
Antigone's Law: A Contemporary Dramatic Egyptian Version

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REVIEW DATA

Received: 30 December 2022

Accepted: 18 February 2023

Volume: 3

Issue: (1) Winter 2023

DOI: 10.54848/bjtll.v3i1.53

In the context of the adapted literary works, I watched a distinguished dramatic performance entitled Antigone's Law - a version of the ancient Greek Sophoclean play Antigone.

The dramatic performance is the graduation project of a student at The American University in Cairo. The student acts with her colleagues in this dramatic performance directed by Dr. Dina Amin - the theatre professor at the American University in Cairo. The performance could be considered an Egyptian version rather than a literal adaptation as it embeds so many layers of meanings and different sociological dimensions that reflect the current Egyptian society.

Unlike the traditional classical chorus, all the characters that act as Chorus were women whose songs embed so many intertexts that reveal many rich dimensions of meaning. For example, one of their choral songs includes some Biblical verses that call for sacrifice for the sake of salvation and saving humanity from damnation. This Biblical intertext implies a necessity of adhering to the gods' laws - the message Antigone was calling for throughout the whole performance.

In line with this humane message, the Chorus ensures the importance of humanity as well as the rejection of oppression and coercion practiced by some countries under the name of "Applying the State's Laws". As for the sound effects, they were mainly represented in the Chorus' songs that were more frequent in the conflict between the characters that call for honoring the dead by burying them, and the character of the tyrannical oppressive Creon that is against this humane practice and coercing whoever is for it.

In line with the Egyptian culture and the Nubian folklore that represented the roots and the Egyptian identity, the female Chorus charmingly sings Nubian songs that represent the Egyptian traditions and rituals. These intertexts foster Antigone's humane point of view of burying her brother in the context of the dramatic performance.

It is worth noting that the Chorus' voice was musical to the ears; it sounded like a symphony playing on and enchanting to the ears. In my opinion, the director was very successful in choosing these distinguished voices whose songs are very appealing and in alliance with Antigone's message.

Dr. Dina Amin's - the director's - choices of the theatre decor was highly significant. For example, she replaced the dead corpses that were banned to be buried by a pile of clothes in a pyramid-like shape. This might be intended to reduce the intense tragic impact on the audience and to suggest the unlimited number of the inhumane practices that reject burying the dead. The pyramid-like shape of the pile of clothes might create an intertext that denotes the Egyptian pyramids which stand for the

necessity of adhering to traditions and rituals. The same intertext might also suggest the coercive practices of tyrannical leaders since the beginning of the society symbolized by the Egyptian pyramids.

Regarding the title of the performance, it is considered a means of enriching the meaning and re-assuring that the law belongs to Antigone whose vision represents the laws of all heavenly and non-heavenly religions that call for mercy and humanity. The title also suggests that this law must apply to all people for the sake of saving humanity. The title also reflects the feminist perspective of the performance as the law is represented by a woman whose way of death is chosen by herself. Her suicide is considered an indirect message to her rejection of Creon's oppression and coercion.

Antigone's choice of her death could be interpreted as an intertext of Jesus Christ's sacrifice for the salvation of humanity. The intertexts, therefore, form a web that embeds numerous universal meanings and dimensions despite the different time, culture, and place.

The feminist perspective is reinforced when all the Theban people were shown to be women who represent the voice of wisdom specifically when they give advice to Creon or when they address the audience expressing their fear of blood shed and anti-humanity.

It is noticeable also that the people of Thebes (the ancient Greek city and ancient Egypt as well) were wearing plain poor black dresses that represent the conservative rural Egyptian type of clothes. These dresses function as an intertext that suggests the adherence of the Tbeban women to traditions. The intertextual web expands to suggest the grief and sorrow for the death of humanity and human rights.

In brief, the dramatic performance was exceptional reflecting a very deep and rich Egyptian vision of a distinguished director. It also delivers refined universal messages to humanity at large.