

A Comparative Study of Allusions in the Poetry of English Poet John Milton and Persian Poet Hafiz Sherazi

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Abstract

Comparative literary studies characterize similarities and dissimilarities found in poetic works of two writers of different cultures. This study focuses on the use of allusions in poetry of John Milton particularly with reference to *Paradise Lost* and poetry of Persian Poet Hafiz Sherazi. Using allusions in poetry has been a common style of poets belonging to various cultures and languages as they add to the beauty and imagery of the poem. Yet it arises some difficulties and problems for the readers of the other culture and language. Being alien to a certain culture, the readers of the other language cannot understand the context and meaning of the reference in the form of allusions. Therefore the responsibility lies on the shoulders of the comparatists or the translators to explain and interpret these allusions for comprehension of the readers.

Keywords: John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, allusions, Hafiz Sherazi, interpretation, responsibility, comprehension, reader.

1. Introduction

In the present age of globalization, more and more comparative literature is being studied by the scholars. Especially poetry is a favourite subject in the world literature. Many tools are used in writing a good poem, among them use of allusions is common. A translator who examines a text with a view to translating it, will have a number of concerns. Among them, allusions are likely to become puzzles when they cross a cultural divide. Translating allusions can be a demanding task due to the fact that they simultaneously activate two texts and have specific meanings in the culture and language in which they arise but not necessarily in others. And this is the main hurdle in understanding and knowing the context of the situation presented in a particular piece of poetry. For example Persian poetry is replete with a lot of Islamic words, war vocabulary or incidents. There may be some words of local customs and conventions of old or contemporary Iranian culture and they become difficult for an English reader. Similarly English poetry has a vast treasure of Latin and Greek cultures and mythology and sometimes there may be references from the Bible. And all these things become unfamiliar for the person who belongs to the Islamic world. However, the use of allusions by an author shows an expectation that the reader is familiar with the references made, otherwise the effect is lost.

Abrams (1999) defines allusion as:

“A passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or historical person, place or event or to another literary work or passage.”

Allusion can be attributed as one of the most powerful figures of speech since it can refer to an external text. Therefore, it can be a rich source of meaning and connotation and can be added to the meaning wealth of a text. One term which is used to describe allusion is 'culture bump', which Leppihalme (1997) defines as follows:

“Culture bump occurs when an individual finds himself or herself in different, strange, or uncomfortable situation when interacting with persons of a different culture”

2. Allusions in *Paradise Lost*

John Milton was born on December 9, 1608, in London. His family's financial prosperity afforded Milton to be taught classical languages. In 1632, Milton took his M.A. at Cambridge. He is one of the greatest poets of the seventeenth century. He wrote many poems but got fame through his masterpiece “*Paradise Lost*”. The poem concerns the Christian story of the Fall of Man: the temptation of Adam and Eve by the fallen angel Satan and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Milton has used allusions abundantly in this famous epic. His allusions range from religion, mythology, literature to history. Therefore it is not easy even for a native reader to grasp the language used by Milton until he masters all this background knowledge. The reader must be acquainted with a vast area of information about Greek, Latin, Christian and historical happenings. Milton incorporates Paganism, classical Greek references, and Christianity within the poem. While describing Satan in Book 1 of *Paradise Lost* (line 201_203) Milton says,

By ancient Tarsus held, or that Sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th' Ocean stream.

Comparing the Satan with sea monster, Milton is using a Biblical allusion as this monster has been described in Isaiah chapter no. 27 & verse no. 1 and again in Job chapter 41 & verse no. 34

While again in Book 1 lines no. 483-84, Milton says
The infection, when their borrowed gold composed
The calf in Oreb

Here again the allusion is from Biblical story when the magicians of Pharaoh while contesting with preaching Moses made a calf of gold to mislead the people.

In Book 1 line no. 307 Milton uses the allusion of Pharaoh Ramses II of Egypt just mentioning the name Busiris.

