

Language and Identity: Indifference and Singularity as Identity Destroyers

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Abstract

My article proposes to study the use of language by individuals to construct their identity under the colonialist, imperial mainstream discourse of England in early twentieth century Ireland. The study puts emphasis on two major aspects. The first shows the way language is adopted as a personal strategy of inverting and of combating the imposed identity canons of the colonial power. The second aspect is concerned with language as a tool in the perpetual edification of an individual's never-stable identity. In order to conduct this issue, I have proposed to analyze two tragedies by John Millington Synge as samples of the Irish identity quest against the English hegemony. I have relied on W.B. Yeats theatrical ideals because he underlined the paramount importance of language over the actor and scenery in theatre performance, and on Julia Kristeva's post-modern criticism to demonstrate theatre and language appropriations of the Irish people in creating a literary and cultural movement of their own, the Irish Revival. As a conclusion, I have reiterated that language is a very important mean for a people to promote their identity.

Introduction

In the following pages an attempt is made to give Synge's drama- through *Riders to the Sea* and *Deirdre of the Sorrows* more specifically- its ultimate place in the treatment of the Irish identity crisis at the end of nineteenth century. Synge's entry to the literary world of Ireland was occurring parallel to the Irish Literary Revival, which was most famous for its powerful and complex dramatic plays. It was the time when Ireland was trying to win a national sovereignty. The Revival was mainly concerned by restoring Irish literary connections to their Celtic past because Englishness threatened to

envelop, devour and model the cultural world in Ireland according to its essentialist view. England could construct its identity hegemony throughout the many lands of its empire only by “*dint of excluding or absorbing all the differences that constituted Englishness, the multitude of different regions, peoples, classes, genders that composed the people gathered together in the Act of Union*” (Tymoczko and Ireland, 2003:14) As a consequence, England isolated and marginalized the cultures of the people it colonized to give birth to the cultural identity of the colonized other like the Irish identity and cultural struggle. As early as the eighteenth century, voices rose to claim a cultural heritage different from that of England. Such a claim developed during the nineteenth century, and a literary tradition with divergent models, subject matters and goals came into existence, aiming to reject the dominant literary tradition of England. In an 1892 address to the Irish National Literary Society entitled “*The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland*”, Douglas Hyde called the Irish to differentiate themselves culturally. (Ibid, p 15) To achieve the cultural and political liberation of Ireland, that movement promoted a national literature in both Irish and English languages. The Irish Literary Revival involved the transference of Irish language literary and historical materials into English, the adaptation of the poetic, traditional and folkloric elements to the modern literary production, and the exploitation of the supernatural elements of Gaelic tradition within the context of twentieth century mentality. Thus, it was during the Irish Revival, which began around 1885 and ended between 1925 and 1940, that Synge’s plays were written; each of them underlies the interplay of tradition, culture and identity in Ireland and serves to define the way subjective identity is founded. Therefore, Julia Kristeva’s theory of the identity turmoil inside every individual and W.B Yeats theatrical directions are most appropriate to illuminate the relation of Synge’s drama to the crucial identity quest of Ireland.

Synge’s Life

John Millington Synge was born in Dublin in 1871 to a family of English ancestry which owned land in many parts of Ireland. He died in 1909. Like his short physical existence, his artistic life was not

prolific. Five plays were the sum of it. He graduated from Trinity College where he had learned little Gaelic which he forgot after leaving Ireland. He wandered around in many countries of Europe. His years of vagabondage made him be in touch with the literature produced by some authors of his predilection as Ronsard, Rabelais, Cervantes and Hugo. He also acquired "*the preliminary training necessary to realize the opportunities offered by the study of elemental human activities in the last stronghold of...primitive national life*" in Ireland. (Boyd, 1917: 91) Most of all those who knew him described him as silent; a looker-on who always listened outside the circle. But ironically he became the center of aggressive altercations in the field of public, political and cultural life in his country when his plays were being published because he suggested new non-sentimentalised and un-romanticized insights into the question of identity in Ireland.

