APPENDICES

BIOGRAPHY, WORKS, AND SUMMARIES

APPENDIX 1. Biography of John Millington Synge

Edmund John Millington (J.M.) Synge was born in Newtown Villas, Rathfarnham, County Dublin on 16 April 1871. He was the youngest son in a family of eight children. His parents were part of the Protestant middle and upper class: his family on his father's side were landed gentry from Glanmore Castle, County Wicklow and his maternal grandfather, Robert Traill, had been a Church of Ireland rector in Schull, County Cork and a member of the Schull Relief Committee during the Great Irish Famine (1845–1849). Rathfarnham was then a rural part of the county, and during his childhood he was passionately interested in ornithology. He was an Irish playwright, poet, prose writer, travel writer and collector of folklore. He was a key figure in the Irish Literary Revival and was one of the cofounders of the Abbey Theatre.

His grandfather, John Hatch Synge, was an admirer of the educationalist Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and founded an experimental school on the family estate. His father, also named John Hatch Synge, was a barrister but contracted smallpox and died in 1872 at the age of 49. Synge's mother, who had a private income from lands in County Galway, moved the family to the house next door to her mother in Rathgar, Dublin. Synge, although often ill, had a happy childhood here, and developed an interest in ornithology along the banks of the River Dodder in the grounds of the nearby Rathfarnham Castle, and during family holidays at the seaside resort of Greystones, Wicklow, and the family estate at Glanmore.

Synge was educated privately at schools in Dublin and Bray, and later studied piano, flute, violin, music theory and counterpoint at the Royal Irish Academy of Music. He traveled to Europe to study music, but changed his mind and decided to focus on literature. He proved to be a talented student and won a scholarship in counterpoint in 1891. The family moved to the suburb of Kingstown (now Dún Laoghaire) in 1888, and Synge entered Trinity
College, Dublin the following year, where he graduated with a BA in 1892. While at college, he studied Irish and Hebrew, as well as continuing his music studies and playing with the Academy orchestra in the Antient Concert Rooms.

After graduating, Synge decided that he wanted to be a professional musician and went to Germany to study music. He stayed at Coblenz during 1893 and moved to Würzburg in the January of the following year. Partly because he was shy about performing in public, and partly because of self-doubt on his ability, Synge decided to abandon music and pursue his literary interests. He returned to Ireland in June 1894, and moved to Paris the following January to study literature and languages at the Sorbonne. During summer holidays with his family in Dublin, he met and fell in love with Cherrie Matheson, a friend of his cousin and a member of the Plymouth Brethren. He proposed to her in 1895 and again the next year, but she turned him down on both occasions because of their differing religious viewpoints. This rejection affected Synge greatly and reinforced his determination to spend as much time as possible outside Ireland.

In 1896 he visited Italy to study the language for a time before returning to Paris. Later that year he met W. B. Yeats, who encouraged Synge to live for a while in the Aran Islands and then return to Dublin and devote himself to creative work. That year he joined with Yeats, Augusta, Lady Gregory, and George William Russell to form the Irish National Theatre Society, which later would establish the Abbey Theatre. He also wrote an amount of literary criticism for Gonne's Irlande Libre and other journals as well as unpublished poems and prose in a decadent, fin de siècle style. These writings were eventually gathered together in the 1960s for his Collected Works. He also attended lectures at the Sorbonne by the noted Celtic scholar Henri d'Arbois de Jubainville.

Synge suffered his first attack of Hodgkin's disease in 1897 and also had an enlarged gland removed from his neck. The following year, he spent the summer on the Aran Islands. He spent the next five summers on the islands, collecting stories and folklore and perfecting his Irish, while continuing to live in Paris for most of the rest of the year. He also visited Brittany regularly. During this period, Synge wrote his first play, When the Moon has Set. He sent it to Lady Gregory for the Irish Literary Theatre in 1900, but she rejected it and the play was not published until it appeared in the Collected Works.

