

T. C. Murray's Influence on Se-Deok Ham

Jang, Won-Jae *

목 차

- I. Introduction
- II. Birthright and the Sad Talent
- III. Conclusion

I. Introduction

Se-Deok Ham's one-act play *The Sad Talent* was a Korean version of T. C. Murray's *Birthright*. Se-Deok Ham(1915-1950) produced a Korean setting by adding local themes and changing the background of the scenes while preserving the plot of the Irish text. It was published in November 1940 in *Monthly Moonjang* and performed by the Gookminguk-Yeongooso (The Research Institute for National Theatre: RINT) in August 1941. This production was a graduation performance of the students of RINT and no records or critical articles have been found relating to it. Se-Deok Ham, who did not mention Murray in his plays, contributed only a few articles to journals during his career and he also failed to mention Murray in these. Se-Deok Ham did not mention Murray in his writings. For this reason, it is impossible to trace the exact nature of Murray's influence on Ham's play. There are two possibilities regarding the way in which Se-Deok Ham came

*Junior Professor, Department of Creative Writing, Soongsil University

into contact with *Birthright*. Firstly, the Myeong-II Theatre Company performed *Birthright* in December 1932 as a part of the opening programme of the Joseon Theatre in Seoul. However, the Korean text for the production was not published. Secondly and more probably, Se-Deok Ham, who was bilingual, might have read *Best Irish Plays*, the ninth volume of *The Complete Best Plays of the World*. The twenty-four volumes of *The Complete Best Plays of the World* were published in 1928 in Tokyo, the ninth volume of which is *Modern Irish Plays*. This series, which was compiled by the International Association of Play Translators of Japan, was thought to contain the more credible and accurate version of *Birthright* and thus the most influential. *Birthright* is one of the selections. The translator of *Birthright* is the famous Japanese director Osanai Gaoru. Osanai watched the Abbey production of *Birthright* in summer 1903 in London.

II. *Birthright* and The Sad Talent

II-1. Historical Background

T. C. Murray's *Birthright* was first staged at the Abbey Theatre in October 1910 and was one of the Abbey Theatre's most popular productions.(Malone, 1929: 185) It was also popular in America and named by American critics as the best new play presented in America during the season 1911-1912. (Malone, 1929: 185) The main theme of *Birthright* is a variant of the oft-told tale of Cain and Abel in terms of Irish conditions and character.(Malone, 1929: 187)

A trunk, coffin-like, occupies the stage. It is for Shane, the younger Morrissey son, emigrating because his elder brother, Hugh, will inherit the farm. Hugh is the darling of the townland. ... But to his father, Bat, Hugh, though hardworking, is in every twist and turn of him his mother

Mauras son, and not with the true farmers blood in him. Blaming Hugh for the death of a valuable mare, Bat disinherits him. In the dully candlelit set of Act II ... the father renounces the son. The brothers join more violent issue. ... Old resentments at the son favoured by his mother crowd in on Shane. The two fight, and Shane fells, has perhaps killed, Hugh.(Maxwell, 1984: 75)

The background of *The Sad Talent* is a rural town in Korea. All the village people are enjoying the Harvest Festival except the Gal family. His two sons make Choo-Bong, the father, upset. Cheon-Seok, the second son and one of the most skillful farm-workers in the town, will have to leave the house because of his elder brother, Man-Pyo. Man-Pyo is a frustrated intellectual. Although all the family members have made sacrifices to support his higher education, Man-Pyo does nothing but spend his time on a literature competition which he has little chance of winning. If Man-Pyo stays at home, then leaving home to get a labouring job is the only possible way for Cheon-Seok to make money for his wedding. Blaming Man-Pyo for the injury of a valuable cow and for his role in the *sirum*, a Korean wrestling competition, Choo-Bong orders Man-Pyo to leave the house rather than Cheon-Seok. After his departure, all the family members realise that Man-Pyo took part in the *sirum* competition in order to pay for the cost of Cheon-Seok's wedding with the prize money.

