

COLONIAL INFLUENCE, POSTCOLONIAL INTERTEXTUALITY: WESTERN LITERATURE AND INDIAN LITERATURE

ABSTRACT

India, with its colonial history and contemporary postcolonial culture, offers a rich site for the study of both influence and intertextuality. Through the rise of “Orientalism”, it was India which first exercised a literary influence on the West, an equation that was utterly reversed later through colonial intervention. Though some Indian critics have been only too keen to acclaim or denounce the influence of the West, the discriminating response of Indian writers offers more complex examples of both influence and intertextuality as forms of reception.

Keywords: Indian literature; colonial influence; postcolonial intertextuality; response and reception

In *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE* by Virginia Woolf, Charles Tansley, a bright young philosopher, is understood by the kindly Mrs Ramsay to be writing a dissertation on “the influence of something upon somebody”, but as if that were not bad enough, she confidently recalls his topic later in the novel to be “the influence of somebody upon something”.¹ In *Small World* by David Lodge, another young researcher, Persse McGarrigle, whose thesis is on the influence of Shakespeare on T. S. Eliot, plays a little trick on some crass academics by telling them that it is “about the influence of T. S. Eliot on Shakespeare” and keeps up his clever little game by arguing that now “we can’t avoid reading Shakespeare through the lens of T. S. Eliot’s poetry”.² In both instances, “influence” has become one big joke, the kind of tired old inane thing that some young academics still work on without knowing whether they are coming or going, which is enough to give not only “influence” but research or high academic pursuit in general a bad name.

It would, however, be rash and even misleading to think that such discredited and outmoded “influence” (or “‘traditional’ influence”, as it is now called)³ has simply morphed into trendy and with-it “intertextuality”. Indeed, if we were to surmise what the antonym (or the “other”) of “intertextuality”/“intertext” might be, it would probably not be “influence” at all but the “text” itself (as in Roland Barthes’s key dictum, “Every text is an intertext”),⁴ or the “dead” author and his residual “function” (as in the Barthes–Foucault debate on the subject),⁵ or, more broadly speaking, “the ingrained notions of originality, uniqueness, singularity and autonomy” – as opposed to “relationality,

interconnectedness and interdependence in modes of cultural life” which intertextuality signifies.⁶ As a plank, or even instrument, of poststructuralism, intertextuality thus proclaims and celebrates the instability of all communication and meaning, and destabilises the notion not merely of (old) influence but equally of all signification.

Would it, then, be at all meaningful to say that Julia Kristeva’s original (or at least originary) formulation of the notion of intertextuality in the 1960s was “influenced” by both Saussure and Bakhtin? And does it improve matters to say, as a discriminating reader of Kristeva has said, that her notion of intertextuality is “explicitly modeled” on Bakhtin’s notion of “dialogism”⁷ – or does it only make them worse? Further, what happens to intertextuality when Kristeva herself goes on to prefer the term “transposition” because, as she puts it, intertextuality “has often been understood in the banal sense of ‘study of sources’”?⁸ Has intertextuality only too soon turned out, even for its theorising/christening godmother Kristeva, to be suspiciously close to influence – in the sense of a “study of sources” – and are we back where we began?

It hardly matters. The bare fact remains that in literary studies (and in newer related disciplines), we have had over the last three or four decades less and less talk of “influence” and more and more talk of “intertextuality”, and that is a clear enough distinction by itself in empirical terms. In this article, I propose to look at the interrelationship between Western literature and Indian literature, mainly on the basis of the evolving critical discourse produced in India on this issue, and the first observation to make here may be that while during the colonial period, it is mostly “influence” that the Indian writers and critics talk about, Indian literature produced in the last few decades has often been discussed in terms of “intertextuality” or “pastiche” or that postcolonial, theoretical half-breed cousin of it – “hybridity”. And it may, perhaps, be a little too self-reflexive to ask if this shift in terms of critical discourse from “influence” to “intertextuality” or “hybridity” has itself come about as a result of the persisting *influence* of the Western critical practice upon the Indian critical practice in this regard, and is therefore itself part of the problem.

