

The Nature of Heroism and Rebellion against Social Expectations in J M Syngé's '*The Playboy of the Western World*'

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Abstract:

This study aims to uncover the nature of Heroism and Rebellion Against Social Expectations illustrated in the play *The Playboy of the Western World* written by J M Syngé. The drama focuses on how a village's residents respond to the protagonist after he makes the horrible assertion that he killed his father. It reveals human impulses, anxieties, and power-mongering. The scene, a modest tavern in a far-off village, appears innocent and straightforward but depicts a violent and brutal society. Although patricide was considered evil, the protagonist, Christy, is deemed to be a hero. This misconduct must have happened precisely because Christy rebelled against societal expectations. The phrase "Playboy" alludes to Christy's heroism, the fact that he won awards in village activities, and his ability to win the heart of females. Furthermore, it suggests dishonesty given by him and how he exaggerates his persona, thereby highlighting the capacity of Christy to project his personality through deft wordplay.

Keywords: Heroism, Rebellion, Patricide, Playboy, Hypocrisy

I. Background

The Playboy of the Western World is a three-act comedy set against Ireland's rural west coast. The premiere took place on January 26, 1907. The action takes place around the turn of the twentieth century at County Mayo's Michael James Flaherty's public house. The narrative centers on Christy Mahon, a young man who fled his farm while pretending to have murdered his father. When his father shows him a home, his fortunes change, and he must depart in shame after yet another unsuccessful attempt to assassinate his father. He takes the locals for a ride, winning everyone's respect and the romantic interest of the bartender Pegeen Mike.

John Millington Syngé attests that his vocabulary was drawn from the tale of Irish rural dwellers, including ranchers, fishermen, beggars, and ballad singers. He claims to be pleased to recognize the debt he owes to these beautiful people's vibrant folk imagination. The play is based on Syngé's observations of the Aran Islands' residents. Moreover, the space is based on a suspected patricide that occurred in history. It demonstrates the manners and traditions of the rural Irish people in a realistic and blatantly provocative way. There were numerous riots over the play's

presentation during those years of Irish nationalism because people felt it was offensive and painted a derogatory picture of Irish life. Indeed, the celebration of the protagonist Christy's patricide by the villagers was a manifestation of their repressed desire to indulge their evil instincts and subvert the dominant moral order of religion.

II. Nature of Heroism

Early in the 1900s, the action occurred on an untamed Mayo coast close to a settlement. The play is initially set in a shabby rural shebeen. In the initial act, the dialogue between Pegeen and Shawn creates the scene's backdrop. The scene highlights Church's significance. Shawn and Pegeen's personalities are presented, wherein Shawn appears to be a cautious and reserved guy, whereas Pegeen is a feisty, independent young lady.

Christy Mahon, the man, enters. He is on the run from the cops and is worn out, scared, and filthy. When questioned about the nature of his crime, which he finally admits was patricide—killing his father. He reveals that while they were in a potato field, he struck his father in the head with a loy to kill him. When left alone, Christy continues to tell Pegeen additional specifics about his childhood and his father's death, detailing a life of squalor in the country and the oppressive nature of his father. She calls him attractive throughout this exchange, which leads to an attraction between them. The tavern is soon joined by Widow Quin, a thirty-year-old lady who murdered her husband. Father Reilly and

Shawn have given her the go-ahead to bring Christy home, but Pegeen vehemently objects to the notion. Christy causes a fight between the two ladies, and ultimately he says he'll stay at the pub. Widow Christy feels "wonderful luck" in his new circumstances and wishes he had killed his father sooner as Quin leaves, leaving him in his first comfy bed in a long time.

Act Two occurs the following morning. Christy looks at his face in a mirror while still considering Pegeen and Widow Quin's advances. Susan Brady, Sara Tansey, Honor Blake, and Nelly McLaughlin, four local village girls, arrive at the tavern eager to see the young man who killed his father. They discover Christy despite his concealment attempts and offer him presents from their fields. They laugh, saying, "they who murder their dads are a vain bunch undoubtedly," as they see the looking glass he is attempting to conceal behind his back. When Widow Quin enters, she orders the local females to prepare Christy's breakfast. Christy recounts to the kids and Widow Quin the tale of how he killed his father, using a chicken bone as a prop and relishing the attention.

The people consider Christy's crime attractive and are interested in all the graphic details. He will soon receive a hero status from them. This heightens the humor and clarifies people's gloomy, ominous perspective. Christy is accused of doing nothing by Pegeen. She is then forced into accusing himself of murder, thereby foreshadowing Pegeen accusing

Christy of fabricating details of his crime once more at the play's conclusion. There is friction in the action as Widow Quin shows up. The women's competition adds humor and intensity to the scenario. The Widow and Christy both have violent pasts but are currently free. Her persona intensifies the setting's brutality, unpredictable nature, and wildness.

Heroes are acknowledged as unique individuals; society is rarely viewed and categorizes them as heroic. If we remain still and submissive, progress will never occur. When regulations are broken, breaking the rules then becomes the new policy. With this, our world would have much innovation and change. It takes tremendous bravery when you realize how much basic human behavior it goes against. For social acceptance and a few other reasons, we are partially intended to agree with the majority. Or, at the very least, avoid acting against the grain and creating a spectacle.

Christy literally and figuratively killed his father. Christy does attempt to murder his father, which is also a defiance of social norms for which he is praised. The celebration of Christy's patricide by the villagers was a manifestation of their repressed desire to indulge their evil instincts and subvert the dominant moral order of Christianity.

