

Study on Myths in Some Selected Plays of English and English Translation as a Cultural Discourse

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Abstract – Myths are generally seen as narratives or stories (mythos) that have taken place in a primordial age. They are stories involving superhuman desires and strivings, human accomplishments and limitations. A fantasy must have both narrative power (i.e. it should be a decent story) and functional relevance (i.e. it must say or safeguard something important). Since myths establish models for behavior, their major function is didactic. Myths often function to maintain social structures and institutions; they legitimize societal sets of accepted rules by claiming that they were established by sacred beings and through their function as the cultural storehouse. Creative journalists in all ages have been influenced by myths and thus they adapted myths extensively. Despite the fact that myths are culture specific, they gain allegorical and metaphorical value and new significance during the time spent adaptation and appropriation. Henceforth even modern playwrights have not been impenetrable to this influence. Familiarity of ancient myths to contemporary readers and probability of infusing new meanings into them make myths a viable device in the hands of the modern playwrights. Literary works draw upon a common store of archetypes or intermittent images, sacred objects, or cycles of culture. In the present research study has examined myths from the point of perspective of discourse in the selected plays, some of which are composed in English and others have been translated into English.

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INTRODUCTION

“Art never improves, but ... the material of art is never quite the same”

T.S. Eliot

Culture is one of the most difficult terms to define, yet culture is indispensable. For Edward Taylor culture includes mental capabilities (thoughts) and behavior (actions). Also, culture is learned, shared and exists within a gathering or groups. Raymond Williams takes a gander at it as a description of a particular way of life expressing certain meanings and values in art, learning, institutions and ordinary behavior. It connotes the entire way of life. Culture includes the organization of production, the structure of the family, and the structure of institutions which express or oversee social relationships, the characteristic structures through which individuals from the society communicate. The Post Marxist and Postmodern thinkers redefined the orientation about culture. Postmodern critics like Foucault depict culture as 'a hierarchical organization of values, accessible to everyone, except at the same time the occasion of a mechanism of selection and exclusion'. This is another perspective of perceiving culture not as homogeneous, brought together and one-dimensional but rather a site of currents and cross-

currents, construction and de-construction, visions and revisions, standards and their alternatives, the central and peripheral, the voiced and voiceless, the reasonable and restricted, the powerful and the quieted, the ideal and the ideological, the apparent and the covered up. Literature is one of the ways to manifest the dialectical and transformational nature of culture.

Cultural studies owing to its allegiance to the Postmodern and Poststructuralist see, brings in question the notions like power, learning, representation and character in connection with culture. The notion of discourse, which binds all these concepts into a neat package, share the postmodern conviction that no (literary) text means what it appears to say; or what its essayist intended to say. Many circumstances communication acts, surprisingly though, have intention or impact to conceal, bewilder, rationalize, naturalize, universalize or legitimize the world they depict. The surface meanings of a text are therefore nothing than a camouflage or a substitution for underlying meanings which cannot be unmistakably said. Contemporary critics take a gander at 'text' as a kind of discourse, a site for dialectics.

Myth has been an integral and crucial part of culture since antiquity. The integrity has been crucial to the degree that the advancement of a culture in particular period could be adequately traced through the interpretations of myths (Berkoff, 2000). Therefore by invoking the desultory aspects of myths, the study has attempted to demonstrate the ideological and digressive nature of culture. Culture has been regarded as a concept having ideal components yet many postmodern analyses have revealed it to be an ideological and digressive construct. Literature is one of the methods of expressing culture whereby culture gets established through the adaptation of fantasy. That is the reason to choose plays for illustration and analysis. Drama, as compared to verse and fiction, is all the more socially orientated type of literature as it is required to be performed for masses than for individual appreciations. In addition, drama is more rambling, liquid and politically and culturally informed so it connotes rather than states and therefore problematizes the common sense understanding. It utilizes the culturally popular components like myths which shape the center part of social mind or aggregate unconscious. The study centers on the utilization of adapted myths in the plays from modern and postmodern circumstances and thereby the discussion of fantasy, legend feedback, discourse and cultural studies.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

On the off chance that fantasy is an intricate story that alludes to the cultural patterns, then it merits knowing culture and all the more importantly in the modern context Culture, as Raymond Williams states, is one of the most difficult terms to define, yet culture is indispensable. Matthew Arnold made a genuine attempt to define culture in his *Culture and Anarchy* (1867), where culture is alluded to special intellectual or artistic endeavors or items, what today we may call "high culture" rather than 'popular culture' or 'folkways'. By this definition, any small social gathering has culture. The rest are potential wellsprings of anarchy. This feeling of culture is more firmly related to esthetics than to social science.

