Chapter III

Concept of literary influence: different theories, creative reconstruction of the borrowed texts; relevance of the notion of influence with regards to Yeats and Das

Literary influence is a major concept in Comparative Literature studies, since it postulates the presence of two distinct and therefore comparable entities: the influenced work and the influencing work from which the influence proceeds. Influence study is an attempt to trace the influence of a writer and is an important branch of Comparative Literature which is an interdisciplinary field whose practitioners study literature across national borders, across time periods, across languages, across genres, across boundaries between literature and the other arts such as music, painting, dance, film, etc. across disciplines such as literature and psychology, philosophy, science, history, architecture, sociology, politics, etc. However, the influence of a writer (emitter) or set of writers upon another is studied in the domain of theme, idea, attitude, technique etc. It is a fruitful study as it can throw light upon a writer's individual talent or it can unmask a plagiarist. Influence study is by the degree of influence; either direct or indirect, conscious or unconscious, strong or weak. According to Prawer, there can be four principal types of influence studies, viz. study of direct borrowing, study of the conflux of impulses from various literatures or writers, study of Literatures in contact and study of influence of ideas.

The mode of influence can be classified into adaptation, pastiche, stylisation, burlesque, parody, plagiarism, negative influence, false influence and creative Treason. Adaptation involves translation of works in a foreign language and covers a wide range from conventional reworking of a foreign model to a commercial attempt at turning a foreign work to suit the local taste. Examples are: Shakespeare's adaptation of Plutarch, Pound's lyrical paraphrase of Chinese and Old English poems and Sambandam Mudaliar's adaptation of Shakespeare. Pastiche imitates a particular poet or movement for artistic purpose. Example is Pushkin's elegy on Byron where Byron pays tribute in a special passage of Pushkin's style. Burlesque is a comic element where a particular style is ridiculed through comic distortion. Example is Operas of Gilbert and Sullivan.
of the 19th century. Parody aims to ridicule a literary model through imitation. Examples are parodies of Emerson’s plays. There is another kind of imitation which is known as ‘stylization’. It aims at the style of a single writer, a whole movement, or even an entire period. For the sake of artistic purpose, an author displays a combination of style and materials in his work. It is the emergence of new trends and beliefs within the framework of national literature, inspired by foreign models, as protest against the existing artistic theories and practices. Parody and travesty, as creative genres, pave the way for such negative influences which is possible when the native authors imitate one another. Plagiarism is a bad example of influence as it stealthily copies quotations without giving the reference to the source. Negative influence is a term coined by Anna Balakian. It denotes an instance where a work is written (by the receiver) as an antidote to the bad influence of an earlier work. Example is Shaw’s St. Joan was a corrective influence to rectify the tarnished image of Joan projected by Shakespeare in England and Schiller in Germany. A writer also rejects certain aspects in negative influence. False influence is another thing. When a writer (receiver) intentionally distorts and transforms the basic character of a model, it is called a case of false influence. Example is the 18th century Blake being portrayed as modern poet by French Translators. ‘Creative Treason’ refers to the misreading of a literary work, especially a translated work. Example is Gulliver’s Travels regarded as a children’s book and Alice in wonderland as an adult book.

There are three schools of Comparative Literature which determine the mode of influence study: the French School of Comparativism, the American school of Comparativism and the Russian school of Comparativism. These three schools promoted Comparative Literature. The French school combined in itself historicism and positivism under French Comparatists like Jean Marie Carre, Rene Etiemble, Paul Van Tieghem and Baldensperger. In America Comparative Literature developed in a progressive manner as various Colleges and Universities provided the basis for Comparative Literature. The leading Comparatists are H.H. Remak, Harry Levin, Verner Freidrich, Francois Jost and Arthur Kunst. The philosophy of communism in Russia provided fertile soil for the growth of Comparative Literature. The leading Russian comparatists are Victor Shlovisky, roman Jacobson, Boris Eichenbaum, Yury Tynyonov and Zhirmunsky. Com-
parative Literature was established in France in the second half of the 19th Century. The field became a subject of lively criticism and developed well and won good recognition. Soon US also initiated Comparative studies. German scholars who fled Hitler’s regime spread this discipline in the United States. There were dynamic arguments between the French and the American school of Literatures. The French preferred narrow positive studies. The Americans adopted a broad approach to Comparative literature. The French scholars gave importance to the essence of literature. It is significant that they termed this study as Literature Comparee with emphasis to literature. The French scholar, Caree, created Comparative Literature as a branch of literary history and made it a study of international spiritual relations, for example between Byron and Pushkin or Goethe and Carlyle.

When folklore studies were undertaken, the great French Comparatist, Baldensperger objected to it as it involved more painstaking and systematic gathering and which studied only the content and ignored the creativity and the writer. Van Tieghem also supported Baldensperger. He advocated Comparative Literature to study the actions and influence exerted by works of individuals. Caree recommended the study of the history of success of a literary work and the literary fortune of a writer. Another trend of the French school is literary history as per the comparative perspective where an author is focused on as well as his work. The survival of comparative literature in France was as comparative and general literature. The text is the centre of its research which keeps in mind the aspects of intertextuality, context and history. French School of Comparative Literature became important by not designating itself to one language or nationality but presenting a general orientation to the subject matter. The main focus was on solid research before interpretations were made. It was a chronological and systematic approach. The study of ‘influence’ about the originality of the source or the author’s influence which created his work was replaced gradually by ‘reception’ study which centered on reaction, opinion, orientation, critique etc. and thus shifted from being author-centric to reader-centric. It was not the emitter focused but the receptor. Reception study gauged the response to a writer’s work. Van Tieghem was an indirect follower of reception study as he concentrated on the process of communication. Yves Chevrel studied both the ‘influence’ and the ‘reception’. On the level of the emitter he concerned with the
fortune, reputation, diffusion and radiation whereas on the level of the receptor he focused on reaction, critique, opinion, reading and orientation. Reception studies deals also with the transformation of a text like its translation and adaptation and also the internal aesthetic codes of literary systems that are unconsciously linked with the prevalent theme.

