Problems of Data-management in Folklore Research: Dramatic Discourse as a Case Study

Abstract

This paper attempts to recognize some basic problems and their possible resolution related to data mining and exploration in the field of folkloristic researches. The present paper is broadly compartmentalized into three sections. First of all, it distinguishes folklore (FL) as an autonomous field of study with its data-based approach clearly differentiated from the other allied disciplines. Secondly, the paper strongly argues in favour of a distinction between Textual and Contextual folklore, specifically in case of data-management (DM) for performing folk art. Thirdly, this paper considers, purely from a theoretical point of view, the theatrical perspective of FL, in order to observe how different semic codes continually interact in constituting multi-layered complex pattern of corpora.

This paper attempts to recognize some basic problems and their possible resolution related to data mining and exploration in the field of folkloristic researches. The spirit of folklore (FL), current within a folk community, is inherent in its social dynamics and divergent socio-cultural setting, often resulting into complex pattern of corpora. The problem is further rehearsed due to possible merger of FL with other academic domains. It is true to admit that the database of FL studies normally falls within the province of two or more academic disciplines. Thus the data-treatment by a cultural anthropologist or a professional linguist is radically different than that of folklorist. In reality, a folklorist has to find out his own way for data-elicitation and corpora management. Such a manner of investigation surely confirms the autonomy of FL as an independent discipline.

A folklorist often faces a challenge in managing and interpreting the dynamic and continually growing corpora in a real social set up. It is never denying that folkloristic researches in the present state of affairs have become much more refined than the early FL scholarship of the Grimmian days. The chief concern of the current folklorist is not the text only; but the text with the context as its integral part has become essential for taking any evaluative measure on contemporary FL. As a consequence, a folklorist has to incorporate an integrative support, which can manage both text as well as context at the same synchronic plane. This composite strategy requires a strong electronically supported data-manager, which can continuously record the data without affecting its naturalness by forcefully insulating the text from its socio-cultural environment.

The present paper is broadly compartmentalized into three sections. First of all, it distinguishes FL as an autonomous field of study with its data-based approach clearly
differentiated from the other allied disciplines. Secondly, the paper strongly argues in favour of a distinction between Textual and Contextual FL, specifically in case of data-management (DM) for performing folk art. Thirdly, this paper considers, purely from a theoretical point of view, the theatrical perspective of FL, in order to observe how different semic codes continually interact in constituting multi-layered complex pattern of corpora. However, it is worth mentioning that no specific field study has been mentioned in the present context.

I

A renowned Folklorist of present century has rightly remarked that FL is perhaps as old as mankind. (Handoo:1989 ). Truly speaking, there is no human society which does not possess folklore. The term folklore ( meaning the lore of the people ) was first suggested by a British antiquarian named William Thoms in the year 1846. However, it goes without saying that the study on FL already began much earlier than the coining of the term by Thoms.

Looking from the global perspective, the newly coined term not only established a new academic discipline but also generated an unending controversy about what should and should not be included in the gamut of this newly identified field of inquiry.

It has already been pointed out that the corpora of folklore studies frequently fall within the territory of two or more disciplines. It often happens that FL with its organized data gets connected both with humanities and social sciences. One of the expected social sciences is Cultural Anthropology (CA) having a converging domain of investigation with FL.

If we assume that FL is a 'verbal art' as designated by Bascom, there arises no confusion in drawing a line of separation between CA and FL. Because in this sense, it is needless to say, FL may be identified as folk literature being separate area of investigation from CA. But the problem becomes much more intensive in case of broader demarcation of FL as done by Richard M. Dorson (1972). According to his classification FL includes (a) Oral literature; (b) Material culture; (c) Social folk customs and (d) Performing folk arts. So, apart from oral literature the other three areas have a closer attachment with CA.

