The Cuchulain Myth in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats

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Abstract

Much has been said about myth, especially in relation to poetry. Contemporary studies have also revealed modern poetry's immense interest in myth. However, only dispersed references to the potential impact the use of myth in poetry may have on nationalism have been made. Moreover, the complex interweaving of poetry and myth has been probed only in general terms, disregarding sundry aspects. Thus, this article investigates some issues pertaining to myth and poetry. Specifically, it interrogates the relationship between poetry and myth, both of which are cogently interwoven to the extent that we can hardly disassociate them. This interrogation attempts to question the role of the ubiquitous presence of myth in the poetry of William Butler Yeats. To meet this objective, this article explores the Cuchulain myth in his poems. It contends that Yeats uses this myth both as an artistic device that echoes the struggle of Irish nationalists and a means that enhances resistance.

Keywords: Cuchulain, functions of myth, Irish nationalism, modern poetry, Yeats

Cites as: Touzani, F. Z. (2019). The Cuchulain Myth in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats. *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies*, 3 (1) 232-245.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol3no1.18>