict of artistic autonomy and cultural nationalism. He had disagreements with the Gaelic revival movement; the reason being difference in perception with other cultural revivalists in the Abbey Theatre. As George Cusack mentions,

Synge saw a ‘dwindling population’ fatally wounded by colonialism and modernisation, a community that would be accessible only “for a few years more”. Where the nationalists sought to reform Irish identity through the de-Anglicisation and uniformity of language and cultures, Synge was specifically attracted to the discontinuities created when Irish and English culture intersected. And most importantly while the Gaelic nationalism located the potential for Irish rebirth in the totalising structures of myth and legends, Synge located it in the individual artist and his ability to restructure cultural identities to fit the current need. Thus Synge lays focus on liberation of individuals from repressive social structures rather than on the liberation of the entire nation.³⁵

The English subjugated the country politically as well as culturally. By the end of 18th century, Ireland had become majorly anglicised. Irish was not spoken by the mass population which was one of the main concerns of the cultural revivalists in creating Gaelic League in 1893. It was an attempt on the part of the cultural nationalists to look back at the Gaelic past and revive Irish a language. The de- Anglicisation process again complicated the problem of Irish identity and the Irish were confronted with self-hate, self-doubt and self-contempt. As Dr O’ Brien ³⁶notices:

This did not entirely eliminate the old hate [of England], but turned it into one element in a more complex system. So far as hate survived, it had now to include self-hate and self-contempt: quite important components in the psychology of some Irishmen as of other ‘colonised’ peoples.

Synge’s plays end on a tragic, uncertain but hopeful note. It seems incomplete, but justified. The emergence of a new self that has progressed can be seen as the plays end. The presence of the unambiguity of the end leads to various interpretations of the plays. In comparison to Synge, O’ Casey was different in his style of drama because he based the theme of his plays on political and historical facts, particularly his Dublin Trilogy plays. *The Plough and the Stars* is one of the most controversial plays based on the Easter Rising of 1916, in which he did not participate. Krause mentions:

³⁴ Synge *J.M, Collected works*, p 386.

³⁵ *Ibid* 25.

³⁶ Watson gives reference to O’ Brien, Conor Cruise. *Passion and Cunning: Notes on the Politics of Yeats*. Macmillan, London, 1965.

Initially a disillusioned nationalist who became an ardent socialist, O’O’ Casey decided to take a sceptical view of both the ideologies when he emerged as a formidable dramatist in the 1920s.(Krause:1997)

James Joyce remarked that the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century symbolises the emergence of a paralysed colony emerging as a violent nation. A study of the majority of theories on nationalism brings out that nationalism involves a call for expanded political or cultural circumstances. Catherine Frost³⁷ argued that nations appear in these theories as largely socially constructed set of relationships that the population involved tends to regard as a fundamental part of their collective lives (Frost:26). Earnest Gellner called the account of nationalism that reduced it to “atavistic forces of blood or territory” and the “Dark Gods” theory, which was untenable (1983:130). He also questions whether nationalism has the tendency to feed on the dark side of our nature, which actually makes it a dangerous phenomenon. Thus the idea nationalism actually caters to the darker side. .

Hans Kohn wrote about cultural nationalism, “Its purpose was to create a liberal and rational civil society representing the middle class.” But the national identity that was envisaged through the Abbey theatre was distant from being liberal and rational. Instead of creating fabrics of Irish identity, it shattered the artistes who wrote about Ireland. It gave them an exiled experience, in terms that they were never accepted by the Irish nation. Robin Skeleton observes that Synge was not in favour of activism like Maud Gonne and had his own way of working for the cause of his nation that was different from others. He was disturbed by the narrow puritan bourgeois morality of the times. His first play *When the Moon has Set* also shows how he disliked the narrow and negative attitude towards the issues of sexuality in Ireland of that century. His plays like the *Riders to the Sea* portray his perspective of women, family and the myths in the life of peasant class men and women. He presents the tragic story of women like Maurya, who surrenders to force of the nature and is shown being stoic in the end, like Synge’s Pegeen and O’ Casey’s Juno. Synge’s early plays were more of a slice from the lives of the working class, tramps and vagrants. His plays were not in the first place, presenting a political propaganda or historic events like Sean O’ Casey’s drama. But, he as a dramatist was a cultural nationalist like W.B Yeats, Lady Gregory and Sean O’ Casey because he became the speech of the Irish subaltern class by telling their stories.

Here, the question worth pondering is, what are the precincts of an artiste, which he thinks as a person not belonging to any nation? Does an artiste have the authority to question

³⁷Catherine Frost, *Morality and Nationalism*,Routledge. New York.2006

concepts which are sacred to the masses, especially when it comes to concepts like religion, nation and womanhood? My question is – is the fabric of Nationalism too thin and fragile? Do we kill and riot for things that are imagined and be blind to things that exist in front of our eyes by ignoring them, like the chaotic history ignored by the cultural nationalists, while they were dreaming of the beautiful future? For, we as humans are more fascinated with the romance of imagining things and concepts and imagine things that do not exist.

Declan Kiberd in his essay *Irish Literature and Irish History*, talks about the revivalist tradition and says that it is the artist's duty to insult, as well as occasionally to flatter his fellow countrymen. He also mentions Yeats saying that the real man of genius is never like a country's idea of itself. To quote from the text of book "The perspectives on Irish Nationalism"...

The blood sacrifice message of Easter week sets Patrick Pearse, Joseph Mary Plunkett and Thomas Mac Donald were a heretical integration of Catholic and Irish Ireland. They insisted on an Ireland "Gaelic as well as free", wove Catholic atonement and redemption themes into a revolutionary tapestry.³⁸

Thus, the tapestry of the national image was painted in strong and bold colours of sacredness; sacredness of the bloodshed that the country needs from its men for a free nation. The nationalists portrayed the image of Ireland as a woman, which is virtuous but enslaved by the British, now it is asking for sacrifice from its sons. The image of Ireland as a woman is rooted in the Bardic traditions according to which the Island is a woman, to be worshipped, wooed and won, if necessary by death (Kiberd:283). Thus when the authors like Synge and O' Casey rejected this myth of Ireland as a woman that too sacred and enslaved, by portraying an image that was completely opposite of the enslaved and reticent woman, the reaction was violently critical. But the contradiction lies in the fact that people who rejected *The Playboy of the Western World* on the pretext of bold romantic scenes and offensive dialogues, arguing that the Irish race is the most chaste and Irish women are the most virtuous and incapable of adultery, consisted of people who themselves were full of contradictions and hypocrisies. These protestors belonged to the Gaelic League.

Gaelic leaguers protested against the titillating love scenes, little realizing that it was from a book published by the League's president, *Love songs of Connacht*, that many of the offensive phrases had been taken. Yeats attributed the protests to sexual anxiety brought on by Synge's celebration of the body and he likened the protesters to eunuchs in hell gazing with envy upon Don Juan's sinewy thighs. The protestors insisted on the chastity of Irish race, but

³⁸*Perspectives on Irish Nationalism*, Edited by Thomas E Hachey, Lawrence McCaffrey, University press Kentucky, Kentucky. 1989. Print. p 15

one doctor present at the Abbey riots remarked. "I can hardly resist pointing out those protestors whom I personally have treated for venereal disease" (318:Foster).

This brings out the hypocrisy within the Gaelic league, it shows how the image, displayed in public is so idealistic and is far away from reality. The image of nation is like fiction, that is a part of your imagination, it actually doesn't exist, and to quote Kiberd-

Tens of millions of people on our planet turn annually to that fiction for an explanation of their innermost being. All nations are, in Benedict Anderson's phrase, invented or imagined communities and the Irish have shown more relish for that fiction than the most. In particular, they have asked their writers to chart its progress from them because the idea of a free nation is an imaginary one (Kiberd:337).

Their writings are like sharp-edged swords that stab the reader as well the audience with their realistic portrayal of class, gender and national identity. As artistes, they were neither propagandist nor a politician, who had an agenda of a political party. Although they were founding members of the Abbey Theatre, they had no political propaganda whatsoever. Politicians and propagandists use the nation as an entity to manipulate masses for the power. In comparison to the creative artiste, dramatist, poet or the painter who calls a spade a spade, is awarded with the medal of exile. Thus who builds and makes the nation stronger? – It is a great question to ponder!

Denying the reality would be to act like an Ostrich which buries its head in the ground and thinks that there is no danger. For realism to survive in literature, a writer has to have a pugilistic attitude towards concepts like nationalism because the existence of nation is because of the existence of these communities: fishermen or peasants living in tenements or glen. The nation sings of all the people, not just about people who dwell in the mansions but equally to the people who live in a deserted island or the tenements. Communities are not imagined, they exist for real; if something is imagined, it is idea of nationalism. An artiste doesn't have any nation or any nationality of his own. When he writes, he writes about what he sees, he reacts to what he finds worth writing.

These plays also present the budding and the dying of hopes, conception and misconceptions of nationalism that leads people to a state of disillusionment that originates from big bombastic words as sacrifice, patriotism, brotherhood and nationalism. These plays are like crossroads where literature, politics and history meet creativity. The post-colonial discourse reveals that nationalism is a warp concept and for realism to survive in art, the artiste needs to have a pugilistic attitude.

Nations are an abstract thought of imagined community as Benedict Anderson says

"An imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign". Nations and identities are not compartmentalised entities; they develop and emerge with the course of time and with the changes in the development of the histories. Nations develop and emerge, not because they cling to history or because they are nostalgic about past, but because they learn from the history and develop better ways to function as big units of civilisations and society. Nations emerge as hybrid communities and evolve with the psychological landscape of a nation. Paying no heed to the changes that come with the pace of time and just clinging on to the historical past doesn't make a nation strong, but it makes it rigid and narrow in terms of a bigger change that comes with exposure to social, economic and cultural changes. Creating and building up a single identity on the basis of descent is an impossible task because identities are fluid not stagnant bodies.

Chapter- 2

HYBRID WOMEN

Multiple representations of Gender in Sean O' Casey and J.M Synge.

Ireland is perceived as a sacred land, a land that epitomizes a woman. From times immemorial, it has been portrayed as a feminine figure - invaded, colonized and enslaved. The image of Ireland is also that of a woman, protected and patronized. Just like a woman is seen in relation to men most of the time, Ireland is always seen in relation to Britain. The relationship between the two countries has been that of the master and the slave, the colonizer and the colonized. In a way, Britain and Ireland share a love-hate relationship. The Anglo-Saxons colonized her, ruled and ridiculed her; called her the land of buffoonery because it stands in absolute contrast to their sophisticated sense of humor and manners of the former. If the women back home were genteel in their Englishness, the women across the Irish Sea were wildly violent. Thus the English made her a part of their own identity and perceived her as their foil. Whatever they lacked as a nation, they found in Ireland and what bothered Ireland and the Irish is the fact that they looked for what was missing in them and still made into jokes in Britain. Britain still rules Northern Ireland, like it rules the heart of the dear beloved and returned its Southern part like it gave back her body.

One of the reasons why Ireland has been depicted as a feminine figure is to play the role of the innocent victim that was colonized, destructed and destroyed. Secondly, the colonized entity is always considered as a feminine identity, as the subjugated identity is always feminine and never the masculine. Cultural nationalist writers like W.B Yeats have always imagined Ireland as a feminine entity in order to valorize Irish identity and positioned the English as the object. It is worth noticing how the image of Ireland kept on shifting from a young maiden in the English depiction to the mother figure for the nationalists and revivalists (Busse: 3)¹. It is clear that Britain looked upon Ireland as a

¹Busse, *Cristina, I 've got a bad wife in my house.*

resourceful young land, beautiful as wild Venus; whereas to the native Irish, she was a mother figure, who is asking for sacrifice and freedom to break free from the shackles of colonization and enslavement. As a reaction to this enmity with England, every reaction became one opposed to and in relation to Englishness. It was natural for the Irish to be defensive, for they always felt a sense of inferiority, because of the violent awkward images that were linked to them by the English.

Ireland being a resourceful, fertile land of hard working people sets the perfect analogy and the setting for Synge's and O'Casey's heroines. Synge's Pegeen Mike is young and vibrant like a wild lily. His Nora is a strong and hard-working peasant woman living a dull, unhappy life devoted to the ungrateful master, who destroyed her through the power of patriarchies invested in him by society. His heroines suffer at the hands of patriarchy as well as male chauvinism by their husbands and lovers in the first place and through the ban and the severe criticism from the nationalists in the second place, which again symbolizes the power of male over the female. It is interesting to note that when *The Playboy* riots broke out in 1907, it was men who severely criticized the play commenting that it is a blasphemy on the name of the Irish women and that Irish women are the most virtuous women. This presents before us how the power structures operated in Ireland in the beginning of the 20th century. It also shows how the Ireland of that era was still shackled with gendered image of women.

The rigidity and the intolerance that was displayed towards the portrayal of gender role also sheds light on how artistes of great creative acumen suffered at the hands of the narrow nationalistic powers that consisted of men. It presents the narrow perspective of the critics and the writers of the era, who rejected the works of Joyce, Yeats, O'Casey and Synge for naturalism and objectivism in the art.

Sean O'Casey, the acclaimed playwright best known for the Dublin Trilogy, makes a case for the unaccepted, rootless Irish tramp, who lived his life in exile after he was castigated for his one of the best plays, *The Plough and the Stars*. The play was

rejected by the Abbey audience on the pretext of immoral presentation of Irish womanhood, and in particular the depiction of the prostitute figure of Rosie Redmond, which was juxtaposed with the image of Ireland. The play and the playwright, both were rejected by Irish audience in Ireland so brutally that none of his works were staged in Abbey after the production of *The Plough*. It was the same playwright who wrote *The Shadow of the Gunman* and *Juno and the Paycock*. He was castigated for portraying the urban slum dwellers of the civil war-torn chaotic Dublin. He was the only writer who wrote about the sordid realities of the working class. He witnessed and about the robbed city of Dublin. A city robbed of its pure character, identity and its ideals. Dublin was witnessing patriotic zeal and patriotic zeal and horrifying looting at the same time. The juxtaposition of the sacred with the petty, the glorified with the filthy is one of the most impressive aspects of O'Casey writings. While portraying the sordid conditions of the Irish working class, he did not idealize anything. His song was that of indictment of the most celebrated Easter Rising of 1916, which is considered as one of the most sacred events in the history of Ireland. One may argue the stand of a creative writer here and can question the narrow nationalism prevalent at that point of time and the hypocrisy present under the smooth looking sheets of politics, through the spectacle of the proletariat class.

O'Casey was one of the proletariats whose idealistic vision was shattered after the failure of the Dublin Lockout of 1913. On 24 July, 1914, he resigned from the Irish Citizen Army, after he proposed to deny dual membership to both the ICA and the Irish Volunteers. As a result of this he did not participate in the Rising of the 1916. This was one of the reasons why he was criticized by the Irish critics and nationalists in the first place and secondly, for writing *The Plough and the Stars* as a serious indictment of the Irish Nationalistic Movement. The crowd lost it when the playwright juxtaposed the harlot, with the patriot. The problem O'Casey confronted was; he was feeding milk to lactose-intolerant crowd that did not want to hear what the proletariat class went through and as a result, they could not digest it. To O'Casey, the Easter Rising ended in sheer disillusionment of the socialist ideals. *The Plough and the Stars*, that stood for the socialist ideals lost to the so called nationalistic ideals. He wrote it because he himself saw what the Easter Rising did to the proletariat class of the Ireland. It embodied his

indictment of the Rising and his representation of his disillusionment with the socialist ideals. Every character stood for one's own disillusionment whether it was social or personal in one way or the other.

