
Intertextuality as an Inherent Tool for the Composition and Interpretation of Texts: A Theoretical Reappraisal

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Abstract: The aim of the paper is to discuss the operational concepts and theory of intertextuality as a postmodern theory. Postmodern theory is a theory that emerged in the second half of the 1960s. This theory was born as a reaction to modernity and its ideals. By the 1970s, postmodern aesthetics, on which postmodern theory was based, began to be felt in almost every field of art, from architecture to painting, from literature to cinema. Intertextuality seems such a useful term because it foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness, and interdependence in modern cultural life. In the Postmodern epoch, theorists often claim, it is not possible any longer to speak of originality or the uniqueness of the artistic object, be it a painting or novel, since every artistic object is so clearly assembled from bits and pieces of already existent art. An author or poet can use intertextuality deliberately for a variety of reasons. They would probably choose different ways of highlighting intertextuality depending on their intention. They may use references directly or indirectly. They might use a reference to create additional layers of meaning or make a point or place their work within a particular framework. A writer could also use a reference to create humour, highlight an inspiration or even create a reinterpretation of an existing work. The reasons and ways to use intertextuality are so varied that it is worth looking at each example to establish why and how the method was used.

Keywords: Intertextuality, Postmodern Theory, Literary Genres

1. Introduction

Postmodern theory is an approach that is the sum of certain breaking moments occurring in the historical development of the western societies. This theory rejects any utopia, goal, meaning, uniqueness; powerful ‘heroes’ who rule nature; the characters are more schizophrenic than neurotic— reflecting the basic psychological mood of modernist characters in the face of terrifying external reality; time does not move forward, it involves intertwined and often complex time periods; it has no message, instead of having nothing to say, aimlessness, pastiche, parody and irony can only be in question. As in the old works, it is not the case that the event flows in its natural course and the characters or heroes are chasing a meaning, struggling for a goal, a utopia. There is an intense insistence on only form, collage, interpenetration, aimlessness, nihilism and elements of violence and form [18].

Juvan, Marko also stated that intertextuality is one of the most important elements among postmodern elements of

literature [47]. Postmodernism is a decentered concept of the universe in which individual works are not isolated creations. It means that much of the focus in the study of postmodern literature is settled down on intertextuality. Intertextuality has been the relationship between one text and another or one text within the interwoven fabric of literary history. An indication of postmodernism’s lack of originality and reliance on clichés are pointed out by the famous critics. It is a reference or parallel to another literary work and an extended discussion of a work or the adoption of a style.

“Intertextuality” is an important text theory formed in the trend of thought of western structuralism and post-structuralism. It usually refers to the intertextual relationship between two or more texts. The theory was first proposed by Julia Kristeva, a feminist critic who is a famous French semiotician of Bulgarian origin. While criticizing the unreasonable aspects of structuralism, she developed her own theories inspired by Bakhtin’s dialogues and polyphony theories. Intertextuality is a basic feature of discourse. It is, to

be precise, the heterogeneous characteristic that various corpora intersect each other in the process of discourse generation, a text that influences and correlates with other texts ([42, 56]). Any text is an insert of the quotation, and any text is an absorption and adaptation of another [48]. The other text mentioned by Kristeva is the mutual text in the common sense. It can refer to the social and historical text at the synchronic level, namely the text space of horizontal discourse mentioned above. It can also refer to the works of predecessors or descendants at the diachronic level, namely the vertical relationship dimension of the text. The absorption and adaptation of the text can be realized in the text by means of parody citation and collage [85]. Intertextuality indicates that all texts exist in the relationship with other texts. Texts in different space-time intersect to form a large system, and any single text exists as a part of the system. It can be seen that what Kristeva emphasizes is the internal process of text recombination or transformation, in which the corpus from other texts is combined into a new meaningful text according to its function.

Thus, the aim of this paper is to discuss the operational definition of intertextuality and theories of intertextuality as a postmodern theory.

2. Operational Definition of Intertextuality

Since its birth up to the present, the concept of intertextuality has acquired “very complex ramifications and effects” [65] in the study of both literary and non-literary texts and discourses as well. Hence, for reasons of relevance, it would be advisable to define intertextuality and discuss its implications by adopting a narrower perspective of literary studies, as attempted below.

Put simply, the term “intertextuality refers to... the fact that all texts (films, plays, novels, anecdotes, or whatever) are made out of other texts.” [1] Similarly, the functional definition of the term intertextuality has been elaborated by [2] as quoted below:

The term intertextuality, popularized especially by Julia Kristeva, is used to signify the multiple ways in which any one literary text is made up of other texts, by means of its open or covert citations and *allusions*, its repetitions and transformations of the formal and substantive features of earlier texts, or simply its unavoidable participation in the common stock of linguistic and literary conventions and procedures that are “always already” in place and constitute the discourses into which we are born. In Kristeva’s formulation, accordingly, any text is in fact an “intertext”—the site of an intersection of numberless other texts, and existing only through its relations to other texts. [2]

As can be deduced from the two definitions quoted above, the term intertextuality is used (by literary critics and theorists) to refer to the various aspects of interrelationships or interconnections that are presumed to be established

between one literary text and any number of other prior texts. Secondly, what one needs to realize from Abrams’s more descriptive definition (quoted above) is the fact that there are “multiple ways in which” various forms of intertextuality could be (consciously and unconsciously) smuggled from any number of prior literary (and non-literary) texts into a later literary text. For example, a literary text’s intertextual connections with other texts, according to this same author, could take on a variety of forms—these range from the explicitly acknowledged citations of and indirect allusions or references to other texts, to an (un)acknowledged “repetitions and transformations” (and/or very subtle assimilations) of “the formal and substantive features of earlier texts” [2], and where the “form” of a literary text should be understood to embrace both literary style and generic conventions generally [24].