His first account of life on the islands was published in the New Ireland Review in
1898 and his book-length journal, The Aran Islands, was completed in 1901 and published in 1907 with illustrations by Jack Butler Yeats. Synge considered the work "my first serious piece of work". When Lady Gregory read the book's manuscript, she advised Synge to remove any direct naming of the place and adding more folk stories to it, but he refused to because he wanted to create something more realistic. The book is a slow-paced reflection of life on the islands and reflects Synge's belief that beneath the Catholicism of the islanders it was possible to detect a substratum of the older pagan beliefs of their ancestors. His experiences on Aran were to form the basis for many of the plays of Irish peasant and fishing community life that Synge went on to write.

In 1903, Synge left Paris and moved to London. He had written two one-act plays, Riders to the Sea and The Shadow of the Glen the previous year. These met with Lady Gregory's approval and The Shadow of the Glen was performed at the Molesworth Hall in October 1903. Riders to the Sea was performed at the same venue in February the following year. The Shadow of the Glen, under the title In the Shadow of the Glen, formed part of the bill for the opening run of the Abbey Theatre from 27 December 1904 to 3 January 1905. Both plays were based on stories Synge had collected on the Aran Islands, and Synge relied on props from the Aran Islands to help set the stage. He also relied on Hiberno-English, the English dialect of Ireland, in order to reinforce its usefulness as a language; parts of this stemmed from his belief that Gaelic as a language could not survive.

The Shadow of the Glen was based on a story of an unfaithful wife and it was attacked in print by Irish nationalist leader Arthur Griffith as "a slur on Irish womanhood". Years later, Synge would write, "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 encouraged more critical attacks that alleged that Synge described Irish women in an unfair manner. Riders to the Sea was also attacked by nationalists, this time Patrick Pearse, who decried it because of the author's attitude to God and religion. Furthermore, Synge's audience felt that he did a disservice to Irish nationalism for not idealizing his characters. However, later critics would attack Synge for idealizing the Irish peasantry too much. Despite these attacks, the plays are now part of the canon of English language theatre. A third one-act play, The Tinker’s Wedding was drafted around this time, but Synge initially made no attempt to have it performed, largely because of a scene where a
priest is tied up in a sack, which, as he wrote to the publisher Elkin Mathews in 1905, would probably upset "a good many of our Dublin friends".

When the Abbey was set up, Synge was appointed literary advisor to the theatre and soon became one of the directors of the company, along with Yeats and Lady Gregory. However, he differed from Yeats and Lady Gregory in what he believed the Irish theatre should be. His next play, The Well of the Saints was staged at the theatre in 1905, again to nationalist disapproval, and again in 1906 at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. The critic Joseph Holloway claimed the play combined "lyric and dirt".

Synge is commonly described as an enigma, a person who is hard to read and understand. John Masefield, Synge's acquaintance, said that he "gave one from the first the impression of a strange personality". Not even the members of his own family were close enough to understand him. He was quiet and reserved, and Yeats thought that he was "meditative". However, Synge was open when he would write letters to women, and, according to David H. Greene, he acted like "an ordinary human being but not a particularly eloquent one". Not all of his letters were kind, especially his letters to Allgood, an actress that Synge wrote to often. Those letters are filled with condescending remarks and by a man who is, as Greene argues, "not only unattractive but also incompatible with the complex personality of the man who wrote the plays".

Masefield felt that Synge's problems and thoughts about life originated with his poor health. In particular, Masefield claims that "His relish of the savagery made me feel that he was a dying man clutching at life, and clutching most wildly at violent life, as the sick man does".

Synge's plays helped set the Abbey house style for the following four decades. The stylised realism of his writing was reflected in the training given at the theatre's school of acting, and plays of peasant life were the main staple of the repertoire until the end of the 1950s. Sean O'Casey, the next major dramatist to write for the Abbey, knew Synge's work well and attempted to do for the Dublin working classes what his predecessor had done for the rural poor. However, O'Casey was not the only playwright that Synge influenced; Brendan Behan, Paul Vincent Carroll, Brinsley MacNamara, and Lennox Robinson were all indebted to Synge.
The critic Vivian Mercier was amongst the first to recognise Samuel Beckett's debt to Synge. Beckett was a regular audience member at the Abbey in his youth and particularly admired the plays of Yeats, Synge and O'Casey. Mercier points out parallels between Synge's casts of tramps, beggars and peasants and many of the figures in Beckett's novels and dramatic works.

