

A Study on the Current Situation of English Poetry Development in New Zealand

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Abstract: In the research stage of poetry in English language literature, most English poems are English poems from the United Kingdom or the United States. However, due to historical reasons, the United Kingdom and the United States are not the only countries that use the English language for poetry creation. Australia, New Zealand, India, South Africa, and Ireland are all countries that use the English language for poetry due to colonial expansion. However, there are very few studies on English language poetry in these countries. This paper intends to study the development status of English poetry in New Zealand, as well as its dissemination and prospects in China.

Keywords: New Zealand English poetry; development status; dissemination

1. Introduction

In the realm of English language and literature research, a significant portion of English poetry hails from either the United Kingdom or the United States. However, it's essential to recognize that the English language serves as a creative medium for poetry in various other nations, thanks to historical factors stemming from colonial expansion. Countries such as Australia, New Zealand, India, South Africa, and Ireland have all embraced English for poetic expression. Regrettably, there exists a notable dearth of scholarly attention directed towards English language poetry originating from these countries. The bulk of research in this field predominantly focuses on English poetry within the confines of the United Kingdom and the United States. This article seeks to delve into the current state of development of English poetry in New Zealand. Surprisingly, there are merely 13 high-quality documents pertaining to the study of New Zealand poetry within the CNKI database, with most of them concentrating on Maori poetry and literature within New Zealand. These articles were predominantly published in the 1990s. Furthermore, within my country, there remains a glaring absence of works dedicated to New Zealand English poetry. Only one book, "New Zealand Literary History" by Professor Yu Jianhua [1] (1994), briefly alludes to New Zealand English poetry, but its primary focus is on the broader spectrum of New Zealand's literary history. In Professor Yu Jianhua's monograph, he astutely observes that the "Cambridge History of English Literature," published in 1920, did include a chapter on New Zealand literature. However, he aptly distinguishes New Zealand literature as having its own distinct characteristics and allure, emphasizing that it is not merely an appendage to English literature elsewhere or a variation thereof. This insight underscores the evident gaps in the developmental history of New Zealand English poetry, the dissemination of contemporary New Zealand English poetry in China, and the overall study of contemporary New Zealand English poetry. These lacunae eagerly await the scholarly endeavors of dedicated researchers and scholars [2-6].

This paper takes a structured approach in dissecting the study of New Zealand poetry, delineating it into three distinct sections for comprehensive exploration. The initial segment embarks upon its journey by delving into the annals of New Zealand's history. Within this context, it rigorously examines the evolutionary trajectory of New Zealand English poetry, meticulously tracing its development over time. This historical exploration extends to illuminating the unique characteristics and seminal works that have graced the landscape of New Zealand English poetry throughout different epochs. Transitioning to the second segment, the focus shifts towards the present-day panorama of New Zealand English poetry. Here, the paper meticulously introduces and elucidates the current status of New Zealand English poetry, shedding light on its contemporary vibrancy. Moreover, it scrutinizes the intricate facets of how New Zealand English poetry has been disseminated and received in the realm of Chinese academia and literary circles. Finally, in the third section, the paper brings its discourse to a thoughtful conclusion. It offers an insightful reflection, casting an eye towards the future prospects and

potential of New Zealand English poetry. Simultaneously, it conscientiously addresses the inherent shortcomings and challenges that may lie ahead on the path of its development. This structured tripartite approach ensures a thorough and nuanced examination of the multifaceted world of New Zealand English poetry, from its historical roots to its contemporary presence and onward to its future horizons.