In more specific words, the term intertextuality, as used in literary theory and criticism, implies the existence of a prior text’s subject matter, themes, topoi, ideology and echoes of its stylistic/formal features—such as aspects of language, structure, genre, and devices (e.g., symbolism, imagery, allusions, quotations, references, irony, satire, pastiche, parody and tone)—in a later text. This, conversely, means that the later literary text is replete with explicit or implicit “snatches” or echoes of such features of other prior texts. When it is looked at from the historical study of literary tradition, the term intertextuality intimates the idea that “Literary texts... are always contributed by and within a context or [a literary] tradition.” [19]. By implication, “Intertextuality is the name often given to the manner in which texts of all sorts (oral, visual, literary, virtual) contain references to other texts that have, in some way, contributed to their production and signification.” [18]

3. Theories of Intertextuality

It is apparently a corollary to say that the coinage of the term *intertextuality* is traced from the 1960s, hence from the “postmodern age” [6], and thenceforward “the twentieth century has proved to be a period especially inclined to it culturally” [3]. This, nevertheless, does not mean that the practice of intertextuality in literary production is the phenomenon of the twentieth century (or of a few recent past centuries). But rather the practice or manifestation of intertextuality, in one form or another, “is at least as old as recorded human society. Unsurprisingly, therefore, we can find theories of intertextuality wherever there has been discourse about texts.” (Worton and Still, 1990: 2) In effect, today it appears to be the usual procedure for authors of books on intertextuality to attend, at least in passing, to pertinent concepts or texts by “a selection of early writers to give a flavour of what theories of intertextuality can be found in the past.” [73] In other words, in such authoritative books on the subject (e.g., [6, 73]), there certainly are citations of writers from the classical period, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and so forth, though, finally, most authors shift their attention to the twentieth century (and/or the present-

day) theorists of intertextuality: Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Gérard Genette, Michael Riffaterre, Harold Bloom, Jonathan Culler, to mention only a few among the most prominent ones ([66, 3, 6]).

By implication, the twentieth century, more than other centuries, has witnessed the proliferation of a wide variety of the notion of intertextuality [66]. For this reason, it has nowadays become a commonplace practice to express the phenomenon in the plural as the “theories” of intertextuality or “intertextualities” ([66]). On the other hand, it should be pointed out that, besides the “origins” of the literary theory of intertextuality that are attributed to Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva, there have long been successful attempts made by some authors to systematically divide later theories of intertextuality into three or more lines of development. For example, the reader of the essay “Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept” by [3] and the book *Intertextuality* by [6] would encounter two similar categories of later literary theories of intertextuality: (1) the “poststructuralist–deconstructive” strand of an intertextual theory, as illustrated in both authors by Roland Barthes [3]; and (2) the ostensibly narrowly circumscribed “structuralist approaches” and “poetics” of intertextual analysis [6], as illustrated in both authors by Genette and Riffaterre.

Accordingly, among the most important twentieth century theorists of the subject, our literature review in the next four subsections focuses on the works of Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva, both of who represent the origins of the literary theory of intertextuality, and on the works of Roland Barthes and Gérard Genette, who respectively represent the two main strands of later theories of intertextuality as indicated in (1) and (2) in the above paragraph.

3.1. Bakhtin's Theory of Intertextuality

It was as late as the mid-1960s that Julia Kristeva introduced the work of the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin to the Western world, particularly to the French-speaking audience. Surprisingly, Bakhtin's work has since then brought about wide-ranging influences and implications “within the fields of literary theory and criticism, and in linguistics, political and social theory, philosophy and many other disciplines.” [6]) The issue at stake, then, is that the study of the theory of intertextuality is inseparably rooted in Bakhtin's work, in that the proper “understanding [of] the former” rests on one's prior understanding of important concepts of the latter [6].

To begin with, in order to understand the nature of Bakhtin's theory about literary discourse in general and how intertextuality originates from his work in particular, one “must begin with his view on language,” whereby he is able to systematically critique “the basic premises and arguments of traditional linguistic theory.” [3] That is, in most of his works, Bakhtin has consistently theorized “that all linguistic communication occurs in specific social situations and between specific classes and groups of language-users” [6]. In other words, as [6] explains, the *Bakhtinian* critique of an

“abstract objectivism” of Saussurean linguistics (which “seeks to explain language as a synchronic system”) is found in two earlier books which (being published in the 1920s) associate Bakhtin with Medvedev [12] and with Volosinov [11]. Specifically, in explaining the social or context-specific nature of “all linguistic communication,” all the three theorists (Bakhtin, Medvedev and Volosinov) are said to have recourse to an *utterance*, which is characteristic to spoken language but practically devoid of an “abstract objectivism” of Saussurean linguistics and of Russian formalism [6]. The implication is that every act and gesture of verbal and written communication cannot be understood to be of a neutral or independent nature, but rather of a “dialogic nature, which involves its social, ideological, subject-centred and subject-addressed nature” as summarized by Allen:

From the simplest utterance to the most complex work of scientific or literary discourse, no utterance exists alone. An utterance, such as a scholarly work, may present itself as an independent entity, as monologic (possessing singular meaning and logic), yet it emerges from a complex history of previous works and addresses itself to, seeks for active response from, a complex institutional and social context: peers, reviewers, students, promotion boards and so on. All utterances are *dialogic*, their meaning and logic dependent upon what has previously been said and on how they will be received by others. [6]

The dialogic or relational nature of spoken words and utterances is what makes them to be produced as acts of communication or as responses to previous acts involving specific addressees. In the words of [12], “*word is a two-sided act*. It is determined equally by *whose* word it is and for whom it is meant. As word, it is precisely *the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee.*” [emphasis original] (quoted in [6]).

