

INTER-TEXTUALITY: IMPORTANCE AND APPLICABILITY

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Abstract

Interdisciplinary studies, according to the Oxford English dictionary means relating to more than one branch of knowledge. Interdisciplinary studies, in other words, give a researcher the opportunity to work on one or more diverse fields under a common roof, accentuating either the co-relation, tracking the parallels or together making the research a comprehensive whole. Intertextuality, bringing varied texts to read and analyse a particular text furthers the promotion of interdisciplinary studies. The term inter-textuality was coined by Julia Kristeva in her 1966 essay on Bakhtin as:

What allows a dynamic dimension to structuralism is [Bakhtins] con-ception of the "literary word" as an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character) and the contemporary or earlier cultural context.

The researcher wishes to investigate the poems by Allen Ginsberg. One of the primary aims of this paper is to accentuate the purpose, utility and importance of inter-textuality and interdisciplinary studies.

Keywords: Intertextuality, Interdisciplinary, Structuralism

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Right from the industrial revolution, the publication of Darwin's Origin of Species to the chemical havoc created during the world wars, science has affected and added to literature in measures unfathomable. For example, the poem "Ulysses" by Alfred Lord Tennyson's consists of the following scientific details:

"Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and forever when I move"

This description gives a hint into the changes brought with the industrial revolution and precisely the "arch" further glorifies the developments taking place during the Industrial Revolution. Literature gives one an insight into the life, characters, chances and circumstances. Every literary work cherishes a democracy, viz., it is- of the people, by the people and for the people. Therefore, any piece of art cannot be segregated from the environment and other factors affecting this environment. As F.Scott Fitzgerald has said:

That is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings, that
you're not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong.

Allen Ginsberg, being a post-war American poet has beautifully amalgamated in his works various disciplines. The researcher wishes to highlight the same as intertextuality and interdisciplinary studies can only better our understanding of the events, affecting the society at large and the literature it produces.

Allen Ginsberg, famously called an experimentalist by his father, Mr. Louis Ginsberg, had many dimensions in his personal life that have certainly added to his works, famously, Kaddish (1959) and Howl (1956). When we speak of interdisciplinary studies, we cannot ignore the advent of technology and how this technology has shaped the literature of the times. Literature cannot be secluded from the environment. Right from the Victorian age, the mark of industrial revolution there are observable changes in the style of writing. The origin of species further shook the belief in lord and man started questioning his place and purpose in this world. This

led to realistic writings as seen in George Eliot's *Middlemarch: A study of Provincial life*, Mark Twain's *the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and many more. Realistic writings were furthered by development of new techniques like stream of consciousness, which enabled one to create a close connect with the readers for they found no artificiality and idealism, but elements to which they could relate to. It is this relation which becomes an integral part of literature. People relate to works/pieces of art which they understand both at emotional and mental levels. Therefore, a work of art cannot be away from the culture, society, feelings, encounters and discoveries.

Allen Ginsberg, the pioneer of the Beat generation, focussed on the experimental form. To describe his poems, the researcher wishes to quote James Breslin:

“It was the cult of spontaneity because he aimed at honesty and immediacy of feeling, rather than the finish of a well-wrought work of art.”

Setting has played a major role in the poem *Howl*. Ginsberg highlights different places and locations as these men go on with their routine lives. The interesting element to notice here is these locations highlight the developments that had happened by 1955:

Peyote solidities of halls, backyard green tree cemetery dawns, wine drunkenness over the rooftops, storefront boroughs of teahead joyride neon blinking traffic light, sun and moon and tree vibrations in the roaring winter dusks of Brooklyn, ashcan rantings and kind king light of mind, who chained themselves to subways for the endless ride from Battery to holy Bronx on benzedrin..... who sank all night in submarine light of Bickford's floated out and sat through the stale beer afternoon in desolate Fugazzi's, listening to the crack of doom on the hydrogen jukebox, who talked continuously seventy hours from park to pad to bar to Bellevue to museum to the Brooklyn Bridge, Ginsberg uses the line “Streets of shuddering cloud and in the mind leaping toward poles of Canada and Paterson, illuminating all the motionless world of Time between”, to express the mental state which is in a state of flux. The continuous transitions between various thoughts have been again depicted in symbols of time and space. Allen Ginsberg has also accentuated upon the drug abuse in the famous line:

who broke down crying in white gymnasiums naked and trembling before the machinery of other skeletons, who bit detectives in the neck and shrieked with delight in policecars for committing no crime but their own wild cooking pederasty and intoxication.

