

Review

Inevitability of arts from inter-textuality

Mohammad Khosravi Shakib

Department of Persian Language and Literature, Human Science Faculty, Lorestan University, I. R. Iran.
E- Mail: Khosravi_shakib@yahoo.com.

Accepted 29 November, 2012

Kristeva coined the term, intertextuality in 1966, and since that time intertextuality has come to have almost as many meanings as its users. It is no small task for this paper to clarify what intertextuality means for Kristeva and her mentor/colleague, Roland Barthes before criticizing their concept of intertextuality and its application in interpretation. Because no rational and coherent concept of intertextuality is offered by Kristeva and Barthes or by their Epigoni, it will be concluded that intertextuality should be treated using lexicon of sincere and intelligent humanists. This work will discuss and analyze some types and theories of intertextuality, with examples. These examples would be based on the definitions discussed in this paper, because it is discovered in this research that there are conflicting views among scholars on this topic. For instance, while some authors consider pictures as texts, others do not. At the end of the work, it will be taken that any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages etc are passed into the text and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text. Intertextuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot of course be reduced to sources or influences of problem; intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely be ever located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation marks.

Key words: Intertxuality, imitation, film, literature, art.

INTRODUCTION

Intertextuality is a word coined by Julia Kristeva, a French linguist who has written much on this topic. This word has a broader meaning in today's context than the theories she expounds in her seminal work on intertextuality which are "word, dialogue and novel". Her notion of Intertextuality refers to the literal and effective presence in a text of another text. "A text", according to her, "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" (Allen, 2000). Kristeva writes that horizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important factor: each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read (Kristeva, 1986). In Bakhtin's work, these two axes, which he calls dialogue and ambivalence, are not clearly

distinguished. Yet, what appears as a lack of rigor is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin (1981). Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotation; it is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least twice.

TYPES OF INTRTEXTUALITY

It must be analyzed firstly two major types of Intertextuality, which are ekphrasis and iconotext. Ekphrasis was defined by Tom Mitchel, Grant Scott and James Hefferman as "the verbal representation of visual representation" while David Carrier sees it as a "verbal

re-creations of visual artwork" (Wagner, 1996, p.10). artwork" (Wagner, 1996). By this definition, both authors mean that ekphrasis comes into being when a writer describes a visual object such as painting or sculpture with a verbal media such as a novel, poem, or other writings. This can be seen in any literature that tries to describe or portray painting and sculpture, as seen below:

- The description of Achilles's shield in Homer's Iliad
- Shakespeare's The rape of Lucrece
- Esfandiar Blindness in Shahnameh of Ferdosi in the Persian literature

The underlying point here, however, is that the above examples are pieces of literature that describe visual art works. This can also be seen in the poetic description of works of arts, mostly painting in a literary mode, and is the subject of James Hofferman's recent perception survey of a body of literature from Homer to Ashbery, that corroborates the struggle between WORD and IMAGE. According to Barthes, all ekphrasis is notional, and seeks to create a specific image that is to be found only in the text as its "resident alien" (Barthes, 1973). Ekphrasis stages a paradoxical performance, promising to give voice to the allegedly silent image even while attempting to overcome the power of the image by transforming and inscribing it. For instance, painting does not have voice but when one describes painting in writing, he is intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly giving voice to this painting. This brings us to the second category of intertextuality called iconotext. It is the use of (by way of reference or allusion, in an explicit or implicit way) an image in a text or vice versa. Micheal Nerlich defines it as a work of art made up of visual and verbal signs, such as Evelyne Sinnasamy's novel with photographs, *la femme se decouvre*, in which text and images form a whole (or union that cannot be dissolved). But Alain Montandon sees it as a Work of arts in which writing and the plastic element present themselves in an inseparable totality. Iconotext can also exist in such works in which one medium is only implied, example, the reference to a painting in a fictional text (Barthes, 1973). Examples can be found in most newspapers, where articles sometimes carry pictures (Santaella, 1998). It can also be seen in story like *One Thousand and One Night* in which pictures are used in various parts of the story to give image to the writing. It should be noted that the said novel has been reproduced as film, but we will come to that later when discussing film as an example of intertextuality.

