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ЛИТЕРАТУРНАЯ ТЕОРИЯ С. Т. КОЛРИДЖА И Т. С. ЭЛИОТА:  
КОМПАРАТИВНЫЙ АСПЕКТ

S. T. COLERIDGE'S AND T. S. ELIOT'S LITERARY THEORY:  
COMPARATIVE ASPECT

В статье предпринята попытка сопоставительного анализа теоретических идей С. Т. Колриджа и Т. С. Элиота относительно роли Воображения и природы символа в контексте противоречивого и продуктивного взаимодействия поэтики модернизма и романтизма. Теория объективного коррелята Т. С. Элиота одновременно противоречит романтическому способу лирического переживания и согласуется с принципом негативной способности или имперсонализма поэта-романтика Д. Китса. Актуальность исследования связана с нарастающим интересом современного литературоведения к философским и эстетическим основам феномена творческого процесса, к языку концептуальных образов в поэтическом тексте, компаративному подходу в изучении романтического и модернистского стиля.

**К л ю ч е в ы е с л о в а:** *С. Т. Колридж; Т. С. Элиот; символ/знак; воображение; эготизм; имперсонализм; объективный коррелят; деперсонализация.*

The article represents an attempt of comparative analysis of T. S. Eliot's and S. T. Coleridge's theoretical ideas about Imagination and symbol in the context of complicated and productive interaction between the Romantic and Modernist poetics. T. S. Eliot's "objective correlative" theory is simultaneously in contradiction with the romantic lyrical passion and is connected with the "negative capability" (J. Keats) or impersonalism. The relevance of the research is associated with the deep interest of contemporary literary theory in studying the philosophical basis and aesthetic principles of the creation process, the language of conceptual imagery in poetic texts, as well as the comparative study and analysis of poetic styles of Romanticism and Modernism.

**Key words:** *S. T. Coleridge; T. S. Eliot; Symbol/Sign; Imagination; Egotism – Impersonalism; Objective Correlative; De-Personalization.*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's literary theory is mainly embodied in the category of Imagination. In *Biographia Literaria* (1817), *Imagination* is defined as "esemplastic creative power", which blends and harmonizes natural and artificial components, makes art subordinate to nature, form subordinate to the content, and our admiration for the poet subordinate to our admiration for the poetry [1, p. 166].

Coleridge believes that an "extraordinary emotional state and an extraordinary order will form a beautiful and intelligent whole" under the combined effect of Imagination [1, p.167]. It is no exaggeration to say, that Imagination is the ability of artistic creation: it melts, decomposes, and disperses for the purpose of re-creation, it is essentially full of vitality, even if all objects are essentially fixed and dead [1, p. 159]. S. T. Coleridge's literary theory is centered on Imagination and the concept of symbol as a dynamic agent between literal and metaphorical

meaning of image (its external, visible form and the internal invisible essence). According to Coleridge's outlook, authors, characters, poetry styles and paragraphs, vocabulary, rhythm and logic, flowers, leaves, branches and trees – all combine into one Whole. He described literature through the categories of his theory of "organic unity" (or "divine Tetrade" ("Table Talk")), where the thesis ("I") and the antithesis ("World") can coexist mechanically (mesothesis) or are united organically (synthesis) [2, p. 155]. An ultimate manifestation of Imagination is the outburst of inspiration. The primary Imagination helps create the image of nature, the secondary Imagination recreates an image according to the ideal ("to idealize and unify"): "I divided imagination into the first and the second: the first imagination is the vitality and motive force of all human consciousness, and it is the repetition of the eternal creative activity in the infinite 'I exist' in the limited mind. The second imagination is the echo of the first imagination. It coexists with the conscious will" [1, p. 76].

The role of Imagination is shown in the following two aspects: on the one hand, the ability to imagine is an important tool for humans to perceive nature. Without it, things in the external world can only be a mess of things, and imagination can help us give shape and outline to external things. He believes that just storing and classifying sensory impressions will not lead to wisdom. On the contrary, only the wisdom of perception, first of all, makes this perception meaningful, and this is Imagination. On the other hand, imagination has the power of unity.

The best illustration of S. T. Coleridge's symbolic imagery is his poem *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*. For example, the narration of the old sailor in this poem is full of images-symbols: *the bronze sky, the scarlet lips of the death lady, the pale skin of leprosy patients, the green sea, the body covered with cold sweat, the colorful snake body*. All of them leave a deep sensory impression, as if everything is vividly remembered [3, p. 33].

