

Review Article

Other and Hybridity: The Ethnic Relationship in *Yeats' Easter, 1916*

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Abstract: Since the middle and late twentieth century, postcolonialism has gradually developed. William Butler Yeats is an Irish national poet spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His poems have rich images and are very intriguing. This article intends to analyze Yeats's "Easter in 1916" from the perspective of "others" and "hybridity" from the perspective of postcolonialism, so as to interpret the deep meaning of ethnic relations in Yeats's poems. This article also discusses the poet's contradiction toward Ireland. It plays an essential role to research postcolonialism in the poem and contributes to have a deeper understanding of Yeats.

Keywords: Postcolonialism; William Butler Yeats; Other; Hybridity.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

After World War II, a huge anti-colonial political movement emerged and many scholars began to study colonialist works, which was the development of postcolonialism. At the same time, the development of postmodernism has promoted the expansion of postcolonialism on a global scale. Postcolonialism developed from colonialism, focusing on the complex relationship between the suzerain country and the colonies, imperialism, nationalism and then gradually expanded the scope of development, thus involving the right to speak between the East and the West, the first world and the third world's cultural relations, cultural hegemony, etc. "In this new "post-modern" and "post-contemporary" era of "multiple symbiosis", the sudden emergence of post-colonialism marks the increasingly "ideological" and "politicized" tendency of contemporary Western literary theory." (Wang Ning: 1995).

Yeats is one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1923. It can better interpret the national liberation movement in Ireland and guide people to

correctly understand Yeats' thoughts to Analyze Yeats from the perspective of postcolonialism. This article analyzes Yeats's "Easter in 1916" from the perspective of the "other" and "Hybridity" of postcolonialism, so as to interpret Yeats's poems and his thoughts more comprehensively and deeply.

Chapter 2 Other and Hybridity in Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism focuses on the relationship between the suzerainty and the former colonies. It is not a rigid theory, but constantly changing to adapt to different cultural identities, historical backgrounds, geographic regions, and so on. Based on the two perspectives of "Other" and "Hybridity" in post-colonial theory, this article believes that the former colony is not just the "other" of the suzerain state, but the two influence each other, with a "hybridity" relationship.

2.1 Other

Any existence is external to the self, no matter what form it appears, whether visible or invisible, perceivable or unperceivable, can be called the other." (Zhang Jian: 2011) The concept of other in postcolonialism refers to the relationship between the suzerain state and the former colony. For the overlord, the colony is the other. The suzerainty takes it for

granted that the colonial people are barbaric and lowly. Therefore, they need what they call themselves a noble civilization. This is the perfect excuse for the rationalization of "colonization." Edward Said talked about West-centrism in "Orientalism", which put the East naturally in the position of other.

In addition, we should realize that this identity of other is endowed by Western civilization. In this process, colonial people as "others" have no right to speak. When studying the social motives and reasons behind other, scholars and experts cannot ignore this: Is it unfair to use the concept of the other established under the Western theoretical system to analyze the culture of the colony in a disadvantaged position? Based on this consideration, after deconstructing the Western-centric view, it is necessary to reconstruct the hybridity relationship of the multicultural symbiosis between the suzerain state and the colony.

2.2 Hybridity

Homi Bhabha is an important representative of postcolonial theory. He puts forward the concept of "hybridity" of postcolonial culture in "The Positioning of Culture". "When were we one race? When did we no longer become one?" (Bhabha: 1994) From the perspective of traditional thoughts, since the colony is the "other" of the suzerain country, then a colonial culture will be formed, which completely eliminates the original culture of the colonized country. However, it is not true. The process of cultural influence is never single, but bidirectional. As a result, the phenomenon of multicultural symbiosis between the colony and the colonized was formed. Bhabha's reconstruction of a modern national historicity "transcends the heterogeneity of the two sides, and deconstructs the essentialism that has been consistently constructed in the West using political thoughts and literary language" (Tang Youdong: 2012).

In this complex pattern of "There is a bit of me in you and a bit of you in me", both the colony and the colonized should face up to their own problems and eliminate prejudice to the greatest extent, in order to achieve common development and gradually reduce the cultural contradictions of nations in the process of globalization.

Chapter 3 *Easter, 1916* in the Perspective of Postcolonialism

Many scholars who study Yeats are caught up in the debate about whether Yeats belongs to postcolonialism, and the existence of this debate is more important than the answer. The uncertainty of contemporary postcolonialism on Yeats's research enriches the reading experience of Yeats's works. The following will analyze the background of Yeats's *Easter in 1916*, the poet's thoughts on the national liberation movement, and the complicated relationship between

Ireland and the United Kingdom from the perspective of other and Hybridity in postcolonialism.