When comparing *Birthright* and *The Sad Talent*, the most significant point to emerge is the fact that a socio-cultural link exists between the two plays. The background to T.C. Murrays *Birthright* was the massive emigration out of Ireland caused by famine. The father in the play, Bat, has a small farm which can not support two sons. Although neither of his sons wants to leave the house, it is inevitable that one son will eventually have to emigrate to America. Without being aware of this point, it is impossible to understand why the struggle between family members becomes so serious. To the Irish

audience, the fatal fight between the two adult sons, Hugh and Shane, in the last sequence, is a realistic rather than a melodramatic situation.

The Great Irish Famine was not widely known about in Korea during the colonial period. However, the Korean audience and reader could feel sympathy towards the Irish situation without any cultural barrier as a result of an historical equivalence. The Japanese Colonial Government, as previously mentioned, systematically exploited Korean farmers resulting in a hopeless rural exodus from Korea during the 1920s and 1930s.

As a result of the Colonial Farm Policy, Korean rural society in its entirety went to ruin. ... In 1926, the statistics of the Colonial Government show the number of petty farmers as 2,150,000, 11% of the population. By 1931, it had increased to 5,200,000, 25% of the population. The 10,000 beggars in 1926 increased to 160,000. Three-quarters of the farmers were in debt. The average amount of debt per family was around 65 Won. Many Korean farmers faced absolute poverty, leaving no way out for them other than to leave their homes. For example, more than 150,000 people left their hometown in 1925. The number of migrants increased during the colonial period. A number of migrants became beggars or slash-and-burn famers. Many of them emigrated to Japan, Manchuria and Siberia where they worked as day labourers living in slum conditions. (M. Gang, 1985: 99-100)¹⁾

II-2. Similarities and Differences of the Dramatic Structure: Relationship between Family

The major dramatic action of both plays is similar: the struggle between brothers and discord between father and son. However, the reasons for the struggle and its dramatic function are not the same. In Murray's text, this struggle comes from a fundamental disparity of personality. Bat and Hugh

1) All the Korean articles and plays which cited in this thesis were translated by Won-Jae Jang.

have an entirely different view of life. 'Bat is a hard working, tyrannical farmer. He loves his farm and has a complete lack of interest in anything which does not minister to its prosperity.'(Malone, 1929: 187) Hugh, however, is full of life and spirit, 'with little inclination for the humdrum life of the farm.'(Malone, 1929: 187) He is something of a popular local hero. The father and his eldest son have little in common.

In contrast, the discord between father and son in *The Sad Talent* comes from the fathers disappointment in his son. Man-Pyo, the first son of Choo-Bong, was once a promising student. He was the pride of the Gal family and also carried the hopes of the town in which he lived. In addition, the rest of the family members had made sacrifices to support Man-Pyo.

CHEON-SEOK: What did I deliver dung and muck from dawn to midnight for? Why have I boiled cattle feed every day? Yes, I did it for my good-for-nothing brother. Do you remember the day his teacher visited us with the Village Chief? He told father that Man-Pyo deserved to have a higher education. Father and me made a firm decision at that time. I've prayed to God for his success for the last seven years. That was the only hope in my life. You shared the hardships, didn't you? I can't control my temper when I look back upon the past. You used to go off to the market and come back to the house on foot so many times a day carrying a heavy pack on your head...it was heavy enough to bend your back. Supporting a college student was too much for our income.(Ham, 1947: 50)

However, colonised society prevented Man-Pyo from finding a suitable role as a member of the intelligentsia and he returned home frustrated. His lack of luck was not only an indication of his own personal failure but also proved a disaster for the Gal family.

Se-Deok Ham also changed the reason for the discord between the brothers. In *Birthingright*, long suppressed jealousy leads to a fatal fight between the brothers.

