

Liberation or Resignation:

Nora, Ellida and Anna in Ibsen's, Synge's and O'Neill's plays.

Kaoru Imanishi

I

According to Raymond Williams, Ibsen “created: the consciousness of modern European drama” in *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*.⁽¹⁾ Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), “the father of modern drama”, created the famous woman Nora Helmer who slammed the door on her previous life, leaving her husband and three children behind, and chose instead the way of independence and liberty. The controversial realistic play *A Doll's House* was produced at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen in 1879. Bernard Shaw claimed that *A Doll's House*⁽²⁾ conquered Europe and founded a new school of dramatic art.

Modernism in the theatre movement was initiated by August Strindberg, and also by Ibsen though their stances were different in one aspect. While Strindberg emphasized the natural and biological roles of women, Ibsen placed women almost on an equal footing with men. His idea of humanism was easily interpreted as feminism because the seminal stage of the feminist movement was beginning to gain ground in Europe at the time when *A Doll's House* was being produced in various European countries. Egil Törnqvist writes:

Both Ibsen and Strindberg were highly skeptical of the society in which they lived, but while Ibsen was so primarily because it was a

male society, in which women were suppressed, Strindberg opposed society because it was too removed from nature. In a wider, Darwinian =Rousseauan sense, he argued . . . that both men and women are victims of the repressive mechanisms of modern Society. To Strindberg the difference between 'natural' and 'cultural' man was of fundamental importance. Rather than imitate the cultural males who were on the wrong track, women should return to their natural, biological roles of being mothers in the first place.⁽³⁾

When Ibsen's *A Doll's House* was first performed, Ireland was still a paternalistic society dominated by males, and therefore female roles were mainly domestic. In those days Ireland was still exploited by England; its relationship was somewhat similar to that of Irish women to Irish men. It was natural that Irish nationalists, like feminists advocating their independence and liberty from oppressive males, sought freedom from the oppressive England. W. B. Yeats, who promoted the founding of the National Literary Society in 1892 and later established the Irish Literary Theatre, wanted to produce a completely new drama which was "a revolt against realism and the Ibsen-type drama," as he thought "Ibsen is 'immoral'".⁽⁴⁾ Though Yeats did not like Ibsen-type drama, he hoped to do the same as Ibsen did in Bergen and Christiania (Oslo) in Norway in terms of an Irish cultural movement with Lady Gregory, Edward Martyn and George Moore. The Irish Literary Theatre's first performance took place in 1899 with Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen* and Martyn's *The Heather Field*.

At the turn of the twentieth century Dublin was still under the heavy influence of the commercial English theatrical values. Those four people, who gathered at Coole Park, the residence of Lady Gregory, valiantly initiated the Irish Theatre movement with lofty literary ideals. According

to the manifesto, W. B. Yeats's primal aim for founding the Abbey Theatre was:

. . . to make the nation conscious of its heritage in history and myth; to provide a point round which the popular imagination might first awaken, and then concentrate its power; and at the last to unify itself for a nationalist effort by the imagery liberated in the drama.⁽⁵⁾

Lady Gregory also stated her aim for the theatre movement:

We propose to have performed in Dublin . . . certain Celtic and Irish plays . . . and so to build up a Celtic and Irish school of dramatic literature. We . . . believe that our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure for us a tolerant welcome, and that freedom to experiment which is not found in the theatres of England. . . We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the theme of an ancient idealism.⁽⁶⁾

While creating the Irish drama, Yeats had a strong ally in Edward Martyn at the initial stage of their movement. Both writers thought that commercialism of the English theatre had a detrimental effect on the creation of Irish drama worthy of the name of art. When they established the National Literary Theatre in 1898, they contemplated how they could avoid commercialism.

As Ibsen's plays were coincidentally gaining ground in Europe towards the end of the nineteenth century, Martyn thought that Ibsen would be an ideal writer to use as a model; Martyn himself wrote a play *An*

Enchanted Sea influenced by Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea*. He thought English theatre was spoiled by commercialism and the audience's tastes were unrefined. Therefore he denounced the English theatre and audience thus:

. . . the upholstered, drawing-room-like shapelessness of an English theatre, designed for an addled, over-fed audience, who loathe . . . any performance on the stage that would appeal to a lofty and aesthetic sense in humanity . . . and noble austerity of some foreign theatres . . . where the first consideration is not materialism but art.⁽⁷⁾

Yeats's idea for ideal drama differed considerably, and his reaction to Ibsen's dramas was therefore different from Moore's and Martyn's. Whereas Yeats adamantly tried to integrate Irish myth into drama, Moore and Martyn held Ibsen as a superb model for Irish dramatists to imitate. Michael O'Neill writes:

Martyn, somewhat ahead of his time, was not satisfied with the peasant play based on rural Ireland and realized the need in Ireland for a social drama which would gather its general inspiration and subject matter from the life of the urban middle classes. Particularly in the social and psychological dramas of the Norwegian master he saw what he wanted for his guide and stimulus. Yet, not until later in the history of the Irish theatre, when the social and economic prestige of the middle classes increased in Ireland, did the validity and relevance of Martyn's theories become more fully recognized. Yeats, on the other hand, in the light of his solitary vision, could give his approval only to

the romantic plays of Ibsen; the social dramas of Ibsen, he thought, were lacking in beautiful vivid language.⁽⁸⁾

Because of differences of opinion on theatrical ideas, and for religious reasons, Edward Martyn, the first president of Sinn Fein, and George Moore distanced themselves from Yeats in 1903. The result was their first production of Ibsen's *A Doll House* in the same year.⁽⁹⁾

Among those playwrights, John Millington Synge had a unique position in theatrical career in the same period. Synge was born in 1871 and spent his boyhood in Wicklow, and he liked wandering the forests and mountains to the south of Dublin. He was so passionate about wandering in Nature that he even belonged to the Dublin Naturalists' Field Club. His sensitive appreciation of the beauty of nature is well traced in his prose and drama. Ann Saddlemyer in "The Essays as Literature and Literary Source" writes;

Synge's traveler . . . remains always in tune with his surroundings, conscious of every stop in the vast scale of experience and emotion, deliberately keying his own actions and impressions to the panorama of sky, sea, mountains, birds, beasts and even fellow vagrants.⁽¹⁰⁾

Synge's experience of watching the wild creatures in those remote places and his reading of Darwin's evolution theory in his teens influenced him greatly, and this formed the basic core of his way of thinking: his love of Nature and his agnostic attitude to religious principles.

Later, following W. B. Yeats's advice, Synge visited and stayed in the Aran Islands five summers in succession from 1898. Yeats said to him in Paris in 1896, just after coming back from the Aran Islands himself:

Give up Paris. You will never create anything by reading Racine, and Arthur Symons will always be a better critic of French literature. Go to the Aran Islands. Live there as if you were one of the people themselves; express a life that has never found expression.⁽¹¹⁾

Yeats's advice worked on Synge perfectly. After having been to the Aran Islands, Synge found a means to showcase his talents. He was lucky in a way as the Irish Literary Renaissance movement coincided with his discovery of the people in the countryside. Four of the themes of his plays, including *Riders to the Sea*, were directly taken from actual incidents, and *In the Shadow of the Glen* and *The Well of the Saints* were from folk tales. No other playwrights were as good as Synge at vividly describing Nature and country folk surrounded by it; the way of his depicting Nature was in a melancholic tone, reflecting himself and his nation in his day. Christopher Murray comments:

Synge read into the landscape his own romantic melancholy, and the landscape gave him back examples of the co-existence of death and endurance, material hardship and spiritual wonder, desolation and transcendence. The Aran Islands were for Synge a two-way mirror, of his and the nation's soul.⁽¹²⁾

Synge not just loved Nature but felt in awe of it. He strongly believed all creatures could not escape from the influence of Nature and all of them were in the constant process of evolution; he discarded the Christian belief that all the existing creatures on the earth were the outcome of God's act of creation. When he drew inspiration from Nature and wrote plays, they were overcast by pessimism. His plays had overshadowed a somewhat

bitter, almost cruel tone in praising the beauty of Nature and interpreting its effect on men.

Part of the reason for his pessimism was due to his health problems. In addition to religious scepticism, he suffered from Hodgkins disease, which cut his life tragically short. He died at the early age of thirty eight. Although his theatrical contribution to the Irish theatre movement was very short, only seven years between 1902 and 1908, his influence was extensive and long-lasting.

