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Post-Modernist Archetypal patterns:

The Archetype of Cain and Abel in Sam Shepard's *True West* and Ibrahim Alkoni's *Qabil..Where's thy Brother Habil?*

An MA thesis

(Cerdit Hour System)

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Overview

This thesis seeks to analyze two literary works within the frame work of the Archetypal Theory. Literary works exhibit a high degree of order, coherence, and some sort of connection between them. This connection is not restricted within the boundaries of time, place, or certain literary genres.

The connection is exemplified in certain recurrent patterns which are called archetypes. Archetypal patterns have a universal appeal through its universal plot, character or theme. For instance the archetypal theme of brother enmity and fratricide is a common pattern that can be found in many works written in different languages.

Research question and significance:

This study has been an attempt to decipher a universal archetype of character and literary representation and, at the same time, the expression of the will to give a critical framework valid for comparative approaches that cross the boundaries of Western cultures to account for the same pattern found in other cultures such as the Arabic culture. It was an attempt to understand some of the fascination that archetypes still have for us as postmodernists. In other words, I sought to understand why the archetypal pattern of brother enmity as derived from the Bible and the Holy Quran has universal appeal, for what reason this archetypal pattern is recreated, what is its literary function and its implications for us as readers. Many are the ideas that form the basis of this work.

Research methods/design

The study`s approach is comparative; therefore, two different literary genres from two different cultural and linguistic backgrounds were chosen to see how each writer employed the story of Cain and Abel in a new perspective.

The specific choice of the two writers: The choice of these two works is motivated by the fact that each of them portrays some of the most relevant aspects of the paradigm this study is built on. The first work is a play by the American dramatist Sam Shepard (1943) and the second is a novel written by the Arab writer Ibrahim Al-Koni (1948). The reason for this choice is that both writers rely heavily on archetypal patterns in their works. The Cain and Abel archetype form the skeleton of Shepard`s *True West* and *Al-Koni`s Qabil .. Where is thy brother Habil?*.

Why two different literary genres? It may seem strange that the study makes an application of its approach on two different literary genres. In fact, the choice of two different literary genres serves the purpose of the study which is to prove that the Cain and Abel archetype is so common and universal that it does not confine itself within the boundaries of literary division, place, and time.

The starting point of this study and its prerequisite condition was that the pattern of brotherly enmity and fratricide must have a functional purpose within the narrative; that is, the conflict between the two brothers must be practically the focus of the plot. One of the few possible ways to fulfill an analysis of the plot in order to retrace a transcendental paradigm, all the while taking into account the historical meaning of the work and its socio-cultural background, is to approach the text from a critical framework based on the belief of universal myths and archetypes. This framework has been developed by Northrop Frye

Conclusion/Summary of main points: In fact the story is as old as the

creation itself and numerous allusions to Cain and Abel as an archetype of fratricide persist in different literary works. Both Shepard and Al-Koni found in the story a golden chance to reveal their dissatisfaction of contemporary social and political structures. Each writer explores the grounding nucleus of the story and relocates it in a new context. Both of them manipulated the archetypal characters of Cain and Abel in a new vision that aptly cope with the political and sociocultural values of our postmodernist world. To assert difference, however, is not to entirely deny communality that cuts across cultural boundaries.

It was this destruction within the brotherhood of mankind which gave rise to many narratives around it adding symbolic meaning to the pattern of conflict –torn brothers. The archetype of the conflict –torn –brothers is so general that no one in any nation can deny it, and perhaps there is a general consensus that this archetype is the cause of all evils in our world. Think of Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his brothers. The archetypal approach may seem mystic, but this is the only plausible explanation that account for the almost identical images, story patterns, and type of character found in literature.

An archetype is, in the last a beautiful way of expressing truth– not reasoned, factual, conceptualized truth, but truth as grasped by intuition and the imagination. Old stories are reborn in the writings in the genius. I hope you have gotten a glimpse of why I consider the study and understanding of archetypal patterns to be important in the post-modern world as they provide a common land for the writer as a framework to work within and a perspective for the reader to read through.