

Synge on vagrancy: labour, workhouses and the feeble-minded

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This article demonstrates how two of J.M. Synge's plays, *In the Shadow of the Glen* (1903) and *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) document and reflect attitudes towards vagrancy and feeble-mindedness in Ireland at the dawn of the twentieth century. Adopting an intersectional perspective towards social class and labour, the article uses archival sources to juxtapose varied opinions on vagrancy, labour, workhouses and the social anxiety over feeble-mindedness. In so doing, the article questions the extent to which vagrancy was perpetuated by a government that failed to offer adequate provision to the destitute and secure employment to some of the most vulnerable people in society.

Keywords: J M Synge, vagrancy, labour, workhouse, feeble-mindedness.

Vagrancy in early twentieth-century Ireland was an overriding social concern at a time when the country was undergoing increased modernisation. Both governmental and popular culture discourse debated the problems presented by vagrancy, and J.M. Synge was part of it. "I wish Uncle Johnnie would not encourage tramps",¹ Synge's mother told her family, as the young writer persisted to interview tramps during family holidays in County Wicklow. In "The Vagrants of Wicklow", first published in *The Shanachie* in 1906, Synge celebrated "all the circumstances of this tramp life" because of its "certain wildness that gives it romance."² In the unpublished version of that article entitled "By the Waysides of Wicklow", he further romanticised vagrants for choosing a life of "penury with a world for habitation".³ In years to come, Synge would sign off his letters to his fiancée as "your old tramp" as he fully adopted the vagrant as an alter-ego. "In the middle classes", Synge wrote, "the gifted son of a family is always the poorest – usually a writer or artist with no sense for speculation – and in a family of peasants, where the average comfort is just over penury, the gifted son sinks also,

and is soon a tramp on the roadside.”⁴ Consequently, Synge’s mythologisation of what he perceived to be a pseudo-artistic lifestyle has left him open to critiques of fetishising extreme poverty, neatly summed up by W.B. Yeats’s Anglo-Irish Ascendancy dream of “the noble and the beggar-man”.⁵ However, while Synge is mocked as the “the tramper”⁶ by James Joyce in *Ulysses*, Synge’s writings on vagrancy need to be considered in context. Synge the prose writer turned the vagrant into a muse that could substantiate his career as a wandering artist who rejected what his upper middle class family considered to be professional labour. Look past the convenient bohemian alter-ego, and Synge the dramatist used the theatre as a powerful arena in which he could bring the lived realities caused by living in extreme poverty to life.

In both *In The Shadow of the Glen* (1903) and *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), Synge offered an unsentimental representation of vagrancy in early-twentieth century Ireland that was at odds with his romanticisation of extreme poverty in his prose writings. *The Shadow* dramatises a married woman ejected from a comfortable house into a life of vagrancy, whereas *The Playboy* dramatises the life what the state called “professional vagrants”. In choosing to dramatisate vagrancy from two sides of the classed socio-economic spectrum, Synge interrogates the realities that vagrants faced when seeking employment and accommodation. In both plays, Synge poses a pertinent question concerning vagrancy and the social definition of labour in Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century: to what extent was vagrancy perpetuated by a government that failed to offer adequate relief to the destitute and secure employment to some of the most vulnerable people in society? This article addresses this question by juxtaposing attitudes towards vagrancy, labour, workhouses, and feeble-mindedness that were held by government, popular culture, and Synge himself.

The Walking People

Vagrancy in early twentieth-century Ireland was a new category of social class that reflected changing attitudes towards the labour market. In order to understand social attitudes towards vagrancy it is necessary to briefly outline how the social phenomenon of vagrancy grew out of changing opinions towards beggars and the labour of begging in nineteenth-century Ireland.

Ireland at the beginning of the nineteenth century experienced a significant economic downturn due to widespread unemployment in textiles and agriculture. As a consequence, social attitudes to labour were relaxed as people sought alms, particularly in the summer months between planting and harvest. Authorities were empowered to settle beggars in houses of industry, but at the same time the general public (who largely adhered to the orthodoxy of Roman Catholicism) were inclined to give alms to locally known beggars as a form of charity in return for a blessing. Synge was familiar with the politics of mendicancy. For example, outside of Killorglin, County Kerry, Synge encountered “blind beggars [who] were kneeling on the pathway, praying with almost Oriental volubility of the souls of anyone who would throw them a coin.”⁷ Significantly, in an unpublished article on vagrancy entitled “The Waifs of the Wayside”, he comments that vagrants have “no resemblance with the mendicants who show their sores.”⁸ In *The Well of the Saints* (1905), a play that is likely set in nineteenth-century Ireland, Synge presents two “weather-beaten, blind beggar[s]”⁹ who are tolerated by a community in Wicklow. In this play begging is represented as a form of labour. When Martin Doull hears someone coming along the road, he performs his labour “*with a begging voice*” and asks for “a bit of silver, or a penny copper itself, and we’ll be praying the Lord to bless you and you going the way” before switching back to his “*natural voice*”.¹⁰ *The Well of the Saints* echoes attitudes towards beggars and begging in nineteenth century Ireland. In 1843 the English political theorist, Nassau Senior, wrote an article for *The*

Edinburgh Review in which he concluded that “almost every part of Ireland is overrun by beggars”.¹¹ The article documented cases in which beggars were willingly invited into homes in exchange for “news, flattery, conversation, prayers, the blessing of God, and the good-will of men”.¹² Concluding his article, Senior informed his readers that “it must never be forgotten that the beggar is not in Ireland – as he is in England – an outcast, whose apparent misery is ascribed to imposture or vice” but quite the contrary, the cabin “would be *lonesome without him*”.¹³ Tolerable attitudes to the labour of begging such as this remained right up until the eve of the Great Famine. However, the trauma inflicted by the Famine radically changed the definition of labour. With an economy in recession, attitudes towards acquiring an income involving little-to-no-labour was frowned upon.