Review of Literature

J.M. Synge's works were studied by critics who sought to elucidate their complexity and profundity though some of them had valued these plays negatively. In his book *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature: A Study*, Daniel Corkery minimized the religious tendencies that could be contained in some of Synge's plays. Failing to underline Synge's finest use of Symbolism, Nicholas Grene in *Synge: A Critical Study of the Plays* put emphasis on the Irish background of the playwright's works. Contrary to the two first critics, Declan Kiberd reminded us in *Synge and the Irish Language* about the mastery of Gaelic language and myth that showed Synge's awareness of Irish old culture. As for Edward A. Kopper, he observed in *A J.M. Synge Literary Companion*, which is a collection of essays, that the themes of Synge's plays could be ranged from traditional types to modern ones, and stressed the relevance of Synge's works to contemporary audiences. (Cited in Gonzales, 1997: 404)

Riders to the Sea and *Deirdre of the Sorrows* contain many levels of meaning, for they are set in the Aran Islands which provided Synge with a rich cultural context. They offered him the verisimilitude and the subject matter of his works. The islanders had a blending of religious and pagan beliefs, and mastered that musical, strange, and

beautiful Gaelic-English language. In sum the two tragedies embody elements of medieval stories related to the aristocratic consciousness of a part of Irish people, and others related to the political and religious movements of the late nineteenth century that blocked the emergence of a stabilized national identity in Ireland.

Method

W.B Yeats's drama Ideals:

As stated in his essay on "*The Reform of the Theatre*", W.B Yeats resolved to teach others what an Irish poet should be. He advised every poet in Ireland to use its abundant legendary material. The past is palpable within the Irish society. Archaic ways of life, old cultural customs, and an oratory art were inherited from the very ancient times. In Samhain, a newspaper of the National Theatre Society, he wrote,

We have to write or find plays that will make the theatre a place of intellectual excitement ...if we are to do this we must learn that beauty and truth are always justified of themselves, and that their creation is a greater service to our country than writing that compromises either in the seeming service of a cause...Such plays will require, both in writers and audiences, a stronger feeling for beautiful and appropriate language than one finds in the ordinary theatre. (Bickley, 1912: 68)

He insisted on making a modern Irish lover, an old Gaelic king or a peasant speak on stage that kind of subtle and emotional language. M. Tymoczko and C. Ireland said that the western Irish islands offered a "*rich and living language, a speech racy to the soil, and audiences trained to listen to rhetoric and oratory, to a popular imagination that was fiery and magnificent, and tender, still possessing a common knowledge of stories...*" (Tymoczko, Ireland, 2003: 15-16) Yeats also pointed to the importance of the simplification of acting, scenery and costume in the theatrical representations. He wanted to develop a drama which would permit common people to understand good art and intellectual thinking; it should tell them of their own life where they could see their own image. Curtis Canfield recognized that "*by his teaching and example*

in essaying radical experiments in dramatic writing” Yeats “*set a high literary mark for the new generation.*” (Canfield, 1936: v) W.B. Yeats’s theoretical initiative provoked a tremendous outpouring of creativity in early twentieth century Ireland.

Julia Kristeva’s Psycho-analytical theory

Julia Kristeva proposed another criticism as a substitution to the old criticism and to the Russian Formalism. She put forward two essential ideas. The first was that “*a whole world of presuppositions of an economic, social, aesthetic and political order intervenes between us and them (the texts) and shapes our response.*” (Hawkes, 1977: 127) The second was **the institutionalization of subjectivity/or identity** of every individual. Such a concept valued differences and contradictions in literature. That was contrary to “*the Enlightenment dream of discovering one story that can name us all*” (Holand, 1999:1), and contrary to the colonial and imperialist view of England. A multitude of little narratives as in Synge’s plays began to gain space over the old, linear, Cartesian, western mainstream discourse. Kristeva attempted to rethink and subvert that discourse from inside because those dominant western thoughts were man-made. That was why she positions her theory between the dominant external world and the subject’s inner world. She advocates that **meaning is generated by the speaking being in relation to the cultural world around.**

