



Mythology And Folklore in Yeats' Poetic Drama: Shaping Irish Cultural Identity

Dinesh Kumar, Research Scholar, Dept. of English, The Glocal University Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh
 Dr. Suresh Kumar, Assistant Professor, Research Supervisor, Glocal School of Art & Social Science, The Glocal University, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh

Abstract

British colonial dominance over Ireland for almost eight centuries has had a tremendous impact on the country's national and cultural identity. This essay examines the profound identity crisis that the Irish people have experienced as a result of British government political, economic, and cultural persecution. Irish cultural memory and self-perception were profoundly affected by the banishment of the Gaelic language and the imposition of English, which resulted in a reduced sense of national identity. Through his creative works, the poet W.B. Yeats attempted to reconcile his conflicted feelings towards British culture and his Anglo-Irish background. Yeats integrated Irish folklore, myths, and tales; he hybridized the English language with Irish features. He included inspirations from Oriental cultures in an attempt to revitalize Irish cultural identity. In the end, his attempts to produce uniquely Irish literature helped to build a new Irish cultural identity free from British domination by fostering a sense of pride and solidarity among the country's citizens.

Keywords: Mythology, Folklore, W.B. Yeats, Poetic Drama, Irish Cultural Identity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ireland was extraordinarily influenced by British provincial history because it was the primary British state. Somewhat English Norman states were established in a few areas of Ireland after Norman vanquishers showed up there in the twelfth hundred years. They slowly blended in with the whole country and became known as the "Early English," or Somewhat English Irish, of Ireland. Regardless of regular struggles between the pioneer and hostile to frontier powers, the British provincial power over Ireland over its almost eight centuries of pilgrim control were essentially higher than the counter pilgrim strength generally speaking. The British government utilized political guidelines all through the pilgrim period to financially and culturally abuse the Irish public. Monetarily, the Irish working class endured extraordinarily because of the British government's high tax assessment on grains, which represented most of Ireland's gross item. Moreover, Britain overwhelmed Irish monetary strategy, which hampered Ireland's financial growth. The Westminster parliament passed the Cows Acts in 1666 to forbid the passage of reasonable Irish crowds into Britain. It was culturally taboo for Irish individuals to speak Gaelic. Following hundreds of years of frontier control, English arose as the overarching language in Ireland. During Ireland's devastating Extraordinary Starvation during the 1840s, up to 1,000,000 local speakers died from starvation. There were not many unique works in Gaelic after the disaster. Irish individuals lost their memories of their beautiful past when the Gaelic language was gone, and Britain basically emptied water into their verifiable comprehension. Individuals were nearly both a public and a cultural identity emergency because they had a weak feeling of who their nation was and were unaware of the need to battle pilgrims. The Irish country came to be viewed as the subject of British pioneer talk, the quiet individuals unable to verbalize their own set of experiences, and the others who were underestimated and lost their aggregate memory.

1.1.Objectives of the Study

- To comprehend the multifaceted relationship between W.B. Yeats's Anglo-Irish identity and British society.
- To investigate Yeats's literary techniques, such as the resuscitation of Irish myths, stories, and folklore, the blending of Irish and English words, and the addition of Oriental cultural motifs.
- To evaluate how Yeats's writings elevated Irish culture and promoted national consciousness, helping to create a new Irish cultural identity.



2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pokorná, L. (2012) sought to provide a succinct overview of Yeats' early life in relation to the larger cultural backdrop of Ireland in the late 19th century and to evaluate his influence on the process of the Irish people creating their own identity. It also examines the process of forming a national identity, which involves two distinct approaches: reconstructing the integrity of the old epic and characterizing the country negatively as "not-English." The employment of mythology and folklore as a pillar of the self-fashioning process unites these two methodologies. In his poems, Yeats also drew inspiration from mythology, folklore, and old tales to guide the country towards a metaphorical transcendence. This thesis' central query is, "How does he achieve that?" In order to respond to this query, the analytical section addresses the recurrent Celtic themes and motifs in his writing, paying particular attention to these elements' associated themes and motifs. Yeats frequently utilizes specific themes, and this thesis will examine these motifs to determine how Yeats uses them to shape the Irish national consciousness. The thesis contends that these motifs have the ability to impact readers on multiple levels since they are connected to both topical concerns concerning life in 19th-century Ireland and mythological and folklore themes.

