

A NEW HISTORICIST PERSPECTIVE OF JOHN DAY, WILLIAM ROWLEY AND GEORGE WILKINS' *THE TRAVAILES OF THE THREE ENGLISH BROTHERS*

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Abstract:

This paper undertakes the application of new historicist assumptions to John Day, William Rowley and George Wilkins' collaborative play *The Travailes of The Three English Brothers*. It is argued that the playwrights have deliberately misrepresented the Orient and Oriental characters in the play, while depicting the three English brothers as gentlemen and heroes under the influence of the dominant ideology of the period. In this way, they have portrayed the gradual cultural and religious superiority that culminates in the Christianization of Persia at the end of the play. Hence, the play can be perceived as a propaganda play. The playwrights have used this drama as an ideological tool to serve their specific purposes. This becomes clear when we compare the overlapping discourses related to the Sherley brothers with the conflicting discourses. Although the overlapping discourses related to the Sherley brothers seem to shower graces on the three brothers, the conflicting discourses reveal a different story and expose the sham and spurious reality which cloaks these characters. For the purpose of this investigation, the researchers have applied the new historicist assumptions characterized by the use of anecdote, historicity of text and textuality of history, construction of identity and discourse and power relations. From this vantage point, this paper interrogates the existing traditional criticism, thus proffering a new lens whereby to interpret the play.

Keywords: New historicism, Discourse, ideology, Orient, misrepresentation, anecdote, construction of identity

Introduction:

Originating in America, New historicism is usually associated with the name of Stephen Greenblatt. Unlike the historical materialism of British theorist and literary critic Raymond Williams, new historicism argues that literary works as cultural products are rooted in the socio-historical conditions of

the period, thus enabling readers to access the otherwise inaccessible, gone and dead past. New historicists believe that the past is buried in the texts of the past and can be grasped by analyzing and exploring these texts. It is in this context that Louis Montrose describes new historicism "as a reciprocal concern with the historicity of the

texts and textuality of history” (Abrams & Harpham, 2015, p. 245). Authors, readers, critics and literary works as cultural constructs have dialogic nature since they shape each other and cannot be perceived in isolation. That is why new historicists prefer to use Clifford Geertz’s term thick description. It alludes to the fact that the meaning of an event or a cultural representation can only be discovered in the context of its cultural customs and conventions. Due to its excessive emphasis on the cultural aspects of literary representations, new historicism is also known as cultural poetics. These cultural representations as discourses negotiate with the socio-historical conditions and form a network with other contemporary discourses. Subsequently, these inter-discursive practices reflect the dominant ideology and help the readers comprehend the episteme of the period embedded in these varied discourses.

Research Questions:

This paper attempts to investigate the answers of the following questions:

- a) What sort of effects do Day, Rowley and Wilkin create through the dramatic representations of Oriental characters in their collaborative play *The Travailes of The Three English Brothers* as the cultural others?
- b) In what way(s) do the three playwrights’ collaborative play promote ideologies that support or undermine the prevailing power structures of the period in which they are written and performed?

c) To what extent do these dramatic representations of the Oriental characters play a role in constructing identities of the English audience?

1. Use of Anecdote:

... worthy personages whose Noble spirits [...] have drawn other Nations into admiration of their valours and emulation of their virtues, [...] the Three Heroes of our Time [...] Honour by them has added to her [i.e., England’s] glory. [...] they were unkindly used by us, to be made strangers here at home. (Nixon, 1607, B- B2).

Usually, the new historicists analyze a literary work by juxtaposing it with a non-literary work that may be a historical document. The new historicists call this historical document an anecdote. The use of anecdote helps the new historicists to explore the power relations and “show how power extends its operations from minute anecdotes to the more complex and intricate texts and material practices embedded in a particular society or culture” (Brannigan, 1998, p. 133). In this way, the new historicists may put forward certain socio-historical claims about history since anecdote “make[s] reference to the real (Fineman, 1989, p. 56). The above lines from Anthony Nixon’s pamphlet *The Three English Brothers* (1607) serve as reference to the real and may be used as an important contemporary historical document to comprehend the circulation of the prevalent discourses and the dominant ideology.