For her, **the speaking being** she calls also **the subject in process** is very important for the understanding of any literary text. The subject strives for the establishment of a never stable identity in a world of perpetual change, and **three** elements are crucial for any success- the **symbolic** world of culture, the **semiotic** world of the conscious, and **language**. The external symbolic world includes the cultural, traditional, moral, historical forces that besiege the subject. The inner, psychic, unconscious semiotic world encloses desires, tensions, and repressions. The spoken words (language) of a subject are regulated by the symbolic and semiotic worlds. Thus, language does not only convey plain meanings but it also carries poetic and affective significations. **The subject must manage to balance his**

identity state at the borderline between the symbolic and the semiotic worlds. By contrast to the western capitalist opinion which considers individuals and languages as static, Kristeva thinks that the linguistic changes always reflect changes in the identity of the subject. **The subject is constituted through the language he/she uses.**

To differentiate the symbolic and to the semiotic worlds in literature, Julia Kristeva coined two kinds of texts: **Genotext** and **Phenotext**. A text can be considered as genotext if repetitions, rhythms, melodic devices, hiatuses, illogicality, and unfinished sayings are detected. Conversely a phenotext uses language obeying to syntactical and grammatical rules commonly admitted. Considering that any literary text “*represents the ultimate coding of our crises, of our most intimate and most serious apocalypses*” (McAfee, 2004:50), Julia Kristeva claims that characters/subjects must experience processes like **Abjection, Melancholia (Depression), and Revolt.**

A melancholic, whose semiotic world energizes meanings, mourns for something lost. Incapable of coping with the cultural symbolic world, he regresses until committing crime or suicide. Some melancholics can be reintroduced to the symbolic by their identification to the imaginary father. This process is **a revolt of the semiotic over the symbolic-Micro politics-** so as to turn down the deadening order imposed by the mainstream symbolic discourse-of England in the case of Ireland- and to stabilize the identity of the subject in process. Julia Kristeva advises every subject in process (individual) to combat imposed hegemony, resembling Synge’s personages which adopted specific modes to position themselves toward the great issues of their country. They did not respond to the communal ways which prevailed at the late nineteenth century Ireland for the achievement of a national identity.

Discussion

Riders to the Sea: Indifference and Dissocialization in Identity Dislocation

This one-act play deals merely with an old woman, Maurya, and her family. The sea has snatched down her husband and her sons,

leaving her with only two daughters to confront the harshness of the peasant life in Ireland. *Riders to the Sea* is with no doubt a tragedy but one of another sort, different from the conventional tragedies we have been used to. In fact, it has no plot because it does not include some kind of conspiracy which Aristotle has believed to be very important in the hierarchy of dramatic elements. The story, if there is one, goes on naturally obeying the natural laws, and Synge is only interested in the life of his characters adhering thus to the opinion of other dramatic thinkers like John Galsworthy, who argued that “*A human being is the best plot there is. The dramatist who hangs his characters to his plot, instead of hanging his plot to his characters, is guilty of cardinal sin*” (Toby 1960, cited in Styan, 2000: 64) It does not even resemble Synge’s other plays, for it has no crisis or denouement to guarantee a fierce tragic impact on the reader or spectator. All that we have here is a natural flood of events revealing the beauty and the truth that characterize the Irish peasant life. This dramatic text tells the people of Ireland about their real life.

Riders to the Sea is set in an *Island of the West of Ireland*, and its scenic stage is filled with props of great necessity to the life of people. The scenery is simplified as suggested by W.B. Yeats. The cottage contains *nets, oilskins, a spinning wheel and a pot-oven*. The material tools are those used mostly by women. Among all the stage props, the hand prop held by Nora is revealed to be most essential. It is a bundle which contains a shirt and a plain stocking. Synge has used it to announce the probable death of Michael, Maurya’s son. He quickly sets up an atmosphere of death that hovers over the stage. As readers, we ought to read the play with the mood of death. Though Michael’s death belongs to past, Synge wants us not to be surprised if Bartley’s death occurs in the near future. The author amplifies such a feeling throughout the anxious opening discussion of Cathleen and Nora, Maurya’s daughters. The girls’ use of the word “she” when referring to their “mother” is unusual. The word “she” would mean mother for them but can also suggest another person that is stranger if compared to the naturally compassionate and lovable mother we generally have. As a consequence, Maurya is the key character whose

struggle for the realization of a complete identity is to be demonstrated in this commentary. As a precursor to western writers who later attempted to present suffering as meaningful to modern literature, Synge had already concentrated on documenting Maurya's personal frustration, despair and fear to find significance only in subjective experience.