He portrayed women who were rough and aggressive unlike men who were feminine. He wrote of women who ended up picking bar-brawls and using really rough language when it came to pick a fight. But in portraying savageness and violence in women, he pointed towards their savage and poor existence in the tenements. O'Casey broke the traditional portrayal of Ireland as a mother figure, who is always asking for sacrifice and protection. Through the image of Rosie, he portrayed neither the image of the maiden nor the image of the Mother. Unlike Yeats, who mythologized Ireland, O'Casey portrayed what seemed to be the real picture without any dreamy imagination. His Rosie was the image of Ireland, who was struggling with her own identity as a prostitute, an Ireland going through the phase of moral bankruptcy in terms of identity, an Ireland that had lost its real and pure character and who had to rely on the other for her own existence. He portrayed Ireland that was beautiful like Venus but without any authentic identity or character, an Ireland that was struggling with the question of its own identity, an Ireland that was uncertain of its direction.

Anthony Domestico² in his essay presents a very interesting spectacle while juxtaposing the anonymous leader who is giving a revolutionary speech outside the pub, when the slum dwellers are busy in indulging in bar-brawls and drunken talk. In the same essay the drunken wheedling of the patriot has been very interestingly compared with the drunken patriotic wheedling of the harlot. The juxtaposition also shed light on O'Casey's attitude towards his criticism of The Irish Republican Army joining hands with the Irish Volunteers for the Easter Rising and its effect on the poor slum dwellers. To show the anger and the frustration of the working class, O'Casey showed them as the mob looting the shops, while the revolution was taking place. It is worth noticing how O'Casey has

² Anthony Domestico wrote web article in which he juxtaposes the predicament of Rosie to The patriotic leader in the play.
web<http://modernism.research.yale.edu/wiki/index.php/The_Plough_and_the_Stars#cite_ref-5> 24 July 2012.

presented women in his plays. His perceptibility towards women is remarkable in his Dublin Trilogy. Through his female characters, he does away with the tradition of showing women as the meek, submissive and docile. He presented women who did not need men, like Juno and Rosie, no matter how averse the situations became, the women carried on, keeping the realities in mind. For instance, Juno is shown leaving the tenements with her pregnant daughter Mary forever. This brings out the heroic in O'Casey's women. In comparison to the women, men are shown as procrastinators and moaners, who stay at home and do nothing for the family.

O'Casey's portrayal also represents his sense of liberation of the women from the traditional gender roles. The criticism as a reaction presents before the readers how the Ireland of that era was not able to digest this liberation. In a way it also showed on the part of nationalistic forces that Ireland was yet to emerge as a liberated nation. O'Casey, one can argue, does not treat women like a victim, but more like heroes and masculine women, who prefer action to words. In a way he does away with the conventional roles and the ideas that have been linked with women. His women are those who do not sit and moan; they are the women who emerge not as tragedy queens but tragic heroes out of miserable conditions. Juno reminds the audience of *Mother Courage*³ who was also called the hyena of the battlefield, signifying the stoicism Juno portrays even in the worst of situations.

The *Dublin Trilogy* presents a state of chaos and unrest among the Dublin tenement dwellers and their sordid lives. It aimed at showing the Abbey audience the artificiality and the filth of brutal politics that made the poor working class live a life of promised misery. This promised misery further led to the disbelief in nationalism that was prevalent in Ireland at the time of the Rising. This was responsible for the waning of any interest in the nationalistic movement for the working class. O'Casey's plays showed the Abbey audience that the mirror image of the idealized nation that they are dreaming of is actually broken. The play represented the disillusionment of the poor slum dwellers for whom the only glorious thing was their work and socialist rights, which suffered a

³ The protagonist of *The Mother Courage and Her Children* By Bertolt Brecht. 1939.

great blow due to the failure of the Dublin lockout and the strike. The title *The Plough and the Stars* does not celebrate the struggle of the proletariat class, but it stands in sheer disillusionment and the failure of the socialist's goals. Men in O'Casey's world are poets and drunks, who enjoy their cup of tea in the day and struggle to somehow have a pint in the pub in the evening. The real winners that emerge as the masculine female hero are his heroines, like Minnie, Juno, Nora, Rosie, Mary and Bessie.

What make these women heroic are their deeds in the hour of unrest and chaos. Although they stand in great contrast to each other, each of them has a radiant and strong character. If Minnie dies as a martyr for Ireland, Rosie stands for her courage to survive by earning her livelihood by selling her body in a war torn Dublin. If one is a prostitute looking for her customers, Juno is out the whole day working hard for the whole family, which includes her young crippled son and an idle husband. Towards the end of the play *Juno and the Paycock*, Juno emerges as O'Casey's strongest heroine, she stands as a symbol of liberation in the sense that she decides to leave the tenement house and live with her sister and pregnant daughter Mary. She is liberated because she makes her own decision, to stand by herself and her daughter when things fall apart after the murder of her crippled son by the I.R.A. The strength of her character lies in the fact that even the death of her son and the misery of living by herself with her pregnant daughter could not break her will to move on in life. It also presents the genius of O'Casey in portraying the heroism in women.

The character of Juno can be studied in contrast with *Mother Courage and Her Children*, Bertolt Brecht's epic play that coincidentally has the charade of all the impressive characters from all the plays of the Dublin Trilogy. Juno as The Mother Courage and her dumb daughter Katrin reminds us of Juno's crippled son Johnny. Eliff and Swiss Cheese in a way remind us of the bravery on Minnie's part and the camp prostitute Yvette reminds us of Rosie Redmond. Later in Brecht's play the Mother Courage is called the *Hyena of the battle field*⁴ and after all her children die a tragic death, just like Juno, Mother Courage is shown pulling her wagon, which again can be compared to her tragic

⁴A symbol of stoic attitude in the face of adversity.

act of stoicism by moving ahead with indifference to pain. Thus women break out of the conventional gender roles in O'Casey's writings and present an anti-stereotypical role.

O'Casey's unsung heroine and the martyr from *The Shadow of the Gunman* stands as a fine balance of English mannerisms with the blend of romantic and violent streak of patriotism and nationalism. She symbolizes the desire to die as a martyr for the country and this also shows her true Irish nature. In showing Minnie's death, O'Casey is portraying the futility of patriotism as well as nationalism. Minnie's belief leads her to death and nothing else, whereas to people like Donal, it is above any sacred imaginary word like nationalism or patriotism. Minnie's death and Donal's survival reveal the futility of life as well as death. Johnny in *Juno and the Paycock* dies because of his patriotism and spirit to die for Ireland, it may be argued that both the characters meet their tragic death because of the ardent love for their nation, which did not exist, which in the end proves the futility of such sacred and valorized concepts. In contrast to the ardent and over-enthusiastic martyrs, nationalists and the patriotic characters, the characters that are more practical end up putting up with their life. Their end does not seem that tragic to the audience. Mr. Boyle who is neither enthusiastic about his work nor a patriot is seen wandering on the street drunk, after the I.R.A had killed their son Johnny. The predicament of Juno seems the most miserable, strong and stoic in the same vein, as life is a pathetic business to handle to people who show more courage and have to tolerate more tragedies like Juno did, in comparison to Minnie and Johnny.

Death plays a motif in all the three plays in The Dublin Trilogy. Someone dies by the end of every play, Minnie, Jack, Johnny and Bessie. They all die a death which is tragic and futile. Minnie is shot by the English soldiers, on the pretext of helping the I.R.A. Her death also signifies the futility of patriotism and the love for one's nation. She being the idealistic and romantic patriot is fascinated with the idea of dying for the nation and it is one of the reasons why she gets attracted to Donal living next door. Donal does not die because he is not the ardent nationalist. He has seen politics and the hypocrisy behind politics that is involved in the so called nation-building process, unlike Minnie who is fascinated with the idea of dying for the cause of Ireland. Here is an excerpt:

Donal- No man, willingly dies for anything.

Minnie-Except for his country, like Robert Emmet.

Donal- Even he would have lived on if he could; he died not to deliver Ireland. The British Government killed him to save the British nation.⁵

The character of Donal, also represents the disillusioned self of the playwright. O'Casey's characters are the talking head of his own disillusionment. In *The Ploughit* was the Young Covey; in *The Shadow of the Gunman*, it is Donal, who disagrees with Minnie and mocks her in subtle tones when she talks about dying for the Irish cause. The idea of nation was always fascinating and romantic to the Irish because of the continuous colonization repression. This repression gave birth to the greatest identity conflict that has haunted Ireland for ages. This identity conflict lies at the heart of the nationalistic movement. The idea of nation dreamt and imagined by the cultural nationalists was anti-English and it imagined Irish identity totally nostalgic on the Gaelic past. With this nationalistic tapestry, the Irish fabric of nationalism was painted in Gaelic nostalgia. The nationalistic spirit is seen in Minnie's character. DonalDevoren epitomizes the disillusionment and the indictment of politics during the 20th century. Both O'Casey and Synge created characters that represented the identity conflict within the artiste, who was never treated as Irish. The idealism in a way created a great barrier in the progression of Irish as a strong nation. My argument is that although cultural nationalism did work for the Irish in the post-Parnell era as people craved for a true Irish identity, the nostalgic nationalism could not survive for a long period. In the long run, nations need to become hybrid identities that progress and develop with changes in their identities. There is no doubt about the fact that the progression of a nation, derives its motivation from the past by seeking its identity from the roots, but nations progress like a flowing river, not like stagnant ponds.

The fabric and the tapestry of the Irish nation were created by leading cultural nationalists through the potent power of literature. Abbey Theatre was among the major endeavors on the part of the Irish renaissance intellectuals. These intellectuals although made an effort to combine the artistic merit in creating the national identity, their path

⁵ Act One Dublin Trilogy.pg 18.

was not easy. Because of the political connections of Abbey Theatre, the nationalists had major disagreements on the way the Irish life was depicted in some of the literary works. The disagreement and the conflict were seen in the form of riots that broke out after the staging of Synge's literary masterpiece *The Playboy of the Western World* and O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*. Abbey rejected *The Playboy of the Western World* because the artistic and creative orientation of the playwright clashed with the political inclination of the Theatre and nationalists like Arthur Griffith, who castigated the play as well as the playwright in various different pretexts and reasons. If one reason was the portrayal of unconventional morality, the other was the depiction of the Irish female character. The plays, according to political propagandists, stood in absolute contrast with national identity. Secondly, the Abbey was not an artiste's theatre per say, it was a theatre with a nationalistic propaganda. To propagandists, the plays were more like non-native Protestant ascendancy's reaction towards the Irish culture and particularly on Irish peasant class women, which is particularly my concern in this chapter.

The celebration of Irish peasantry was appreciated neither by the nationalists nor the Abbey audience. They had a problem with the uncouth, violent and savage portrayal of the Irish identity as a nation. To Irish nationalists every act of violence and savagery reminded them of how the English portrayed them as buffoons on the English stage. Another reason behind rejection of these plays was that these playwrights did not portray women as victims or as subjugated meek creatures. Instead they created them wildly empowered and unconventional in terms of their actions and decisions. Characters were not possessed with victimization, but liberated individuals, who emerged as better individuals than men in the plays. This was one of the main reasons why I was drawn towards the study of these authors.

Women in the plays of O'Casey and Synge present stoicism and strength of the female character. Their denial of subjugation also stands in contrast with the mythological portrayal of Yeats's Cathleen. O'Casey's Rosie, Bessie, Minnie, Juno are not subjugated women, but an emblem of liberated female self, who dies as martyrs like Minnie or stands as a solid rock like Juno, even when everything falls apart in their lives.

O'Casey's women are romantic, but strong-willed entities unlike other literary female characters who are shown as the emblem of victimization and colonization. These women do not ask men to protect them or sacrifice their lives for them, instead they take the charge of their own existence and problems and fight out their problems. They are not meek and timid beings, but women with spirit and zeal to come in terms with their life. They are fighters and the heroes.

In contrast to the argument that women in Synge and O'Casey reveal a very unconventional gender identity, that is to say those women are masculine; there is another argument regarding the gender portrayal of men in both the playwright's writings that they are comparatively effeminate. When Christy comes to the shebeen, he is timid and shy. He is described as a man with feminine features. In comparison to Christy, Pegeen and Widow Quin are described in a very robust and masculine way. The way the women in Synge display their robustness and men their feminine instincts portray various details about how gender is perceived in a larger perspective of national identities. This is because the robust depiction of female characters was castigated by the nationalists. The nationalistic perspective of gender was so warped during this era that any depiction that did not possess the feminine and weak qualities of a woman was totally annihilated by the patriarchal powers operated in that era. It also shows that the ideal picture of women was also bent for their own nationalistic purposes. As Jack says, Ireland is more than a mother. One can argue that nationalistic forces and political propagandists used the feminine figure to create the image of a land that was robbed of its freedom by the English race and subjugated and victimized. But Synge and O'Casey unlike other authors presented the liberated women, who were stoic but strong, robust but loving, adventurous but responsible. One can also argue that this disagreement on how the gender roles were bent by these authors was also an attack on their own masculinity, which empowered them to take a decision on what is appropriate for the spectators. This severe reaction also shows how patriarchy practices the power games by showing their disapproval on what is appropriate for women in terms of manners and as Irish women. This presents before us the case of being doubly colonized. But these two authors unconventionally wrote as feminists, who not only portrayed their problems, but liberated them by breaking the norms of oppressed identities and giving them space to become the hero instead of being

treated as a victim. Synge's women were rough because they were peasants and did not belong to the landed gentry aristocratic English class. They worked like men in shebeens like Pegeen, or like Nora in *The Glen*, like an animal. Or they were Bessie or Rosie, who despite the ghetto like situation in the Dublin of political unrest worked all day to make a living for their family, whose effeminate men are busy doing nothing. Thus this positioning of gender was one of the main features of the cultural nationalism that was prevalent in the late 19th century.

Ireland has, of course, long been gendered — by the political nationalist metanarrative and the cultural nationalism of traditional history and literature — as a women victimized by the colonizing English male. For an equally long time, the lives of actual Irish women were arguably colonized by Irish men, at the same time both genders were colonial subjects of England. (Bradley and Valiulis: 6)⁶

Ireland's stance as a woman reminds me of Charlie played by Julianne Moore from a *Single Man*⁷. She played the role of a woman, who felt victimized and deprived of love because of her failed relationships and broken marriage. Although she is a dependent woman at the moment, her friend George played by Colin Firth tells her that the reason for her being depressed is not her victimization but her choice and the pleasure that she derives from playing the role of a victim. Charlie does suffer because she feels victimized or is victimized. She also says..Charley“-Living in the past is my future.You're a man. It doesn't have to be yours.”⁸The prolonged suffering makes her derive a sort of masochistic pleasure out of her unhappiness that originates from being the victim and she develops the habit of being happy about being unhappy. I argue that just like Charlie, Ireland celebrated being the victim and the subjugated. In the process of celebrating the subjugated self, the creative authors were unjustly rejected, who painted the picture of women who were not victims; women who did not epitomize the meekness forced unto them by man. But they portrayed women who took a stand, argued and fought for their

⁶Bradley, Anthony and Maryann GialanellaValiulis.*Gender and Sexuality in Modern Ireland*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts P, 1997.