Accordingly, the notion of dialogism, according to the scholar on Bakhtin and dialogism, is used to refer to “the interconnected set of concerns that dominate Bakhtin's thinking” [41]; quoted in [71]. Particularly, dialogism is said to be “a constitutive element of all language.” [6] What is worth stating here is that, those contending forces in a society can play a role in promoting or repressing certain aspects of a dialogic language. Then, in order to theorize the on-going struggle between the dialogic forces of language, Bakhtin is reputed to draw on the conflict between monologic and dialogic utterance as well as on the “ancient traditions of the *carnival*” [6]. For Bakhtin, the carnival celebration is a social practice during which, under cover of masks and other facial coverings, the participants were said to have the chance to act out some “unofficial” behaviors by using “a profane language” and laughter and by displaying various bodily parts and images that are proscribed or tabooed under normal circumstances of social and individual life ([3, 6])—to be more specific, as Allen enumerates, the “images of huge bodies, bloated stomachs, orifices, debauchery, drunkenness and promiscuity are all ‘carnavalesque’ images.” [3] Put simply, the ancient carnival performance, as theorized by

Bakhtin, is thought to have had subversive effects on the “monologic” (i.e., the dominant) social discourses or behaviors or norms.

“The modern inheritor of this unofficial, highly satirical and parodic, dialogic tradition of the carnivalesque is found, Bakhtin argues, in the novel.” [6] For Bakhtin, the dialogic or intertextual nature of the novel genre can be understood from the novel’s reliance on all types of registers and characters that can be drawn from all walks of life and hence endowed with any kind of individual consciousness; and such a dialogic or intertextual conception of both the novel genre and the term dialogism, as Allen explains, has been consistently complemented by Bakhtin’s other concepts which include “heteroglossia”, “polyphony”, “hybridization” and “double-voiced discourse.” ([8] and [9]; as cited in [6])

For example, *polyphony*, as applied to the dialogic novel, implies the multiple “voices” or worldviews found in the story of the novel: the voices of the author, narrator(s) and characters that keep conflicting each other throughout the narrative of the story. In this respect, even a single character’s own discourse or utterance is dialogic as it contains traces of previous discourses or utterances of other people or characters [9]. That is why Bakhtin writes: “Worldviews, trends, viewpoints, and opinions always have verbal expression. All this is others’ speech (in personal or impersonal form), and cannot but be reflected in the utterance. The utterance is addressed not only to its object, but also to others’ speech about it.” [11] It is this same idea that is intimated by any of Bakhtin’s other concepts quoted earlier (namely “heteroglossia”, “polyphony”, “hybridization” and “double-voiced discourse”, whose differences are only a matter of degrees).

In summary, Bakhtin’s literary theory of intertextuality is borne out by his most important concepts of *dialogism* and *carnavalesque/carnivalism*, and *the dialogic novel*; in other words, his theory about the intertextual/dialogic nature of the meanings of language and literary discourse (or texts) is underpinned by “the primacy of the social” world in any interpersonal verbal, literary and textual communication, and by “the assumption that all meaning”—or all meaningful/significant human behavior, at large—“is achieved through struggle.” [3] This constant struggle for meaning, in the context of verbal communication, is said to be articulated by the subversive (or threatening) effects of the dialogic/intertextual aspects of language on the “monologic” aspects of “everyday” verbal communication promoted officially by the dominant social, political or religious discourse, ideology and morality. Indeed, seeking for the best analogy for demonstrating such a language-based struggle between social forces, Bakhtin draws on (or capitalizes on) the subversive holiday gestures and performances in the medieval and Renaissance carnivalesque “in which the dominant order of the society is overturned, fools dressing as nobles, nobles dressing as fools and so on”; in effect, from the Bakhtinian perspective, “this unofficial, highly satirical and parodic, dialogical tradition of the carnivalesque” is said to be inherited by the modern genre of the novel ([10]; as

quoted in [6]).

3.2. Kristeva's Theory of Intertextuality

Bakhtin’s most important concepts of *dialogism*, *carnival* (also called *carnavalesque* or *carnivalism*) and *the novel genre* are said to be thoroughly studied and interpreted by Julia Kristeva in her efforts to develop the theory of intertextuality. As shown below, the context which brought Kristeva and Bakhtin’s work together needs to be clarified first.

As [6] describes, the French “intellectual scene” of the mid-1960s which Kristeva joined (and which gave rise to her theory of intertextuality) “was one in which an array of established positions within philosophy, political theory and psychoanalytic theory were being transformed” [6], and, instead, the “scene” was said to be characterized by those subversive poststructuralist notions of literary theory and critical approaches ([51]; cited in [6]). Meanwhile, Kristeva had subscribed to the journal *Tel Quel*, to which the most important poststructuralist French theorists used to contribute their writings about “the theory of the text and textuality.” [6] It was during this time that Kristeva came to study Bakhtin’s theoretical and critical work for her own purposes (i.e., for her doctoral dissertation) and thereby began to interpret the basic concepts of his *oeuvre* for the benefit of the Western audience.

Most specifically, in her essay “Word, Dialogue and Novel” in which she introduced the term intertextuality for the first time, Kristeva writes: “The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*.” [52] From her allusion to “*double*”, one can see that, Kristeva not only reinterprets but also intertextually “incorporates Bakhtin’s dialogism, his insistence on the social and double-voiced nature of language, into her new semiotics.” [6] More importantly, by capitalizing on Bakhtin’s notion of the dialogic nature of the word and literary texts, she theorizes that literary texts function along two axes:

[The] horizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important fact: each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read. In Bakhtin’s work, these two axes, which he calls *dialogue* and *ambivalence*, are not clearly distinguished. Yet, what appears as a lack of rigour is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin: any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*. [52]

To explain, in her semiotic theory of language and a literary text, Kristeva conceives the “word as the minimal textual unit” whose status is said to be (standing) at the intersection of three coordinates or dimensions of the textual space (i.e., “writing subject, addressee and exterior texts”): “The word’s status is thus defined *horizontally* (the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee) as

well as *vertically* (the word in the text is oriented towards an anterior or synchronic literary corpus)." [52]