Precolonial influence: India and Western literatures

The earliest recorded transaction between Indian literature and Western literature was perhaps the translation of the *Panchatantra*, a collection of fables compiled around the 5th century A.D., successively from Sanskrit through Middle Persian, Arabic, Greek, Hebrew and Latin into a number of modern European languages, including into Czech, for example, in 1528, and through Italian into English in 1570 by Sir Thomas North as *The Moral Philosophy of Doni*; the text proved to be “the source of much European folklore”.⁹ Apparently, this remained a solitary pre-colonial example of the translation and influence of a Sanskrit text in Europe until the second half of the eighteenth century, when Voltaire acclaimed the “Ezour-Vedam” (i.e., the Yajur-veda), a

Sanskrit scriptural text “definitely anterior to Alexander’s expedition” into India in 327 B.C., of which he had seen a manuscript translation into French in 1760, and Maridas Poulle and Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron prepared in the 1780s French translations, respectively, of the *Bagavadam* (i.e., the *Bhagavatam*) and a selection of the *Oupnek’hat* (i.e., the *Upanishads*), the latter following the version which the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh had had translated from Sanskrit into Persian in 1656.¹⁰

Though the French may at this period have run a little ahead of the British in the matter of translating Sanskrit texts, they shortly afterwards lost this advantage, as well as the battle for the position of the dominant European power in India. Led by Sir William Jones and Sir Charles Wilkins, it was the British in Calcutta who, in the 1780s, began to translate prolifically from the Sanskrit a body of texts which would cause widespread wonder and admiration throughout Europe as these were subsequently translated from their English versions into other European languages. Such was the initial impact of these newly translated texts that they seemed, according to Raymond Schwab, to have caused in Europe nothing less than an “Oriental Renaissance”:

the world, in the sense that we understand it, dates from [this] period. For so long merely Mediterranean, humanism began to be global [. . .]; a whole buried world arose to unsettle the foremost minds of an age.¹¹

Such a claim may seem patently exaggerated, especially in hindsight, though a study such as John Drew’s *India and the Romantic Imagination* (1987) demonstrates in close textual detail the wide permeation of the newly discovered Indian texts, into the works of Coleridge and Shelley for example.¹²

On the other hand, in his foreword to the English translation of Schwab’s book, Edward Said said that while Schwab’s view of the Orient was “profound and beneficent” and his was “criticism of a sympathetic cast”, he “avoid[ed] the disorienting aspects of the European experience in the East” as well as any “ethno- and anthropocentric” approaches to it, and while he must not be regarded as “a failed theorist”, his value lay in the fact that his “great scholarly achievement” provided the occasion for later “theoretical orientation” – such, presumably, as Said’s own in his book *Orientalism*.¹³

Indeed, Schwab’s view of “orientalism” (and “perhaps no single word has been so loaded with emotion, even passion,” he had already noted in 1950) and Said’s view of it represent two diametrically opposed approaches to the phenomenon. But though Schwab and Said differ radically on whether this substantial body of translated Indian literature had a beneficial or a deleterious influence on the West, they are both agreed on how enormous and vital the influence was. In any case, as the British won more and more vital military victories in India and consolidated their colonial power, their regard for oriental texts seemed correspondingly to decline; their enhanced power over India neither facilitated nor seemed to depend on any enhanced knowledge of the country. Shortly afterwards, in fact, they instituted steps to make the Indians

learn English and discover Western literature and come under its influence, in one of the clearest instances of a direct use of power to turn the tide of the flow of knowledge and its direction.¹⁴

Following a decision taken by the Governor-General of India in 1837 and the consequent setting-up of numerous colleges and, in 1857, three universities in India on the British pattern, a small but important section of Indians began to study not only English language and literature but even Sanskrit literature through the medium of English. The heyday of orientalism was by now clearly over, and it had by decree been replaced by a kind of occidentalism. The discovery of Sanskrit literature may or may not have led to an oriental renaissance in England, but the imposition of English literature in India under the colonial dispensation did soon lead to what several traditional historians of the phenomenon acclaimed as “the Bengal Renaissance” or “the Indian Renaissance”, though some major contemporary critics have recently begun to interrogate the description.¹⁵

Western impact

Though literature in Sanskrit and two closely related ancient languages, Prakrit and Pali, had flourished in India since about 1500 B.C. (and also, since about 250 B.C., in a Dravidian language in South India – Tamil), and though both ancient and modern Indian languages had been constantly interacting with some Central Asian languages and cultures such as Turkish, Arabic and Persian since about 900 A.D., it is undeniable that Indian literature even in its already hybridised condition had never before felt an impact as hard and powerful as that caused by our discovery of English literature. Though the English language belonged at least nominally to the Indo-European family, its syntax, culture, social conventions, values and world-view were all as different as could be imagined. This by itself would have been enough to cause a great impact, but what made the impact incalculably greater was that English literature came to us as the literature of our masters. The influence of English literature on Indian literature may be one of the most extensive and profound influences ever exerted by one literature over another, but it still remains only a very small part of the larger master narrative, if one may so call it, of the impact of British colonial rule on India, and is inextricably entwined with it. It was not merely, or even mainly, a literary and cultural influence; it was a more comprehensively hegemonic oppression.¹⁶

