



ON CRITIQUING INFLUENCE AND PLAGIARISM

Dr.Jeyashree G.

(Associate Professor/Vice Principal, Dr.Ambedkar College of Commerce and Economics, Mumbai.)

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ABSTRACT



The term that every research scholar is conscious of is *plagiarism*. Stealing or copying others' work is plagiarism. Broadly speaking every research scholar strives to produce original work. Despite working diligently many a time the research scholars face certain hurdles that question the authenticity of their work. Hence, the scholars are anxious to produce his/her work devoid of plagiarism. The paper deals with the concept of influence and plagiarism evincing the distinction between the two. Matter and manner are the two major ingredients that lucidly project the discrimination between the two concepts. The paper refers to the theory of Harold bloom which refers to the psychological struggle of the aspiring authors to overcome the influence of their literary antecedents.

Every work stems from the previous work. But the manner in which the borrowed concept is projected is important. Literary works appeal to the emotions and feelings where there are chances of overlapping that put them in trouble. The paper also speculates *cryptomnesia*, when an author is alleged of plagiarism, he/she justifies that his/her borrowing from another work is unintentional. The paper attempts to illuminate the discrimination of influence and plagiarism which every author ought to be aware of before venturing to write on a subject.

Keywords: *Influence, Plagiarism, Concepts, Discrimination, Scholars.*

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INTRODUCTION

All mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated. . . .—John Donne

The process of researching tends to unearth something that already exists in the world. Every work is the conduit of the past. *No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. . . . The existing [literary] monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them.* The source of a text is the matter which resembles some earlier work and the dissemination of the *matter* in varied perspectives is the *manner* that every research has to focus.

Literature appeals to emotions and feelings. The work of a literary writer is subjective. The scholars may find overlapping of ideas during the process of their study but the manner in which the work presented is more important. The dramatic theme of Dryden's play *All for Love* stems from the Shakespeare's play *Antony and the Cleopatra*, nevertheless, Dryden cannot be accused of plagiarism as he has duly registered in his preface that his work was influenced by Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, as the play offered *an excellent moral* in its depiction of the unfortunate consequences of *unlawful love*. But though the source of the play is pecked from Shakespeare's play *Antony and Cleopatra*, Dryden's play *All for Love* is projected in a different perspective firmly

imprinting the originality of the writer as the play focuses on Alexandra's doomed relationship with her husband Antony. Moreover, the influence of Shakespeare has been acknowledged by Dryden. There is a fine line that distinguishes plagiarism and influence. Scholars from various fields choose the themes for their work from various sources. These themes become the motif of their study as the human brain is bombarded through various sources. These sources implant a theme of a work that attracts their psyche.

INFLUENCE AND PLAGIARISM

Writers and artists are consciously or unconsciously influenced by their role models or the subjects that cater to their tastes. Many a time the writers are tempted to write on the topics that attract them. On such occasions these writers tend to write on the topics which had been already published, but they make an attempt to write in their original style that expose a different perception making the work totally different from the resource text from which the gist of the work had been extracted. Hence different styles are recorded based on the common topic. Such works come under the cadre of influence.

A keen perusal of the history of English Literature illumines the fact that influence is the major factor that provides a base for a new work. Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* written between 1387 and 1400 depicts a group of pilgrims where every member of the group tells a story during their journey to the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket. The critics surmise that the



repertoire of tales narrated by the members of the group resembles *Boccaccio's Decameron*. The Government record shows Chaucer's several trips to Italy between 1367 and 1378 and the critics assume that he might have met Boccaccio during this period as the *Canterbury Tales* is published between 1387 and 1400 after his visit to Italy. However there was no evidence of their meeting. Chaucer's earlier works bear French influence that illumines the fact that every work is the collage of different sources.

T.S. Eliot in his *Tradition and individual Talents* affirms that no work is independent. He observes, *what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it*. No work is autonomous nevertheless the work should vouch originality of the writer.

There are certain materials that unconsciously embed in the bottom of the heart of the authors from their prior reading or listening to a particular subject. These materials surface in their work that put them under the purview of plagiarism. Psychologists observe that these authors experience *Cryptomnesia, a concealed recollections* where certain themes are buried in the mind of the authors from prior reading or listening and these themes emerge in their works that will place them in plagiarism. Such oblivious presentation of a work that reflects the source of another author questions the authenticity and credibility of the writer even though they argue that they are unaware of plagiarism.

