

STRUCTURES OF POWER AND AUTHORITY IN W.B. YEATS' 'THE SECOND COMING' IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

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Abstract

"The Second Coming" a classic Irish poem written by William Butler Yeats, and published in 1920, it portrays disorder, disaster, Christianity, prophecy, and violence. In a biblical sense, it represents the destruction of man as well as of civilization, the coming of Christ as well as the emergence of the Anti-Christ. They symbolize human annihilation throughout civilization and the beast signifying Anti-Christ when Christ appears again. Regarding these modern social changes, this paper will concentrate on its imagery and symbolization of power and authority. It discovers the meanings of concepts with special reference to the disillusionment period after the First World War, it portrays the shattered relations in present times. Power and authority are two primary social issues in Yeats' work analyzed in this research with the reference to "The Second Coming." For it offers information on literature and its role within the contemporary society, hierarchy, and the concepts' volatility. In analyzing power relations, this paper will apply Structuralism where the poem's power dynamics post-WWI can be linked to current social/political relations. Therefore, modern power and authority remain products of conflict and contradiction, and therefore they require flexibility, capacity inclusion, and critique. Thus, the relational concept of authority advances the principles of participatory government, voice, and innovation at the margin and promotes peace, coexistence, and equitable solution to global

challenges.

Keywords: Anarchy -Annihilation -Power-Authority -Modern Times -
Innovation -Peace.

INTRODUCTION

'The Second Coming' by William Butler Yeats ,was published in 1920 and stands an intense lyrical poem .It reflects upon a life in which a person's ambition never seems to be satisfied .The key themes of the poem are disorder ,disaster ,Christianity ,prophecy ,and violence .It reminds us that nothing is permanent and that change and turmoil are inevitable ,challenging our ideas of order and stability .The main idea is that time is up for humanity ,and civilization as we know it is about to be undone . Readers may symbolize it was return of Christ the beast symbolizing Anti-Christ, which heralds an apocalyptic ending for Christianity and the world. The arrival of the rough beast denotes the arrival of the new age. 'The Second Coming' is a rather pogrom-lyrical poem. It also portrays a life of an individual who never feels that he has achieved enough. In defining the themes of the poem, one is to reckon with anarchists, apocalypticism, Christianity or prophetic tradition, violence and many more. Humanity, and civilization as we know it is about to be undone. Yeats' poem " also depicts reflections of an emerging world, chaos that arise as the old order disintegrate; and new dreadful forces come in. The above written literary piece should not only be viewed as one of the masterpiece written by the great poet named William Butler Yeats, but it also opens a plethora of opportunity to discuss power and authority within its text. In other words, "The Second Coming" attempts to analyze power relations, the collapse of civilization and hint at the coming of a new era of anarchy.conventions and brought anarchy into play" (Lit Charts, 2023).

The main concern of the poem is presented by the question of power and authority. In phenomena described by Yeats, the sources of power have eroded, and the vile powers are taking over the world. According to Yeats' s 'the second coming' lies the imagery of the 'rough beast' slouching toward Bethlehem to be born and this is the new authority, frightening but imminent. This beast symbolizes irresponsible power, power that is not constrained by the standards of right and wrong of old (Poem Analysis, 2023). This end of the world feel to the poem reinforces the feeling that change is a demolition of the old by unknown and possibly evil forces.

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Yeats continues the consideration of the concept of power relations in "The Second Coming" aided by the symbolism employed. A falcon cannot hear the falconer, the symbolizes separation of power and the masses which is a loss of authority. This picture shows the Great War from which the existing order was no longer relevant, and that this world was out of control. Those among them that the speaker tries to draw to the imagery of the "blood-dimmed tide" and the "ceremony of innocence" being drowned belong with the violence and moral putrefaction born of the societal collapse of power (Ivy Panda, 2024). It is these symbols that make the reader to be aware that all human structures are mortal and that they are built and destroyed by forces within history.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Here we refer to the relation of the poem with the power and political dynamics of modern age as chaos is the never ending cycle build a relation. This paper is meant to identify and analyze the imagery and symbolization of power and authority in "The Second Coming" by W. B. Yeats with reference to the social changes taking place in the present time. While analyzing the representation of power relations within the poem, the research aims to contemplate on the real meanings of the concepts within the overall aspect of the disillusionment of post First World War to signify the broken or redefined "bonds" between nations, social classes, or individual identities due to the war's impact.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The value of this research is its ability to shed light on which elements of Yeats' body of work relate to the social concerns of the time. Through the examination of the themes of power and authority in the poem, "The Second Coming," the study will perform a service to learning how literature interacts with its history. This analysis remains highly applicable to the modern world since the nature of power, as well as the instability of human constructs, can be discussed from the obtained viewpoints about the social revolt.