SHANE: I'll go when I'm after saying what I want to say, an what's on my mind for many a day. ... When we were small boys an we sitting there at that table, who always used to be gI'ven the white loaf, an who used to get the strong cake? An who was it always got the fine cloth from the shops in Macroom, an which of us had to be wearing the grey homespun that was like what the poorhouse boys do be wearing, an they walking out the country roads with their school master?(Murray, 1928: 86-87)

Shane the simple, quiet, steady youth accuses his mother of persistent favouritism toward Hugh. Hugh had always had the best clothes; Hugh had always had the treats from earliest childhood. Suddenly a hidden and perhaps unfelt sore is exposed. Angered still more by these bitter accusations against his gentle mother Hugh flames out with still greater fury.(Morgan, 1924: 225-226)

In contrast, Cheon-Seok, the younger brother in *The Sad Talent*, shows no jealousy towards his elder brother. He has made heartfelt sacrifices for Man-Pyo and the relationship between the brothers is relatively good. There are two reasons for Cheon-Seok's anger toward his brother. Firstly, he is completely disappointed by his brother. Cheon-Seok has had to support Man-Pyo's education and living costs for seven years. However, the result of the investment in his education is very different from the family's expectations. In spite of his higher education, Man-Pyo has not made a success of his life. Furthermore, he wastes time trying to write a novel, but has displayed almost no talent for writing. Therefore, Cheon-Seok feels that his long-term sacrifices for his brother have been worthless.

VILLAGE CHIEF: What nonsense! Why does he have such a long face on an enjoyable Festival day?

MRS. GAL: Cheon-Seok is leaving home and going to be a labourer. That's why he's angry like this.

VILLAGE CHIEF: Did Cheon-Seok really decide to do that?

MRS. GAL: Yes.

...

VILLAGE CHIEF: Why does Cheon-Seok hate living with Man-Pyo? I know he admires Man-Pyo.

MRS. GAL: He believed that we could be a thriving family after Man-Pyo's graduation.

VILLAGE CHIEF: He's not alone in thinking like that. I did too. Man-Pyo's teacher, the head teacher, everybody in this town thought the same.

MRS. GAL: So we fully supported Man-Pyo for the last seven years. We even saved on food and clothes to pay Man-Pyo's college fees. But, he left college halfway through and spent day after day doing nothing, no job, just writing stories and things like that. Cheon-Seok is sick and tired of it.

VILLAGE CHIEF: He got married to a millionaire's daughter the second time, didn't he?

MRS. GAL: I heard that his father-in-law provided him with food and fire-wood at first. But a married daughter is no better than a stranger. How can his father-in-law support him for life?

VILLAGE CHIEF: Did Man-Pyo come back alone? Did he send his wife back to her parents home?

MRS. GAL: Yes. Because he's jobless now. (Ham, 1947: 53-54)

To make Cheon-Seok's anger appear more reasonable, Se-Deok Ham introduced an important variation, the theme of Cheon-Seok's wedding. Cheon-Seok's wedding plans are in crisis. He has no way to make the

money needed for his wedding if Man-Pyo stays at home, as Man-Pyo, who has no income at all, is occupying the room he and his bride will have. This theme serves a variety of functions throughout the play. Firstly, it strengthens the discord between the brothers. Secondly, it justifies the reason for Cheon-Seok's leaving. Cheon-Seok's departure is the only possible way for him to make the money for his wedding. However, his decision to solve his wedding crisis in this way invites another problem. The father of his bride makes it clear that they approve of his leaving. Cheon-Seok's plan is delivered by Woo-Tae, who is a replacement for Dan in Birthright. In the first sequence of Murray's play, Dan, a neighbour boy, makes his appearance. His reason for calling on the Morrissey household is to deliver a trunk. The function of his role in the drama is to reveal news of the local hurling match in which Hugh is a key and star player. Through the conversation between Dan and the Morrisseys, the background of the discord between the characters is clearly suggested.

Like Dan, Woo-Tae appears in the opening sequence of *The Sad Talent*. He is very upset when entering the stage and his angry tone and attitude carries two functions. Firstly, the tone of his voice causes anxiety in the audience, who are concerned about the reason for his rage. Secondly, it makes an odd contrast with the offstage sound of the cheerful voices from the Festival of the Harvest Moon.

WOO-TAE: Choo-Bong!

CHOO-BONG: Dont shout at me.

WOO-TAE: Do you think you treated me well? What have you done to my daughter?

CHOO-BONG: What happened to your daughter? What's all the fuss about?

WOO-TAE: What? How can you say that? You ruined my sweet

daughter's life.

CHOO-BONG: Who destroyed your daughter's life?

WOO-TAE: Who else? Damn Cheon-Seok.

