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INTERTEXTUALITY: A STUDY OF *THE FOREIGNER* AND *A FAREWELL TO ARMS*

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ABSTRACT

The concept of influence, which was considered to be author-centric and evaluative, gave way to the theory of intertextuality, the term coined by the French poststructuralist Julia Kristeva in the 1960s and since then it's been widely accepted in literary circles. Resisting Ferdinand de Saussure's theory and his claim that signs gain their meaning through structure in a particular text, Kristeva maintained that readers are always influenced by other texts, sifting through their archives, when reading a new one. In a broad sense, intertextuality is the reference to or application of a literary, media, or social "text" within another literary, media, or social "text." In literature, intertextuality is when a book refers to a second book by title, scene, character, or storyline, or when a book refers to a social "text" such as a media, social, or cultural story. This borrowing invites a Comparison between our understanding of the text outside of the book, and its use inside of the book. Intertextuality asks us to think about why the author is choosing this particular literary or social text, how they are including the text in the book, and to what effect is the text re-imagined by the book, or the book shaped by the text. This paper intends to explore the conspicuous similarities and text within text of the two works - Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* and Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*.

Keywords: influence, theory, intertext, transformation, intertextuality.

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The term 'intertextuality' is now often used to describe the complex relationships that exist between works of literature. Originally, though, it was intended to mean much more. The basic tenets of this theory were first elaborated in Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* which "subsumes the work of major authors with that of minor figures in a multiple positional typology based on relation and difference". Literary theorist Julia Kristeva believed that there is a cohesive force in literature that connects all the various traditions, past and present. She gave that force a name 'intertextuality' in 1966 in her essay 'Word, Dialogue, and Novel'. In her dialogue with the texts of Mikhail Bakhtin, she argues: "Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations: any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva, 1986, 37).

A literary work, then, is not simply the product of a single author, but of its relationship to other texts and to the structures of language itself. Intertextuality is, thus, a way of accounting for the role of literary and extra-literary materials without recourse to traditional notions of authorship. It subverts the concept of the text as self-sufficient, hermetic totality, foregrounding, in its stead, the fact that all literary production takes

place in the presence of other texts; they are, in effect, palimpsests. For Roland Barthes, who proclaimed the *death of the author*, it is the fact of intertextuality that allows the text to come into being:

Any text is a new tissue of past citations, bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc., pass into the text and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text. Intertextuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot, of course, be reduced to a problem of sources or influences; the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation marks (Clayton and Rothstein, 1991, 39).

Thus writing is always an iteration which is also a re-iteration, a re-writing which foregrounds the trace of the various texts it both knowingly and unknowingly places and dis-places. Perhaps, M.H.Abrams's definition of intertextuality is comprehensive one and provides the aptest framework for this discourse; according to him, intertextuality is a creative means used to:

Signify the multiple ways in which any one literary text echoes, or is inescapably linked, other texts, whether by open or covert citations and allusions, or by assimilation of the feature of an earlier text by a later text, or simply by participation in a common stock of literary codes and conventions (Abrams, 1981,200).

This emerges as the most dominating trend in Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* and Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner*. The hero, Frederic Henry of *A Farewell to Arms* is a foreigner, an aspiring student studying the relatively peaceful art of architecture in Rome, a self-centred American, who is forced into the bloody Italian front in World War-I simply because he "was in Italy... and I [Henry] spoke Italian" (20). He has no explanation for his joining Italian Ambulance unit and feels somewhat embarrassed on being asked about it.

The hero, Sindi Oberoi, in Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* embodies the same traits as of Frederic Henry of *A Farewell to Arms*. A born foreigner, only son of Indian father and a British mother, and born in Kenya orphaned at an early age, brought up by his uncle, Sindhi is a young man detached in every sense. The Leaving Kenya, he had an excellent academic career at London University followed by a doctorate in Mechanical Engineering at Boston though no special attitude for it. He has no valid reasons for joining this field; regards his choice as time pass affair taken without due pondering.

Lieutenant Henry although, he is in military department, but his attitude refused to be involved. He sees the war as an opportunity to meet new people, finds love, and run into an adventure which distances him from the actual war in general. Being at front, he is still unaware of the grimness, reality and destructiveness of the war. "Well. I knew I would not be killed. Not in this war. It did not have anything to do with me. It seemed no more dangerous to me myself than war in the movies" (35). His aloofness to war is a sort of detachment. Catherine asks him about reasons for being a soldier, "Why did you join up with the Italians?" "I was in Italy," he said, "and I spoke Italian"(35). This suggests that he isn't fighting for the cause of the war or who wins. The fact that Henry, like the soldiers, distances himself from the event through alcohol also adds to his detached spirit. He drinks with the officers and talks with priest, and visits the officer's brothel, but all contact he keeps deliberately on a superficial level. He does not affiliate with the Italian army and has rejected the war in a true sense.

