Intertextuality

Intertextuality is the shaping of a text's meaning by another text. Intertextual figures include: allusion, quotation, calque, plagiarism, translation, *pastiche* and parody.[1][2][3] Intertextuality is a literary device that creates an 'interrelationship between texts' and generates related understanding in separate works ("Intertextuality", 2015). These references are made to influence that reader and add layers of depth to a text, based on the readers' prior knowledge and understanding. Intertextuality is a literary discourse strategy (Gadavanij, n.d.) utilised by writers in novels, poetry, theatre and even in non-written texts (such as performances and digital media). Examples of intertextuality are an author's borrowing and transformation of a prior text, and a reader's referencing of one text in reading another.

Intertextuality does not require citing or referencing punctuation (such as quotation marks) and is often mistaken for plagiarism (Ivanic, 1998). Intertextuality can be produced in texts using a variety of functions including allusion, quotation and referencing (Hebel, 1989). However, Intertextuality is not always intentional and can be utilised inadvertently.

The term "intertextuality" has, itself, been borrowed and transformed many times since it was coined by poststructuralist Julia Kristeva in 1966. As philosopher William Irwin wrote, the term "has come to have almost as many meanings as users, from those faithful to Kristeva's original vision to those who simply use it as a stylish way of talking about allusion and influence."[4]

1 Types of intertextuality

Intertextuality and intertextual relationships can be separated into three types: obligatory, optional and accidental (Fitzsimmons, 2013). These variations depend on two key factors: the intention of the writer, and the significance of the reference. For example: poet William Blake intentionally uses his knowledge of the Christian Bible and alludes to themes from this text using language such as 'thee', 'thou' and 'thy' (Kliese, 2013). There are also specific references to the 'Lamb' which are significant and vital to the reader in order for them to understand the contexts and purpose of the poem (Kliese, 2013). The distinctions between these types and those differences between categories are not absolute and exclusive (Miola, 2004) but instead, are manipulated in a way that allows them to co-exist within the same text.

2 Obligatory intertextuality

Obligatory intertextuality in when the writer deliberately invokes a comparison or association between two (or more) texts. Without this pre-understanding or success to 'grasp the link', the reader's understanding of the text is regarded as inadequate (Fitzsimmons, 2013). Obligatory intertextuality relies on the reading or understanding of a prior hypotext, before full comprehension of the hypertext can be achieved (Jacobmeyer, 1998).

2.1 Examples of obligatory intertextuality

To understand the specific context and characterisation within Tom Stoppard's 'Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead', one must first be familiar with Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' (Mitchell, n.d.). It is in Hamlet we first meet these characters as minor characters and, as the Rosencrantz and Guildenstern plot unravels, specific scenes from Hamlet are actually performed and viewed from a different perspective. This understanding of the hypotext Hamlet, gives deeper meaning to the pretext as many of the implicit themes from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are more recognisable in Shakespeare's Hamlet (Comhrink, n.d.).

3 Optional intertextuality

Optional intertextuality has a less vital impact on the significance of the hypertext. It is a possible, but not essential, intertextual relationship that if recognized, the connection will slightly shift the understanding of the text (Fitzsimmons, 2013). Optional Intertextuality means it is possible to find a connection to multiple texts of a single phrase, or no connection at all (Ivanic, 1998). The intent of the writer when using optional intertextuality, is to pay homage to the 'original' writers, or to reward those who have read the hypotext. However, the reading of this hypotext is not necessary to the understanding of the hypertext.

3.1 Examples of optional intertextuality

The use of optional intertextuality may be something as simple as parallel characters or plotlines. For example, J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series shares many similarities J. R. R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy. They

both apply the use of an aging wizard mentor (Professor Dumbledore and Gandalf) and a key friendship group is formed to assist the protagonist (an innocent young boy) on their arduous quest to defeat a powerful wizard and to destroy a powerful being (Keller, 2013). This connection is interesting and J.K. Rowling was most likely influenced by other fictional and fantasy novels. However, this link is not vital to the understanding of the Harry Potter novels.