By implication, in defining intertextuality, Kristeva draws on her notion that a prior orientation to the common literary, social and cultural—hence intertextual—experience and knowledge is necessary in order for an individual to appropriately respond to a text and to share in the common objects of desire to be evoked by a literary text. To this end, she memorably defines that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another." [52] Her characterization of a literary text as "a mosaic of quotations" implies that poststructuralist notion that it is intertextually compiled from pre-existent utterances, words, texts and discourses. Likewise, in her essay "The Bounded Text," Kristeva defines the text from the perspective of the contemporary semiotics the object of which are "*several semiotic practices* which it considers as *translinguistic*" and therefore the text is seen as "a *productivity*", meaning it is both "a translinguistic apparatus" and "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality" [emphasis original]:

In this perspective, the *text* is defined as a trans-linguistic apparatus that redistributes the order of language by relating communicative speech, which aims to inform directly, to different kinds of anterior or synchronic utterances. The text is therefore a *productivity*, and this means: first, that its relationship to the language in which it is situated is redistributive (deconstructive-constructive), and hence can be better approached through logical categories rather than linguistic ones; and second, that it is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another. [49]

Put simply, Kristeva's original theory of intertextuality can be re-interpreted as referring to a literary text's (inter)dependence on prior texts from which the author inevitably draws during the time of composing the text. In other words, according to this semiotic approach and theory of intertextuality, a literary "text's meaning is understood as its temporary rearrangement of elements with socially pre-existent meanings." [6] In fact, it would suffice to read the following quotation so as to grasp the general idea of Kristeva's theories of intertextuality and textuality (Retrieved on 29 October 2008 from: <http://www.metapedia.com/wiki/index.php?title=Intertextuality>).

The theory of intertextuality introduced by Julia Kristeva assumes that meaning and intelligibility in discourse and Texts are based on a network of prior and concurrent discourse and texts. Every text (and we can insert any cultural object here: image, film, Web content, musical composition) is a mosaic of references to other texts, genres, and discourses. Every text or set of signs presupposes a network of relationships to other signs like strings of quotations that have lost their exact references. The principle of intertextuality is a ground or precondition for meaning beyond "texts" in the strict sense of things written, and

includes units of meaning in any media. Essentially, intertextuality describes the foundational activity behind interpreting cultural meaning in any significant unit of a cultural object (a book, a film, a TV show, a Web genre): whatever meaning we discover or posit can only occur through a network of prior "texts" that provide the context of possible meanings and our recognition of meaning at all.

As has been described in this quotation, Kristeva's original theory of intertextuality implies the idea that any literary text is characterized to be "a mosaic" of direct and/or indirect and unintentional and/or intentional "references to other texts, genres, and discourses." That is to say, the genesis of a literary text (i.e., the process of an artistic creation of a literary artifact and thereby its meaning) is essentially grounded on the author's prior knowledge of other texts, on the one hand, with respect to their language, genre and style and, on the other hand, with respect to the themes, ideas, concepts, thoughts and traditional topoi embedded in them. This "foundational" feature makes any literary text and its meaning "essentially" intertextual in nature. In effect, for no text would give sense when it is seen independently of other texts [19], intertextuality has been today seen as an essential "precondition" or a "foundational activity" for making a literarily intelligible reading and interpretation of the meaning of a literary text.

At the same time, Kristeva herself is the one who was forced to modify or redefine her own original definition and conception of intertextuality. That is, based on her observation that *intertextuality* was mistakenly reduced to refer to only those *traceable* or *detectable* relationships between texts, as well as to what is called *influence study* (or the *study of sources*), she resolved to employ the term *transposition* which, for her, signifies the third "process" (which is to be added to the two fundamental Freudian "processes" of the unconscious: *displacement* and *condensation*); seem from Kristeva's semiotic theory of art and language, this third "process" of the unconscious—as specified by her term *transposition*—involves this: "the *passage from one sign system to another*" [50], as elaborated hereunder:

The term *inter-textuality* denotes this transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another; but since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of "study of sources," we prefer the term *transposition* because it specifies that the passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic—of enunciative and denotative positionality. If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an inter-textuality), one then understands that its "place" of enunciation and its denoted "object" are never single, complete, and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated. In this way polysemy [multiple levels or kinds of meaning] can also be seen as the result of a semiotic polyvalence—an adherence to different sign systems. [50]

In clarifying this process, Kristeva has provided examples of signifying materials (e.g. language) and signifying

systems/practices (e.g., carnival, the novel); then, she maintains that a new signifying system can result from “the same signifying material; in language, for example, the passage may be made from narrative to text”; or the new signifying system may be the result of the borrowing or transposition from “several different sign systems” or “different signifying materials,” such as the formation of the novel genre “as the result of a redistribution of several different sign systems: carnival, courtly poetry, scholastic discourse.” [50]

3.3. Barthes's Theory of Intertextuality

At the present, there are more than a few literary theorists whose theoretical-critical texts, some published in anthologies of literary theory and criticism, would prove daunting for most novice students in the field of literary studies. For instance, Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes, to mention only two, are among those who are referred to, by [70], as being notably “arcane theorists” of poststructuralism. This view about both theorists, as [21] attests, has remained true at least ever since 1967—the year in which both published texts that similarly celebrate an inherently “pluralistic” (meaning a “relational” or “intertextual”) nature of textual meaning; namely *Of Grammatology* [29] and the essay “The Death of the Author” [16] respectively.

But some authors like [3] and [6] have decidedly chosen and/or focused on Roland Barthes, in their illustration of “the poststructuralist/deconstructive” line of the theory of intertextuality. Particularly, in his explicit appreciation of Roland Barthes’s literary-theoretical articulation of and stance towards the concepts of the “text” and “intertextuality,” Allen sounds to imply his familiarity with the basic writings of this French theorist and/or exponent of poststructuralism: “A critic and theorist who, like Kristeva, has always attacked notions of the ‘natural’, stable meaning and unquestionable truth, Roland Barthes remains the most articulate of all writers on the concept of intertextuality.” [6] Then, on the basis of such views, the focus of the present subsection is also on Barthes’s theory of intertextuality (as implied by the above subheading).

