

[Book Review]

Anthony Roch, *Synge and The Making of
Modern Irish Drama*
(Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2013. 288 pages.)

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Abstract: A book review

Key words: Synge, Yeats, Lady Gregory, Hyde, Beckett, Friel

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제목: 앤소니 로치 지음 『싱의 현대 아일랜드 드라마 만들기』

우리말 요약: 서평

주제어: 싱, 예이츠, 레이디 그레고리, 하이드, 베켓, 프리엘

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This is a latest collection of essays by a Synge specialist, Anthony Roche. He is not only a specialist in Synge, but also in Friel, and what he says carries weight. Roche quotes Friel who “spoke at the re-opening of the Synge cottage on Inishmaan in 1999”:

On this occasion, on this island, it is very important to me to acknowledge the great master of Irish theatre, the man who made Irish theatre, the man

who reshaped it and refashioned it, and the man before whom we all genuflect. (9)

It is interesting to learn that when Synge had first shown his two works, *The Aran Islands* and *When the Moon Has Set*, to Yeats and Gregory at Cool, they approved *The Aran Islands* but rejected the second work. After this, Synge went to Dublin and saw Douglas Hyde's one-act play, *The Twisting of the Rope* (1900), which, as Synge wrote, "gave a new direction and impulse" to him. The motif of the "stranger in the house" (Greene's term) is best displayed in two of his plays *Riders to the Sea* and *The Shadow of the Glen*. The newly formed Irish National Theatre immediately decided to produce them (Roche 4).

In fact, Roche's introduction to this book is a great introduction to Synge the playwright, what he has been and what he will be in relation to Irish dramatists. All the great playwrights, Samuel Beckett, Brian Friel, Stewart Parker, Marina Carr, Martin McDonagh have been under the influence of Synge. "[W]hen asked [by his biographer] whose work had most influenced his, "the octogenarian playwright [Beckett] murmured only one name in response: 'Synge'" [9].

The book has ten essays: "J. M. Synge: Christianity versus Paganism"; "Synge and Germany: Drama as Translation"; "Yeats, Synge and an Emerging Irish Drama"; "Joyce, Synge and the Irish Theatre Movement"; "Ghosts in Irish Drama: Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, Yeats's *The Only Jealousy of Emer* and Stewart Parker's *Pentecost*"; "Woman on the Threshold: Synge's *The Shadow of the Glen*, Teresa Deevy's *Katie Roche* and Marina Carr's *The Mai*"; "Marginal Zones and Liminality: Synge's *The Well of the Saints* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*"; "Postmodern *Playboy*: Synge in the Twenty-First Century"; "J.M. Synge and Molly Allgood: The Woman and the Tramp"; "Brian Friel and Synge: Towards a Theatrical Language." As

illustrated by the significant titles, the width and depth of the Synge study in this book is great, so any scholars who will study Synge may want to read his articles. Scholars will find Roche's position, for example, as to Yeats's advice for Synge to go to the Aran Islands *without Racine*, more tenable: Roche claims the evidence in *Riders to the Sea* says that Synge sure went to Aran, but *with Racine in his back pocket* (6). Roche offers articles to support Synge as "a deliberate and self-conscious artist rather than a naïf who stumbled into being a great playwright [with his visits to the Aran Islands] (3)," with longer indexes about his European backgrounds and influences: Bertolt Brecht (58-66) and Henrik Ibsen (172-73, and in many places over the whole book).

I think this book is a welcome addition to the Synge scholarship, and I believe Synge should deserve more attention, in particular, from young scholars. Synge is not a passé at all but rather a continually developing playwright, as Shakespeare is.

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