Sindi Oberoi while working for his doctoral degree in mechanical engineering joined Foreign Students' Office to look after new Indian students. He is not serious about this job as this job puts him to a lot of strain. He keeps the job only for monetary gains "because it added a few dollars to my meager resources"(17). He does not care for mechanical engineering a bit more than any other subject: "I cared two pins for all the mechanical engineers in the world" (14). In New Delhi on much persuasion, he accepted the job of supervisor in Khamka's establishment which was quite contrary to what he studied and this profession required. When Mr. Ghosh, an Income Tax officer, approached Sindi and inquired about compliances of letters sent by Tax authorities, Sindi bluntly replied, "I don't think I am the man you want to see"(37). Sindi paid no heed to Mr. Ghosh's talk of Capitalism and Socialism. This attitude of Sindi shows his indifference towards the job and the business. When the income Tax authorities raided Khamka's factory and his house and took away incriminating

documents, Sindi told Khemka to his face to bear the brunt for unethical business practices and tax evasions as he has nothing to do with him or his business empire. This fact shows Sindi's involvement is shallow and flimsy.

Henry is a man with hedonistic life style. All his life was like "nights when the room whirled and you needed to look at the wall to make it stop, nights in bed, drunk, when you knew that that was all there was, and the strange excitement of waking and not knowing who it was with you" (11). In the beginning, Henry is not a bit serious in his relation with Miss Barkley. He just wants to ward off the tensions of the imminent war between Italy and Austria. In their second meeting Miss Barkley anticipates his intentions, stops his advances, slaps him and hurriedly expresses her views, "I just couldn't stand the nurse's evening-off aspect of it"(24). Henry sensing brake-off instantly apologized to her and stole the show. Though Miss Barkley slightly softened, tried to appease Henry but apprehensions still loom in her mind. She repeatedly asks Henry to assure herself about the fate of their relation, "You will be good to me, won't you?"(25). On Henry's part, the affair with Miss Barkley is still a sort of adjustment. He is playing an elaborate game of seduction. Instead of going to house of officers, he prefers to stay with Catherine. "I know I did not love Catherine Barkley..... nor had a idea of loving her. This is a game....." (28). At this juncture Henry's interest in Catherine is just sexual and superficial.

In actual practice of life Sindi is a pleasure-seeker like the epicureans as is evident from his revealing and developing illicit relations with Anna, Kathy, Judy, Christine and June. He has no system of morality. Like Henry, Sindi wants to enjoy love and make his life pleasurable without getting involved. He regards marriage "a heap of crumbled illusions" and tries to be excused on the pretext of remaining detached. He does not want to fall in love because "To love.....is to invite others to break your heart"(82). To him, passing through a ceremony (marriage) cannot dissolve the aloneness of two persons. In his cynical way he tells June, "You can love without attachment without desire"(170). He pretends to be misogynist for "marriage was more than often a lust for possession than anything else"(71). All this shows that he cherished this false notion and on the other hand continued to enjoy short-lived but passionate love affairs with many.

Henry's first meeting with Catherine was casual. Dr. Rinaldi, Frederic's roommate, takes him to visit a nurse he has taken a liking to. Catherine Barkley, the nurse Rinaldi speaks off, is instantly attracted to Frederic and he is to her. Frederic courts her for a brief period before he goes to the front. At the front, Frederic is wounded in the legs by a trench-mortar shell and is shipped back to an American hospital in Milan to convalesce where he meets up with Catherine again. During his recuperation, Frederic has a very romantic liaison with Catherine and they begin an intense relationship.

It was lovely in the nights and if we could only touch each other we were happy. Besides all the big times we had many small ways of making love and we tried putting thoughts in the other one's head while we were in different rooms. It seemed to work sometimes but that was probably because we were thinking the same thing anyway. (108)

By falling in love with Catherine Henry opens his heart for changes, the changes that are provoked by Catherine and start making him an absolutely different man. They become each other sanctums. During this passionate period, the bond of love between Henry and Catherine is so strengthened that Henry tries his best to avail full convalescent leave but in vain as the hospital authorities are of the view that Henry himself inflicted Jaundice because of excessive alcoholism.