The American School was more closely aligned with the original internationalist visions of Goethe and Posnett, who reflected the postwar desire for international cooperation, and were looking for examples of universal human “truths”. They felt that the study should be based on the literary archetypes that appeared throughout literatures from all times and places. The approach of the American School current practitioners paved the way for Cultural Studies which became a boom in universities during the 1970s and 1980s. The field today is highly diverse: for example, comparatists routinely study Chinese literature, Arabic literature and the literatures of most other major world languages and regions as well as English and continental European literatures. According to H.H. Remak, American scholars needed well versed knowledge on two distinct areas as their attitude to Comparative Literature was a study of two National Literatures. They had an uninhibited approach to this subject. American Comparatists favored Analogy studies. Remak and Rene Wellek recommended Parallel studies. Remak defined Comparative Literature as a study of literature beyond boundaries of a country and was a study of relations among literatures and other scientific areas of knowledge and belief.

Rene Etiemble supported Analogy studies and demonstrated that it could be done well even though there are no positive links between any two writers. He compared the aspects of metrics and style in his comparative studies. He was wary of Parallel studies as he felt that without scholarship that study would become empty. However he favoured parallel study of two writers belonging to same civilization, though of different literatures. Finally comparison became a certain temperament of mind or turn of mind, a synthetic turn of mind, not merely an approach to literature.

The French and American Comparative schools are quite similar as far as their groupings, diversity and liberalization go. But there are minor differences
especially stemming from the lack of a truly comparative perspective in the French School. The American school has a blend of a wide range of things which at times makes it appear divergent but rather diffuses; whereas the French school tries to appear restricted and thus the confined methodology makes it incomplete and curbs proper studies.

J.T. Shaw says that influence can exist in one work only if the writer had already read the previous author otherwise that something would not have manifested. According to Anna Balakian, the search for influence should be analytical- a study in depth, microscopic and precise.

Ulrich Weisstein studies the notion of influence as virtually the key concept in Comparative Literature studies and that which is revealed in many manifestations. Influences on literary works are done by literary and non literary men. Karl Marx and Freud are non literary men who have influenced literary works. Influence study presupposes a direct casual relationship between the emitter and the receiver while analogy study is concerned with the investigation of two authors or works without necessarily implying a direct casual relationship between them.

However, Ulrich Weisstein warns the comparatists against making any qualitative distinction between an active (giving) and passive (receiving) factors of an influence. The French critic, Marius-Francois Guyard, regards influence as a part of 'the fortunes' of authors. 'Reception' and 'fortune' of a foreign writer are interchangeable terms and the reception and popularity of a writer usually prepares the ground or accounts for his deeper impact on a national Literature. The analytical study or critical and other kinds of comments on the writer usually prepares the grounds or accounts for his deeper impact on a national Literature. The analytical study or critical and the other kinds of comments on the writer help us know about the depth of his popularity. The French scholars developed this method to measure the reception and popularity of the native poets and novelists in their countries.

Ulrich Weisstein poses the question whether and to what extent literary form of appropriation exists. In terms of their mutual interdependence one can define 'influence' as unconscious imitation and imitation as direct influence. With influence studies the question of direct and indirect influence is a complex prob-
lem. A native author may introduce the influence of a foreign tradition and it may thereafter proceed from the impact of him to the other native writer. The theory of imitation is considered as an extension of the theory of influence. Associated with the concept of imitations are many terms like Plagiarism, adaptations, burlesque, pastiche and parody; many earlier twentieth century novels are acknowledged adaptations of George Reynolds’ works. Many are under the misconception that translation is a separate entity. Translation comes under influences, as it serves as the best intermediary between any two literatures. It plays an important role in the process of influence. In fact, Translation itself is claimed to be a creative art: transcreation. It is through translations that the achievements of one country is made available to the rest of the world. Thus translation can open new lanes in the literary world traffic. The August Schlegel – Ludwig Tieck translation, for example, transformed Shakespeare into a German classical poet.

The harmonious blending of originality and influence from diverse models result in creative innovation. Thus the study of influence upon an author, his work or literature ensures a better understanding of a finished work. The centre of interest, however should be what the borrowing or influenced author does with that what he takes and what effect it has upon the finished literary work. Weisstein in his book, Comparative Literature and Literary Theory, discusses about influence studies in two chapters: ‘Influence and Imitation’ and ‘Reception and Survival’. He makes two preliminary observation. One is that the study of influences within a national literature or between two national literatures is not a qualitative one; it is methodological one. The other is that as a matter of principle, the function of intermediaries or transmitters such as translators, books, journals, reviewers which are supposed to link the emitter and the receiver will be partially ignored.

Weisstein warns the comparatist that he should not make a qualitative distinction between the giver and the receiver, since there exists only creative transmutations and not literal imitations. The steps that lead to the study of the original work of art are literal translation, adaptation, imitation and influence. Weisstein says that the term ‘originality’ applies to creative innovations in form of content as well as reinterpretations and combinations of ingredients borrowed from diverse models.
In literary criticism, the problem of influence – whether it is psychological or aesthetic – has long been a subject of controversy. During the nineteenth century, scholars tried to solve the problem by simply removing the barrier between art and psychology, and finding a casual explanation for any influence. Benedetto Croce asserts that the work of art is unique, independent and has a soul of its own. As a Comparatist, he does not also want to repudiate totally the concept of influence. He strikes a compromise between two extremes, namely, the casual approach and the aesthetic interpretation of a literary work. He assigns influence to psychology and treats it as a phase of creative process.

Weisstein discusses about influence studies in his another chapter 'Reception and Survival'. In this chapter also he insists on demarcating the two terms 'influence' and 'reception'. To him 'Influence' should preferably be used to denote the relation existing between finished literary products, while 'Reception' might serve to designate a wider range of subjects. They are the relations between these works and their ambience, including authors, readers, reviewers, publishers and the surrounding milieu. Hence the study of literary reception points to the study of literary sociology.