Drawing upon revelations made by Anthony Nixon (1607), Samuel Chew (1937), Anthony Parr (1995) and Lopez Casellas (2013) point out that the former wrote the pamphlet *The Three English Brothers* in the light of the instructions given to him by Thomas Sherley who had returned to England in 1606 after a two-year imprisonment in Constantinople. His purpose in narrating the accounts of the Sherley brothers is to show their worthiness because he perceives them as heroes. Soon after the publication of the pamphlet, John Day, William Rowley and George Wilkins (1607) dramatized the Sherley brothers' travels highlighting the same purpose in their play *The Travailes of The Three English Brothers*. In the play, the three playwrights make a request to the audience:

If forrein strangers to him be so kinde,

We hope his native Country we shall finde

More courteous, to your just censure then,

We offer vp their trauells and our pen (Ridha, 1974, p. 46).

Both the text (the play of the three playwrights) and co-text (Anthony Nixon's pamphlet) seem to make a request to the audience that the Sherley brothers should be given kind treatment. This requesting tone strengthens the idea that both of the Sherley discourses have been created as part of the propaganda the objective of which is to restore the honor of the Sherley brothers. In

this respect, the play and Nixon's pamphlet alike attempt to justify the Sherley brothers' "unauthorized" (Hutchings, 2015, p. 44) mission to "encourage a Christian-Persian alliance against the Ottomans" (Casellas, 2013, p.37). As the Sherley brothers' self-decided and self-contrived mission (1599-1601) was unofficial, it put their honor and fortunes in their own country at stake. An effort was required to restore the Sherley brothers' public image. It is in this scenario that the eldest brother, Thomas Sherley, commissioned the writers of the period to create the play and the pamphlet "to influence public opinion on a current affair" (Publicover, 2010, p. 695). This similarity in treatment of theme and the Sherleys' defense, which is the common objective of both discourses, makes them "intertextual" (ibid, p. 701). Intertextuality and inter-discursive practices show that the relationship between the play and the pamphlet is dialectic and "material ... is transferred from one discursive sphere to another [thus becoming] aesthetic property" (Greenblatt, 1982, p.3).

Though the play is mainly based on Nixon's pamphlet yet "the playwrights in adapting Nixon's account for the stage ignored some parts of his version and added some new incidents" (Ridha, 1974, p.14) to make their play culturally suitable and a market success. Therefore, in addition to apparent objectives which are in line with Thomas Sherley's instructions, the discourses related to the Sherleys, particularly the play *The Travailes of Three English Brothers* as a dramatic discourse, have certain cultural and

ideological motives that can be explored in connection with England's imperial desires in the early modern period. In addition to it, these motives can be traced in representation of the Persian and Ottoman Turks as cultural others in the play. The dramatic discourse employed in the play may be described as the imperialist discourse the purpose of which in the early modern English period was to grant cultural hegemony, thus paving the way for the rise of later colonialism.

2. Historicity of Text and Textuality of History:

Louis Montrose (1989) emphasizes that texts "are inscriptions of history" (p. 24). Literary text as cultural artefacts should be evaluated and explicated with reference to the socio-historical conditions of the period since these conditions produce a text and a text in return produces these conditions. Therefore, a literary work cannot be divorced from its socio-historical conditions that form the historicity of the text. The textuality of history means that history or past is in textual form. It is through textual traces i.e. the documents, there is possibility of getting limited access to past since "access to full and authentic past" (ibid, p. 20) is difficult. In short, historicity of text refers to the conditions which create a literary work, and textuality of history refers to the fact that history is textualized. Although, it may be difficult to recuperate the full past, it is possible "to recover the ideology that gave birth to the text, and which the text in turn helped to spread within the culture" (Dogan, 2005, p. 82).