Because of illness, Synge was often confined to bed later in life. W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory were the chief initiators of the Irish theatrical movements, but Synge was the most successful playwright in his day. Dennis Johnston states Synge's plays became the prototype of Irish folk drama:

Although Yeats and Lady Gregory are rightly regarded as the centerpieces of the Irish theatrical renaissance, it was Synge far more than either of these who gave the movement its national quality, and left to the world the type of play that has since become the prototype of Irish folk drama.⁽¹³⁾

Synge gave shape to the movement at the time of Irish Literary Theatre, prior to the establishment of the Abbey Theatre in 1904. Yeats wrote in his letter:

We will have a hard fight in Ireland before we get the right for every man to see the world in his own way admitted. Synge is invaluable to us because he has that kind of intense narrow personality which necessarily raises the whole issue. It will be very curious to notice the

effect of his new play. He will start next time with many enemies but with many admirers. It will be a fight like that over the first realistic plays of Ibsen.⁽¹⁴⁾

When Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen* (1903) was produced, it aroused bitter dispute over the fidelity of Catholic Irish women. This play was followed by *Riders to the Sea* (1904) and *The Well of the Saints* (1905), and also by *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) which caused much more violent commotion in and around the Abbey Theatre than *In the Shadow of the Glen*. In fact, its first production in Dublin was one of the most disturbing incidences in Irish theatre history since the production of Ibsen's *Ghosts*.

Synge was involved with the Irish Renaissance Theatre Movement, but he was not at all political. However, during his stay in Paris, he had belonged for a few months to the revolutionary and semi-military group *L'Association Irlandaise* led by Maud Gonne who supported Irish independence in Paris. When Synge quit because of the violent nature of the association, he wrote in his letter of resignation: "I wish to work in my own way for the cause of Ireland, and I shall not be able to do so if I get mixed up with a revolutionary and semi-military movement"⁽¹⁵⁾.

Synge did not treat contemporary political issues as his main theme because he never really became nationalistic in the Irish question. His emphasis was always on the poetic quality of the drama even when he mixed social issues in his play. In the Preface to *The Playboy of the Western World*, Synge praises Mallarme and Huysmans for their poetic quality and denounces Ibsen and Zola:

. . . Ibsen and Zola dealing with the reality of life in joyless and pallid

words. On the stage one must have reality, and one must have joy; and that is why the modern intellectual drama has failed⁽¹⁶⁾

Synge says himself that he is not a man who believes that the theatre is a place for “criticism of life”. He avowedly repudiates the ethical or sociological problem play created by “Ibsen and the Germans.” Yet, Ibsen’s influence on European theatre was almost universal at the turn of the twentieth century. No dramatists could remain unaffected by Ibsen’s influence, whether positively or negatively. Jan Setterquist points out:

“The rapid and world-wide success won by Ibsen with *A Doll’s House* must necessary have made a strong impression on Synge. The detailed analysis of *In the Shadow of the Glen* has shown how skillfully he could evoke Ibsenian problems, re-arranging them to harmonize with his own interests and possibilities.”⁽¹⁷⁾

Synge, who advocated “drama like the symphony, does not teach or prove anything” in the preface to *The Tinker’s Wedding*, did not appreciate Ibsen in the first place; Synge thought Ibsen’s dramas were didactic “dramas of ideas”, and he tended to underestimate the poetic quality of Ibsen’s plays. Tornqvist puts it like this:

Although Synge explicitly opposed the ‘joyless’ Norwegian dramatist, statements of this kind may well have been made to disguise Ibsen’s impact. Despite the great dissimilarity between the environment in *In the Shadow of the Glen and A Doll’s House*, there is “more than one connection link between Synge’s Nora and her Norwegian namesake . . . Both plays introduce us to an ill-assorted

couple whose union is spoilt by a bullying husband who does not allow his wife any kind of private life.”⁽¹⁸⁾

Jan Setterquist also states the same opinion:

The Ibsenian trends in Synge’s plays are indeed so many and so heterogeneous that, in my opinion, they must be regarded as an evidence of ubiquitous influence upon him by the Norwegian dramatist. The juxtaposition of Synge’s plays with those of Ibsen⁽¹⁹⁾ seems to reveal an indubitable correlation of them.

After having explained the background of Synge, and the wide influence of Ibsen on modern drama, the focus here is to compare Synge’s works with Ibsen’s and analyze the similarities between them in themes, and try to certify how much Ibsen influenced Synge, citing *In the Shadow of the Glen* and *Riders to the Sea* by Synge, and *The Lady from the Sea* (1888) by Ibsen.

As Synge’s rejection of Ibsen is clearly stated in the preface to *The Tinker’s Wedding*, Synge’s attack on Ibsen is not merely occasional. Jan Setterquist says:

Those negative attitudes towards Ibsen by Synge make it difficult to connect two playwrights, but similarities are identifiable in some plays. Jan Setterquist’s comment is almost ironical; “Indeed the arrogant tone of Synge’s attack is in itself an indirect proof of the fact that Ibsen occupied his thought more than he cared to admit, even to himself. . . .”⁽²⁰⁾ Synge’s controversial attack was a form of self-defense.

It is possible that Synge misunderstood Ibsen's works; Synge must have thought that Ibsen was a champion of naturalism, for which reason he found Ibsen most disagreeable. In particular, the controversial ending in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* must have made a strong impact on Synge, as well as on G. B. Shaw. Elizabeth Coxhead puts it as follows:

In fact, though he objected to Ibsen's 'pallid and joyless words', his Nora and the Nora of *A Doll's House* have much in common. Both slam the door on the loveless marriage, and take to the hard life of the outcast. Ibsen is close to reality, however, in making Nora take it alone. If Synge's play has a weakness, it is in the not quite realized figure of the Tramp who leads her to freedom. As with all great dramatists, many of Synge's figures carry symbolic overtones.⁽²¹⁾

Synge's lack of appreciation of Ibsen's work may be the result of the quality of translation: just like G. B. Shaw's willful interpretation which caused misunderstanding for appreciating the significance of the themes in *Pillars of Society* (1877), *A Doll House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1882) and in *An Enemy of the People* (1883). Jan Setterquist remarks:

To some extent this [the lack of Ibsen's poetic quality] is undoubtedly due to inadequate means of showing us Ibsen as a great master of language. Though fairly true to the original, and a great achievement as such, Archer's translation is often rather mechanical as well as lacking both in form and spirit.⁽²²⁾

Ibsen himself was quite aware of the fact that a poor translation could harm his work. At a banquet in Stockholm on 11 April 1898, he said; "What

one reads in translation is . . . always in danger of being more or less misunderstood; for translators are unfortunately all too often lacking in understanding.”⁽²³⁾ Ibsen’s comment applies to William Archer, the chief translator of Ibsen into English. On top of this, Bernard Shaw’s view of *A Doll’s House* and Ibsen’s works in general, “. . . best known from his comments on the play in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891) is presumably the major reason for a rather slanted view of Ibsen’s plays in Britain and America.”⁽²⁴⁾

Bernard Shaw’s interest in Ibsen was purely for its social value; Shaw wanted to use Ibsen’s work as a tool to attack conventional Victorian domestic values. Jan Setterquist comments on this:

Let us begin with a preliminary statement on Ibsen the reformer. It has long been customary to stress his qualities as a thinker and a social critic at the expense of his great achievement as a poet. Now, according to many recent critics Ibsen’s “thinking” is but rarely on a level with his poetical inspiration. In other words, Ibsen is always in the first place a great poet and artist.⁽²⁵⁾

Though Synge was able to understand the Gaelic language, he did not understand Norwegian. Synge, whose work is praised for its poetic quality, failed to appreciate Ibsen’s poetic quality in his dramas mainly because too much was lost in translation.

II

As the Nordic Sea and fjord prevail in Ibsen’s *The Lady from the Sea*, a similar close affinity is found between characters and Nature, especially

Synge's Wicklow mountains and glens in *In the Shadow of the Glen* and the Atlantic Ocean in *Riders to the Sea*.