To begin with, as the subsequent paragraphs demonstrate, our assessment of Barthes’s “poststructuralist/deconstructive” theory of intertextuality would largely rely upon his essays “The Death of the Author” [16] and “From Work to Text” [17], both of which are edited in his anthology of essays entitled *Image-Music-Text* [17]. Indeed, because his theories of the “text” and “intertextuality” are two sides of the same coin, it would be advisable to start off by exploring first the essay “From Work to Text” in which Barthes has stipulated five poststructuralist theoretical and critical precepts concerning the nature of what he calls “the *Text*” (with a capital “T”) as opposed to “the *work*” [17]. As he writes, the five “principal propositions at the intersection of which I see the Text as standing” are to be construed as “enunciations, ‘touches’, approaches that consent to remain metaphorical”; and, for him, “they concern method, genres, signs, plurality, filiation, reading and pleasure.” [17] In what follows, an

attempt is made to explicate the implications of those five “propositions,” following the order in which they appear in the original source; but there are two points to be noted before we proceed to the discussion that follows: (a) instead of the numerical order (1–5) used in the original source, verbal sequence markers from First proposition–Fifth proposition are used below, and (b) “the Text” with a capital “T” appears only in direct quotations.

First proposition: “The Text is not to be thought of as an object that can be computed.” [17] In this proposition, Barthes characterizes “the text” as “a methodological field” as opposed to the materiality of “the work”, as in: “The difference is this: the work is a fragment of substance, occupying a part of the space of books (in a library for example), the Text is a methodological field.” [17] To elaborate, what he wants to say is that the meaning of a text is not a finished product; or that the meaning of a text is not a computable experience. Rather, as he proceeds to explain, the text can “endlessly” produce meaning every time it is re-read or experienced through a process in which “the text is a process of demonstration” and a process in which the text exists in the field of language and “in the movement of a discourse”. Of course, this form of a “textual” movement or activity of meaning production is referred to as *signifiance* both by Kristeva and Barthes, and perhaps by some other poststructuralists as well (and where, put simply, the term “*signifiance* implies that meaning is only ever produced in the act of reading” [6: 219])—indeed, it is such usages and applications of the term *signifiance* that are intimated by Barthes’s assertions about an essentially intertextual nature of the text and/or of the “activity” of generating textual meaning: “*the Text is experienced only in an activity of production*. It follows that the Text cannot stop (for example on a library shelf); its constitutive movement is that of cutting across (in particular, it can cut across the work, several works).” [emphasis original] ([17] Here, it is worth noting Barthes’s contention that “the Text cannot stop” for the very reason that it is endowed with a “constitutive” capacity for “cutting across” any number of other “works” or texts, and, such a contention, in simple terms, can be understood to be an reiteration of the idea that (a literary) text can “endlessly” produce meaning because it is intertextual in its constitution or composition.

Second proposition: Any literary text cannot be strictly classified as belonging to a single generic category and/or aesthetic category. This proposition is about “genres”. Barthes, thus, theorizes that “the Text does not stop at (good) Literature; it cannot be contained in a hierarchy, even in a simple division of genres. What constitutes the Text is, on the contrary (or precisely), its subversive force in respect of the old classifications.” [17] To explain, Barthes’s second theory of textuality, as quoted here, seems to embody two interrelated ideas or implications about the theory of intertextuality. At one level, he is implying that a literary text would defy a strict generic category; if so, this idea bears out the postmodernist/poststructuralist notion that a literary text, particularly a novel, is generically impure or hybrid or

intertextual. At another level, his statement that “the Text does not stop at (good) Literature; it cannot be contained in a hierarchy...” can be construed to be Barthes’s articulation of postmodernism’s (and/or poststructuralism’s) rejection of the distinction between high and low works of art and literature [48]. This may be the reason why he speaks in favour of a subversive text:

The Text is that which goes to the limit of the rules of enunciation (rationality, readability, etc.). Nor is this a rhetorical idea, resorted to for some 'heroic' effect: the Text tries to place itself very exactly *behind* the limit of the *doxa* (is not general opinion—constitutive of our democratic societies and powerfully aided by mass communications—denied by its limits, the energy with which it excludes, its *censorship?*). Taking the word literally, it may be said that the Text is always *paradoxical*. [17]

Third proposition: “The Text can be approached, experienced, in reaction to the sign.” [17] This theoretical proposition has to do with “signs” or, to be precise, with the semiotic nature of the text and textual meaning. As Barthes writes:

The Text can be approached, experienced, in reaction to the sign. The work closes on a signified.... The Text, on the contrary, practises the infinite deferment of the signified, is dilatory; its field is that of the signifier and the signifier must not be conceived of as 'the first stage of meaning', its material vestibule, but, in complete opposition to this, as its *deferred action*. Similarly, the *infinity* of the signifier refers not to some idea of the ineffable (the unnameable signified) but to that of *a playing*; the generation of the perpetual signifier (after the fashion of a perpetual calendar) in the field of the text (better, of which the text is the field). [17]

Fourth proposition: “The Text is plural.” [17] This involves what is known to be Barthes’s theory of the plurality of the text. For him, the plurality of the text “is not simply to say that it has several meanings, but that it accomplishes the very plural of meaning: an *irreducible* (and not merely an acceptable) plural.” [15] In explaining the plurality of the text, he first notes that “etymologically, the text is a tissue, a woven fabric.” [17] Then, he describes the inherently intertextual conditions or the “textual space” on which the text relies to produce its plural meanings every time it is re-read in relation to, beside or against other prior and contemporary texts, as in: “The intertextual in which every text is held, it itself being the text-between of another text, is not to be confused with some origin of the text,” for the reason that “the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas.” [emphasis original] [17] His ideas, as quoted here, appear to be echoes of Kristeva’s memorable definition that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*.” [emphasis original] [52]