When Maurya is first introduced on stage, she *querulously* reprimands Cathleen mainly because of the imminent departure of Bartley. She fears it. When she is *sitting down on a stool at the fire*, she has repeated, "*He won't go this day*". Her voice crystallises in the slow gesture as she reaches the stool she sits on, another technique used by the Irish Revival dramatists. Her body moving downwardly becomes part of the larger movement of uncertainty, fear, grief and death predominant in the play. For instance, her fear is plainly conveyed by the words she utters before Bartley leaves, "*It's hard set we'll be surely the day you're drowned with the rest. What way will I live and the girls with me, and I an old woman looking for the grave.*" A normal mother would cling forcefully to the body of her last son, crying, rolling herself over the ground to impeach the departure, but Maurya has done none of these things. Something inside her wants to expel itself to the exterior world after the death of her last son, Bartley. That is very probable because she has hesitated to bless him, and to give him the bread he forgot after he quitted the cottage. She looks very much like Meursault, Camus' stranger. (C.f. Kristeva, 1991: 39-45)

Both of Meursault and Maurya's identities are transformed by the spectacle of death. Meursault has witnessed a death sentence, and Maurya has buried her husband and her many sons. Although Meursault has provoked death by killing the Arab on the beach, Maurya has done nothing to prevent Bartley's. She is then as guilty as Meursault for when she goes out to fellow Bartley, she does it *slowly*. She is incapable of bearing any longer inside her the desire which urges for achieving a stable identity; Bartley's death will force off Maurya that inner tension she suffers from. As a representative of mother country Ireland, Maurya has lost faith in humanity and life as

conceived and imposed by the symbolic mainstream discourse of English colonialism. She lives in a state of a “*lost consciousness*”, and nothing will shock her anymore for “*shocks are for consciousness*” (Kristeva, 1991: 41, my trans).

Maurya is deeply deceived by the several deaths in her family. She has exploited all the energies contained in her inner psychic, semiotic world to confront and overcome the repeated grievances till nothing is left. Now, her psyche is *empty* and *white*. Because of the perpetual murders, Maurya is indifferent and more and more introverted. She is now a depressed for whom death would have no sense or signification because she is completely disrupted from the symbolic world. She has incessantly and deeply furthered the limits of her suffering until she detached herself from reality. She has not kept a personal interior zone for making a **revolt**, so she will fail in realizing her identity quest. A striking illustration of this inconceivable indifference is contained in this farewell discourse to Bartley, in which she says,

It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God. It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't know what I'd be saying; but it's a great rest I'll have now, it's time, surely. It's a great rest I'll have now, and great sleeping in the long nights after Samhain, if it's only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that would be stinking.

She overtly admits in lucid, accurate but *metallic* words the extent to which she is distorted from the people around her. It is the voice of the *white and empty psychotic* inside her who destabilises her identity process. She is not really conscious that it is her son's death. Having resigned to the fact that her signifying process is totally controlled by her semiotic world, Maurya believes to enjoy a full rest till she dies. She does not fear to be alone with the two girls or to starve from food scarcity as before because actually she is indifferent and nothing in the external world is significant for her. According to Kristeva's viewpoint, Maurya's signifying process is generated only by her semiotic world. Whispering to her sister, Nora remarks the same indifference in her mother. She says, “*She's quiet now and easy;*

but the day Michael was drowned you could hear her crying out from this to the spring well”.