As far as John Day, William Rowley and George Wilkins' *The Travailes of The Three English Brothers* (1607) is concerned, it dramatizes the Sherley brothers' travels from 1599 to 1601. It was created and performed in 1607. It is grounded in the socio-historical conditions of the early modern period. Firstly, the religious conditions of the period that form the background of the play are worthy of discussion. As mentioned earlier, England became a full-fledged Protestant country under the rule of Queen Elizabeth when she assumed the dual responsibility of the "Head of State and as Supreme Governor of the Church of England" (Sanders, 2000, p. 128). England's religious identity as a Protestant country and its separation from the Church of Rome developed hostility between the Catholic Spain and Protestant England, which consequently caused led to wars between the two countries.

Samuel Chew (1937) and Lopez Casellas (2013) observe that Anthony Sherley and Robert Sherley, Protestants by birth, during their travels to Persia and other Eastern lands had converted to Catholicism from about 1598-1600. The two brothers' conversion from Protestantism to Catholicism along with their unofficial mission created serious problems for them. Anthony Sherley was banned from returning to England by Queen Elizabeth "because of his unauthorized departure [and] lived out his years mostly in Spain" (Houston, 2009, p. 141) where the titles of the "Knight of Saint Iago" and "Captain of th' Armado" (Ridha, 1974, p.136) were bestowed upon him. The youngest brother Robert failed "in

gaining James' support for trade alliances with Persia [and] died there in disfavor with Abbas in 1628" (Houston, 2009, p. 142). Under these adverse circumstances, the eldest brother Thomas Sherley who was imprisoned in Constantinople came back to England in 1606 due to the interference of James I and devised a strategy to restore the honor of the Sherley family. That is why, he commissioned the writers and playwrights of the period to create the works which might restore the Sherleys' honor in their own country.

Secondly, the political conditions of the period particularly with reference to Anglo-Muslim relations are also worth mentioning. As the Christianity had bifurcated into Catholicism and Protestantism, similarly the Muslims also divided into Shi'a Muslims of Persia and Sunni Muslims of the Ottoman Empire. Because of these religious differences, both disliked and hated each other. England had clear knowledge of the sectarian differences between the Shi'a Persians and Sunni Turks (Masood, 2012, pp. 5-6). The English wanted to exploit these differences and form a Christian-Persian alliance against the Ottomans. This alliance was beneficial for the whole Europe because if the Turks and Persians fought against each other, "Persia would act as buffer to fend off Ottoman's threats to Europe" (Farahmandfar, 2016, p. 145). At the same time, England had established friendly commercial relations with the Ottoman Turks despite her avowed hatred against the Turks during the reign of Queen Elizabeth especially through the Levant Company, which was supplying a lot of wealth to

England and boosting her economy. Thus, the national interests got the upper hand over the national hatred, and England became a trading partner of Turkey. The accession of James to the English throne prompted a shift in English policies towards The Turks. Despite his strong liking for and inclination towards the Persians, James could not foster either the trade relations or the military alliance with Persia due to the national interests, which England was gaining in the form of the Levant Company. It is in this context that Sir Anthony's suggestion to the Persian Sophy in *The Travailes of Three English Brothers* to have a Christian-Persian league against the Turks finally proves "out of date" (Hutchings, 2015, p. 52) and fails to mature.

Thirdly, the Sherleys' thirst for fame and riches, namely the economic desires that inspired them to try their fortunes in the exotic lands, also seems to function as the main motive for their travels to Persia in the play. According to Jonathan Burton (2009), Anthony Sherley during his stay in Venice came to know about the Persian silk trade and the Sophy's hospitality towards the foreigners, this idea came in his mind that he should introduce himself to the Sophy as an official ambassador of the Christian princes and negotiate for trade as well as military relations with Persia. In reality, Anthony was deputed neither for Christian-Persian alliance nor for trade relations by any Christian ruler of the period. It was merely Sherleys' "a wish-fulfilment fantasy" (Hutchings, 2015, p.53). The textual analysis of the play bears out the fact that the Sherleys visited Persia for fame and

wealth rather than with any noble or patriotic aims in their minds. That is why, the three playwrights seem to convey this point through the personification of Fame in the prologue and epilogue of the play. In the Epilogue, Fame as a personified character makes this point clear that:

Thus far hath Fame with her
proclayming trumpe,

Sounded the Trauailles of our English
brothers (Ridha, 1974, p. 136).