⁷ A movie released in 2008, directed by Tom Ford..

⁸ScreenpalyA *Single man* ,web<http://www.pages.drexel.edu/~ina22/splaylib/Screenplay-Single_Man,%20A.pdf>Accessed 21 July 2012.

own identity and emerged as their own heroes. The heroism and forwardness on the part of characters like Nora and Rosie from *The Plough and the Stars* were rejected by the critics. The fact that these women needed nobody to rescue them shocked the Abbey audience, the nationalists and the critics, which further led to the castigation of their works as well the authors. The portrayal which could have been accepted and appreciated for its realistic portrayal was castigated and rejected, which further added to the solitude of Irish protestant faith. The strong anti-feminine image of womanhood thus led to shambles in the Abbey Theatre. The audience and the nationalist critics turned the virtue into slur, because in comparison to liberal feminists O'Casey and Synge, the nationalists were the saviors of their own womanhood and sisterhood.

The Irish peasantry was something that involved native Irish sentiments. It was never idealized in the way it was idealized by Synge. If O'Casey criticized what was ideal to the nationalist propagandists, Synge idealized what nobody thought of idealizing-- the Irish peasantry. He celebrated what was considered unsuitable for women, this was the reason why he created characters like Pegeen, Nora and Widow Quin. Clashes among the audience were natural because he was not just dealing with Abbey audiences who were Protestants as well as natives, hence, too defensive about true Irish image and the anti-English portrayal. Synge was accused of mocking Irish peasantry and especially Irish women's virtue. The play was banned on the pretext of unfamiliarity with the Irish culture. But it can be argued if one's birth in a Catholic peasant family makes one a true native Irish or is it devoting a major part of your life to the people and studying their life irrespective of your birth or nationality. Was not Synge a better nationalist who wrote of the forgotten people in the island and the culture and mannerism of Irish peasantry by living with them? The shallow nationalist of Dublin was busy being anti-English, but not observing what true Irish identity was? Was it an Irish identity? It seems like instead of reviving their own identity, they were busy punishing people who were making an effort to heal the fractured identity by way of celebrating it. Synge knew the Irish identity was fractured, but his way of healing and dealing with the problem of identity was different from others.

Synge perceived and illustrated Irish peasantry as an entity that was not looked in contrast with the English; to him they were not foils to English. To him they were Irish

peasants belonging to a distant county in Ireland, so he wrote of them what he saw in them. His *Aran Islands* is a great example of his account of the depiction of the Irish peasant life, which he saw and presented before his readers so objectively.

He, in certain ways, identified with them. Unfamiliarity and the alienating feeling of not belonging, and the Anglo-Irish solitude that rooted deeply within him, marked his writings. His identity alienated him from the natives, but when he went to live in the Aran Islands, he celebrated their lives, their hardships and sufferings and gave their oral-folklore a written expression through his artistic works. He wrote about women with wild beauty who had a flair for telling folktales, which Synge recreated into his plays, *The Shadow of the Glen*. Although severely criticized for the portrayal of the Irish peasant women, his portrayal is more believable than those authors who wrote of an idealized but mythologized version of an imaginary virtuous woman, who never existed. Synge knew that just by imagining nations do not make a nation, working on it helps on building a nation.

The English connection haunted the Irish imagination like a ghost haunting the psyche of people who are full of self-doubt. It haunted them even more if the answer about their Irish identity came from an Anglo-Irish Protestant author like Synge, who according to critics and nationalists was familiar with neither the culture nor the native identity. This aggravated the condition of the rootless and solitary man like Synge, who was already a recluse. But in these voices, the Irish peasant found one's own voice. Through his writings, he came closer to the Irish nature and the nation, which helped him to cope up with his own solitude. In the disapproval of the depiction of the peasantry, nationalists rejected their own self, the identity and the existence of native peasants and their habits, just like Synge was rejected as a stranger living in his own house. Here both the Irish peasants and the author felt like they are not the natives or the countrymen but are actually –visitors at her own doorstep.

As writer of a nation named Ireland, Synge attempted to write of his country, the folktales and the cultural traditions. He wrote of a country that could never find peace with its own unique identity and a country that was too sensitive and defensive about its own identity. To them becoming authentic Irish was not becoming Gaelic, it became

more about being de-Anglicised and not being English. In becoming Irish, they actually became anti-English.

O'Casey's heroines are the father-figure of the family. Minnie, O'Casey's romantic ardent patriot, dies like a man, defending Donal, the supposed I.R.A. gunman on the run in the battlefield. Juno does not give up till everything is lost. Rosie accepts her predicament and moves on with her sordid existence as a prostitute. Synge's heroines in contrast to O'Casey's epitomizes his sense of liberation for Ireland and his perspective of freedom from colonization and subjugation. His Pegeen Mike and Nora are brave hearted women who open their hearts to uncertain situations and stand apart from the miserable, unhappy female figures who love playing the victim, need being protected and asked for sacrifices. They were liberated in the sense that being a woman they denied being treated as a doormat. They stopped being slaves to patriarchy and this was unacceptable to the mob, because the power to decide what is virtue and slur for Irish woman was decided by the men. It can be said that both of Synge's heroines emerge as winners because they do not let the patriarchal powers dominate their spirit to live a life of opportunity, with a hope of happiness

Pegeen and Nora are confronted with an uncertain future, but they are hopeful of a life without the dominance that emerges from the question of their identity as an Irish woman. The security that comes with the idea of a narrow nationalism and a narrow but secure marriage are the same, they do not leave space for development of the nation and the woman. In order to have a better life, Nora had to have a strong and risky decision, and emerge as a hybrid predator learning from the past, but not clinging to it.

Ireland of the 19th century was skeptical of anti-nostalgic nationalism. But this brand of nationalism was appreciated by Synge in a very subtle way in his plays. If O'Casey was one artist whose art emerged from the politics of socialism and nationalism, Synge's art emerged from a mind that had no political orientation whatsoever. In answer to Stephen MacKenna's question "Do you really think, Mr. Synge, that if a man did this in Mayo, girls would bring him a pullet?" Synge said, 'I wrote the play because it pleased me, and it just happens that I know Irish life best, so I made my methods Irish.' Nicholas Greene commented on this by saying that "Obviously it is absurd to judge his work simply as a representation of Irish life, and to condemn it out of hand if it is considered inaccurate. Yet, it is not just accidental that Synge "knew Irish

life best,” and his plays are more than incidentally Irish.”⁹ Of course Synge knew about Ireland and the Irish because he went and lived with them, but the Irish identity was so fractured at the time the play was staged that the nationalists took it as a direct attack on their identity. Synge’s Protestant identity also aggravated the situation, as he was also judged by his ascendancy background, he was not according to the descent an Irish, thus he had no knowledge or authority to comment on the Irish life. One may wonder the stance of the artist in

Ireland’s nationalism offered an escape into health, sanity and community, but for Synge nationalism was a moment of resistance to the inevitable transformation of traditional life, not a programme for redemption for it. In this his nationalism deviates in a radical manner from that of [Padrick] Pearse who sought, in a new educational system and in a new ideology of cumulative rebellion, the instruments for the re-establishment of a lost cause.¹⁰

Synge stood in disagreement with the nationalists and the Abbey audience when he was accused of being unfamiliar with the Irish culture. The vision created by the romance between Pegeen and Christy and their imagined glorified future stands in great contrast to the imagined and the romantic idea of a nation and a society that is nostalgically in love with the Gaelic past. But the non-acceptance of the freedom that has emerged in the heroic figure, through the process of transformation of the heroic from the timidity of Christy, makes the process of positive transformation complete.

In ‘The Playboy of the Western World,’ Pegeen Mike’s desolate cry of loss brings to an end the prospect of a glorious future with Christy Mahon, one which Christy had invoked by articulating a vision of pastoral romance which properly belongs to the old Gaelic past. The failure of the community to bring the past Eden into a Utopian future marks the boundary line of nationalist and romantic desire. The vagrant hero or heroine fades into legend or fantasy. The community remains; more deeply stricken, more visibly decayed. . . . Society is not redeemed, and the traditional function of comedy remains incomplete. Synge is not writing out the failure of heroism. He is registering its failure with regard to society or, conversely, society’s failure with regard to it.¹¹

Kiberd argues that the Irish were more in love with the idea of nation than the nation itself. Another instance where we get to know about this aspect is the criticism of Seamus Deane. Here he gives the example of the Irish mythological hero Cuchulian. He says that

⁹Synge: *A Critical Study of the Plays*, by Nicholas Grene (London: Macmillan, 1975)

¹⁰Seamus Deane, *Synge and Heroism* (1985), in J. M. Synge: *Four Plays*, ed. Ronald Ayling (London: Macmillan, 1992)

¹¹ Harington John P, *The Irish plays on the New York stage 1874 -1966*, University Press Kentucky, 1997 p 58.

to Irish the idea of the hero was more fascinating than to see the heroes with flesh and blood on the stage. To listen to fake, made up story is more fascinating to Irish, than to look at the same heroic act in front of their naked eyes. Kiberd says:

Yeats's own repeated attempts to conceive of Cuchulian as a hero who could participate in the mind of the present generation [about which more later] Pearse's assertion of Cuchulain's presence, and their mutual castigations on the community which could not receive these demanding exemplars, are repeated, with variations, by Joyce, O'Casey, George Moore and others. There was no audience for heroism when it became flesh.¹²

As far as cultural and classic nationalism is concerned, victimization and suffering on the woman's part has always been prevalent in the nationalistic discourse. I argue that nationalism as well as gender portrayal in those times was perverted as it promoted romanticization of victimization and suffering. The problem lies with imagining the strong nation as the masculine one, the meek and the colonized one as the feminine one. Acceptance as well as promotion of Ireland as a woman, asking for its men folk, to ask for sacrifice, is again asking for validation and help of the patriarchy.

In a broader sense their dramas liberated women by making them rebels by providing them the power to take decisions. Irish defensiveness was the result of the prolonged colonization and subjugation, primarily on the level of both genders from the colonized framework and further colonized by the patriarchy through the framework of gender. So whatever was portrayed by Synge, if it was uncouthness, drunkenness of male peasantry or the wild and violent depiction of the female was seen as a reaction to what English imagined and vaguely perceived of Irish. It was rejected because of the Irish defensive attitude. The way they looked upon the Irish language, created a big trench between the two races. *The Playboy* was thus taken as a direct attack on the Irish identity that has always been perceived by the English as violent and savage.

Gender is used in their writings as a feminine emblem, particularly the propagandist authors like W.B Yeats, who portrayed Cathleen as an Irish emblem. One may ask why? Why is Ireland a woman? If given a choice, would not one want to be

¹² Ibid 7

liberated and powerful like men and not cling to a subjugated figure? Why did not Ireland emerge as a fatherland after the end of colonization? The solution can be located through the plays in question. To construct a strong nation, people need to engineer the skill to learn from the past because it is impossible to move ahead without considering the past and the roots, but they have to take into account the present conditions. To emerge as a hybrid entity is to accept and overcome the adversities faced in the past and not be haunted by our own insecurities but rather working on building them. To look forward to the challenges and prepare a generation by way of liberation of ideals is, of course, a better way to build a strong nation than being defensive of one's identity. If the idea of an imagined nation is fractured, the outcome of the nation will be a disaster.

O'Casey's Johnny symbolizes the Irish nation whose patriotism and nationalism make him a nationalist, but this dream has taken away his arm from him, thus the romantic imagination crippled him from helping him build the nation. O'Casey being a realist conveys his disillusionment in the nationalistic dream of creating an ideal nation, through nationalism, which he saw losing to socialistic ideals. The conflict between romantic nationalism and realistic socialism can be seen in the metaphorical figure of Juno's son Johnny's crippled hand destroyed by the romantic ideals of nationalism. His *The Plough and the Stars* recapped every one of *The Playboy Riots*, which was just like *The Playboy* rejected by the Abbey. Synge described the Irish as "double chinned, slobbering, sweaty and fat faced"¹³ and O'Casey's Rosie unnerved the puritan-Catholic faith of the audience, who rejected his play because they disagreed with him on the fact that there were no prostitutes in Ireland. In the defence of Synge, Watson says:

There are sides of all that western life, The groggy patriot publican general –shop man who is married to the priest's half sister and is second half cousin once removed from the dispensary doctor, that are horrible and awful....All that side of the matter off course I left untouched in my stuff the articles. I sometime wish to God I hadn't a soul and then I could give myself up to putting those lads on the stage. God wouldn't they hop! Ina way it is all heart rending, in one place the people are starving but wonderfully attractive and charming, and in another place where things are going well , one has a rampant , double-chinned vulgarity I haven't seen the like of.¹⁴

¹³ G.J Watson In his book *Irish identity and The Irish revival* quotes Synge's *Biography* on page 39-40.1979—ISBN-0-85664-330-0-CW, vol.2,p.283.

¹⁴ G.J Watson quotes J.M Synge p40

Synge admits the fact that he did not valorize the peasant life, because he saw them and, portrayed them as objectively as he could, but even in that depiction he used his discretion because he was writing for the Abbey, so his expression was tamed. In another letter to one of his admirers, in the introduction to *The Playboy of the Western World*, Synge very succinctly explains his inclination towards the peasant life and his theory of writing. He says:

Anyone who has lived in the real intimacy with the Irish peasantry will know that the wildest sayings and the ideas in this play are tame indeed, compared with the fancies one may hear in any little hillside cabin in Geesala, or Carraroe, or Dingle bay. All art is a collaboration; and there is a little doubt that in the happy age of literature, striking and beautiful words were as ready to the storyteller and the storyteller's or the playwright's hand, as the rich cloaks and dresses of his time.¹⁵

Synge had an eye for depicting simplicity and beauty of men and women living on the islands. He presents the objective details of life on the islands in one of the finest memoirs book - *The Aran Islands*. As George Cusack mentions, he remarks on the vitality and the women living on these Islands. Synge also mentions how he was struck by their lack of shyness and strange simplicity, which I think epitomizes a true and real Irish identity, that is not a reaction to the English identity. In comparison to Irish women's vitality, Synge's men are repressive, inexpressive and they lack appreciation of women's beauty. This aspect has been very beautifully and creatively being dealt by him in *The Shadow of the Glen* through the character of Nora. If vitality is one aspect of the women on Islands, the other objective truth is the importance of child-bearing and domesticity, which according to Synge blind them to look at the real attractiveness and the strength of the character (Cusack:142). In the play women with great personal merit are judged on the sheer basis of domesticity.