SOME THEORY OF INTERTEXTUALITY

Here, this paper wants to discuss the theories of intertextuality by Plato, Aristotle and Roman theorists,

while giving some examples based on the understanding of the author. First theory is the Theory of imitation. According to Roman theorists, imitation presupposes reference to a pre-existent reality which is concrete as well as textual. Apart from the above authorities, Quintilian remarks that imitation is not repetition; it is an highlighting in which by reading and writing, the translator declares his/herself, while also engaging in a process of self-alienation. Joel Weinheimer argues that an imitation has no independent or autonomous essence. It is neither a copy nor an original. Now in the case of platonic imitation, the poet always copies an earlier act of creation, which is itself already a copy. Plato's theories of poetry highlight intertextual relation. Certainly, the work of art, to Plato is not autonomous but crossed; for example, by various references to social knowledge like military tactics; divination, statecraft. Plato's theory can be supported by most of the poems written as a result of the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington DC. We all know what happened, including the poets. It would not like to limit Plato's theory to poetry; it can also be seen in other literariness like films. For instance, the film "The rise and fall of Idi Amin" which portrays the brutal and dictatorial regime of Idi Amin in post independent Uganda (Idi Amin was a totalitarian Ugandan leader, who was widely known for his brutality against his opponents. He was deposed from power in a military coup). There are many films about the first and second world wars, and the Persian Gulf War. In all these cases, we know what happened and we still watch and appreciate the film version of the events. These examples can help to explain Plato's theory of imitation. According to Still and Worton (1990), Aristotle's theory of imitation is rather different from Plato's; for Aristotle, dramatic creation is the reduction, and hence intensification, of a mass of texts known to the poet, and probably to the audience as well. He holds that we learn, with great pleasure, through imitating, other than our instinct to enjoy works of imitation; it is inborn instinct (Still and Worton, 1990). Both Cicero and Quintilian emphasize that imitation is not only a means of forging one's discourse but it is a consciously intertextual practice (Bakhtin, 1986). This is so, because by imitating a text, one tends to mix one's ideas with the ideas contained in the imitated text, thus leading to a product of hybridity.

All the theories discussed above are similar to the author's point of view. They all underline the fact that imitation has to do with texts known to the authors. It is logical that one can not imitate something one does not know about. A good example of an imitated work is the play of king Lear of Shakespeare which is supposed to be copied from a Persian great tragedy called Feridoon in Shahnameh and transplanted in some mythical context. The theory of quotation is the second theory of intertextuality. Imitation leads us to the theory of quotation, which is a common practice in academic work. According to Kristeva, reading is aggressive participation and also

that the reader escapable strives to incorporate the quotation into the unified textuality which makes the text a semiotic unit. The reader thus seeks to read the borrowing not only for its semantic context but also for its topological or metaphoric function and significance. It should be noted that one can find quotations in books and articles without a quotation sign, and if one has no knowledge about these quotations, one could read such work without knowing that it is borrowed from other people's material. For instance, in the film "Star Trek" Shakespeare was quoted on many occasions. A case in point is "Sein oder nicht sein (to be or not to be)" as in Hamlet.

Intertextuality in literature

Let us now discuss examples of intertextuality in African literature by differentiating between African men's and African women's literatures. This is because there exists an interesting parallel in both literatures. This technique of intertextuality in African literature is called writing back.

Men's literature

A number of European who spent time in Africa as missionaries, tradesmen, adventurers and colonial officials and even some who never set foot on the Africa continent wrote novels set in Africa. Their statements about African culture and people are deeply rooted in the colonial mentality which is, according to Janmohammed "dominated by a Manichean allegory of white and black; good and evil; salvation and damnation; civilization and savagery; superiority and inferiority" (Bakhtin, 1981). In accordance with this notion, colonialist authors reproduce the stereotyped image of Africa as a "place of barbarism" and the myth of the "burden of the white man" who is to bring light into the heart of darkness. With their texts, colonialist authors legitimized the widespread fallacy that Africa lacked culture, history or literature. It is hardly surprising that this European blackmail of the "dark continent" elicited protest from Africans. Achebe, a famous African creative scholar, goes on to say that he later discovered that "...once that kind of enlightenment comes to you, you realized that some one has to write a different story". In 1930, Sol Plaatje heralded the age of these "different stories" of African authors with his novel MHUDI. Since then, more and more African writers have been creating an intertextual dialogue by putting the right perspective on African culture in opposition to the view of colonialist literary text. The aim is to correct the distorted literary depiction of African and questioning the colonial mentality of Europeans and Africans as well. African writers created a more differentiated and realistic picture of Africa and African men. In their writings, the latter appear as complex individuals who possess dignity, history and cultural identity and are not primitive,

dangerous and barbarous. Salman Rushdie described with the words "the empire writes back with vengeance". This critically intended intertextual dialogue received a name "writing back". This is visible in Nkenjo Njumbam's novel *The white man of God*, where he highlights a conflict or clash between the Western and African religion, making it clear that the African did not hear of religion from the white man.