As the social definition of labour changed, the language used to define extreme poverty changed too. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the term beggar begins to disappear from official and popular culture discourse in Ireland and the terms vagrant and/or tramp begin to emerge, thereby marking a change in opinions towards extreme poverty and the value of labour. In 1906 the government established a Departmental Committee on Vagrancy whose findings documented the sharp contrast between beggars and vagrants. Beggars were officially defined as “unoffending poor persons who have lost their homes” who were “not unpopular with the country people whose charity they seek.”¹⁴ Vagrancy was much more of an elastic term, but certainly, the vagrant was deemed to live “an unsocial and wretched sort of existence. He has no object in life, and his very contentment with his miserable surroundings renders any improvement in his condition practically hopeless.”¹⁵ Significantly, beggars were still supported by settled society because their need for charity was seemingly deserved. The same could not be said of vagrants. An informant responding to folklore on the *lucht siúil* (the walking people) in the Irish Folklore Commission maintains that tramps “came mostly looking for lodging and if they would not get this they would curse

the house”.¹⁶ Another informant recorded that tramps supported themselves by wandering the neighbourhood receiving “tea at one house, sugar at another and they go on like this until they have sufficient food to last them for a couple of days.”¹⁷ Considered to be different from beggars, vagrants were despised for their ability to extort settled society, and most of all, for their lack of labour. Government thought that the rise in vagrancy in Ireland was due to “drunkenness (most of all) and other vicious habits, idleness, and physical or mental inability to do a satisfactory day’s work. These bad habits and defects have a tendency to divert men and women from earning their own subsistence by honest labour.”¹⁸

While there was no clear distinction between tramps and vagrants, there was certainly a clear distinction between a beggar and a vagrant/tramp in Ireland at the turn of twentieth century. Commonly referred to as tramps, vagrants were “just as much disliked as the genuine beggar is tolerated” because they had wilfully chosen a life of unemployment, frequenting “fairs, markets, race-meetings, and other places of amusement, begging or singing ballads, and thieving and intimidating”.¹⁹ In his analysis of Synge’s works, Nicholas Grene has argued that a tramp was “virtually a freelance agricultural labourer” who was an “accepted member of the farming community”.²⁰ However, official and popular discourse in early twentieth-century Ireland does not support this. For example, the social activist, Laura Stephens, argued that the tramps were defined by their economic unproductivity: the tramp “contributes nothing to the wealth of the country, upon the resources which he is a constant and increasing drain”.²¹ In her analysis of vagrancy in Synge’s works, Mary Burke has argued that Stephens “almost certainly has the native tinker in mind when she implies that Irish anti-vagrant efforts are simply not strenuous enough”.²² Here, it is important to point out that there was just as much of a key difference in Synge’s Ireland between a Traveller (tinker) and a vagrant, as there was between a beggar and a vagrant. Indeed, just as Synge wrote *The Well of the Saints* about beggars and begging, he also wrote a play about

Travellers: *The Tinker's Wedding* (1909). Caitriona Clear reminds us that “it is unlikely that the antecedents of the people we now know as ‘Travellers’ were those steadily persecuted as vagrants”²³ because they were defined by their labour (usually that of a tinsmith, repair work or selling of small items). Consequently, when Synge writes about tramps/vagrants in *The Shadow* and *The Playboy*, they should be seen in context of what Virginia Crossman considers to be the “epitome of the undeserving poor; people who could work but chose not to.”²⁴

Vagrancy and Workhouses

Since 1838 the Irish Poor Law Act had provided support to those in living in extreme poverty by establishing a network of workhouses that provided welfare support, both medical and non-medical. Across the island 130 Unions were initially established (later rising to 163), each with their own workhouse that could accommodate between 500 to 900 people, cumulatively providing support for up to 100,000 people. Workhouses were foreboding structures that bore down on towns and villages because of the social shame they symbolically represented. Confinement in a workhouse was considered to be a public declaration of pauperism, a social stigma that was hard to shake off. Stephens is apposite when she states that “to the majority of people the word workhouse conveys but a vague uncomfortable sense of gloom and poverty.”²⁵ Nobody wanted to enter the workhouse. Apart from vagrants, that is, as Synge understood: “the union, though it is a home of refuge of the tramps and tinkers, is looked on with supreme horror by the peasants”.²⁶

Government further defined a vagrant as “a person who wanders about from Union to Union, very frequently obtaining in a workhouse a bed for the night and a meal or two before resuming his journey. These wanderers, as they make their journeys on foot, are very

generally known as Tramps or Night Lodgers.”²⁷ Wandering from Union to Union was a crime under the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847, and anyone found guilty of doing so could be imprisoned for up to one month. In 1862 the Commissioner for Administering the Laws of Relief in Ireland wrote a panicked letter to Major-General Thomas Larcom, a former Under-Secretary of Ireland:

I am sorry to say that I never remember so many vagrants and tramps going about the country as at the present time – it appears to be a regular profession, and notwithstanding that in most Unions the Workhouse Rules are strictly enforced with respect to them, the evil seem to increase – parties travel systematically about the country from union to union bringing disease and bad habits with them [...] I think the serious attention of the constabulary should be called to the evil of increased vagrancy. The Commissioners believe that the evils here referred to peculiarly affect the Eastern Coast, including Waterford, Wexford, Enniscorthy, Gorey and Rathdrum Unions, and the Unions along the coast to the northward of Dublin.²⁸

In County Wicklow, Synge believed that “the position of the principal workhouses” between Arklow and Bray had made “this district a favourite with the vagrants of Ireland”.²⁹ Indeed, government were aware that the workhouse system only encouraged vagrants, or “night-lodgers and ins-and-outs” to abuse the system.³⁰ Such was the commonality of vagrants wandering from Union to Union that the 1869 Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners considered the literal act of walking to be the professional labour of vagrants.³¹