Synge further writes about *The Shadow of the Glen*, which he wrote some years ago. He explicates how the basis for his plots came out of his overhearing of the conversations of people when he was living in Wicklow. He wrote an elaborated version of the folktale he heard from the villagers with his own alterations to the plot. Synge's

¹⁵ Preface to *the Playboy of the Western World*.pp110,Dr S.Sen. ISBN:81-8357-050-X

Nora epitomizes his vision of liberated woman, who does not give up her life as a sacrifice, rather chooses a life of hope and opportunity. This stands in contrast with the conventional situation of an Irish woman living in a small county of Ireland. His portrayal of women was unflattering and perceptive.

The action of the play proves that the idea of a nation is romantic, an imagined one. It is created in a situation when there is a need to find something that is lacking or missing. It can be the lost identity or the lost consciousness of something that has to be revived. Anderson quotes Gellner in his essay *Imagined Communities* ...

Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.¹⁶

In the case of Ireland, not just the feeling of nation was lost, there was also the sense of identity and consciousness, as a prolong effect of British colonization. Anderson says that the idea of nation will always remain narrow because no matter how big a nation is, there is always a geographical boundary to it and beyond that boundary there is another nation. Anderson says:

The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations; No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation in the way that it was possible, in certain epochs, for, say, Christians to dream of a wholly Christian planet (Anderson, 1983).

To Pegeen to imagine a violent act that is to see the dirty deed with her own naked eyes brings out the real violence of the patricide, to Minnie also love for Ireland seems as a romantic story, full of chivalry on the soldier's part, who according to her die for the cause of Ireland but in reality the same romantic idea leads to her death. Thus the nationalists and the common audience who were led by the league of nationalists and leaders were justified in criticizing the plays of O'Casey and Synge because they had the romantic idea of an imagined community called nation. They were led to believe in the sacredness of the nation and the identity that was related to it. The writings like *The*

¹⁶Gellner, *Thought and Change*, p. 169.

Playboy somehow clashed with the ideal image of nation and thus smashed the image of the dream nation by portraying the peasantry in violent colors of the Irish life. "It is as if we looked in the mirror for the first time, and found ourselves hideous"¹⁷ (Watson: 72).

The Irish knew that the mirror was broken but they did not want to face the fact, the mirror reflected that the identity which was once a unified one was now broken in pieces. Irish were anti-English because they knew that the stone of the colonization had shattered their identity in irreversible ways. *The Playboy* shocked and woke the Abbey audience like someone wakes you up from a beautiful dream and makes you realize the facts of real life. O'Casey and Synge showed the audience the shattered mirror and woke them up from the dream.

The Playboy and *The Plough* created the same effect, they pinned nationalists who did not want to see the image that was portrayed by Synge and O'Casey in their works. O'Casey shocked the Dublin audience by showing them the poor urban dwellers going through utter poverty and tragedy. Synge shocked them by showing them the difference between the idealized story and the reality of the violent action. Synge was accused of depicting women in the most horrifying and the most vulgar diction. As I mentioned above, the nationalists rejected the play as a slur on the face of Irish womanhood and peasants, and they condemned the playwright as unfamiliar with the culture of Ireland. Widow Quin was the most outspoken character of the play known for using the foulest language a woman can use (Watson: 79).

Christy's slaying of his da, with his action replay, Pegeen's action replay, Pegeen's lament for that violent enemy of policemen, Daneen Sullivan, Jimmy Farrell's hanging of his dog, the spectator sports of the village girls, the widow Quin's suckling of a black ram and the cannibalistic consequences experienced by the Lord Bishop of Connaught, Micheal James's epic account of the epic drunk at the wake, Pegeen burning of Christy's leg, Christy's biting of Shawn's leg, and much more in the same joyously violent vein.(Watson: 79)

¹⁷*The poetry of Sir Samuel Ferguson* Dublin University Review, November 1886.Cited in Uncollected Prose, vol-1(1970) Oxford University Press, London, 1971, p -9.

Though a writer, he might have given the reality a glaze and a digression, but the peasant class is perceived as the unsophisticated and the unpolished class when it comes to mannerisms and language. Watson says that this celebration of artistic commitment to daemonic energy, where Synge intended glorification, the Irish audience found something else - inevitably. Did the Irish find something offensive and worth rioting because they were looking for it, or was there something worth castigating? The problem here, it seemed like, was the presumed confirmation of the Irish stereotypical image by Synge. An insight to why Irish natives were portrayed as savage is found in Conor O'Brian's criticism. He says,

The exact point of their demonstration remains a little obscure: that it was a counter-demonstration to the native one is clear. Presumably, they agreed with the natives that the play represented the natives as savages, but denied that the natives had a right to object to such a representation, since savages were what the natives were. Politically, the natives were unfit for self-government, and the natives' reaction to the play, both proved it.¹⁸

Aran Islands is his enigmatic yet realistic piece of work. His masterpiece *In the Shadow of the Glen* and *The Playboy of the Western World* are also based on his accounts and stories of people he heard about and met during his visit to the Aran Islands. In the introduction to his memoir, *Aran Islands*, he mentions this fact. He writes

In the pages that follow I have given a direct account of my life on the islands, and of what I met with among them, inventing nothing, and changing nothing that is essential. As far as possible, however, I have disguised the identity of the people I speak of, by making changes in their names, and in the letters I quote, and by altering some local and family relationships. I have had nothing to say about them that was not wholly in their favor, but I have made this disguise to keep them from ever feeling that a too direct use had been made of their kindness, and friendship, for which I am more grateful than it is easy to say.

Thus he wrote about the Irish people as he saw them. He painted them in the color of not one's imagination, but with the color that can be felt and realized, which he himself saw when he stayed on Aran Islands. His writings portray the theme of unconventional morality and gender roles. In his writings, we will find anomalous

¹⁸Conor, Cruise O' Brien, *States of Ireland*, p.74.

women character portraits like Pegeen, Nora, Widow Quin who are too progressive for the Ireland of the century. The events and the incidents in the plays present a picture of women and the society, who took strong decisions for the survival of their families. It also presented O’Casey’s feminist aspect that painted women who wanted to live in dignity and respect. Life just seems like a struggle for existence for female characters and a struggle for pint for men. Captain Boyle and Joxer Dali in *Juno and the Paycock*, and Michael James Flaherty i.ePegeenMicheal’s father are men who do notshow any fatherly quality, women instead are the ones who work to support a family. Female characters like Bessie Burgess and Mrs.Gogan also present how the peasant class, particularly women, have to struggle with life especially in a war-torn Dublin.

Bessie- (To Peter) [with a push of her hand that sends PETER tottering to the end of the counter]. G’way, you little sermonizing, little yella-faced, little consequential, little pudgy, little bum, you !..

In retaliation to Bessie Burgess Mrs.Gogan:

Come on, now, me loyal lassie, dyin’ with grief for little Catholic Belgium! When JinnieGogan's done with you, you'll have a little leisure lyin’ down to think an’ pray for your king an’ country.

Barman- [coming from behind the counter, getting between the women, and proceeding to push BESSIE towards the door]. Here, now, since you can't have a little friendly argument quietly, you'll get out o' this place in quick time. Go on, an' settle your differences somewhere else I do notwant to have another endorsement on me license.

Peter - Here, take your kid back over this. How nicely I was picked now for it to be plumped into my arms!

Fluther-. God, it's a relief to get rid o' that crowd. Women is terrible when they start to fight. There's no holdin' them back . [To the COVEY] Are you goin' to have anything?

Rosie. You louse, you louse, you! . . . you're no man. . . . You're no man . .

I'm a woman, anyhow, a 5 if I'm a prostitute aself, I have me feelin's. . . . Thryin' to put his arm around me a minute ago, an' givin' me th' glad eye, th' little wrigglin' lump o' desolation turns on me now, because he saw there was no thin' doin'. . . . You louse, you ! If I was a man, or you were a woman, I'd bate th' puss o' you .(192-197)

In Act 2 the Covey says to Rosie—“Nobody’s asking you to be buttin’ in with your prate....I have you well taped, me lassie....just keep your opinions for your own place..it will be a long time before th’ Covey takes any instruction from or reprimandin’ from a prostitute” (197).

Her character brings out the tragedy of her hopeless, tragic and sordid existence as a prostitute. In Act 2 Rosie says –“It’s no joke tryin’ to make up fifty-five shillin’s a week and keep an’ laundry, an’ then taxin’ you a quid for your own room if you bring home a friend for th’ night....If I could only put by a couple of quid for a swankier outfit, everythin’ in th’ garden ud look lovely” (182). This also shows that women in O’Casey were playing more masculine roles than the men around her..

Thus in both dramatists’ works there are unconventional gender roles, they can be better described as womanly men and manly women. It’s the masculine women wooing the men in *The Playboy*, i.e Widow Quin offering Christy Mahon to come and live with her. Characters like Shawn Keogh, Michael James Flaherty join the league of the feminine men who are escapists and not protectors. Once again Synge’s women rule the world with their tough decisions; one should rather say that their decisions are tragic. Pegeen, Nora and Martha stand next to each other in the Irish peasant working class. They have to abandon something behind them so that they have something to look forward to in life. .

Gender and unconventionality perform roles. Women out of necessity are the breadwinners of the family, whereas men are the dreamers. Generally the former is supposed to be romantic and act less realistic, but the characterization of women in these plays show that gender is a construction and performance as Judith Butler (1993) has said. Women in O’Casey are out on the streets of Dublin to make a living. The character of Rosie Redmond is tragically sordid, to whom neither the free state nor the colonized one has nothing to offer or the patriotic speech. They are a blend of construction that falls apart when realism strikes hard. Poverty takes away the gender construction; her attitude towards life is that of a man because she has to work to survive in Dublin, she is not a dreamer but one of the strongest characters. To her nation and patriotism hardly make any difference, because nations are dreamy imagined communities. She is a poor prostitute working like a man. In contrast to Jack Boyle and Joxer who complain about women, they work hard to survive. Rosie, a prostitute, has no interest in the address given by the speaker outside the pub in Act -2 of *Plough and the Star*. Women like Bessie

Burgess and Mrs. Gogan who fight with each other present another aspect of a very crude and crass aspect to their personality which men in the plays actually lack. Men in O'Casey as well as Synge are poets and tramps talking about the sea journey and the stars. In O'Casey men hardly use as foul language as women do.

Minnie, who meets her tragic end in *In the Shadow of the Gunman* while saving Devore and by hiding Donal's war equipment in her room, is a subject of interest. To her the idea of Donal being the gunman on the run is very romantic and adventurous. Her romantic idea about Donal actually paves way for her death. Donal who used to work for I.R.A is a disillusioned man who knows the ailments and the reality of war that is why he is escaping the reality through poetry and reading it to Minnie. Donal and Captain Boyle live a state of escape and thus escape into poetry.

These plays are manifestations of how specific classes in a certain community, especially a colonized community, connect themselves with the idea of a nation, which is in the first place an abstract identity. The characterization in both the playwrights is such that we can see the characters imagining - the image of a state like a mother figure is quite contradictory. One may argue so because the Irish idea of nationalism stands in contradiction with what they imagined as nation. Playwrights like O'Casey and Synge who wrote about the follies as well as the wisdom that are deeply embedded in human nature became prey to the nationalism. Although their plays were based on historical events of Irish struggle for freedom and were an indictment of the wrong, they were castigated as they did not fit the pattern of Irish nationalism. As Anderson says:

Finally, it is imagined as a community because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much as to kill, as willing to die for such limited imaginings (P. 50).

While explicating the peasant life, J Watson quotes from the Catholic Magazine *The Lyceum*, in a review of 1890 of Gavan Duffy of Thomas Davis:

While our peasants say their beads and meditate on the mysteries of the rosary, they can never come wholly under the sway of the doctrine that men were sent into the world to be happy and to make money...Thomas Davis saw in the factory a monster that destroyed this ideal life, and he was its foe. He would have Ireland a nation of peasant owners¹⁹.

The constant comparison of the Irish to stereotypical Englishness has created a sense of inferiority with their identity. To British understanding, Ireland is always the subjected object. It was subjugated to English. As a consequence, authors and artistes who actually wrote about authentic Irish nature were criticized and their works looked upon as buffoonery of the Irish, or spokesman of what was anti-Irish. Joyce is a fine example of this, he wrote about Dublin and Ireland with utmost objectivity. He wrote about the sense of deprivation and inferiority in the Irish psyche. As G.J. Watson says his art originates in the attempt to face the sense of inferiority with honesty and his ability to come in terms with a fractured culture (Watson: 1979). Joyce knew what was inferior in the society, whereas for the ascendancy writers like Yeats and Synge this was not the problem. They could choose what they wanted to idealize and leave what did not qualify (Watson 1979: 21). In the portrayal of *Aran Islands* Synge portrays the Ireland that was unknown to the masses in Ireland. His memoirs are the constructions of what he saw as real living on those Islands.

His characters are miles away from the Englishness and also from being Irish; they were from an imagined land geographically situated on the map somewhere near Ireland. Thus its qualifying as a different world altogether wouldn't be too much to say.

It is worth thinking that the act of violence on the part of Christy in the form of patricide, the violence in the speech, the cannibalism present in the words of women characters invited severe criticism of the Abbey audience and the Sinn Fein leader Arthur Griffith who commented that the theatre was not sufficiently political and described the play.

Although The Freeman journal described *The Playboy* as the unmitigated protracted libel upon Irish peasant men, and worse still upon Irish girlhood, one may argue, how justified was it for the nationalists sitting in Dublin to comment on identities that exist only in their imaginations, and to decide what is virtuous and slanderous for

¹⁹ Howard, Smith..Ireland: *some episodes from Her past*. (BBC publications,, London 1974. page 115.

women. It presents before the readers, how patriarchal the revival movement was in portraying women. The construction of gender which was broken by the these playwrights, by proving the Butlerian argument that gender is a performance, was not accepted by the patriarchal canopy of the Irish nationalistic movement.

It is a question of great speculation that for the Dublin audience, especially who commented on *The Playboy* that the author knew nothing of their culture, were mistaking that Aran Islands was not part of their nation, because as Ray Foster(1988) comments, the Irish a have a great fascination for imaginary things and fiction rather than reality. Thus for such people the concept, the manners and the behavior of the people living on these Islands will always be imagined and unfamiliar. So, if according to them, Synge was not familiar with the life of these islanders, who else was? The answer cannot bethe Dubliners! The artiste went to the island and wrote the account of the peasant while the nationalist imagined and idealized the sugarcoated candy image of the distant land. The artiste objectively portrayed it wild but beautiful, savage but raw, violent but intensely passionate and foul and vulgar.

Robin Skelton mentions this in an article about his love for the Aran Islands and the islanders. He says, “He finds much to praise on the islands, and while a great deal of what attracts him is inextricably bound up with his almost mystical admiration of primitivism, some is not” (Skelton:4). It is difficult for the artiste to remain an artiste and not write what he observes. It is a failure if it has a selfish political propaganda. The aim of an author is to write what he feels and believe what he sees, and that is what these playwrights did. They wrote about demons of war, particularly not of colonization or Ireland being a colony of Britain, because the question of Irish identity originates from its cultural roots. Though the colonization complicated it, it will be unfair to blame Britain for all cultural problems Ireland faced.