Nature in these plays is treated as an oppressive element. Ellida, the heroine of *The Lady from the Sea*, and the daughter of the lighthouse keeper on an island, surrounded by the sea feels life inland oppressive; she feels suffocated by living in a town where she cannot find fresh sea water, after marrying Dr. Wangel. Joan Templeton points out the "mermaid" quality in Ellida:

Ibsen originally called his play Havfruen (The Mermaid); the transformational pun Fruen fra Havet (*The Lady from the Sea*) may have resulted from a recognition that the text's insistence on Ellida as "mermaid" called for a more nuanced title.⁽²⁶⁾

Hjalmar H. Boyesen also lays emphasis on the difficult situation Ellida has been put in:

She is like a mermaid who has stayed into inland waters, and now lies helpless, dying by inches, in a stagnant cove . . . Her restless discontent finds expression in strange caprices due to overstrained nerves. She is perpetually bathing, though she professes to find no refreshment in the brackish waters of the fjord.⁽²⁷⁾

Ibsen's idea of depicting Ellida as a "sea creature" is apparent in this play. She is a "mermaid" dragged out of the sea to the land for reasons of financial survival. There are references to "mermaid" at the beginning of Act One; Ballested says, "I'm going to have a mermaid. Half-dead."⁽²⁸⁾ and "The Death of the Mermaid" (*LS*, p. 129) for the picture he is painting.

Joan Templeton cites some cases of Nordic folklore in which water spirits charm people with seductive songs and cast spells. She also mentions that Ibsen knew the well-known version of Hans C. Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*, in which the mermaid desires to be a human. She concludes:

In shaping his drama, Ibsen typically drew on the different traditions as it pleased him. His “merman” possesses the power to seduce, while his “mermaid” feels trapped in the human world, yet longs to be integrated within it.⁽²⁹⁾

In *The Lady from the Sea* a symbolic figure the Stranger (“a merman”) seduces Ellida (“a mermaid”) into coming back to the sea with him. He tries to let the trapped “mermaid” escape from captivity. Ellida is suffocated by the staleness of the inland water though she regularly swims there to take a breathing spell; she feels “Dear God, the water here is never fresh. It’s lifeless and stale. Ugh! The water is sick here in the fjord. . . . I think it makes one sick. Poisonous, too.” (*LS*, pp. 136-37)

In the suffocating situation Ellida is struggling to liberate herself, conjuring up the Stranger. The Stranger, who has been on her mind even before her marriage to Dr. Wangel, is not just a projection but a person who comes to “rescue” her. Her married life no longer functions as man and wife after the loss of her baby. Wangel makes a proposal to Ellida; moving to a place by the sea where Ellida can feel secure. Ellida, however, strongly objects to the idea because she doesn’t want to see Wangel sacrifice himself for her. Yet, both Wangel and Ellida know the primal reason for her suffocation though both of them have tried to evade the real issue until the

Stranger intrudes into their seemingly safe, but uncertain haven.

Wangel: The mountains oppress you — they weigh you down. There's not enough light for you here. Not enough sky around you. Not enough strong, clean air.

Ellida: How right you are! Night and day, winter and summer, it fills me — this homesickness for the sea. (*LS*, p. 153)

When we look at Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen*, the heroine Nora Burke expresses the cause of her suffering to her lover Michael Dara, "a kind of a farmer . . . from the sea to live in a cottage beyond"⁽³⁰⁾. There is a parallel between the Stranger in *The Lady from the Sea* and Michael who is from the sea. Both men have irresistible desires for the heroines. Nora regrets her choice to marry Dan Burke though she knew there was no other option at the time. For Nora life under the shadow of the glen means boredom and loneliness:

Nora: I do be thinking in the long nights it was a big fool I was that time, Michael Dara; for what good is a bit of a farm with cows on it, and sheep on the back hills, when you do be seeing nothing but the mists rolling down the bog, and the mists again and they rolling up the bog, and hearing nothing but the wind crying out in the bits of broken trees were left from the great storm, and the streams roaring with the rain. (*SG*, p. 90)

Synge writes about the psychological problems of local people affected by the depressing natural surroundings in his essay "The Oppression of the Hills":

This peculiar climate, acting on a population that is already lonely and dwindling, has caused or increased a tendency to nervous depression among the people, and every degree of sadness, from that of the man who is merely mournful to that of the man who has spent half his life in the mad-house, is common among these hills.⁽³¹⁾

In *In the Shadow of the Glen*, there is an example of the woman who went mad from isolation and loneliness. In the introduction to *In the Shadow of the Glen* T. R. Henn explains the depressive situation:

Thus nature becomes a sort of grim protagonist, as menacing in its own peculiar manner as the sea and the isolation of living on an island in *Riders*. . . . Here in the hills prolonged storms isolate the lonely farms; the hills take on their own mystery of loneliness, and drive men “queer” or mad. (*SG*, p. 23)

The plot of this one-act play is very simple; a young woman is sitting at a table. On a bed lies the dead body of her old husband. The Tramp knocks at the door, and is allowed in thanks to Irish hospitality codes and the heavy rain. She asks the Tramp to keep an eye on the dead husband while she goes away to tell the neighbour what has happened. When she is gone, the “corpse” sits up. The husband wants to punish his wife for infidelity. When she brings back her lover, he “wakes up” and orders her to leave the house.

In this play Synge describes Nature as more of a life-taker than of a life-giver. He does not just praise the beauty and the blissful aspect of Nature but rather shows the sinister side of it, relating oppressive Nature to madness in lonely people. The clear example is Patch Darcy’s horrible death.

Tramp: If myself was easy afeard, it's long ago I'd have been locked into the Richmond Asylum, or maybe have run up into the back hills with nothing on me but an old shirt, and been eaten by the crows the like of Patch Darcy. (SG, p. 84)

L. A. Strong opines that “*The Shadow of the Glen*⁽³²⁾ is the perfect picture of a mood. Its hero is not man but nature.”⁽³³⁾ Nora’s tragic life is originated from the loveless marriage to the much older Dan Burke. She has no other option but marry someone who would provide her with a means of subsistence even if he was an old man.

Nora: What way would I live . . . if I didn’t marry a man with a bit of farm, and cows on it, and sheep on the back hills? (SG, p. 90)

Thinking her old husband is dead and cold, she discloses to the Tramp her “cold” relations with her husband.

Nora: Maybe cold would be no sign of death with the like of him, for he was always cold, every day since I knew him . . . and every night, stranger . . . (SG, p. 83)

As the oppressive Nature, surrounding her outside, has had a detrimental effect on her for the many years since she married, Nora’s life is almost pre-determined in terms of social settings too. Having no chance to have a child, Nora foresees her future, dark like Peggy Cavanagh’s.

Nora: . . . to look on Peggy Cavanagh, who had the lightest hand at milking a cow that wouldn’t be easy, or turning a cake, and there she is now

walking round on the roads, or sitting in a dirty old house, with no teeth in her mouth, and no sense, and no more hair than you'd see on a bit of hill (SG, pp. 90-91)

Behind Nora, all the oppressive shadows are on her: the shadow-figures like Patch Darcy and Peggy Cavanagh, the emblems of Nora's miserable death in the foreseeable future, and the spectral effect of gloomy shadows of the glen on her. As Nicholas Grene suggests, the glen itself is central in this play: "the effect the shadow of the glen has upon the lives of the characters."⁽³⁴⁾

The repressive element of the glen is more emphasized and clearly depicted as a destroyer. Nora is always exposed to the natural elements and fears Nature as much as she is bored with it; she senses life in Nature virtually means death to her. As her illicit relation with a neighbouring young herd Michael Dara is discovered, she is not allowed to remain in her home. Although she is soothed and enticed to lead a casual nomad life by the Trump, she is not satisfied. Yet, she simply has no other option but leave. This final scene of Nora leaving the house in *In the Shadow of the Glen* is well contrasted with the famous slamming-the-door scene Ibsen's Nora acted twenty four years before, which was later said to have "echoed all over Europe". Nora Helmer's case was her own will. Her husband Helmer was dismayed by her decision and tried to dissuade her from doing this. The reason for her seemingly sudden decision was for liberty and independence.

In *In the Shadow of the Glen* Nora Burke's slamming-the-door sound is soft and is only heard by the audience in the theatre. Yet, Nora's leaving scene is bitterly criticized by the Irish nationalists for showing distorted images of Irish women on stage. Arnold Goldman's statement is:

Synge and his plays were abused in the Irish press in the playhouse, and were defended, most notably by W. B. Yeats. Most of the attacks came from nationalists, with whom he had underlying but not surface sympathy. Nationalist journalist-spokesmen saw Synge as threatening their sacred images. To them, an Irish peasant woman who leaves her husband was a libel on Irish womanhood and the sanctity of marriage. They might have claimed Synge was the result of British colonial oppression.⁽³⁵⁾

This criticism was based on the firm belief that Irish women in a patriarchal society were chaste, docile and obedient, and would never leave a husband however personally isolated they felt they were. In both cases the element of fear is detected in the heroines' minds, originating from isolation and alienation in the lonesome glen in the case of Nora, and from displacement to a town on the mainland in the case of Ellida, the lighthouse keeper's daughter on a solitary island. In addition to the suppressed feeling caused by environmental situations, both Ellida and Nora are alienated from their husbands; they have no common ground with their respective husbands. There is vast difference in age and in spiritual background. Loss of familiar environmental settings and the total lack of function as a working family unit; these various negative elements combine to cause Ellida and Nora to these have fear more about their foreseeable future.

