

Human Nature in J.M. Synge's Comedies

Dr. Sushil Kumar Mishra

Abstract

The career of John Millington Synge as a playwright was short. His first play *THE SHADOW OF THE GLEN* was produced at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin in 1905 and he died of Cancer at the age of 38 in 1909. Before his last play *DEIRDRE OF SORROWS* could be finished. During these half a dozen years of his career as a dramatist, Synge could write strangely enough, seven plays. The seventh play entitled *WHEN THE MOON HAS SET* remained unpublished till 1968. After the publication of that play new critical investigations regarding the dramatic genius of Synge have started becoming not only fashionable but also relevant for Contemporary drama. The present essay follows the critical vogue obtaining after 1968.

Although the comedies of Synge outwardly make us rejoice at only their vitality and humour, Synge displays human nature simple and crude, cunning and brutal, greedy, spiteful and changeable. At the same time this human nature is warm in the blood and capable of creativity.

Key Words: J.M. Synge, human nature, comedy, etc.

INTRODUCTION

Synge, comic characters are comparable to Shakespeare's Falstaff and his associates who could bring to life common earthly humanity, with a mingled grace of unredeemed flesh and blood before the so-called virtuous and judging world.

No one has made so far a comprehensive study of all the four comedies of Synge taken together in the process of the development of Synge as a playwright. So far only the tragedies of Synge have been highlighted. Among the comedies the only *THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD* has received rather overmuch attention. The present paper examines each of these four comedies of John Millington Synge and will try to find out which one is Synge's real masterpiece among his comedies. We have a suspicion that *THE*

SHADOW OF THE GLEN and *THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD* have received undue importance and applause from British critics because the character of Nora in the first play is an unfavourable reflection on Irish womanhood and that of Christy Mahon is a satirical picture of a shy, Irish young man.

In the play *The Shadow of the Glen* a woman marries the old farmer for the sake of money and declares her old husband dead after taking all money from him. A woman is seen, on a wild evening, of rain, putting in her pocket a stock pile of money within doors. She is disturbed by a knock on the door. She first pockets her money and then lets in a passing Tramp. She has married an old farmer for the sake of that money. His body rests on the bed in the room. She has supposed him dead. After a little talk with

that Tramp, the woman goes to tell the neighbour that her husband is dead. But actually the old farmer is alive. Tramp is supposedly left with the dead man and he is perplexed.

To the utter surprise of the Tramp, the dead man throws off his sheet. The Tramp is a ghost. But the old farmer tells him that he was not dead. But he has got a stick ready to deal with the young man, the supposed lover of his wife. He knows that his bad wife will bring that particular young man back to dispose of his body. When the bad wife comes, the old farmer asks her to leave his cottage forever. The woman goes out with the Tramp. The scene closes with the old farmer and the young man, a supposed lover of the bad wife. They are drinking together by the fire. The old man's anger has died down. The other is really an innocent young man.

Similarly *THE TINKER'S WEDDING*, a two act folk comedy by Synge is a satire on the Roman clergy and marriage sacrament. It gives us a new expression not only to jollity and fun but also to incongruities and mannerism of the Roman Catholic clergyman.

REFERENCES:

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The Well of the Saints, a three act drama is also illusion of life and the disillusionment with life. The illusion and the disillusionment form the idea of *The Well of the Saints*.

The Play Boy of the Western World develops around Christy Mahon, who has struck his father and left his villagers thinking that his father is dead. It is a funny comedy. It provides a satirical picture of the Irish youth. It is realistic, fantastic and bitterly satirical comedy. Among the comedies the only *THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD* has received rather overmuch attention. The present paper examines each of these four comedies of John Millington Synge and will try to find out that *The Play Boy of the Western World* is Synge's real masterpiece among his comedies.

CONCLUSION

JM Synge's keen insight into human nature and his skill in the delineation of character are best seen in the character of Nora in *The Shadow of the Glen*, the character of Mary Byrne in *The Tinker's Wedding* as well as the character of Christy Mahon in the *Play Boy of the Western World*.