In recent years, Synge's cottage on the Aran Islands has been restored as a tourist attraction. An annual Synge Summer School has been held every summer since 1991 in the village of Rathdrum in Wicklow.

APPENDIX 2. John Millington Synge's Works:

In the Shadow of the Glen, 1903
Riders to the Sea, 1904
The Well of the Saints, 1905
The Aran Islands, 1907 (The book at wikisource: The Aran Islands)
The Playboy of the Western World, 1907
The Tinker's Wedding, 1908
Poems and Translations, 1909
Deirdre of the Sorrows 1910
In Wicklow and West Kerry, 1912
Vol. 2: Prose, 1966
Vols. 3 & 4: Plays, 1968

APPENDIX 3. Summary of Riders to the Sea

This short play "Riders to the Sea" is about the calamities inflicted by the sea on a family of fishermen on an island to the west of Ireland. The scene is laid in the kitchen of a small cottage. The fishing net kept there indicates that these people earn their living by
catching fish. The spinning wheel kept there indicates that these people spin their own yarn and weave their own clothes.

There are some white boards standing against the wall. Since there are no trees on the island, these boards have been obtained from the mainland. These boards indicate that someone has recently died there and a coffin is to be made for his burial.

The cottage is very close to the sea. The island is one of a group known as Aran Islands. Synge went to these islands at the suggestion of W.B. Yeats and spent a long time there, studying the lives of the islanders and making a note of the language spoken by them. The incidents included in this One-Act Play is based on the stones that Synge was told by the islanders. Synge went to these islands at the suggestion of W.B. Yeats and spent a long time there, studying the lives of the islanders and making a note of the language spoken by them. The incidents included in this One-Act Play is based on the stones that Synge was told by the islanders. The language is based on the conversations he had actually heard among the islanders.

When the curtain rises, we see Cathleen, a girl of about 20, kneading flour. She completes this work and puts the dough in the oven by the fire. She then starts spinning yarn with the spinning wheel. Her younger sister, Nora, now appears at the door. She has a small bundle of clothes which she is hiding under her shawl. She asks her sister where their mother is. Cathleen replies that their mother is lying in the other room, and perhaps sleeping if she can get any sleep. Nora comes to the kitchen and tells her sister that the bundle had been given to her by the young priest. The bundle contains a shirt and a plain stocking which had been removed from the body of a man who was drowned and whose was washed ashore in Donegal. He was given a decent burial by the people there.

Michael, their brother, had been drowned in the sea, nine days back and the whole family, especially their mother, Maurya, was in deep mourning. They had been looking for Michael's body to be washed ashore so that they could give him a, clean burial. They had obtained the white boards from the mainland to make a coffin for Michael. But the body hasn't appeared so far. The young priest told Nora that if those clothes belonged to Michael they would be pleased to know that his body had been decently buried in Donegal. The priest added that if those clothes did not belong to Michael, Nora should not mention anything about them to her mother because this will give her greater pain and she will almost kill herself with lamentation.
Cathleen says that their last surviving brother, Bartley, was planning to go that day by sea to the mainland to sell his horses at the Galway fair, and she asks Nora whether she had asked the young priest if he would stop Bartley from going. Nora replies that the young priest told her that he won't stop him from going, but he told her not to be afraid of his safety. Her mother prays to God almighty up to midnight everyday and so God would not make her utterly helpless by taking away her last surviving son.