However, the study on both CA and FL truly reveals the differences existing between processing and management of corpora in these disciplines. The subject matter of the mentioned disciplines are invariably the same, but there is a basic distinction in the manner in which they approach the data. We may note the worth mentioning remark of Goodenhough (1976:19) - "The separation of cultural anthropology and folklife study... is not a reflection of an intrinsic difference in their respective subject matter; rather it is a reflection on how Euro-American scholars have identified themselves with the peoples whose customs and cultures they study." So, a folklorist treats the data as his 'own'. He looks at the corpora as a part of the present and not far from civilization but as a living aspect of civilization. The line of distinction between CA and FL has nicely been summarized by Dundes"(1975: xiv). -"Anthropologists, generally speaking have been primarily concerned with studying other cultures and not their own. In contrast, folklorists have typically been engaged in study-
ing their own cultures or selected segments of their own societies, for instance the rural, uneducated "peasants" or "folk" groups. So, when an American studies Japanese community he is doing anthropology, whereas his Japanese colleague is studying folklife. (Goodenough 1976: 20).

The science of anthropology and ethnological sciences including FL, having fieldwork as an essential aspect of investigation, are often guided by a basic theoretical assumption. The theoretical background subsumed that "the main tendency of culture from primeval up to modern times has been from savagery towards civilization" (Tylor 1858: 21). Thus Anthropology remained as whiteman's science, which considered Asia and Africa being technologically less advanced society, were less civilized and hence primitive. The so called primitives therefore should be studied from the viewpoint of the technologically advanced west.

The idea of distinguishing folkloristic data-management from that of anthropological one has a far reaching ramification. It is true to admit that the presupposition for analyzing the corpora of the primitive society by the civilized scholars has a biased and partial viewpoint for making any theoretical framework. The civilized world is formed out of commercial-industrial societies; and this commercial-industrial bias cannot escape the conscious or unconscious feeling of exploitation (Handoo 1989: 79). Lévi-Strauss has strongly criticized this anthropological attitude by his comment (1966: 124-27)."its (Anthropology) capacity to access more objectively the facts pertaining to the human condition reflects -- a state of affairs in which one part of mankind treated the other as an object." [the portion within parenthesis is my insertion]. The French philosopher Foucault while defining the 'history of system of thoughts' has also pointed out that power and knowledge directly imply on each other. So, the knowledge-base of any specific age, anthropologically defined in terms of 'civilized society', gets strongly influenced by the power of the intellectual class.

This rightly indicates that FL study needs a separate line up for DM. It should strictly follow its own methodology in order to keep its own distinctiveness from the style of the anthropological fieldwork. It is no denying that many techniques of anthropological fieldwork have been owned by Folkloristics. Still FL requires a necessary amendment in its DM. However, this is rightly performed by a Folklorist who generally study their own culture in making data interpretation and management. As a consequence, the Euro-centric attitude in explaining corpus gets automatically eliminated.

It is further to be noted that the treatment of data in FL is quite different from that of Linguistics. This is quite apparent even at the level of data collection. An informant in Folkloristic fieldwork has a qualitative distinction in comparison to the informant in linguistic fieldwork. An ideal speaker of a particular language may well operate as Linguistic Informant (LI). He can supply information related to phonetic and suprasegmental features of his language to the investigator. The co-textual information about a particular item and its meaning may also be captured with a necessary feedback from the native informant. But the real problem of data management (DM) appears in case of FL due to incorporation of both textual and contextual informa-
A FL informant should have a distinct knowledge about the text and its appropriate context. For instance, not only he can tell a folktale, but can also explain the context of its applicability. As a matter of fact, in case of FL informant, linguistic, pragmatic and communicative competences are simultaneously operative in the process of representation of data.

FL informant deserves a special status. He does not simply provide information about the text itself, but he should have the complete background knowledge of the textual FL materials. For instance, he supplies not only a particular folk song, but the typical situation of its performance. Moreover, a LI by his linguistic competence can understand and interpret all possible structures of his native language. In contrast, a FL informant hardly has complete control over all Folk genres. For instance, an informant who has a competence in Folktale, may not be equally competent in Folk song or drama. As a consequence, a Folklorist has to depend on number of informants for collecting corpora even for a particular genre. Therefore, it is quite evident that a complex type of DM is obligatory in case of FL study.