All these constraining obligations resemble the nets that threatened to trap Stephen Dedalus and Joyce was accurate in exaggerating when he went on to charge that "Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow."²⁰ Many were devoured, but many of the creative and

²⁰ Anne MacCarthyPapers on Joyce 2 (1996): 39-46

clever ones escaped, and it should be apparent that the political revolution and the obligation to accept its sanctity did not manage to repress or silence Ireland's writers. In the justification of the riots David Krause notes that the riots broke out because O'Casey like Synge was also not a propagandist, but a dramatist and a literary artist rather than being a politician. In his article on *The Plough and the Stars* *Socialism* (1913) and *Nationalism* (1916) Krause says: "Juno's speech contains a paradoxical wisdom because O'Casey is a principled dramatist who distrusts principles, especially when principles become nationalist or socialist ideologies set in concrete, and then he mocks and rejects both. In other words, nothing sacred is sacred to O'Casey, nothing but life itself and the survival of its weakest and least protected links. Consequently, some righteous Irish interests, particularly those that worshipped an idealistic image of republican nationalism, provoked the riots against *The Plough and the Stars* in the Abbey Theatre in 1926. O'Casey's drama was held hostage by political controversy or by what Seamus Heaney has called "the quarrel between free creative imagination and the constraints of religious, political, and domestic obligations."

In the same article Krause mentions his conversation with Peadar O'Donnell, a militant socialist, nationalist and novelist, about O'Casey, he said, "An Irish Social Rebel":

About women in the play, Krause says in the article, "The Plough and the Stars-Nationalism and Socialism" in 1915. The honour of Irish womanhood is deflated by the kicking and scratching fight over illegitimacy between Jinnie Gogan and Bessie Burgess, and by the unheard of appearance of an Irish prostitute. Later, however, the antagonistic Jinnie and Bessie join forces against their common enemy, the war, to help the abandoned Nora. Jack and his comrades disgrace the Republican cause by drinking in uniform in a pub, and they demean all women by proclaiming that Ireland is greater than a mother and a wife. In another passage, Krause explains why *The Plough and the Stars* was a controversial play. It demeaned the character of the Easter Rising and disgraced the image of Irish womanhood. He says that Jack Clitheroe can be a romantic as well as a fickle lover, a vain as well as a brave Republican soldier.

The concept of nationalism is a dream and imagined community, as Benedict Anderson puts it. The idea of this sort of imagined communities is created through stories and lies, just like Christy Mahon did. Through Christy, Synge created the idea of the nation. His emergence as a hero symbolizes the emergence of nations, from the weak and timid cocoon of dreams, which is a lie or an illusion. Nations, like him, emerge and transform from the timid and shy cocoon of imagination, through progressive action, not being nostalgic of the past. It does not need to be a community belonging to people of the same ethnicity. If ethnicity be the parameter or the base for the existence of a nation, no nation can actually exist. Ray Foster quotes Anderson:

All nations are, in Benedict Anderson's phrase, an invented or imagined community, and the Irish have shown more relish for that fiction than the most. In particular, they have asked their writers to chart its progress for them. On the other hand the Irish have also shown a marked aversion to the idea of the state, which levies taxes and asks for other sacrifices-and so have their contemporary writers. The problem is that the ideal nation can only achieve concrete form through the medium of the state, whose apparatus, ever since the colonial phase of their experience, many of them have learned to hate or fear. A true republic - a happy embodiment of the idea of the nation in a state - is something that all Irish people, and not, and not just O Criomhthain's Blasket Islanders, have yet to know. (Foster:280).

CHAPTER-3

VISITER AT MY OWN DOORSTEP¹:

Censorship, Violence and Resistance in late 19th and early 20th Century Irish Drama.

Working under censorship is like being intimate with someone who does not love you with whom you want no intimacy, but who presses himself in upon you. The censor is an intrusive reader, a reader who forces his way into the intimacy of the writing transaction, forces out the figure of the loved or courted reader, reads your words in a disapproving and censorious fashion.²

Censorship is a complicated phenomenon. It marks the boundary of what is accepted by the norms of a particular society and what is not accepted. Acceptance of the norms of a particular society might be different from other communities, and so are the norms of what they reject, and that is the reason why authors and their works which get rejected in a particular country get accepted in a different country. It is also a matter of great interest, how certain nations function in terms of performing nationalism. The way cultural nationalism rigidly sticks to a religious sacred identity by harping on to an imaginary nostalgic past hinders the progress of the nation and its people. The intolerance generated by sacred concepts results in the creation of a mass culture that is intolerant and rigid in itself. This intolerance poses a threat to the voice and the vision of the author by making him a visitor at his own doorstep.

The intolerance that is displayed through riots, burning of a book, or banning it, castigation of the author, and violent reaction towards him/her at a book launch are the various examples of how intolerance towards the author and his vision of truth is shown in

¹This phrase has been taken from web article written by Hugo Hamilton for the Independent Post. Web <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/book-of-a-lifetime-the-aran-islands-by-john-millington-syng-1958026.html>> 23 June 2012.

²J. M. Coetzee, *Giving Offence*, 1996, P.38

public. The way the exiled authors are greeted in their own country through bans presents before the whole world the level of intolerance that is embedded in certain communities on religious and identity issues. It is more disturbing to observe how women authors are portrayed as monsters and threats to national identity, thus castigated and are forced to live in exile. Moreover, it is not just the women authors who are castigated for writing about the truth of their lives, it is also the men who face fierce oppositions for taking up issues of women's liberation in their writings, as we will examine in relation to the playwrights selected for this study.

The writers were forced to live in exile because the writings that were produced by them were against the norm. These writings were rejected on grounds of blasphemous account of Irish womanhood, unconventional morality depiction and savage mannerism of Irish peasantry class. This depiction was unacceptable to the nationalists who fed the masses on stories and myths that were imaginary in their own way. This enmity between the artist and the nationalism forces artists to seek a home away from home. It also forces him to imagine a home away from home. It makes him seek an identity in a new land. This home can be described as his birthplace, a place where he can identify with, the people the language and the culture, but when in exile he thinks of his home as an imagined past that is marked with the same marked identification. But when in exile the artist not only misses his home but reimagines it, he reinvents it by creating it in his memory over and over again, adding some bits and pieces to it, every time he looks back at it.

The courage to say what the artist believes in and which he writes about comes with a great risk: the risk is of losing one's homeland and to be disowned by its own land. For sure, politics and political circumstances play a great role in the castigation of an author, who writes not of the nations, or sings of the nation but writes of it, what he sees for himself and also what he imagines of it.

Ireland has homed and exiled plentiful artists, it could have owned them, but unfortunately they were disowned by their own nation through exile. These authors suffered from a syndrome that is the rudimentary characteristic of a great artist, that is to say, these artists were not afraid to take risk of writing what is difficult for everyone to express. The artist pushes the limit, writes and expresses the conflict, stands on a sharp edge, risking a part of his own identity. Why? The answer is, to discover and write the truth that is unsaid and unexplored. He risks not only his identity but also his home, where he was born and brought

up. Why? It is because the truth that he seeks through the writings is far superior than clinging to his feeling of nostalgia for his homeland. For if he is scared of taking a deep plunge in the ocean by risking his own life, who will go out and discover the treasures for everyone else to see? Writers who leave the comfort of belonging to his home, and set on an exile become hybrid identities, like Rushdie says such artistes emerge from being migrants to mutants.

The identity of belonging to a nation is jeopardised when the author chooses to write not about propaganda; for he is not a statesman and he does not belong to some party. He is an artist which means that his loyalties are superior; his loyalties are towards a larger whole. He might shatter the utopian dream of a great nation building process, or he might create one. The fidelity toward the art and truth that is being represented through the art is the aim of the author, not the allegiance towards propaganda or a political party. He doesn't valorise the world around him because of his conviction that there is nothing to glorify. One may ponder here about the significance of authors in a society. Although it is impossible to imagine nations without artistes, both share a very strange relationship; particularly the ones who are castigated by their own country. It is quite interesting to notice how one nation rejects an author or an artiste and how the neighbour nation embellishes the author by giving honorary awards. Writers, for instance, Salman Rushdie from India, Taslima Nasrin from Bangladesh, Sean O' Casey and Joyce from Ireland are some of the most controversial authors who raised their voice to seek a truth, by presenting the dilemmas present in their societies and say it aloud. Some said it through the books they wrote and some attempted to say it through the platform of stage, like J.M Synge and O' Casey, what was common was the rejection, the riots and the exile.

Literature is not in the business of copyrighting certain themes for certain groups. And as for risk, the real risk of any artiste are taken in the work, in pushing the work to the limits of what is possible, in the attempt to increase the sum of what is possible, in the attempt to increase the sum of what it is possible to think. Books become good when they go this edge and risk falling over it- when they endanger the artiste by reason of what he has, or has not, artistically dared (Rushdie: 15)³.

This truth gets its representation through the writer's voice; it is an outcome of the real experience. But it is not easy to write the truth in the first place and it is way more

³Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands, Essays and Criticism*, 1981-1991, Granta Books, London, New York 1992. P 15.

difficult to face what comes as a consequence for writing of this truth. Authors and artistes who write the unembellished or non-sanitised truth fall prey to fanatic nationalism. Nations seem like fragile entities that seem to be intolerant towards the opinions and criticisms of the society. The truth thus falls prey to the politics of nationalism and the artiste has to leave his or her homeland and has to set out on journey of finding another homeland. But as I have argued in my research that the clinginess to the past, holding on to a nostalgic identity on the part of a nation is natural; one has to find a way to hunt for better routes to muddle through the nostalgia of a glorious past and move ahead with present day realities that come with the progression of time. The nostalgia and the sense of alienation that the exiled author undergoes is different from what is being felt by the migrant who moves to a different land not because he is castigated by his own homeland but because of the better opportunities for work. But the case of an author is different, especially the author who is not allowed to enter his own country, for he took the risk of writing his truth by shattering the truth that is being accepted by the majority of population. The sort of alienation that the exiled author goes through is different from that of a migrant. But here I would like to add that this sense of alienation that builds up in the mind of the exiled author not just allows him to imagine and recreate his homeland but also it makes him more open about expressing his opinion and his conviction in the truth that he seeks. I would also like to mention that the exile in a way provides the author a sort of larger freedom of expression by exposing him to a cosmopolitan atmosphere in comparison to narrow constraints of nations and fanatic nationalism that is linked to them.

Exile is a dream of a glorious return. Exile is a vision of revolution: Elba, not St Helena. It is an endless paradox: looking forward by always looking back. The exile is a ball hurled high into the air.⁴

One may argue that the authors here in question experienced exile due to their castigation, which was an outcome of the clash of the politics of nationalism with that of the freedom of expression, a clash between art and ideology. The choice that these writers are confronted is of either to maintain a silence or to leave their homelands. The author of course chooses to live in a distant place away from home. Choosing silence or sanitising his work is not a choice for him, rather than giving an embellished and glorified account of something that he does not feel convinced to present. My argument is that a great writer will always use literature and make use of its tools like realism to bring a change in the society by depicting

⁴This quote has been taken from the book *Satanic verses* written by the exiled author Salman Rushdie.

the existing condition and also suggesting better solutions to problems posed for a community. Thus if in the process of writing the truth if one has to face the distance from their homelands, one should again seek a superior truth, which is above nationalism and boundaries, for the artist is the citizen of world. One does not need to be fearful of exiled existence, but rather look at it as a process to discover a higher truth. One needs to have a pugilistic attitude on behalf of the author, for the survival of a truth that is beyond any political, social or religious propaganda. A writer is not a man belonging to a nation he is a world citizen.

For Irish authors the baggage of the colonised historical past was too heavy a burden to portray a strong national identity. The Irish identity was not a single identity; it was a complicated phenomenon, particularly because of the various brutal plantations, like the Ulster plantation. Historical facts like this complicated the relationship between the Catholic natives and the Protestant settlers from Scotland and Britain. The natives thus shared a hatred for the Protestants. Although the cultural nationalistic revival was headed majorly by Protestant and Anglo Irish authors, it harped on the Celtic nostalgic past, and the Gaelic roots for their national identity. Cultural nationalism was led by Protestant authors and writers in creating an Irish identity ignored the complicated history before the cultural nationalistic era, as a result of which the Irish identity becomes way more complex to understand. This complexity is thus the concern of both the authors in question here, J.M Synge and Sean O' Casey. These were the authors who took the risk of writing they thought was convincing to be written about. These authors wrote of Ireland: peasantry, religion and unconventional morality, three things that were most sacred for Irish. It was a result of the artistic audacity on the part of these authors that they wrote what nobody dared to write, for Casey critiqued the most sacred event in Irish history and Synge who wrote about unconventional gender and morality in his plays.

Religion is one of the main components of the national identity. It is a part of the identity of the nation to which an individual belongs. Religion is not only a cultural exercise but it also a complicated phenomenon that differentiates and divides masses. This leads us to think that it is a part of the larger politics that distinguishes and divides people rather than uniting them. It further complicates the phenomenon of nations and nationalism, as these communities rely on the religious identities to mobilize individuals for not always the right causes. Thus religion turns the nationalism to fanatic nationalism that is an extreme type of nationalism, to which the authors fall prey to. The conflicts between the Catholics and the

Protestants have always been the root cause of the non-acceptance of the Anglo-Irish community in Ireland. They were looked upon as the agents of the British Crown and were never considered as natives by the natives. This position of being an outsider that came from first being a non-native and second being a Protestant lies at the heart of the problem of alienation of the artistes that I am writing about. The feeling of not being accepted is the feeling that one undergoes when writers like Synge and Casey are charged by nationalistic leaders of not being familiar enough with the Irish culture. One may argue that to live in a different country and then feel the pangs of exiled existence is easy to comprehend but to live in one's own country and feel alienated and not being accepted is a predicament that is strangely devastating for the author.

Past is a country from which we have all migrated, that its loss is a part of our common humanity, says Salman Rushdie in his essay *Imaginary Homelands*. Writers who write about the past write of imagined places through their imagination. They use their lived past experiences to recreate what they can recollect from the imagination of the past, particularly when they are away from their homelands. The phenomenon of exile works in different ways. Rushdie in his essay also mentions how migration, especially in the case of an artiste, who has been disowned by his own country adds to his experience, and thus as he suggests migrants becomes mutants.⁵

The predicament of exiled identity can be understood through the figure of Synge's anti-hero Christy Mahon, from *The Playboy of the Western World*. Christy as a rootless and exiled identity seeks him and his by creatively recreates his past through his story of how he murdered his father. In doing so he constructed a part of his self through his past, but he did not deny the existence and the importance of the present, he created what he lacked and in doing so he made use of the image reflected in mirror and broke the mirror when it was important for him to do so, thus in doing so he created himself. Kiberd writes, for to be a new species of man or woman is to lack a given identity, to be nobody but not somebody either (290). The exiled author discovers other aspects of his self, because he has destroyed the mirror of the past, he revisits it by recreating it, and not by destructively clinging on to it to an extent that it will blind him from his present. Thus the destruction of the past elevates the experience of the present, Kiberd further goes on to say that the forces of creation flow through as the ego is released from the constraints of the past(291).What applies to Christy

⁵This phrase is taken from Rushdie's essay *Imaginary Homelands*.

applies to Ireland as a nation, as well as to the exiled author. It is because the psyche of the exiled nationalism and the transformation of the rootless tramp symbolises the flux like nature of the progression from the past to the present, from self-loathing to self-awakening.