Fifth proposition: The text “reads without the inscription of [or the filiation with] the Father.” [17] By this he means that the text “can be read without the guarantee of its father, the restitution of the inter-text paradoxically abolishing any legacy.” [17] Indeed, this fifth theoretical point seems to be expanded by Barthes in his essay “The Death of the Author” (16a) as was stated earlier. To explain, the essay “The Death of the Author” is now metaphorically conceived to be his announcement of “the death of the author” and, more surprisingly, according to Bennett, there were decades during which the same “essay was often taken as the last word on the author.” [2]

What matters is how Barthes’s essay has come to be considered “something of a Post-Structuralist manifesto” [68], and thereby how his declaration of “the death of the author” has, since then, continued to affect “the role of the author in our interpretation of literary works.” [70] With regard to the relationship between Barthes’s title phrase and poststructuralism, [21] has offered a synecdochical interpretation. For him, the title phrase is considered to be the embodiment of “the whole iconoclastic project of poststructuralism” and, conversely, poststructuralism “was often interpreted as an assertion of ‘the death of the author’.” [21]

By definition, “the death of the author” refers to a poststructuralist critical practice and attitude towards the role of the author, but where “the author is no longer considered a meaningful object of analysis” and this why the author is “dead.” [70] For this and other similar reasons discussed earlier, Barthes’s poststructuralist literary-critical theory is said to be a “declaration of radical textuality” and a celebration “of texts working independently of their authors.” [21] By implication, as [21] explains, Barthes conceives the text to be inherently “intertextual”; but in his idea of intertextuality is involved “a radical intertextuality without origin”—in other words, his idea has to be understood as “a new conception of intertextuality that goes beyond specific and identifiable echoes, allusions, or references”; and hence, “Such a model of textuality – textuality as intertextuality – eliminates the central, controlling power of authorial consciousness.” [21]

It follows that, as such iconoclastic notions of poststructuralism and radical “textuality as intertextuality” have brought wide-ranging consequences on “fundamental questions of literary interpretation,” focus has been increasingly made “on the reader; on the ideological, rhetorical, or aesthetic structure of the text; or on the culture in which the text was produced, usually without reference to the author.” [70] That is why, in “The Death of the Author,” Barthes devalues “authorial intention” by contending that “a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author- God)”; and instead he characterizes the text to be intertextual: that is, in his view, the text is “*a multi-dimensional space* in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is *a tissue of quotations* drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.” [emphasis added] [16]

At this point, one thing is worth noting about the concluding lines of the essay “The Death of the Author” where we find such assertions: “Classic criticism has never paid any attention to the reader; for it, the writer is the only person in literature”; but now “we know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: *the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.*” [emphasis added] [16] To explain, in concluding his essay in which he metaphorically murdered the author, Barthes has “empowered” the reader in the most memorable way in the very last line of the essay as italicized above. In effect, with the diminished role of the author (or of “authorial intention”), more importance is now given to the role of the reader in the act of reading and interpreting a literary text—a literary text that is said to be plural or intertextual in its constitution.

Moreover, as Barthes contends in the same essay, a text is “the multiplicity of writing” and “a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation”; for this reason, in such a “multiplicity of writing, everything is to be *disentangled, nothing deciphered*” [16]. In fact, for Barthes, the reader is the destination or the textual space/field for all quotations which, nevertheless, cannot be said to belong to him/her personally; rather the reader “is simply that *someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted.” [16]

3.4. Genette's Theory of Intertextuality

Based on his structuralist approach to the study of poetics, particularly in his “three related works” which form a trilogy, *The Architext* [37], *Palimpsests* [38] and *Paratexts* [39] (1997b), Gérard Genette has progressively theorized and refined his own version of the phenomenon of intertextuality. Eventually, instead of the concept of “intertextuality” that is now widely recognized within the theoretical-critical approaches of poststructuralism and/or postmodernism, Genette has managed to devise “the term *transtextuality* to cover all instances of the phenomenon in question and then subdivides it into five more specific categories” [emphasis added] [6], which include: (1) intertextuality, (2) paratextuality, (3) metatextuality, (4) architextuality, and (5) hypertextuality, as are respectively described in the subsequent paragraphs.

To begin with, *intertextuality* is Genette's first category of transtextuality. But, as [6] comments, Genette's use of the term *intertextuality* is somehow different from the manifold applications and wide-ranging generic scope or implications that the concept commonly carries within poststructuralism and/or postmodernism. This is because Genette employs the term very reductively to refer to “the actual presence of one text within another” and/or “a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts” ([37]; quoted in [6]). As Allen puts it, the scope of the nature of intertextuality, in Genette's usage, is reduced or consigned “to issues of quotation, plagiarism and allusion”; and thus, in terms of its application to textual analysis, such a narrowly circumscribed approach purports to be “a very pragmatic and

determinable intertextual relationship between specific elements of individual texts.” [6]

Paratextuality, as Genette's second category of his transtextuality, obtains between specific elements of one text, and into which are included all “those elements which lie on the threshold of the text” and influence its “reception” [6]. In other words, the “paratext” is constituted of both the “peritext” and “epitext” as described respectively. The “peritext” involves those “peripheral” or “liminal” texts that not only “surround” a given text but also have an effect on its reception—titles, subtitles, prefaces, chapter titles, epigraphs, all kinds of notes, blurbs, afterwards—and which are said to be included by the author or at his/her behest. The “epitext” contains those textual “elements” that are found “outside” of a given text and are usually supplied by the publisher, the editor, the critics and/or the interviewers—“such as interviews, publicity announcements, [critical] reviews by and addressees to critics, private letters and other authorial and editorial discussions” [6].