Finally, it must be signalled that Maurya loves Michael as much as she loves Bartley; but when Bartley died her inner identity predicament has become more profound. As a conclusion, Maurya is not a border-lined subject in process. She is sickly introverted and is condemned to perish. Julia Kristeva writes that “*the murderous and irreconcilable singularity which inhabits inside subjects*” as Maurya “*would not permit them to found a new world.*” (Kristeva, 1991: 45, my trans)

Deirdre of the Sorrows: Singular Beauty and Freedom as Identity Destroyers

Deirdre of the Sorrows is a three-act tragedy relating the story of the prettiest girl in Ulster, Deirdre, whom the king Conchubor promised himself to wed. She is sent to Lavarcham’s house on Slieve Fuadh to be schooled a royal education until she becomes older and be readied for the marriage in Emain Macha, the town where the king resides. However, she has met Naisi, her lover and son of Usna, the enemy of Conchubor. Naisi will be her husband for seven years before king Conchubor convinces them to come back to him. At the end of this play, the sorrows that a legendary tale announced occurred in reality. In this tragedy Synge has reinterpreted a very ancient legendary material seeking to propose ways for the completion of the national Irish identity different from those proclaimed by the dominant political and cultural parties and organisations.

Act I is set in Lavarcham’s house which is situated in a rural area. It looks like any peasant shelter except that it has *tapestry*, a prop revealing the high ranked status of the people who are acquainted to visit or live in it. Synge uses only one word to show the singularity of this place because the character must dominate the scenery in the Irish revival drama. The opening discussion between the old woman and Lavarcham serves to program both the actors’ performance and the audience’s receptive reaction to the play. It helps the reader to catch the characters’ mood, attitude and feeling of anxiety. Anxiety characterizes the beginning of the play because Deirdre should not

encounter the sons of Usna; their meeting might bring about a generalised destruction of the kingdom of Ulster. Lavarcham implores, “*The gods send they don’t set eyes on her*” (Act I). Through this dialogue, Synge regulates the reader’s response to the play and discloses the past. The reader is already amazed and sublimated by Deirdre, whom Synge has not yet introduced on stage. Because every word uttered by Lavarcham, by the old woman and by Conchubor is meant to fill out the character of Deirdre. Anticipating on what is to come and carrying the plot, Lavarcham again supplies us the remarkable literary mechanism which Synge has intentionally planned for the structure of this tragedy when she says,

Who’d check her like was meant to have her pleasure only, the way if there were no warnings told about her you’d see troubles coming when an old king is taking her, and she without a thought but for her beauty and to be straying the hills. (Act I)

Everything needed for the excavation of Deirdre’s identity disaster is wittily displayed above. First, there are warnings about Deidre. They symbolically mean misfortune, distress and destruction in case she goes on wedding the king or she flees with the sons of Usna. Second, the reader knows the object -marriage preparation-of the king’s visit to Lavarcham’s house. Third and most important of all, Deirdre’s interest which consists only of the preservation of her beauty and freedom is underlined.

In approaching this text, I will show why Deirdre is subjugated by her beauty and freedom and why she has “*no wish to be a queen*”. (Ibid) While pursuing this target I will, of course, explain her identity instability. Deirdre is obviously aware of her sublime beauty. No other woman all over the kingdom is more beautiful than her, but is she really happy? Lavarcham’s answer to Conchubor’s question about whether Deirdre knows or not about the foretold troubles is very informative. Lavarcham replies, “*I’m after telling her one time and another, but I’d do as well speaking to a lamb of ten weeks and it racing the hills ...It’s not the dread of death or troubles that would tame her like.*” (Ibid) Accordingly, we can conclude that Deirdre is as happy as a little lamb grazing and running over the hills without

knowing the dangers it might be confronted to. Therefore, many conclusions can be drawn following Kristeva's assertions. To begin, Deirdre knows that she is wanted for marriage by an old king she greatly despises. Next, despite the troubles she would cause to the kingdom, she is very happy to be on Slieve Fuadh. "*As a stranger*" in this spot, "*she stirs up a happiness of a new kind*" (Kristeva, 1991: 13 my trans) Deirdre is constantly joyful since she has been brought up there. The space stretching before her eyes would mean an infinite and promised happiness though she carries inside her the foretold and frightful troubles she is supposed to provoke. This casual and insolent happiness continues to be threatened by an inner dread which is more and more present. As a result, the subject in process Deirdre ought to preserve the shaky and delicate limits that exist between her external symbolic happiness and her inner semiotic fear. She must maintain this perpetual transitory state to ensure the continuity of her happiness; otherwise she will sink and be frantically subject to identity problems.