Cathleen asks Nora whether the sea appears to be rough near the rocks. Nora says that the sea is bad, but not very bad. There is a great roaring sound coming from the west, and it will get worse when the tide turns. Nora asks her sister whether she should open the bundle of clothes. Cathleen says that they would take a long time in identifying the clothes because both of them are crying and in the meantime, it is possible that their mother might wake up and come there. Nora hears sounds of Mauya's movements. Cathleen suggests that the bundle should be hidden in the turf kept in the loft where Maurya cannot see them. When she goes to the seaside to see whether Michael's body has been washed ashore they can open the bundle. They put up a ladder and Cathleen goes up and hides the bundle in the turf.

Maurya now enters the kitchen and she is surprised to find Cathleen near the turf. She asks her whether they did not have enough fuel for the day. Cathleen explains that they are baking a cake and so they need more fuel. The cake would be needed by Bartley, if he goes to Connemara.

Maurya says that Bartley must not go on this day because the wind is rising from the south and the west. She is sure that the young priest will stop him from going. Nora says that the priest will not stop him and heard some of the people in the village saying that he would definitely go. He has gone down to find out whether there would be another boat to the mainland this week. Just then Bartley comes and he seems to be in a hurry. He asks Cathleen about the new rope that they had bought in Connemara. The rope is hanging on a nail and Nora gives it to him. Maurya asks him not to take the rope. When Michael's body is found, they will dig a deep grave for him and the rope will be needed for lowering the coffin in the grave. Bartley says that he needs the rope to make a halter for the red mare and he has to go quickly because the boat is about to leave and there won't be another boat for two weeks or more. People are saying that this will be a good fair for the sale of horses and he wants to sell his red mare and Michael's gray pony.
Maurya objects to Bartley's going on the ground that if Michael's body is found there would be no male member in the house to make the coffin out of the white boards that she has purchased. Bartley says that there is no possibility of the body being washed up because there is a strong wind blowing from the west and south. Maurya says that the indications are that the sea will become rough now and she does not want him to take the risk of crossing the sea to go to the mainland at this time. He is her only son now and he is more precious to her than even a thousand horses.

Bartley pays no heed to his mother's words and continues making the halter. He asks Cathleen to take care of the sheep and to sell the pig with the black feet if she gets a good price for it. He asks the sisters to gather enough sea-weed. He says that they will face a lot of difficulty now because there is only one male member left in the house to do all the work. When Maurya finds that Bartley is determined to go, she says that the family will have real difficulty when he too is drowned like the rest of the male members of the family. She asks him how she, an old woman, will live and provide for the girls if he undertakes this trip and is drowned.

Bartley ignores his mother's objections and is determined to go. He asks Nora to see if the boat is coming towards the pier. Nora sees that the boat is passing near the green head and getting ready to stop at the pier. Bartley takes his purse and tobacco and gets ready to go. He says that he will come back in two days or three days or perhaps, four days if the wind is bad. Maurya now becomes desperate and she says that he is a hard and cruel man who does not listen to his old mother who is trying to hold him back from going to the sea. Cathleen now takes her brother's side and says that it is natural for a young man to want to go to the sea and their mother is unnecessarily saying the same thing over and over again. Bartley now picks up the halter which he has made from the rope and says that he must go quickly. He would ride on the red mare and the gray pony would run behind him. Bartley leaves after invoking God’s blessings on them all.

Maurya is grief-stricken as Bartley leaves. She does not give her blessings to him. She has a sign that now he will not come home alive. She says that he is gone and they will not see him again, and when the black night comes she will have no son left in the world. Cathleen takes her mother to task for sending Bartley away without blessing him. She had said very unlucky words when Bartley was going on a dangerous voyage. They were already grief-stricken due to the death of Michael and Maurya's words are likely to add to their
sorrow. Cathleen then remembers that she has forgotten to give the cake to Bartley. Nora says that Bartley has eaten nothing since the morning and he will reach the mainland only at night, and he will be miserable due to hunger. Cathleen takes the cakes out of the oven and blames her mother for her own forgetfulness. She says that nobody can have sons in a house where an old woman keeps on talking all the time.