Hath vexed the Red-Sea coast, whose waves o'erthrow
Busiris and his Memphian chivalry

The story of Greek mythology has also been referred by Milton in Paradise Lost time and again. The story of Zeus's war with the giants, the Titans and Briareos in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*. Titan: in Greek mythology, one of the twelve children of Uranus (ruler of the heavens, husband of Gaia, and father of the Titans. He was dethroned by his son Cronus, father of Zeus) and Gaia (personification of the Earth), supreme rulers of the universe until they were overthrown by Zeus. Briareos was the sea-goat, a giant of incredible strength and ferocity, even superior to that of the Cyclopes and the Titans, who he helped to overthrow, Son-in-law of Poseidon. While Typhon was final son of Gaia, fathered by Tartarus, and is the most deadly monster of Greek mythology. Typhon attempts to destroy Zeus at the will of Gaia, because Zeus had imprisoned the Titans.

3. Allusions in Hafiz Sherazi's Poetry

Hafez was born in Shiraz, Iran. His parents were from Kazerun, Fars Province. Despite his profound effect on Persian life and culture and his enduring popularity and influence, few details of his life are known. Accounts of his early life rely upon traditional anecdotes. Early tazkiras (biographical sketches) mentioning Hafez are generally considered unreliable.[5] The preface of his *Divān*, in which his early life is discussed, was written by an unknown contemporary whose name may have been Moḥammad Golandām.[6] Two of the most highly regarded modern editions of Hafez's *Divān* are compiled by Moḥammad Qazvini and Qāsem Ġani (495 ghazals) and by Parviz Natil Khanlari (486 ghazals). Modern scholars generally agree that Hafez was born either in 1315 or 1317; following an account by Jami 1390 is considered the year in which he died.[6][9] Hafez was supported by patronage from several successive local regimes: Shah Abu Ishaq, who came to power while Hafez was in his teens; Timur at the end of his life; and even the strict ruler Shah Mubarez ud-Din Muhammad (Mubarez Muzaffar). Though his work flourished most under the twenty-seven year reign of Jalal ud-Din Shah Shuja (Shah Shuja),[10] it is claimed Hāfez briefly fell out of favor with Shah Shuja for mocking inferior poets (Shah Shuja wrote poetry himself and may have taken the comments personally), forcing Hāfez to flee from Shiraz to Isfahan and Yazd, although no historical evidence of this is available.[10] His mausoleum, Hāfezieh, is located in the Musalla Gardens of Shiraz.

Like Milton Hafiz's poetry is also abundant with allusions and likewise covers the areas of religion, history, indigenous mythology and literature. In one of his Ghazals Hafiz says:

Mun az aan husne rooz afzoon keh Yousaf daasht daanestam
Keh ishq az prdah ismat beroon aard zulikhaa raa
(By reason of that beauty, daily increasing that Yousaf had, I knew that Love for him would bring Zolikhā forth from the screen of Chastity)

In the above couplet the allusion of Prophet Joseph has been discussed by the poet and for reader perfect understands he has to get knowledge about the said story otherwise the charm of literary taste will go waste.

In another Ghazal, Hafiz says,

Fark ast az aab e Khizar keh zulmaat jae oost
Taa aab keh mazbaesh Allah o Akbar ast
(From the water of life (love-giving eternal life) of Khizr, whose place is the land of Darkness (man's elemental existence), it is far up to our water, whose function is (God is greatest))

In another Ghazal Hafiz alludes two famous kings of the world, one Alexander the Great and other Darius the Great. Here one has to be acquainted with classical history of wars between Persia and Greece.

Aaina e Sikandar jam e may ast benigar
Taa bar to arzah darad aahwal e malak e Dara
(The cup of wine is Sikandar's mirror. Behold, so that it may show thee the state of Dara's kingdom)

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that poetry which is called the wine of minds and is penetrated into man's blood. It gives a parallel world which is more charming and alluring than the real world in which we live. With inception of comparative literature poetry has crossed the boundaries of regions and has entered into the foreign lands. The people are not only interested in foreign poetry but are also having comparisons with different tools of analysis. This is global era and internet has made access possible to foreign languages. Therefore it is the need of the hour that knowledge about context beyond confinements should be learnt whether in original or in translation.

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