For Edward Taylor culture alludes to a quality controlled by all individuals in all social groups, who nevertheless could be arrayed on an advancement continuum from "savagery" through "barbarism" to "civilization". In *Primitive Culture* (1871), he defines culture "that mind boggling entire which includes learning, conviction, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as an individual from society". (1) In contrast to Arnold's view, all people "have" culture, which they acquire by uprightness of participation in some social gathering – society. It consists of things, from learning to habits to capabilities. Subsequently culture isn't special thing limited to a particular favored class yet it is more 'democratic' idea. For Tylor, culture includes mental capabilities (thoughts) and behavior (actions).

Also, culture is learned, shared and exists within a gathering or groups. The greatest legacy of Tylor's definition lay in his "unpredictable entire" formulation.

ANDHA YUG-DHARAMVIR BHARATI

Andha Yug was composed originally in Hindi by Dharamvir Bharati, a legendary author in 1953 in Hindi. The English rendering of it is done by Alok Bhalla in 2005. The play begins on the evening of the eighteenth day of the war and finishes with the final pilgrimage and death of Lord Krishna (Bharati, 2005).

'THE WHEEL SPINS WITHOUT A CENTRE': DISCOURSE OF DARKNESS AND BLINDNESS

Discourse, as in social sciences, is comprehended as strategies to propagate distinctive ideological positions. Ideological positions choose the perceptions and actions of individuals, who are the vehicles as well as the victim of the same philosophy. In myths, the characters speak to the cultural and ideological positions. Once these positions are institutionalized they transform into digressive practices. Myths, subsequently not just give a range of occasions and characters, they are the store of cultural and ideological positions. The Mahabharata, the longest epic of the world is loaded with variety of characters and their ways of perceiving things. The great war of Mahabharata and the profound darkness that accompanies it are the central issue in *Andha Yug*. The play gives a select cut of this epic drama which is brimming with hatred, conceit, treacheries, sacrifices, massacres, fraud, falsity, skepticism, diseases and unending darkness and blindness. The play captures the temperament in Hastinapur after the seventeenday long battle. The Pandavas are nearly victory and the Kaurava clan is about to extinguish. This war is eluded as 'the dharmayudha' (a war upholding the principles of thought and action) (Brecht, 1984). Paradoxically the experience of the Great War recounts an alternate story. It isn't only an account of the on-field savagery however it is a saga of abyssal darkness inside the human mind. It is this inner darkness that makes one blind disregarding the physical sight. Everyone in this cyclorama is carrying this darkness inside himself or herself. The play shows the 'inner' darkness with all its shades and its gradual scission towards total decadence. Discourse in such cases operates through nuances of the mind. Everyone appears to carry the load of conceit and 'will to dominate'. Henceforth every character tries to create a way for him to establish his essence. War is an occasion for everyone to settle their accounts. Therefore it is on this occasion the darkness inside everyone's heart is anticipated clearly. *Andha Yug* as a mythical play exhibits a chance to analyze each ancient

character from the keen of the postmodernist discourse focal points in this manner.