OBJECTIVES

This study connects the poem's themes to the historical realities of the era, exploring how Yeats captures the fragmentation of established systems and norms. Its aims to bridges the poem's historical context with the present,

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identifying parallels in the modern world and examining the relevance of
Yeats' insights today.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How "The Second Coming" reflect the breakdown of traditional social, political, and cultural structures after the First World War?

How can the power relations depicted in "The Second Coming" be linked to contemporary social and political dynamics, particularly the ongoing cycles of chaos and change?

LITERATURE REVIEW

W.B. Yeats' poem The Second Coming owes a great deal to Structuralism, as a literary theory, emphasizing analysis of the structures meeting on the relationships between elements within a text rather than on its historical context or the author's intentions. When critics use structuralist methods to analyze Yeats' work, they frequently investigate how language, symbols, and patterns within the poem generate meaning.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES IN THE POEM

BINARY OPPOSITION

Binary oppositions are seen by structuralists as a fundamental organizing factor in a text. From light against darkness, civilization against savagery, and order against chaos In the Second Coming, Yeats meets extensive use of binary thinking. This poem contrasts the falcon, which represents authority and order, with the growing gyre, which represents confusion and chaos. Such contrasts can emphasize the poem's vital point, which is the contrast between the diptych's stability and collapse. Research on other language structures, such as polysemy and semantic fields, is limited. Examining Yeats' use of words with several meanings and considering how they affect the poem's overall structure can provide new insights into its intricacy.

GYRE, A STRUCTURAL ELEMENT

Yeats uses the idea of the gyre in his writing, particularly in The Second Coming. By highlighting the cyclical nature of history and the certainty of change, structuralist critics analyses how this picture of the gyre shapes the poem's structure. Claude Lévi-Strauss and other structuralists have studied the ways in which myths impact writing. Yeats creates a legendary narrative that introduces to the Second Coming of Christ but undermines it with the appearance of a gruesome monster, depicting biblical inception. However, a

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structural conflict between ancient and new myths as a result of the interaction between classic Christian ideology and the more furious vision is observed.

INTERTEXTUALITY

Yeats set in his poem to produce informative arrays to use Non-Western Symbolism and Structuralism. He combines symbols from cultural traditions, such as Eastern philosophy which shows a potential impact of non-Western motifs.

LINGUISTIC PATTERNS

Structuralism focuses on language itself. Critics examine The Second Coming's repetition, syntax, and diction. For example, the poem's alliteration (such as the repeated 'r' sounds) in 'Things come apart; the center cannot hold') set up a perception of movement echoing the imagery. Chinua Achebe's novel Things Fall Apart, express how Yeats' language echoes across literary history. The Second Coming can be interpreted as a story of society break and restoration.

Cleanth Brooks, focused on the poem's inner tensions and contradictions, aligning with structuralist analysis. Jacques Derrida addressed the instability of meaning in texts, which could be applied to Yeats' vague metaphors with reference to The Second Coming, where traditional symbols are interrupted again. Structuralist criticism On the Second Coming focusses on how Yeats used language and symbols to construct a complex network of meanings that manifest on historical and cultural order. Helen Vendler, a prominent critique of his times, shares The Second the complex imagery, language, and symbolism. She investigates Yeats' use of form and structure in her book Our Secret Discipline. Brooks study on The Second Coming highlights how the text's oppositions and tensions can be investigated using structuralist concepts like binary oppositions.

Deane investigates Yeats' structural components as cultural and symbolic order to better comprehend the structural foundations of The Second Coming. Ellmann looks at how Yeats builds his poetry using myth and archetype. His book examines the structural characteristics of Yeats' poetry, as well as its reliance on symbolic imagery. Kiberd's writing studies how The Second Coming intersects with larger cultural and ideological

forces. Frye 1961 emphasizes on Yeats' archetypal procedures for combining personal experiences with universal themes, as well as weaving legendary symbols and archetypes into his poetry, resulting in a corpus of work that resonates with both individual and communal human experience. Frye's approach ties poetry with the everlasting patterns of myth and folklore.

