

THE PLAY OF TEXTS WITHIN A TEXT IN EMMA DONOGHUE'S *HOOD*

M. Iswarya,

Ph. D Research Scholar,
Reg No. 19223154012032
S. T. Hindu College, Nagercoil,
Affiliated to Manonmaniam
Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.

Dr. S. Ambika

Assistant Professor
Department of English
S. T. Hindu College, Nagercoil,
Affiliated to Manonmaniam
Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.

Abstract

The paper entitled “The Play of Texts within a Texts in Emma Donoghue’s *Hood*” aims to explore Donoghue’s expertise of textual incorporation in her novel *Hood* using Gerard Genette’s concept of transtextuality. It subtly projects the problems in lesbian relationships through a universally appealing theme of grief in a ‘transtextual framework’. This paper tends to reinstate the postmodern view that there is nothing called ‘absolute meaning’ in the context of textual analysis since the meanings are liable to transformation depending on the context, signifying system and intellectual experience of the readers.

Keywords: Intertextuality, Paratext, Peritext, Epitext, Metatextuality

Gerard Genette a French Literary theorist, redefines the idea of ‘intertextuality’ and propounded the concept of transtextuality which encompasses ‘intertextuality’ as one type. The term ‘intertextuality’ is originally propounded by Julia Kristeva, which she has drawn by synthesizing Saussure’s semiotics and Bhaktin’s dialogism. Genette in his book, *The Architext: An Introduction*, defines ‘transtextuality’ as, “all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts” and it “covers all aspects of a particular text (83-84). His division of transtextuality into five different types (‘intertextuality’, ‘paratextuality’, ‘metatextuality’, ‘hypertextuality’ and ‘architextuality’) gives ample space to identify and categorize the types of references authors use in their works. The paper concentrates on the prominent three types of transtextuality, ‘intertextuality’, ‘paratextuality’ and ‘metatextuality’ to explore the textual traces in *Hood*. Donoghue being Irish by birth enumerates prominent issues in pre boom Dublin in *Hood* through the eyes of her protagonist Penelope O’ Grady, in short ‘Pen’.

The first type of transtextuality is intertextuality which is characterized by its limited dimension it has. Genette’s ‘intertextuality’ as noted by Fowler is a “relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts” (1-2) and “the actual presence of one text within another” (2). To him, intertextuality is the relation between two texts, where a hypertext has some textual connections with the hypotext such as echoes, quotations, allusions and parallelism. Donoghue’s novel *Hood* is the hypertext under discussion which is parallel to the distinguished modernist novel

Ulysses by James Joyce. James Joyce's 1922 novel *Ulysses* and Donoghue's *Hood* share a lot of similarities. Despite the fact that they are written at different times as first and last half of the twentieth century, both are set in Dublin. *Ulysses* covers exactly one day of Stephen Dedalus, whereas *Hood* covers one week of Pen, the protagonist. Both Stephen Dedalus and Pen are history teachers in boys and girls elementary schools respectively. He seems to mourn for his mother's death whereas in *Hood* Pen mourns for Cara.

Hood's another parallel hypotext is Homer's *Odyssey*, the classical great epic poem. Donoghue's character Penelope O'Grady bears the same first name as the wife of Odysseus in the classic Homer's *Odyssey*. Ulysses is the Latin name of Odysseus, the hero of Homer's epic poem and the novel *Ulysses* in turn has numerous reference and parallels to that of the epic poem. Donoghue's *Hood* is based on James Joyce's *Ulysses* and it has the references of both the text either explicitly or implicitly. The name of the protagonist is significant in the *Hood* since it has its own significance. The protagonist Pen is not happy with her name, she feels that she does not have any qualities attributed to that character Penelope. She regrets as,

And why had my mother given me such a wifey name anyway? The original Penelope should have run off to an island with the wittiest suitor, or woven a fabulous tapestry that would spread her fame or just taken the dog and run along the shore. Why sit home for years in one long nightmare house-party waiting for your true love, who is probably changed, grizzled, faded, and even if they are the same, how dare they expect you to have waited that long? And as soon as they come home, they're off on their travels again. I've never woven anything, but if I did, I wouldn't rip it up; I'd wrap it round me to keep warm. (174-175)

The above passage not only reveals her hatred towards the name but it highlights how she associated herself to the mythological character Penelope. It declares the pain she undergoes every time Cara leaves to travel. In Greek mythology Penelope is the wife of Odysseus who has a zest for travel. After a year of their marriage, he leaves her for twenty years for war and wandering respectively. Though her husband is away she remains faithful despite of many suitors. In *Hood* Pen's temperament goes parallel to mythological Penelope. Like mythical Penelope, Pen has been waiting for Cara's arrival. Cara, being free-spirited hodophile often leaves Pen with expectation and uncertainty about their relationship. Mythological Penelope waits for her husband till his return whereas Pen's waiting in *Hood* becomes eternal. One thing that differentiates the mythical Penelope and Pen in *Hood* is their sexual orientation. Penelope is heterosexual whereas Pen is homosexual.