Vagrants commonly arrived at workhouses at the fall of night when manual labour had finished, seeking food and accommodation. Workhouse gates were locked at 9 o’clock, after which those seeking admittance had to apply to the gatehouse porter, who then approached the Relieving Officer or the Workhouse Master. Late application to workhouses meant that vagrants were usually kept in a probationary, casual ward at the gatehouse, as opposed to being confined to the workhouse proper. Workhouse inmates were confined to daily manual labour (either agricultural, domestic or industrial) in exchange for welfare

support. A 1906 report into vagrancy in United Kingdom stated that vagrants were usually allowed to leave the probationary ward in the morning, after they had completed 3 hours of manual labour if they stayed one night, or nine hours if they stayed two nights. Manual labour tasks were diverse but included “stone breaking, wood sawing, wood chopping, flint pounding, corn grinding, pumping and digging, and oakum picking.”³² However, a report about vagrancy in Ireland published in the same year (1906) pointed out that not all Irish workhouses demanded hard labour, as opposed to other workhouses in the United Kingdom that did:

the practice as regards the imposition of labour-tasks on vagrants varies. In numerous Workhouses no tasks are given, in others the allotted work is light, and in a few a proper amount of work has to be done [...] tramps naturally arrange their circuits so as to avoid the houses of entertainment where they have to fall in with what, from their point of view, are objectionable or superfluous customs.³³

Likened to “men of business when travelling”, Irish vagrants treated workhouses as “good hotels, with well-aired beds and good food”.³⁴ For vagrants, the workhouse was not a social deterrent that policed the labour market, but an institution that was actively desired. That vagrants were not commonly asked to undertake manual labour is important. Outside of the workhouse, vagrants did not contribute to the regulated labour market. Yet, inside the workhouse, vagrants were not always given the chance to upskill through manual labour, and so the cycle repeated itself. William J. Smyth has argued that workhouses “were built to play a powerful role in *protecting* the labour market – not replacing it”,³⁵ and not only did workhouses protect the labour market for settled society, they also protected the labour market from the unsettled members of society. Of course, this suited the vast majority of vagrants, but it is important to point out that these institutional failings actively supported the problem of vagrancy in Ireland at the dawn of the twentieth century, and by 1905 workhouses were at breaking point. In that year census returns estimated there were up to 2,000 vagrants

wandering throughout Ireland. 320,470 separate admissions of vagrants into workhouses were recorded in one calendar year with a daily average of 745 admissions; seventeen daily entries for every 100,000 citizens on the island.³⁶ Government were concerned that vagrancy was becoming a social pathology because, in their view, a vagrant “has very often been reared a tramp, and remains a vagrant all his life. He is often young and able-bodied, but in many instances unfit, and in all cases unwilling, to work, having from his infancy done nothing but tramp from town to town.”³⁷ It was understood that the most straightforward solution to the rise of vagrancy in Ireland was containment in the workhouse.

In the first decade of the twentieth century vagrancy began to be associated with what the government termed as “feeble-mindedness”. The 1906 report provided by the government’s Departmental Committee on Vagrancy muted the definition of vagrancy as “able-bodied paupers, unemployable and feeble-minded”.³⁸ The report also called for the “compulsory power of detention”³⁹ for the feeble-minded. Then, in 1908 the Royal Commission of the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded categorised the feeble-minded as “street loafers and vagrants”⁴⁰ in England and Wales, as “vagrants, loafers and ins-and-outs of poorhouses”⁴¹ in Scotland, and in Ireland the feeble-minded were considered to be,

persons who may be capable of earning a living under favourable circumstances, but are incapable from mental defect existing from birth or from an early age (a) of competing on equal terms with their normal fellows or (b) of managing themselves and their affairs with ordinary prudence.⁴²

This definition of feeble-mindedness neatly accounted for aforementioned official definition of vagrancy in Ireland: a person with a “physical or mental inability to do a satisfactory day’s work. These bad habits and defects have a tendency to divert men and women from earning their own subsistence by honest labour.”⁴³ As Sarah Wise has argued, feeble-mindedness was “the late Victorian/Edwardian reclassification of the earlier terms of ‘idiocy’ and its fellow

travellers “moral idiocy” and “moral insanity”.⁴⁴ Those that were deemed to be idiotic or morally insane needed to be contained for genuine fears that they would infect settled society with their physical and moral germs. Reminding her readers that the vagrant was a “genuine parasite” who abused the “casual ward of a workhouse”,⁴⁵ Stephens advocated that “the power of heredity is strong” and that it was vitally important “that an effective blow can be struck at the root of vagrancy”.⁴⁶ With the change in definition of vagrancy to incorporate idiocy and insanity, entering into a workhouse left vagrants open to being categorised and contained as the “lunatic poor” because they were considered to be both feeble-minded and destitute. Accordingly, vagrants that attempted to stay for a night or two in a workhouse were in very real danger of being confused with those in need of acute psychiatric care in an asylum. Policing vagrants with the appellation of “feeble-minded” radically changed public perceptions of vagrancy in Synge’s Ireland, and it directly informs the social context of both *The Shadow* and *The Playboy*.

Afear of the Tramps

Vagrants were well known to approach farmhouses when men were at work in the fields in order to manipulate women into giving them alms. A government report by the 1906 Poor Law Reform Commission noted that vagrants were known “to march round the country terrorizing women while men are in fields, and collecting food and money to enable them to shirk work and escape any regular exertion for self-support.”⁴⁷ The findings of this governmental report were corroborated by Stephens. “Anyone who has lived in the country” Stephens wrote, “will know how the visits of well-known tramps strike terror into the hearts of farmers’ wives and cottagers living in lonely places. The tramp comes along, demands food and drink, and the housewife refuses at her peril.”⁴⁸ Synge was fully aware of the

popular perception of vagrants preying on vulnerable women left alone in remote cottages. In an article, 'The Oppression of the Hills' published in the *Manchester Guardian*, he recounts a conversation he had with a woman living in rural Wicklow: "I do be so afeard of the tramps,' she said to me one evening. 'I live all alone, and what would I do at all if one of them lads was to come near me?'"⁴⁹ In the privacy of his own journal, Synge accounts the unedited conversation:

I do be so afeard of the tramps said one woman, I live here all alone and what would I do if one of them was to come near me. Last week I was across seeing Mrs. B and she's a very charming woman and she sat me down to the kitchen for refreshment [...] and when I was coming home there was some of them [...] in the ditch and they had lighted a fire. It was a one-eyed fellow that was up twice for robbery [...] it was getting dark and I cut into the fields and went over the side of the hill [...] and I all trembling.⁵⁰

The Shadow, a play that begins with a tramp's approach to the "the last cottage at the head of a long glen in County Wicklow"⁵¹ in which Nora resides as "a lone woman with no house near me" should be read in the light of this context. So should *The Playboy*, in which Pegeen worries that she will be left "lonesome these twelve hours of dark" with her "teeth rattling with the fear".⁵²