The locals become more enamored with Christy as his story becomes worse. Christy's ability to portray himself as a hero in his tale gives him that prominence. The fact that the same people afterward denounce him

demonstrates how their pretenses still rule them.

III. DECLINING COURAGE OF SHAWN KEOGH

"A decline in courage may be the most striking feature which an outside observer notices in the West in our days...Should one point out that declining courage has been considered the beginning of the end from ancient times?"

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, A World Split Apart

Shawn Keogh is a fair, young farmer who is a cousin of Peegen. He is waiting only for Father Reilly, the local priest, to grant the two cousins a special dispensation before they marry at the play's beginning. When Peegen Mike shows concern about spending the night alone at the tavern, he is timid and God-fearing and is unwilling to spend the night with them alone. Shawn tries to persuade his adversary to leave by providing him with a ticket on a ship to America because he is intimidated by the newcomer, Christy Mahon, who appears to be courageous, adventurous, and uncompromising. In the end, Shawn's attempts to get rid of Christy are unsuccessful. As a result, he joins forces with other villagers to execute the newcomer. The villagers are furious as Christy's claims that he killed his father are untrue. Furthermore, Peegen makes it clear that she no longer wants to marry Shawn after Christy departs from the town.

The Playboy of the Western World explores legal compliance and disobedience. Shawn Keogh plays the role of the ultra-conservative character who submits to the law with respect and humility. Christy Mahon, who represents the other extreme, disobeys the law by portraying himself as a patricide perpetrator and a judicial system felon. The play presents the law as an oppressive societal structure that suppresses a person's ability to express their uniqueness. Shawn, who abides by the rule, is presented as an uninspired character whose uniqueness is wholly hidden by social law. In contrast, Christy, who breaks the law, is portrayed as a flamboyant individualist who emanates vigor and originality.

Several forces have come together for centuries to create the uniformity that plagues the West. It is motivated by values in which social approval has a prominent place. It is made worse by success on some platforms requiring virtue signaling and adhering to the prevailing moral trends. It is also a by-product of an educational system that elevates the democratic ideal and advocates group rights over individual rights.

IV. The Society's Hypocrisy

The admiration and resentment of Pegeen, Shawn's deal, and Widow Quin's desire to wed Christy all contribute to his hero reputation. Christy receives praise for the elegant and lyrical way he delivers his experience clearly, and directly. For the first time in his life, Christy is

receiving attention from the public and being seen as a hero. Indeed, the play makes a mockery of Irish rural folk, and the glorification of bloodshed was intolerable at a period when Irish nationalism was piously extolling Irish history and culture, sparking Playboy riots. It is now apparent that Christy is spinning too many stories, which will ultimately bring to his doom. The loy is the main connecting element in Christy's and Mahon's stories, making Philly Cullen realize the truth. Mahon has the same eloquence and power as Christy. The nature of reality and honesty is severely subverted in these passages. The villagers' perception of Mahon's son is against Mahon's perception. Later, the peasants' attitude toward Christy changed. According to Widow Quin, Mahon was insane. Later, the peasants' attitude toward Christy changed. Christy's self-assurance stems entirely from his unearned accomplishments. He conjures up an idyllic, Edenic future for them that is just as unreal as his portrayal of himself as a hero. It subtly mocks the ideal vision that Irish nationalism and religion provide. It's important to note that Pegeen is partially convinced by his own words. Shawn's Christian morality and his submission to authority is contrasted with Christy's alleged disobedience. Christy is, therefore, a more appealing choice for Pegeen. Michael urges Shawn to engage in combat and display courage like Christy. Heroism is what defines a man. Because Christy represents Pegeen's

triumph as a hero, she won't leave. She is the reason he got his new identity. Christy's overt sexual language is a parody of his newly discovered manhood. The Playboy Riots were primarily caused by the perception that the play was indecent due to references to shifts (female underwear). Justice is what the frenzied mob demands. What is justice, though? It has a lot of issues. It is a dramatic irony that Mahon defends Christy from the mob's anger. The evil behavior that the play celebrates infuriated Irish spectators. Darkness is a metaphor for the human ability for violent, hidden yearning. The space contrasts society's hypocrisy with a person's pointless conduct. It mocks the heroics of Irish Nationalists and reflects their deeply flawed, damaging relationships that are rife with tension, hostility, and aggressiveness.

V. Conclusion

As the story winds up, the old Mahon had entered the tavern on all fours by the time the performance was through and was quietly watching. The men depart Christy after seeing Mahon. Mahon informs Christy that they will continue on their journey while having fun relating tales of the misdeeds of the Mayo idiots. "Come on now." Christy responds, "Go with you. I will then, like a gallant captain with his heathen slave. Go on now, and I'll see you from this day stewing my oatmeal and washing my spuds, for I'm master of all fights from now. Because Christy represents Pegeen's

triumph as a hero, he is reluctant to leave. She is the reason he got his new identity.

Moreover, Christy's overt sexual language reflects his newly discovered manhood. The arrival of the old Mahon is received with contempt by the mob. Justice is what the frenzied mob demands. What is justice, though? It has a lot of issues. It is a dramatic irony that Mahon defends Christy from the mob's anger by the end.

Pegeen is mourning the death of a man who was the master of his identity as she laments the passing of the Playboy of the Western world and says, "[hitting him a box on the ear.] — Quit my sight. (Putting her shawl over her head and breaking out into wild lamentations.) Oh my grief, I've lost him, surely. I've lost the only Playboy of the Western World."

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