4 Accidental intertextuality

Accidental intertextuality is when readers often connect a text with another text, cultural practice or a personal experience, without there being any tangible anchorpoint within the original text (John Fitzsimmons). The writer has no intention of making an intertextual reference and it is completely upon the reader's own prior knowledge that these connections are made (Wöhrle, 2012).

4.1 Examples of accidental intertextuality

Often when reading a book or viewing a film a memory will be triggered in the viewers' mind. For example, when reading Herman Melville's 'Moby Dick', a reader may use their prior experiences to make a connection between the size of the whale and the size of the ship. Another reader could draw deep connections to the Bibilcal allegory Jonah and the Whale, simply from the mention of a man and a whale. Whilst it was not Melville's intention to create these links, the readers have made these connections themselves.

5 Intertextuality and poststructuralism

Kristeva's coinage of "intertextuality" represents an attempt to synthesize Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics—his study of how signs derive their meaning within the structure of a text—with Bakhtin's dialogism—his examination of the multiple meanings, or "heteroglossia", in each text (especially novels) and in each word.[5] For Kristeva,[6] "the notion of intertextuality replaces the notion of intersubjectivity" when we realize that meaning is not transferred directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through, or filtered by, "codes" imparted to the writer and reader by other texts. For example, when we read James Joyce's *Ulysses* we decode it as a modernist literary experiment, or as a response to the epic tradition, or as part of some other conversation, or as part of all of these conversations at once. This intertextual view of literature, as shown by Roland Barthes, supports the concept that the meaning of a text does not reside in the text, but is produced by the reader in relation not only to the text in question, but also the complex network of texts invoked in the reading process. –

More recent post-structuralist theory, such as that formulated in Daniela Caselli's *Beckett's Dantes: Intertextuality in the Fiction and Criticism* (MUP 2005), re-examines "intertextuality" as a production within texts, rather than as a series of relationships between different texts. Some postmodern theorists [7] like to talk about the relationship between "intertextuality" and "hypertextuality"; intertextuality makes each text a "living hell of hell on earth" [8] and part of a larger mosaic of texts, just as each hypertext can be a web of links and part of the whole World-Wide Web. Indeed, the World-Wide Web has been theorized as a unique realm of reciprocal intertextuality, in which no particular text can claim centrality, yet the Web text eventually produces an image of a community—the group of people who write and read the text using specific discursive strategies.[9]

One can also make distinctions between the notions of "intertext", "hypertext" and "supertext". Take for example the *Dictionary of the Khazars* by Milorad Pavić. As an intertext it employs quotations from the scriptures of the Abrahamic religions. As a hypertext it consists of links to different articles within itself and also every individual trajectory of reading it. As a supertext it combines male and female versions of itself, as well as three mini-dictionaries in each of the versions.

6 Competing terms

Some critics have complained that the ubiquity of the term "intertextuality" in postmodern criticism has crowded out related terms and important nuances. Irwin (227) laments that intertextuality has eclipsed allusion as an object of literary study while lacking the latter term's clear definition.[10] Linda Hutcheon argues that excessive interest in intertextuality rejects the role of the author, because intertextuality can be found "in the eye of the beholder" and does not entail a communicator's intentions. By contrast, in *A Theory of Parody* Hutcheon notes parody always features an author who actively encodes a text as an imitation with critical difference.[11] However, there have also been attempts at more closely defining different types of intertextuality. The Australian media scholar John Fiske has made a distinction between what he labels 'vertical' and 'horizontal' intertextuality. Horizontal intertextuality denotes references that are on the 'same level' i.e. when books make references to other books, whereas vertical intertextuality is found when, say, a book makes a reference to film or song or vice versa. Similarly, Linguist Norman Fairclough distinguishes between 'manifest intertextuality' and 'constitutive intertextuality.'[12] The former signifies intertextual elements such as presupposition, negation, parody, irony, etc. The latter signifies the interrelationship of discursive features in a text, such as structure, form,

or genre. Constitutive Intertextuality is also referred to interdiscursivity,[13] though, generally interdiscursivity refers to relations between larger formations of texts.