MRS. GAL: (*jumps up with surprise*) You're not making sense. Calm down and tell me what's behind all this in the room.

WOO-TAE: I've no time for that. How can I calm down after watching my daughter weeping while we were doing the grinding at the mill?

MRS. GAL: Well be related by marriage this coming October, won't we?

WOO-TAE: I thought the same. But your son Cheon-Seok told my daughter BOK-SOOL last night to put off their wedding.

MRS. GAL: (*surprised*) Did he?

CHOO-BONG: (*smiling*) He's just pulling her leg to test her loyalty.

WOO-TAE: He wasn't joking. A wedding is one of the most important events in anyones life. I would have thought the same if Cheon-Seok had bumped into Bok-Sool in the street and told her that. But he took Bok-Sool to the Village Chiefs field on purpose to tell her. How can it be a joke?

CHOO-BONG: Is that true?

WOO-TAE: You knew everything, didn't you? You and your son planned it. I can guess what the problem was.

MRS. GAL: This is the first I've heard of it.(Ham, 1947: 45-46)

From this conversation, the audience can deduce much information. Woo-Tae is Bok-Sool's father. Bok-Sool will marry Cheon-Seok, the second son of Mr. Gal, in a month. Cheon-Seok had suggested to Bok-Sool that they postpone their wedding, as he would like to leave the house in order to get a labouring job. Woo-Tae took Cheon-Seok's suggestion to mean that the engagement was broken off and thought that Mr. Gal was behind the decision. Woo-Tae is angry because he maintains that Cheon-Seok and his family have destroyed Bok-Sool. In fact, Cheon-Seok organised the plan by

himself, without informing his parents.

WOO-TAE: Stop! If you don't want the two of them to get married, you should tell me, not Bok-Sool. Why did you use Cheon-Seok to pass on your feelings to Bok-Sool? She cried all day. Hum! I hear that your first son Man-Pyo has come home from Seoul, I suppose he's found a wealthy girl for Cheon-Seok.

MRS. GAL: Even if Man-Pyo finds a millionaires daughter for Cheon-Seok, how can we cancel the wedding? We've already promised to have it.

...

WOO-TAE: No need for that. GI've the letter to me right away. I'll try to find another husband for Bok-Sool. Maybe Mrs. Jangson can find one. But everybody knows about them in this town. Cheon-Seok used to meet Bok-Sool in the field, at the royal tomb and all over the place. So there is no other possibility for Bok-Sool but to Il've unmarried with someone as man and wife. (*suddenly shouts*) Damn bastard! He has been getting all the sweetness out of Bok-Sool. Now, what? Postpone the wedding? How can he say that? I'll report him to the police. If the police break some bones, he'll be more careful and never act like this again.(Ham, 1947: 46-47)

Woo-Tae's threat to sue Cheon-Seok is hard to believe in reality. However, the Gal family pay heed to Woo-Tae's intimidation because they have already had a bitter experience of a similar problem. When Man-Pyo insisted on divorcing his ex-wife, all his family members lost face among the neighbours.

CHEON-SEOK: What did Man-Pyo do for us? Did he become famous? Did he send us money even once? He did nothing for us but make us crazy by asking for a divorce from his ex-wife. All he did was get a new girl in his college days. That's all.

MRS. GAL: Why are you doing the same thing if you know that asking for a divorce makes all the family crazy?

CHEON-SEOK: (CHEON-SEOK *does not understand* MRS. GAL's words) What do you mean?

MRS. GAL: Father attended the court frequently to solve the problem of your brothers divorce. At that time, everybody laughed at father and me. Father had even had a fight with the father of our daughter-in-law. How can you insist on putting off the marriage if you know that. Woo-Tae just came to see me and he said he would report it to the police. (Ham, 1947: 50-51)

These lines indicate that Man-Pyo's present failure is a heavy burden on Cheon-Seok. His past behaviour also restrained Cheon-Seok's freedom to do as he wished and as a result Cheon-Seok's bad feelings toward Man-Pyo have increased.²⁾ However, unlike the dramatic structure of *Birthright*, the discord between the brothers in *The Sad Talent* is settled. In the last sequence of the play, Cheon-Seok's wedding is connected with the reconciliation within the Gal family. Man-Pyo understands that he alone can solve the problems of Cheon-Seok's wedding by entering the *sirum* competition. The discord between father and son, and between the brothers, is solved when Choo-Bong and Cheon-Seok realise Man-Pyo's intentions.