Kadiroglu, M. (2021) showed how Yeats, the most well-known follower and pioneer behind the Irish Scholarly Recovery in the mid twentieth 100 years, is showing a philosophy to battle for a legacy and public identity by visiting Irish and Celtic legends as well as contemporary Irish destinations, and hence making a performative talk in his poetry that advances calculated and reasonable comprehension of Irishness to be worked out. From his initial years, he managed the issue of Irishness and Irish culture. His melodious subjects, which length from adoration to the art of poetry, are fixated on the possibility of Irishness, which is bolstered by stories and pictures drawn from Celtic and Irish mythology as well as contemporary Irish areas. Irish districts and mythic/verifiable viewpoints combined with Yeats' poetic antipoetry produce a bridge between the past and contemporary Irishness. His poetry hence becomes an assertion of views and objectives with respect to a glorified rendition of Irish culture.

Llewellyn-Jones, M. (2013) analyzed the complexities of the relationship — especially with regards to a period of political and monetary commotion — between these portrayals of Ireland and the malleability of cultural identity. While the book gives a verifiable framework to contemporary Irish drama and examines a portion of the prior works by Brian Friel, Plain MacGuinness, and Tom Murphy, it centers basically around their later work from 1980, especially the works by arising writers acted during the 1990s, during the Harmony Cycle in the North and the development of the "Celtic tiger economy" in the Republic. The book's primary subjects give it construction, and it centers around dramatic methods that have been associated with identity execution, particularly in post-frontier settings. Also, references are made to exhibitions that have occurred around Britain and Ireland, as well as interviews with writers, entertainers, chiefs, and associations. The utilization of present-day basic viewpoints is done as such in an approachable way, going from analysis and execution praxis to post-pioneer reasoning.

Kurz, M. (2012) concentrated on just two plays: Vincent Woods' At the Black Pig's Dyke, which depicts the modern era, and William Butler Yeats' The Countess Cathleen, which represents the Revival period. There are six chapters in the thesis. The definitions and applications of the terms mythology and folklore in the thesis are explained in the first chapter. It also gives a general overview of Irish literature and culture. The circumstances leading up to the Irish National Revival are described in the second chapter, which also examines the events that shaped Ireland's progress until the end of the nineteenth century. The biography of W. B. Yeats, his participation in the Revival, and the origins of his inspiration and drive for writing are all covered in the third chapter. This chapter also focuses on The Countess Cathleen, including her history, creation, reception, and mythological and folkloric components. A brief history of the developments in Irish drama over the past 100



years is provided in the fourth chapter. It concentrates on a few of the occasions that directly affected Irish life in the past as well as Irish people now.

Lindová, V. (2014) demonstrated how the folk heritage, and especially oral storytelling, shaped national consciousness and identity formation in the Irish-speaking population. He demonstrated the strong connection between the nineteenth-century Irish cultural rebirth and oral tradition. In his thesis, he examined the connections between the oral heritage of the Irish language and its evolution during the nineteenth-century Irish cultural renaissance. He mostly drew from Guy Beiner's *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory* and Thomas E. Hachey and Lawrence J. McCaffrey's *Perspectives on Irish Nationalism* for the first chapter, which will analyse these relationships. In-depth and well-researched, Guy Beiner's work views folk history as a trustworthy component of historiography. His works critically address vernacular historiography in relation to Irish history and memory in each of their chapters. He highlights the importance of local heroes, Daniel O'Connell being one prominent example for the reader.

3. YEATS'S IDENTITY ANXIETY

Yeats' own background and his Somewhat English Irish identity background contributed to his identity nerves in his initial years. Yeats was born in Dublin into a Protestant working class family. John Butler Yeats, his dad, was a barrister until he settled on the choice to seek after painting. A prosperous group of dealers from Sligo delivered his mom, Susan Pollex fen. Afterwards, they migrated to London, where Yeats began going to classes. But because of an absence of discretion and business intuition, the family's monetary standing crumbled. The mother and the children visited Sligo for some time. Yeats related Sligo with blissful cherished recollections, when he was informed numerous Irish legends and folktales by workers and mariners. Because of this special experience of carrying on with two lives, Yeats communicated his tangled love and disdain for Britain and British society as follows:

In the basic comments of his eighteenth-century Ireland, Lecky expressed that no individuals had encountered more oppression, nor had that mistreatment totally halted until the current day. Nobody despises the past however much we do who never goes away...My family names are all English, even though my own is the only English marriage I am aware of in my immediate line; Shakespeare, Spenser, Blake, and perhaps William Morris are the sources of my spirit; and I tell myself that all my love stems from the English language, which I use for everything from thinking and speaking to writing. Gaelic is my public language, even though it isn't my first language. (Yates 1961b, page 520)

Identity is intricate, maybe more so for Irish identity. In Shakespeare's *Henry V*, Irish commander MacMorris addressed Somewhat English Irish identity when represented a test by Welsh chief Fluellen, inquiring, "Of my country? What is my country? Ish a miscreant, a convict, a bastard, and a villain. Which nation am I ready? Who talks about my country? It was said that Irish men were "a lowlife, a bastard, a heel, and a scoundrel" with run of the mill characteristics. Language problems were likewise examined by James Joyce in his book *A Picture of the Craftsman as a Young fellow*. The youthful Irish craftsman Stephen Dedalus refers to lighting a light in one of the episodes. The English Dignitary utilizes the expression "channel," whereas the Irish understudy utilizes "tundish." As portrayed by Yeats, the Old English Irish individuals of the nineteenth century were uncertain of who they were. Yeats was a member of the Old English Irish imaginative and scholarly local area, which maintained the British way of life while harboring patriot political beliefs and an interest in native culture. Then again, Irish Catholics were derided in Britain for being Irish, and they were related to English pilgrims. They were not piece of any gathering. In his last option work, Yeats every now and again alludes to "Old English Irish isolation."

4. DISTINCTIVELY IRISH CULTURAL IDENTITY

Yeats thought that a nation's literary heritage should influence its cultural identity. He once declared, "I am aware of my own race, and I have considered it in all of my writing, whether it be dramatic or lyrical. I will write for my own people, and it probably won't matter if I



write for them out of love or hate. In most of Yeats' artistic works, this philosophy is clear. Building a particularly Irish cultural identity separated from the effect of English mastery was his essential scholarly objective. Yeats advanced the development of an exceptionally Irish writing to reawaken the Irish public's feeling of public opportunity. John O'Leary filled in as motivation for Yeats to begin the Irish Artistic Restoration Development. Irishness was to play the job of Englishness in this development. Yeats attempted to go against British frontier culture and to advance Irish public culture.

Without creators who were ready to devote their work to Irish patriotism, there could be no durable Irish writing in English. Without identity, extraordinary writing couldn't exist, and without incredible writing, a country couldn't characterize itself. For Ireland to accomplish political and cultural freedom, it would be important for Irish writers to cultivate a remarkably Irish public creative mind. Irish writers should write about Ireland and in an unmistakably Irish voice. Irish writers would need to utilize English since the Irish language was everything except wiped out, but they may as well find a subject and a style that were interestingly their own by exploring Irish mythology and legend, contemporary Irish folklore, and verifiable records, as well as by paying attention to Irish-communicated in English.

5. THE Development OF IRISH CULTURAL IDENTITY IN YEATS'S POETRY

5.1. Myths, Legends and Folklore

Yeats had mostly focused on fables, Irish folklore, and storytelling in his sonnets. This voyage into that other realm is anticipated to assist the artist in his or her efforts to transcend reality. However, it is possible to argue that the author purposefully included them to make his poetry more difficult to read in the area. Yeats used the canonical works of the time to create a coherent picture of Ireland during the Celtic Renaissance. The author claimed that public resources may focus on individual workmanship by combining the two.

Two ideas that ultimately came together to form a nation's spirit, or deep standard, may be seen as its goal. The first occurred in the past, and the second is happening right now. The first is sharing responsibility for the rich heritage of memories, and the second is agreeing to live in the here and now while yearning to preserve the value of the legacy that each of them has received in its totality. Like the individual, the nation is the result of many extended years of arduous work, penance, and duty. Yeats's recurring effects Ernest Renan thought that men's inner circle is the truest of all because it is the begetters who have shaped men's identities. A nation's heavenly past, amazing people, incredible wins, dazzling achievements, and related splendor can all be used to illustrate its social capital. Being perceived as "public" implies sharing traits from previous successes and a common desire to acknowledge current achievements. It also implies that even after reaching incredible success together, there is still a great deal you feel needs to be done. Yeats revived the past with the intention of addressing the present.