Subsequently, she has no other possibility than that of refusing Conchubor's proposal for marriage because he threatens to keep her jailed inside his fortress. Clearly, the inner threat always propels her into a perpetual flight. She revolts against Conchubor, who symbolises the aristocratic ideal for Ireland's identity quest. She will flee with Naisi whom she has chosen to be her confident. In Kristeva's view, she is captivated by his beauty and physical traits. Therefore, she might have said to herself, "*I am as singular as him so I love him; but I prefer my own singularity so I kill him*" (Kristeva, 1991: 12-14, my trans). To confirm this, Deirdre confesses *in a low voice* to her lover that,

*Since that, Naisi, I have been **one time** the like of a ewe looking for a lamb that had been taken away from her, and **one time** seeing new gold on the stars, and a new face on the moon, and **all times** dreading **Emain***
(Act I)

The rhythmic repetition of *one time*, of the *ing* form, and the low tone used to express her feelings is an example of **Genotext**. These melodic utterances are energized by the semiotic world which sparkles out the inner drives of her subjectivity/identity. She intends the person of Naisi to guarantee her weak identity equilibrium without keeping

aside the possible death she would cause to him in case they go back to Emain where Conchubor lives. Very much like her, Naisi is beautiful, loves nature, and does not fear death. Inevitably, their pagan marriage is celebrated by Ainnle, Usna's brother, at the end of this first Act. Ainnle's sermon starting "***By the sun and the moon and the whole earth, I wed Deirdre to Naisi. May the air bless you, and water and the wind, the sea, and all the hours of the sun and moon***" (Act I), sweeps away every religious and conventional reference. Synge refutes those references for the shaping of the western identity as determined by the mainstream discourse. He uses the natural elements (sun, moon, earth, water, wind and sea) in replacement of the old dominating religious values of the church in Ireland. These natural elements are also used to amplify the need for freedom which is central to the lives of Deirdre and the three brothers.

Shorter than the previous one, Act II is set in Alban, an open area where Deirdre and the sons of Usna have been living for seven years. Hastily, Lavarcham brings news concerning the arrival of Fergus, Conchubor's messenger, who is sent to convince them to come back to Emain. Throughout her discussion with Deirdre, Lavarcham suspects her of desiring to go back to the king; a fact that is synonym of death for herself and for the Usna brothers. Analogously, Ireland's identity would also die in case an allegiance to the British kingdom is adopted or instituted.

Actually two major things are important. The first is that the inner dread shows up more and more, so the subject in process Deirdre struggles to maintain it downward. The second is that she undoubtedly prefers her own singularity over any other's. It is during these moments of hesitation that the identity establishment of the *misogynous* Deirdre starts to collapse. Although she does not know what to do, she seems irresistibly interested in returning to Emain Macha because she cannot support her beauty to fade in the harsh nature where she has been staying for seven long years. Her attachment to her beauty becomes a sickly one. She would never accept to turn dry, old and ugly like Conchubor even if she dies. Many critics as Francis Bickly have concluded that "*the idea that even*

Deirdre will grow old is the central idea of the play” (Bickly, 1912: 45). She is caught between two desires: to protect her beauty and to remain free. But she abhors the external environment which destroys her singular beauty. Thus, she is bound to go back to Conchubor’s castle. To Naisi’s brothers who expressed their disapproval about returning, Deirdre has told,

It is my wish.... It may be I will not have Naisi growing an old man in Alban with an old woman at his side, and young girls pointing out and saying, “That is Deirdre and Naisi had great beauty in their youth.” It may be we well putting a sharp end to the day is brave and glorious, as our fathers put a sharp end to the days of the kings of Ireland; or that I’m wishing to set my foot on Slieve Fuadh, where I was running one time and leaping the streams, and that I’d be well pleased to see our little apple trees, Lavarcham, behind our cabin on the hill; or that I’ve learnt, Fergus, it’s a lonesome thing to be away from Ireland always. (Act II)

The three reasons evoked in order to justify her wish for returning are noticeable. She speaks of her native place’s nostalgic love, her solitude and her beauty, which is the most important one. She plainly admits her death rather than becoming an aged ugly woman.

