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A Study of Intertextuality in Jean-Pierre Spilmont's *Il Fallait Inventer la Mer* and Attar Neyshaboori's *The Conference of the Birds*

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ABSTRACT

The *Il fallait inventer la mer* play from Jean-Pierre Spilmont is one of the most successful adaptations of Attar Neyshaboori's *The Language of the birds*. Spilmont has attempted to adjust elements of Attar's work, given the theatrical requirements of his adaptation, while staying true to the main storyline of birds' travel toward Simorg. This play, in comparison with *The Language of the birds*, has changes in its structure and content. The structural changes are as follows: adding a narrator, omission of the birds' characters, adding some anecdotes, dialogues and theatrical scenes. From the viewpoint of content, reduction of the number of love's valleys, alteration of Simorg's manifestations and the interior travel of the birds are the most prominent changes. This article attempts to answer the following questions while employing the intertextuality theory of Gérard Genette: Has Spilmont been successful in conveying Attar's universal message in form of a contemporary play? And can contemporary audience relate to this work? What are the main changes in the storyline of birds' travel? The result of this research reveals that considering the intertextuality of Genette which underlies the co-presence of the elements of two texts in each other, the presence of the components of Attar's text in this play is undeniable. In other words, Spilmont has benefited from the explicit intertextuality for the creation of this literary work. One of its intertextual elements is the presence of a bird named Tooka, as the leader of the birds. This factor is the outcome of Spilmont's adaptation from the mystical text of Attar and shows that in both texts, the existence of a wise bird as a leader has been highlighted but there are some differences in their manifestations. Tooka is the consequence of the terrestrial perspective of Spilmont, that is why it accompanies the birds and in the valleys of love, observes them from afar because what is important is the personal effort of each bird which leads to a better awareness of himself. One of the other intertextual elements is the valleys of love that have been reduced into four and their names have been altered to "liberation", "war", "violence" & "rejection" which emphasizes the contemporary crises. The presence of Simorg is another intertextual component of the play which is different from its original form. In this play, Simorg is a terrestrial creature, and its mystical dimension was eliminated. That is to say, knowing this creature equals better knowledge of ones' self which would help us join the union of the world. Finally, we can say that *Il fallait inventer la mer*, like its source, can be classified in the category of "therapeutic literature". It can answer contemporary human's questions and release him from perplexity by guiding him to tranquility. Moreover, the reader can easily relate to this text as it speaks plainly about the common problems and pains of human beings.

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