Another parallel found between Synge and Ibsen is, as has been already mentioned, a person assuming similar roles in *In the Shadow of the Glen* and in *The Lady from the Sea*: The Tramp in the former and the Stranger in the latter. Those two persons are, in a way, tempters but also saviours. What is most interesting to note is that the Tramp, the name for a vagabond character, has no actual name in the play, and is always referred

to as “stranger” by Nora. Even her husband Dan Burke, after getting up, addresses to him as “stranger”. The audience duly have an indelible impression this vagabond character is a “stranger”.

Because of the subjugation of Nora and suppression of Ellida, they need a let-out for their pent-up emotions. Both Ellida and Nora are encouraged to break with their oppressive environments by a stranger. As the Tramp comes to rescue Nora at the critical moment, the Stranger could be a saviour, though he first seemed a tempter. As Jan Setterquist says “. . . the tramp symbolizes Life”⁽³⁶⁾ in *In the Shadow of the Glen*, the Stranger also symbolizes the sea to which Ellida belongs. Ellida expresses her feeling: “That man is like the sea.” (*LS*, p. 174) and “Oh, this man temps me and draws me into the unknown! All the power of the sea is gathered in this man.” (*LS*, p. 205) In the Stranger’s case, he embodies the sea, while Nature for The Tramp in *In the Shadow of the Glen* is something which exists outside him, and he glorifies it:

The Tramp: . . . you’ll be hearing the herons crying out over the black lakes, and you’ll be hearing the grouse and the owls with them, and the larks and the big thrushes when the days are warm . . . but it’s fine songs you’ll be hearing when the sun goes up (*SG*, p. 94)

When Ibsen praises the beauty of Nature, he simply does it wholeheartedly, while in Synge’s case there is always a morbid irony in it. In his praise of the beauty of nature, his insinuation of the ill-effect of the wild life is mentioned in a nonchalant tone as if it did not matter at all to the person who was concerned.

The Tramp: . . . you’ll be hearing a tale of getting old like Peggy Cavanagh,

and losing the hair off you, and the light of your eyes . . . and there'll be no old fellow wheezing, the like of a sick sheep, close to your ear. (*SG*, p. 94)

When the Tramp praises the beauty of Nature, he also vividly illustrates the reality of wild life, "I'm telling you, and the time you'll be feeling the cold, and the frost, and the great rain, and the sun again, and the south wind blowing in the glens, you'll not be sitting up on a wet ditch . . ." (*SG*, p. 93)

What the Tramp is enticing is the symbolical union between the Nature and Nora, not between himself and Nora, which is totally different from the one between Ellida and the Stranger. During the course of the play Ellida discloses another serious reason for her anxiety, that is, her "engagement" to the Stranger. She says she had a symbolical marriage ceremony after they shared the joy of the sea; ". . . we talked about whales and dolphins, and seals that lie out on the islands when it's hot. And we spoke of gulls and eagles and all the other sea-birds—you know. And—isn't it eagles and all the other sea-birds—you know." (*LS*, p. 155)

What she discloses to Wangel is:

Ellida: He [the Stranger] took out of his pocket a key-chain, and pulled a ring off his finger, a ring he always used to wear. And he took a little ring from my finger too, and put these two rings on to his key-chain. Then he said that we two were going to marry ourselves to the sea. (*LS*, pp. 156-57)

It is ironic that Ellida's husband who is totally incapable of finding a remedy for her illness is a doctor, though he now knows the cause of her suffering.

Towards the final scene the Stranger appears in front of Wangel and Ellida; he claims that he has the priority on the matter of marriage. He says the marriage ceremony performed with their united rings is as valid as any the priests preside over. He demands that Ellida should come with him “of her own free will”. After witnessing Ellida’s encounter with the Stranger, Wangel understands the real reason:

Wangel: Ellida is one of the sea people. That is really what it is. . . . It’s almost as though they lived the same life as the sea does. Their way of thinking, feeling — they’re like the tide, they ebb and flow. And they can never uproot themselves and settle anywhere else. Oh, I should have thought of all this before. I sinned against Ellida when I tried to take her away and bring her inland to his place. (*LS*, p. 181)

Afterwards, Wangel yields to Ellida’s suggestion: “All I want is that we two should freely agree to release each other”. (*LS*, p. 188) Wangel is horrified that Ellida can contemplate leaving him for a stranger, but his wife reminds Wangel of the fact that she knew him no better than the sailor, and yet “went off” with him; “following a doctor who offers maintenance for life is no more defensible than following a sailor over the sea”. (*LS*, p. 198) Her disastrous attachment to the seaman seems incurable.

Now the solution Wangel thinks out is to move her to the place near the sea. This decision frightens her because she fears that the sea will remind her of the Stranger more strongly than it should. She tells him that Wangel was a tempter when she had no other option. This is exactly the same as Nora’s situation in *In the Shadow of the Glen*. Nora’s miserable life springs from suppressive Nature and an incompatible relationship with her husband. It is, in a way, a tragedy of circumstances. Nora says, “What way

would I live, and I an old woman, if I didn't marry a man with a bit of farm, and cows on it, and sheep on the back hills?" (SG, p. 90)

Both relationships are loveless and founded purely on material motives. In Ellida's case too, she did not come to Wangel's home of her own free will. What she now wants is her decision to be made by her own free will; whether she remains with Wangel or to leave with the Stranger. Wangle accepts her terms at the final moment: "Now you can make your choice, Ellida — in freedom." (LS, p. 206)

Though Ellida feels "this man tempts me and draws me into the unknown! All the power of the sea is gathered in this man." (LS, p. 205), she resists the temptation and decides to stay behind. In Ellida's case fear grows immeasurably beyond her control. The presence of the Stranger in her mind is getting larger and larger, and she cannot distinguish reality from dream-like unreality where she is under the control of the Stranger. Her fear even caused her to evoke the Stranger in her new-born baby's eyes.

Ellida: The sort of fear that only the sea can give you. (LS, p. 159)

Ellida: The child's eyes changed with the sea. When the fjord was calm and sunny, his eyes were the same. And when it was stormy—oh, I saw it clearly enough, even if you didn't. (LS, p. 160)

Ellida: That man is like the sea. (LS, p. 174)

In Ibsen's plays there are many tempters for the main characters, for example, Gregers to Hedvig in *The Wild Ducks*, Hilda to Soleness in *Master Builder*, Rat Wife to Eyolf in *Little Eyolf*, Judge Brack to Hedda in *Hedda Gabler* and Rebecca to Rosmer in *Rosmelsholm*, but the Stranger in this play has a slightly different quality from other tempters; his roaming

nature is akin to the Tramp in *In the Shadow of the Glen*. Donna Gerstenberger writes:

Symbolic for Synge of the difficult freedom from the tyrannies of society were the tramps and tinkers he saw daily on Ireland's roads. . . . The tramp, a recurrent figure in Synge's plays, is, like the artist, the repository of the experiences of his people; he travels the roads and tells the tales that have come to him from actual occurrences, from ancient mythology, and from folktales. . . . The Tramp represents also for Synge a lonely figure, which the man outside society inevitably must be.⁽³⁷⁾

Ellida suffers from severe psychological problems when she loses her baby who, she claims, has eyes that change with the color of the sea, like those of the Stranger. Her obsessional symptoms have been incurable. Now Wangel finds the remedy at the final moment when she has to face the stranger to decide her future life. As Joan Templeton explains the secret of Ellida's success:

Fearing that keeping Ellida by force will drive her into madness, Wangel abruptly releases her from their contract. She has become so dear to him that she may "choose in freedom" on her "own responsibility". It is a miracle cure; Ellida cries out: "How this—transforms everything!" Wangel's love has exorcised his wife's demon; the Stranger is no more to her than "a dead man who came up out of the sea—and who's drifting back down again". She will now return to her husband "because I come to you freely — and on my own".⁽³⁸⁾

At last Elida is able to fulfill her responsibility in Wangel's household which she has willfully neglected up to now. She is ready to assume the duties of her position as she is completely cured of her longing for the sea and is about to act "as a land-animal".