ADAPTION OF MULTIPLE MYTHS IN THE MODERN AMERICAN CONTEXT

Want Under the Elms, published in 1924 is a tragedy of the Cabot family set against the New England background during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The play exhibits the tragic yet enlightening story of the exceptionally complex relation between the trio-Ephraim, Eben and Abbie. Their relation is intertwined and dominated by the emotions like love and hate, vengeance and repentance. At the end Eben and Abbie realize their intimate romance for each other, sadly though at the cost of their new conceived youngster. The play does not allude to any legend or mythical characters expressly as in Antigone or The Trojan Women, yet there are strong undercurrents within the plot and the characters that take us near not only one but rather multiple ancient stories. The central issues in the play are related to the Eben and Ephraim relationship and the Eben-Abbie relationship. The Eben and Ephraim relationship is brimming with tensions as Ephraim is an imposing patriarch. Eben declines to take after his dominance especially on the backdrop of Ephraim's inhuman treatment of Eben's mother. His abhorrence of Ephraim is established on the firm conviction about the inhuman injustice demanded against his mother by Ephraim. He hates his father and adores his mother passionately, though she is not any more alive. At another level, Eben and Abbie share to a great degree intricate relation; starting with the express hatred as the stepmother-son later on involving with each other as the conferred darlings. Abbie turns out to be such a great amount of intimate with Eben that she executes their youngster to demonstrate her genuine feelings for him. In this manner the whole plot structure rests upon the two issues-the monstrous hatred for the father, as an image of patriarchal tyranny and the incest combined with the abnormal murder of the infant. Though indirectly, the topic and the focal occasions without a doubt coordinate towards the components in three myths-Phaedra-Hippolytus-Theseus, Oedipus and Medea (Abrams, 1999). The complex interweaving of the human relations in the cultural context of the past makes Desire Under the Elms its very own tragedy kind and magnanimity, focusing on the key cultural fundamentals like sin, redemption and retribution. Through its indirect affinity towards the ancient stories, the occasions and characters achieve what Longinus calls 'the grandness of thought and action'. It is therefore named as "the principal great American tragedy" by many critics. Edward L. Shaughnessy remarks that, "O'Neill gives us a portrait of partners in sin who works out their redemption and who, within a modern context, brings out echoes of classical tragedy... "(Down the Night and Down the 84 Days97). Desire Under the Elms therefore gets a great attention as 'a modern tragedy with ancient echoes'.

ANTIGONE- BERTOLT BRECHT

Antigone is a modern adaptation of the Sophoclean tragedy by the German playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898 - 1956), written in December 1942, and first performed in 1948 at Chur, Switzerland. The text selected for the study is translated in English by Judith Malina in 1984. Bertolt Brecht published his Antigonelegende. He subtitled it "a tragedy in a modern setting." Firstly this fantasy was dramatized by Sophocles in Greek. Friedrich Hölderlin, a German Romantic artist translated Antigone in 1804. Brecht adapted this version and adjusted it by placing it in the post-world war II situation (Armstrong, 2005).

The Antigone fantasy predominantly introduces two characters-Antigone and Kreon, around which the whole action spins. Antigone challenges Kreon's run on the issue of the burial of her dead brother's, Polyneikes' cadaver. She wants to cover the dead body whereas Kreon requests to keep it betrayed for vultures to eat. Kreon accuses Polyneikes as a traitor, who flees from the battle against Argos. Therefore he ought to be rebuffed even after death, as the state law says. Antigone does not approve this stand as she takes after the divine law, which tells that the dead body must be appropriately covered according to the rituals. In this way the battle amongst Antigone and Kreon is fixated on the issue of 'law' and which one to take after either the Kreon sponsored state law or the traditional divine law. Kreon speaks to the state law as he is the king. He is at the highest point of social hierarchy and therefore he can choose rather dictates things for others. Being a king, he appreciates the institutional help and he is hardly questioned for his decisions. He displays the 'powerful' class, who is hardly challenged. The rare challenge originates from Antigone, which bothers Kreon ("And yet you dared to break my law?") He feels that his authority will be destabilized with such instances. Though powerful Kreon is hesitant, who monitors even smallest things, it may challenge his run the show. Antigone, on the contrary, shows more assured behavior. She begins with the issue of the burial however goes ahead to question the imperialistic intentions of Kreon. She actually uncovered the 'legislative issues' behind war, through which Kreon consolidates his energy and position. She speaks to the 'consciousnesses' against the dictator, who conceals reality by employing distinctive strategies. Therefore one might say that they show a greater amount of propensities, than being simply human characters. This is valid about other characters as well. Ismene presents the existential concerns which a common man is concerned with during the critical times. For her, the survival is the prime most concern than moral issues. She calls Antigone's dissent as 'useless actions' (Barthes, 1972).

She speaks to the dilemma in the mind of a common man—a dilemma between the emotions and the actions. She too feels bad for her brother yet she isn't sufficiently courageous to undertake 'Antigone pattern'. Finally she makes a decision to help Antigone. Hamon too displays the emotional conflict of choosing love over power and hierarchy. He is the courageous one to help Antigone in all kinds of inconvenience. He even submits suicide after Antigone's implosion. Hamon stands for that rare inclination of adoration and care in the governmental issues of war which ultimately stands defeated and insulted. Tiresias is the blind prophet who makes Kreon aware about the alarming threats to his realm. He, sadly though, is accused of his self-interests. Tiresias speaks to the 'consciousness' about the reality which is horribly disregarded by the ruler. He sympathizes with Antigone however is unable to save her. The old individuals of Thebes largely bolster Kreon, obviously, for their own advantages. They demonstrate the general propensity of being near the power. They work like the spokesperson of Kreon, making his decisions look natural and legitimate. Their function as the 'agency' to secure Kreon's interest recommends the overall operations of the ideological structures within any society. All the characters, thusly, are representative in the story. Their inner attributes are more important than their physical characteristics. One can see that the Antigone legend contains a larger number of metaphors than characters. The story itself speaks to 'the metaphor forever' in search of meaning and personality (Bolaffi, et. al., 2003).