The making conscious of the Irish elements leads it to create a perfect mirror in which to view itself, a narcissism of self-love followed by self-loathing, like, like that which causes a parrot in one of Yeats poems to rage at its own image and then to break it. The past has returned, but in the form of self-hatred. In the estrangement which follows, Yeats becomes an instance of the modern man, bleak and yet free. Only the sinful, broken, tainted medium allows progress: another example of *felix culpa*, of going wrong in order to go right. (Kiberd:290)

Declan Kiberd succinctly describes that the points in history at which literature and politics meet have been described as a 'bloody crossroads'. This is because whenever literature and politics meet, freedom of the creative artist, which is the soul of art clashes with the rigidity of political propaganda. Whenever someone critiqued the historical events, that too the most sacred and politicised ones, things got worse. The politics that was related to Irish identity has always been a very sensitive issue for writers, especially when it comes to the presentation of the Irish national identity. The defence of being Irish came with the constantly fighting for not being English. The ghost of the English identity haunted the Irish race to an extent that even the mention of any image or imagination that was non-idealised faced criticism in the form of riots or bans and the deportation of the authors. Joyce, J.M Synge and Sean O' Casey were amongst those writers and authors who, instead of imagining an imaginary picture of Ireland, portrayed the dilemmas, conflicts and the broken Irish predicament. But this led to their castigation and further to their exile. It made them live the life of a foreigner in their own country; one can also say that for individuals like Casey and Synge their homeland also felt like exile, as one can read between the lines the feeling of solitude that came with their non-acceptance. This Anglo Irish solitude was one of the reasons why these authors make a complex case for studying the concept of exile.

The authors in question make an interesting study of complex individuals, as Jonathan Swift describes them, 'strangers in a strange land'⁶. This strangeness was born out of the complicated historical baggage and the Catholic-Protestant identity conflict. This conflict complicated the Irish question furthermore. It becomes stranger, when the insider also felt like an outsider in his own country. One might ponder: Was Ireland really their home? If yes why did they feel like outsiders and strangers? If no, why did writers like O' Casey felt rootless in

⁶Ben Howard gives reference to Jonathan Swift in his article titled *In Sunlight and in Shadow*, *Sewanee Review*, volume 117, Number 4, Fall 2009.

everyplace they lived, even when he spent all his life in exile in England? What is home? And was Ireland a strange homeland? The relationship between the creative writer and his nation is quite a complicated one. The reason can be explained by marking the loyalties of the creative artist with that of loyalty to the nation. The question here to be pondered is which one of the above mentioned entity is to weigh more. Is the author a nation pleaser, like the political propagandists, or are his loyalties to the facts that he sees around him, whether or not they are idealised or not? If Irish peasantry was one sacred thing for Irish, the national identity was another. The authors that are under inquiry here are those who were castigated for portraying Irish women in vulgar and bold colours. Is not nation a narrow boundary that handcuffs the individual who writes about cosmopolitan human experiences? He might celebrate or mighthaul over the coals, or he might reject beliefs that are sacred to a community called nation, but he will write and question the silence. Are nations created for the attainment of freedom, liberal ideals or to colonize their subjects? Nations seem like fragile and sentimental entities, weak and sensitive. Nationalism is thus so intolerant and sectarian that even a feather-light criticism of identity or religion can pose a big question on the existence of the so called big nations. The word nation connotes the image of a wholesome positive identity, that is to say one identity, even when it is not one. This makes it an illusion, an imagined illusion, which is a sort of dream.

Catholic-Gaelic Irishness as an authentic identity left people with identities that stood apart from the so called authentic Irish identity. When we look back on the ideals of the cultural nationalistic revival that aimed at creating the national fabric and consciousness through the revival of the real Irish identity, we observe that it aimed at creating a single Irish identity, which I argue is a bent concept. As Joyce also says that there could be no single Irishness, no restricted pastoral consciousness⁷. It is worth mentioning how Kiberd observes the following facts about *The Playboy*, he says:

In portraying an Irish hero who is acclaimed by village girls for a deed of violence, Synge offered . . . `a subtle irony on the cult of the hero.' His play shows that the so-called fighting Irish can only endure the thought of violence when the deed is committed elsewhere or in the past. But when a killing occurs in their own back yard, then they become suddenly aware of that gap between poetic stories and foul deeds. Far from being another attempt to pander to the British notion of Ireland, Synge's play was an honest attempt to express the nation to itself, to reveal to his own countrymen the ambiguity of their own attitude to violence. . . . He saw only too well how generations of Irishmen would sing ballads of glamorized rebellion and offer funds

⁷Jaime DeLanghe 2008-*Joyce the Playwright*, page 4.

for the freedom-fighters--so long as the fighting took place at a safe distance in past history or at the other side of a patrolled political border. He believed that a writer's first duty may be to insult rather than to humour his countrymen, to shock his compatriots into a deeper self-awareness of their own dilemmas. He exploded forever the strange myth of the fighting Irish and, like Joyce, revealed to his countrymen an even more distressing truth--the fact that their besetting vice was not pugnacity but paralysis⁸

I agree with what Kiberd has to say about the duties of an author, and I would also like to add here that Synge's Christy of *The Playboy* represents his broader perspective of what he perceived as his stand as an author. His Christy Mahon emerges as a hero not because he clings to his past, a past where he was being victimised, like Ireland by his father but because he chooses to leave that place that fraught his headway as an individual. He thus chose to walk day and night as a vagrant, as a rootless man with no identity, to discover who he really was; tragic but new transformed Christy. He does not confirm to the stereotypical idea as Kiberd has mentioned above. His deed of killing his father again by brutally hitting him with an axe in the play makes him an anti-hero, the transformation process in the last act of the play symbolises that clinging on to past does not create something new which is better for future. Learning from the past and progressing with the changing time is the petition to create nations that are communities that are formed on humanly grounds rather than on the sectarian and religious grounds. In its attempt to become one of its kind, it lost its connection with the world outside Ireland and in itself became a strange land because it could never open itself to the world outside Ireland. His transformation from the uncouth rootless tramp to the playboy of the western world symbolises his anti-nostalgic attitude towards the past. He used lie to tell his story in heroic colours, whereas when the Mayoites saw him performing the deed in front of them, they got to know how brutal the action is, in comparison to the story that was being narrated to them. Likewise the story of the Celtic myths and the Volk identity that the Irish revival seek to follow was an imagined identity that was too far away from the present situation of the Irish and thus as a result they always found themselves in a condition of self-doubt.

Synge went to Aran attracted by the ideal of the simple harmony of the lives of the peasants, to escape the decadent culture of Paris. He wrote of his first curragh trip to Inishmaan, 'It gave me a moment of exquisite satisfaction to find myself moving away from civilisation in this rude canvas canoe of a model that has served primitive races since man first went on the sea.' But even here, as he exults in his withdrawal from civilisation, his language is that of the decadence; the 'moment of exquisite satisfaction' is Pater's ideal in the famous 'Conclusion' to *The Renaissance*, it is the object of Des Esseintes' quest in *A Rebours* [the

⁸ Declan Kiberd, *Sharp Critique of Excess* (1980), in J. M. Synge: Four Plays.

work by Huysmans that is a candidate for the book that poisoned Dorian Gray; see your Norton edition]. Synge in 1898 was a dilettante, self-consciously cherishing his 'impressions,' at his most imitative when he tried hardest to express his own reactions. Yeats's recollection of Synge's early work gives us an acute image of his failings: 'I have but a vague impression, as of a man trying to look out of a window and blurring all that he sees by breathing upon the window.' Synge at this stage was indeed a prisoner of his own self-consciousness, and the window had to be shattered before he could develop into a creative artist (23).⁹

In creating every character and landscape the author writes about a part of his own imagination and consciousness, the man or the woman that hides behind the thick and thin curtains of his consciousness. Every line and every word that he uses represents a sort of question and confrontation faced by the one who struggles with the paper and with himself to bring out something which is of a higher value to humanity. Whether it is Synge's Christy or Casey's Rosie it is not the pure imagination of the author, it is the faces and the people he catches around him the author wants to question the people who affect him and question him, with a potent eye that questions something about the environment around him. The characters are thus the emblems of those norms, religious beliefs and the gender roles that the author poses a question to. These are the norms that both these playwrights attempted to challenge because of the disagreement with the other contemporary playwrights with whose idea of nationalism these playwrights beg to differ. Synge defines the purpose of his drama, "We should not go to the theatre as we go to a chemist's or a dram shop but as we go to a dinner where the food we need is taken with pleasure and excitement"¹⁰

The wits of the author takes uncountable plunges and the characters that he creates emerge after being dead for numerous times in the mind of the author; he drowns them, he makes him swim, he makes him suffer and he makes him die. Why? Because he is part of his imagination, likewise the creator and the makers nation of are thinkers and people who open themselves to possible possibilities of new century, they risk writing the dilemmas they face and observe around them, and create works that sometimes are humorous and sometimes shocking, but one thing I am sure of is that they pose a question to the readers and the people who see these writing finding a voice in the voice of an actor, on a stage. For they pose questions by shocking them, which is one of the main aim of theatre and of the creative

⁹*Synge: A Critical Study of the Plays*, by Nicholas Grene (London: Macmillan, 1975)

¹⁰Sen S, *The Playboy of the Western World*, A critical evaluation, Unique Publishers 2007 isbn-81-8357-050-x

artiste. The first duty of a writer Brendan Behan wrote, "is to let his fatherland down, otherwise he is no writer"¹¹

Thus in order to symphonise with the new emerging world, and to strike a balance between what is going on in the world scenario one needs to maintain a fine balance between the past present and the future, for the present depends on how one learns from the past and looks forward to future in creating a better civilisations. But the Irish literary revival seemed to get struck into the past and as a result of which it did not welcome the change that came with the changing time, the portrait of Ireland that was depicted by Synge and Casey was Modern and Irish nationalists seemed to have a problem with modernity. The non-acceptance of modernity that was represented through the text was rejected by the nationalists and the mass population, as a result of which the Sean O' Casey left Ireland, some say he left for good, hard to say whose good. Ireland lost one of its jewels, but it will never realise it. Kiberd writes in this context,

The inauthentic Irish fled from the Pressure of the stereotype and then the English made them Irish inspite of themselves: but the more thoughtful Irish sought to free Ireland in the only meaningful sense by freeing their expressive selves. They did this like Christy Mahon at the end of *the Playboy* by constructing themselves from within and throwing them away in the mirror. In making themselves Irish, they did what he did and eluded final description; for to be a new species of man or woman is to lack a given identity, to be not nobody but not somebody either.¹²

One can also argue that Synge's nationalism seeks not the lost cause but the new future and new horizons for Ireland, the way he portrayed women strongly independent and highly eloquent, women who seek for a way and take a stand in a situation, like that of Nora, shows he was imagining women of hybrid abilities. His portrayal of morality and experiment with the stereotypical image of hero also presents that he was a man with a different perspective on gender as well on the issues of nationalism. Unlike Pearse and Arthur Griffith, Seamus Deane observes:

". . . Ireland's nationalism offered an escape into health, sanity and community, but for Synge nationalism was a moment of resistance to the inevitable transformation of traditional life, not a programme for redemption for it. In this his nationalism deviates in a manner from that of [Padrick] Pearse who sought, in a new educational system and in a new ideology of cumulative rebellion, the instruments for the re-establishment of a lost cause.¹³

¹¹This quote has been taken from the preface of the book *Modern Irish drama*, xiv. edited by John Harrington, London, ISBN 1991-0-393-96063-3.

¹²Declan Kiberd p 290. *Inventing Ireland*. p 290

¹³ Seamus Deane, *Synge and Heroism*, 1985, in J. M. Synge: Four Plays, ed. Ronald Ayling, London: Macmillan, 1992.

W. B Yeats writes “Edgar Allan Poe and Walt Whitman are national writers of America, although the one had his first acceptance in France and in other in England and Ireland”¹⁴ The point here to discuss is that it has actually become a very common phenomenon that writers who are castigated and exiled from their own countries become the poet laureates of other countries, writers like Rushdie, Taslima Nasrin, Brendan Behan and Sean O’ Casey fall under the category of this pool of authors. These authors are rejected in their own country but the same work gets highly acclaimed on the basis of literary merit, which again brings us back to think about the nature of nationalism and the contradictions that are attached to it. On one hand, in Ireland O’ Casey’s works are banned and rioted against in Dublin and on other hand he was given honorary awards and degrees from institutes and universities which he kept declining. It is difficult to say which position is better to be in; visitor at one’s own doorstep or a permanent tourist in a foreign land. This predicament of non –belongingness is again a complicated one, but one thing is possible, writers mould them in a very intelligent fashion and the exile in a way turns them into hybrid identities, they live in their own imagined communities, because they know nations are nothing but are Imagined communities, like Benedict Anderson says. Kiberd in his book *Inventing Ireland* writes very beautifully of the exiled authors. He says:

The man or woman of genius moulded the nation, rather than being made its mould: and because of their creative unpredictability, they encountered opposition, but they were embraced there “in the end”. In the mean time they might have to turn for protection to the despised police of the colonial power, as Yeats did during the Playboy riots and as Rushdie would decades later: expressing the people ‘s life was far more dangerous than merely exploiting it. (Kiberd:165)

He very rightly writes in the essay titled ‘Nationality and cosmopolitanism’ that Yeats’ new species of man is recognizably one of Rushdie’s hybrids people who route themselves in ideas rather than in places, in memories as much as in material thing; people who have been obliged to define themselves because they are so defined by others –by their otherness; people in whose deep selves strange fusions occur, unprecedented unions between what they were and where they find themselves.(Kiberd: 164). Thus writing about people in exile, whether an exile that is internal, that is when people treat fellowmen as strangers, or the external exile wherein one willingly or unwillingly leaves the homelands, Kiberd by giving a reference to Salman Rushdie says that for an migrant artiste the search is for the mode of

¹⁴ Yeats, W.B, *Nationality or Cosmopolitanism* ,Samhain, 1904.

expressions, a fuller articulation and this very quest becomes its own point for the writer. Kiberd further crystallises the concept of nation and the consciousness that is related to them by quoting Yeats. He elaborates that a nation could achieve consciousness through exposure to others, similarly, a self could only awaken by an act of hybridization: for nothing could create until first it was split into two (Kiberd: 165).