In *In the Shadow of the Glen* Nora's tragedy is her loneliness as a land-animal overshadowed in the glen. P. C. David says:

Nora's tragedy is also typical of the tragedy of the women of Irish islands who are condemned to a life of loneliness, as their men go out to earn their livelihood and must neglect them for most of the time. It is a tragedy of their circumstances, such circumstances as are compulsive and beyond their control. A lonely and monotonous life becomes the condition of their existence, their destiny which they cannot change.⁽³⁹⁾

Aside from Nora's interior turmoil, exterior factors also play a significant role in creating the inherent darkness of the play.

The gloomy natural surroundings depicted in the play are truly evocative of the natural surroundings of the Irish islands. Synge has, indeed, distilled the very spirit of the glens of Wicklow in his play.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Here, we find Synge's stoic receptive attitude towards fate reflected in Nora's awareness of her circumstances and resignation; whether her life is inside or outside the house, it is almost the same thing, as long as she is under the shadow of the glen. Whereas Ibsen gives us an optimistic view of life in *The Lady from the Sea*, Synge seems to imply in his play that tragedy is inevitable in human life and we must learn to accept it and be content with our fate.

III

Aristotle's theory of *Catharsis* defines that tragedy involves the hero's unavoidable tragic consequence. However hard the hero tries to escape from the predestined misfortune, he eventually has to face what he has struggled to run away from. It is impossible to present a logical explanation for tragic incidents the central characters have to bear in ancient Greek tragedies. They are caught up in inexplicable forces which are beyond their control. The same fatalism is also seen in Synge's plays, in *In the Shadow of the Glen* and, more so in *Riders to the Sea* in which the main character Maurya becomes a victim of fate though no fault of her own. Her misfortune is brought on by the death of her husband, and her father-in-law and all her sons at sea.

The eventual course of Nora's fate in *In the Shadow of the Glen* is almost predetermined; the tragic ending is set in progress the moment she steps into Dan Burke's household. P. C. David states the role of natural elements:

The gloomy atmosphere is another important ingredient of the tragedy in the play. The continuously surging fog, the shadow moving sinisterly in the glen hang above the characters as a malevolent influence. Nature in *The Shadow of the Glen* is wild and weird, cruel and relentless as Fate. It is the central symbol of Fate in the play.⁽⁴¹⁾

This marked sense of fatalism is more apparent in *Riders to the Sea*. Elizabeth Coxhead comments:

In *Riders to the Sea* the sense of fatalism preponderates. Maurya, Bartley and Cathleen suffer for almost no fault of their own and become creatures of pity. The sea, cruel Nature and the grey pony Maurya envisions Bartley riding are the symbols of fate in the play. *Riders to the Sea* is read much like a typical Greek tragic play; in its structure and spirit also it is Greek.⁽⁴²⁾

At the beginning of the play, the elder daughter Cathleen is spinning wool and her younger sister Nora enters with a shirt and a stocking which were taken off a drowned body on the coast of Donegal and brought south by a priest. Nora identifies the stocking as her brother Michael's because she dropped four stitches when knitting it.

When their mother Maurya appears, she laments that she could not hold back her last son Bartley who was going to a horse fair. She realizes that she has forgotten to hand baked bread to him and give him blessing, and so she chases after him. But when she meets him, she is choked up and cannot say anything. She is worried about her last remaining son Bartley, and has a premonition that she will never see him again alive. When Maurya comes back, she says that she saw Bartley ride down on a red mare, followed by Michael astride the grey pony, a symbol of death. Seeing the ghostly premonition Maurya resigns herself and senses that she will lose all her seven sons to the sea; the sea is both a giver and taker of life, and this works as a symbol in the play. This portent vision of death is exactly like that of Ibsen's *Rosmelsholm*. Jan Setterquist says:

The "ghosts of the manor" are two horses which appear whenever someone of the family is going to die. Indeed this theme is so closely interwoven with the play that Ibsen originally intended to call it *White*

(43)

Horses instead of *Rosmersholm* published in 1886.

The real cause of Bartley's death is that the pony kicked him over into the sea. James Joyce, who was also influenced by Ibsen, was not satisfied with this death. Joyce thought the cause had to be the sea, and not the horse. The sequence of the suggestive vision of the horses and the coming news of death is exactly the same as Ibsen's *Rosmelsholm*. In both plays visions, signs and portents have a considerable significance.

The constant use of symbols is a characteristic feature of Ibsen's work during the 1880's. He introduced an element of ambiguity into his plays during that period. With certain alterations this may also be applied to Synge's plays.

In *Riders to the Sea* the motif of the horses is used to presage the catastrophe as in *Rosmersholm* where the heroine catches a glimpse of the white horses of the manor in the day time, and realizes her unavoidable fate. There is also a symbolical prop on the stage; The presence of a spinning wheel and the attention given to a woman spinning the wheel like in Wagner's opera *Flying Dutchman* recalls the tragic sequence of fortune which is predominant throughout the play. Synge provides the dramatic symbol on the stage; the pattern of fate is being spun and woven as inexorably in *Riders to the Sea* like Greek models. Jan Setterquist's understanding is:

As will be seen from the summary above, none of the characters in the play, not even the mother, has the central role in *Riders to the Sea*. For the sea itself, which Synge apparently regards as a symbol of Death, rules the lives of the islanders and controls their destinies.⁽⁴⁴⁾

In the case of the Tramp in *In the Shadow of the Glen*, he is simply a tempter who promises Nora to provide, at least, food, even when telling her of her macabre future and her possible course of death in the wilderness. But overall the symbolical presence of Nature and the shadow of the glen poses a sinister presence to Nora. In the case of the Stranger he himself has a symbolic quality; Ibsen used a kind of “sea-symbolism”. In *Riders to the Sea*, the sea plays the central role as the glen does in *In the Shadow of the Glen*.

In comparing Ibsen’s two plays, *The Lady from the Sea* has an optimistic ending but *Rosmelsholm* is pessimistic. In contemporary plays, from Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* onwards, man’s life is often treated as meaningless and as our tragic death as accidental. Synge, a possible precursor of the Theatre of the Absurd, has a pessimistic view of life, and the haphazard death of man is ubiquitous in his *In the Shadow of the Glen* and *Riders to the Sea*. Robin Skelton writes on *In the Shadow of the Glen* :

The lyricism and bitterness of this play do indeed establish it as one of the most original works of the Irish Renaissance, the precursor of much black comedy, and the true forerunner of *Juno and the Paycock* and ⁽⁴⁵⁾*Waiting for Godot*.

The tragic death presented in Synge’s plays is different in terms of treatment of external forces. In the case of suicide by Rosmer and Rebecca, their tragic death originates from their egocentric desire, whereas in the case of Maurya tragedy is external in its presentation and it lacks in personal cause. A grey horse plays the same roles as the White Horses, messengers of death, in *Rosmelsholm*.

In *Riders to the Sea*, the central character, posed as God, is the sea itself, and Maurya's nine male family members are like offerings to God. Denis Johnston says, "The sea—not the Gods—is the source of the law in this play, and there is no escape from it."⁽⁴⁶⁾ When Maurya sprinkles the Holy Water over Bartley's dead body and also Michael's clothes, it implies the holy nature of sea water. Maurya laments at the final scene: "They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me." (*RS*, p. 105) and her final speech in resignation before the curtain falls resonates in audience's minds: "No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied". (*RS*, p. 106)

In *Riders to the Sea* the sea holds the supreme power, and the characters have a role to respond to what nature is and to reveal the meaning of life under a divine power. Synge seems to persuade us into accepting casual death in human life, since there is no way we can alter our tragic fate in the same way as all the dramas in the Theatre of the Absurd did in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Synge's creed for the drama is: "On the stage one must have reality, and one must have joy In a good play every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or apple."⁽⁴⁷⁾ In Synge's plays the characters' speech is poetic. T. S. Eliot writes in his essay "Poetry and Drama" that "Synge wrote plays about characters whose originals in life talked poetically, so that he could make them talk poetry and remain real people."⁽⁴⁸⁾ Through the experience of life in the Aran Islands, he found "excitement and joy" in the country folks in the rustic life, and he expressed life in the country in the form of harsh social and natural settings. Synge wanted to create poetic drama based on reality. He was against the trend of serious plays which tends to ignore poetic quality of the plays.