II

FL as an autonomous discipline lays emphasis on a special kind of DM. And it is true to admit that the process of DM may successfully be executed through a systematic fieldwork. One of the basic problems in fieldwork is that it does not have any uniform field strategy. The method of field study, for instance, in case of collection of folktales is totally different from that of the folksongs. So, it becomes obvious that DM in FL has a heterogeneous approach in tackling data base of different genres.

The problem of DM becomes more complicated in case of performing folk arts. India as well as Asia are characterized by the variety and richness of performing folk arts such as dance, drama, music etc. Handoo (1989) has clearly pointed out that in the Asian perspective performing folk arts are firmly embedded in rituals and folk festivals. It is impossible to artificially create the environment for performance of the folk art specifically required. So, it requires that all of the performing folk art events must be collected and recorded in real setting. Thus a data-manager needs to be technically equipped with audio and video instruments for recording the real life situation of FL. Obviously, this type of requirement is too much expensive for the third world countries. But in reality any compromise leads to a severe damage in the process of data- treatment and interpretation. There is no other way but to depend on technological support for investigating the dynamic situation of performing folk art.

We may also note the specific situation for social folk custom, which is an important area of folk studies. It is worth noting that social folk custom is not always verbal in nature. The communicative event in social folk custom often involves a complex network of semic codes. In addition to text, music, colour, action and other complex symbolic actions may be equally functioning in the process of cultural communication. For instance, Diwali is one of the important festival in Northern India. There are number of socio-cultural codes such as music, texts (of songs or of stories), rituals, the idols of the Goddesses, the colourful decorative settings of the deity etc., which are strongly effective in making totality of the communication process. It is
useless to depend upon the informants in order to construct a database reflecting all these social customs of the particular festival. In order to have a total access to this type of DM, mere interview method is not at all adequate. The folklorist should record each and every aspect of the festival for building up the required corpora.

The point is now quite clear. For understanding FL, we have to consider both text as well as its socio-cultural context. They are just like the two sides of the same coin. Contextual information is indispensable for complete understanding of any FL text. However, such type of information may be gathered through and thorough modification of the systematic fieldwork adopted by any folklorist. It is right to accept that systematic fieldwork begins at the desk, in the library and the archive (MacDonald 1972:407). But its success no doubt depends upon the methodology incorporated, in evaluating and interpreting any folk-performance in an actual socio-cultural setting.

For a comprehensive DM, FL should be partitioned into two broad categories: Textual FL and Contextual FL. Textual FL perceives the literary text of FL as a cohesive unity of patterns, structures and effects. It also records the ways in which Folk text borrows features from non-literary domain, but maintains that these borrowed features are transformed by the basic stylistic features of the folk text. On the other hand, Contextual FL considers how the contextual features influence folk texts. These involve (i) the competence and disposition of the participants and observers; (ii) the socio-cultural forces that dominate all folk discourses; (iii) the systems of signification through which we process and interpret all phenomena, linguistic and non-linguistic; literary and non-literary (Bradford 1997).

III

Let us consider an important field of the performing folk art, i.e. Folk drama (FD) which is a domain that has been very little discussed in FL studies. But in our present context, FD is highly significant. It is noteworthy that textual and contextual perspectives are strongly interactive in FD in order to generate multiple semic codes for the complex communicative network. As a consequence, DM in FD study turns out to be extremely complex.

In recent years researches on FD has gained a prominent place. The South-Asian study on FD has also extended the scope of investigation both in the field of anthropology and folkloristics. It has also been recognized by the anthropologists that the semantic aspects of culture can properly be estimated through FD (Peacock 1971). Some of the noteworthy features of FD may be pointed out in this context.