Cathleen cuts a piece of the cake and wraps it in a piece of cloth. She suggests to her mother to take this in the spring well and give it to Bartley when he passes near this place on his way to the pier. If she invokes God's blessings on Bartley now the evil effect of the unlucky words that she spoke earlier will be neutralized. She can meet Bartley, if she goes quickly. Maurya takes the bread and stands up unsteadily. She is old and weak and finds it difficult to walk. Cathleen asks Nora to give her the stick which Michael brought from Connemara. Maurya takes the stick and comments that in the outside world the older people leave things to be used by the younger people, but in this place young men die first and leave things to be used by older people. (Michael has died and his stick is being used by his mother). She goes out slowly.

When Maurya goes out, Nora takes the ladder and goes up to the loft and throws down the bundle. She says that the young priest would come back to the island the next day and they should inform him if these clothes are definitely Michael's. He had told her how the body had been found. Two men were rowing with poteen early in the morning and the oar of one of them caught the body and they brought it to Donegal. Cathleen cut the string and opened the bundle. It contained a shirt and a stocking. Nora says that she would get Michael's shirt which is hanging there and compare the flannel that of the two. But that shirt was not there. Cathleen says that probably Bartley put on that shirt that morning because his own shirt was heavy with salt in it. But there was a bit of a sleeve of the same material. The stuff was the same, but Cathleen says that a lot of that material is available in shops and so 'someone else might have got a shirt of the same material. Nora counted the stitches of the stocking. It had fifty-six stitches. Nora remembered that this was the number of stitches in the stocking which she stitched for Michael. They are now certain that the body that had been found in Donegal was Michael's. They both start crying because now they are certain that Michael is drowned. Nora throws her arms on the clothes and says that it is very sad that this is all that is left of Michael who was a great rower and fisherman. As they are weeping they hear the sound of Maurya's footsteps, and they become quiet. They decide to keep the clothes away
and not to tell their mother about them while Bartley is on the sea. They put the bundle in a hole in the chimney-corner. Cathleen starts her work at the spinning-wheel. Nora sits down at the chimney-corner.

Maurya comes into the house very slowly. The cloth with the bread is still in her hands. She sits down on her stool by the fire and starts wailing. Cathleen tells her not to lament for Michael but to tell them whether she saw Bartley. Maurya says that her heart is broken because she has seen a frightful vision. She saw Bartley is riding the red mare and she also saw Michael is riding the gray pony which was running behind. Cathleen feels that she must now tell her mother about Michael's clothes. So she tells her mother that she could not have seen Michael because Michael's dead body has been found in Donegal and he has been given a decent burial by the people there. Maurya, however, says that she saw Michael is riding the gray pony and wearing fine clothes and new shoes. She wanted to give her blessings to Bartley when he rode past her, but the words stuck in her throat.

Cathleen begins to lament and says that they are ruined from this day. She feels that the vision means that Bartley will die and they will be left absolutely helpless. Nora tries to console her mother and sister by saying that the young priest has said that God will not leave her utterly helpless by taking away her last surviving son. But these do not console Maurya. She says that persons like the young priest have no idea of the ways of the sea. She has a sign that Bartley will be drowned now. She wants the girls to call Eamon and make a good coffin out of the white boards for her, for she won't live after all her sons are dead. Or the coffin can be used to bury Michael.

Maurya recalls that she had her husband and her husband's father and six sons in this house. Her sons were six fine men, though she had a lot of trouble in giving birth to them. They have all been lost in the sea. The bodies of some of them were found, while those of the others were not found at all. Stephen and Shawn were drowned in the great storm and their bodies were found in the Bay of Gregory and brought to the house on one plank.

Cathleen and Nora now hear some noises coming from the seashore. Maurya, however, does not hear anything and continues her description of her calamities. Sheamus, his father and grandfather were lost together on a dark night and their bodies were not recovered at all. Patch was drowned when his curragh (boat) got overturned. She was sitting at that time with Bartley, who was a small child, on her knees and first two women came, then three came and
then four women came. They were making signs of the cross and not saying a word. Then some men brought the dead body of Patch wrapped in a red sail with water dripping out of it.