Numerous fascinating accounts of this influence are available either in autobiographical accounts by Indian creative writers, or in comparative critical discussions of the merits of say Shakespeare and Kalidasa, the fourth-century Sanskrit dramatist and poet whom Sir William Jones had already acclaimed as “the Shakespeare of India” in the preface to his translation of his foremost play, the *Abhijnanashakuntalam*, under the title *Sacountala* (1789). For example, Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengali poet who won the Nobel prize for literature

in 1913, said how the “spirit of Europe” had awakened and “dazzled” him when he was an adolescent, and that the “impetuosity of [...] passion” of a romantic poet like Byron in particular had “moved our veiled heart-bride in the seclusion of her corner”.¹⁷ (This erotic-mystical metaphor for the literary influence of the West upon the East is, incidentally, profoundly traditional and comes straight from the long line of Indian devotional poetry of which Tagore was one of the last major practitioners; however stirring and sweeping the influence of the West may have been, it was still felt and described by him in unreconstituted Eastern terms.)

Rather more prosaic in tone is an academic account of this influence written in English (and first published by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, in 1948, one year after India attained independence):

The bulk of it [i.e., Bengali literature] was monotonous, platitudinous, convention-ridden, and devoid of substance, variety and virility. [...] [C]ontact with English literature has given it substance and variety, intellectuality and modernity. It has [...] become a fit medium for adult and civilized consciousness. More important than anything else, it has become humanized. [...] The Bengali writer need no longer live in the darkness and isolation of his native medievalism; he is a citizen of the entire modern world.¹⁸

This was written by J. C. Ghosh, who was one of the first Indians to obtain a D. Phil. in English from Oxford, for his edition of Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*, which he followed up with his edition, only recently superseded, of *The Works of Thomas Otway: Plays, Poems and Love-Letters*, 2 volumes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932). He stayed on in England, though he never got a proper academic job as a university teacher of English, which apparently he hankered for all his life with his high qualifications; he could only manage little odd jobs as a drudge (such as assisting with the revision of the *Short-Title Catalogue*), or short-term fellowships for a succession of assorted research projects, except for being appointed as a poorly paid lecturer, not in English but in Bengali (in which he had no formal qualifications) at the University of Cambridge. He remained a confirmed Anglophile, and his short history of Bengali literature, from which the above extract is taken, was written on a grant from the Rhodes Trust.

Ghosh's account of the influence of English literature on Bengali literature as having been not only a modernising but indeed a civilising force indicates that he had fully internalised the British colonial claim that their rule in India was a civilising mission. But Ghosh's further claim that this influence served to “humanise” Bengali literature, as if it had been sub-human or inhuman ever since its origin, is contradicted by Ghosh's own account earlier in his book according to which Bengali literature began in the twelfth century, while its great epic, which Ghosh calls “the Bible of the people of Bengal” and which was written in the fifteenth century, heralded “the great classical renaissance which in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries poured the treasures of ancient Sanskrit literature in a golden shower over Bengal”.¹⁹ But this lyrical tribute by Ghosh to what Bengali literature derived from Sanskrit literature is apparently

forgotten, disparaged and even expunged when he comes, but a hundred pages later in his brief history, to eulogise the Western influence on Bengali literature.

Indian response

In fact, not many Indian critics have been able to command the long perspective in which to view steadily and whole the older constitutive and shaping influence of Sanskrit literature on the literature of the modern Indian languages as well as the newer, unsettling and transformative influence of Western literature. In as balanced an assessment of the matter as perhaps any critic has achieved so far, Sisir Kumar Das, in his magisterial *History of Indian Literature*, speaks (in the sub-title of the volume covering the crucial colonial period 1800–1910) not only of “Western Impact” but equally of “Indian Response”, which was often resistant and antagonistic, and of a sense not only of excitement at the new exposure to Western literature but also of a recoil to the old Sanskrit sources of traditional sustenance:

What makes this period unique in our literary history is its continuous conflict between the indigenous and the alien ideals, values and sensibilities.