As I have compared Ibsen's plays with Synge's, there are

unmistakable similarities between them. Jan Setterquist also points out the same quality of both dramatists:

. . . the Ibsenian trends in Synge's plays are indeed so many and so heterogeneous that, in my opinion, they must be regarded as evidence of ubiquitous influence exercised upon him by the Norwegian dramatist. The juxtaposition of Synge's plays with those of Ibsen seems to reveal an indubitable correlation of theme, character drawing, setting and technique.⁽⁴⁹⁾

What we have to admit is that there are so many similarities in both dramatists, and therefore Ibsen's influence on Synge is most probable. Yet, Synge's originality is seen in *In the Shadow of the Glen* and *Rider to the Sea*. As Jan Setterquist points out, "the Ibsenian influence was never permitted to efface the genuine Irishness of its literary profile".⁽⁵⁰⁾

Looking at women in both dramatists' works, Synge's women, like Ibsen's Nora and Hedda, spiritually independent and vigorous; this might be violating the religious codes and traditional conceptions of traditional Irish women. Both dramatists dealt with unsuitable marriage cases: Helmer and Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Dr. Wangel and Ellida in *The Lady from the Sea*, George Tesman and Hedda in *Hedda Gabler* and Dan Burke and Nora in Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen*.

Jan Setterquist concluded with elaborate illustrations and comparisons between Ibsen and Synge, and there are many parallels and clear pieces of evidence that support his theory. Synge was influenced by Ibsen though Synge himself strongly objected to Ibsenite style of plays. Yet it is undeniable that through the imitation of Ibsen, Synge became "the father of modern Irish drama".

IV

As we have traced Ibsen's influence on Synge, here let us examine another example of Ibsen's influence, and also Synge's, on the great American dramatist Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953). Before doing this, let me quote from Langner's *The Magic Curtain* which states G. B. Shaw played an important role as a medium in terms of Ibsen's influence on him; "Already at the age of seventeen, O' Neill was wildly excited about Shaw's *Quintessence of Ibsenism*. It was his favorite reading."⁽⁵¹⁾ Doris Alexander also shows that O'Neill was deliberately exposed to Ibsen: "In October 1906 Alla Nazimova had put on a repertory of Ibsen: *A Doll's House*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Master Builder*. O'Neill went to see them all 'and he talked Ibsen all that year.'⁽⁵²⁾

Among O'Neill's earliest plays, the one-act play *Recklessness* (1913) is heavily indebted to Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, and therefore very similar to *In the Shadow of the Glen*. The heroine Mildred is married to an old man and she feels lonely and isolated. Her husband says to her, "You must be bored to death on this mountain with none of your old friends around."⁽⁵³⁾ The heroine Mildred was "sold" to Arthur Baldwin and feels she is treated like "his plaything, the slave of his pleasure, a pretty toy to be exhibited that others might envy him his ownership," (*R*, p. 58) which is exactly the same way as Nora Helmer was treated by her husband Torvald. Arthur retorts to Mildred's accusation of his treatment of her: "If I have regarded you as a plaything I was only accepting the valuation your parents set upon you when they *sold* you." [*Italics mine*] (*R*, p. 71) Mildred feels there is nothing to share with him: "You have never really loved me. We are not the same age. . . . We do not look at things in the same light — we have nothing in

common.” (*R*, p. 70) Their relationship is exactly like the ones between Ellida and Dr. Wangel, and between Nora and Dan Burke.

In *Recklessness* the heroine is disappointed with her cold and bossy husband, and has an illicit love affair with his young chauffeur. The consequence of this was the accidental death plotted by the vengeful husband after hearing of this illicit relationship from the equally-vengeful maid (who had been jilted by her former lover, the chauffeur), and finally Mildred’s tragic suicide.

There is another example of O’Neill’s indebtedness to Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*: his first full-length play *Servitude* (1914). In *Servitude* “Nora” comes to meet “Ibsen”. The “Nora” figure Mrs. Frazer is spiritually awakened after seeing the play “Sacrifice” ten times, in which the heroine leaves her husband with the words “I have awakened!”; it is Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* enacted in a play-within-a play setting. The playwright “Ibsen” is Mr. Royston. Mrs. Frazer is so impressed by the heroine’s courageous attitude that she also decides to leave her husband for independence and freedom. One night she comes to meet “her author” and says how grateful she is to him to have given her the courage to achieve independence, though she is in penury and has virtually no money to buy a return ticket home.

Mrs. Frazer: I was in love with an ideal — the ideal of self-realization, of the duty of the individual to assert its supremacy and demand the freedom necessary for its development. . . . I saw I could never hope to grow in the stifling environment of married life — so I broke away. (*S*, pp. 244-45)

This sounds like a speech Nora in *A Doll’s House* might have delivered to her friend after slamming the door at Torvald’s. But she is seriously in

doubt whether it is right to have left her husband who is in misery and distraught at the loss of her dear wife. So “Nora” asks “Ibsen’s ” opinion.

Mrs. Frazer: When I see him [Mr. Fraser] so unhappy I say to myself: “Have you the right?” and I find no answer to satisfy me. How can I bear hardship for a cause in which my faith is wavering? That is why I come to you. . . . I have the right to come to you, haven’t I? Mentally I am your creation. (S, p. 249)

After she stays overnight in Mr. Royston’s guest room, she discovers that he is also his fictional creation in reality like his fictional heroine in “Sacrifice”. Her initial veneration of him as “the superman, the creator, the maker of new values” vanishes after his “illusion” is sustained by his self-devoted wife’s sacrifice and servitude. After the consequential misunderstanding and the suspicion of Mrs. Royston and Mr. Frazer about the relations between Mr. Royston and Mrs. Frazer, two couples’ relations are almost magically restored in the end. Mrs. Fraser realizes the importance of her husband who has devoted himself to her, so does the author Mr. Royston for his spouse.

This play is significant as this goes psychologically deeper than *A Doll’s House* and gives us both another perspective on the consequence of women’s liberation and a satisfactory solution to the marriage problems. Eugene O’Neill tried to go beyond Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*; *Servitude* ends happily as does *The Lady from the Sea*.

Now let us examine another influence by Ibsen. Edwin Engle writes on Ibsen’s influence, especially on *Anna Christie*:

Ibsen’s impact on O’Neill ironically reaches an apogee in the play that

was hailed in Europe a sign that American was at last living up to its New World reputation in the field of drama. The play is *Anna Christie*.⁽⁵⁴⁾

As Engel notes, Ibsen's *Ellida* and O'Neill's *Anna* have perfect similarity in their desiring the open sea. There is a close affinity, not only between the two heroines, but also between the plots of the two plays. John H. Houchin also writes on Synge's influence: ". . . something of Synge's wild beauty and fatalism in *The Shadow of the Glen* and *The Rider's to the Sea* has been captured by O'Neill and allowed to shed its glamour over *Anna Christie*."⁽⁵⁵⁾

Now let me summarize *Anna Christie* and compare it with Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea*, Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen* and *Riders to the Sea*.

Anna is a daughter of Chris, a sailor who never returns to his native Sweden because he always spends his passage money on drink. Therefore, his wife moves to her relative's place in Minnesota from Sweden to be near her husband. But while Chris was on voyage, his wife dies, Chris, who fears the sea as if it were a devil, thinks it is better to have Anna brought up inland by her relative far from the sea where she is not affected by the "dat ole davil sea". Chris thinks it would be a haven for Anna to live on the farm; his cherished daughter should avoid the ill effect from the sea. Chris says:

She come dis country, bring Anna, dey go ut Minnesota, live with her cousins on a farm. Den ven her mo'der die ven Ay vas on voyage. Ay tank it's better dem cousins keep Anna. Ay tank it's better Anna live on farm, den she don't know dat ole davil, sea, she don't know fader like me.⁽⁵⁶⁾

However, contrary to his expectations, Anna's childhood is miserable: "The old man of the family, his wife, and four sons — I had to slave for all of

'em. I was only a poor relation, and they treated me worse than they dare treat a hired girl". (AC, p. 972) Her situation turns from bad to worse; When she is sixteen years old, she is sexually molested by her cousin. Therefore she runs away from home to a nursing institution named St. Paul where she has to take care of children. She cannot bear the life there either:

Anna: I was caged in, I tell you—yust like in yail—taking care of other people's kids—listening to 'em bawling and crying day and night—when I wanted to be out—and I was lonesome-lonesome as hell! (AC, p. 1008)

Her life mirrors like Nora's in *In the Shadow of the Glen*, suffering from loneliness and isolation. Eventually she leaves, and has to save herself by whatever means she could. She knows, of course, it is not right, but the only solution to survive is to sell, not her soul, but her body. Later she becomes sick, and in convalescence visits her father Chris whom she has not seen for fifteen years.