2. An overview of New Zealand history and culture

The historical tapestry of New Zealand unfolds across several significant epochs, each leaving an indelible mark on the nation's narrative. This narrative can be partitioned into distinct phases that have shaped its trajectory: the arrival of the Maori people, the age of European exploration, the era of British colonization, and subsequently, the periods marked by independence and modernity. In the early days, New Zealand's English poetry found its roots in the cultural traditions of European colonists, with a particular emphasis on the poetic legacy of Britain and Ireland. These colonists brought with them a rich heritage of verse, which laid the foundation for poetic expression within New Zealand. The verses composed during this time often mirrored the sentiments and ideals of the homeland. However, as the sands of time continued to flow, New Zealand's English poetry underwent a profound transformation. It began to evolve distinctive local characteristics and themes, reflecting the island nation's unparalleled geography and the multifaceted experiences of its inhabitants. This transformation marked a departure from mere emulation of European poetic traditions to the creation of a poetic identity uniquely intertwined with New Zealand's own story. This evolution in New Zealand's English poetry can be attributed to the fusion of diverse influences. The indigenous Maori culture, interwoven with the colonial experience, played a pivotal role in shaping the themes and voices found in the nation's poetry. Additionally, the day-to-day lives, struggles, and triumphs of New Zealanders from various backgrounds added layers of complexity and authenticity to the poetic landscape. In essence, New Zealand's English poetry stands as a testament to the dynamic interplay between heritage and innovation. It exemplifies how a poetic tradition rooted in the Old World can organically adapt and flourish in a New World setting, ultimately encapsulating the spirit and essence of a unique and vibrant nation [7-10].

2.1 New Zealand Poetry before the Nineteenth Century: the Arrival of the Maori

The Maori are the indigenous people of New Zealand. They came to New Zealand in canoes from Eastern Polynesia around 1300 AD. They established a society that included many ethnic groups and developed a unique culture such as: wood carving, weaving arts, dances (such as haka) and oral poetry. "Of course, their method of oral transmission is not mechanical recitation and repetition, but is expressed with poetic language, movements, shouts, and tunes. Its content covers a wide range, such as the origin of the world, migration across seas, anecdotes from hometown, achievements of ancestors, and so on. Cooperation and conflict between contemporary Maori and whites, etc." [11-13] (Zhao Youbin, 2002)

Before the arrival of European civilization, the Maori had no written language and could only convey information through spoken language. Maori oral literature can be roughly divided into two categories: tales and song-poems. It is also broken down into myths, legends, folklore, and proverbs, which are rich in variety. E.H. McCormick, a literary historian, traced the source of New Zealand literature and said: "Before entering the European orbit, New Zealand has long been a 'hometown of writers'. When Chaucer was a child, there were poems and songs on the island. people. By the time of Shakespeare, myths and folk tales about distant homelands had been circulated among this imaginative people. During hundreds of years of isolated existence, the Maori created the characteristics of Polynesian literature. It has a distinct system of its own." (E.H. McCormick, 1959:1) They are all spread through the mouths of listeners, passed down orally from generation to generation, updating and processing the stories passed down from generation to generation.

Maori poetry in New Zealand has a rich and beautiful history, deeply rooted in Maori spiritual traditions. Traditional Maori poetry, or 'whakapapa', is often used to celebrate ancestors, record history, impart knowledge and even law. Maori's work is very concerned with traditional etiquette, and the structure of his work is often deeply symbolic and metaphorical. The rhythm of the language and the rhythm of the sounds are very important in Maori poetry. Maori used repetition and juxtaposition to enhance poetry. In addition, many Maori poems convey a certain mood or feeling by imitating natural sounds (such as birdsong, waves, etc.). With the influence of Western culture and the widespread use of

English, Maori poetry has also undergone some changes. Some modern Māori poets, such as Hone Tuware, Karlo Mil and Selina Tusitala Marsh, began to write poetry in English or a mixture of English and Māori, and their work contained elements of the modern tradition while also reflecting themes and issues. The development of Maori poetry is now moving in a more recognizable and inclusive direction, incorporating new influences while also preserving and promoting traditional Maori culture and values.

2.2 New Zealand English Poetry in the Twentieth Century: The Rise of National Literature

In 1642, Dutch explorer Abel Tasman was the first European to discover New Zealand. However, it was not until 1769 that the British navigator James Cook arrived in New Zealand, learned about the coastline of New Zealand in detail, and prepared for future construction.