It was not a contact between two authors or two texts, it was a contact between two civilizations in an unfortunate historical circumstance. [...] This love and hate relationship with the West made the literary contact tortuous and complex.²⁰

Though the Indian writers borrowed from Western literature several new literary genres and forms such as tragedy, the novel, and the essay, they still resisted, according to Das, “the values expressed” through such works in English. The attraction for the new was “at times hesitant and cautious, at times impetuous and uninhibited”. Even where the novelty of what came from the West was blinding, as in the case of the novel, the Indian exponents of this new form did not “lose their links with the *katha* and *akhyān* and *dastān*” – the older forms of narrative available from the Sanskrit as well as the Perso-Arabic literary traditions. Similarly, the induction of tragedy – inconsistent with the invariably restorative and harmonising happy endings of Sanskrit drama – brought with it “a new vision which could not be easily reconciled with a world-order regulated by the doctrine of *karma*” and again required a tough balancing act. Indeed, a direct consequence of our encounter with the West was that we went back to look again at what we already had and to reassess its worth and value. “Never in our literary history,” observes Das, “was there so much obsession with the past, such glorification and defence, such criticism and introspection.”²¹

It was as if, on being confronted with the alien novel, the Indian writer instinctively reached for his *katha* and his *dastān*, and on coming across tragedy, for his *karma*. A true measure of the depth of the Western impact on India seems to have been what may be called the nearly equal and opposite reaction that it caused, of taking the Indian writer back to his traditional sources which

had regulated Indian literature in an uninterrupted (if constantly modified) continuum right to the point of the arrival of the British, without the hiatus of any “medieval” or “dark” ages. Unlike in some other parts of the colonised world, such as Africa and the West Indies and, in a different way, also the white settler colonies, we in India had something traditional, substantial and no less rich of our own into which, and against which, to receive the Western impact and to cushion and even foil it. The Western influence on Indian literature was nothing if not dialectical and dialogic, which makes it perhaps as vast and complex an example as one could find anywhere in world literature not only of influence but also of reception.

The anxiety to be influenced

In this context, the Indian critical discourse on Western influence seems almost as fascinating as the influence itself, and contributes to the issue a paratextual (if not quite metatextual) dimension. This discourse seems to divide predictably into two broad categories, of critics who find such influence everywhere, and of other critics who are either reluctant to see such influence or tend to play it down. However, what unites both the categories is their common concern with identifying what they implicitly or explicitly regard as “good” and enabling influence, and distinguishing it from bad or sterile influence.

The “anxiety of influence” (i.e., a basically romantic concern to preserve and protect one’s own originality against the possible influence of “strong” predecessors, perceived Oedipally as father-figures) has been identified by Harold Bloom as a condition universal enough in Western literature to provide him with a whole “theory of poetry”.²² In colonial India, on the other hand, in the first flush of Western influence, it was often seen as a badge of distinction to have been influenced by some Western author or other; a term of high praise for a writer was to be called, for example, the Walter Scott or the Byron or the Shelley or whatever of Bengal.

It has been in particular in critical discussions of the novel, which is generally agreed to have been a form that did not exist in India before the beginning of the Western influence, that influence studies have had a field day. One of the most impressive critical works here was produced as a doctoral thesis by Bharat Bhushan Agrawal, fairly late in his career, when he was already well known as a Hindi poet and novelist and held a senior administrative post in the Sahitya Akademi, the Indian National Academy of Letters. *Hindi Upanyas par Pashchatya Prabhaw* (Western Influence on the Hindi Novel), a lively 500-page treatise, is as scholarly, sensitive, and searching an account of literary influence as perhaps any yet attempted in Hindi criticism, and therefore worth attending to for both its virtues and its limitations.

In it, Agrawal sets out to explore Western influence on about a dozen modern Hindi novelists who came to prominence after the death in 1936 of the greatest Hindi novelist, Premchand. Agrawal’s own text may be in Hindi but his

footnotes are often in English, especially in the early theoretical chapters. He attempts to define “*prabhav*” which is the common Hindi word for “influence”:

In one sense, of course, each thought or sentiment is [an example of] influence because, by definition, each thought that arises or is born in the mind cannot come into existence without some impact of the external world, yet there is a sufficient difference between the two even if of a subtle kind. [...] Thus, there is a marked element of reaction in influence. [...] And the reaction may not always be positive, it may also be negative. [...]

A second characteristic of influence is that it is by its very nature not whole but partial. [...]

A third characteristic of influence is that it is not obligatory but optional. [...] If there is no reaction at all, it is not possible for influence to exist. [...]