Another special kind of reception is the 'literary fortune' which helps to find out the popularity of a particular work or an author, and of their 'survival'. Reception and Literary Fortune are interchangeable terms to the comparatists. These terms are used by the comparatists to refer to the initial reaction of the readers and the writers of a native country to a foreign author or work. Such as reception paves way for the foreign author to leave a deeper impact on native literature.

Weisstein refers to another kind of reception which is known as 'erudition'. It is an important factor in the hierarchy of literary values. He cites the example of Heinrich Mann’s historical novel, Henri Quatre. Weisstein says that in Mann’s historical novel the fusion of reception or of erudition, influence, and originality would seem to be almost perfect. Reception studies become an interesting study, especially when the receiver acts as an intermediary also, Anna Balakian gives the example of Baudelaire’s translations of Edgar Allan Poe and Andre Gide’s recasting of Blake’s poems. She states that the distortion of a model undertaken for translation, leads to different creative possibilities. Such a
quality seems to be inherent in translation distortions. Baudelaire's famous essay on Poe in French not only transformed the writer into a real French romantic, but started a whole movement in symbolism, which brought a change in the course of French poetry.

The French comparatists assume that the influence of one writer on another has a casual link and therefore can be factually explained. On the contrary, the American comparatists go in for a more systematic investigation as influence is more aesthetic than factual. Apart from making a qualitative distinction between 'reception' and 'influence', the one exercising a superficial and the other lasting impact on the receiving author, it is imperative to define terms associated with influence studies: borrowings, source, parallels or analogies and imitation.

Since the study of Influence offers ample scope for literary scholarship, it finds an important place in Comparative Literature. J.T. Shaw is of the view: "Any serious study or analysis of any author includes consideration of the component part of his work, their meaning and relationship, how they were suggested to the author, and what they mean to him and to his work\textsuperscript{19}. Everyone knows the fact that Shakespeare conspicuously draws material from Boccaccio or Holinshed and what interests one is how he transmutes his borrowed materials.

Anna Balakian brings out the qualitative distinction between literary fortune and influence in her article 'Influence and Literary Fortune: The Equivocal Junction of Two Methods'. She takes up the influence of German Romanticism on French Literature and says that the Romanticism seen in the works of Victor Hugo and Stendhal was brought about by the impact of Madame de Stael's book, Of Germany. Balakian also maintains that literary fortune is more quantitative and so, it is a subject of literary history; literary influence is more qualitative and therefore, it is a subject of literary criticism.

According to S. S. Prawer, the study of Reception and Literary Fortune form an important branch of Comparative Literature. He cites the example of French scholar Roger Asselineau's critical study of the fortunes of Ernest Hemingway in France. He has made a study of the articles, reviews, translations

of his novels and short stories. The next example is Friedrich Gundolf's Shakespeare and the German Mind in which he studies Shakespeare's fortune in Germany.

Weisstein believes that the reception of a foreign work by an author writing in a different tongue will not create methodological problems for a comparatist because the receiving author has direct access to foreign literature. However, one has to see the qualitative differences; it is likely that involuntary creative treason may occur. In such cases, it is quite difficult to decide when the creative transformation ends and the conscious manipulation commences.

J. T. Shaw also takes up the issue of reception and popularity. Though the French comparatists do not strictly demarcate 'reception' and 'influence', scholars like Paul Van Tiegham have developed useful methods to study the literary fortune of a foreign writer. His popularity can be gauged by an elaborate study of the critical and other types of comments about him in newspaper articles, reviews, journals, diaries, allusions and such other items in native works. Secondly, the amount of sales of the foreign writer's works in the new country. Thirdly, the number and size of the editions, and also the translations of his works help measuring his popularity.

Prawer points to such principles in the studies in which two cultures confront each other. He points out that the received author and the receiving author each must be studied against his own cultural and literary background. Then only the relationship between the two authors must be defined and documented. Prawer views that reception studies are incomplete without taking an assessment of the nature and function of literary agents or international mediators, who at present belong to an important branch in modern times, namely, Communication. Communications, according to him, are the institutions and forms in which ideas, information and attitudes are transmitted and received; they belong to the great travel routes of thought and literature. Great translators and scholars can act as intermediaries between two cultures or literatures. Prawer cites the instance of Arthur Waley, the oriental scholar, who through his translations and writings of Chinese and Japanese literatures, brought the West and the Far East closer together. He was a source of influence to writers like Ezra Pound
and Bertolt Brecht. Prawer concludes the chapter on ‘Reception and Communication’ by answering to Anthony Thorlby’s remarks that reception study indicates a largely second-hand interest in original authors and works, which turns out to be superficial surveys. But, Prawer’s examples quoted disprove Thorlby’s contention and show that the reception studies are not against the direct firsthand experience of literary works.

Comparative Literature among other disciplines is a branch of literary history. The Comparatists are dissatisfied with the present library books as they are concerned with the idea of chronology. History is not a mere data-collecting; rather it is constituted by our knowledge of such events as phenomena that have occurred at specific time, at particular place and in a certain unique manner. For effective study of literary History, the Comparatists think in terms of epoch, period, age, generation and movements. The term ‘epoch’ is applied to large units of time. Epoch defines a larger unit of time. It is smaller than a Period and larger than an Age. Etymologically epoch is determined by an event or time making the beginning of relatively a new development. One gets interested in the beginning and not in its duration or the length of time span. Epoch further suggests a chronological order or a system computed from a given date. Epoch differs from Period because of more significance given to its definition to derive to a weightier meaning than Period. ‘Era’ like ‘epoch’ stresses the beginning, rather than the duration of a time span considerable length. Semantically ‘period’ may suggest ‘periodicity’ that which returns at certain specified intervals. After 1870 periods were replaced by movements. It should be further noted that comparatists rarely think in terms of calendar years. For example Nineteenth century would be referred to as the ‘Victorian Age’ or the “Realistic-naturalistic” period, beginning with Goethe’s death and ending with the dawn of symbolism. However it is unwise to periodize by generation too, because its representatives undergo further development which separates them from their origin. For instance, the author of Faust, belonged to the generation of storm and stress turned into a classicist in his fourth decade, partook of Romanticism in the second part of Faust and in the end, embraced Realism. A single poet can thus belong to several literary generations. The historical concepts so far treated provide essential tools for methodology. No binding definitions for the terms, ‘epoch’ ‘period’
"movement" and "generation" are possible because new facts are constantly coming in and the past is being rediscovered.