Coleridge showed with his rich imagination an old sailor and his crew, drifting on the vast sea without purpose, but controlled by some mysterious force [4, p. 46]. The mechanic existence in the world without living the life of the soul makes him an abstract person: people do not know where they set sail, where they are going, and they are unconsciously searching for some kind of wisdom that can transcend reality:

First Voice: 'But tell me, tell me! speak again,  
Thy soft response renewing –  
What makes that ship drive on so fast?  
What is the ocean doing?'

Second Voice: Still as a slave before his lord,  
The ocean hath no blast;  
His great bright eye most silently  
Up to the Moon is cast –

If he may know which way to go;  
For she guides him smooth or grim.  
See, brother, see! how graciously  
She looketh down on him. PART VI (Line 1–12) [5, p. 48]

It is the existence of the absolute solitude of the old sailor that forces him constantly to find appropriate listeners to talk about his intuitively acquired experience, and each of his restatements is actually repeated again and again in his limited mind. The content of his narration will be reproduced in the listeners' minds, too. Although the personal experience of a fixed listener (reader) is limited, when this story is constantly repeated in the minds of different listeners (readers) at that time, the number of the listeners (readers) becomes infinite, and, consequently, the story of the old sailor becomes infinite as well.

T. S. Eliot's innovative literary ideas are mainly embodied in the theory of De-Personalization and the theory of the Objective Correlative. In the article *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1919), he emphasized the importance of history in writing and understanding poetry. Redefining the notion of *tradition*, he believed, that poetry should be impersonal in nature, separate and different from human personality [6, p. 1]. Once this consciousness is reached, it will erase any traces of individuality from the poem, because the poet has become a pure medium of expression, which is the main aspect of the De-Personalization theory [6, p. 2]. In *Hamlet*, T. S. Eliot argued, the only way to express emotions in the form of art is to find an objective connection; in other words, a set of objects, situations, series of events, and these events should be constitute that particular formula of emotion [7, p. 6]. Therefore, when external facts that must end in sensory experience are given, emotions are immediately aroused [7, p. 7]. So, the concept of T. S. Eliot's symbol/sign is based on these two literary theories.

T. S. Eliot distinguished the poet's daily feelings from the artistic feelings expressed in his works, and suggested that poetry is not the indulgence of feelings, but the separation of feelings; poetry is not the expression of personality, but the separation of personality. This view clearly opposes the romantic trend of poetry that expresses the poet's emotions and publicizes his personality, which makes the focus of literary criticism shift from the poet to the work itself.

However, the objective correlative theory is not original. Looking back at the British literary theory in the 19th century, it is not difficult to find its origin in S. T. Coleridge. In fact, in some of Coleridge's critical works one can observe the early germination of the "objective ability" theory. In his theories about poets, geniuses and Shakespeare, the first germination of T. S. Eliot's objective correlative theory may be conceived. In Coleridge's view, poets are almost equivalent to geniuses, and they always possess the philosophical qualities of objectivity, impersonality, aiming to capture the entire universe. Shakespeare is Coleridge's model of genius. The first sign of objectivity in a poetic talent is that Shakespeare, for example, can perfectly handle writing topics that are far from his personal interests, environment, and experience, and then he can vividly and meticulously describe the content and emotions that are far from the poet's personal experience. Therefore, Coleridge praised Shakespeare for being able to avoid his own feelings as a poet completely – he was both a "painter" and an analyst of these feelings. Secondly, Coleridge used psychological empathy to describe the process by which a poet's ability of objectivity can be applied. Shakespeare, as an example, plunged

himself into various human characters and passions, and was a god of water and fire, like Proteus, with endless changes. Thus, the basic feature of the ability of objectivity is that the poet avoids personal emotions in his creation in order to achieve the effect of a vivid portrayal of things. Shakespeare's ability of objectivity enables him to turn himself into everything in his creation, and at the same time, he can objectify himself. In addition, Coleridge highly praised Shakespeare's ability to completely avoid personal feelings.

It can be said, that T. S. Eliot "was born" in S. T. Coleridge's discourse of poets' ability of objectivity. Coleridge emphasized, that poets should eliminate themselves to be able to penetrate into all things, and that artistic creation must transcend personal emotions, but S. T. Coleridge attributed this talent to the poet's own gifts and abilities. T. S. Eliot, however, focused on the natural generation of works of art. In other words, T. S. Eliot is concerned about the work of art itself, standing in the autonomous position: the poet's own emotions should be distinguished from the emotions expressed in art. He proposed the theory of the objective correlative, thus predicting the importance of the text itself with the advance of the age of criticism focused on the form and technique.