A fourth characteristic of influence is that by itself, it is not enduring or permanent. Born as a reaction, it enters one’s sensibility but then it is either erased, in the sense that one’s sensibility is freed of it and returns to its original nature, or it is assimilated into the sentiments bred by one’s own sensibility and becomes a part of a person’s nature.²³

Even if one did not know the context, this might appear to be a specially circumstantial definition of the nature of influence. The repeated emphasis on either a contestatory or a mitigatory aspect of influence – to the effect that all reaction could be called influence, that influence is as often negative as positive, that it is not obligatory but optional, and that it sooner rather than later dissolves to become part of one’s own nature – would appear to be a palpably postcolonial strategy to suggest that though Western literature may have exercised a vast amount of influence on Indian literature, that should not be construed as a continued dominance of the latter by the former.

However, such apparently postcolonial sturdiness does not stop Agrawal from treating all his chosen Hindi novelists as guilty almost of plagiarism until proved innocent, as if that were the recognised universal procedure for conducting influence studies. For example, S. H. Vatsyayan Ajneya (1911–87), who was not only himself the first major modernist poet and novelist in Hindi but, through his role as an outstanding editor of journals and anthologies, also the cause of modernism in numerous other Hindi writers, is subjected to a particularly close interrogation regarding his possible Western sources, including some that he himself openly and blithely acknowledged, among them “*Through the Eyes of a Child*” (sc. *The Eyes of a Child*, 1917), a novel by Edwin Pugh. It is a deliciously ironical reflection on the nature of colonial influence that while the novel in question by Ajneya, *Shekhar: Ek Jivani* (2 vols, 1941, 1944) is agreed to be one of the greatest Hindi novels of the twentieth century, Pugh (1874–1930), who was a Fabian socialist and a prolific novelist of the realist Cockney school, does not even rate an entry in the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*.

At other places, too, Agrawal appears to be as dogged and even obtuse an influence-hunter as can be imagined. In a major Hindi novel, *Sunita* (1936) by Jainendra Kumar, a male character says to a female: “‘You lie down, Sunita’ ...

And Sunita lay down." Agrawal claims that there is an uncanny resemblance in phrasing here with D. H. Lawrence, for "exactly the same sentence occurs in Lawrence." The passage Agrawal quotes here (in his accurate but edited Hindi translation) from *Lady Chatterley's Lover* runs as follows in the original English:

"You lie there," he said softly, and he shut the door, so that it was dark, quite dark.

With a queer obedience, she lay down on the blanket.²⁴

It does not seem to matter to Agrawal that in the Hindi novel there is no door to shut and there is no darkness, and no queer obedience and no blanket either (India being a hot country), to say nothing of what follows in Lawrence, an act of sexual intercourse candidly and directly staged, which cannot conceivably take place in the work of a Gandhian moralist like Jainendra Kumar. For Agrawal, it is quite enough that both the women are asked to lie down and do so; all women thus lying down are "exactly the same" for him, apparently. This may seem to be the bane not only of influence studies in general but of colonial influence studies in particular, where as much as possible in the text of a colonial writer is often sought to be shown to be derived from a Western writer, even if it is just a woman lying down.

Broadly comparable in attitude to Agrawal is a later critic, Jaidev, who was Professor of English at the university in Shimla, and whose work of criticism, written in English and titled *The Culture of Pastiche: Existential Aestheticism in the Contemporary Hindi Novel* (1993) deals with the work of four later Hindi novelists who all began writing after India gained independence in 1947, and who may therefore at least technically be called postcolonial. Jaidev describes three of his four chosen novelists as being "captivated by the lore of High Modernism and existentialism", both Western literary movements which he asserts have no valid relevance or resonance in India. By the term "pastiche", which Jaidev says he uses interchangeably with "influence, imitation, adoption [and] intertextuality", he means to indicate that these novelists "willingly, almost gratefully, allow the [Western] influence to become the most dominant code in their novels." And in the "Conclusion", he clarifies that his study "has not been against the influence of Western writers or movements on the Hindi novelists. [. . .] It has only been against their undue privileging of this influence."²⁵ He, too, cites numerous parallel passages from these Hindi novelists and Western novelists such as Camus and Beckett and imputes resemblances between them, many of which again seem so broad as to be untenable. For example, Molloy in Beckett is at one point asked by an intruder, "Are you not dead yet?", whereas a Hindi hero of Krishna Baldev Vaid is asked by a visitor, "Are you still alive?"²⁶