The major problem in field of literary history is that of the use of terminology. It is not as though the problem can be solved in reference to the respective values of literature and history. Literary history is neither literature nor history by an intricate combination of both contributing to historical quality. Hence, an enlightened awareness of such problems is necessary for any comparatist to reconcile himself to those literary terms. The problems of literary history are inevitable and their solutions are many and it all depends upon the comparatist to make virtue of those problems and take a justifiable sophisticated view of literary history. However, attempts are made to give concrete definitions of certain literary terms. The term "Movement" is important as it involves a large span of activities and refers to certain characteristics of general nature. It is widespread. It differs from "Generation" by definition. Movements like the Romantic Movement are important in history. While "Generation" refers only to particular phenomena, Movement refers to wider and general phenomena which have a consistent and lasting impact. Sometimes there is certain "Trend" in literature which is another particular literary fashion with short time limit. Movement goes beyond these terms and exclusively refers to the cultural conditions in majority of literary problems and products in a given period of time. "Periodization" is an attempt to categorise universal history and divide time into named blocks. Without periodization past events would be just a sort of scattered events. A period "brand" is convenient to understand the system of a nation or culture. The task of a literary historian is to describe the historical process of interpretation by arranging the individual works of art in smaller or larger groups according to authorship, genres, style etc. This arrangement or division of literary works into segments is known as periodization. Conventionally works are periodized according to different periods of socio-political activity (examples: Reformation, Restoration, renaissance, etc.), various schools of thought (examples: Romanticism, Classicism), sequences of art style such as Pre-Raphaelite, Gothic, Impressionist, etc., then periods of philology (example: Old English literature) and Chronology (example: 18th century literature). Scholars like Claudio Guillen and others were particular in their definition of this term. The term "Period" suggests
periodicity. Period refers to a series of irreversible and inimitable events. By period, the definition gets into a matter of cyclic and rhythmic thinking. The term 'Period' has given birth to 'periodic period' on the analogy of historic history.

'Age' is defined by the rise and prominence of an individual for a time span, so there is the Age of Shakespeare, Age of Goethe etc.

Thematics and thematology are important in the field of study of Comparative Literature. Though it has been the core of literature it acquired importance only towards the end of the 19th century. Thematology originated in Germany, but soon became secondary to influence studies. Then there was a revival in the 60s by the efforts of Elisabeth Frenzel (in Germany), Harry Levin (in America) and Raymond Trousson (in Belgium). Thematology is primarily concerned with subject matter or content of literature. Though it literally means the study of themes, it actually covers several aspects like, situation, type, motif, topos etc. Thematic study is one of the logical and traditional ways of comparing authors and literatures. Thus it is essential and nearly a part of analogy study. However, Fernand Baldensperger opposed thematic studies as incomplete study while Paul Hazard pointed it as inadequate in the comparison of two works. They pointed out the limitations and added that this study should determine the artistic genius of present authors and not just confine to the comparison with the predecessors. Raymond Trousson supported Thematological studies and discussed the methodology in his books. The study of themes, motifs, topos etc. became an interesting field in Germany and elsewhere. Elisabeth Frenzel’s publication A Dictionary of Literary Themes (1962) was a pioneering work in Thematology. In America, Cleanth Brooks made a thematic study of Faulkner. Much of the credit goes to Weisstein, Prawer and Trousson for widening the scope and defining the categories of thematology.

The thematological categories such as 'themes', 'motifs' and 'types' have transcended their barriers and now have acquired universal acknowledgement. The reason for the choice of certain modes and themes by the writers may be found out by making a comparative study of them. A theme is an avenue for progression of ideas, whose entrance into Literature, it invites and facilitates. This helps us in making enquiry into the permutations and adventure into the
history of ideas. Van Tiegham assigns thematology the task of determining not only the dependence of more recent authors upon their predecessors, but also the role played by their own genres, their ideal and their art and the variations they have played on the common theme. Thematic Studies, therefore, are mainly as well as intimately connected with the study of literary style and literary genres.

In comparative criticism, the terms like 'theme' and 'motif' have not been unanimously accepted. The meanings of the terms do not agree with each other. They are often used as synonyms by most British and American authors. But in the Anglo-Saxon world of criticism there seems to be a tendency to identify 'theme' with the abstract and the 'motif' with the concrete. Ulrich Weisstein associates themes with characters and motifs with situations. The 'trait' the 'image' and the 'topos' are the smallest thematic units. Both trait and image are additive or decorative elements. They become subject for thematological research only through conscious repetition or subtle linkage. The 'trait' is an incidental attribute. Ben Johnson succeeded in portraying the trait dominating characters in his comedy of Humours. In her book on Shakespeare's imagery, Carolina Spurgeon attributes to each play a characteristic, 'cluster of images' and they provide the author's intentions with a clue. The 'topos' is more fruitful for more comparative Literature studies. The term 'topoi' literally means arguments, and in the comparative topos studies, the interpretation of originality.