As Maurya was describing the way in which the body of Patch was brought, the scene is re-enacted. Women start coming to the house crossing themselves and kneeling down with red petticoats over their heads. Maurya was utterly confused and in a sort of a dream. She asks Cathleen, who has died—Patch or Michael. Cathleen replies that Michael's body has been found in the far north. Maurya asks how they could recognize the body after it had been in the sea for nine days. Cathleen explains that they had sent the clothes taken out of that body and they were sure that these clothes belonged to Michael. Cathleen gives the clothes to her mother. Just then Nora sees some men coming towards their house carrying something wrapped in a sail from which water was dripping. Cathleen asks the women, whether they are bringing Bartley's body. One of the women replies that it is definitely Bartley's body. The younger women pull out the table and the men place Bartley's body, wrapped in a sail, on it. Cathleen asks the women how Bartley was drowned. The woman replies that the gray pony knocked him into the sea and the strong current took him into the deep sea and dashed him against the white rocks.

Maurya now goes and kneels at the head of the table. The women are wailing softly and swaying their bodies to and fro. Cathleen and Nora kneel at the other end of the table. The men kneel near the door. Maurya then raises her hand and speaks as if there is nobody around her. She says that all the male members of her family are gone now. The sea has done the maximum damage possible and it cannot do any more harm to her. In the past when there was a storm on the sea and she could hear the strong waves striking against each other, she used to keep praying to God for the safety of her menfolk who were on the high seas. She used to and get Holy water in the dark nights after Samhain and she did various rituals with this water. Now she will have no worry about storms and rough seas and she will have no need to get the Holy Water. She asks Nora to give her the Holy Water which is still there. She drops Michael's clothes over Bartley's feet and sprinkles Holy Water on the clothes and on Bartley's dead body. She says that she has prayed so much for Bartley on dark nights that sometimes she did not know what she was saying. Now that there is no son left, she would have no need to pray for someone and so she will have a great rest and peace. She will be able to sleep during the long winter nights after Samhain (all Souls' Day-1st November). Since there is no bread-winner left in the family, she will have very great difficulty. She and
her two daughters will now get only wet flour and some stinking fish. But she will have rest and peace of mind. She kneels down again, makes the sign of the cross and prays silently.

Cathleen now turns to an old man and requests him to come next day along with Eamon and make a coffin for Bartley. She tells him that her mother had purchased white boards for a coffin to be made for Michael when his body was found. Now these boards can be used to make a coffin for Bartley. She adds that she has made a cake which they can eat while they are making the coffin. The old man looks at the boards and asks whether nails have been bought. Cathleen replies that they had not thought of the nails. At this another man comments that it is strange that Maurya who has seen so many coffins being made in her house, did not think of nails. Cathleen says that she is getting old and has been shattered by grief and so she is getting forgetful.

Maurya stands up again very slowly, spreads out Michael's clothes beside Bartley's body and sprinkles the last drops of Holy Water on them. Nora says to Cathleen in a whisper that their mother was very quiet now, but when the news came that Michael was drowned, she cried so much that one could hear the sound of her lamentation from this place in the spring well. She says, "I think that she loved Michael more than Bartley but nobody could have thought that possible". Cathleen replies that that is not the reason. An old woman soon gets tired of what she has been doing. She was wailing and moaning for nine days and now she is tired of it. That is why she is quiet now.

Now Maurya stops complaining and stoically accepts her fate. Death has to come to everyone. So if someone dies the survivors should give him a decent burial and pray for his soul and remain satisfied. Maurya acts in this spirit. She lays her hands on Bartley's feet and says, "The souls of my husband and all my sons are together in the other world now. May God almighty have mercy on Bartley's soul and on Michael's soul and on the souls of Sheamus, Patch, Stephen and Shawn and on my soul and on the soul of all those persons who are still living in the world." She pauses a little and the wailing of the women rises and then subsides. Maurya continues, "Michael has got a decent burial, in the far north and for Bartley a fine coffin will be made out of the whiteboards and we shall bury him in a deep grave. What more can one want? No man can live forever and so we must be satisfied". The play ends on this note of submission before fate and mortality.