The human body has been likened to machinery which is lifeless and working towards production in the era of extreme pessimism and darkness. The point here to be noted is the sarcastic take on industrial revolution. The

revolution which heralded the human desires and stood as the beacon light of hope with the advent of the steam engine, also gave the human hands the nuclear power. The post-war world stood naked and corrupt; emotionless, feeling less, insensitive and crude, just like the machines. Ginsberg's disgust at such developments and request to mankind to not swamp its hands with the blood of their own brethren can be seen in Plutonian Ode:

O density! This weightless anthem trumpets transcendent
 through hidden chambers and breaks through
 iron doors into the Infernal Room!
 Over your dreadful vibration this measured harmony
 floats audible, these jubilant tones are honey and
 milk and wine-sweet water
 Poured on the stone black floor, these syllables are
 barley groats I scatter on the Reactor's core,

Language is an important tool: language as a medium of expression and language as a medium to connect different ideas, opinions and fields of study. The line: who howled on their knees in the subway and were dragged off the roof waving genitals and manuscripts, very aptly shows the meeting points of civilization and barbarity. The subway depicts the developments and “howling” for the homosexuality in their writings, further depicts the manner adopted to show the world their carefree attitudes. We are bound to notice how the disciplines of science and history must be referred to for a better explanation of the poem. One cannot ignore the psychoanalysis as given by Freud while reading Howl and Kaddish. The will of the speaker to project a defiant position while projecting his utmost personal thoughts in Howl can be understood well in the light of the three constructs of id, ego and superego. The id here, represents that side of the writer which is willing to break loose by highlighting the best minds who have fallen into the gap of post-war and modern period and therefore are unable to achieve stability, whether emotional, occupational or mental. The ego represents that side of mind which still wishes to bear with the changing trends and therefore the famous beat writer opts for a medium, viz, writing (as super-ego directs) to vent out his anger and frustration.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the process of adolescence is a period of preparation for adulthood during which time several key developmental experiences occur. Besides physical and sexual maturation, these experiences include movement toward social and economic independence, and development of identity, the acquisition of skills needed to carry out adult relationships and roles, and the capacity for abstract reasoning. While adolescence is a time of tremendous growth and potential, it is also a time of considerable risk during which social contexts exert powerful influences. The intention behind highlighting this particular key idea is to throw some light upon Allen Ginsberg's period of adolescence. He

underwent tumultuous events when he was twelve. Kaddish by Allen Ginsberg, is a song of mourning which is being dedicated to his mother, Naomi Ginsberg. The song unravels the poet's psyche and earnest yearning for his mother's love. The poem unleashes the guilt that had a firm clasp over the poet ever since his adolescence when he had to decide to witness his mother's severe bouts of depression or to take her to a place which might soothe her anxieties regarding her family and herself. This overbearing guilt is reflected in the following lines:

'I'm your mother, take me to Lakewood' (near where Graf Zeppelin had crashed before, all Hitler in Explosion)
'where I can hide.'

We were kicked out—tramping with Valise to unknown shady lawn houses—dusk, pine trees after dark—long dead street filled with crickets and poison ivy—

I shut her up by now—big house REST HOME ROOMS—gave the landlady her money for the week—carried up the iron valise—sat on bed waiting to escape—

Neat room in attic with friendly bedcover—lace curtains—spinning wheel rug—Stained wallpaper old as Naomi. We were home.

I left on the next bus to New York—laid my head back in the last seat, depressed—the worst yet to come?—abandoning her, rode in torpor—I was only 12.

The examples mentioned above clearly show how the literary quotient of a work only increases with its adherence to the area of literature, per say. Interdisciplinary studies and intertextuality will always make the work better and easier to comprehend because a person has varied dimensions to one's personality and cannot be boxed into a particular mould. To quote the famous Romantic writer, William Wordsworth: Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions recollected in tranquillity. These emotions are a cumulative mix of all the experiences an individual has had in one's lifetime. And these experiences cannot be just literary. Inter-textuality ensures intermingling of diverse fields of knowledge and a variety of texts on a single platform. The poems Howl and Kaddish clearly illustrate the importance of reading and analyzing in the light of different aspects to provide a better comprehensive meaning. If Howl and Plutonian Ode highlight the effects of industrial revolution and world wars on literature and Kaddish accentuates the co-reading of fields like psychology and historical narratives.

How Inter-textuality is relevant in the present scenario?

Inter-textuality helps promote a diversified study of a text which otherwise would have been restricted to one

interpretation. Clearly by enjoying the democracy of a text the readers feel better acquainted with a piece of writing and enjoy the freedom of evaluating the texts as per their ideas and prior readings. This approach will only lead to cherishing of texts which can be read and re-read and become timeless. This approach gives the present and future generations the liberty to analyse texts written centuries ago to evaluate them in the light of present developments and advancements. This, therefore, ensures the applicability and longevity of any piece of writing which will always remain open to interpretation. This is precisely the purpose behind all developments that they can be applied to different fields, here text both contemporary and dated. Intertextuality promotes reviewing texts in the light of disciplines which otherwise would have been considered irrelevant for application. It opens the text for a diverse audience, thereby increasing the readership and creating a globalized text. Clearly the citizens can look forward to a future which is promising in terms of rich literature for meanings are determined by an individual and the author takes a backseat(Roland Barthes) especially with the increasing applicability of different theories to any text catering originally to any discipline.

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