First of all, FD is appreciably different from the ordinary drama. Ordinary drama has a fixed form of written text. But the text of a FD is not fixed. In reality, it differs from the ordinary drama in performance, audience relationship and mode of transmission. Secondly, folk drama is primarily identified as a play activity being closely related to game, dance and ritual. The play world is constructed out of some conventional symbolic objects like mask, costume etc. Thirdly, FD has a generic mixture. Many FDs in India is mixed up with other performing folk activities like music and dance etc. For instance, dance performance in Yaksagana of Karnataka or Kathakali of Kerala, go along with narratives. This invokes a highly complex holistic DM hav-
ing a multi-strata operation for collecting corpora from different aspects of the folk performance.

In this context, we may consider dramatic discourse, which is involved with complex DM for evaluating different interactive semic codes tied up with the process of communication. Theatrical communication is mostly complicated in a sense that performer-audience communication does not take a direct form in this context. Instead, the actor-spectator transaction within the theatrical context is mediated by a dramatic context in which a fictional speaker addresses a fictional listener (Elam 1980:38). Thus a basic distinction may be drawn between the context of the performer-spectator transaction and the (fictional) dramatic context of character-to-character communication. However, in this present discussion we shall be primarily concerned with the second communication level, i.e. the supposed semiotic exchange taking place within the dramatic world.

The dramatic discourse creates an aesthetically charged fictional construct in language, in which dramatic action is performed through dialogues iconically representing social encounters (Gargesh 1980:116). Dramatic discourse involves three types of semic codes, namely -

(i) linguistic;
(ii) paralinguistic;
(iii) non-linguistic sign systems.

The linguistic codes may be treated within Textual study; while the other two codes require Contextual treatment. This implies that both textual and contextual FL are essential for DM in FL studies. The three types of codes may be discussed in isolation. But it does not mean that they are separate, their interaction makes the process of dramatic communication feasible.

A. Linguistic sign system: Dramatic discourse is build up in a spatio-temporal context, in which the created characters exchange information through organized utterances. The dialogic mode of representation focuses on I-thou perspective with an interchange of roles; and as a consequence direct authorial voice is eliminated. It is worth noting that FD has a more complex form of dialogic encounter. Because in many dance-drama performances of India, we have not any clear cut demarcation between the performers and their audiences. The actual situation suggests that there is a frequent role-exchange between the artists and the audiences (Handoo 1989:94). As a result in order to understand the folk interactions in drama, a broader communicative or semiotic competence is required, which incorporates "the psychological cultural and social rules which discipline the use of speech in social settings." (Hymes cited in Giglioli 1972:15).

Elam has identified that the fictive context of dramatic discourse is based mainly on two components-- (a) the situation in which a communicative exchange takes place; and (b) the context of utterance. The situation is related to the set of persons and objects present, their physical circumstances, supposed time and place of their encounter etc. On the other hand, the context of utterance in a dramatic context is represented as speaker, listener, time of utterance, location of the utterance, and the
So, it appears that deixis is a significant feature in a dramatic discourse. Deictic features are present throughout the play and it is dynamic in a sense that the participants and the time and location of utterances undergo continual change. Therefore, deixis allows the dramatic context to be referred to as an actual and dynamic world in progress (Gargesh 1980:117). In the process of dialogic interchange it creates an interpersonal dialectic within the time and location of discourse. Serpieri has rightly pointed out that all linguistic and semiotic functions in the dramatic discourse derive from the deictic orientation of the utterance towards its context. He therefore comments-

In the theatre... meaning is entrusted in primis to the deixis, which regulates the articulation of the speech acts. Even rhetoric, like syntax, grammar, etc are dependent, in the theatre, on the deixis, which subsumes and unites the meaning borne by the images, by the various genres of language (prose, poetry), by the various linguistic modes of the characters... (Serpieri 1978:20).