Coleridge, a well-known poet of Romantic age has been criticized for plagiarism and his indebtedness to other writers. The poet's defenders refer to his *eccentricity work habits* and his prodigious power of writing but Thomas De Quincey, one of his contemporary writers has exposed Coleridge's literary appropriation stating that his literary indebtedness to other writers had been characterized as *personal neurosis*. During this period intellectual Property Rights was in an evolving process legally and plagiarism was rather associated to aesthetic judgment than moral attributes.

Cryptomnesia, has been widely discussed by the critics and psychologists. It is questionable to gauge the authenticity of the author's defense pertaining to ethics of writing. There are chances that ideas and concepts may emerge in the writer's mind and be reproduced in the works that resemble a material which had been already published. To sum up these authors justify that that they have used the materials unintentionally. However such works are considered as plagiarized even though the writers argue owing to the faulty memory rather than negligence or malice as it is difficult to understand if the writers' assertion is true or not. One of the most debated cases of *cryptomnesia* is Helen Keller's *The Frost King*. Helen Keller was born in 1880 and became deaf and blind at an early age. She was educated by her teacher Anne Sullivan and later became an author and activist. When she was eleven years old she wrote a book, *The Frost king* and submitted to the head of the Perkins



School for the Blind which was published in their Alumni magazine and later it was published in the Goodson Gazette, a journal of deaf and blind education that reached broader audience, it was discovered that the story had a strong resemblance including at some lines, to another story entitled Frost Fairies by Margaret Canby. She was tried by a school of court that consisted of four sighted people and four blind ones. They interrogated her and the judgment came favorable to her. Yet it was harrowing experience for her that made her give up writing fiction altogether, in fact she lost interest in writing. There are cases of *crytomnesia* that gives opportunity for writers to argue that they have not plagiarized intentionally. But it is very essential to be vigilant as writers may take advantage of the term. Nevertheless, at the bottom of their heart, the writers are anxious of being influenced by their predecessors that may trap in plagiarism.

Every aspiring author often experience *anxiety of influence* referring to literary antecedents as there is en number of works penned on a particular subject. Harold bloom in his book *Anxiety of Influence* validates that only a strong writer could resist the anxiety of influence. Thus the anxiety of influence always simmers in the mind of the budding writers. The term plagiarism unnerves them. Influence from the varied sources is ineluctable but the manner in which a work is presented should guarantee the originality of the author.

Different versions of the fairy tale *Beauty and Beast* have been published and later

made into movies. These versions share a common concept but the varied presentations with improvisations made by the authors firmly affirms the skill of understanding the taste of the public. This tale is first written by French novelist Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve and published in 1740. Later in 1756, Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont abridged the version and published it in Children's collection. From then onwards varied versions are produced to cater to the taste of the public. Influence plays a vital role in writing especially in humanities. Literary writings are always stem from the preceding works.

CONCLUSION

Intellectual Property Rights is formed to protect one's work from theft. The efforts of the writers needs to be protected from the pseudo authors who attempt to steal the brainchild of others. The term plagiarism is derived from the Latin word *Plagiarius* that denotes stealing of someone else's work. The word was pioneered by the Roman poet Martial in the 1st century who complained that another author had *kidnapped his verses*. The term *Plagiary* a **derivative of plagiarus, introduced into English in 1601** when the dramatist Ben Jonson alleged someone guilty of literary theft. The proper term plagiarism was introduced **around 1620** which refers to *kidnapper* and *plagium*. Authors of all age are conscious to protect their works from plagiarism but ideas and messages resurge with varied perspectives. However when ideas disseminated across a work that resembles



any other work, it will come under *paraphrasing plagiarism*. Conscious or unconscious borrowing of materials of other's work amounts to plagiarism. The paper refers to varied sources but they are used as support material to validate the points which are discussed in the paper and the research scholars should know to distinguish between influence and plagiarism as it is essential for every aspiring author to advocate the messages and ideas effectively that win the trust of the readers.

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