7 Intertextuality and allusion

While intertextuality is a complex and multileveled literary term, it is often confused with the more casual term 'allusion'. Allusion is a passing or casual reference; an incidental mention of something, either directly or by implication ("Plagiarism", 2015). This means it is most closely linked to both obligatory and accidental intertextuality, as the 'allusion' made relies on the listener or viewer knowing about the original source. It is also seen as accidental however, as they are normally phrases that are so frequently or casually used, that the true significance of the words is not fully appreciated. Allusion is most often used in conversation, dialogue or metaphor. For example "I was surprised his nose was not growing like Pinocchio's." This makes a reference to The Adventures of Pinocchio, written by Carlo Collodi when the little wooden puppet lies (YourDictionary, 2015). If this was obligatory intertextuality in a text, multiple references to this (or other novels of the same theme) would be used throughout the hypertext.

8 Intertextuality and plagiarism

"Intertextuality is an area of considerable ethical complexity" (Share, 2006). As intertextuality, by definition, involves the (sometimes) purposeful use of other's work without proper citation, it is often mistaken for plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of "using or closely imitating the language and thoughts of another author without authorization-" ("Plagiarism", 2015). Whilst this does seem to include intertextuality, the intention and purpose of using of another's work, is what allows intertextuality to be excluded from this definition. When using intertextuality, it usually a small excerpt of a hypotext that assists in the understanding of the new hypertext's (Ivanic, 1998) original themes, characters or contexts. They use a part of another text and change its meaning by placing it in a different context (Jabri, 2004). This means that they are using other's ideas to create or enhance their own new ideas, not simply plagiarising them. Intertextuality is based on the 'creation of new ideas', whilst plagiarism is often found in projects based on research to confirm your ideas. "There is much difference between imitating a man and counterfeiting him" (Benjamin Franklin, n.d).

9 Related concepts

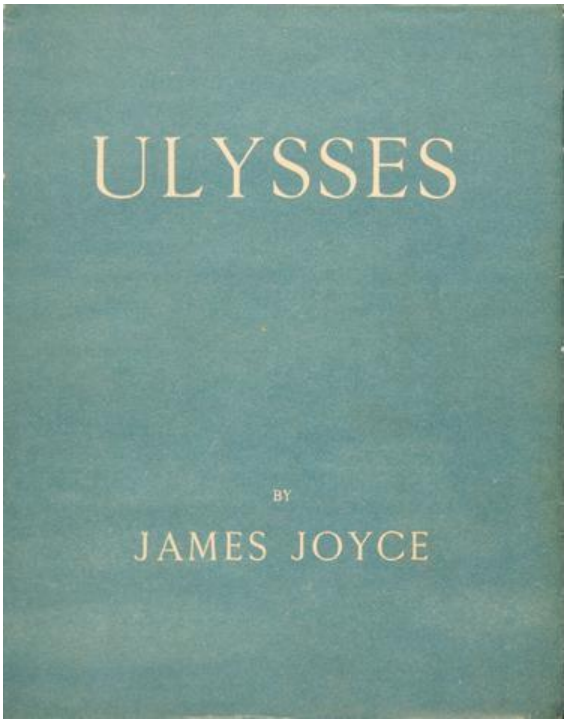
Linguist Norman Fairclough states that "intertextuality is a matter of recontextualization."[14] According to Per Linell, recontextualization can be defined as the "dynamic transfer-and-transformation of something from one discourse/text-in-context … to another."[15] Recontextualization can be relatively explicit—for example, when one text directly quotes another—or relatively implicit—as when the "same" generic meaning is rearticulated across different texts.[16]

A number of scholars have observed that recontextualization can have important ideological and political consequences. For instance, Adam Hodges has studied how White House officials recontextualized and altered a military general's comments for political purposes, highlighting favorable aspects of the general's utterances while downplaying the damaging aspects.[17] Rhetorical scholar Jeanne Fahnestock has shown that when popular magazines recontextualize scientific research they enhance the uniqueness of the scientific findings and confer greater certainty on the reported facts.[18] Similarly, John Oddo found that American reporters covering Colin Powell's 2003 U.N. speech transformed Powell's discourse as they recontextualized it, bestowing Powell's allegations with greater certainty and warrantability and even adding new evidence to support Powell's claims.[19]

Oddo has also argued that recontextualization has a future-oriented counterpoint, which he dubs "precontextualization."[20] According to Oddo, precontextualization is a form of anticipatory intertextuality wherein "a text introduces and predicts elements of a symbolic event that is yet to unfold."[21] For example, Oddo contends, American journalists anticipated and previewed Colin Powell's U.N. address, drawing his future discourse into the normative present.

