

Intertextuality in Spencer Johnson's *Who Moved My Cheese?* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

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Abstract- *The present study explores the ideas of intertextuality in Spencer Johnson's Who Moved My Cheese and Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot. Intertextuality relates to texts that have incidents and ideas related to another text. The features of intertextuality are quotations, scenes, characters, narration, etc. The present study considers only one theorist, Julia Kristeva, and investigates the intertextual elements in the select texts. The results of the study are evaluated with other studies regarding intertextuality.*

Indexed Terms- *Characters, elements, ideas, intertextuality, scenes*

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature is a way and art of expressing emotions, values, and concerns, exposing social realities and language that changes the society and self. Stauffer describes literature as a "catalyst, guide, or mirror of social change". The success of the writer is not in the result, but his writing to persuade its audience, over a common understanding of some issues and this initial acknowledgment brings forth change in the society or individual. The aftermath effects of world wars paralyzed individuals and communities. People started to study the disciplines like anthropology, sociology, psychology, etc. That is where we are introduced to Existentialism, Idealism, Realism, Atheism, etc in the study of literature.

Intertextuality is a high-flying figure in postmodern texts and alludes to the text through the representation of characters, scenes, ideas, and so on with other texts. The renowned writer Umberto Eco curtails, "The good of a book lies in its being read. A book is made up of signs that speak of other signs, which in their turn speak of things. Without an eye to read them, a book contains signs that produce no concepts; therefore it is

dumb" (Eco, 2011). Postmodern writers represent intertextuality through choice of diction, phrases, quotations, pictures, translations, characters, and so on. The notable theorist, Julia Kristeva, coined the term *intertextualité*, which means the relationship between the texts that are imposed by using diction, quotations, and insinuation.

In a world where meaning seems elusive, two influential works: *Waiting for Godot* and *Who Moved My Cheese?* delve into the postmodern aspect of intertextuality. Through their unique narratives, they challenge us to confront the futility and meaninglessness that often underlie our existence. The cheese story attributes its enormous success to simplicity and the profound message about adapting to change. Change is inevitable and men's response to it determines their fate. The cheese station symbolizes a secure and predictable environment where individuals find satisfaction in their lives (Johnson, 1999).

In *Waiting for Godot*, the tree symbolizes a place of security for Vladimir and Estragon, because it is where they spend all of their time waiting for Godot. The tree also symbolizes Vladimir and Estragon's dedication to their supposed purpose of one day hopefully meeting Godot (Beckett, 2006).

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Melude Zengin investigates the path from 'work' to 'text' and points out the position of the reader and interpreter. The author further reveals that T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" deals with modernism. It is a kind of intertextual that borrowed ideas from the past and Zengin finds the modernist aspects in the text of T. S. Eliot. Zengin utilizes the theory of Kristeva, and she never separates language and subjectivity because of the original language. Zengin affirms the idea of Kristeva that text is a

production, and it cannot be represented by anyone's ideas. The author acquaints the theory of Kristeva with other theorists for highlighting the ideas of Kristeva regarding intertextuality (Zengin, 2016).

The study by Mehwish Ali Khan alleges the novel *Sleeping Beauty* that is intertextual with the movie "Maleficent". Ali illustrates intertextuality through the characters in both the movie and the novel. In the novel *The Sleeping Beauty*, the writer represents the protagonist as a negative into positive character, but in the movie, the director portrays the protagonist as a reprimanded character only (Khan, 2017).

The study of Mojgan Eyvazi, Shirin Pourebrahim, and Nasim Sahebazamni points out that Jean Rhy's *Wide Sargasso Sea* comes under the issue of both intertextuality and irony. In intertextuality, Rhy's novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* is intertextual with Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. The story of both texts remains the same, but the portrayal of the protagonists is differentiated alone. So, the authors exploit Kristeva's two kinds of axes: 'the horizontal axis' and 'the vertical axis' (Kristeva, 1980). Through this theory, the authors illustrate the works of *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre* under the perspective of intertextuality (Eyvazi and Pourebrahim et al., 2014).

The study of Alla Abdrakhmanovna Dzhundubayeva affirms the role of intertextuality, narrative strategy, and combinational of own and foreign words in the text. Then, the author explains the concept of intertextuality in literature's influence on Bakhtin's idea and mentions Tolen Abdikov's novel *The Burning War of the Mind*. The author spotlights on dialogue and uses Bakhtin's 'dialogue' concept (Dzhundubayeva, 2015).

The study of Yegane Abdullayeva insists on Barthes's intertextuality theory that all the texts are reverberated of another text. Likewise, Peter Ackroyd's novels: *The House of Doctor Dee*, *The Lambs of London*, and *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein* interlink with other texts of Ackroyd's novels. Therefore, Barthes's theory is pertinent to this study (Abdullayeva, 2018).

The study of Ayo Kehinde abbreviates about intertextuality in African novels. Kehinde assumes that Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is intertextual with Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* through the story, and

Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* is intertextual with Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* through the protagonist Razumov. The author employs Barthes's intertextuality theory, and it depends on the reader as the systematized hub of interpretation (Kehinde, 2003).

The study of Arzu Özyön analyzes intertextuality through three novels: *When She Woke*, *The Scarlet Letter*, and *The Handmaid's Tale*. The author notifies Allen's theory that intertextuality is a kind of task, and the readers, writers, and authors have engaged with them. Anyone may pose questions and fabricate explicit answers (Özyön, 2015).