Beginning in the early 19th century, the New Zealand Company initiated and organized large-scale immigration of British to New Zealand. Therefore, New Zealand poetry in the 19th century mainly came from British and Irish immigrants, often reflecting their nostalgia for their hometown and their adaptation to the new environment. These poets often described New Zealand's natural environment through poetry, and conveyed observations and experiences of new life to people. Some of the early important poets included Thomas Bracken, whose poetry explored New Zealand identity and character. Poets of this period often used New Zealand's natural beauty as the subject of their poetry. They depict New Zealand's mountains, seas, forests and wildlife in an attempt to capture and convey the natural beauty and uniqueness of New Zealand. However, these works also evoke the strangeness of their novel surroundings and nostalgia for home.

During this period, many poems by Charles Christopher Bowen and Frederick Napier Broome were published, but most of their poems were based on the British Romantic tradition. Inherited, not a product of New Zealand life. The Irish immigrant Thomas Bracken was an important poet of this period. His poetry creation is aimed at the lower class people, and he is good at expressing ordinary and simple feelings with poetic language. His works reflect various aspects of New Zealand society in the 19th century, including immigrant life, land reclamation, and Maori life. His work sought to shape and convey a new New Zealand, a pioneering move at the time. The lyrics to New Zealand's national anthem "God Defend New Zealand" were written by him. The most individual and characteristic poets of this period are undoubtedly Jessie Mackay and William Reeves.

Born to Scottish immigrants, Jessie Mackay drew her sustenance from Scottish folk poetry, and her idealism often exposed the shadows of society. Her poems often reflect social issues such as the gap between rich and poor and inequality of social status. For example, her poem *A Vision* expresses the poet's "extreme dissatisfaction with the polarization of power and property." (Yu Jianhua 1994:68)

The English poetry of this period is noteworthy because the works of this period reflect the voices of a new generation. "The first generation born in New Zealand has reached adulthood; and in terms of total population, the number of locally born white descendants exceeded the immigrant population of their parents' generation for the first time in the 1990s" (Yu Jianhua, 1994: 71). The new generation of writers advocates abandoning old conventions and is good at absorbing and accepting new ideas. Their works are full of idealism and express their own new experiences. However, New Zealand poetry during this period also accumulated a large amount of British and Irish poetic traditions in form and theme, and had not yet fully formed its own unique style. The real independence and innovation of New Zealand poetry began mainly in the 20th century.

The 20th century was a period of dynamism and diversity in New Zealand English poetry, as poets began to seek a more local form of expression that reflected New Zealand's unique culture and environment. In the mid-20th century, New Zealand's English poetry began to find its own unique voice from traditional British poetry styles. Ronald Allison Kells Mason is one of the most iconic and powerful poets of this period, known for his profound insights into human and social issues. Allen Curnow was another important poet who attempted to explore and capture New Zealand's geographical and cultural identity. His works such as *Island and Time* (1941) and *At Dead Low Water* (1949) celebrate New Zealand's unique environment. They tried to strip away the influence of British poetry and create more New Zealand-specific poetry. Their work not only showcases New Zealand's grief, but also the lives and thoughts of New Zealanders.

2.3 New Zealand English Poetry in the Twenty-first Century: Freedom and Tolerance

In the 21st century, New Zealand English poetry continues to develop and flourish. Poetry produced

during this period was more diverse, covering a wide range of themes and styles, from personal experience to sociopolitical stances, and from traditional forms to experimental writing. New Zealand poets in this period actively tried new ways of creation and explored new poetic language and expression techniques. Multiculturalism is an important feature of New Zealand poetry in the 21st century. With the increase in immigration and the impact of globalization, New Zealand's poetry creation has been influenced by a variety of cultures, including Maori culture, Asian culture, Pacific Island culture, etc. This cultural diversity makes New Zealand's works richer and deeper. "They emphasize the spontaneity of poetry, the energy and vitality contained in poetry itself, and rarely consider the traditional definition of poetry". (Cao Jun, 2002) Young poets in New Zealand are particularly influenced by contemporary American poetry.