This is the key component in the context of adaptation of the Antigone fantasy. Hans Blumenberg, the German anthropologist, has proposed how the mythical foundations of plays like Antigone "give us a 'symbolic framework' within which current issues may be examined along philosophical, literary, historical, economic and social line"(10). What Blumenberg alludes to as the symbolic framework within the story is conceivable because each character gains a metaphorical value in the play. The Antigone fantasy, therefore, turns into a symbolic story, having the capacity to correlate with various time and place contexts. The characters enriched with eternal attributes and personal conflicts turn into the universal ones. The Antigone fantasy belongs to the Greek culture and it is repeatedly utilized since then. It holds many ideological positions and formations. It introduces a hierarchy, where Kreon is placed at the best and thus he is all powerful (Coupe, 2007).

Challenging Kreon is equated with challenging the exceptionally sovereign energy of the state. 'The king is always right' is the kind of philosophy that the story ventures (Danto, 1975). Therefore his intentions are never questioned. In the event that someone like Antigone or Hamon does that, he or she is liable for discipline automatically. The weight of proving the king wrong is on such agitators. The state law is

always to be taken after with the conviction that everyone is equal under the watchful eye of law. The king is simply and unbiased, so he has the ultimate appropriate to rebuff anyone. Challenge to the king is equal to challenging the whole arrangement of state. Such ideological formations are always consolidated by the ancient stories like Antigone legend. War is always seen as the need to secure the honor of the state and therefore everyone ought to participate in it. War is an occasion to demonstrate one's patriotism. War involves the king's pride, which must be protected at any cost. The present story also demonstrates the traditional patriotic attitude towards the war. The war against Argos involves pride for Thebes. Kreon, while reporting the war to the senior citizens, invokes this feeling (Ferguson, 1997).

CONCLUSION

Ages and ages have passed however the human anxiety to tell and retell a tale is never totally exhausted. Probably this is the reason why the generations of human beings have been revisiting the ancient stories. Cultural transmissions demonstrate a constant exchange amongst ageless and temporal, where by 'past influences the present and present alters the past. 'The procedure of (literary) adaptation is in this way particularly soaked up in the cultural give-and-take. It is something that happens all over the place and at inevitably. Adaption is a transposition practice, casting a specific type into another bland mode, an act of 're-vision' itself. It involves diverse arrangement of terms like version, continuation, variation, transformation, interpretation, imitation, transportation, pastiche, parody, travesty, revision, revaluation, rewriting, resound and so on. However adaption is said to be not the same as this.

In general sense, adaptation is a procedure that makes one text, may be it a legend or any cultural phenomenon, is exhibited in an alternate shading with transformed components, and it has got a definite reason. Each story constitutes components like occasions, characters, locale, and time of action, conflicts, message and point of view. These components experience a sea change during the time spent adaption. The present study concentrates on the procedure of how and why myths are adapted by the literary artists, especially the modern and postmodern playwrights. Out of the six selected plays, only *Desire under the Elms* is a modern play whereas all remaining plays belong to the postmodern period. The basic question which coordinated this whole study was, "The reasons are the modern and postmodern playwrights interested in using age-old myths?" The 404 study tries to map the nearby relation between the utilization of myths and the contemporary writing as fantasy and literature are basic building squares of any culture. It is a common observation that legendary characters like Oedipus, Antigone,

Ulysses, Rama, Sita and Krishna fascinate constantly the modern minds disregarding the cultural distance in time and space. The study tries to reveal the wellspring of this mental attachment with myths. The myths, which are adapted in the postmodern context, make an attempt to speak about the present issues by using the ancient models. The selected plays therefore can be viewed as the platform where culture, myths and literature assemble with each other. Myths are at once textualised and contextualized i.e. they find a place in the literary text, and at the same time they think about the context in which they are adapted. In the analysis of the play, (con) textualisation of legend can be found as playing a pivotal part.

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