Chris, a coal barge skipper, still hates the sea and thinks the sea is a "devil" whose ultimate aim is to devour human life or have a psychologically and physically detrimental effect on people on board a ship. When Chris receives a message from Anna, he finds himself in a trouble because he has no place to accommodate her except on his barge. When he tells her this fact, Anna resists living on the barge. Chris, however, tries to persuade her:

Chris: You don't know how nice it's on barge, Anna. Tug come and ve gat towed out on voyage—yust water all round, and sun, and fresh air, and good grub for make you strong, healthy gel. You see many tangs you don't see before. You gat moonlight at night, maybe; see steamer pass;

see schooner make sail—see every tang dat’s pooty. (AC, pp. 976-77)

Chris’s illustration of the life on the barge is just like the one when the Tramp praised the beauty of Nature and comforted Nora in *In the Shadow of the Glen*. After having started to live with her father on the barge, Anna feels she has come back to life, by the curative effect of the sea water, like Ellida, the “mermaid” of *The Lady from the Sea* who regains her vigor through swimming in the sea, though the quality is not good at the inlet. Anna really loves fog and the sea. It has a cleansing effect on her, and she feels her “sin” is purged by the sea and the fog. She says, “It makes me feel clean—out here—’s if I’d taken a bath.” (AC, p. 980) She also says:

Everything’s been so different from anything I ever come across before. And now—this fog—Gee, I wouldn’t have missed it for nothing. I never thought living on ships was so different from land. Gee, I’d yust love to work on it, honest, I would if I was a man. (AC, p. 980)

Neeta Dixit writes: “In *Anna Christie* a mystical equation of the sea and human life is attempted. The fog is symbolic of eternal ambiguities representing a terminal dignity as well as an ultimate fate for man.”⁽⁵⁸⁾

Chris does not like the sea. He tells Anna the reason why he fears the sea and hates it:

Chris: Yes. Damn fools! All men in our village on coast, Sveden, go to sea. Ain’t nutting else for dem to do. My fa’dar die on board ship in Indian Ocean. He’s buried at sea. Ay don’t never know him only little bit. Den my tree bro’dar she’s left all ‘lone. She die pooty quick after dat—all ‘lone. Ve vas all avay on voyage when she die. (He pauses sadly.) Two

my bro'der dey gat lost on fishing boat same like your bro'ders vas drowned. (AC, p. 981)

The situation is very similar to that of *Riders to the Sea*, in which Maura has lost all male family members. Here the same fatalism is detected, and the reason why he repeats "dat ole davil sea" is there. Chris knows that sea is a life-taker and not just a life-giver. When he says the sea is not God, that is an accusation against the harsh treatment of the sea on people.

Ten days pass since Anna was united with her father, and on a dense foggy evening a shipwrecked sailor, Mat Burke, is rescued by Chris onto his barge. When Mat meets Anna, he says: "I thought you was some mermaid out of the sea come to torment me. (He reaches out to feel of her [Anna's] arm.) Aye, rale flesh and blood, devil a less". (AC, p. 984) and mistakenly treats her as a prostitute on the barge. When Mat finds out that she is the daughter of the barge owner, he apologizes.

Burke: Though it's a great jackass I am to be mistaking you, even in anger, for the like of them cows on the waterfront is the only women I've met up with since I was growed to a man. (AC, p. 987)

He says that life as a sailor is not an easy one, and expresses his wish to go back to Ireland: "It's a hard and lonesome life, the sea is". (AC, p. 990) It is interesting to compare his life with Anna's loneliness, or with the lonesome life under the shadow of the glen which Nora in *In the Shadow of the Glen* has to put up with. The sea is easily replaceable with the glen because the sea in this play has the same role as the glen. Whether the character is at sea or on the mountain, they feel lonesome when they have no one to love

and to be loved by. Soon Mat's newly awakened love towards Anna becomes more evident. Soon their love blossoms and Mat discloses his feeling to Chris, who would never allow Anna's marriage to a sailor.

Burke: You'd be wishing Anna married to a farmer, she told me. That'd be a swate match, surely! Would you have a fine girl the like of Anna lying down at nights with a muddy scut stinking of pigs and dung?
(AC, p. 999)

This reminds us of Nora's situation in *In the Shadow of the Glen*. It is also interesting to compare the actual speech patterns of the characters in Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen* with Mat Burke's. Mat Burke is of Irish extraction, as Eugene O'Neill himself is. Here the naming is interestingly identical, as in the case of naming Nora as Nora Burke to Nora Helmer and Mat Burke to Dan Burke, in *In the Shadow of the Glen*. Mat Burke's bragging is just like Christy Mahon's in *The Playboy of the Western World* by Synge. Burke emphasizes his strength and courage, having no fear about the sea: "The sea's the only life for a man with guts in him isn't afraid of his own shadow!" (SC, p. 999) His relationship to the sea is exactly like that of the Stranger; both are the sea symbols and life-force. H. M. Prasad writes:

The characters in the sea-plays reveal themselves in their relation to the sea. More than that the sea is the personification of the life-force . . . O'Neill seeks theological explanation of man's destiny in the power of the sea.⁽⁵⁹⁾

The heated discussion over Anna never ceases between Chris and Mat. It

finally comes to an actual brawl with a knife involved. When Anna sees Chris and Mat fighting over her, she declares that she is not a possession of either of them. Her declaration is as strong as the final speech by Nora Helmer in *A Doll's House*.

Anna: First thing is, I want to tell you two guys something. You was going on 's if one of you had got to own me. But nobody owns me, see? — 'cepting myself. I'll do what I please and no man, I don't give a hoot who he is, can tell me what to do! I ain't asking either of you for a living. I can make it myself—one way or other. I'm my own boss. (*AC*, p. 1007)

Chris curses the sea which united his daughter and a sailor who, according to him, surely would cause another misfortune: "It's dat ole davil, sea, do this to me!" (*AC*, p. 1012) Chris's basic concept of fatalism related to the sea is confirmed here. He has to admit that the sea has the overpowering authority on the seaman's life. Chris's resignation is like Maurya's in *Riders to the Sea*; "Dat ole davil, sea . . . And Ay tank now it ain't no use fight with sea, No man dat live going to beat her, py yingo!" (*AC*, p. 1015) H. M. Prasad states O'Neill treated the theme on fatalism with an almost theological approach:

The characters in the sea-lays reveal themselves in their relation to the sea. More than that the sea is the personification of the life-force . . . O'Neill seeks theological explanation of man's destiny in the power of the sea.⁽⁶⁰⁾

Burke's love cleanses Ann's wrongful past as the fog initially did.

Burke: . . . and I'm thinking I'd change you to a new woman entirely, so I'd never know, or you either, what kind of woman you'd been in the past at all. (*AC*, p. 1023)

The role of Mat Burke is the equivalent of that of the Tramp in *In the Shadow of the Glen*, but is the opposite to the Stranger's who is the cause of trauma for Ellida in *The Lady from the Sea*; Mat is a "saviour" who heals Anna's past spiritual wounds. In a way, however, Mat is just a medium to help Anna to realize her real self, a sea person, like the "mermaid" Ellida. Michael Manheim says: "But what really changes Anna is her discovery that the sea is her spirit and in her veins, while the fog which leaves her in suspension from reality purifies her"⁽⁶¹⁾.

Anna says to Mat that the effect is not just by the sea, but by him: "Don't you see how I'd changed? . . . Will you believe it if I tell you that loving *you* [Italics mine] has made me — clean?" (*AC*, p. 1010) In this speech she expresses the newly achieved state of "cleanliness" of her spirit as well as her body dirtied in the past by her cousin, or by her clients at the brothel. When Anna says "loving *you*", it is not just Mat but Mat and the sea combined; Mat symbolizes and embodies the sea. M. L. Ranald confirms the positive effect of the sea:

For Anna, the sea is affirmative, life renewing, even welcoming, curative, and loving. She willingly gives herself up to its dictates and accepts its premises. Therefore, for her the sea is ennobling. For Chris, on the other hand, the sea is fickle, and hostile. He continually fights against its will and excoriates it for it acts.⁽⁶²⁾

Cleansing the spirit and rebirth through the sea is found in *Anna*

Christie as in *The Lady from the Sea*; the sea is a life-giver and life-taker as shown in *Riders to the Sea*. O'Neill follows the examples of ancient Greek dramatists; he shows our fate is predestined, and even when its course is diverted, it is redirected to be back to the original path by uncontrollable forces. A small verge moving forward in the thick fog in a wide ocean is a symbolic projection of an individual going forward in the naturalistic universe in the ever-advancing flow of time.