The comparative study of themes and motifs enables us to see what type of writer chooses what type of material, and how the material is dealt with at various times. Elisabeth Frenzel's comparative dictionary of themes and personages is an indispensable tool for such studies. It has demonstrated how some writers like Hans Sachs, for instance, will find any theme grist to a somewhat coarsely grinding mill and writers like Rotrou, or Johann Gottfried Herder discover out interesting themes but leave them others to make the most of them. The great dramatist like Shakespeare is the most notable though not the only one, has a genius for combining themes and motifs from the most various sources and integrating them into unified works of art. There are writers with Racine, Hofmannsthal weigh and filter and distil their themes. Nor is it idle to ask what and writers as different from each other as Dante, Machiavelli and Shakespeare
saw in the figure of Brutus; how their conceptions of Brutus relate to those of Robespierre, Saint-Just and Heinrich Heine. Such question should interest students of literature no less than students of society and political ideas.

Thematic studies enable us to examine and contrast the spirit of different societies and epochs as well as those of individual talents. It is fascinating to see how the problems facing groups, classes and societies become embodied in literary figures with a life and an individuality of their own. It is fascinating to see stories going back to classical Greek and Roman times assimilated in varying ways to the chivalrous ideas of the Middle Ages or the humanist ideal of the eighteenth century. It is an important exercise to examine the popularity of different themes at different times. This kind of study can make an important contribution to the history of ideas; a history which is indissolubly connected with that of literature.

Thematic studies must not be divorced from study of literary style. The most eloquent call to examine this phenomenon has come from Raymond Trousson, who has pronounced such studies 'a difficult exercise, as far removed from dusty erudition as from the scope of beginners in criticism, a task often demanding and arduous, sometimes ungrateful, but ever invigorating and new, revealing something of the secret, strong life of the great figure we have made, century after century, our own glorious doubles. According to Trousson, the study of recurrent figures and figuration aims at 'finding, across many reincarnations of a single hero, some constants, some fundamental problems, in a word: something essential to human nature, something ceaselessly modified yet always preserved and transmitted beneath this mythic guise'. There have been several valuable comparative studies of this kind. These include Trousson's own book on the Prometheus theme in European literature and Kate Hamburger's study of the fortunes of Greek heroes in plays from Sophocles to Sartre. Kate Hamburger concentrates on the metamorphoses of literary figures without taking account of the plays in which they occur. Her book is therefore more lopsided than John White's Mythology in the modern Novel, which also discusses the different structural functions of the myths. White distinguishes subtly ad usefully between
works that re-narrate a classical myth; works that juxtapose sections narrating a myth with others that concern themselves with the modern world; works which while being set in the modern world, have a pattern of mythological motif that prefigures part of one narrative but does not run consistently through it. This classification is supported by many comparisons of novels in different languages which do not shrink from aesthetic judgments. By using mythological plots, writers invite their readers to make comparisons, to become comparatists.

The necessity for consistent mental comparison between the new work and the old is all the greater, of course, when there treatments of a theme. This happens in Max Frisch’s play Don Juan or the Love of Geometry, which shows its eponymous hero pushed against his will into the role of the best lover, when all he wants is to stay quietly at home and study mathematics; or in Sartre’s the Flies, where a swarm of flies replaces the Furies, and where Orestes defies Jupiter by taking guilt freely upon himself, knowing that to do so is absurd. Ulysses shows clearly the two main modes in which older works can be present in modern ones: as ironic counterpoint, and as pre-figuration. It should be recognized, however, that the study of themes and motifs, like so many of the comparatist’s most distinctive activities, can become history of ideas without losing its status as literary history and criticism. Harald Weinrich’s essay on the way various eighteenth century writers introduced the Lisbon earthquake into their works provides a telling example. Weinrich discussed the roles of Pope, Lessing, Goethe, Voltaire and Rousseau in the great eighteenth-century debate about the place of evil in the world-order; he shows way the motif of the earthquake should have so persistently commended itself to authors concerned to justify the ways of God to man. He demonstrates, concretely, how in each case a distinctive literary achievement or an equally distinctive intellectual argument, is fully intelligible only against a national background which may include such things as a specific earthquake at specific time, the reception of an English poem and a German philosophic work in France, a competition set by the Prussian Academy of Sciences, and the distinction, recently refined, between natural, moral and metaphysical evil. In the course of this examination Weinrich finds himself compelled to analyse the narrative perspective of authors adopt and also the different ways in which the com-
mon earthquake motif is integrated into the structure of a number of literary works. He is therefore justified in claiming by his every title, that his essay is a contribution to literary history as well as to the history of ideas.

Harold Bloom, a great modern critic, has for years been propounding a view of literary history and its relation to creative originality quite antithetical to the allied formulations of Eliot and Pound. Along with his own teachers, Northrop Frye and Meyer H. Abrams, but in very different ways, Bloom has helped to make the study of Romantic poetry as intellectually and spiritually challenging a branch of literary studies as one may find. The recent study of the romantic tradition has corrected the modernist dogmas about romanticism—the very word evoked the imprecise, the vague, the rhetorical—and argued for the centrality of the major English poetic line which modernism rejected. Eliot hankered after the Christian orthodoxy, classicism and royalty; the tradition he turned away from, the line running from Spenser, to Milton through the romantic poets to Browning, Tennyson and Yeats, was protestant, visionary and, save at its terminus, revolutionary.

Bloom has gone beyond tracing the ways in which this tradition descended from one major poet to another. He has extended it to a general theory of what he calls “poetic influence.” “The Anxiety of Influence” may outrage and perplex many literary scholars, poets and psychologists; in any event, its first effect will be to astound, and only later may it become quite influential, though in a different mode from the one it studies. Bloom’s book, “The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry” is true to its subtitle, ‘A Theory of Poetry,’ primarily in its association of a theory of creativity with a theory of the dynamic of poetic history. This is an area where will, personality and the presences of the dead in the legacy of their works are all engaged in a struggle. For Eliot, the dead, the last of these, banished the first two: in the proper development of a true poet’s career, he says, what happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.
There is one of Bloom's central principles: Poetic Influence; when it involves two strong, authentic poets, it always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence, which is to say the main traditions of Western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature of distortion, of perverse, willful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist.” On the surface of it, this is most strange. To speak of one major poem resulting from a “reading” or “interpretation” of a prior one is not a usual concept of literary history; to go on to specify the relation between forebears and followers as “misreading” seems even stranger. In the course of the six central chapters of his book, Bloom expands and refines the concept of misreading—of what he calls at the outset “poetic misprision”—in powerful and sometimes maddeningly subtle ways. But for an elucidation of the central concept, a glance at some more traditional formulations of the influence relation may perhaps help.