Like Henry, Sindi's first meeting with June was casual. He met June at a ball organized by International Students Association to develop better understanding between the students of America and those of the other countries. In one of such parties Sindi sees June and struck by her beauty. Everybody was dancing and Sindi was sitting in the bar. During a break June came to the bar, interacts with Sindi for a brief period and offered him to teach steps to be a good dancer. In the Annual Beer Party floated by Foreign Students Office, Sindi has an asthmatic attack. It was June who came for his rescue and attended him in a way. It was the illness like Henry that brought Sindi and June together and strengthened their relation. His philosophy of detachment was hammered out in his subsequent meetings with June. Later he tells June how he followed a detached way of life till he met her:

I had until I met you ... it received a pretty bad beating at your hands. You don't know how hard I struggled before making love to you that evening we came from beach. That night you had set off

an avalanche that I had no means of stopping. It was lucky you left me. I was miserable when it happened, but I would have been completely bankrupt if you had not done so.(72)

Before Henry returns to the front, Catherine reveals to him that she is pregnant. Soon after he returns to the front, the fierce Austrian assault forced the Italians to begin a massive retreat and Frederic and his ambulance drivers are separated from the main group. With the increased paranoia towards enemy infiltration, Henry is arrested by a group of officers who suspect him of being a spy because he speaks Italian with an accent, being an American. Henry witnessed the gruesome executions of such irresolute officers before him after the most cursory of trials by this battle police. When Henry himself is in danger of a senseless summary execution he plunges into the Tagliamento river. To preserve the precious existence, "I looked at the carabinieri. They were looking at the newcomers. The others were looking at the colonel. I ducked down, pushed between two men, and ran for the river, my head down. I tripped at the edge and went in with a splash" (218). Thereafter he unites with Catherine who was pregnant with his child at Stresa. With the help of an Italian bartender, before his impending arrest in the following morning Henry and Catherine escape to Switzerland.

Sindi Oberoi went to New York in connection with his project. There his thoughts invariably drifted to Boston and to June. He does not believe in marriage because he is "afraid of possessing anybody" or "of being possessed" and marriage means both. He, as a matter of fact, remained cool towards June because he was convinced that "June would not leave (him), not for Babu anyway. What would she find in Babu that he didn't have?"(102). His views not only mar his own happiness but ruin the life of June and Babu. Back at Boston Sindi's extreme infatuation with self forces June to find comfort in Babu's callow. Babu's soaring love for June later gets solidified into his proposal of marriage. Babu comes from a conservative background. The threat of his father to disown him if he married June scrapes (diminishes) his affair with June. Further his moral inhibitions and orthodox background restrain him from marrying June. He is unable to go against the wishes of his father. Instead he uses his conviction of June sharing bed with Sindi as a prop for his suicide, leaving her pregnant from him.

In Switzerland the war seems to Henry to be far away. He enjoys blissful honeymoon days with Catherine, without feeling guilty for deserting the foreign nation's army. Frederic's attitude towards the army indicates that he is not very loyal and is lacking in the sense of duty. However, the couple contentedly settled down in Montreaux, a small town in the Alps waiting for the delivery. Their anticipation and hope for happiness, however, proved to be futile. The long-awaited birth turned tragic. Catherine suffered in labor for many hours, and finally the doctors had to perform a caesarean section. The baby was delivered dead; and a little later, Catherine suffered haemorrhage and died in Frederic's arms. Frederic had lost everything he held dear. For Frederic, stunned by grief, there was no place to go, nothing to do, no one to talk to. He ambled aimlessly from the hospital through the rainy streets, a broken and lonely man.

It was the pregnancy of Catherine from Henry which changed the life style of Henry from detachment to involvement. It also strengthened their relation. In *The Foreigner*, Later, when June informs Sindi of her pregnancy and seeks his advice and help, Sindi decides to do away with his philosophy of detachment and marry June. The thought of "marrying her crossed my mind again" (198). He goes to Boston but only to learn from the neighbours that June has died in the course of an operation for abortion. The death of June left Sindi lonely and desperate as has been the case with Henry in *A Farewell to Arms* when he bade farewell to dead Catherine in a caesarean operation and walked out of the hospital in rain.

.....and the light went out. I was alone in the darkness again. Only the raindrops pranced about me, like a brigade of drummers. I stumbled back to the porch in the darkness and leaned against the wall while the wind lashed my face with rain. (159)

June's tragedy had made Sindi further cynic and lonely. He wants to leave America in order to forget his conflicts, at least at the conscience level. His escape from America is "meant an escape from a bit of myself that appeared the most delayed" (176). Sindi's decision to go to India, and more specifically the way it is decoded by a flip of the coin, reveals that he has lost all charms in life (disciplined life). He finds India no better than America. Mr. Khemka offers him a job in his establishment which he acquits well. The dishonest

business ethics of amassing wealth lands Mr. Khemka in Jail befalling the fear of starvation on many workers. Sindi does not want to get involved. However Muthu's heroic and incessant struggle to provide food to his own family and his brother's family teaches Sindi the real meaning of life. A talk with Muthu teaches him the difference between detachment and involvement. "Sometimes detachment lies in actually getting involved"(225). So Sindi decides to take up the management of the factory after having been solicited by the employees fearing retrenchment. With utmost honesty, efficiency and dedication, he infused new life into the ruined Mr. Khemka's empire, saves many from starvation and will find a loving and loved wife in Babu's sister Sheila.

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