Paratextuality is the second type of Genette's transtextuality. Paratextuality conveys the relationship between a text and its 'paratext'. It refers to the materials distinct from and has some relation to the main body of a text written by someone other than the original author of the text. Peritext refers to prefaces, titles, captions, notes, dedications, illustrations, epigraphs. Genette believes that peritexts have a major influence in terms of interpreting a text. In *Hood*, the presence of peritext explicates the upcoming psychological suffering of the protagonist Pen. The author's

use of epigraph in *Hood* from Greek poet Olga Broumas's poem "Little Red Ridding Hood" explicates the complications of Pen. The poem "Little Red Ridding Hood" tells about a woman who is unable to conceive and it makes her depressed. Broumas stresses that sometimes it is necessary to accept the flow of life, since everything happens for a reason.

The epigraph in *Hood* begins with the lines, "I kept to the road, kept the hood secret, kept what it sheathed more secret still". Though the poem of Olga Broumas appears to be revealing the struggle and the pain of a women who is trying to conceive in the literal level. The metaphorical meaning of the poem suggest the plight of lesbian women who are unable to proclaim their relationship openly. The epigraph reveals the struggle of Pen who is unable to grieve openly for her beloved Cara death and how she tries to conceal her real nature. It also hints at the hesitation of Pen throughout the novel about her relationship status by highlighting the importance of the title *Hood*.

Metatextuality is the third type of transtextuality. In Genette's words, "it unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it (without summoning it), in fact sometimes even without naming it" (4). The inclusion of lyrics from the song "Molly Malone" and also significant. The song "Molly Malone" is about a fishwife who used to sell fishes on the street of Dublin and she dies of fever at an young age. The fictional character Molly Malone is very popular since the legend around her is evident in most of the Irish folk songs. In one version, she is deemed as a woman of chastity, whereas in other version she appears to be a woman who sells fish and day and prostituted herself at night.

Pen's homosexuality is not known to her mother, Cara's father Mr. Wall, and sisters in her school. She is an iconic figure of chastity in the eyes of people who do not know about her relationship, but her true nature comes to be in light only at night. It implies how Pen enjoys carnal pleasures at nights before Cara's death and how she manages to hide their relationship. In the song, it is said that even after the death, the ghost of fishwife who sells fishes in the street which directly alludes to the memory of Cara which haunts Pen even after her demise. It also reveals Pen's state of delusion after Cara's death. The story around Molly Malone is quite relevant to highlight the nature of Pen. The inclusion of song "Molly Malone" is rather critical though Pen likes the song for its rhythm which helps her to do her household works better. Beside being just the part of the book, the songs Donoghue incorporated expands the meaning of the text by reinstating the problems of the text.

The incorporation of lyrics from "Johnny I Hardly Knew Ye" is also significant. It is a song written by Joseph. B. Geoghegan and the song is in popular Britain, Ireland and the United States respectively in the early twentieth Century. The song is considered as a famous anti-war song. Though it appears as a humorous song, it conveys the cruelty of war. Pen says that death songs are 'catchiest' though the lyrics are meant to induce the negative feelings associated with death. Donoghue's incorporation of the Geoghegan lyrics in *Hood* as follows: "you haven't an arm and

you have'nt a leg/ you are an eyesless noseless chickenless egg/ you will have to be put in a bowl to beg/och Johny I hardly knew you (275).

The song is a monologue of an Irish woman meets the former lover on her road who ran away to be a soldier, after the birth of her illegitimate child. Through the song the reinstatement of Cara's nature as a hodophile and fun lover is being done. Unlike Pen, Cara is very conscious of her look and she loves to present her well. Pen feels that, "It was as well that she hit the frame of the car head-on; she would not have wanted to survive as an eyeless, noseless, chickenless egg" (275). Simandan mentioned Genette's idea of metatextual traces as , "explicitly refers to clear and obvious way, leaving no doubt as to the intended meaning" (32). Since pen is aware of Cara's nature she thinks that it is better for Cara not to survive the accident. The song again has a similar and obvious role to play in *Hood* as Homer's *Odyssey*. It suggests the waiting of Pen but it also hints at the feelings she has for Kate, Cara's sister before thirteen years though she is not disloyal as Cara in their relationship.

The presence of intertextual, paratextual and metatextual traces in the novel *Hood* enhances the literary quality of the text by incorporating textual elements from various classical texts. The play of multiple texts in a text tries to conceal the gap between past and present, and it redefines the past and reproduces into a new context. It highlights the multiplicity of meaning possible within a text by suggesting that there is nothing called 'absolute meaning' in a text. Interpretation varies depends on one's knowledge and understanding of the textual traces within a text.

Works Cited

- Donoghue, Emma. *Hood*. Harper Perennial, 1995.
- Fowler, A. *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the theory of Genres and Modes*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1982.
- Genette, Gerard. *The Architext: An Introduction*. University of California Press, 1992.
- , *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. University of Nebraska Press, 1997.
- Simandan, Voicu Mihnea, *The Matrix and the Alice*. Lulu Books, 2010.