The relation of a major poet to his predecessor can be likened to that of God to the man he made in his image, although from Milton on, poetry in English has claimed that relation to hold between an artist and his work. It could also be seen as that of Jesus to the Old Law, which he came, he said, not to destroy but to fulfill. The opening chapter of “The Anxiety of Influence” starts from Satan and God as a paradigm of poetic ancestor and scion. But the paradigm is really a dramatic image which first explores the problem of the creative psyche and its analysis. To avoid being reductive, he continually adumbrates myths, parables, examples and quotations from other writers. There are many relations of a quasi-filial sort which can prevail between a poet and a precursor, and it is with some naughtiness that Bloom commences with the particular predicament of the Modernist poet as seen in Satan’s moving but unconvincing denials. The six chapters of his book deal in turn with the kinds of relation—he calls them revisionary “ratios”—which can hold in various instances. The opening one is that of swerve: if Satan, in falling from Heaven, had not dropped straight down to the bottom of everything but had swerved slightly as he fell, he might have fallen to a new region, have created something Original instead of merely Opposite. Bloom’s
discussion on Yeats sketched out a theory of influence but there it was for purposes of literary history and of trying to correct what he felt to be the faulty accepted view of Yeats' career—a soft romantic poet who hardened up into a great modern one. "The Anxiety of Influence" is an inevitable fulfillment of Bloom's earlier work. In a group of aphorisms inserted between the third and fourth chapters, he can assert that the meaning of a poem can only be another one and then assert also that all criticism is prose poetry. It is not a condition surrounding or preceding or following the creative act, as a doctor would conceive and perhaps treat it. Bloomian anxiety is an analogue of the psychiatric concept in the symbiotic life of the poet's imagination, and so it is not nonsense for him to declare that a poem is a poet's melancholy at his lack of priority. He reflects on each poem to arise out of the illusion of freedom, out of a sense of priority being possible. He considers the poem as an outcome of the poet's creative faculty, an innovation of the poet's imagination as formed by an accumulation of readings and personal experiences. The accomplished poem is a made thing and as such is an achieved anxiety. In "The Anxiety of Influence", Harold Bloom talks about poetic influence and interpretation. Bloom comes out with varied opinions concerning the notion of tradition in art and poetry. He deals considerably with the possibility of the continuance of tradition in poetic works to be both beneficial and destructive to the form and the future of the form. Through these views, Bloom points out some common idealistic thoughts on poetry, while simultaneously offering an innovative method of criticizing poetry.

Bloom talks of the Six Revisionary Ratios to outline the methods to which one should adhere to escape the imitation of past poetic influences. These ratios suggests Bloom's theory of the necessity to misinterpret influential poetry to produce unique poetry and to become a strong poet:

1. Clinamen: It refers to the method of misreading or misinterpreting a poem. The poet denies the content of the poem itself, and misinterprets it such that it relates to external meanings rather than the meanings as intended by the poet. This method "corrects" the new poem by allowing the old one to move in the direction of the present.
2. Tessera: It is the technique of “completing” the original poem. The new poem is written as an endnote to the first, influenced by, yet moving away from the original poem.

3. Kenosis: It refers to the reduction of one’s own poetry, removing all traces of repetition with the first, and doing the same with the first, so that in the end, the two are unique and individual.

4. Daemonization: It welcomes the opinion of a third party, though this third party is the poet himself. He looks at the original poem as a reaction to an earlier work, and as simply another piece of poetic tradition. By viewing the similarities between the two, the original poem suddenly loses some of the uniqueness originally perceived; as a result, the new poem in progress gains a newfound individuality.

5. Askesis: It involves the separation of oneself; thus, the poem from all other people and influences. As the person becomes separated, so too does his work, minimizing the similarities to the original poem.

6. Apophrades: It is the process of acknowledging past poetic influences such that it seems that the “new” poet is also the creator of the original. This method allows for a role reversal whereby the earlier poet now mirrors the new.

The principal idea reflected in ‘The Anxiety of Influence’ is that a poet wants to begin to create though at first he feels threatened and anxious that a stronger, precursor poet has already said what he wanted to say before he had the chance to say it himself. The influence of the precursor is overwhelming in its inspiration and the poet begins to copy the voice or style or philosophy of the precursor poet, causing an anxiety over the poet’s struggle for identity, for individuality.

W.B. Yeats and Jibanananda Das are two great poets, one being an English language poet and the other, the Bengali language poet. A comparative study of poems of both poets pinpoints certain similarities between them as po-
Both poets were lovers of Nature. Folktales and history constitute the focal points of their poetry. Both were inspired by the French symbolists more or less. Das was a voracious reader of English literature and was a college teacher of English. In all possibilities, Das went through the poetic works of Yeats. Das himself made occasional references to Yeats in his treatise, *Kobitar Kotha*. Certain poems of Das remind the readers of Yeats' poems. But the wonderful aspect of Das' poems is that though they show the poetic glimpses of Yeats, they exhibit an added charm and meaning that testify to the individualistic traits of Das as a separate entity and as a great poet. However, Yeats' influence over Das as a poet can be sensed and comprehended when certain poems of Das are placed side by side with that of Yeats. However, the manner and kind of influence with regards to Yeats and Das can be highlighted in the perspective of different theories of influence.