The playwrights have done their best to portray the Sherleys as heroes in the play, but their deeds in foreign countries are unheroic and in no way worthy of their noble characters. For an instance, Thomas Sherley decides to attack a town under “the Turks dominion” (ibid, 8. 22, p. 83) with his soldiers by tempting them “to purchase gould” (ibid, 9.41, p. 85). But the soldiers desert Thomas Sherley and refuse to attack the Turkish town because they think that overthrow may be their lot “instead of gold” (ibid, 9. 44, p.85). During this attempt, Thomas Sherley is arrested by the Turks who transporthim to Constantinople. While explaining the sudden arrest of his brother Thomas to the Persian Sophy, Robert Sherley tells Thomas’ motives, which brought him to Turkey:

desire of fame

That in all ages has beene Sherleys
aime

Drewe him from home (ibid,
15.121-123, p. 113).

Like his brother Thomas Sherley, Anthony Sherley is also mean and greedy. Halibeck, a Persian lord, describes him “a Fugitive, / A Christian spy, a pirate and a Theefe” (ibid,

5. 4-5, p. 77). Theplaywrights do their best in the play to defend these accusations levelledagainst Anthony Sherley and depict him as hero but the reality was otherwise. Anthony was a real culprit. As Mark Hutchings (2015) argues that Halibeck’s “charge is not without foundation; indeed [Anthony] had operated as privateer early in his career and was accused of theft in Russia” (p. 51). When the Sophy comes to know about Anthony’s underhand activities in foreign countries where he has gone as a member of the embassy that negotiates the Christian-Persian alliance against the Turks with different Christian monarchs, he tells Robert about Anthony that

How much he has abus’d himself,
and vs

In his employments (Ridha, 1974,15.
112-113, p. 113).

The Sophy further adds that the Sherleys are “all ambition” (ibid, 14. 102, p. 112) and they are nothing

But traitors.

Ignoble Sherley, treacherous
Christian (ibid, 14. 88-89, p.111).

All these conditions form the historicity of Day, Rowley and Wilkins’ *The Travailes of Three English Brothers*. As far as the textuality of the history is concerned, all the discourses such as literary, historical and travel related to the Sherleys which circulated at that time in the society form the textuality of history since these circulating discourses constitute the textualized history and provide an access to the history of the past.

3.Discourse and Power Relations:

“Discourse, by which is meant all sign systems and generators of meaning, is the only material subject of study, and therefore the only route to the past, to self, to any form of knowledge” (Brannigan, 1998; Afzaal & Liu; 2021). Power flows in society through the circulation of multiplicity of discourses, which are all pervasive and regulate the operations of power. Discourses may be “overlapping and competing with one another ... in any number of ways at any given point in time” (Afzaal 2020; Tyson, 2006, p. 285). In case of the Sherleys’ adventures, there was a multiplicity of discourses, which circulated in the early modern period. The discourses related to the Sherleys may be divided into two categories: the overlapping discourses, which are mainly English in sources, and the competing or conflicting discourses, which are non-English in sources except *Calendar of State papers, Domestic Series of The Reign of Queen Elizabeth, 1601-1603* (1870) which is English in source and consists of the official correspondence. Among the conflicting discourses either in French or in Spanish language, the most prominent are Abel Pincon’s *Relation d’un voyage de Perse* (composed in 1605 but published in 1651) and Don Juan’s *Relations de Persia* (2013). The conflicting discourses both English and non-English “interrogate the positive picture of the Sherleys” (Casellas, 2013, p. 38). These conflicting discourses present different pictures of the Sherley brothers which do not match with the picture portrayed in the overlapping discourses. The official correspondence of the period recorded in *Calendar of State papers,*

