The Treatment of Myth in Modern Irish Drama

AMAL RYADH KITISHAT

Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement of the Degree of Master of Arts, English Department, Yarmouk University

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Mahmoud Al-Shetawi .................................................. Chairman
Dr. Mufeed Hawamdeh ................................................... Member
Dr. Fadla Syufi ............................................................. Member
Abstract

This study aims to prove two points: the influence of the political and social situation on the Irish dramatists’ treatment of myth; and the myth’s employment in retrieving the Irish cultural awakening. The researcher adopted a thematic study of the political and social problems that are present in the works of William Butler Yeats, John Millington Synge and Sean O’Caseys.

There are three different modes of the Irish writers treatment of myth: romantic, realistic and satirical. The first mode is clearly seen in the works of W.B. Yeats. This mode is marked by its romantic aspect. Yeats who was the first Irish dramatist to employ myth seriously tends to idealize Irish life and the sense of nationalism. He focuses on the cultural application of myth in his dramatic works to strengthen the national feeling of the audience, and to make them conscious of their cultural heritage. However, the second mode, there is a shift to the realistic handling of myth. This use is best seen in the works of John Millington Synge who is well-known for establishing of the peasants drama. In Synge’s works the myth is brought into a very realistic setting, in which the hero has an ordinary nature and very close to the Irish real nature. In his works, he introduces the mock-heroic treatment of myth. He focuses on some of the negative aspects in the Irish society.

The third mode is marked by the appearance of Sean O’casey
who has introduced the satirical treatment of myth. This attitude is different from the other previous modes in its direct discussion of the political issues. Like Synge, he has mocked the Irish mythical heroes and heroines to introduce the bitter truth of the Irish society. But he is different from Synge in that great touch of satire which is involved in his treatment of the Irish political and Social subjects. Despite these different aspects of the myth's employment, the Irish dramatists are shown to have the same goal which emphasizes the need of a distinguished dramatic movement that is based on Irish culture and heritage.