3.1. Ireland: the Image of Other

On April 24, 1916, when Britain worked in World War I, the Irish captured several areas in Dublin and declared the foundation of the Republic of Ireland. Subsequently, 20,000 British troops were sent to Dublin, surrounded the city center. The area occupied by the rebels was blasted to suppress the Irish. It was in this situation that Yeats wrote the poem *Easter in 1916*. The poem expresses the poet's complex emotions towards the uprising, his praise and admiration for patriots and at the same time reflects his yearning for the establishment of an independent and free country.

In terms of culture, religion, social structure, and living standards, it seems that Ireland in the twentieth century is regarded as a typical "first world". To some extent, Ireland in the nineteenth century seems to help Britain maintain its "Empire" status. However, in terms of the characteristics of colonial rule, Ireland has indeed become a British colony: Irish people are treated separately by the ruling class, the use of Irish is not allowed, and the local culture gradually tends to be marginalized. For Britain, Ireland became the "other".

Going back to this poem, the "other" of the Irish is embodied in all aspects. One is that the narrative of the poem is the first person to observe everything happening in Ireland. The poet seems to be a third person, escaping from his own nation and looking back at what happened to that nation. This narrative technique itself embodies the image of the "other" of Ireland. In addition, the image of the "other" in Ireland is also fully revealed in the text. "For England may keep faith, For all that is done and said." This refers to Home Rule Bills in Ireland passed by the British government in 1914, but it was delayed due to World War I. The next two sentences "We know they dreamed; enough, to know they dreamed and are dead" reveal the helplessness and resentment, pain and struggle of Ireland towards Britain as the "other".

The image of the "other" like Ireland is given by the United Kingdom, not defined by Ireland itself. The contrast between silence of the Irish and the contempt from the British reveals that the colonized Irish unconsciously constructs an ideology dominated by the British.

Subsequently, as the poor "other", Ireland was full of uncertainty about the changes in the status quo. "And what if excess of love, bewildered them till they died?" This sentence is that the narrator feels contradictory to the rebellion, the uprising and the people involved. This sense of contradiction exacerbates the uncertainty of the "other" of the Irish. At the same time, this uncertainty and sense of

contradiction make people reflect on what kind of relationship should Ireland and Britain coexist in.

3.2 Hybridity among nations

Yeats's feelings about Ireland and Britain are contradictory, which he believes that their relationship is a kind of inter-ethnic "hybridity". This is represented in the poem *Easter in 1916*. On the one hand, Yeats used the language of the colonists to tell the story of the Irish, which was a kind of silent rejection and resistance to the colonial sovereign state and its culture. The "winged horse" in "And rode our winged horse" comes from the flying horse in Greek mythology, and wherever you step on it is called "Pegasus horse." Yeats uses traditional European culture to tell the story of his own nation to express his resistance to the colony. Yeats's sense of nobility revealed in his poems, "From the perspective of today's historical materialism, it is of course conservative and contrary to historical development. However, the poet is only using his own understanding and ability to urgently seek to ways to awaken and save the nation" (Tang Junhong: 2005). The "motley" from "But lived where motley is worn" can be inferred that the poet described aristocratic or court life. Aristocracy not only refers to the aristocratic class in Ireland, but also refers to the aristocratic class in England at that time. It implicitly expresses the poet's dissatisfaction with the repression of the colonial sovereign state through exploring the relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom from the British aristocracy. This is the cultural influence of Britain on Ireland, which is never one-way, but bidirectional.

On the other hand, Yeats expresses his doubts about these violent Irish revolutionaries many times in this poem, in order to show his attitude towards the national liberation movement. "That woman's days were spent, In ignorant good-will, Her nights in argument, Until her voice grew shrill." Here is a description of a duchess who supported a violent revolution and came from a prominent family. It seems that the poet's attitude towards her is not very supportive. The mention of Mao Degang's husband in the poem implies that the poet disagrees with this violent and fanatical national liberation movement. What's more, Home Rule Bills in Ireland passed by the British government and the poet's dream of aristocracy also reflects the poet's non-objection to British culture. This is the cultural influence of Ireland on Britain.

The relationship between Ireland and Britain is contradictory but coexisting and the poet Yeats has a very ambivalent attitude towards this. But behind this contradiction, there is hybridity between the colonizer and the colonized. Such a mixed and entangled state of affairs broke the original single "other" relationship between the colony and the suzerain state. In this mingling, the culture of the colonized has struggled to retain the most unique cultural tradition of its own nation. At the same time, the culture of the suzerain country has strengthened its cultural appeal and cultural uniqueness because of the foreign influence of the colonial culture. Both nations seek their own identities in such a hybridity.

Chapter 4

CONCLUSION

Consequently, by using the postcolonial literary criticism theory to interpret Yeats's *Easter in 1916*, this article shows Yeats's ambivalence towards the national liberation movement. And by dissolving the binary opposition between Ireland and the United Kingdom, the two sides have reached a integration and hybridity. At the same time, in today's globalization, it is required further researches to explore the cultural trend under postcolonialism and pluralistic symbiosis.

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