Yeats looked to keep a widely held belief:

Might I not, with health and good luck to aid me,
 create some new 'Prometheus Unbound'; Patrick or Columcille,
 Oisín or Finn, in Prometheus' stead; and, instead of
 Caucasus, Cro-Patrick or Ben Bullen? Have not all races
 had their first unity from a mythology that marries them to
 rock and hill?

According to Henry A. Murray, the word "legend" is a "chameleonic term" It provides an ethical narrative, typically centred on the adventures of heavenly creatures and dreams, and is employed to explain a commonplace event or a resemblance of one. The English word "dream," which can refer to any information received, whether it be true or false, comes from the Greek word "muthos," which means "word" or "talk," "the thing verbally communicated," or "the story told." Dreams were initially shared verbally, first with one age group and then with the next. At that point, an ancient copy record of the stories was preserved in printed



form. From then on, legend developed into literature that embodied imagined or mythical characters, events, or narratives.

Myth is fundamental, the dramatic representation of our deepest instinctual life, of a primary awareness of man in the universe, capable of many configurations, upon which all particular opinions and attitudes depend.

5.2.English Language Hybridization

In order to construct an Irish cultural identity, it is necessary to resolve issues related to language, since this is the outward expression of our shared history and values. The ancient Irish people used a language called Gaelic or Celtic, and their writings go back over a thousand years. During the time that the English were in control, the Gaelic language nearly died out. Preserving and increasing the usage of the Gaelic language is crucial to ensuring that Irish culture remains autonomous. Years thinks that the revival and transmission of old Irish literature would be better served by poetry written in English rather than Celtic, which he does not comprehend. Writing poetry in English requires following its conventions and laws, which makes it difficult to forge a distinct cultural identity and, objectively, contributes to the continuation of British cultural colonisation from a linguistic perspective. Therefore, his choice of language seems to be an acknowledgment of English colonisation.

5.3.Taking in Asian Culture

As indicated by Fanon, native people groups bear both the obligation for their own culture and the responsibility for the world at large, and the groundwork of a country is inextricably connected to the advancement and investigation of all-inclusive standards. However, they are commonly dealt with in an unexpected way, said claims that China, Japan, and Ireland are all essential for a similar gathering. In the same way as other pilgrim countries, Ireland's culture is subservient since it is ordered as "Other," in spite of the way that these countries are geologically nearer together.

Besides, Yeats' way of thinking of veils is vigorously influenced by Japanese Noh, which utilizes different covers to increase dramatic impact. His poetry in the Insane Jane series act as an unmistakable illustration of the cover hypothesis. Subsequently, Yeats' sonnets and thoughts are enormously affected by Japanese culture, which assists with melding the arising Irish cultural identity.

Yeats consolidated Chinese subjects, which are shown in lapis lazuli, notwithstanding Japanese culture.

A third and two Chinamen are cut in lapis lazuli,
a long-legged bird float over them.
When somebody demands melancholic music,
talented hands begin to perform.

.....

Their eyes, regardless of their various wrinkles,
are bright and stunning because of their age.

The "long-legged bird" is a kind of crane, and the "two Chinamen" are prototype old Chinese sages. Yeats imagines that the destiny of dramatic characters is seldom thought of and that older people with crow's eyes have a particular sort of oriental wisdom. They are quiet, unapproachable, and crisp, and they enjoy "sorrowful tunes" because they really comprehend that life and demise are only similar to constantly.

6. CONCLUSION

Ireland experienced a severe identity crisis as a result of the long-lasting British colonial rule, which had a major effect on Irish national and cultural identity. Ireland's sense of identity was permanently altered by the erosion of traditional Gaelic culture and collective memory brought about by the imposition of English language and culture as well as economic and political subjugation. Irish writer and literary icon W.B. Yeats was instrumental in resolving this conflict. His creative endeavors, which were devoted to resurrecting and advancing Irish



cultural identity, were influenced by his conflicted views towards British culture. Yeats attempted to accomplish this through incorporating elements of Irish folklore, mythology, and legends back into the English language, as well as by absorbing influences from Oriental culture. His fascination with Chinese and Japanese cultures also enhanced Irish literature and placed it in a more inclusive, wider context. Yeats made a substantial contribution to raising Irish culture, promoting national awareness, and opposing British cultural domination by creating a new Irish cultural identity that is based in tradition but open to influences from around the world. His impact has had a lasting influence on Irish identity formation, demonstrating the value of literature in defining a nation's identity and reviving its culture.

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