Yet, what is interesting to note is *Anna Christie*, by no means implies the pure determinism found in Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. It shares the element with *A Doll's House* and *The Lady from the Sea*, typical of contemporary plays, in which the free will of the heroine also has a vital power to control her destiny within the scope of the fatalistic course of events.

A new life achieved after suffering is the very essence of great drama. Whether it is through the power of Nature or the will of God, the force of sea or a self-generated power for independence and freedom, the transmutation of the heroines into new selves is all that matters in *A Doll's House* and *The Lady from the Sea* by Ibsen, *In the Shadow of the Glen* and *Riders to the Sea* by J. M. Synge, and *Anna Christie* by Eugene O'Neill.

Notes

- (1) Raymond Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 77.
- (2) It is interesting to note that the first English translation of *A Doll's House* (1882) by Frances Lord appeared under the title *Nora*. She writes William Archer acknowledged his debt to her as the original translator of *Nora* in the preface to the second edition of *Nora; or A Doll's House* (Chicago: Lily Publishing House, 1890), p. vi.
- (3) Egil Törnqvist, *Ibsen: A Doll's House* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 158.
- (4) W. B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 166.
- (5) J. M. Synge, *Synge: The Complete Plays* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1963),

- p. 5.
- (6) Lady Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre* (Gerrards Cross, Bucks: Colin Smythe, 1972), p. 20.
 - (7) See, J. M. Synge, *Synge: The Complete Plays*, p. 5.
 - (8) Michael J. O'Neill, *Lennox Robinson* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1964), p. 38
 - (9) Ibsen's original title is *Et Dukkenheim*; this was translated into English in two ways. One was *A Doll's House* and the other was *A Doll House*. Moore and Martyn chose the latter.
 - (10) See, J. M. Synge, *West Kerry and Connemara*, (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1980), p. 20.
 - (11) W. B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions*, p. 299.
 - (12) Christopher Murray, *Twentieth-Century Irish Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 65.
 - (13) Dennis Johnston, *John Millington Synge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 3.
 - (14) W. B. Yeats, *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, ed. Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), pp. 447-48.
 - (15) David Greene and Edward M. Stephens, *J. M. Synge* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), p. 63.
 - (16) J. M. Synge, *Synge: The Complete Plays*, pp. 174-75.
 - (17) Jan Setterquist, *Ibsen and the Beginning of Anglo-Irish Drama* (Copenhagen: Upsala, 1951), p. 25.
 - (18) Egil Törnqvist, *Ibsen: A Doll's House*, p. 161.
 - (19) Jan Setterquist, *Ibsen and the Beginning of Anglo-Irish Drama*, p. 54.
 - (20) *Ibid.*, p. 13.
 - (21) Elizabeth Coxhead, *J. M. Synge and Lady Gregory* (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1962), p. 14.
 - (22) Jan Setterquist, *Ibsen and the Beginning of Anglo-Irish Drama*, p. 76.
 - (23) Quoted from Thomas F. Van Laan, "English Translations of *A Doll's House*", in Yvonne Shafter (ed.), *Approaches to Teaching Ibsen's A Doll's House*, New York, 1985, p. 6.
 - (24) Egil Törnqvist, *Ibsen: A Doll's House*, p. 159.
 - (25) Jan Setterquist, *Ibsen and the Beginning of Anglo-Irish Drama*, p. 86.
 - (26) Joan Templeton, *Ibsen's Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 196.
 - (27) Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen. *A Commentary on the Works of Henrik Ibsen*

- (London: William Hejemann, 1894), pp. 281–82.
- (28) Ibsen, *Plays: Three* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1980), p. 128. All quotations from *The Lady from the Sea* are from this edition. The page numbers of the subsequent citations will be given in parentheses in the text, and the title will be abbreviated as *LS*.)
- (29) Joan Templeton, *Ibsen's Women*, p. 196.
- (30) J. M. Synge, *Synge: The Complete Plays*, p. 90. All quotations from Synge's plays are from this edition. The page numbers of the subsequent citations will be given in parentheses in the text, and the titles will be abbreviated as follows: *In the Shadow of the Glen* is as *SG*, and *Riders to the Sea* as *RS*.
- (31) J. M. Synge, *Collected Works Volume II: Prose* (Gerrards Cross, Bucks: Colin Smythe, 1982), p. 209.
- (32) The title of this play for the first season of production was *In the Shadow of the Glen*, and later "In" was dropped to be *The Shadow of the Glen*. I chose the original title.
- (33) L. A. Strong, *John Millington Synge* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1941), p. 27.
- (34) Nicholas Grene, *Synge: A Critical Study of the Plays* (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 101.
- (35) Arnold Goldman, *Synge's The Aran Islands: A World of Grey* (Gerrards Cross, Bucks: Colin Smythe, 1991), p. 28.
- (36) Jan Setterquist, *Ibsen and the Beginning of Anglo-Irish Drama*, p. 21.
- (37) Donna Gerstenberger, *John Millington Synge* (New York: Twayne Publisher, 1964), p. 19.
- (38) Joan Templeton, *Ibsen's Women*, p. 199.
- (39) P. C. David, *The Tragic View in the Plays of J. M. Synge* (Bara Bazar, Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1988), p. 24.
- (40) *Ibid.*, pp. 24–25.
- (41) P. C. David, *The Tragic View in the Plays of J. M. Synge*, p. 24.
- (42) Elizabeth Coxhead, *J. M. Synge and Lady Gregory* (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1962), p. 8.
- (43) See, Halvdan Koht, *Henrik Ibsen*, III, Oslo, 1928-29. vol. II, p. 281.
- (44) Jan Setterquist, *Ibsen and the Beginning of Anglo-Irish Drama*, p. 28.
- (45) Robin Skelton, *The Writing of J. M. Synge* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), p. 63.
- (46) Dennis Johnston, *John Millington Synge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 20.

- (47) J. M. Synge, *Synge: The Complete Plays*, pp. 74–75.
- (48) T. S. Eliot, *Selected Prose*, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1953), p. 74.
- (49) Jan Setterquist, *Ibsen and the Beginning of Anglo-Irish Drama*, p. 90.
- (50) *Ibid.*, p. 906.
- (51) See, Egil Törnqvist, *Ibsen: A Doll's House* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 161.
- (52) See, Egil Törnqvist, *Ibsen: A Doll's House*, p. 161.
- (53) Eugene O'Neill, *Complete Plays 1913–1920* (New York: The Library of America, 1988), pp. 67–68. All quotations from *Recklessness* and *Servitude* are from this edition. The page numbers of the subsequent citations will be given in parentheses in the text, and the title will be abbreviated as *R* and *S*, respectively.)
- (54) Edwin Engel, *The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 23.
- (55) John H. Houchin, *The Critical Response to Eugene O'Neill* (London: Greenwood Press, 1993), p. 28.
- (56) Eugene O'Neill, *Complete Plays 1913–1920* (New York: The Library of America, 1988), p. 964. All quotations from *Anna Christie* are from this edition. The page numbers of the subsequent citations will be given in parentheses in the text, and the title will be abbreviated as *AC*.)
- (57) Edwin A. Engel insists Anna's becoming a prostitute instead of continuing her job as a nurse makes her final transformation into a purified woman not very convincing: ". . . voluntarily to substitute prostitution for tending children on the ground, that in latter position one is 'caged in' and 'lonesome' is both novel and improbable." See Charu Mathur, *Women in the Plays of Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams* (New Delph: Rawat Publications, 2002), p. 24.
- (58) Neeta Dixit, *The World of Eugene O'Neill* (Kanpur: Vinai Prakasham, 2000), p. 129.
- (59) Hari Mohan Prasad, *The Dramatic Art of Eugene O'Neill* (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1987), p. 16.
- (60) *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- (61) Michael Manheim, *The Cambridge Companion to Eugene O'Neill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 56.
- (62) Margaret Loftus Ranald, *The Eugene O'Neill Companion* (London: Greenwood Press, 1984), p. 31.