George Bornstein's 1976 examines the intersection of historical context, symbolic language, and prophetic tone to shed light on how the poem has stayed relevant to readers and critics over time, developing to suit new readings. His interpretation, which has been published in scholarly anthologies is a useful tool for understanding the interpretive difficulties presented by one of Yeats' most well-known works, demonstrates the breadth of Yeats' poetic vision and its relevance to discussions about civilization, chaos, and the human condition. Harold Bloom's 1997 study on Yeats's poetry investigated the gyre's structural symbolism as a metaphor for cosmic and historical forces. The gyre symbolizes historical cycles and the interaction of opposites, reflecting Yeats's theory of cyclical time. Bloom's research supports poems like *The Second Coming*, where the gyre imagery alludes to a planet about a catastrophic metamorphosis, reflecting the conflict between order and chaos.

Yeats' poetry leans over towards a New Criticism approach, even though structuralist critics have not yet fully investigated how the poem's meter, rhythmic patterns, and sound approaches. *The Second Coming*, demonstrate the development of his representative system, how Yeats' symbolic frameworks evolve during his career, especially in response to historical events like World War I. Digital humanities has opened opportunities for structuralist analysis, such as using text-mining algorithms to examine Yeats' syntax, diction, and thematic structures. Contemporary critics focus on thematic concerns as compared to Yeats' structural use of language. Structuralist theory emphasizes the significance of investigating texts within a larger literary system.

Yeats' poetry is rarely studied through the lens of structural narrative theory, even though it constructs a narrative curve through symbolism and imagery rather than narrative one. A synchronic analysis will be needed to demonstrate how Yeats utilize description to create the impression of contemporary vision in cultural and philosophical systems.

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RESEARCH GAP

An enormous research void emerges when considering W.B. Yeats', The Second Coming through the lens of its representation and disintegration of traditional structures and its relation to modern dynamics. While much has been written about the poem's meditation on post-World War I disillusionment, there has been little investigation into how Yeats' imagery captures the breakdown of social, political, and cultural systems in the aftermath of world battle. Furthermore, the poem's power dynamics – represented by the falcon's separation from the falconer and the ominous development of a "rough beast" – provide a rich framework for comprehending cycles of chaos and renewal. However, few studies draw obvious similarities between these factors and current social and political upheavals, such as the development of authoritarianism, global crises, and the disruption of established norms. Bridging this gap could shed light on how Yeats' vision transcends its historical setting, providing insights into the persistent patterns of turmoil and transformation in modern society.

METHODOLOGY

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to structuralists, structuralism, is an approach to the study of literature that aims to provide a concrete identification of the structures, oppositions, and archetypes that most significantly condition and delimit meaning in each text. Structuralists hold the opinion that language and cultural production- including the literary works are collections of signs thus come into existence due to their relationships rather than the behavior of the outside reality. An important concept in studying poetry, structuralism supports the close examination of the structure of the poem, its medium, and language, and images and symbols used. This is because the structuralist critic can only explain how the structure controls the process of meaning making by having to identify the foundational patterns as well as binaries constituent of the poetry.

A structuralist analysis of Yeats "The Second Coming" will then be to examine how the poems efficiency of power and authority is inherent in the binary structures and deep structures.

which arranges the symbolisms of that mapped discourse. This will include paraphrasing or cutting the poem to look at the vocabulary used in the poem.

ANALYSIS

Yeats' poem, *The Second Coming*, symbolizes the fragmented nature of authority in the modern age, which is dispersed and not easily controlled. This could mean artificial intelligence, populism, or climate change, which disarm hierarchies. Authority is stimulated by conflicting ideas. Yeats' visions of de-centered powers and their ongoing construction are analyzed by structuralists, who understand the relational and constructed nature of power across historical and contemporary contexts.