II-3. Differences between Dramatic Elements: *Sirum* and Hurling

Sirum, the Korean style of wrestling, is an adaptation of the hurling in

2) Man-Pyo, a failed member of the intelligentsia, represents a self-portrait of Se-Deok Ham. After becoming a dramatist, Se-Deok Ham was barely able to offer any support to his family. The situation was such that his family had to keep supporting him over an extended period. The divorce of Man-Pyo also parallels the life of the playwright himself. "When he was in his late twenties, Se-Deok Ham was forced by his parents to marry the daughter of a clergyman. It was a loveless marriage and Ham's only interest was in the theatre. The couple divorced by mutual agreement. Se-Deok Ham conducted one additional act of selfish behaviour. He left the duties required of the eldest son to his younger brother Seong-Deok and went to Japan to study theatre production. When *The Sad Talent* was performed, Seong-Deok Ham thought "My brother has done something positil've after all this time." (Oh, 1991: 195)

Birthright. However, while in both plays, the eldest sons are good at sports, the dramatic function of sirum is very different to that of hurling. In T. C. Murray's text, Hugh is a sportsman, a youthful hero of the neighbours. Hurling is the source of his self-confidence. Winning a hurling match is not only a matter for self-pride but it brings his town honour as well. In contrast, sirum has a different meaning for Man-Pyo. Firstly, Man-Pyo is driven by sheer necessity to enter the competition. Sirum is a part of the Festival of the Harvest Moon, but it is a competition for farmers not for an intellectual. Entering the competition means relinquishing his status as an intellectual.

VILLAGE CHIEF: One of us must get the title because all the village people have raised money to buy a calf as the first prize. Useless bastards, when will you show me how strong you really are? That was the time to use all your strength.

SIRUMER: There's no point getting angry. I've already been knocked out.

VILLAGE CHIEF: Whose the best in our village? Is there nobody who can crush them?

SIRUMER: Everybody pushed Man-Pyo to take part.

MRS. GAL: Man-Pyo? What did he say?

SIRUMER: He didn't listen at first but he agreed after everybody kept begging him to.

MRS. GAL: What? You mean he'll take part in....

SIRUMER: Yes.

VILLAGE CHIEF: (*shows gratitude*) Really?

SIRUMER: Yes. So he asked me to bring his old clothes for the match.

VILLAGE CHIEF: But is he strong enough to beat the Ip-Sil sirumers?

SIRUMER: Lots of college students have taken up Judo, recently. A Judo expert can throw down a man twice as big as he is. The Farmers sirum is just a battle of strength but there are so many skills in Judo.

VILLAGE CHIEF: (*his spirits raised*) That sounds great! (Ham, 1947: 55-56)

During the sirum competition, Man-Pyo feels a sense of shame about his lack of talent as an intellectual. He is clearly aware that he has no ability except in sirum.(Ham, 1947: 68) When Cheon-Seok sharply attacks him on this point, Man-Pyo's self-denial is amplified.

CHEON-SEOK: When parents support their son, they usually expect him to look after them when they grow older. But I don't expect your help in the future. I had no chance to study. So you were my hope. I thought if you became famous, I could be satisfied with my life too. Why shouldn't I blame you? You've absolutely no talent except in Judo. If I had studied like you, I wouldn't be the man like you. When I think about it, I hate getting married, I hate the idea of getting married, I hate people, I hate living!

CHEON-SEOK, *sheds tears leaning against the pen post mortified.*

MAN-PYO: (*in a grave tone*) You're absolutely right. I've no ability in anything apart from Judo. I tried to do my best to become a famous writer, but its impossible. I've no talent at all. I confess to you, I've entered for so many prize novel competitions, but I've always been rejected. When I got the sirum title tonight, I realised that this is the only thing that I can do. I hate myself too. I know it'll be useless to devote my life to literature.(Ham, 1947: 67-68)

Like hurling in *Birthright*, the sirum competition in *The Sad Talent* is one of the main ways to incur the wrath of the fathers. However, the motivation for the anger shown by the fathers in each play is not the same. In *Birthright*, Bat loses his temper due to Hugh's absence from home at a busy

time and when the family are facing misfortune but Hugh is innocent and has a reasonable excuse for his absence.