Authorities encouraged the public into the suppression of vagrancy by advocating "the withholding of alms, and rests",⁵³ but the reality of refusing a tramp was altogether different, especially in rural areas. Stephens is apposite when she wrote that the general public "will think twice before refusing entertainment to a tramp" because if refused farmers "may wake to find his hay burnt and his cattle dead, and the causes of the disaster only to be guessed at."⁵⁴ Nora, the wife of a successful farmer, has little choice but to accept the Tramp who knocks on her door after the fall of night looking for "a sup of new milk and a quiet decent corner where a man could sleep".⁵⁵ The first audiences of *The Shadow* would have considered the Tramp to be an untouchable of settled society, similar to the representation of

the Tramp by Synge's informant. Indeed, Synge is keen to emphasise the Tramp's latent menace onstage:

[*he lights his pipe so there is a sharp light beneath his haggard face*].
And I was thinking, and I coming in through the door, that it's many lone woman would be afeard the like of me in the dark night, in a place wouldn't be as lonesome as this place, where there aren't two living souls would see the little light you have shining from the glass.⁵⁶

Nora's nonchalant welcome of the Tramp into her home was surprising to the first audiences of *The Shadow* because she confronted the expectations of settled society. When the Tramp emerges as a kind-hearted character, Synge encouraged his audiences to think differently about vagrants due to their precariousness within the labour market.

In early-twentieth-century Ireland vagrancy as a lifestyle involved deviant forms of labour such as robbery or begging, but in truth these were the only forms of labour available to vagrants in a society that rendered them idiotic, morally insane and of feeble-mind. Synge himself was guilty of discriminating against the labour of vagrants. He once encountered a vagrant in County Wicklow who tried to sell him a makeshift table made out of twisted rushes and branches. The writer offered money for the table and, once the vagrant was out of sight, left it on the side of a road. "In a moment, he came up on me again", Synge recalled, "holding the table in his hands, and slipped round in front of me so that I could not get away. 'You wouldn't refuse it,' he said, 'and I after working at it all day'".⁵⁷ Anecdotes such as this demonstrate the value of concrete labour to vagrants in a country with entrenched socio-economic class divisions. From this perspective, the categorisation of feeble-mindedness had a profound impact not just on social attitudes towards vagrancy, but also on the social value of vagrant labour as being of little to no worth. Synge's larger point in *The Shadow* is that while vagrancy was commonly considered to be a chosen lifestyle, for some it was enforced due to limited access to labour market, a point reinforced with Nora's entrance into vagrancy.

In dramatising the ejection of Nora from her comfortable home and into a life of vagrancy, Synge draws attention to the lived realities of vagrancy that particularly threatened women in a patriarchal culture. Virginia Crossman has argued that, “by the end of the nineteenth century, mendicancy in the form of the wandering beggar (most often female), was thought to have largely disappeared from Ireland. Vagrancy, personified by the figure of the tramp (most often male), was now mainly associated with crime and degeneracy.”⁵⁸ By leaving the house with a male vagrant, the promiscuous Nora will be considered as a vagrant by a patriarchal society that will consider her extra-marital affairs as a sign of her degeneracy. If beggars were predominantly female and were considered to be “unoffending poor persons who have lost their homes”,⁵⁹ then while Nora has lost her home, she has offended patriarchal rectitude. She will not be distinguished as a beggar by a society in which there were few beggars left, nor will she receive charity.

Dismissed from her home, and with no employable skills, Nora’s attention immediately turns to how she will provide for herself. She is concerned that her labour opportunities will be limited to “begging for money at the cross roads, or selling songs to men”⁶⁰ that the local feeble-minded vagrant Peggy Cavanagh performs. With little means to economically contribute to society, she fears that she will become just like the vagrant Cavanagh who spends her time “walking round on the roads, or sitting in a dirty old house, with no teeth in her mouth, and no sense”.⁶¹ Now that she is in danger of being categorised as a feeble-minded idiot she has little to offer the labour market, and therefore she has little opportunity to escape a vagrant lifestyle that she has been unfairly condemned to. James Little has argued that because of the “dire reputation of state institutions such as the workhouse [...] the Tramp’s final speech to Nora is not a Yeatsian enticement to fairyland, but words of comfort to a despondent woman”.⁶² Little is correct, and due to her new appellation of ‘feeble-minded’, she will think twice about seeking state-sponsored provision

in the Union in case she is imprisoned in the workhouse. Instead, she will resort to the life of what the state called “professional tramps”, in which she will be “hiding herself away till the end will come, and they find her stretched like a dead sheep with the frost on her, or the big spiders, maybe, and they pitting their webs on her, in the butt of a ditch.”⁶³

Professional Tramps

When Synge was writing *The Playboy*, the *Irish Independent* reported on Ireland’s “tramp nuisance” and quoted the Medical Officer of the Lurgan workhouse in County Armagh, Dr. Darleu, who believed that tramps could be divided into three classes:

1. Professional tramps, who are, and never mean to be, anything else
2. Drunken and lazy individuals who won’t or can’t remain in any employment, and
3. Those who are *bonn-fide* [sic], seeking work, and who deserve help.⁶⁴

In *The Playboy* Synge dramatised the Mahons as two professional tramps who wander from Union to Union seeking temporary relief. Indeed, in the earliest drafts of the play Christy describes himself as “a meal seeking vagabond straying from Union to Union”.⁶⁵