The ideas of *The Second Coming* relate to the return of Christ and the rise of anti-Christ as images that have become a deep symbol. *The Second Coming* symbolizes the ongoing struggle between good and evil in contemporary political processes, reflecting the struggle between leaders with virtues of justice, unity, and peace and those manipulating freedom. The prospect of the *Second Coming* narrates the hope of a leader renewing polity with benevolence and truth, challenging societies to examine the moral underpinnings of power and its effects on justice and peace. They can epitomize the failure of the conventional order regarding the politics and authority in Yeats poem, fundamental lines such as 'Things Fall Apart; the center cannot hold' point to a failure of political systems, moral order, social order.

Globalization and digitalization have destabilized centralized hierarchies, leading to the rise of transnational corporations and social movements. Structuralism suggests that modern authority is a relation between signifiers and rulers, lacking a 'core'. This contrasts with the structuralist idea that all systems are fragile and require contrasts. Modern narratives, such as social media and grassroots movements, challenge the rule of one system by offering multiple versions of truth, justice, and governance.

FINDINGS

Turning and turning in the widening gyre, The falcon can't hear the falconer, Things Fall apart: the center can't hold, Nere anarchy is loosened upon the world, The blood -dimmed tide is loosed, and everywher.

THE CEREMONY OF INNOCENCE IS DROWNED

In 'The Second Coming' the widening gyre and the falcon whose face is to the blow, represents a structuralist perspective of fragmentation within frameworks of society. This is the view that ideas, institutions, values or even

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cultures are made up of relations – whether they are linguistic, cultural, or ideological. Here, one of the most important figures – that of falcon and the falconer – is ruptured, and the breaking of that sign means the decentralization of the entire symbolic system.

This imagery can easily be related with the contemporary societies where established authorities like governments, religious establishments, and social orders all over the world are failing to combine all aspects of societies' lives due to the vibrant change and This imagery resonates with modern times, where traditional institutions such as governments, religions, and social norms struggle to maintain coherence amid rapid change and globalization. The "blood-dimmed tide" and the "ceremony of innocence" being drowned evoke a world overwhelmed by violence, cynicism, and the erosion of shared values, as seen in the rise of extremism, environmental crises, and moral relativism. Through a structuralist lens, Yeats portrays a system where meaning unravels, leaving humanity caught in a chaotic flux, mirroring the modern sense of cultural fragmentation and the search for new centers of stability in an increasingly uncertain world From a structure point of view, Yeats presents a system where significance unwinds the web of culture, humanity then remains mired in a state of postmodern coherence lessness or in an effort towards an ephemeral cultural stability and the search for coherent centers in an expanding culture lessness elsewhere. The best lack all conviction, while the worst Are full of passionate intensity.

SURELY SOME REVELATION IS AT HAND

Surely the second coming is at hand For what it is worth, Harrison describes an antithetical contradiction where “the best” people who are “Dylan’s crew” lack conviction while “the worst” are full of passionate intensity in the second coming. This article asserts that Structuralism define meaning as oppositions in a structure, and in this stanza, Yeats reversed the conventional order. The “best”, linked to reason, rightness and power are depicted as weak while the “worst”, linked with disorder and excess, exploit aggression. Today this idea is evident in the absence of coherent ideologies, as well as in populist and postindustrial information and political states of the world where rationality succumbs to passion. The phrase “surely some revelation is at hand” positions this debate in cycles and shift, and this is the

reason why structuralism is all about. This change, however, is quite relative, containing within it the hope of the renewal as much as fear of change. Reading the lines in the light of structuralism reflects on the loss of order of culture in the postmodern world and how broken hierarchies threaten to topple society. The Seconds Coming! Hardly are those words out When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi.

TROUBLES MY SIGHT

somewhere in sands of the desert A shape with lion body and the head of a man ,However, in The Second Coming the imagery of “Spiritus Mundi” and the appearance of a beast half lion, half man can be viewed as structuralist striving to interpret myths and values. According to Structuralists, meaning is produced out of combinations of cultural signs and symbols; mythic and archetypal aspects of the human mind inform this vision of apocalypse. The discourse ‘Spiritus Mundi’ or pool of shared symbols produces an image which does not adhere to the conventional power/moral dichotomy. This monstrous Man comprises a human head and a beast’s body representing the loss of duality that defines advanced emergencies – civilization against savagery, human against animals. In the contemporary world this figure can be associated with anxiety induced by preoccupation with technologies and with morality, with the slogans of ‘post truth’, with rising fascist leaders all over the world, and with the crisis of values and disintegration of collectivity. Desert, as the territories in between, is chosen to stress the wear and shift of traditional paradigms and the emergence of something ominously post-novice. This paper concludes that through structuralist approach, imagery of Yeats’ becomes reflective of a modernity in a state of struggle with elements of a cultural and ideological breakdown, while portraying aspects of tension and fatalism regarding the process of change. A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun, Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.