Heaney calls the collision between art and ideology "the quarrel between free creative imagination and the constraints of religious, political, and domestic obligations."¹⁵ All these constraining obligations resemble the nets that threatened to trap Stephen Dedalus, and Joyce was accurate if exaggerating when he went on to charge that therefore "Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow"¹⁶. Many were devoured, but many of the creative and clever ones escaped, and it should be apparent that the political revolution and the obligation to accept its sanctity did not manage to repress or silence Ireland's writers. Exiled authors according to Joyce make their way out of the quoted strange country, as according to him this country has not a lot to offer to its creative writers. The image of Ireland that was envisaged by De Valera was of a dream that was like this, the Ireland we have dreamed of would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as a basis of right living, of a people who were satisfied with frugal comfort and devoted their leisure to the cosy homesteads, whose village would be joyous with the romping of the sturdy children, the contests of athletic youths, the laughter of comely maidens; whose fireside would be forums of the wisdom of old age.¹⁷ It sounded like a really beautiful dream, but as we know dreams are far away from reality. Ireland as a dream nation was always beautiful, because Irish have a great love for imagination and that too imagining future, while they look back at the past. Writers like Synge have been rejected and will always be rejected, because new things take time to get accepted, but to shock the reader and give them what is pleasing to their ears is not the duty of a good writer. As W.B Yeats mentions:

...in Synge's plays also, fantasy gives the form and not the thought, for the core is always, as in all great art, an overpowering vision of certain virtues, and our capacity for sharing in that vision is the measure of our delight. Great art chills us at first by its coldness or its

¹⁵Easter i. Seamus Heaney, *Sweeney Astray*, New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1983, p. 2.

¹⁶ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916; New York: Viking, 1964), p. 203. 28

¹⁷Eamon De Valera- on New Free State-Peter Costello, *The Heart Grown Brutal*, p189. *The Irish Revolution in Literature, From Parnell to the Death of Yeats, 1891-1893*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin. 1977.

strangeness, by what seems capricious, and yet it is from these qualities it has authority, as though it had fed on locusts and wild honey.¹⁸

The rootless hero, the tramp and the vagrant images in the bleak landscape that have been portrayed by Synge in his plays represents how deeply unfamiliar and alienated he felt as an individual and as an artist living in Ireland. Thus his heroes are tramps- rootless entities who always keep moving from one place or the other. In a way they also represent men who speak for women like *Nora*. The tramp of *The Shadow* and Christy Mahon from *The Playboy* never settle down in one place and keep on moving shows their sense of freedom in being a migrant, the same is with the authors who migrate to other countries like tramps; tramps who leave their homelands to seek something that the home was lacking, their leaving home was more of like an act of rebellion on their part, like the authors who left Ireland and made their way to some other homeland.

One can also say that what one imagines of nation is an imagined dream of an imagined community, identity or an image to be fulfilled, but there is a difference between the dream and the reality just like there is difference between the story and the deed, truth and lie. As Yeats wrote:

In 'The Player Queen' Yeats followed Wilde in his explanation of the underlying idea: 'To be great . . . we must seem so. Seeming that goes on for a lifetime is no different from reality.' Synge was not so sure. In 'The Playboy' he offered his criticisms of Wilde's theory, of fine words divorced from real action, of gestures struck rather than deeds done--in short, of the fatal Irish gift for blarney. He voiced his own doubts in Pegeen's grief-stricken complaint that 'there's a great gap between a gallous story and a dirty deed.' Synge suspected that, at bottom, the mask of the elegant anti-self purveyed by Wilde and Yeats was merely a subtle latter-day version of ancient Irish blarney. (Kiberd)¹⁹

Thus we must understand the basic assumption that in order to balance with the present, nationalism needs to break the mirror of past identity, so that the new identity can be made; like the exiled author transforms as a hybrid identity, likewise the nation too must urge to find a new form, as holding on to the past is death in itself. Kiberd finely says if the energy of life is the urge to find a satisfactory expression, then a nation is but a longing for a new form, sign that all dreams end in a beautiful body. There is a beautiful image in Saul Bellow's latest novel, *The Dean's December*. The central character, the Dean Cord, hears a dog barking wildly somewhere. He

¹⁸Yeats, W.B. *J. M. Synge and the Ireland of His Time, Essays and Introductions*. New York: Collier Books, 1968)

¹⁹Kiberd, Declan. *Sharp Critique of Excess*. 1980., in J. M. Synge: Four Plays Ed. Ronald Ayling. London, Macmillan, 1992.

imagines that the barking is the dog's protest against the limit of dog experience. "For God's sake", the dog is saying "Open the universe a little more!" and because Bellow is, of course not really talking about dogs, or not only about dogs, I have the feeling that the dog's rage and its desire , is also mine, ours, everyone's for God's sake, open the universe a little more" (p. 21)²⁰.

²⁰Salman Rushdie refers to Saul Bellow in *Imagined Communities* ,1982,p 21.

Conclusion

Of the dark past
A child is born
With joy and grief
My heart is torn.¹

In this dissertation I intended to study the contradictions present in Irish cultural Nationalism when it is studied in relationship to Gender and Class. I intended to do so by critiquing the select plays of the most controversial playwrights of the Irish literary revival. The study has revealed that nationalism is a problematic phenomenon and its association to gender further makes the entire revivalist movement all the more complicated. It was further interesting to note that class played a very important role in the study of these gender entities, as the subject of the study were working class Irish women and men and their interpretation in the plays in these select plays. As I moved ahead with the study of Ireland as a nation, with its historical colonial baggage, it became more intricate but interesting. My concern in studying the nationalism in relation to the plays of Synge and Sean O'Casey was to have a profounder understanding of the politics of identities that has always been attached to Irish nationalism, that too through class and gender representation.

This research also intended to understand the limits as well as the demerits of a narrow nationalism that ignores concerns that affect the artist and the creative writer who falls prey to political fanaticism that stems from this type of narrow nationalism. It also studied the aspect of the creative artist who imagines and recreates his homeland in his imagination to make his expression potent, so that it survives to tell his truth and to convey it through his work. The author who gets exiled because of the criticism of his work suffers first because he or she is not allowed to come to his own homeland but it also helps one to explore lands, cultures and people which one did not identify with while living in a foreign land. This in a way makes the exiled author a hybrid being, for he lives and goes through so many experiences to discover and experiment with the facets of his true identity and his imagined

¹Joyce James, *Irish writer. Ecce Puer Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, The Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair, eds. (2d ed., 1988) W. W. Norton & Company.

past. As I have argued, the creative writer has his fidelity to the truth he discovers through the experience of the world around him, which he needs to express to broaden the boundaries of human experience. I have found that the sort of cultural nationalism that Ireland sought in the late nineteenth century was anti-modern and its nature was very rigid, which left no space for authors like O' Casey and Synge to express their modern ideas about identity and feminism. There is no doubt in saying that the Irish were very defensive about their identity, but the English were also defensive in their own way in possessing the world around them. One can observe their insecurity in the fact that they look upon Irish as their foils. But because the English colonised Ireland for such a long period, their insecurities became less visible. The past that the nationalists and the revivalists harped upon, was a past that had lost its future, it was an idealised past, a past that is a sort of distraction from the difficulties of the present. But this aspect of cultural nationalism was the lacuna inherent in it. Kiberd writes:

Such a past has in effect lost its future, its power to challenge and disrupt: it exists only as a commodity to be admired, consumed, reducing its adherents to the position of tourists in their own country, whose monuments and heritage centers can be visited or re-entered by an act of will. Its people are lulled by their leaders to "become drunk and remembrance"² to recover the past as the fetish rather than to live the flow of actual history. (Kiberd:294)

The contradiction that was present in the cultural nationalism crippled writers like J.M Synge and Sean O' Casey who introduced modernity to the Irish revival through their writings. But because the fixation with the past was so intensified, the modernity that was portrayed through the text of these experimental playwrights epitomised modern themes, to which the cultural nationalism was not open to, thus these works were rejected and banned. The rejection in itself shows that because the theatre was made an object of national importance and a platform for political propaganda, it was not made for the presentation of artistic truth or artistic merit. It was propagated by authors who used it as a tool for political nationalism in the first place.

These works were rejected because the nationalistic fervour blinded the objective eye of the people who were still living in the dream of a glorious imaginary Celtic past, which was hard to win back. But Synge and Casey wrote without the fear of the narrow constraints of nationalistic forces. They wrote of men and women and the world they saw around them—strong spirited women and disillusioned working class men. They knew they were playing

²Declan Kiberd Quotes this phrase from Frantz Fanon. *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961, p.135, in his book *Inventing Ireland*.

with fire, particularly O'Casey in critiquing the Easter Rising of 1916, as it was one of the most important events in Irish history.

O'Casey wrote the play because his truth was different from those who participated in the Rising; his perspective on it was different because he suffered like the whole working class community, due to the failure of the socialistic ideals to nationalistic ideals. This disillusionment with the ideologies lies at the heart of his work. Synge unlike O' Casey didn't comment on the political events, as his way of representing Irish conflict was through the depiction of the peasant class males and females living in distant parts of Ireland through the folklore and the stories he heard from them. He wrote and celebrated the Irish peasantry in a light-hearted manner, particularly in *The Playboy*. This comical but satirical representation was considered blasphemy on the name of Irish peasantry as well as on Irish womanhood. These playwrights did not choose these subjects because they are controversial; they chose it because of their conviction to express what they saw worth expressing. Their voice found an expression in the words that were spun with fine creative imagination. For Casey knew that his play would not be greeted well by the mass of population who did not want to see the perspective of life that he had seen, living in a state of disillusionment. But he wrote it without the fear of rejection. W.B Yeats wrote:

To speak of one's emotions without fear or moral ambition, to come out from under the shadow of other men's minds, to forget their needs, to be utterly oneself, that is all the Muses care for. Villon, pander, thief and man-slayer, is as immortal in their eyes, and illustrates in the cry of his ruin as great a truth, as Dante in abstract ecstasy, and touches our compassion more. All art is the disengaging of a soul from place and history, its suspension in a beautiful or terrible light to await the Judgment, though it must be, seeing that all its days were a Last Day, judged already. It may show the crimes of Italy as Dante did, or Greek mythology like Keats, or Kerry and Galway villages, and so vividly that ever after I shall look at all with like eyes, and yet I know that Cino da Pistoia thought Dante unjust, that Keats knew no Greek, that those country men and women are neither so lovable nor so lawless as `mine author sung it me'; that I have added to my being, not my knowledge . . .³

History is witness to the inevitability of great conflicts within communities on question of what is sacred, particularly the fight that originates from the pen of the creative artiste. The sacredness that has been linked to the sentiments and in particular religious emotions is one of the reasons why national identity has always been such a fragile subject. The discussion or even the mere mention of the words that are related to religion are highly politicised in countries seeking an identity for themselves, on the basis of ethnicity and

³Yeats, W.B.J. M. *Synge and the Ireland of His Time*, Essays and Introductions New York, Collier Books, 1968.p26.

culture. One can imagine the level of intolerance on the part of masses, whenever something is written or performed, either on the silver screen or on the theatre stage. The reception that a play, a book or a movie gets shows the changing and evolving pattern of a particular society. When riots break out or an author's work is criticised on the grounds of religion or culture, the author or the filmmaker realizes that for surely it must be something that hit the nerves of the spectators and the readers. The mirror reflects the beautiful as well as the ugly aspect of the self to us, that is why when someone is not happy with the way one is and it shows his ugly and hidden aspect of him, that he is trying to hide it from himself; he breaks the mirrors in pain and agony. We cannot lie to ourselves about our deep faiths as well as our defences that we build around us, defences that build up due to our past good as well as bad experiences. Isn't it? Similar was the predicament of the Irish that came out of a brutal colonised past; broken and fractured. History of the colonial past was a big burden to carry on the tired shoulder that had devastated their personalities for ages. The Imperial colonisation had shattered their psychology by ascribing to them the image of a buffoon, the image that was portrayed by English author in the London theatre. This aggravated Irish pain even more. Thus to a generation that was colonised and made fun of in such a manner was expectation of acceptance of reality portraying a non-idealised society as depicted by Synge and O'Casey was unnatural.

The reason why they could not accept these portrayals, was that as a nation, Ireland did not want to see what had been portrayed by the English for ages on the Western stage. The opposing images of the violent Irish man always haunted them and so they called these plays the writings of decadence, for it was amply clear that the Irish hated the English and the way in which they perceived them. Thus the cultural nationalist aimed to seek the identity that was untouched by the hands of the English, the Irish revival looked back upon the Celtic roots in nostalgia which instead of doing good to Ireland made it more defensive about the Gaelic past and cut it off from the present. The Irish hated the English, like an assaulted woman hates the assaulter from her heart, body and soul. Irish hated English in a similar fashion and they hated how they treated them as their foils and inferiors. The Irish literary revival attempted to treat this hatred by de-Anglicising Ireland through language practice and the re-awakening of the Celtic culture through the myths and the legends of mythical Celtic heroes and the legendary figures. As I have discussed in chapter one the implications and the nature of the revival, and how the playwrights that I have chosen for the study were different in their creative ideologies.

This work primarily intended to study the revival that was channelized through the mechanism of Abbey theatre that further became the National theatre of Ireland, and secondly it aimed at studying the contradictory aspect of nationalism all throughout, through the contradictions and the disagreements that were posed by the most rioted playwrights of the Abbey theatre. These playwrights as by now, we know were the most controversial as well as highly celebrated playwrights, who are acclaimed world-wide for their artistic and creative merit. My study aimed at studying the contradictions of nationalism through the select works of these authors, that too through the trajectory of class and gender, moreover by questioning the norms which these authors broke while writing about the liberation of the woman, and in her image as I have argued they liberated Ireland from victimhood.

Furthermore, I intended to study the gendered image of Ireland, through the gender construction of the female characters that have been portrayed by these playwrights in a spirit of liberalising women, by giving her traits characteristics of male, not to say portraying her in English colours or in the genteelness. These women were the portraits of liberated selves as I have argued and they were painted with the fresh liberated colours, not with the dark colours of oppressions and repression. These authors were visionaries, who knew that clinging to the nostalgia of the ancient past would not create the nation and the national consciousness, and thus through their portrayals of males as well as females they wrote of the imagined future, that keeps in consideration the present, and never forgets the past. As Oscar Wilde wrote, 'The past is of no importance. The present is of no importance. It is with the future that we have to deal. For the past is what ought not to have been. The present is what man ought not to be. The future is what artists are.'

If Synge was enigmatic and who was accused by the nationalists of blasphemy because of the portrayal of the most tabooed subjects, O' Casey on the other hand was criticised for being oversimplified in his language. The vision and perspective they shared to depict Ireland had some affinities with each other, this the reason why I chose it to study both the playwrights together and also in contrast to each other, and to understand a concept that has been carved by communities for seeking a larger identity; national identity. The Ireland that was portrayed by these authors was as I had intended to argue was keeping the heart in past roots but looking forward to the future by coping with the present. It was about remembering the future as Kiberd mentions about remembering the future. In addition to that, one should also keep in mind that one can't stop the past from going forward.

One can say that the battle between art and ideology is a very complicated one. As according to Kiberd, the colonialist crime was the violation of the traditional community; the nationalist's crime was often the denial of the autonomy of the individual. Liberation would come only with forms which stress the interdependence of the community and individual, rather than canvassing the claims of one at the expense of the other. The question which faced the decolonizing world, the question to which it might become the answer, was: How to build a future on the past without returning to it? The danger of the nationalist's culture was its tendency to petrification and martyr cult, which created in many adherents an unhealthy obsession with their future demise (Kiberd:292).