Thus, if there was among some early Indian enthusiasts of Western literature in the nineteenth century a marked anxiety to be influenced, there has apparently been a corresponding eagerness among some Indian literary critics of a later era to see postcolonial Indian writers as still being unduly influenced by the West. In the case of Agrawal, it may have been sheer source-hunting indulged in as a delectable

critical game, but for Jaidev it was probably more a case of moral indignation and anguish at finding that though India had attained *swaraj*, or self-rule politically by becoming independent, at least some strands of Indian “literary discourse” still had “room neither for Gandhi nor for our culture” and created fictional characters so Westernised in their sensibility that “they often wilfully estrange themselves from India, her needs and her socio-cultural practices, in order to go global”.²⁷

Postcolonial intertextuality

The year following the publication of *The Culture of Pastiche*, Jaidev contributed a paper to a conference in which he described postcolonialism as “a long, difficult moral project” of building “a good nation” in which the poor and the lowly were at least “allowed the right to be decently poor and human” and to be accorded literary representation in “simple texts [with] simple literary norms”. At the same time, he expressed serious doubt, in the allusive (and untranslated) Hindi title which he pointedly gave his paper written in English, whether such postcolonialism will ever come to pass.²⁸

The postcolonialism that has come to pass certainly has no simple norms, nor can the inter-text be by any means called a simple text. In an intermeshing of the two major “post-” discourses of our times, the ever-deferred semantic and semiotic contingencies of the postmodern have infected the urgent oppositional political impulse that initially underlay the postcolonial, to form a condition of hybrid identity ideally suited (in Homi Bhabha’s compelling phrase) to the “translational transnational”,²⁹ i.e., the Third World migrant in transit to the First World. And any kind of nation or nationalism, let alone the “good nation”, is now in bad theoretical odour. The postcolonial world, having dissolved the old blameful binary of the coloniser and the colonised, has gone global, just as the great majority of the “postcolonial” writers seem to have migrated to the West and to be now writing (back?) from that cosy proximity to the centre in the one global language, English. The distinction between the centre and the periphery seems no longer to hold or is said even to have been reversed – with the attendant paradox that if there is now no difference between the centre and the periphery, there is not much point perhaps in being the new centre.³⁰

In terms of influence, too, we are now told that it was those who were influenced who had the best part of the deal rather than those who exercised the influence. For instance, Michael Baxandall tells us that if we think not of influence *on* but influence *for*,

the vocabulary is much richer and more attractively diversified: draw on, resort to, avail oneself of, appropriate from, have recourse to, adapt, misunderstand, refer to, pick up, take on, engage with, react to, quote, differentiate oneself from, assimilate oneself to, assimilate, align oneself with, copy, address, paraphrase, absorb, make a variation on, revive, continue, remodel, ape, emulate, travesty, parody, extract from, distort, attend to, resist, simplify, reconstitute, elaborate on, develop, face up to, master, subvert, perpetuate, reduce, promote, respond to, transform, tackle . . . – everyone will be able to think of others.³¹

What a colonial subject might be able to think of, even beyond this somewhat contrarily exhaustive list (which has both “assimilate oneself to” and “assimilate” in the same breath, and similarly “ape, emulate” as well as “travesty, parody”) are words like “be dominated by, be oppressed, be hegemonised” – all terms used before in this discussion, which apparently still lie beyond Baxandall’s interminable and perhaps irresponsibly ludic range. Again, the historical colonial experience of being influenced by the West does not show many of the possibilities listed by Baxandall as having been available as real options. Homi Bhabha’s celebrated examples of “sly civility” and subversive “mimicry” on the part of some Indians in their response to the West all date from a period before the British had consolidated themselves as a ruling power in India, when the playing field was if not quite level then at least not steeply unlevel, and they are in any case exceptions and not the rule.³²

The shift from almost coercive and certainly hegemonic colonial “influence” to apparently less hierarchical and more enabling postcolonial “intertextuality”, this shifting of the goal posts in extra-time, may seem to be a form of belated empowerment. If the new intertextual dispensation has visibly enabled any writers, it must be Salman Rushdie and other younger postcolonial Indian writers in English, who can be seen in the West to be reassuringly intertextual by the mere fact of their writing about India in a Western language, English, and furthermore, by writing in such a *scriptible* or “writerly” mode that even an acknowledged expert on intertextuality such as Graham Allen could take India to be Pakistan.³³

A more challenging and therefore more rewarding task before students of influence, reception and/or intertextuality (especially those familiar with an Indian language and/or located in India) may be to read the works of numerous young and old writers still writing in the Indian languages. They are demonstrably bilingual and therefore have what may be called an intercultural sensibility that is likely to have been even more conducive to the production of intertextuality than, say, Rushdie’s predominantly Anglophone sensibility.

