Narratives of Dispossession: The Persistence of Famine in Postcolonial Irish Fiction

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Abstract

This essay demonstrates the ways in which two thematically and structurally similar novels, Nuala O'Faolain's My Dream of You (2001) and Joseph O'Connor's Star of the Sea (2002), complicate popular uses of the Famine narrative in arguments on both sides of the debate over Irish independence. By calling forth ghosts from the 19th century to expose both intentional and unintentional misrepresentations of the Famine (imagery, ideological meaning, and political mandate), O'Faolain and O'Connor redefine modern Ireland in terms of hunger and dispossession, revealing a more complex national narrative and a more cosmopolitan national identity.

Keywords

Famine; Ireland; Novels; Politics; Revisionist

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This necessary advance in postcolonial trauma studies has made the theory more comprehensive, but the trauma of concrete historical factuality: of dispossession, of land loss, and of instances of racial discrimination.

3. Re-Viewing Melancholia. Trauma fiction assigns meaning to themes of recuperation, redress, and resilience, many other scholars. Comment [A7]: Please reinstate hyphens if they are present in the original. Postcolonial fiction does not define itself by the use of certain techniques but by the deployment of strategies that allow a critical or ironic perspective on (neo)colonialism and by the assertion of indigenous values, languages, myths, history or traditions. Most importantly, the balance between Western and non-Western attitudes and viewpoints is shifted in the direction of giving postcolonial protagonists, attitudes and interests greater space to the reduction and even elimination of European or North American values and views. Narratives of Transmission, Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press. 1992. Emecheta, Buchi. Lloyd, David. Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment, Dublin: Lilliput, 1993. Arguably the most tragic event in the Irish history, the Great Famine of 1845-1849 was a period of mass starvation that led to the fall of Irish population from 8,175,124 in 1841 to 6,552,385 in 1861. In this article, I examine the issue of the British government complicity in the Great Famine, and make a conclusion about causal links between the economic structure and political situation of Ireland and the Famine's severity.