Just when he[Bat] is wanted at home Hugh is playing a hurley match and must spend the evening at a team supper at the special request of Father Daly. Such a request cannot be refused and he goes with the consent of his distraught mother who fears her husbands resentment but realises that circumstances force Hugh to go. The afternoon match had been won through the prowess of Hugh, and the boys had accompanied him home with triumphant music and shouting. The noise frightened the horse which had consequently run loose and broken its leg, with the result that it had to be shot. This misfortune, coming on the top of everything, drives Bat to insensate rage and he attributes all his misfortunes to Hugh's worthlessness.(Morgan, 1924: 24-225)

Bat has no objection to Hugh joining the hurling match. In contrast, Choo-Bong feels negative about the sirum competition. Without knowing that Man-Pyo has joined the competition as a fighter, Choo-Bong in *The Sad Talent* is already displeased with his role in the sirum competition. The Village Chief asked Man-Pyo to organise and manage the competition and Man-Pyo has accepted. To Choo-Bong, it is not a job suited to an intellectual. Furthermore, Man-Pyo's joining the competition as an organiser means that all the village people may recognise his failure as an intellectual. Therefore, it becomes a matter affecting the entire Gal family rather than a private concern of Man-Pyo. Furthermore, Man-Pyo spent several days organising the competition and as a result did not help with the farm work. For these reasons, Man-Pyo's entry in the sirum competition is totally unacceptable to Choo-Bong. It is interpreted as extremely selfish behaviour, the only purpose of which is to satisfy his own pleasure without considering the situation of the other family members.

CHOO-BONG: Even if you dont have any sense, how can you think about going there now? I'll be picking cotton and digging up sweet potatoes soon. If you are not here, what can I do?

CHEON-SEOK: My brother can help you.

CHOO-BONG: He has no experience of farming at all.

CHEON-SEOK: Nobody learnt farming when he was an infant. Anybody can do it. Why shouldn't they be able to?

MRS. GAL: Man-Pyo isn't staying here long. He's just a visitor.

CHEON-SEOK: If he's a visitor, he should stay at home rather than join the sirum ring as a referee.

MRS. GAL: He didn't want to go there. But the Village Chief begged for him to be a referee, so he had to say yes, even though he didn't want to. You know, he has no interest in being involved in the sirum competition with farmers. He was once a college student. (Ham, 1947: 49)

II-4. Differences between Dramatic Elements: Death of a Mare and Cow's Injury

Another reason for Choo-Bong's wrath is the cows injury. The shouts of the cheering crowd applauding Man-Pyo's victory lead to an accident: the noise frightens the cow which runs loose and falls down the hill. This is, of course, an adaptation of the theme of the mares injury in Birthright. This misfortune, coming in the early evening, drives Bat to rage. He blames Hugh because the mares accidental injury comes from Hugh's carelessness.

SHANE: It come into my head somehow that Hugh might be after forgetting to close up the gap this morning-he isn't over careful when them matches do be on-and I was thinking that the cows might be in the little patch o winter cabbage, and as I was troubled about it I come away.(Murray, 1928 : 60)

In contrast, Man-Pyo has no direct responsibility for the cows injury. It is Cheon-Seok, who wants to leave the house, who does not care for the cow properly.

CHOO-BONG: He's still tying up the cow in the field. Its dark already. Where is he? Whats he doing? Our family will soon be ruined and all he thinks about is leaving home.

MRS. GAL: Our cow is sick I think. It looks listless.

CHOO-BONG: He tethers the cow beside the persimmon tree every day. Cheon-Seok doesn't take care of the cow. How can the cow get any fresh pasture? He's always off somewhere. If he's not here like today, I cant do anything. I dont know what Ill do after he goes.(Ham, 1947: 58)

MRS. GAL: (*anxiously*) It'll be dark soon. Hurry and fetch the cow.