It is true to admit that dialogues by themselves are incomplete until the appropriate contextual elements (speaker, addressee, time, location) are duly provided. For instance, we may consider an indexical expression such as - "ami tomarke janacchi ekhan ekhane keu nei" which means - 'I am informing you that now nobody is existing here'. Here, the expression remains ambiguous unless uttered in a context where the 'shifters' (as termed by Jakobson, 1971:26) ami - "I"; tumi - "you"; ekhan - "now"; ekhane - "here" have evident referents. It is in fact the theatrical communication, which provides the appropriate elements of communicative context and situation.

Elam (1980:142-43) further points out that "Not all indices have the same status" in the dramatic discourse, that the central position is occupied by those deictics relating to the context of utterance (I-you-here-now)."It is clear that within this relationship the first person is dominant. Because dramatic discourse is egocentric, in which first person defines everything in term of its own place in the dramatic world. Furthermore, 'I' and 'you' ('I' is the speaker and 'you' becomes listener/addressee) play genuinely active roles in the dramatic exchange. Lyons (1977:638) confirms this position by his comment "that only the speaker and addressee are actually participating in the drama'. Others are defined negatively by means of unmarked third person. It is also significant to note that I-you dialectic is defined by the principle of interchangeability, because speaker and addressee relationship get interchanged (Benveniste 1966:230). The primary exchange in the dramatic discourse may be represented by the following diagram (cf. Serpieri 1978:30).

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I → You
You ← I
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It is for this reason that the 'proximal' deictics relating to the speaker's context of utterances (as indicated by 'here', 'this', 'these', 'now', the use of present tense etc.) have a more important function than the 'distal' variety representing distance, times
and places (such as indicated by 'there', 'that', 'those', 'then', the past tense etc.), which are more commonly found in narratives.

Besides deixis, co-referencing in the form of anaphora serves a key function in keeping the dramatic discourse continuous. Co-referential rules are in part responsible for the semantic and pragmatic coherence of the dialogue. Anaphoric reference is important to dramatic dialogue in that it creates through co-reference, the appearance of continuity in the universe of discourse.

Let us define what is meant by anaphora. Anaphora refers to a relation between linguistic elements, where the interpretation of one (called an anaphor) is in some way determined by the interpretation of the other (called an antecedent) (Lust, 1986; Wasow, 1986). For example,

*Ram cheletike dekhleo ami take dekhini*

"Ram observed the boy, though I did not see him"

Here, the italicized pronominal form refers to the antecedent 'cheleti'. So, in a general sense, the pronominal form acts as an anaphor for the antecedent noun (Majumdar 2000). There lies a basic functional difference between deixis and anaphora. "Anaphora presupposes that the referent should already have its place in the universe of discourse. Deixis does not; indeed, deixis is one of the principal means open to us of putting entities into the universe of discourse so that we can refer to them subsequently." (Lyons 1977: 673).

Backward-looking anaphora is also particularly significant as a means, at the beginning of the play or of individual acts and scenes, of creating the sense of a world in medias res, with its own pre-dramatic history which can be referred back to (Elam 1980: 153). For example, in Othello Roderigo's complaint at the beginning of the play --"that thou ...shouldst know of this" -the anaphoric 'this' picks up the referent of a presumed unheard antecedent. Structurally, these Backward-looking anaphors are cataphors, Here, the pronominal is used first and the information (though already known to the characters of the play) is revealed to the reader/audience later (Gargesh 1990: 120).

B. Paralinguistic sign system: A linguistic utterance is a product not only of the phonological, syntactic and semantic aspects of the language, but also of the paralinguistic features of utterance. Paralanguage refers to some typical features, which is superimposed on the linguistic system adding extra dimensions of meaning to the utterances. Paralinguistic features comprise factors such as pitch, loudness, tempo, timbre and non-verbal sounds etc. which supply essential information regarding a character's state, intentions, attitudes and the like (Gargesh 1990: 120).