Particularly, out of these elements of a paratext, Genette has stipulated two ways in which the title (and subtitle) of a certain literary text can function; that is to say, “Genette distinguishes between *thematic* titles which refer to the subject of the text and *rhematic* titles which refer to the manner in which the text performs its intentions.” [emphasis original] [6]. In the same vein, the critic Monica Loeb also asserts that “The title of any literary work is primarily an advertisement for the product and its contents”; and then she maintains that an intertextually used literary “title brings with it preconceived notions, expectations, associations in the reader (who does recognize its origin).” [55] More specifically, Loeb further spells out that “Intertextual titles might evoke theme, subject matter, atmosphere, era, landscape, character, and will as a consequence enrich the work in question.” [55] This theoretical assertion about the significance of the title of a specific text, if seen from a broader perspective of intertextuality, can be exploited for the purpose of extrapolating (thematic and stylistic) intertextual connections between or among any number of literary texts.

Genette's third term *metatextuality* is used to refer to the relationship between a literary text and all kinds of external “commentary” and “critical” texts (“literary criticism”) written on it. As the “very practice of literary criticism and poetics is clearly involved in this concept,” the relationship can be implicit, without necessarily leaving a hint or identifiable trace about the two texts concerned [6].

Genette's other category termed *architextuality* “has to do with ‘the reader's [sic] expectations, and thus their reception of a work'...” ([38] quoted in [6]). In the words of Allen, Genette's usage of *architextuality* is concerned with the given text's “relation with certain genres, sub-genres or conventions” [6]. In other words, the architextual aspects of a literary text rely upon the reader's expectations about a set of abstract categories such as genre, mode, theme, topos, discourse, some universally or culturally acknowledged concepts, symbols and configurations, which gave rise to the

text and to which it is related [6].

On the other hand, the nature of intertextual generic conventions, patterns, and archetypes actualized by the novels has been theorized by the literary theorist Northrop Frye in his work entitled *Anatomy of Criticism* [36], which “may now be read as a monumental study of intertextual generic conventions.” [64] This designation to Frye’s work can now be deemed correct because, by adopting an *archetypal criticism* as a framework for characterizing and classifying the four genres of literature (namely, romance, tragedy, satire/irony, and comedy), Frye has argued that “while the specific content of particular romances, tragedies, ironic/satiric narratives, and comedies is different—that is, their surface phenomena are different—the structure of each genre” [i.e., the underlying generic structure which is intertextually modelled and actualized by different literary narratives] “remains the same.” [70] Most specifically, with regard to the structural principles underlying the genre of tragedy, Frye has stipulated that “catastrophe, which consists of the hero’s downfall,” is the basic structural component of tragedy [70]. By extension, if Frye’s archetypal classification of literary genres is seen intertextually, it implies the fact that all tragic literary narratives, for example, are structurally related to each other, because they are written (or narrated) based on a generic archetype which has continued to serve as an intertextual model for innumerable tragic literary texts written in the literary traditions of different civilizations.

Finally, in defining the literary phenomenon of what he calls *hypertextuality*, Genette relies on another coinage, namely *hypotext*, and on an agricultural metaphor of grafting. For him, *hypertextuality* is about “any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary” [emphasis original] ([38] quoted in [6]). According to Allen, Genette’s term “the *hypotext*” is referred to, by most critics, as “the *inter-text*, that is, a text which can be definitely located as a major source of signification for a text.” [6] The examples [6] cites in this context are Homer’s *Odyssey* and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, where the former serves by being “a major” hypotext or inter-text for the latter.

4. Two General Forms of Intertextuality in Literature

Fundamentally, there seem to be two (interrelated) ways of thinking about how intertextuality, with its different forms, could be incorporated into a certain literary text: intentionally or consciously and unintentionally or subconsciously.

To begin with the former, as [79] writes in her website article (“Graham Swift, *Ever After*: a Study in Intertextuality”), authors can intentionally or consciously use different forms of intertextuality in their literary texts “as a strategy to create meanings.” In fact, the nature of the consciously incorporated intertexts in one literary text can take on either the forms of explicit references to other texts

(e.g., direct quotations from, and allusions or references to, other texts) or different forms of implicitly assimilated and transformed (thematic and stylistic) intertextual links between texts in general (e.g., parody, plagiarism, imitations, genre fiction). According to the above author, an intentionally used intertextuality “allows for intricate, complex stories, challenging the reader with a handful of more or less clearly recognizable hypotexts. Instinctively... the reader tries to identify these other texts.” ([79]. On the other hand, when the author unconsciously draws on the themes, stylistic and formal features, and implicit literary codes and conventions employed by other prior or contemporary texts, intertextuality is said to be introduced into a literary text unintentionally or unwittingly “as an abstract concept of the relatedness of all writing” which, in turn, is also “applicable to concrete passages of a text.” [79]. In other words, viewed from such a general perspective of a textual system (or a linguistic sign), the existence of intertextual relationships (like linguistic, textual, “semiotic” or thematic connections and generic interdependence) between or among literary texts is taken to be an inevitable rule but not an exception. That is why [75] asserts (in a website article) that such an “abstract” form of “Intertextuality is a property of language—and of semiotic systems in general—not simply of literature.” As a result, as this same theorist argues, most features of literary intertextuality are taken to be unintentional, and hence a certain literary text is essentially part of a very complex or discursive textual system—“a matrix of possibilities constituted of earlier texts.” [75] To use [84] words, because of this abstract concept of the impurity of a textual system, “any [literary] text is inevitably quoting and quotable, a criss-crossing intersection.”

In short, in line with the current postmodernist critical practice, it would be deemed difficult (or even “impossible”) to read a newly written poem, novel, short story or play in isolation from that matrix of literature and language, which must be used as a contextual tool by the reader in the process of reading and explicating its meaning(s).