J.T. Shaw in his 'Literary Indebtedness and Comparative Literary Studies' records:

"Literary influence appears to be most frequent and most fruitful at the times of emergence of national literatures and of radical change of direction of a particular literary tradition in a given literature... In the case of emerging national literatures, authors may seek in form or ideology that which they can adapt or transmute for their own consciousness, time and nation."  

Das belonged to a period when Tagore was still casting his long shadow in the realm of Bengali literature. In order to respond to his inner psyche and to conform to the prevailing trend of modernist poetry simultaneously, Das had to eschew the dominant impact of Tagore and had to look for English and French poets for the models of his poetry. In the process, Yeats along with Eliot, Pound and French symbolists like Stephane Mallarme, Paul Verlaine, Paul Valery, etc. came to ensnare his psyche more or less. This creative transmutation employed by Das makes it difficult to curve out a thorough analogy between his poems and Yeats. Ulrich Weissstein seems to be correct when he repudiates a qualitative

---

distinction between the giver and the receiver, as there exist only creative transmutations but literal imitations. Das is a poet influenced, to whatever extent, by Yeats; but he is such an original poet that he cannot be called an imitator of Yeats. Of course, the theory of imitation is claimed to be an extension of the theory of influence in the context of terms like plagiarism, pastiche, parody, adaptations and burlesque. But poet Das, by means of the sense of history and time, coupled with the profound understanding of human nature, makes the creative transmutation of the idea, more or less, of the predecessor conforming to the native setting and climate, keeping the individuality intact. His awareness of folklores and native rural setting provides his poems a familiar sense of sound and smell drawing a sense of involvement among readers. His poem, Aabar Asibo Phire masterly evokes an attachment:

\[
\text{Aabar asibo phire aei dhansiditir teere— aei banglai} \\
\text{Hoito manush noi—hoito ba shakhachil shalikher beshe;} \\
\text{Hoito bhorer kaak hoye aei kartiker nobanner deshe} \\
\text{Kuashar booke bhese ekdin aasibo e knathal-chhayai; ...}
\]

The poet wants to identify himself with local birds, shankhachil, kaak and shalikh. He longs for a return to his native place piercing through the fog after a probable death. The very word Aabar (again) referring to rebirth intensifies his love for life which enables him to witness the flora and the fauna of his familiar land. A poet of Das’ caliber can evoke such an involvement which is graceful and appealing at the same time. Das’ originality rests on the elaborate thought couched in magnificent imageries. His treatment of Nature is noteworthy. The poem Phire Eso reflects the tenderness of nature:

\[
\text{Phire eso samudrer dhaare} \\
\text{Phire eso prantorer pothe} \\
\text{Jei khane train ese thame} \\
\text{Aam nim jao-er jogote}
\]

The poet finds the significance of life in nature. Autumn is a season that finds its manifestation in varied attributes of nature. The poem Dujon delineates the withdrawal of life signified by the autumn:
Again the serenity of harvest after the toil followed by weariness is a delicate understanding of life beautifully drawn in the aforementioned poetic sentences. Das’ idea of variety of nature is one remarkable aspect of his poetry. In poems dealing with nature, he shows an extraordinary sense of oneness and intimacy, rare in literature.

Bloom believes that all writers are influenced by the writers who came before them and left a lasting mark on the history and development of the poetic form. These relationships between poets, Bloom defines as intra-poetic relationships. While this may be the case, however, Bloom also draws a distinction between the failed poet and the strong poet. Although profoundly influenced by his precursors, the strong poet refuses to repeat or imitate influential works completely. Instead, he looks to influential poets for his own place to be original. The failed poet is one who has failed in his attempt to attain originality as a result of outright imitation of the works of his precursors. Further in the discussion, Bloom defines the methods and practices by which a modern poet can become “strong” in the Six Revisionary Ratios. While he must remain gracious to and influenced by his precursors, the strong poet must not repeat past works and accomplishments. To avoid such repetition, the strong poet must purposely misinterpret these works to create for himself, a personal sphere within these boundaries. To Bloom, the creation of the individual poetic self requires the poet to deny the influence of previous poets by intentionally misunderstanding and misinterpreting these sources. Bloom also claims that the strong poet, despite his accomplished “individuality,” will never equal his precursors in greatness. As poetry evolves with time, so too, is it weakened with time. Because no poet is as great as his precursors, each poet becomes slightly weaker than the last. Although a poet can be “strong,” according to Bloom’s definition, this strength diminishes with time; in this way, the strength of poetry itself fades with time, as well. The inevitable result is the eventual death of poetry. In the backdrop of Bloom’s theory of
influence, the case of Das being influenced by his precursor in Yeats is justified, so far influence is concerned. But Das, by virtue of his greatness as a poet, can be categorized as a strong poet. Regardless of any kind of influence, Das is a poet who earns a niche for himself as a major modern Bengali poet who withstands the monumental impact of Tagore. A poet of Das’ potentials never finds himself in a position to take refuge to Bloom’s suggested method of the six ratios. This method was not meant for him who evolved into a strong poet on his own accord. Das conceived a poem and moulded it up in the way most natural for him. When a theme occurred to him, he shaped it with words, metaphors and imagery that distinguished him from all others. Jibanananda Das’ poetry is to be felt, rather than merely read or heard:

Pnechar dhusar pakha udhe jay nakshatrer pane
Jola math ehhedhe diye chhaader aahobbane

Buno hnaas pakha mele-shay shay shobdo shuni taar;

Ek —dui —teen— char —ajosra— opar—

[Buno Hnaas]

The feeling out of the imagery drawn is quite enchanting. The grey wings of the owl are directed towards stars, leaving the wet field. The owl responds to the call of the moon. The wild duck swims in rhythm, with its wings open, beating of which is audible to the sensitive ears. The imagery is pictorial enough. His diction is unrivalled. His images are drawn from a familiar world; but an unfamiliar and innovative aura of intimation and love is stemmed. This uniqueness is natural for him. He is such a spontaneous poet.

