

INTERTEXT AND LITERARY INTERFACE



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Abstract:-Intertext has been a part of the poststructuralist literary discourse. The term is important in itself as it provides new insights in the study of literary texts and their production. Intertext has been widely discussed in the context of web of texts and their connections to other texts. This helps the reader improve his/ her understanding of the literary text availing him a wider periphery to locate his own meaning in it. The same technique may be used for understanding the whole process of creative writing. This paper attempts to address this forgotten side of relevance of study of intertextuality.

Keywords:Intertext, interface, literary interface, creative writing, imagination.

INTRODUCTION

While talking about Chaucer's characters, William Blake, somewhere in his writings says that of Chaucer's characters as described in his 'Canterbury Tales' some of the names or titles are altered by time, but the characters themselves ever remain unaltered; and consequently they are the physiognomies or lineaments of universal human life beyond which nature never steps. For years, we have been listening stories from *the Mahabharata and the Ramayana*, from *the Iliad*, and *the Odyssey* and from scriptures and religious documents all over the world. The stories are adopted, modified and repeated according to the demands of situations. Each time we listen to them or read them, we are confronted with a different signification. The story is as it is however the perception of the reader/listener is altered by the presentation.

Every text carries certain exchangeable elements, exchanged in one text or the other, with the original meaning (here I mean the meaning as it is intended by the original author), sometimes with the meaning as it is perceived by the author (who was a reader once) and sometimes with modifications suitable to the cause of or situation in the writing. These exchangeable elements when used in a different context create the space called *interface* where the first text interacts with the second and ultimately with different contexts which operate with possibilities of alteration. Interaction of a text or some textual elements with a new context generates possibilities of a new creation, which may or may not be connected with the original text. When a work imitates the style or content of another work or genre, it can be said to refer to or quote the previous examples. This gives both the maker of the new work and the person analysing it the chance to play with the meanings which can be derived from knowledge of and familiarity with different genres and styles, and the ways and contexts in which they have been used in the past. Sometimes this relationship may take the form of pastiche or parody, destabilising the original form and creating a new, often socio-political and critical set of meanings.

The term intertext is used to describe the ways in which culturally-produced items and works (written texts, paintings, photographs, films, aural texts, etc.) relate and connect to other cultural objects, either in the same context or a different one. The relationships among these cultural objects are often categorised under terms such as 'genre' or 'style'. These not only form the basis for creation and subsequent analysis according to the conventions but also define characteristics of a given style. It is the interface that provides space for and determines the presentation of the new text. It is the presentation of content rather than the content itself that generates possibilities of multiplicity of meaning.

It is almost impossible to study a literary text in isolation. Texts are interconnected with endless selections from other texts and different ways of representing this selection. Intertext is an outcome of exchange of elements of one text with other texts. The writer may do it with several purposes, effective representation of the subject matter, projecting his/her erudition, simplifying the complex matter and vice versa, parodying or correcting the previous writing or only for the sake of writing without any purpose at all and so on. 'A text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological meaning' (the message of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture....the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such way as never to rest on any one of them' (Barthes, 1977, p.146-7). This power to imitate and arrange the borrowed material is conferred on him by the interface.

Interface is a line of contacts between boundaries, two or more. The writer's contacts are vertical (contacts with the past) and horizontal (contacts in his own period). The author's contacts are bound to be chronological that is s/he works over the literary ages according to their chronology besides changes he has witnessed in his own past. S/he takes cues from socio-political and economic changes in different ages and literary productions in those ages. S/he studies tendencies and interests of people in a particular age. This certainly helps him comprehend trends in acceptance of literary works. According to Jakobson, 'The synchronic description envisages not only the literary production of any given stage but also that part of the literary tradition which for the stage in question has remained vital or has been revived' (Jakobson, *Linguistics and poetics*, in Lodge, p. 34). A writer's study is diachronic, based on synchronic, beginning with the ancients up to his own age. This chronology avails for him the 'tradition' in the creative literary production and his own product/s appears to be novel. People accept novelty with enthusiasm as long as the newness persists. This novelty is an effect of the space provided to a writer for writing his work. When an author experiences something, individually or as a part of some group, s/he interacts with the context, and while interacting relates the experience to other existing experiences (which may be once, twice or thrice removed from the original one). When one thinks of an experience, s/he thinks of the context and its relevance to the other contexts, either similar or opposite. Language has an ideational function which represents the speaker's experience, including inner mental experience. There is a representational attitude towards experiences which analyses them as abstracted and encoded by language as propositions, truths,

conditions, or conditional terms. Language represents experiences as thoughts. The ideational function of language gives us the lexical and grammatical resources for representing emotions in mental and behavioural processes.

The writer works by means of concepts and the critic by means of signs. Within the opposition between nature and culture, there is only an imperceptible discrepancy between the sets employed by each. One way indeed in which signs can be opposed to concepts is that whereas concepts seem to be wholly transparent with respect to reality, signs allow and even require the interposing and incorporation of certain amount of human culture into reality' (Genette, Structuralism and literary criticism, in Lodge, p. 65). A writer when confronts real or pseudo real situation, dwells upon his past which is full of questions, answers, symbols, images, quotations as well as symbolic representations of similar situations prior to it. This situation gets contextualised in the mind of the writer after thinking over its suitability, based on its appeal to popular sentiments and the possibilities of acceptance by people, and the beginning of contextualisation is the beginning of the process of creation. The writer at this point of time functions simultaneously as a creator as well as critic. The creator becomes critic with the intention to make his work flawless. It is the presentation that invites critics to interpret the text differently, as per their training.

Victor Shklovsky in his essay 'Art as Technique' says 'A work is created 'artistically' so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception. As a result of this lingering, the object is perceived not in its extension in space, but so to speak, in its continuity' (in Lodge, Modern Criticism, 1988 p. 27). For this a writer traverses from nature to culture and from culture to nature for several times. 'That which is *universal* and spontaneous, and not dependent on any culture or on any determinate norm, belongs to nature. Inversely, that which depends upon a system of *norms* regulating society and therefore is capable of varying from one social structure to another belongs to culture' (Derrida, Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of human sciences in Lodge, p.113). This horizontal as well as vertical journey of writer enables him/ her to evaluate the potential of his content to appeal to reader's natural and cultural tendencies. An author presents cultural aspects that s/he has experienced, either directly or indirectly. His culture is the one with which s/he has become one, through its adaptation, through its studies, through its existence around and in many different ways. To put it in a simple way, he borrows cultural aspects from the real life experiences. Recent investigations in linguistics and language teaching suggest that a large proportion of linguistic performance is enabled not so much by an internalized rule-governed linguistic competence as by the internalization of a vast number of institutionalized utterances, or lexical phrases, or fixed and semi-fixed expressions. This automatically makes him/her a borrower, and the influence of this borrowing can be easily witnessed in his writings. For natural aspects, he has to depend on responses of human nature to each of human activities and the activities related to basic instincts. This may be a reason that almost eighty percent literature as well as films is based on the theme of love. The basic instincts may be 'love, like and life' as have been pointed out by Aristotle or *bhay* (fear), *bhukh* (hunger), *nidra* (sleep) and *maithun*(sex) as have been stated in *Upanishads*. Thanks to Mr. Freud and Mr. Jung for simplifying the complexities. For each of our actions, there has to be some stimulus, absence of which may convert the libidinal energy into stupor. There are many writers who never read anything yet write. There are these natural instincts which are at the base of each of their writings. They depend for the sources on the natural perception of natural experiences and natural emotions which follow them. He utilises the depository of common experiences of our ancestors i.e. they follow the call of collective unconscious.

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