III. METHODOLOGY

Julia Kristeva is a famous intertextual theorist known for the book *Word, Dialogue, and Novel*. In this book, she mentions the function and utilization of words and dialogue in the novel. Firstly, she retorts, "any description of a word's specific operation within different literary genres or texts, thus requires a translanguistic procedure" (Kristeva, 1986:37). Likewise, Johnson's *Who Moved My Cheese*, he says, Every Morning after that, the mice and the Little people dressed in their running gear and headed over to Cheese Station C. It wasn't long before they each established their own routine. Sniff and Scurry continued to wake early every day and race through the Maze, always following the same routine. When they arrived at their destination, the mice took off their running shoes, tied them together and hung them around their neck –so they could get to them quickly whenever they needed them again. Then they enjoyed the cheese (Johnson, 1999, p.28).

Likewise, Beckett elucidates,

Estragon: You are it was this evening?

Vladimir: What?

Estragon: That we were to wait.

Vladimir: He said Saturday. (Pause) I think.

Estragon: You think.

Vladimir: I must have made a note of it.

Estragon: But what Saturday? And is it Saturday?

It is not rather Sunday (Pause.) Or Monday? (Pause.) Or Friday?

Vladimir: It is not impossible. Estragon: Or Thursday?

Vladimir: What'll we do? (Beckett, 2006, p. 246)

Here, the description of a word has different operations like 'cheese' in *Who Moved My Cheese* and 'god' in *Waiting for Godot*.

Secondly, Kristeva exemplifies, "the line of word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one context to another context, from one social collective to another" (Kristeva, 1980). Likewise, Johnson highly explores the word 'cheese' and mentions, "Finding cheese was the little people's way of getting what they thought they needed to be happy. They had their ideas of what cheese meant to them depending on their taste. For some, finding cheese was having material things. For others it was enjoying good health or developing a spiritual sense of well-being" (Johnson, 1999, p. 34). In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett mentions,

Vladimir: Has he a beard, Mr. Godot?

Boy: Yes, sir.

Vladimir: Fair or... or black?

Boy: I think it's white, sir.

Vladimir: Christ have mercy on us! (Beckett, 2006, P372)

Kristeva explains, "as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character) and the contemporary or earlier cultural context" (Kristeva, 1986). She mentions the important element of dialogue in writing and deal with the character or cultural context. This aspect refers to the character's dialogue through the voice of author. Likewise, Johnson alludes, "Well, the story changed the way I looked at change- from losing something to gaining something- and it showed me how to do it. After that, things quickly improved-at work and in my life" (Johnson, 1999, p.22). Similarly, Beckett mentions, "[...] uses Christianity because he is talking of the detritus of the Western civilization, of what is now an empty mythology, helping people carry on their lives in an indifferent and sterile universe" (Beckett, 2006, p.xxvi).

Then, the concept regarding word of mouth is similarly in Johnson's *Who Moved My Cheese* and Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Johnson says, "When I realized the four characters in the story represented the various parts of myself, I dedicated who I wanted to

act like and I changed. Later, I passed it on to some people in our company and they passed it on to others, and soon our business did much better, because most of us adopted to change better. And like me, many people helped said it helped them in their personal lives" (Johnson, 1999, p.23). And, Beckett portrays, "Thus, even the playwright accepted that there are many possible interpretations for the important statements in the play, but he left unsaid that what one may see as important statement is itself an interpretation that others may contest! However, the one important caution that the play already contains everything that he wanted to say about it, is valid even now, and our interpretation of the play (as opposed to adaptation) has to pass the test of the text [...]" (Beckett, 2006, p.xxx).

The two works of art differ in their genre yet unfold in powerful figurative passive words that carry many things in common. Undoubtedly both keep us readers spellbound till the end.

IV. DISCUSSION

The study of Prabhakaran and Geetha enlightens Rushdie's novel *Haroun and the Sea* through the concept of Barthes's intertextuality. The authors elucidate that there is no inventiveness in writing, and the writer may change some words. However, the ideas remain the same in all the texts, and the way of narration may differ from all the texts (Geetha & Prabhakaran, 2018). Likewise, Johnson's *Who Moved My Cheese* is intertextual with Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* through the ideas.

The study of Nana Wilson-Tagoe alleges Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*, and Yvonne Vera's *Nehanda*; both texts have intertextual aspects. Yvonne Vera's European novel *Nehanda* deals with myth, and Zimbabwe is the narrator. Likewise, the same legend contributes to the work of Ayi Kwei Armah. Wilson-Tagoe attributes that everything is connected with intertextuality through dialogue, ideas, characters, pictures, and so on (Wilson-Tagoe, 1999). Likewise, Johnson's *Who Moved My Cheese* is intertextual with Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

The study of Hariharasudan and Thavabalan accolades on intertextuality that Arundhati Roy's *The God of*

Small Things is intertextual with the movie “Chemmeen” because a few tragic incidents are linked (Hariharasudan, 2018). Similarly, Likewise, Johnson’s *Who Moved My Cheese* is intertextual with Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*.

At last, the issues and elements of intertextuality are compared and analyzed with other studies. The intertextual ideas are explicated in the works of Johnson’s *Who Moved My Cheese* and Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*.

CONCLUSION

The present study draws attention to intertextuality. It plays a vital role and many elements are explored through writing. This study explicates intertextuality in Johnson’s *Who Moved My Cheese* and Beckett’s *Waiting for the Godot*. These novels are exemplified through the theories of intertextuality proposed by renowned theorist, Julia Kristeva concerning intertextuality. Finally, intertextuality elements are rendered in the form of writing. The present study assists and recommends future studies that research can be carried out in the areas of alienation, love, psychological barriers, older generation versus younger generation, nostalgia, workaholics, and so on.

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