On Jibanananda Das’ poetry, Joe Winter, a British educationist, remarks that it is a natural process, though perhaps the rarest one. Jibanananda Das’ style reminds us of this, seeming to come unbidden. It is full of sentences that scarcely pause for breath, of word-combinations that seem altogether unlikely but work, of switches in register from sophisticated usage to a village-dialect word, that jar and in the same instant settle in the mind, full of friction – in short, that almost becomes a part of the consciousness ticking. Some instances are
given:

*Gaucher chhayai. Roder bhitore, badami paatar bhirey
Kothao koyek inkro maachher knaatar safalatar por
Tarpor shada maatir konkaaler bhitor*

[Bidhaal]

*Andhokare thes diye jege robo
Baadudher unaakabnaka akasher moto*

[Swapner Dhbanira]

*Dhaan ke kutibey bolo – koto din se to aar kotenako dhaan,
Rodeo shukatey se je aase naako chul taar—*

[Bhije Hoye Aase Meye]

The words employed in these poetic lines are drawn from the rural dialect. Das chooses and uses them and offers a finished form that gives the tinge of smell and sound. The familiar words appear in his hand a new gust of wind that soothes the weary limbs. The ever freshness of Das’ poetic glow is established.

Harold Bloom feels that an author’s literary debts spoil the originality of a poet. But J. T. Shaw believes that originality consists chiefly in the genuineness and effectiveness of the artistic and creative power of the literary work, not in the innovation. Poet Das produces an artistic and aesthetic effect upon readers, his literary debts to Yeats notwithstanding. He succeeds to subordinate his borrowings to the aura his creative art produces stamping his originality, thanks to his creative power of imagination and his sense of history and time which find their realization through the sublime implementation of literary tools such as images, similes, archetypes, metaphors etc.

Yeats is a poet par excellence, who writes in English. Das, on the other hand, is a poet who writes in Bengali. The diction and the style of both poets are different. One is influenced chiefly by symbolist movement, the other by surrealist movement. J. T. Shaw observes, “The question of the influence of literary diction and style across languages has hitherto been perhaps insufficiently stud-
However, while Das has to borrow an idea in the form of a theme or an image from Yeats, his creative impulse reshapes phrase, metaphor, similes to fit them into the native literary tradition. Yeats’ imagery of the poem He Reproves the Curlew is eye-catching and startling:

“O Curlew, cry no more in the air
Or only to the water in the west”
Because your crying brings to my mind
Passion-dimmed eyes and long heavy hair”

The imagery shows Yeats’ intimation with the Irish countryside. His sensitive self hears and perceives the curlew’s ‘crying’. Das in a similar vein comes to hear the crying of the bird chil in the rural background of Bengal. But the difference lies in the treatment of the imagery. Das’ poem offers more intensity and oneness. The simile used is rare and unique:

*Ilay chil, sonali damar chil, aei bhije meghe dupure
Tumi aar kedo nako udhe udhe dhansidhiti nodir paushe
Tomar kannar soore beter faler moto tar mlan chokh mone aase
...* ke hay hriday khudhe bedana jagate bhalobase

The crying of chil is likened to the fruit of a reed, which is rare to view. Its crying near the river Dhansidhi offers a mysterious aura. Yeats’ ‘passion-dimmed eyes’ turns to piercing the core of the heart for Das. The latter is more intense and penetrating. In this way, Das takes an idea and infuses it with a vivid trademark conforming to the natural surroundings. His individualistic trait stands out. His creativity comes to light.

The influencing Yeats and the influenced Das produce poetry of highest order. The impact of Yeats on Das is a creative and productive one. On reading identical themes the readers of Yeats are likely to sense an added freshness even in reading of Das. J. T. Shaw elucidates, “The seed of literary influence must fall on fallow land. The author and the tradition must be ready to accept, transmute, react to the influence. Many seeds from various possible influences may fall, but only the ones for which the soil is ready will germinate, and each will be affected.

---

by the particular quality of the soil and climate where it takes root, or, to shift the image, to the shoot to which it is grafted. "Das’ poetic self experiences the creative influence of Yeats’ poetry but then he establishes his position as a poet by virtue of his creative genius. Shaw’s observation is justified in the perspective of the influence with regards to Yeats and Das. Das’ originality as a poet stamps his position in Bengali literature. Prof. Tapodhir Bhattacharjee rightly estimates his stature as a poet, “The secret of Jibanananda’s originality lies in his specially endowed perceptive eye and the penetrating imagination. His unique position among the poets of Bengali literature depends, among other things, on the fact that he treats every poetic ingredient to be a means for disclosing a pattern beneath phenomena. It may seem reasonable to summarise here that it also reveals the emerging new patterns as the artistic expressions of a deep tension when the social structure of Bengal was changing and eroding as well as the traditional beliefs of the cultural milieu were in the process of rapid disintegration."

In the process, the influence of Yeats on Das culminates in a comparative analysis of two poets cutting across the geographical territory and varied cultures and settings thereby bringing about a different aesthetic and creative taste. A. Owen Aldridge is of the view that it is now generally agreed that comparative literature does not compare national literatures in the sense of setting one against another. Instead it provides a method of broadening one’s perspective in the approach to single works of literature – a way of looking beyond the narrow boundaries of national frontiers in order to discern trends and movements in various national cultures and to see the relation between literature and other spheres of human activity. It is apt to quote: “The influence upon an author or a literature should be studied, for understanding both. Such studies should take into account what qualities were taken, what were transmuted, what were rejected. The centre of interest should be what the borrowing or influenced author does with what it has upon the finished literary work. The study of direct literary relationships and literary indebtedness can be indispensable to understanding and evaluating the individual work of art, not only for placing it in the

---


23 Tapodhir Bhattacharjee, ‘Between Two Worlds’, (Kolkata: Amritlok Sahitya Academy, 2007).P.21
literary tradition, but also for defining what it is and what it essentially attempts and for determining wherein it succeeds. 24

24 Shaw, Literary Indebtedness and Comparative Literary Studies, p. 79.