In the published typescript of *The Playboy* Christy claims to be “the son of a strong farmer” and that Old Mahon “could have bought up the whole of your old house a while since from the butt of his tail-pocket and not have missed the weight of it gone”.⁶⁶ One of the earliest typescripts of the play reveal that Christy is to appear “*more like a farmer than a tramp*.”⁶⁷ Furthermore, Christy is keen to point out that he buried his father when he was “digging spuds in the field.”⁶⁸ Here, it is important to point out that Old Mahon is listed in the cast as “a squatter”,⁶⁹ a person who would take temporary shelter in an abandoned and/or evicted property. Christy may have certainly attempted to murder his father but, significantly,

he did so in a property that was not legally his, and therefore just as temporary as the Unions that he and his father wander to. Accordingly, the distinction between squatters and vagrants was not entirely clear in Synge's Ireland. Indeed, Old Mahon may be listed as a squatter, but he began life in Synge's notebooks as a character called Old Flaherty, "evicted for debt" and "to look on [him] you'd think maybe [he] was only a tramp".⁷⁰ As the play went through subsequent drafts, Synge was keen to represent the Mahons as vagrants as opposed to squatters, or even farmers. When Old Mahon first appears on stage, the Widow Quin refers to Old Mahon as "that tramper", and in turn Old Mahon refers to his son as "an ugly young streeler."⁷¹ Time and again throughout the unpublished drafts of the play, Old Mahon's vagrancy is insisted upon by the Mayo community he stumbles upon, and he is characterised as "a filthy tramper [...] in that state of swinery [sic] and walking dirt".⁷² Consequently, Christy's initial claim of burying his wealthy, strong, farmer father is ultimately proven to be an elaborate lie that was told to deceive the community. This is why, when Michael James Flaherty asks Christy if he buried his father, Synge carefully writes the stage direction "*considering*" before Christy says "Aye. I buried him then".⁷³ Christy needs the extra moment to embellish his lie, which is in keeping with the social stereotype of vagrants as liars and schemers.

Masters of workhouses reported that when vagrants approached workhouses at the fall of night they did so "by means of paths through the fields and leave the workhouse in the same manner thus avoiding passing through the town and escaping observations of the police."⁷⁴ Christy is first spotted by Shawn Keogh in a ditch as darkness falls, and when he arrives in the shebeen fearing the police, Pegeen asks him if he "is one of the tinkers, young fellow, is beyond camped in the glen."⁷⁵ Christy is not a member of the Travelling community however, but a vagrant who is "destroyed walking."⁷⁶ Just like Nora in *The Shadow*, settled society does not see the Mahons as beggars due to the redefined social

attitudes towards vagrancy and labour. In many respects, the Mahons' vagrant lifestyle of wandering from Union to Union anticipate Nora's future in *The Shadow*.

What is significant about Synge's dramatic treatment of vagrancy in *The Playboy* is that he is willing to represent alternative futures for vagrants. The 1908 Commission of the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded stated that "feeble-minded men in the workhouses" were often "ins-and-outs" and that they were known to "go into workhouses in winter and come out in summer, picking up a precarious livelihood in one way or another".⁷⁷ Christy has done exactly this and now, fresh out of the workhouse, Christy is willing to work and to shed his status as a professional tramp. From this perspective, Christy's character trajectory in the play should be considered in terms of moving from being a professional tramp (Darleu's first definition of vagrancy) to someone who deserves help and seeks labour (Darleu's third definition of vagrancy). Indeed, once Christy has picked up precarious employment as "pot-boy" with "good wages" and the promise of not to "destroy [him] with the weight of work"⁷⁸ he is completely transformed. Working as a makeshift waiter his status changes in the eyes of the law; it is now difficult to prosecute Christy under the 1871 Vagrancy Act because he has found employment. With employment, Christy's social status changes from a tramp "destroyed walking with [his] whole feet in bleeding blisters, and [his] whole skin needing washing like a Wicklow sheep",⁷⁹ to the playboy of the western world.

A vagrant was considered to be a "masterless man" that, is a man with nothing to master (labour or home) and therefore, as Clear reminds us, a vagrant was understood to be a "pathetic, unsexed creature".⁸⁰ Indeed, Old Mahon says that Christy was "the laughing joke of every female woman where four baronies meet, the way girls would stop their weeding if they seen him coming the road to let a roar at him, and call him the looney."⁸¹ However, with labour to master Christy is incredibly attractive to the women in the village. Indeed, Pegeen teases Widow Quin for being "without a tramp itself to keep in order her place at all."⁸²

Nevertheless, when Old Mahon arrives into the community looking for his son and “a supeen” (Darleu’s second definition of vagrancy) after talking to another tramp who saw Christy “coming this way at the fall of night”,⁸³ the imagined life of settled respectability comes crashing down. The stereotypes of the vagrant being an untrustworthy criminal remerge as the socio-economic class barriers between the vagrant and settled society are reinforced.

The general public were frequently reminded of their civic duty to apprehend vagrants. The *Sligo Champion* encouraged all people to take matters into their own hands if necessary:

the vigilance and energy of the police should be seconded by every one [sic] having any regard for the welfare and stability of society, in order that this nuisance should be abated. At any cost, these vagabonds should be got rid of, and to effect that object every well disposed [sic] should, if needs be, constitute himself a special constable.⁸⁴

Seeing themselves as special constables, the community proceed to hobble Christy with the view to send him “to the peelers till they stretch [him] now”.⁸⁵ Christy “*looking round in desperation*” pleads innocence, and requests to be left alone “to run off like a vagabond straying through the Unions”.⁸⁶ Such was the importance of employment to Christy that, in an earlier draft he begs for mercy as just a “poor man is passing pauper on the highways of the world”.⁸⁷ In that unpublished draft, he asks to remain settled amongst the Mayo community: “let you not have me sent out this day to be a lonesome poor tramper on the face of the world, walking from Union to Union with the ground white and hard to my feet, and the old lad pacing behind me the way the lost spirits do be following and following the saints of God.”⁸⁸ In so doing, Christy beseeches those present for a duty of care, but this matters little to the community who are appalled by the frightening reality of Christy’s vagrancy. When Christy tries to murder his father in real life, this is all that the community need to fully associate Christy as being of a feeble mind, for only an idiot or the morally insane would

actually attempt to murder their father. Indeed, Shawn Keogh had suspected that Christy was feeble-minded from the very beginning when he spotted Christy “in the furzy ditch, groaning wicked like a maddening dog”.⁸⁹

Throughout the play Synge is careful to document a pathology of psychological disturbance that runs in the feeble-minded Mahon family. Old Mahon, “the sniggering maniac”, has a medical history of being “locked in the asylum for battering peelers or assaulting men”.⁹⁰ In turn, Synge extends the accusations of idiocy and feeble-mindedness towards Christy, directly associating it with insanity. As Christy struggles to escape, the community “*half frightened, half amused*” scream “he’s going mad! Mind yourselves! Run from the idiot!” to which Christy defends himself: “if I am an idiot, I’m after hearing my voice this day saying words would raise the topknot on a poet in a merchant’s town.”⁹¹ Christy makes an important point. When he was employed he was not seen as feeble-minded, and his classed status as a vagrant was overlooked in favour of the fact that he contributed to the labour market. Once Christy attempts to murder his father in real life he directly threatens the entire value of the local labour market in case the police arrest all those present. Not only is his enfranchised social status forgotten, he is also seen as what he always was in the eyes of settled society, a feeble-minded tramp who has demonstrated some of the clinical symptoms of schizophrenia: the fear of being watched; peculiar ways of speaking; a change in personality; deteriorated hygiene and appearance; inappropriate or bizarre behaviour; and believing in things that aren’t happening or have never happened.