To cite very briefly a couple of examples, two of the four novelists whom Jaidev considers in his book to be *pasticheurs* if not worse have had career trajectories that seem tailor-made for intertextual creativity. Nirmal Verma (1929–2005), probably the foremost Hindi novelist of the last (postcolonial) half-century, was the son of a senior bureaucrat of the British Raj, and got his B.A. and M.A. degrees from St Stephen’s College, Delhi, an elite missionary institution where several noted Indian novelists writing in English also studied later, including Amitav Ghosh, Allan Sealy and Shashi Tharoor. Verma, in contrast, decided to write in Hindi, and in 1957 went on a scholarship to Czechoslovakia where he learnt the language and translated several Czech writers into Hindi, including Milan Kundera before he became known in the West. After the Prague Spring of 1968, Verma went to London and lived there for about two years before returning to India for good. His first novel, *Vē dīn* (literally, “Those Days”; in published English translation, *Days of Longing*), is set entirely in Prague, while a selection of thirteen short stories by him all set in the

West is available in English translation in a volume titled *Indian Errant*. Though he always wrote his fiction in Hindi, Verma would often write his essays and conference papers in either English or Hindi, as seemed suitable.

Another novelist even more sternly castigated by Jaidev, Krishna Baldev Vaid (1927–), taught English literature in a college of the University of Delhi before going to the USA where he obtained a Ph.D. from Harvard in 1961; his doctoral dissertation was published by Harvard University Press in 1964 under the title *Technique in the Tales of Henry James*. He then taught English for over two decades at the State University of New York at Potsdam before returning to live in India. Besides numerous Hindi novels, short stories and plays of his own, many of them published while he was living in the USA, he has also published translations into Hindi of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, and of *Alice in Wonderland*, and translations into English of Nirmal Verma's first novel, *Days of Longing*, and of several books of his own fiction, including his much acclaimed first novel, *Uska Bachpan* (literally, "His Childhood"), as *Steps in Darkness*.

It could be argued that both Verma and Vaid know the West rather better than, say, Rushdie knows India, which he left forever when he was a mere child of thirteen. Nor could Rushdie, by all available evidence, possibly translate a work of his own into Hindi/Urdu/Hindustani, which is his first Indian language, to save his life. If intertextuality is not mainly a matter of multilingual punning and allusion-mongering broadly within the same culture (as in the case of James Joyce), or a superficial and sensational representation of the exotic "other" (as in the case of Salman Rushdie), but the function of a more deeply permeating intermingling of two radically different cultures within the same individual sensibility, as in the cases of Verma and Vaid (and of scores of other writers from the eighteen major Indian languages), then, a close study of such Indian writers may lead to a serious enrichment of our understanding of both (colonial) influence and (postcolonial) intertextuality, and possibly also a reformulation of the very meaning and definition of these terms on the evidence of their modified function in a (post)colonial context, beyond the ateliers of Western theory.

HARISH TRIVEDI

Department of English
University of Delhi
Delhi 110007
India

NOTES

- ¹ V. Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927; rpt. London, 1951), pp. 24, 105.
- ² D. Lodge, *Small World* (New York, 1984), pp. 59–60.
- ³ M. Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 83ff.
- ⁴ Qtd. in Orr, *Intertextuality*, p. 33.
- ⁵ Rptd. in D. Lodge, *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (London, 1988), pp. 167–72, 197–210.