We can see the inner influence of Coleridge's theory of poetry on Eliot's poetic creation through the analysis of the latter's specific poetic symbols. T. S. Eliot's outstanding critical works are *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*, *To Criticize the Critics*. His prominent poems *The Waste Land*, *Four Quartets* and other texts became the emblem of new modernist poetry.

In the poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", the poet begins with the evening no longer having a sense of beauty. The streets are semi-cold and boring, but the secluded resting place is bustling, noisy and disturbed; the restaurants are also full of oyster shells:

When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherized upon a table;  
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,  
The muttering retreats  
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels. (Line 2–6) [8, p. 115]

These descriptions are intentional in terms of making readers acquire unpleasant and uncomfortable associations and experience the ugly status quo of modern Western society. In this poem, the author also portrays the ugliness of the characters:

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,  
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep. (Line 15–22) [8, p. 120]

The description of these two days makes readers think that the women should be noble and elegant, because the topics they discuss are elegant. However, in the following lines of the poem, readers will realize that these women are artful, because they only pay attention to the appearance of men.

Eliot describes Prufrock's hesitation and repetition from beginning to end, expressing the confusion, loneliness, inferiority, frustration, and despair of the modern western social elite. The same things also happen in the *Waste Land*.

Many of the symbols in the *Waste Land* are all filled with darkness, negative, and pessimistic feelings on the surface. In Eliot's view, poetry should be both rational and emotional, that is, it should contain the unity of thought and feeling. Therefore, the poet should think, feel and experience the world at the same time. This is Eliot's creative application of Coleridge's poetic theory. The duality of stillness and movement, death and life further reflect Eliot's view of the coexistence of positive and negative contradictions in society [9, p. 12].

Coleridge's discourse of imagination seems to have become the scripture for modern critics. They borrowed various ideas from Coleridge's theories and defined poetry as an organic whole composed of various opposing factors coordinated with each other, thus providing powerful theoretical support for modernist poetry [10, p. 22]. Coleridge's Imagination harmonizes not only the factors that belong to the poet's mind or the factors that belong to the structure of the work, but it unifies the poet's mind, the structure of the work and the reader's feelings. Eliot uses the mythological metaphor to show that human beings can only be saved and reborn by the fire of purgatory, which is arranged by God's love. Eliot's poetry is a successful combination of the late symbolism and the perception of the symbol in its complexity, ambiguity and contradiction [11, p. 363].

The Impersonalization theory is inseparable from the theory of the objective correlative. Eliot believes that poetry is not about indulging one's emotions, but escaping those emotions, not expressing individuality, but avoiding individuality. In order to escape the poet's own personality, the poet must use a set of things, a series of events in a suggestive or symbolic way to express his emotions. According to this theory, Eliot used a lot of allusions in his poems and created a lot of intentions to express the decadence, loneliness, despair, grim mental state and spiritual outlook of modern westerners, and to express the ugly status quo and beliefs of modern western society.

Eliot's objective correlative theory can be traced back to the British 19th century poet Coleridge's theory of objectivity and the poet's viewpoint on objective description. Coleridge's presentation of Shakespeare as the ideal of an objective poet with a creative ability of an omnipresent artist, free from personality in his objective description of the whole world, influenced Eliot's objective correlative theory. The belief that Imagination can make art subordinate to nature is a distinctive feature of Coleridge's influence on Eliot's poetry. The symbols in Eliot poems *The Waste Land* fully demonstrate this. Eliot tries to find the stationary point in the spinning of time, because, he believes, the past, present, and future are combined at that point, people are reborn in the coexistence of life

and death, and are created in a world without time. In this way, Eliot expressed the idea that humanity needs to find meaning, salvation from the present and the eternity of time.

The modernist principal reform of Romanticism was reflected in the radical refusal of the direct lyrical voice of the poet in the text (De-Personalization as the high demonstration of objective truth in art). The movement from Romantic egotism as the principle mode of lyrical passion, emanating from the personal feeling and thought of the poet's "I" ("The Preface" of S. T. Coleridge's *Poems* (1795)) to J. Keats's impersonalism (his demand of "negative capability" – the poet's refusal of the personal voice of "I" (*Letters*, 1817)) anticipated the ideas of T. S. Eliot.

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