The community’s all too easy rejection of Christy as a feeble-minded tramp highlights the extent to which the category of the feeble-minded could be easily applied and disappplied in the Ireland of Synge’s time. With Christy reduced to a feeble-minded tramp, Widow Quin says “it’s in the mad-house they should put him”.⁹² Christy, however, is not admitted into an asylum, and he manages to safely leave the community to continue his labour of wandering

aboard without visible means of support. This does not mean, however, that he will avoid the asylum. Old Mahon recounts a time that he stayed in a Union that operated as an asylum: “I’d best be going to the Union beyond, and there’ll be a welcome before me, I tell you [*with great pride*], and I a terrible and fearful case, the way that there I was one time screeching in a straitened waistcoat with seven doctors writing out my sayings in a printed book.”⁹³ In light of the workhouse operating as a makeshift asylum, it is interesting to note that in *The Shadow*, when Nora’s lover Michael Dara reminds her that “there’s a fine Union below in Rathdrum”, there is a deeper reason “the like of her would never go there”⁹⁴ that extends much further than Nora’s socio-economic, classed shame.

The Lunatic Poor

Before 1875 those in need of psychological care were occasionally welcomed into workhouses subject to the approval of the Boards of Guardians. Such was the growth and spread of the asylum in nineteenth-century Ireland that in 1875 legislation was passed that legally allowed for unharmed “lunatics” to be transferred to workhouses subject to the approval of local Government boards and Inspectors of Lunatics. The Board of Guardians at the Rathdrum workhouse implemented the new changes. In 1901, the Rathdrum Union was inspected by Dr. Courtenay, H.M. Inspector of Lunatics in Ireland. Dr. Courtenay found thirty-three people in need of immediate psychiatric care living in appalling conditions, in which patients “sleep in a dormitory with a boarded floor, as there is no room for a bed”.⁹⁵ The *Wicklow News-letter* reported that “the inmates were unable to take care of themselves in any way” and that there was “no one to look after them except two old pauper inmates, who have little idea of keeping themselves clean”.⁹⁶ Dr. Courtenay advised that “a suitable institution for lunatics be provided for the pauper lunatics”⁹⁷ but the Chairman of the Asylum

Committee of the County Council said that “in the first instance they had to be dealt with in the workhouse.”⁹⁸

The scandal of the Rathdrum workhouse was a hangover of a failure of direct healthcare provision that first emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1816 both the Surgeon-General and Physician-General for Ireland stated that “lunatics and idiots have been for many years past promiscuously huddled together in the same apartments, and even placed frequently in the same beds with helpless paupers of sane of mind”.⁹⁹ The following year the House of Commons investigated these allegations. One witness was called before a select committee and admitted that they had seen up to sixty people in one workhouse of which “the majority were insane, and the rest paupers not affected with insanity”.¹⁰⁰ The witness also testified that they had “seen in the same room a lunatic chained in a bed, the other half of which was occupied by a sane pauper.”¹⁰¹ Despite this, in 1836 asylums were brought under the responsibility of the Poor Law Commission. In so doing, the categorical failure to discriminate between the destitute and the insane ensured that the class of the lunatic poor continued. A letter to *The Nation* in 1859 remarked on the “improvement effected by the progress of modern legislation in the position of the lunatic poor”, before commenting on a time before the Famine when,

every village in the kingdom had its stock fool, perhaps, also its raving madman [...] a better period, however, succeeds for the poor *omadhawn*, and we see him emerging from the workhouse to be admitted into one of the District Asylums where 4,000 odd of his brethren are at present well fed, well clad, and cared for.”¹⁰²

However, the scandal of the Rathdrum workhouse demonstrated that those in need of psychiatric care were still being detained in workhouses and, as Crossman points out “the relationship between pauperis and insanity, and between asylums and workhouses, remained confused”.¹⁰³ Indeed, in 1900 Stephens published an damning article in which she visited an unnamed Irish workhouse and, behind “certain heavy doors”, she found herself,

in the gloomy quarters of the imbeciles and harmless lunatics. These poor creatures live in a large barrack-like room, herded together promiscuously, old and young, no employment being provided for those who would be well able to use their hands. They sit listlessly on long forms or pace the room, chattering incoherently or uttering wild peals of laughter, whilst one or two who sit apart with a dull, hopeless look on their faces, are not imbeciles at all but sufferers from epilepsy, as sane as you or I, but in a fair way to lose their sanity by a life among the insane which tries even the steady nerves and brain of the trained lunacy nurse.¹⁰⁴

While this was legal, the fact that workhouses kept both the sane and feeble-minded in the same room severely damaged the reputation of the workhouse. Stephens was a strong advocate against what she called “the evil of improper classification”¹⁰⁵ in workhouses, especially considering the precedent set in English workhouses of “the feeble-minded [finding] their way into the tramp wards.”¹⁰⁶ In light of changing public opinion, all Boards of Guardians were urged to “gradually reduce the number of insane in workhouses”,¹⁰⁷ and in 1908 Boards were told that “all lunatics, idiots and other cases of mental disease in Irish workhouses should be removed”.¹⁰⁸ Progress was slow simply because, as the government report concluded, the task to remove “all mentally defective persons in Ireland from the care and control of the Poor Law Authorities is absolutely overwhelming.”¹⁰⁹