When Act III opens, all of them are in a tent at Emain. The tent is an interior space which replaces the exterior setting of the pervious Act. Synge used this closed space to announce a restriction to Deirdre’s freedom. Ireland cannot build its identity only on tracing its lineage back to Gaelic aristocratic models. Under such restricted conditions, Deirdre will eventually be no more able to maintain the shaky limits between her need for freedom and the inner dread inside her; the two are very essential for the stabilisation of her subjectivity or identity. The mood of anxiety which has accompanied our reading of this tragedy is accentuated in the last act of the play, for the denouement is now imminent as it is the custom of any well-made play of the late nineteenth century. Correspondingly, Naisi who is observing the stage/tent admits that *“It’s a strange place he’s put us camping and we come back as his friends.”* (Act III) The feeling of

strangeness incites the actors to scrutinize the place and discover the grave which Conchubor prepared to the three Usna brothers. The whole trick set by the king is revealed to both the reader and the characters (actors) themselves. However, Deirdre's reaction is of paramount interest to our issue. *Roaming round the room* and speaking *vehemently*, she beseeches Naisi to take her away because she realizes the king's mischievousness. Her identity is completely distorted and destabilized, for she knows now that she is doomed to be imprisoned by the king who would never accept her incessant wanderings; freedom is necessary to her identity establishment. She repeats three times, "*I'll not be here*" after Naisi's death because she realizes that she has had only a seven-year dream of "*her promised and invisible territory*" (Kristeva, 1991: 14, my trans) which she actually associates with death. The misogynous Deirdre has failed to construct an identity based on her inner desires for freedom and beauty. She will reject Lavarcham's suggestion of finding a friend to rescue them confirming thus her resignation to die.

To conclude, we may say that her identity disaster is now wholly achieved because her obstinate, foolish attachment to her beauty and to her freedom are defeated by the foretold and frightening warnings told about her; she pressingly supported such predictions beneath her for a very long time before they ruin her identity stability. By the end of the play, Synge combines the fires lit by Fergus with Deirdre's suicide, for he puts the fires off just when she dies. Very much in the same way, Julia Kristeva reproduces this exact metaphor to describe the happiness of a stranger *the like of Deirdre* when she says that "*This happiness is like the fire which burns only because it consumes.*" (Kristeva, 1991: 13, my trans) Like the fire, Deirdre has consumed her lover Naisi and her beauty in the wilderness before she gives herself a death. Inevitably, Deirdre justifies the sorrows which the legend stamped to her person.

In the light of what has been said about these two tragedies, Synge is impressive in the way he put into practice all the drama techniques, some of which we hinted to. He had bettered what was already available and used single words to refer to past myths or

legends. In addition, he alluded discursively to many social, political and cultural issues of the Aran peoples. He reduced the actors' movements, simplified the setting and filled the stage only with necessary props. This form of drama sketched by W.B. Yeats is defined regardless to the rules of the dominating drama art of England at that time. Nothing is allowed to lower the intensity of emotions in the plays or detract the spectator/reader from the prose delivery. Synge dispensed a minimum of outward details and events so as to explore the individual's inner response to the identity discordances in Ireland. The Aran Islands and its people hierarchized the drama produced by Synge, for poetry dominated the character (actor) and the character dominated the scenery. The language used by the characters is unique, melodious and simple. In sum within the identity and cultural mist of Ireland, Synge, like the ancient poets, had seen the poetic illumination displayed by the Aran islanders and captured the secret of the Irish strangeness from the magical language of the people.

The literary image he transmitted about this Irish Gaelic past is very captive but it contrasts with the harsh and desolate area in which the peasants live. Like the peasants of the Aran Islands, Synge proposed unusual and estranged paths to follow in the construction of Ireland's national identity. To conclude, Synge had spelt out solutions of the interior world in his call for the restless identity construction in Ireland. His characters had endured the same inner, psychic problems as those experienced by post-modern era people. Like Kristeva's patients, they went through processes such as melancholia and revolt in their combat to realize and maintain a perpetual identity stability, the only guarantee for their happiness.

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