- ⁶ G. Allen, *Intertextuality* (London, 2000), pp. 5–6.
- ⁷ J. Mowitz, *Text: The Genealogy of an Anti-Disciplinary Object* (Durham NC, 1992), p. 110.
- ⁸ Qtd. in Mowitz, *Text*, p. 110.
- ⁹ See M. Drabble (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, new edn (Oxford, 1985), pp. 703 and 100, and M. Galik, “East–West interliterariness: a theoretical sketch and a historical overview”, in: *Comparative Literature: Theory and Practice*, ed. A. Dev & S. K. Das (Shimla, 1989), p. 120.
- ¹⁰ See R. Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe’s Rediscovery of India and the East 1680–1880* (in French 1950; Eng. tr. New York, 1984), pp. 152–60.
- ¹¹ Schwab, “There is an Oriental Renaissance”, in his *Oriental Renaissance*, pp. 11–20 and passim.
- ¹² J. Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination* (Delhi, 1987).
- ¹³ E. W. Said, “Foreword”, in Schwab, *Oriental Renaissance*, pp. vii–xix. For a textually detailed analysis of the connection between imperialism and Romantic Orientalism, see N. Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (1992; rpt. New Delhi, 1993).
- ¹⁴ For a survey of the production and politics of orientalism in India through translations into English in the nineteenth century, see H. Trivedi, “Literatures of the Indian sub-continent”, in: *The Oxford History of Literary Translation into English*, ed. P. France & S. Gillespie, Vol. 4 (Oxford, 2006).
- ¹⁵ For example, see Namvar Singh, “The Nineteenth century Indian Renaissance: myth or reality?”, in Avadhesh K. Singh, *Indian Renaissance Literature* (New Delhi, 2003), pp. 53–79.
- ¹⁶ For an extensive discussion of how Western literary influence was felt by numerous Indian writers to be an oppression, see S. Chandra, *The Oppressive Present: Literature and Social Consciousness in Colonial India* (Delhi, 1992). See also the section titled “The Early Hindi Novel; The Tyranny of the Form”, in H. Trivedi, “The progress of Hindi, Part 2: Hindi and the nation”, in: *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. S. Pollock (Berkeley, 2003), pp. 1002–7.
- ¹⁷ Qtd. in H. Trivedi, “Nationalism, internationalism, imperialism: Tagore on England and the West”, in H. Trivedi, *Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India* (Manchester, 1995), p. 56.
- ¹⁸ J. C. Ghosh, *Bengali Literature* (1948; rpt. London, 1976), pp. 118–19.
- ¹⁹ Ghosh, *Bengali Literature*, pp. 34–5.
- ²⁰ S. K. Das, *A History of Indian Literature 1800–1910, Western Impact: Indian Response* (New Delhi, 1991), p. 331.
- ²¹ Das, *A History*, pp. 332, 332, 336, 340 and 336, respectively.
- ²² H. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford, 1973).
- ²³ B. B. Agrawal, *Hindi upanyas par pashchatya prabhaw* (New Delhi, n.d. [c. 1971]), pp. 66–8; my translation. Incidentally, a standard dictionary defines “*prabhaw*” as “1. power, might; majesty. 2. influence (upon); effect; impression”, and the adjectival past participle “*prabhavit*” as “influenced (by); impressed (by)”; “*prabhaw*” in both its senses thus seems an altogether more useful word in a colonial context than “influence” in English. R. S. McGregor, *The Oxford Hindi–English Dictionary* (Delhi, 1997), p. 662.
- ²⁴ Agrawal, pp. 352–3, and D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (London, 1973), p. 120.
- ²⁵ Jaidev, *The Culture of Pastiche: Existential Aestheticism in the Contemporary Hindi Novel* (Shimla, 1993), pp. 23, 3 and 224, respectively.
- ²⁶ Jaidev, *Culture*, p. 160.
- ²⁷ Jaidev, *Culture*, pp. 14, 89.
- ²⁸ Jaidev, “*Na Aane Wala Post-colonialism?*”, in: *Interrogating Post-Colonialism: Theory, Text and Context*, ed. H. Trivedi & M. Mukherjee (Shimla, 1996), pp. 177–85.
- ²⁹ H. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994), p. 172–3 and passim.
- ³⁰ For a variety of critical views on the matter, see M. Ghosh-Schellhorn (ed.), *Peripheral Centres, Central Peripheries* (Munster, 2006).
- ³¹ M. Baxandall, qtd. in Orr, *Intertextuality*, pp. 83–4.
- ³² Bhabha, *Location*, pp. 85–92 and 93–101.
- ³³ “In Rushdie’s novel [*Midnight’s Children*], a contemporary narrator, Saleem Sinai, born at the moment of Pakistan’s independence, tries to narrate his own life history at the same time as narrating the history of Pakistan” (G. Allen, *Intertextuality* [London, 2000], p. 192). But cf.: “I was born in the city of Bombay [...] at the precise instant of India’s arrival at independence” (S. Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* [1980; rpt. New York, 1982], p. 3). It was in his next novel, *Shame* (1983), that Rushdie narrated the “history” of Pakistan; perhaps, a case can be argued that the two novels are intertextual.