Women were more likely to be kept with the lunatic poor than men. “In most Irish workhouses no attempt at classifying the women is made”, Stephens advocated, concluding that women are “left in in daily and hourly companionship with others of degraded character, mentally and morally debased”.¹¹⁰ Staged just two years after the Rathdrum workhouse scandal, Nora’s possible entrance to the Rathdrum workhouse would condemn her to a squalid existence with the lunatic poor in which her mental and physical welfare would be severely compromised. In so doing, a vagrant like Nora considered to be of feeble mind would face the very real danger of becoming an indiscriminate member of the lunatic poor. When the Irish legislature passed the 1875 Act that legally provided for the transfer of

lunatics into workhouses, it was commonplace for the destitute considered to be harmful to themselves or others to be transferred from the workhouse to the asylum. Indeed, Christy recounts a story in which his father was “locked in the asylum for battering peelers or assaulting men.”¹¹¹ Admittance to the workhouse either through choice or necessity meant that so-called feeble-minded vagrants could easily be transferred to the asylum to join other members of the lunatic poor. This is why the Tramp in *The Shadow* lives in fear of the Richmond Asylum in Dublin because by 1907 transferrals from workhouses accounted for 30% of all admissions to the Richmond Asylum.¹¹²

Hard Labour

Before the Famine, Senior reported that “the whole burden of supporting the poor is stated to fall on the middling and small farmers, the shopkeepers, and, above all, on the labourers themselves”.¹¹³ However, in the decades after the Famine Synge was of the opinion that vagrancy existed “wherever the labourer of a country has preserved his vitality”.¹¹⁴ As attitudes to labour changed, disparities in class became increasingly evident in a rapidly modernising Ireland. Due to the fact that many workhouses failed to upskill vagrants, government ruminated on how feeble-minded vagrants could support the labour market:

there should, we suggest, be power conferred upon a Court of Summary Jurisdiction to direct them to be sent for a term of from one to three years to a *Labour-House* [...] we should be sorry to see in them any thing [sic] suggestive of more comfort than can be derived from very hard work, enough of simple food, clean healthy buildings, fittings and surroundings, but everything of the plainest roughest kind.¹¹⁵

This possible solution to the rise of vagrancy seems to have been popular. An anonymous workhouse physician wrote an article in the *Nation* advocating that vagrants “should be sent to *depots de mendicite* and kept to hard labour.”¹¹⁶ Similarly, Stephens thought that “all

tramps could be confined in Labour Colonies.”¹¹⁷ However, Synge was of the persuasion that those who fell into a life of vagrancy needed to be upskilled in institutions that could adequately provide for them, and he was not alone in this opinion. In 1887 Michael Davitt gave a lecture at the Theatre Royal in Limerick, advocating for the “the abolition, root and branch, of the workhouse system”.¹¹⁸ Instead, Davitt called on the government to offer more “opportunities of employment under a new land system and a general industrial development”.¹¹⁹ With little opportunity to contribute to the labour market vagrants were unfairly discriminated against.

Certainly, vagrants were schemers, manipulators and criminals, and while Synge used the vagrant as a muse he used the theatre to pose problematic questions towards the amelioration of extreme poverty at a time of increased modernisation. If vagrants were despised by settled society for their lack of labour, then at the same time the labour market struggled to support vagrants with little to no employable skills. With little faith in a state that labelled them feeble-minded, and little faith in state-run institutions that housed the lunatic poor, vagrants had little other choice but to wander the roads. From this perspective, the application of the term feeble-minded was not just an effective strategy of policing vagrancy in early-twentieth century Ireland, it was also an effective strategy in policing the labour market. In both *The Shadow* and *The Playboy* Synge exposed the superficial relationship between vagrancy and feeble-mindedness. Nora’s situation demonstrates that there was nothing to stop people falling into a life of vagrancy and feeble-mindedness, and the fate of the Mahons demonstrates that there was everything stopping the destitute from emerging from it. That Synge deliberately chose to perform the realities of vagrancy to privileged urban audiences is important. In so doing, the playwright asked his audiences to be mindful of state power, and to think twice about the lived realities of vulnerable people in less fortunate positions. Such a request is as necessary today as it was then.

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- ¹ Stephens, *My Uncle John*, 123.
- ² Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2: 208.
- ³ Synge, *The J.M. Synge Manuscripts from the Library of Trinity College Dublin*: 4335, f.1
- ⁴ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2: 202.
- ⁵ Yeats, *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats*, 603.
- ⁶ Joyce, *Ulysses*, 164.
- ⁷ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2: 265.
- ⁸ Synge, *The J.M. Synge Manuscripts from the Library of Trinity College Dublin*: 4335, f.2.
- ⁹ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3: 69. Synge states the play is set “one or more centuries ago” from the first performance date of 1905.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 75. Emphasis in the original.
- ¹¹ Senior, “Mendicancy in Ireland”, 392.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 400–401.
- ¹³ *Ibid.* Emphasis in the original.
- ¹⁴ *Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy*, Vol. 1: 85.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.
- ¹⁶ “Lucht Siúil”, IFC School’s Collection: 1051B, f.07_010.
- ¹⁷ O’Neill, “Travelling Folk”, IFC School’s Collection: 0692, f.265.
- ¹⁸ *Poor Law Reform Commission (Ireland) Report of the Vice-Regal Commission on Poor Law Reform in Ireland*, Vol. 1: 52.
- ¹⁹ *Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy*, Vol. 1: 85.
- ²⁰ Grene, *Synge: A Critical Study of the Plays*, 88-89.
- ²¹ Stephens, “The Tramp”, 339.
- ²² Burke, “*Tinkers*”: *Synge and the Cultural History of the Irish Traveller*, 90.
- ²³ Clear, *Social Change and Everyday Life in Ireland, 1850–1922*, 129.
- ²⁴ Crossman, *Poverty and the Poor Law in Ireland, 1850–1914*, 198.
- ²⁵ Stephens, “An Irish Workhouse”, 129.
- ²⁶ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2: 217.
- ²⁷ *Poor Law Reform Commission (Ireland) Report of the Vice-Regal Commission on Poor Law Reform in Ireland*, Vol. 1: 52.
- ²⁸ *Chief Secretary’s Office Registered Papers 1875/1878*. Letter from Mr. Banks, to Major-General Thomas Larcom, 18 September, 1862.
- ²⁹ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2: 202.
- ³⁰ *Poor Law Reform Commission (Ireland) Report of the Vice-Regal Commission on Poor Law Reform in Ireland*, Vol. 1: 52.
- ³¹ *Chief Secretary’s Office Registered Papers 1875/1878*. Extracts from the Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for 1869.
- ³² *Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy*, Vol. 1: 28.
- ³³ *Poor Law Reform Commission (Ireland) Report of the Vice-Regal Commission on Poor Law Reform in Ireland*, Vol. 1: 54.
- ³⁴ *Poor Law Reform Commission (Ireland) Report of the Vice-Regal Commission on Poor Law Reform in Ireland*, Vol. 1: 54.
- ³⁵ Smyth, “The Creation of the Workhouse System”, 124. Emphasis in original.
- ³⁶ *Poor Law Reform Commission (Ireland) Report of the Vice-Regal Commission on Poor Law Reform in Ireland*, Vol. 1: 53.
- ³⁷ *Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy*, Vol. 1: 85.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 247.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 61.