Women's literature

In the pre colonial period, women were totally marginalized by men in most African societies. In some communities, women were considered as individuals whose main roles were to bear children, raise them and take care of the house hold just like the situation of women in Europe till the 18th century when these women changed their fate through literary and political intertextuality (Bolter, 1991). The woman's fate was determined by father or husband. Women were generally portrayed negatively as dangerous and malicious. Authors show discrimination view of women as inferior to men. This notion was later challenged by African women writers who portrayed women in a more differentiated and realistic way than their male colleagues. In their works, they destroy the myth that women are inferior to men, faceless beings, who have made no contribution to history. They correct the image of women in their writings. They enter into whether or not they intend to do an intertextual dialogue with the literary text of men, which demonstrates unmistakable parallels to African male writer's revision of colonialist view of Africa (Bordwell and Noel, 1996).

Intertextuality in film

According to Bazin, a French film theorist, there is no doubt at all that films were, in principle, works of authors who at certain time and with certain technical and aesthetic means had managed to create certain distinctive cinematic artwork (Barthes, 1957). Most of Shakespeare's books such as Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Othello, Merchant of Venice among others have been reproduced as films, as well as Gulliver's Travel by Jonathan Swift, and Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart. Christian Metz, a German semiologist, purported that films are not only an artwork, but, rather, a textual system that constitutes its own original, singular totality, in which the author, if involved at all, is only a constituent of this system. Today, it seems to be more appropriate to speak of film as one medium among others which interacts as multimedia, or is connected to one another intermedially. The same film can be seen on cinema, on TV, on video, and DVD. According to Metz, film, picture, color, sound, motion, and adaptation from literature, whether technological or mechanical, make film a sort of technical

intertextuality.

Intertextuality in newspapers

Most newspapers or magazines contain pictures, or cartoons. The degree of the intertextuality is different. Some are more verbal than visual and vice versa.

Intertextuality on computer screens

Texts on the computer monitors are said to be completely hyper textual links, that is, connections of combination that arrange texts as part of a simultaneous virtual network to constantly changing current textual formation which allows the processing of pictures, graphics. Even moving pictures and film on the same textual level could be a good example of this explanation because the system affords us opportunity to read texts, watch motion pictures, listen to audio reports, and even chat online.

INTERTEXTUALITY AND LITERARY EVOLUTION

Returning to how intertextuality informs literary evolution is necessary. It could be argued that literature, unlike evolution, is not random. Writers are creative, putting together strings of words and ideas to a specific end, and intertextuality is merely a tool of which writers avail themselves to approach a tales. As Fowler argues, however, understanding intertextuality as symptomatic of a textual matrix sidesteps authorial design. Individual authors do not use intertexts any more than individual organisms use mutation—it is only when a reader, like Darwin, tells a story about a story that intertexts become apparent as part of the generation process of a work of literature. Many aspects of intertextuality, in fact, enable us to reframe literature in evolutionary terms. First, the literary matrix, as a reference space for reading texts, can also be viewed as a universal point of origin for works of literature. A text becomes unique in so far as it represents a “new” but perhaps only slightly distinct, combination of intertexts, a multi-faceted and multivalent interaction of one text with every text within the literary matrix. A single character, for example, might be read as the product of multiple intertextualities with other characters from previous works, each of which is the product of other myriad intertextualities. In this way, we can construct family trees, relating a character like Kiki Belsey to other cuckolded characters as diverse as Zeus’s wife Hera or Shakespeare’s Othello, and perhaps more importantly, speciation of literature, just like speciation of organisms, that speaks to the generative mutations of Fowler’s literary matrix, what we might think of as a literary genome. Intertextuality, however, undermines the teleology of the literary canon. All works of