10 Examples and history

While the theoretical concept of intertextuality is associated with post-modernism, the device itself is not new. New Testament passages quote from the Old Testament and Old Testament books such as Deuteronomy or the prophets refer to the events described in Exodus (for discussions on using 'intertextuality' to describe the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament, see Porter 1997; Oropeza 2013). Whereas a redaction critic would use such intertextuality to argue for a particular order and process of the authorship of the books in question, literary criticism takes a synchronic view that deals with the texts in their final form, as an interconnected body of literature. This interconnected body extends to later poems and paintings that refer to Biblical narratives, just as other texts build networks around Greek and Roman Classical history and mythology. Bullfinch's 1855 work *The Age Of Fable* served as an introduction to such an intertextual network; according to its author, it was intended "...for the reader of English literature, of either sex, who wishes to comprehend the allusions so frequently made by public speakers, lecturers, essayists, and poets...".



James Joyce's 1922 novel Ulysses *bears an intertextual relationship to Homer's* Odyssey.

Even the nomenclature "new" and "old" (testament) reframes the real context that the Jewish Torah had been usurped by followers of a new faith wishing to co-opt the original one.

Sometimes intertextuality is taken as plagiarism as in the case of Spanish writer Lucía Etxebarria whose poem collection *Estación de infierno* (2001) was found to contain metaphors and verses from Antonio Colinas. Etxebarria claimed that she admired him and applied intertextuality.

Some examples of intertextuality in literature include:

- *East of Eden* (1952) by John Steinbeck: A retelling of the story of Genesis, set in the Salinas Valley of Northern California.
- *Ulysses* (1922) by James Joyce: A retelling of Homer's *Odyssey*, set in Dublin.
- *The Dead Fathers Club* (2006) by Matt Haig: A retelling of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, set in modern England.
- *A Thousand Acres* (1991) by Jane Smiley: A retelling of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, set in rural Iowa.
- *Perelandra* (1943) by C. S. Lewis: Another retelling of the story of Genesis, also leaning on Milton's Paradise Lost, but set on the planet Venus.
- *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) by Jean Rhys: A textual intervention on Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, the story of the "mad women in the attic" told from her perspective.
- *The Legend of Bagger Vance* (1996) by Steven Pressfield: A retelling of the Bhagavad Gita, set in 1931 during an epic golf game.
- *Tortilla Flat* (1935) by John Steinbeck: A retelling of the Arthurian legends, set in *Monterey, CA* during the interwar period.
- *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931) by Eugene O'Neill: A retelling of Aeschylus' *The Oresteia*, set in the post-American Civil War South.

11 References

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[2] Hallo, William W. (2010) *The World's Oldest Literature: Studies in Sumerian Belles-Lettres* p.608

[3] Cancogni, Annapaola (1985) *The Mirage in the Mirror: Nabokov's Ada and Its French Pre-Texts* pp.203-213

[4] Irwin,2, October 2004, pp. 227–242, 228.

[5] Irwin, 228.

[6] Kristeva, Julia. Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980, p. 69.

[7] Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests: literature in the second degree*, Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (trans.), University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln NE and London.

[8] Kristeva, 66.

[9] Mitra, Ananda (1999). "Characteristics of the WWW Text: Tracing Discursive Strategies". *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* **5** (1): 1. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.1999.tb00330.x.

[10] Irwin, 227.

[11] Hutcheon, Linda. A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms. New York: Methuen, 1985.

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13 See also

- Literary theory
- Post-structuralism
- Semiotics
- Umberto Eco
- Meta
- Transmedia storytelling
- Honkadori
- Interdiscursivity
- The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things

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