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- ⁴⁰ *Report of the Royal Commission of the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded*, Vol. 8: 22.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 485.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 448.
- ⁴³ *Poor Law Reform Commission (Ireland) Report of the Vice-Regal Commission on Poor Law Reform in Ireland*, Vol. 1: 52.
- ⁴⁴ Wise, *Inconvenient People*, 381.
- ⁴⁵ Stephens, “The Tramp”, 339.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 343.
- ⁴⁷ *Poor Law Reform Commission (Ireland) Report of the Vice-Regal Commission on Poor Law Reform in Ireland*, 55.
- ⁴⁸ Stephens, “The Tramp”, 340.
- ⁴⁹ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2: 210.
- ⁵⁰ Synge, *The J.M. Synge Manuscripts from the Library of Trinity College Dublin*: 4335, ff.138-139.
- ⁵¹ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3: 31, 37.
- ⁵² Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4: 63.
- ⁵³ *Chief Secretary’s Office Registered Papers 1875/1878*. Extracts from the Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for 1869.
- ⁵⁴ Stephens, “The Tramp”, 340.
- ⁵⁵ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3: 33.
- ⁵⁶ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3: 37.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 206.
- ⁵⁸ Crossman, *Poverty and the Poor Law in Ireland, 1850–1914*, 199.
- ⁵⁹ *Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy*, Vol. 1: 85.
- ⁶⁰ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3: 53.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 51.
- ⁶² Little, “Home, the Asylum, and the Workhouse in *The Shadow of the Glen*”, 267.
- ⁶³ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3: 55.
- ⁶⁴ “Tramp Nuisance. A Plan to Deal With It”, March 11, 1905, 7.
- ⁶⁵ Synge, *The J.M. Synge Manuscripts from the Library of Trinity College Dublin*: 4331, f.745.
- ⁶⁶ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4: 69.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.
- ⁶⁸ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4: 75.
- ⁶⁹ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4: 55.
- ⁷⁰ Synge, *The J.M. Synge Manuscripts from the Library of Trinity College Dublin*: 4331, f.321r.
- ⁷¹ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4: 119.
- ⁷² Synge, *The J.M. Synge Manuscripts from the Library of Trinity College Dublin*: 4331, f.730r.
- ⁷³ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4: 75. Emphasis in original.
- ⁷⁴ *Chief Secretary’s Office Registered Papers 1875/1878*. Letter from Isaac Flower to the Poor Law Commissioners, August 30, 1862.
- ⁷⁵ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4: 67.
- ⁷⁶ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4: 67.
- ⁷⁷ *Report of the Royal Commission of the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded*, Vol. 8: 25.
- ⁷⁸ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4: 75.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.
- ⁸⁰ Clear, *Social Change and Everyday Life in Ireland, 1850–1922*, 138.

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- ⁸¹ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4: 123.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*, 89.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, 119, 135.
- ⁸⁴ *Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers 1875/1878. Sligo Champion*, no date given.
- ⁸⁵ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4: 169.
- ⁸⁶ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4: 163. Emphasis in original.
- ⁸⁷ Synge, *The J.M. Synge Manuscripts from the Library of Trinity College Dublin*: 4331, f.906r.
- ⁸⁸ Synge, *The J.M. Synge Manuscripts from the Library of Trinity College Dublin*: 4331, f.565.
- ⁸⁹ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4: 61.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 143, 85.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 165.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, 167.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*, 143-45. Emphasis in original.
- ⁹⁴ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 3: 55.
- ⁹⁵ "Lunatics in the Rathdrum Workhouse", 7.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁷ "Rathdrum Guardians", 4.
- ⁹⁸ "Lunatics in the Rathdrum Workhouse", 7.
- ⁹⁹ *Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, Report on Ireland*, 79.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰² "Madmen, Madhouses, and Mad Doctors", October 1, 1859, 74.
- ¹⁰³ Crossman, *Poverty and the Poor Law in Ireland, 1850–1914*, 159.
- ¹⁰⁴ Stephens, "An Irish Workhouse", 131.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Report of the Royal Commission of the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded*, Vol. 8: 20.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, Report on Ireland*, 80.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Report of the Royal Commission of the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded*, Vol. 8: 418.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁰ Stephens, "An Irish Workhouse", 134.
- ¹¹¹ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4: 85.
- ¹¹² Kelly, *Custody, Care and Criminality: Forensic Psychiatry and Law in 19th Century Ireland*, 75.
- ¹¹³ Senior, "Mendicancy in Ireland", 392.
- ¹¹⁴ Synge, *Collected Works*, Vol. 2: 202.
- ¹¹⁵ *Poor Law Reform Commission (Ireland) Report of the Vice-Regal Commission on Poor Law Reform in Ireland*, Vol. 1: 55. Emphasis in original.
- ¹¹⁶ "Suggestion for the Irish Poor-Law Reform", 5.
- ¹¹⁷ Stephens, "The Tramp", 343.
- ¹¹⁸ "Mr Davitt's Lecture at the Theatre Royal", November 19, 1887, 4.
- ¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

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There is no potential conflict of interest.

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