Domestic Series of The Reign of Queen Elizabeth, 1601-1603 (1870) and Don Juan’s *Relations de Persia* (2013) show the Sherleys in most unfavorable light. In a letter of March 3, 1602 from Venice, Sir Anthony Sherley complains to Secretary Cecil that he opened a great way of profit as from Persia to China but he is “reported to be banished, and proclaimed traitor” (CSP, 1870, p. 159). In another letter of July 20, 1602 also from Venice, Anthony Sherley requests the Lord Chief Justice of England for “pardon” and seems to protest against Queen Elizabeth’s “cruel and unjust” (CSP, 1870, pp. 223-224) judgment. Similarly, Don Juan’s *Relations* (2013) is replete with Sir Anthony’s indecent acts which he did as a member of the Embassy. He has portrayed him as a “charlatan, liar and murderer” (Casellas, 2013; Imran, Bhatti, Afzaal, M., & Raees; 2020). For instance, Don Juan narrates how the Dominican Friar was imprisoned and threatened by Anthony because Anthony had usurped the Friar’s “thousand crowns and ninety small diamonds” (Strange, 2013, p. 258) and was unwilling to return him. In another incident, Don Juan reports Anthony’s quarrel with the Persian ambassador, Husayn Ali Beg over the issue of the presents which they were supposed to present to different Christian monarchs according to the instructions of the Persian Sophy. Juan describes Anthony as a cheater who “sold or bartered away the contents [of] the thirty-two chests of presents” (ibid, pp. 283-284). It is due to such negative acts, E. Dennison Ross (1933) calls Anthony “an inveterate and

unscrupulous intriguer, a sententious hypocrite” (p.86).

The significant English sources include the anonymous *A True Report of Sir Anthony Sherley's Journey* (1600), William Parry's *A New and Large Discourse of the Travels of Sir Anthony Sherley, Knight* (1601), George Manwaring's *A True Discourse of Sir Anthony Sherley's Travel into Persia* (1601), Nixon's *The Three English Brothers* (1607), John Day, William Rowley and George Wilkins' *The Travailes of The Three English Brothers* (1607) John Cartwright's *The Preacher's Travels* (1611) and Anthony Sherley's *Relation of his Travels into Persia* (1613). The common feature of all these English sources is that they have represented the Sherleys as noble fellows who possess all positive virtues. For an instance, the anonymous *A True Report of Sir Anthony Sherley's Journey* (1600) appreciates Sir Anthony's role who got privileges of the Sophy for Christians to trade and traffic in Persia (Ross, 1933, p. 96). William Parry (1601) reports the Sophy's admiration that amounts to exaggeration for Anthony (Rehman, Bhatti, Imran & Afzaal, M; 2020). George Manwaring (1601) portrays Anthony as a Christ like figure who suffers himself so that his English fellows may be facilitated in Persia (ibid, p.193). These three discourses were created by the people who served Anthony and Robert (Casellas, 2013, p. 38) and accompanied them to Persia. These earlier discourses set the laudatory tone, which can be observed, in Nixon's pamphlet as well as in Day, Rowley and Wilkins's play. Both Nixon and the three playwrights have represented the Sherleys as the national

heroes who do a great service to England. But, the reality was otherwise (Khan, Afzaal, & Naqvi, 2020; Lestienne, 2020).