Chaim Gans in his thesis *The Limits of Nationalism* refers to Brian Berry who says that the cultural nationalism is ascribed to the view according to which people belonging to different nations are like animals belonging to different species, also according to his view as Brian writes that what is common to human beings belonging to different nations is of secondary importance. The difference among them, on the other hand, is of utmost importance. This has anti-liberal implications such as that universal norms for humanity as such are either almost impossible or of negotiable value, that every national group needs a different system of laws, or that national cultures must preserve their members, just as the behaviour patterns that characterize one species are not necessarily appropriate for members of other species.⁴

The reason why cultural nationalism botched up to give an identity that it sought was that it missed the link of the colonial historical past, it jumped from Celtic identity to the imagination of a single identity, the fact they chose to ignore was to be taken in consideration, to fulfil the dream of nation. As Yeats wrote,

For the past hundred years Irish Nationalism has had to fight against England, and that fight has helped fanaticism, for we had to welcome everything that gave Ireland emotional energy, and had little use for intelligence so far as the mass of people were concerned, for we had to hurl them against the alien power. The basis of Irish Nationalism has now shifted, and much that once helped is now injurious.⁵

The problem with the nostalgic past method of seeking national identity was as Yeats sums up: there was very little source left, just a scattered Irish-speaking community in the most westerly regions. Not were the members of that community especially impressed by the lure

⁴ Berry, Brian. *Culture and Equality: An Egalitarian Critique of Multiculturalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001.

⁵ Yeats W.B. *Uncollected Prose 2*, ed John P. Frayne, p 452.

of nationalism: a group of Blasket islanders, gathered around a cottage hearth in Easter week 1916 rebellion in Dublin.(145: Yeats)⁶. Although Synge was accused of blasphemy and for portraying the peasantry in a mawkish manner, Weldon Thornton argues very right that Synge's plays eludes the generic stereotype of tragedy and comedy, "representing as they do received western categories of response".(146 :Yeats). Sean O' Casey in contrast questions the cult and represents the nameless hero (Keiberd:224). His quest for voice starts from an ideal, but ends on a disillusioned sad note, that results from experience of the world. His writings are the explorations of what he found out for himself without the mythical or the legendary stories. Kiberd quotes from one of the plays of Bertolt Brecht,

There, a youthful radical has appealed to Galileo to defy the church inquisition and, having being rebuffed, lamented "unhappy the land which has no heroes": and that is the voice of Yeats. After due reflection, however, Galileo responds with the sad wisdom of experience: " No, unhappy the land that is in need of heroes" : and that is Casey's voice.(Kiberd: 225)⁷.

⁶W.B Yeats *Political Identities*, selected essays, 1996, Michigan, University of Michigan Press.

⁷Keiberd quotes and refers to Bertolt Brecht play, *The life of Galileo*.

Select Bibliography

Primary Sources

-- O'Casey, Sean, *Three Dublin Plays, The Shadow of a Gunman, Juno and the Paycock, The Plough and the Stars* London: Macmillan, 1980.

_____ *The Collected Plays of Sean O'Casey*, London: Macmillan, 1949.

--Synge, J.M. *The Aran Islands*, ed, Tim Robinson, Penguin 1992.

_____ *The Complete Plays*. New York: Vintage Books, 1935.

_____ *A Critical Study of the Plays*. London: Macmillan, 1975.

Secondary Sources.

---Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*, London 1983.

---Armstrong, William A. *The Sources and Themes of The Plough and the Stars*, 1961-62.

---Arnold, Matthew. *Lectures and Essays in Criticism*. Ed. R. H. Super. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973.

---Atkinson, Brooks. *Sean O'Casey: From Times Past*. Ed. Robert G. Lowery. London: Macmillan, 1982.

---Boyce, D. George. *Nationalism in Ireland*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1982.

---Bradley, Anthony. Maryann Gialanella Valiulis. *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Ireland*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997.

---Brown, Terence. *The Life of W. B. Yeats: A Critical Biography*. Malden: Blackwell, 1999.

---Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter. On the discursive limits of 'Sex'*, New York, Routledge, 1993.

---_____, *Undoing Gender*, New York and London: Routledge, 2004.

---Chatterjee, Partha. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* London: Zed Books for the United Nations University, 1986.

---Corkery, Daniel. *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature*, Mercier Press, Cork, 1931.

---Cowasjee, Saros. *Sean O'Casey: The Man Behind the Plays*. Edinburgh & London: Oliver and Boyd, 1963.

---Cussack, George, *The Politics of Identity in Irish Drama*, Routledge, U.K 2009.

- Curtis, Edmund, *A History of Ireland*, Meuthuen, London, 1939, sixth edition 1950.
- Curtis, Jr, L.P, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England*, Bridgeport, Conn, 1968.
- _____, *Apes and Angels: Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, Newton Abbot, 1971.
- Deane, Seamus. *Irish Politics and O'Casey Theatre*. 1973.
- _____, *A Short History of Irish Literature*, Notre Dam University Press, 1986.
- Gellner Earnest, *Thought and Change*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964, p.169.
- Frazier, Adrian. *Behind the Scenes: Yeats, Horniman and the Struggle for the Abbey Theatre*. University of California Press, 1990.
- Foster R.F, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972*, New York, Penguin, 1988.
- Frost, Catherine, *Morality and Nationalism*, Routledge, London and New York 2006.
- Gans Chaim, *Limits of Nationalism*- Cambridge University Press-2003.
- Genet, Jacqueline, & Cave, Richard Allen. *Perspectives of Irish Drama and Theatre*, Irish Literary Studies 33, Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1991.
- Graves, R.B., 'The Stage Irishman Among the Irish', *Theatre History Studies* 1 .1981
- Gregory, Lady A., *Lady Gregory's Journals 1916-1930* (ed.) Lennox Robinson London: Putnam, 1946.
- _____, *The Journals Books 1-29 10/10/16- 24/2/25*, Vol 2 (ed.) Daniel J. Murphy, Coole Edition 14, Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1978).
- Greene, David H. and Stephens, Edward, J.M. Synge, 1871-1909, Mac Millan, New York, 1959.
- Greene, N. *Synge: A critical studies of the Plays*, MacMillan, London 1975.
- Greaves, C. Desmond. *Sean O'Casey: Politics and Art*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979.
- Hogan, Robert. *The Experiments of Sean O'Casey*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960.
- Innes, C.L. *Women and Nation in Irish Literature and Society: 1880-1935*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993.
- Kearney, Richard, *Myth and Motherland Ireland's Field Day*. London: Hutchinson, 1985.
- Kiberd, Declan. *Inventing Ireland: The literature of the modern Nation*, Vintage, London, 1996.

---King, Mary, *J.M. Synge: 'National' Drama and the Post Protestant Imagination*. Cambridge UP, 2004.

---Kosok, Heinz ed. *Studies in Anglo-Irish Literature*. Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1982.

---Krause, David. *Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Work*. Mac Gibbon and Kee, London, 1960.

---Krause, David. *Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Work*. Enlarged ed. London & New York: Macmillan, 1975.

_____. *Revisionary Views: Some Counter-Statements About Irish Life and Literature*. Dublin, Oxford: Maunsel, 2002.

---Levitas, Ben. *The Theatre of Nation: Irish Drama and Cultural Nationalism 1890-1916*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002.

---Lyons, F. S.L. *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.

---Maxwell, D.E.S. *A Critical History of Modern Irish Drama 1891*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

---Murray, Christopher. *Seán O'Casey: Writer at Work*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004.

---McDonald, Ronald. *Tragedy and Irish Writing in Synge, O'Casey and Beckett*. London: Macmillan, 2000.

---McCormack, W.J., *From Burke to Beckett: Ascendancy, Tradition and Betrayal in Literary History*, Cork: Cork University Press, 1994.

---McDonald, Ronan, *Tragedy and Irish Literature: Synge, O'Casey and Beckett*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. 2002

_____. *The Abbey Theatre: Interviews and Recollections*, London: Macmillan, 1972.

---Mitchell, Jack. *The Essential O'Casey: A Study of the Twelve Major Plays of Sean O'Casey*, Berlin: Seven Seas, 1980.

---Murray, Christopher, *Sean O'Casey: Writer at Work, A Biography*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2004.

_____. *Twentieth-Century Irish Drama: Mirror Up to Nation*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997.

---O'Connor, Gary, *Sean O'Casey: A Life*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988.

---O'Riordan, John, *A Guide To O'Casey's Plays: From the Plough to the Stars*, London: Macmillan, 1984.

---O' Farrell, Patrick, *England and Ireland since 1800*, Oxford University Press, London 1975. Print.

- ____ *Ireland's English Questions: Anglo-Irish Relations*, New York 1971.
- O'Brien, Conor Cruise. *Passion and Cunning: Notes on the politics of Yeats*, MacMillan, London 1965.
- Paull, Michelle C, *Modernising O'Casey: Challenging Critical Orthodoxies*, ed. Karen Vandavelde, *New Voices in Irish Criticism* 3, Dublin: Four Courts, 2002.
- Peyronnet, Marianne, 'Was Sean O'Casey a Feminist Playwright?', *Times Change* 12 1997.
- Richards, Shaun, *A Question of Location: Theatrical Space and Political Choice in The Plough and the Stars*, *Theatre Research International* 15:1 .1980.
- Roche, Anthony, *Contemporary Irish Drama From Beckett to McGuinness*, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1994.
- Rushdie Salman, *Imaginary homelands: essays and criticism, 1981-1991*, Granta Books, London, New York 1992. 15.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1985.
- Skelton Robin, *J.M Synge and his World*, New York. Viking Press, 1971.
- Schleifer, Ronald (ed.), *The Genres of the Irish Literary Revival*, Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1980.
- Trotter, Mary, *Modern Irish Theatre*, Polity press, USA, 2008.
- Watson, G.J. *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival: Synge, Yeats, Joyce and O'Casey*. Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1979.
- Watt, Joyce Stephen. *O'Casey and the Irish Popular Theatre*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991.
- Welch, Robert, *The Abbey Theatre 1899-1999: Form and Pressure*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Worth, Katharine, *Revolutions in Modern English Drama* (London: Bell, 1972).
- Worth, Katharine, *The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett*, Athlone Press, London, 1978.
- Yeats, W. B. *J. M. Synge and the Ireland of His Time*. New York: Collier Books, 1968.
- ____ *Cathleen Ni Haulihan*, London, Mcmillan, 1966.
- ____, *Autobiographies*, London 1955.
- ____, *Collected Poems*, London, 1950.

_____, *Essays and Introductions*, London 1961.

---"*The Plough and the Stars*": Socialism (1913) and Nationalism (1916) Author(s): David Krause Reviewed work(s): Source: *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Winter, 1997), pp. 28-40 Published by: University of St. Thomas (Center for Irish Studies)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20557441> .Accessed: 09/04/2012 05:45

---*WHAT ENIGMA?* The O'Casey Enigma by Michael O' hadha Review by: Christopher Harries, *The Cork Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (March 1981), pp. 28-29. Published by: Triskel Arts Centre

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20768651> .Accessed: 09/04/2012 05:42.

---*The Plough and the Stars* by Sean O'Casey Advocate of Peace through Justice, Vol. 88, No. 11 (November, 1926), p. 636 Published by: World Affairs Institute

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20661416> .Accessed: 09/04/2012 05:48.

---The Politics of J. M. Synge Author(s): Robin Skelton Reviewed work(s): Source: *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Spring, 1977), pp. 7-22. Published by: The Massachusetts Review, Inc.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25088702> .Accessed: 02/03/2012 04:52

---O'Casey as Critic Author(s): Christopher Murray Reviewed work(s): Source: *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Dec., 1992), pp. 58-67 Published by: Canadian Journal of Irish Studies

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25512928> .Accessed: 09/04/2012 05:52.

---Making the Least of Masculine Authority: Sean O'Casey's "*Paycock*" and "*Plough and the Stars*" Author(s): Cathy Airth Reviewed work(s): Source: *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Fall, 2006), pp. 42-47 Published by: Canadian Journal of Irish Studies

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25515638> .Accessed: 09/04/2012 05:24.

---The Socialist Legacy of Sean O'Casey Author(s): Robert G. Lowery Reviewed work(s): Source: *The Crane Bag*, Vol. 7, No. 1, *Socialism & Culture* (1983), pp. 128-134 Published by: Richard Kearney.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30060562> .Accessed: 09/04/2012 05:43

---J. M. Synge and Nationalism: Concerning *The Playboy of the Western World*, Author(s): Chiaki Kojima Reviewed work(s): Source: *The Harp*, Vol. 13 (1998), pp. 50-60 Published by: IASIL-JAPAN

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20533387> .Accessed: 13/06/2012 09:22

---A Century of Irish Drama: Widening the Stage by Stephen Watt; Eileen Morgan;
ShakirMustafaReview by: Riana O'DwyerThe Canadian Journal of Irish Studies, Vol. 28/29,
Vol. 28, no. 2 - Vol. 29, no. 1 (Fall, 2002 -Spring, 2003), pp. 211-213Published by: Canadian
Journal of Irish Studies

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25515443> .Accessed: 13/06/2012 09:33.

---Seán O'Casey: Writer at Work by Christoper MurrayReview by:
MártonMesterháziHungarian Journal of English and American Studies (HJEAS), Vol. 12,
No. 1/2, ReVisions ofAustralia: Histories, Images, Identities (Fall, 2006), pp. 312-
320Published by: Centre for Arts, Humanities and Sciences (CAHS), acting on behalf of the
University of DebrecenCAHS.

StableURL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41274369> .Accessed: 13/06/2012 09:31.

---Pilkington, Lionel, “‘Every Crossing Sweeper Thinks Himself a Moralist’: The Critical
Role of Audiences in Irish Theatre History’, Irish University Review 27:1 (1997), 152-165.

---GanChaim*The Limits of Nationalism*, Tel Aviv University Press. Cambridge University
Press.2003.

Web<assets.cambridge.org/97805218/.../9780521808644_frontmatter.pdf> Accessed on 25
july 2012.

---Wilson, Christina, *Representations of Women in the Abbey Theatre*.

---Evans, K Ryan,*Dying for the Shadow: The Heroism of Minnie* - Weber State University.

Web<www.weber.edu/.../Aelurus_Vol1_ScholarlyWriting_Shadow.pdf>Accessed on 25
July 2012.

---Moore, Mathew.*Terrible Beauty, Postcolonialism, Modernism, and The Fate of Tragedy in
The Abbey Theatre, 1897-1907*. Muhlenberg College.2004.

Web<<http://www.muhlenberg.edu/main/academics/english/courses/moorethesis.pdf>>Accesed
on 25 July 2012.

---Busse, Kristina.*I ‘ve got a bad wife in the house: Competing Discourses of Nationalism,
Sexuality, and Religion in the Shadow of the Glen*.

Web -<<http://www.kristinabusse.com/cv/research/synge.pdf>>Accesed on 26 July 2012.

---Frost, Catherine.*Morality and Nationalism*, Routledge, London& New York.Web-
Accessed-26 July 2012.

<<http://mey.homelinux.org/social/Catherine%20Frost/Morality%20and%20Nationalism%20%28381%29/Morality%20and%20Nationalism%20-%20Catherine%20Frost.pdf>> 16 July
2012.