CHEON-SEOK: Oh, no. I completely forgot.(Ham, 1947: 59)

The cows injury, from which it will no doubt recover, is a misfortune but less serious than the shooting of the mare. Choo-Bongs anger is not wholly a result of the cows injury. Rather he cannot accept Man-Pyo's attitude, as he thinks that Man-Pyo never pays attention to family matters. Man-Pyo does not come to the cows pen as he is lying in his room and only appears for the sirum competition. Choo-Bong decides that Man-Pyo is too selfish for them to live under the same roof and he orders Man-Pyo to leave the house.

CHOO-BONG: It happened because of the bloody sirumers and the audiences.

CHEON-SEOK: That's not the real reason. It would have been all right if my brother hadn't taken part in the competition.

CHOO-BONG: What do you mean? Are you saying he not only organised the competition but took part in it, too?

CHEON-SEOK: He became the champion. All the audience suddenly started cheering and shouting and playing percussion instruments when he got the title. That's why my cow was frightened.

CHOO-BONG: Whats keeping that damn bastard out so late? Call him to me now. Damn idiot, he's not worth feeding. Why did he take part in sirum when he didn't want to? The cows leg is broken. Now we can't grind the rice. Is he our master? How can he lie down instead of looking in the pen?

MRS. GAL: I told him to go to sleep.

CHOO-BONG: He didn't care a bit when the cows leg was broken. I think he might not even mind if our house was swept away. No need to live with that kind of bastard. ... You must leave the house tomorrow morning. Go to Seoul or somewhere. That's final.

MAN-PYO:

CHOO-BONG: If you don't leave, Cheon-Seok insists he will. I cant do anything without his help. I cant even live just one day without him. So your leaving is the best way to make everybody happy.

MAN-PYO:

CHOO-BONG: I'm not asking you to send any money to us. You should get a job to feed yourself. I have no education but I make a living out of farming. Your brother Cheon-Seok only finished primary school. He supported you at college by himself...I think we tried to do our best for you.(Ham, 1947: 64-65)

Choo-Bong's order to Man-Pyo does not cause a fatal fight between the brothers as in Birthright as Man-Pyo accepts his fathers orders without any resistance. His departure just before the last sequence of the play is a device used by Se-Deok Ham in order to create an emotional ending. The discord between the family members is solved when Woo-Tae lets them know that Man-Pyo entered the sirum competition to contribute to Cheon-Seok's wedding costs but the benefactor has already left. In the last sequence, Cheon-Seok rushes out calling his brothers name.

WOO-TAE: (*gives a bundle of bank-notes to CHOO -BONG*) Take this.

CHOO-BONG: (*astonished*) What is it?

WOO-TAE: Cash. What else? I've just sold the calf. This moneys from the calf.

MRS. GAL: What?

CHOO-BONG: Damn bastard, all my troubles over the last seven years have been for nothing. He's brought shame on me by taking part in the sirum competition. Tell him that we've no need for that kind of money.

WOO-TAE: (*gets angry*) How did Man-Pyo let you down? He stooped to taking part in the competition to meet Cheon-Seok's wedding costs. Whats wrong with that? Does that mean you've lost face?

CHOO-BONG is trembling as though he has been stabbed. He drags his feet and sits on the edge of the floor.

MRS. GAL: (*sobbing*) I didn't know that. I didn't know that.

CHEON-SEOK: (*rushes out to the street*) Man-Pyo! Man-Pyo!(Ham, 1947: 69)

III. Conclusion

It can be seen that Se-Deok Ham's *The Sad Talent* has a similar plot to T. C. Murray's *Birthright*. The theme of T. C. Murrays *Birthright* is strongly in evidence throughout *The Sad Talent*. A hard working farmers family - parents and two sons - are the central figures of both plays. Both elder sons are the mothers favourites. Their dedication to farm work falls short of that of their duller, more conscientious brothers. The farm, in both cases, cannot support two sons, so the second sons, the father's favourites, set out in search of a new life.