Despite the fact that these overlapping discourses register England's increasing trade interest in alien countries such as Persia and Mughal India, they also have great implications. They serve as ideological tools because they attempt to establish the Western cultural hegemony by showing the Sherleys as members of a superior culture and superior religion as compared to the Persians and Turks as people of an inferior culture and inferior religion. As J. Lopez-Pelaez Casellas (2013) observes that these varied English discourses portray the Sherleys as “exemplars of English virtue, courage and wit” (ibid, p.38). Particularly, this thing becomes most prominent in John Day, William Rowley and George Wilkins' play *The Travailes of The Three English Brothers* (1607). The three playwrights have explicitly employed Eurocentric discourse in the play with a view to establishing this cultural hegemony. This can be observed in case of representation of the cultural others such as the Persians, Turks and the Jews in the play. The playwrights have demonized these cultural others and portrayed their stereotypical and negative images. As Jyotsna G. Singh (2009) points out

English travel accounts to those empires also express mixed feelings, suggesting an attraction to the promise of trade and the grandeur of these courts, but also an investment in a Christian ...

ideology of demonizing
religious and cultural others
(p. 7).

The playwrights' biased and prejudiced attitudes can be traced in the representation of the Persians who have been portrayed as emotional, jealous, untruthful, clever and deceitful in the play. The three playwrights have represented the Persian Sophy an emotional, illogical and irrational person. The dialogues between the Sophy and Anthony Sherley exemplify the representation of the East in inferior terms and West in superior terms. After showing the manner of Christian wars to the Sophy, Anthony Sherley tells him that with the "engines of more force" i.e. the cannons:

We can lay cities leuell with the
pauement,

Bandee vp Towers and turrets in the
ayre;

And on the seas orewhelme an
Argosie (Ridha, 1974, 1. 112-116, p. 51).

The Sophy like an ignorant child is wonder-struck to see this cannon show and thinks that the cannon "is a God" (ibid, 1. 119, p. 51) and Anthony is a divine figure with "God-head" (ibid, 1.126, p. 52). That is why Ladan Niayesh (2008) notes that "Western superiority here takes the form of a cannon, which the Sophy apparently sees for the first time" and which causes him "worship both the object and the man who wields and masters it" (p.131). Like an enthralled person, the Sophy requests Anthony:

First teach me how to call thee ere I
speake,

I more and more doubt thy mortality

Those tongues do imitate the voice
of heauen (Ridha, 1974, 1. 121-122,
p. 52).

The Sophy continues that:

Tell vs thy precepts; and we'll adore
thee. (ibid, 1. 128, p. 52).

These and ensuing dialogues reveal how the three playwrights have depicted Anthony Sherley as hero, a demi god, a member of an enlightened, educated and intellectually superior race and the Sophy as an ignorant child who does not know the art of communication, a member of uncivilized and inferior race. The Sophy's praise and adoration of Anthony is an evidence of what Nabil Matar (1999) describes "a representation of representation" in the Oriental plays like this one which marks "the birth of a British/ European discourse of conquest that preceded the development of other constituents of conquest" (pp.15-17). The Sophy in his efforts of Anthony's admiration and adoration undervalues himself so much that he exclaims:

But God or Christian, or what ere he
be,

I wish to be no other but as he
(Ridha, 1974, 1. 78-79, p. 50).

This desire of self- negation and adoption of foreign identity on the part of the Persian ruler, the most powerful person of Persia, is completely unconvincing and unappealing and show him a king of shreds and patches. These dialogues reflect exaggeration and appropriation of the three playwrights who make the Sophy denigrate his own identity and culture and exalt the Christian characters and their culture. It is in this perspective, Jonathan Burton (2009) thinks

that the play may be seen as a part of “the grand narrative of the rise of British empire” (p.38). He further adds that “If English texts of early modern period develop an imperial rhetoric, the defining mode of that rhetoric is appropriation” (ibid, p. 40).

The Sophy’s adoration and applaud of Anthony is so unconvincing for Anthony himself that he informs the Sophy to be pragmatic:

Oh, let your princely thoughts descend so low,

As my beings worth, think me as I am:

No stranger are the deeds I show to you

Then yours to me (Ridha, 1974, 1. 129-132, p. 52).