The paralinguistic system is composed of various scales, and we may assume that in normal communication utterances fall near the center point of each scale. For special types of communication speakers move up or down in a particular scale or scales. The scales for English have been identified by Wardhaugh (1977: 20). Those are namely, (i) loudness-to-softness scale; (ii) pitch scale; (iii) rasping-to-openness; (iv) drawling-to-clipping; (v) tempo.

Abercrombie (1968: 55) as a Phonetician remarks "The conversational use of spo-
ken language cannot be properly understood unless paralinguistic elements are taken into account. "In the process of theatrical communication paralinguistic features play a significant role. An actor by the optional use of paralinguistic features is able to convey not only dramatic information in relation to character but also signals a high degree of aesthetic information." (Gargesh 1990 :121). Paralinguistic features constitute one of the most ancient object of the actor's art (Elam 1980: 80). Jakobson further cites the expressive versatility of a Stanislavsky trained Moscow Arts Theatre actor, who was able to evoke an immense range of emotional connotations through paralinguistic variation alone.

It is true to believe that an actor's enunciation of a given line or speech can greatly influence the audience's interpretation of the dramatic import. But the problems may arise for the listeners, who want to interpret correctly the messages they hear. Because they must relate their content and delivery to such variables as the sex, age, and appearance of the speaker, and to the context of utterance. Unfortunately, we know almost nothing about the influence of these latter variables on interpretation. Wardhaugh truly comments (1977: 21)--"Communication among human beings is an extraordinarily complicated affair... so many difficulties occur in communication among people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and that so much misunderstanding results alone."

C. Non-linguistic sign system : The non-verbal aspect of communication consists mainly of proxemic and kinesic elements. Both these aspects are essential features in creating aesthetic value of a dramatic discourse. The study of gestures is called Kinesics, while Proxemics is a science related to spatial codes.

Kinesics deals with bodily movements. The movements may be defined either as micro-gesture (such as eyebrow movements, facial movements, slight adjustment of the position of feet etc.), or as macro-gesture (such as larger gestures involving uses of the hands, shrugs of the shoulder etc.). "The dramatic text is invariably marked by a performability, and above all by a potential gesturality, which the language of narrative does not normally possess since its context is described rather than 'pragmatically' pointed to." (Elam 1980 : 142). Interestingly, in case of dramatic discourse the linguistic sign system has a close association with the kinesic elements. For instance, deixis directly involves speaker's body in the speech act. The language of the drama calls for the intervention of the actor's body in the completion of its meaning. Antinucci (1974:243) strongly opines that deixis creates "the possibility of exchanging information operating on the sensori-motor rather than the symbolic level." Styan (1971:2) also confirms the intimate relationship between linguistic and kinesic codes interacting in a dramatic discourse --"the words as spoken are inseparable from the movements of the actors who speak them." Moreover, kinesic codes are culture-specific; it may vary on the basis of the cultural set up of a community. For instance, the gesture involved in the process of greeting for the Indian cultural system is quite different and distinct from that involved in the European one. Even within the same culture kinesic codes are dynamically variable depending upon how different parts of the body are used in different occasions, for example the uses of the feet and the legs
during standing, walking or sitting. Therefore kinesic codes execute significant roles in understanding cultural map of a specific community. Artaud (1938:39) presents an extreme point of view in considering a pure theatrical language free from the dictates of the verbal discourse: "a language of signs, gestures and attitudes having an ideological value as they exist in certain kind of unperverted pantomimes."

The kind of pure kinesic language is even available in Indian classical dance-drama. For instance, Kathakali dance form has a repertory of about 800 mudras (such as 64 limb movements, 9 head movements, 11 kinds of glances are some among them) with a range of fixed meanings correlated to them in term of characters and emotions.

