

P R E F A C E

John Millington Synge (1871-1909) poet, prose-writer, and aboveall, dramatist, who died a premature death at the age of thirtyeight, left behind only a small corpus of literary work. During his lifetime he could not earn that celebrity which in an era of drastic reevaluation, posterity granted him posthumously. Now Synge has been indisputably recognized as one of the pioneering dramatists of modern Europe and the first among the Irish dramatists to receive international popularity. Robin Skelton has acclaimed him as "a world figure", "a Shakespearean figure".¹

The plays of Synge interested me so much that I began to think whether I could embark upon a full-length study about him. The vision of life embodied in his works fascinated me. And I found that besides some casual references to this particular aspect, no full-fledged study (as my first chapter, A Survey of Synge Criticism would indicate) had yet been pursued by any Synge scholar. Hence my decision to explore his vision of life.

A creative writer's world owes much to his varied experiences. These experiences leave an abiding impression on his mind while developing his vision of life. Unless we situate

1. Robin Skelton, "Foreword", J.M. Synge : A Bibliography of Criticism, ed. Sella Mitchell (London : The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1975), p. IX.

(II)

the writer in his background, his vision of life could not be properly understood and appreciated. Accordingly I have divided my thesis into seven chapters.

The first chapter surveys Synge criticism, focuses on the main trends in it, justifies and defines the orientation of the present study.

The second chapter is a study of the man. Unless we know the man who has given himself in his works, we could not get the perspective from which to appreciate his writings and understand the vision of life.

The third chapter is a study of the Aran Islands vis-a-vis Synge. Synge's vision of life was formulated when he came to the Aran Islands.

The fourth chapter is a study of the Irish Dramatic Movement and Synge's role in it. The literary ideas and ideals which motivated the Irish Dramatic Movement further widened Synge's vision of life which went a long way in fulfilling the cause of the Movement.

The fifth chapter shows how the external world informed Synge of the fundamental truths of life and gave him a mature life-vision.

The sixth chapter is an exploration of the imagery in Synge's plays as a key to his vision of life.

And finally in chapter seven the plays have been studied individually and a separate title has been given to the study of each play in the light of Synge's vision of life.

The textual quotations from the plays used in the thesis are taken from T.R.Hann's edition of The Plays and Prose of J.M. Synge. And for other textual quotations especially of the prose and poetry, I have depended on J.M. Synge : Collected Works, Vol. I, General Editor Robin Skelton (Oxford University Press, 1962-3).

The Mela Synge has been followed throughout.

I should acknowledge my debt to my supervisor Dr. S.P. Sengupta, Ph.D. (London), formerly senior Professor of English at the University of North Bengal. I remain thankful to the staff of the National Library, British Council Library and Calcutta University Library. I am also grateful to my own University Library.

Before I conclude this Preface, I should express my wholehearted gratitude to my departmental colleagues who have given me every encouragement and valuable suggestions to prepare this thesis.