All these dialogues show the clear contrast between the Sophy and Anthony Sherley: the Sophy is emotional, irrational and illogical but Anthony Sherley is pragmatic and factual. This leads to the conclusion that the Eastern are emotional and illogical whereas the Western are rational and pragmatic. The playwrights have further highlighted this idea in case of representation of the Sophy’s Niece vis-a-vis Robert Sherley and in the depiction of Hallibeck and Callimath vis-a-vis Anthony Sherley. Through the romantic episode of Robert and the Niece, the playwrights show how the Niece as a typical Oriental woman is emotional and seductive whereas Robert is calm, composed and exhibits self-control. Similarly, the playwrights have portrayed Hallibeck and Callimath as schemers, dishonest and evil minded with reference to Anthony Sherley on whom the playwrights

confer the title of Sir throughout the play. The playwrights have skillfully appropriated and exploited the historical material to establish and assert their cultural hegemony. The final attempt to assert this cultural hegemony can be observed in Robert’s marriage with the Niece which indicates the peak of “imperial appropriation” (Burton, 2009, p. 39) in the play where the English adventurer overcomes the hurdles and wins an Oriental woman. Symbolically speaking, the masculine and powerful West due to his unspeakable positive talents dominates the feminine and weak East with all of her exotic and romantic appeal. In this way, “a Christianized Persian Sovereign” (Andrea, 2005, p. 289) or “a feminized Persia seems to be metaphorically claimed and possessed by the Christian West to which Robert Sherley belongs” (Niayesh, 2008, p. 132).

This denigration and demonization of cultural others seems at its worst in case of the Jews and the Ottoman Turks. The playwrights have introduced only one Jewish character in the play in the form of Zariph, the moneylender. Like Marlowe’s Barabas and Shakespeare’s Shylock, he has been represented as a typical greedy Jew for whom money is more precious than humanity or mercy for a fellow being. Sir Anthony borrows a hundred thousand ducats from this Zariph to purchase a jewel for the Persian Sophy, but he is unable to return the money on time. When Zariph demands his money, Anthony requests him to exercise mercy and give him more time to manage the money. Zariph refuses to do so and utters abusive words for Christians:

The Lice of Aegipt shall devour
them all,

Ere I shew mercy to a Christian:
unhallowed brats, seed of the bond-
woman,

Swine devourers, uncircumcised
slaves,

That scorn our Hebrew
sanctimonious writte (Ridha, 1974,
13. 7-11, p. 102).

He further threatens Anthony that “the sweetest part of a Jewes feast, is a Christian heart” (ibid, 13. 20-21, p.102). Because of his cruelty and inhuman attitude, Anthony calls him an “inhumane Dogge” (ibid, 13. 95, p.105) and “a bloody Jew” (ibid, 13. 112, p. 107). In the real adventures of the Sherleys, particularly in the narrations of Anthony Nixon (1607) and D. W. Davies (1967), there is an inclusion of a good Jew but the playwrights have changed the good Jew into a cultural stereotype. As Anthony Parr (1995) mentions that “figures like The Great Turk and Zariph the Jew are theatrical stereotypes that keep the play anchored in a Renaissance audience’s reality” (p. 12).

Like the Persians and Jews, the English playwrights have represented the Turks as cultural stereotypes and worst human beings. The Great Turk is depicted as a man full of pride. He is “a God on Earth” (Ridha, 1974, 2, 27, p. 56). Because of his pride, he not only condemns Christians but also “their God” (ibid, 2. 41, p. 57). All the Turks are infidels and “devils” whereas all Christians are “vertuous men” (ibid, 2.56, p. 58). The war against the Turks is a just war in which they can freely shed blood because the

objective is “to wash the euill from the good” (ibid, 2. 186, p.64). It is due to such negative representations of the cultural others and especially the Muslims, Linda McJannet (1999) argues that “Anti-Islamic stereotypes are not absent from the play” (p. 252). Such cultural representations granted intellectual superiority to the West and while functioning as ideological tools, they enabled the West to dominate the East. Therefore, despite England’s weak military power in comparison with the military strength of the Muslim empires like the Ottoman Empire, she “had already begun to put the necessary propaganda in place- to create an East full of promise and threat, ripe for English domination” (Bartels, 1992, p. 21).