THE DARKNESS DROPS AGAIN:

but now I know When reading The Second Coming Yeats uses specific imagery, such as a ‘gaze blank and pitiless as the sun’ or ‘indignant desert birds’ hovering above a menacing figure, one can examine the text structurally; thereby coming to the realization that for Yeats modernity brought the dissolution of meaning systems. Once again, the ideas presented in Structuralism concern the connection between the semiotics of a piece of

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work and its social implications; here, Yeats creates the myth which erases the line between the opposites of light and darkness, order and chaos, man and the nature. The "blank" gaze communicates the objectification of experiencers and conjures an air of impersonal and clinical force – a world lacking both metaphysical moorings. What was once a helmet of trials/revelation reducing the desert of meaning, instead of enriching it. In modern situations, this reflects the decline of populists' shared instincts about the future or God's favor as pessimism reigns in everything from the environment to warfare to political fatigue. As dawn is broken and the sun returns, the "darkness drop[s] again," and such cyclical return to the state of chaos predetermines the structuralist vision of history and culture as cycles or patterns, but at the same time correlates with postmodernist free-for-all of today's world. Thus constructing these interrelated signifiers, Yeats questions fragmented postmodern reality in the proactively created search for the new solidarities. That twenty centuries of stony sleep Wee vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle, And what rough beast, its hour com round at last, Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

This paper looks how a W. B. Yeats' The Second Coming lines could be looked at from a structuralist perspective to unravel the post-modern disintegration of order and meaning. To structuralism, a text is a complex signifying system which is determined by the structures of culture, language, and history. These poets all utilize the binaries of order/chaos, good/evil or past/future in their poems in an either organic or mechanistic way, or indeed disrupt such binaries by making order/chaos, good/evil or past/future work to create the rocking cradle and the rough beast slouching towards Bethlehem. Today, we get the bitter truth of the fragmentation of late-modernist grand-socio-political narratives such as religion, nationalism, or reason. 'Twenty centuries of stony sleep' represents history, and the courier of the voice' represents an apocalyptic awakening which signifies doubt and disorientation in the face of history. This crisis concerns postmodernist psychoses of social identity in the disposable epoch of the fragmenting of gender, ethnic, and class meanings. Drawing but noticeable from the structuralist colorful views, Yeats' work becomes a very appropriate form of critique on the modern society unveiling its instability as regards current working structures to foster a sense

CONCLUSION

Contemporary power and authority are characterized by constant instability, which is hardly surprising given the situation described by W.B. Yeats in *The Second Coming*. This means that Structuralist theory can be a useful tool in analyzing this phenomenon in question is indeed predominately relational, decentered and a manifestation of power as relational and located, rather than being absolute and centered. Structuralism suggests that the processes of dissolution and emergence are inherent into the very nature of a given system since the meaning of the systems at large, the distribution of power and the authority undergo constant change. This perspective lay emphasis on the fact that, authority has become flexible and stochastic 'postmodern' customs, extend this state of fluidity and hence, underscores an endless state of contingency that redefines authority, the office of power, and the points of control. Therefore, modern authority can be best viewed not as a constant and organic, but as a process developing in the framework of conflict and contradiction of the systems.

FUTURE RESEARCH

As a future research perspective, the current study indicates an omission of research on how digital technologies and globalization cause the uncertainty and randomness of authorities in present power relations. As much as the structuralist theory pays a lot of attention to the dynamic nature and the decentered forms of interactions; little is said about how those interactions are facilitated and managed by algorithms, social media, and globalization of networks. Further, the involvement of corporate bodies and international organizations in changing the nature of conventional power structures has not been adequately covered. Examining these forces in relation to the dynamics of dissolution and emergence at modern system levels might provide enhanced understanding of the changes in authority in the future times.



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