Given this background, one can appreciate why Se-Deok Ham was drawn to *Birthright*. However, Ham changed the dramatic function of many elements in *Birthright*: the mother's favouritism, the shooting of the mare, and the father's hatred toward his son are either deleted or given less prominence. Instead Ham resolves the play around the issue of family honour. Ham also transferred the setting of the play to a rural Korean town. For this reason, it can be said that *The Sad Talent* creates its originality as a result of intentional alteration. Firstly, in contrast to Murray's original, Se-Deok Ham focuses on the frustration of the Korean intellectual in the colonised society. The struggle and discord between the brothers and between father and son is secondary. Secondly, Se-Deok Ham changed the original function of the dramatic element and created an original story-line in order to support his main theme. Consequently, *The Sad Talent* is an important work of Korean drama from the 1940s: Se-Deok Ham created an original drama through creative alteration.

Bibliography

Korean(한국어)

- Gang(강), Man-Gil(만길), *Hanguk Hyeondaesa*(한국현대사: A Contemporary History of Korea) (Seoul: Changjakgowa Bipyeongsa(창작과 비평사), 1985).
- Ham(함), Se-Deok(세덕), *Higokjip Dongsung*(희곡집 동승: A Boy Monk and Other Plays) (Seoul: Bakmoonseogwan(박문서관), 1947).
- Oh(오), Ae-Li(애리), 'Saejaryoro bon Ham Se-Deok' (to 자료로 본 함세덕: New Materials about the Life of Se-Deok Ham), *Hanguk Kukyesool-Yeongoo* (한국극예술연구: The Research of Korean Performing Arts), 1, (1991), 187-210.

English(영어)

- Malone, Andrew, *The Irish Drama* (London: Constable, 1929).
- Maxwell, D. E. S., *A Critical History of Modern Irish Drama 1891-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
- Morgan, A. E., *Tendencies of Modern English Drama*(London: Constable, 1924).
- Murray, T. C., *Birthright* (Dublin: Maunsel, 1911).
- The Pipe in the Field and Birthright*(London: Allen and Unwin, 1928).

국문 초록

장원재

함세덕은 <문장>지 통권 2권9호 1940년 11월호에 단막극 <추석·일명 서글픈 재능>을 발표하였다. 이 작품은, 가족 구성, 등장인물간의 갈등구조, 연극적 에피소드의 전개 방법 등에서 아일랜드 극작가 머레이(T. C. Murray)의 1910년 작 <장남의 권리(Birthright)>와의 상사성이 확인된다. 두 작품 모두 농부 부부와 두 아들이 주요 등장인물이며, 장남은 어머니와, 차남은 아버지와 정서적 유대가 끈끈하다는 공통점이 있다. 농장에서 나오는 수입만으로는 농부 부부와 장성한 두 아들의 생계를 유지하는 것이 불가능하므로, 건실한 농사꾼인 둘째 아들은 고향을 떠나 새로운 삶을 찾으려 한다는 점도 흡사하다.

함세덕은 원작에 등장하는 여러가지 극적 요소의 연극적 기능을 변형하여 독창적인 작품세계를 구축하는데 성공하였다. 이 논문에서는 두 작품 공히 장남이 참여하는 운동 경기와 가족의 사고가 등장인물간의 갈등을 증폭시킨다는 점에 주목하고, 이의 비교를 통해 두 작품간의 차이점을 규명하고자 노력하였다. 이를 위하여 운동 경기(씨름과 헐링)가 작품 내에서 차지하는 비중 및 그 연극적 기능, <장남의 권리>에 나오는 말의 사사(射死)와 <서글픈 재능>의 소의 부상 모티프의 상이점 등을 비교 분석하였다. 나아가 원전에는 등장하지 않는 주제인 '지식인 장남(만표)의 사회적 부적응'이라는 모티프, 이에 이어지는 가족 전체의 체면 손상이라는 모티프를 고구하여 함세덕의 독창성을 다소 다른 각도에서 조명하였다. 결론적으로, 연극의 기본적 구조가 비슷하다는 점에서 <서글픈 재능>은 <장남의 권리>로부터 다대한 영향을 받은 작품이라고 말할 수 있다. 그러나, 함세덕의 <서글픈 재능>은 원작의 뼈대를 이식한 단순한 변안작품이 아니라, 변안을 통해 재창작으로 나아간 독창적인 작품이라는데 그 연극사/문학사적 의의가 있다.