4. Construction of Identity:

“... our individual identity consists of the narratives we tell ourselves about ourselves, and we draw the material for our narratives from the circulation of discourses that constitutes our culture” (Tyson, 2006, p. 290). Circulating discourses related to the Sherleys’ travels played significant role in constituting the identities of the audience of Renaissance period and vice versa. These discourses enabled the writers to shape the individual identities in different ways. Firstly, the writers of the period created these discourses to mold people’s mind in the support of the Sherleys who otherwise were “proclaimed traitors” (CSP, 1870, p.159) by Queen Elizabeth. Thus, one purpose of these discourses was “to improve the brothers’ public standing in England” (Parr, 1996, p.15). Secondly, the play created by the three playwrights out of the

circulating discourses helped them define themselves and construct individual and national identities. In this respect, the play explicitly portrays the Persians, Turks and Jews in a negative manner. Its representation of the others conforms to the representation of the cultural others in the dominant discourses of the period. It is not only the case of the three playwrights who have portrayed the cultural others in this way in their drama. Rather, it was a pervasive ideology of the period to depict the cultural others in negative and stereotypical manner. This may be observed in the pamphlets, plays, prose works, sermons and historical works of the period.

It is by creating negative images of the others that the three playwrights attempt to establish their cultural hegemony in terms of their intellectual, linguistic and religious superiority and defined themselves vis-à-vis the cultural others. A few textual citations from the play would be suffice to validate this point. When Anthony Sherley shows the cannon show to the Persian Sophy, he is so much impressed that he requests Anthony to teach him how to address him properly (Ridha, 1974, 1. 121, p. 52). This shows that the Sophy lacks the art of communication. Like a novice, he is in dire need of a mentor, a teacher who can guide him how to speak and what to speak. As he continues "Tell us thy precepts; and we'll adore thee" (ibid, 1. 128, p. 52). He finds "the voice of heaven" (ibid, 1. 123, p. 52) in Anthony's tongue and feels delighted to hear Anthony speak (ibid, 1. 158, p. 53) since he perceives him a divine figure with a God-head (ibid, 1. 126, p. 52). All these textual references clearly

prove the English intellectual and linguistic superiority in relation to the Sophy and other Oriental characters in the play (Ahmad, Chaudhary & Murtaza, 2020). This sense of superiority, which the playwrights attempt to assert from the beginning of the play, reaches its zenith at the end of the play. The last scene shows how the Sophy agrees for his Niece's marriage with Robert Sherley, sanctions the construction of a church in Persia and stands as a godfather in the christening ceremony of Robert and his Niece's new born baby. By dramatizing this perfect conquest of the Sherleys in Persia, the playwrights have conveyed the idea of a British Empire in embryonic form (Parr, 1996, p. 30). In a way, this is a march of the completely Muslim state towards Christianity. This was the long cherished and deliberately propagated fantasy of the Western Christians who wished to see Persia as a Christian state (Andrea, 2005, p. 283). Such cultural representations of the others through the dominant discourses obviously helped the writers of the period construct identities by channeling the individual and national attitudes in a specific direction.

Conclusion:

The new historicist analysis of Day, Rowley and Wilkin's *The Travailes of The Three English Brothers* corroborates the researchers' contention that the three playwrights have misrepresented the Orient and the Oriental characters due to the pervasive dominant ideology of the period the purpose of which was to demonize the latter. The paper reveals that as part of other circulating discourses of early modern English period, the intersections of the

playwith parallel discourses evidencesintertextuality.This discourse may be called an imperial discourse.Using this discourse as a tool to disseminate England's colonial ambitions, the three playwrights have attempted to establish their cultural superiority and thereby to mold individual as well as national identities.

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