5. Intertextual Practice in the Postmodern Age

Ever since the term was coined in the late 1960s, both the theory of intertextuality and the mode of an intertextual interpretation have attracted a tremendous amount of artistic and professional enthusiasm from the contemporary theorists, authors, critics, instructors and students of literature. In other words, it was in the “postmodern age” (i.e., since the late twentieth-century) that intertextual literary theory and criticism, as a scholarly discipline, came into the scene of literary studies. Consequently, it might appear unavoidable for the theoretically-informed contemporary authors to grow “sensitive” to the theoretical principles of intertextuality, and thereby to consciously employ different intertexts in their works. However, the incorporation of intertextuality is by no

means novel or new to the institution of literature for the two reasons explained below.

Firstly, the use of different kinds of intertextual connections between a later literary text and other prior texts is not a new or recent practice of artistic creativity because (as William Irwin puts it in his website article “Against Intertextuality”) “Since the dawn of literature authors have referred and alluded to other texts” with the intention of producing different rhetorical effects [78]. Obviously, this aspect of intertextuality is taken to be an intentional intertextuality because it is the author who consciously alludes and refers to, parodies, imitates, adapts and quotes from, other prior and concurrent texts.

Secondly, because unintentional intertextuality is an essential characteristic of any textual system, all literary texts are, at least implicitly, intertextual in nature. For example, by quoting [30] in her a website article, [83] discusses in the “Addendum” to her doctoral thesis about an essentially intertextual characteristic of a literary text and its implications for the meaning (and literary value to be) generated by any textual system. She writes: “A textual system... is always already contaminated by the traces of other discourses and languages.” [73] In other words, any “textual system,” say a literary text, is linguistically and conceptually impure or interlinked with other texts or languages and discourses. Following this, and by quoting [83] to substantiate her earlier assertion about the impurity of “a textual system,” Schostak rationalizes that because the meaning of a written linguistic system or sign follows inscription, all “thoughts, ideas and concepts are... impure, haunted, contaminated and infected.” [83]

In general, when these two reasons (i.e., the intentional forms of intertextuality and the impurity of a textual system or its being essentially mutually interconnected with “other discourses and languages”, including the impurity of all ideas, thoughts and concepts) are taken together, they would help to justify the postmodernist ways of thinking about the meaning and value of literary language and the significance of intertextual modes of reading and criticism. That is, these two postmodernist reasons imply the idea that literary meaning and value are not “intrinsic” in the text or in the written sign or the idea that meaning and value should not be perceived as “immanent” or “given” or “built-in” features of a certain text ([15]; [49]; [32]). Rather, the meaning of a literary text and of language in general only becomes possible through the reader’s acts of knowing about or recognizing, “[re-]tracing” and “explicating” (words used by [32] as cited in [83]) a text’s intertextual references to other texts. Therefore, the point to be emphasized here is that the existence of intertextual links between or among literary texts, according to [20] is “a more general law” of both the creation and reception of all canonical literary texts:

Literature, we might say, is a monstrous or mutant form, a mutant discourse. Literary texts don’t appear out of nowhere. As we suggest elsewhere in this book, recent literary criticism and theory has been much concerned with intertextuality, with ways in which a poem or novel is

constructed out of other cultural and literary discourses, the ways in which texts, ideas and words mutate, ceaselessly evolving and transforming the possibilities of literary forms. This is why literary studies, this unruly, improper discipline, is in fact truly, properly ‘interdisciplinary’. The study of literature involves, from the start, a mixing and contamination of disciplines and genres. Literary criticism and theory are themselves mutant, and any significantly ‘new’ or ‘original’ critical or theoretical work produces a mutation in the discipline. *Frankenstein* can perhaps also help us to grasp how literary texts are mutated in their reception. [...] Mutation, in this respect, is central to the process that we call canonization: for canonization to occur, a text must be inherited, transformed, responded to, deformed, developed, and imitated – in future texts, in the literary and other traditions to which it gives birth, in being read. [20]

The first important idea that should be grasped from the above quotation is that intertextuality—which is also referred to as “heteroglossia” by M. M. Bakhtin and as “monstrism” or “mutant” by [20]—is an inherent characteristic of literary “creation and reception.” The other important point is that the institution of literature (or the discipline of literary studies) is essentially “interdisciplinary” or “multidisciplinary,” for the reason that a literary text is “thematically, verbally, conceptually, intellectually” [20], formally and rhetorically grounded in other literary (and philosophic, scientific, medical, historical or theological) texts and discourses. For example, when describing such aspects of intertextuality used by Mary Shelley in her novel *Frankenstein*, [20] write this: “And before all of these, there is the grounding intertext of that great mutant book of creation, the Bible” whose subjects, imagery, symbols, discourses, incidents and stories have often been consciously or subconsciously distributed within many literary texts of most Christian societies. Thus, the trend appears to be a horizontal rather than a vertical approach to the critical evaluation of literary works so as to discover thematic convergences and stylistic parallels that two or more literary works partake of.

6. Conclusion

Generally, Postmodernism is an umbrella term that is used in different ways by different theorists. It has several common features to characterize its art forms. The notion of intertextuality is one of the prominent aspects in many postmodern art forms that refer to each other through pastiche, parody, irony, allusion, or imitation. So these postmodern forms are frequently used together to break conventions, which is one of postmodernism’s distinct approaches to works of art. Drawing oneself in search of meaning of intertextuality is a difficult task. There are many others who have defined the concept of intertextuality in different ways after Kristeva coined this word. Simply, the notion of intertextuality refers to any sort of presence in a text of another text. It means that a text is “a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text, in which

several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" [6]. Moreover, William Irwin views that the concept of intertextuality is used to refer to "almost as many meanings as users, from those faithful to Kristeva's original version to those who simply use as it is a stylish way of talking about allusion and influence" (228). In this way, the notion of intertextuality is a postmodern approach that it is not necessarily a unified system, creating multiple definitions and meanings of the word.

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