Proxemics involves the use of space. The study on Proxemics focuses on how people use the space between speakers and listeners in the process of communication. For instance, there are appropriate distances for talking to friends, for communicating with strangers and for addressing superiors. Sometimes the distances are also manipulated, for example the superiors try to show their intimate relationship with the juniors by reducing the distance between them. In the context of theatre, the choice of space relation is not "casual or merely functional but is a functionally loaded choice which generates a range of connotative units." (Gargesh 1990 : 121).

First of all, the inter-personal relationship existing between the characters on the stage. Secondly, the nature of the stage is determined by the type of drama to be performed. Folk-drama has its own conception of stage. The distance between performers and audiences are manipulated in such a way so that both can interact in the process of theatrical communication. Thirdly, the fixed entities may also perform important role beyond their physical references (for instance, branch of a tree may symbolically represent a forest.).

So, it becomes quite evident from the discussion that dramatic discourse is a complicated construct. The linguistic sign system in a dramatic discourse becomes complex due to continually changing role of the participants and the dynamics involved with the time and location of utterances in the dialogic form. As a consequence deictic and anaphoric reading within the text becomes extremely difficult. This leads to a severe problem in data interpretation. On the other hand, paralinguistic and non-linguistic sign system opens up a strong interactive domain of text and context. The non-verbal features such as paralinguistic modulation of the dialogue structure, the proxemic and kinesic adjustments of the theatrical set up often invite challenges for a folklorist. The problem can only be resolved by the process of holistic data management, incorporating both the textual and contextual perspective of folklore.

**Conclusion:** This paper was purely a theoretical attempt to recognize the inherent problems emerging in corpus-based data-management of FL studies. In fact, we did not consider database from any specific type of FL. However, the discussion truly reflects the complexity of data processing in FL studies. First of all, the problem in DM and data interpretation arises due to expected merger of FL with other allied disciplines. However, FL deserves its own status while claiming autonomy from Anthropology and Linguistic science. Secondly, the earlier approach on FL was confined within the text itself. But it is no denying that a complex social dynamics is
embedded in a folk-text. Thus a folklorist has to process and interpret the continually growing corpora produced by the folk-community within a broader socio-cultural set up. As a matter of fact, folklorist has to devise a holistic DM procedure interpreting both the textual and contextual aspect of FL. The intimate relationship between text and context can rightly be estimated in the domain of performing folk-art. As a case study, we have considered here the folk-drama in its theatrical set up. The drama has a complex dialogic discourse with a continuously interactive domain of linguistic, non-linguistic and para-linguistic sign system. This leads to a suggestion for integrating textual and contextual FL in the model-theoretic framework of data-management. Moreover, the integrated strategy demands a strong electronically supported feedback. On the basis of this support a data-manager can record the dynamic corpora without dissociating it from the actual socio-cultural set up.

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**Article**  

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Treatment of Folk-Myths in Agatha Christie's The Pale Horse

**Abstract**

Detective fiction and folk myth share a common pattern of ritualistic healing of social ills. However, detective fiction is a modern urban genre whereas folk myths are rooted in the rural and the primitive. In my paper, I have attempted to study the commonality and distinction. I have also tried to show how Agatha Christie uses the detective novel format to play with different perspectives of belief/disbelief in folk myth.

The detective novel has often been compared to the folk-myth. Both depend on formalised rituals and both enact patterns of reassurance, restoring order in a chaotic world. The detective can be regarded as a shaman of the twentieth century. According to The Wordsworth Dictionary of the Occult, a shaman is a 'doctor-priest', centralised as a healer within his own community. The detective performs a similar function in the fictionalised society of the novel: a cleanser of evil (by exposing the culprit) as well as a healer of the injured (by safeguarding the interests of the innocent, some of who may have been wrongly suspected of the crime).

As many of Agatha Christie's books are located in villages, there are many passing references to rural folk customs, especially occult death-rites like animal sacrifices. However, one of the 'rules' of the Golden Age (1920s to 1940s) of detective fiction dictated that the crimes could not be committed by any supernatural or preternatural agencies.

The Pale Horse was published in 1961, long after the Golden Age. Moreover,