"In the past twenty years, New Zealand poetry has shifted from its emphasis on local content to the pursuit of technical style, and the content itself has also changed from rural to urban in the past." (Ren Rongzhen, 1996) In addition, New Zealand poets in the 21st century also pay more attention to social and political issues. Their works often reflect and criticize social injustice, environmental destruction, gender inequality, racial discrimination and other issues. Through poetry creation, they try to arouse public attention to these issues and promote social change and progress. In addition, poets also make extensive use of the Internet and digital media in their creations, which is another characteristic of New Zealand poetry in the 21st century. The Internet and digital media have not only changed the way poetry and songs are created and disseminated, but have also affected the content and form of poetry. Among New Zealand poets in the 21st century, there are many important poets, such as Jenny Bornholdt, Bill Manhire, Anne Kennedy, etc., whose works show. The vitality and creative new spirit of New Zealand poetry.

3. The development status and spread of New Zealand English poetry

The development of contemporary New Zealand English poetry is very active, and the fields of creation are diversified. In the creation of poetry, people make extensive use of the Internet and digital media, and constantly explore new poetic language and expression techniques. Themes are based on personal experience, social and political Southeast Asia, multiculturalism, etc. New Zealand poets such as Jenny Bornholdt, Bill Manhire, Anne Kennedy all had important influences during this period.

Although New Zealand English poetry has less spread in China, there are some translators and scholars who are committed to translating and studying New Zealand poetry. However, compared with British and American poetry, the influence of New Zealand poetry in China is still relatively small. The works of some important New Zealand poets, such as Janet Frame, James K. Baxter, Allen Curnow and others, have been translated into Chinese, but most The works of New Zealand poets have been introduced to China. "In the 1980s, the translation and introduction of New Zealand literature by the Oceania Literature Series was a very important link in the history of Chinese literary dissemination" (Liu Luechang, 2015). The Oceania Series Translation and Introduction began to translate some Mansfield literature in the 1980s. Literary works began to bring New Zealand literature and poetry into China. "It is an indispensable chain in the history of the dissemination and acceptance of New Zealand literature in my country." (Liu Luechang, 2015)

The dissemination and promotion of New Zealand literature in China faces some challenges, including language and cultural differences, lack of translation resources, and insufficient understanding of New Zealand literature. However, with the strengthening of globalization and cross-cultural communication, it is expected to see the spread and influence of many New Zealand English poetry in China. Chinese readers and consumers are gradually growing in interest in New Zealand poetry, which is a positive concept for the spread, influence and development of New Zealand poetry in China.

4. Conclusion

The journey of English poetry's development in New Zealand is nothing short of dazzling, adorned with a constellation of remarkable poets who have left indelible marks on its history. Over the years, the nation has borne witness to the emergence of numerous English poets whose contributions have enriched the literary tapestry. However, when we turn our gaze toward China, we find that the exploration of New Zealand literature and poetry remains relatively narrow, lacking the systematic and profound research it rightfully deserves. Yet, within this landscape of uncharted potential, the future of

English poetry in New Zealand shines brightly, replete with promise and opportunity. It beckons scholars and enthusiasts alike to venture beyond the confines of the familiar and embark on a broader exploration. While the study of Maori poetry in New Zealand is unquestionably significant, it should not serve as the sole focus of inquiry. Instead, a holistic approach beckons, one that acknowledges the multifaceted dimensions of modern English poetry in New Zealand. Scholars should consider not only the artistic expressions but also the socio-political, multicultural, and contemporary aspects of this vibrant poetic tradition. By aligning their research with the prevailing development trends in New Zealand's society and culture, scholars can illuminate the unique voices and narratives that contribute to the rich mosaic of the nation's poetry. In essence, the development prospects for English poetry in New Zealand are brimming with potential, awaiting the probing minds of scholars willing to delve deeper into the intricacies of this literary realm. By embracing a broader perspective that encompasses all facets of this poetic tradition, scholars can help shed light on the myriad stories and experiences that define New Zealand's poetic heritage.

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