

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

I choose to analyse drama for my thesis because drama portrays life as it is and shows the real life of common people. Moreover, the actions and the dialogues can help me reveal the characters' emotion deeply. Drama is one of three main genres in literature which performs various actions and dialogues by the players. According to Shaw, 'Drama is a literary composition in dramatic form intended to be presented on a stage by actors who assume identities, speak dialogue and perform actions devised by an author.' (Shaw, 1972: 289). The human life serves as an endless source of supply of interesting material for drama. As Reaske states 'Drama is a work of literature or composition which delineates life and human activity by means of presenting various action of - and dialogue between - a group of characters.' (Reaske, 1966: 5).

I choose to analyse J.M. Synge's The Playboy of the Western World because this drama has a different theme in comparison with those of J.M. Synge's other works, most of which deal with nature, such as Riders to the Sea and The Well of the Saints. To be more specific, The Playboy of the Western

World is a comedy that satirizes the way Irish people express their feelings through singing and praising aside from seduction towards other people they admire. 'In all of the plays, The Playboy of the Western World is the exception, being racial comedy satirizing the Irish delight in romantic personalities.' (Beckoff, 1972: 156).

Moreover, I choose to analyse The Playboy of the Western World because it is a controversial play. The first performance of this play causes a riot in Dublin. It happens for the reason that the audiences feel that the portrayal of the protagonist and the other major characters in the particular drama does not reflect true Irish, 'He had no attempt to represent Irish life as it is lived.' (Skelton, 1971: 115). The people who protest the play are largely Catholic nationalists. They find the play to be a kind of an insult to Irish moral and religious grounds. In the play, there are some scenes that depict an unmarried Irish woman who sleeps with a stranger living under the same roof and the Irish society's admiration and support towards the murderer. Moreover, there are a lot of violent acts that occur in this particular drama. J.M. Synge's depiction of the characters and their manner of speech become the objection of the protesters.

Despite the controversy arising out of his works, J.M. Synge makes a great contribution to the revival of the Irish literature. He was one of the Irish playwrights who founded the Irish National Theater. He intended to revive the Irish legends, culture and traditions in his literary works. 'The group was able to employ Irish folklore and history without becoming purely nationalistic: by relying heavily on symbolism and other devices, it came fairly close to fusing myth with legend, folklore, with history.' (Beckoff, 1972: 151). Another

contribution of J.M Synge is by producing some of the best plays of the 20th century in the drama, including The Playboy of the Western World.

I would like to analyse the theme of The Playboy of the Western World since I find that the theme of the play is clear and essential. By analysing the theme of a story, the readers will be able to find the meaning of the story as it is stated that 'Theme is the central idea and dominating idea in a literary work and the moral message implicit in any work of art.' (Shaw, 1972: 378).

There are a lot of elements which can reveal a theme, one of which is through contrasting the characteristics of the protagonist of the play, as in the play The Playboy of the Western World, Christy Mahon, and major characters in the Mayo society. The portrayal of the protagonist and major characters lead me to formulate the theme through their action, speech, and thought.

Statement of the Problem

In order to analyse the drama, I state the problems as follows:

1. What is the theme of J.M. Synge's The Playboy of the Western World?
2. How do the contrasting characteristics of the protagonist and major characters help to reveal the theme?

Purpose of Study

The purposes of studying and analysing J.M. Synge's The Playboy of the Western World are:

1. To analyse the theme of J.M. Synge's The Playboy of the Western World.
2. To discuss how the contrasting characteristics of the protagonist and major characters help to reveal the theme.

Method of Research

In this research, I use library research. First of all, I read my primary text entitled The Playboy of the Western World by J.M. Synge. Next, I decide the topic to be discussed in my thesis. Then, I read some supporting criticism and reference books. I continue my research by gathering information from the Internet. Afterwards, I start to analyse the drama using the theories that support my analysis. Finally, I use the data I have collected for my analysis from which I draw some conclusions.

Organization of the Thesis

I will present my thesis in three chapters preceded by the Preface and the Abstract. Chapter One, the Introduction, contains the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two contains the Discussion of the Theme through the Contrasting Characters in J.M. Synge's The Playboy of the Western World. The last chapter, Chapter Three, contains the Conclusion. This thesis ends with the Bibliography, which contains a list of the reference books and various sources that I use, and the Appendices, which presents the Synopsis of the Drama and the Biography of the Author.