literature have a common power source, the literary matrix, and all texts enable the reading of all other texts. Moreover, not only does intertextuality, like biological evolution, suggest that all texts have a single origin, thereby complicating the idea that some are supposed to be better than others, it actually prevents a catch-all definition of literary superiority. How can one tell that a book is particularly good? Should it be far more complex combination of intertextualities? Should it contain a few particularly efficient and resonant intertextualities? Should it be a prolific source of future intertextualities? Just as there are many ways to situate an organism in the non-teleological web of life, there are untold possibilities for locating a work in the literary matrix, and as a result, literary, like biological, evolution is necessarily non-teleological.

This, however, is not to say that all texts are equally viable. Like biological success, literary success is wholly a matter of reception, for only those books that resonate powerfully with many people will be published and read and only those organisms that survive to reproduce will reproduce. As we have seen, intertextuality is also almost entirely a matter of reception. It is safe, moreover, to argue that a specific text’s intertextual moments will have a key role in determining its success. Barthes mentioned if a text does not effectively engage with the literary matrix, if its intertexts are not accessible, then as Fowler suggests and we considered previously, it cannot be read. If a text cannot be read, then it will not be successful. Therefore, a text’s viability will be due to its capacity to resonate with readers through intertextuality. All that can be said of a text that is viable, that enjoys a wide and long-lasting readership, is that it represents an advantageous combination of intertexts from the literary genome (Barthes, 1964). It is probably for this reason that we see entire genres of literature emerge—a particular combination of thematic or character intertexts proves to be successful and the literary environment began to select for other novels with like characteristics.

CONCLUSION

Understanding intertextuality, then, is useful in considering the evolution of literary stories. Intertextuality teaches us that like species, stories share a common origin and a common means of expression of communicating and interacting with the environment. These commonalities imply that, in parallel with biological evolution, literary evolution is non-linear and non-teleological. Finally, textual success is due in large part to the commodity of combinations of intertexts, just as species viability relies on novel gene expression. Indeed, the matrix of literature is just as dynamic and vibrant as the biological universe. The only question remaining, then, is whether or not thinking of literature in evolutionary terms is generative. But on less personal

level, it is important to consider stories as evolving, for in doing so we assume a greater responsibility as readers. If literature is narrative, then we can impact future readers and writers, we can have a greater voice in determining what "good literature is", what should and should not be canonical. To presume that literature is non-narrative is to forsake personal agency and embrace complacency, a state that negatively resonates with this reader. Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc. pass into the text and are redistributed within it, for there is always language before and around the text. Intertextuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot, of course, be reduced to a problem of sources or influences; the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation marks. Thus, writing is always an iteration which is also a re-iteration, a re-writing which foregrounds the trace of the various texts; it is both knowingly and unknowingly places and dis-places. The author supports the view that most texts specifically literary text, if not all, are intertextual based on the theories of quotation and imitation. It is very natural and inevitable in the world of arts. That is why there are clear approaches in this work to portray intertextuality by means of analyzing arguments from various authorities, and by citing examples from sources that can easily be consulted. We are living in a world of Intertextuality or hybridity. Intertextuality is, thus, a way of accounting for the role of literary and extra-literary materials without recourse to traditional notions of authorship. It subverts the concept of the text as self-sufficient, hermetic totality,

foregrounding, in its stead, the fact that all literary production takes place in the presence of other texts; they are, in effect, palimpsests.

REFERENCES

- Allen G (2000). *Intertextuality*. London, Graham Allen presses.
- Bakhtin M (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Michael Holquist (ed.) and Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (trans.). Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin M (1986). *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, Vern W. McGee (trans.), Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (eds.). Austin: University of Austin Press.
- Barthes R (1957). *Elements of Semiology* (trans. Annette Lavers & Colin Smith). London: Jonathan Cape.
- Barthes R (1964). *Image - Music - Text*, Stephen Heath (trans.). New York: Hill and Wang.
- Barthes R (1973). *S/Z*, Richard Miller (trans.). New York: Hill and Wang.
- Bolter D (1991). *Writing Space; The computer, Hypertext, and the history of writing*. Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum press.
- Bordwell D, Noel C (1996). *Post theory of Reconstructing Film Studies*. Wisconsin: Madison press.
- Kristeva J (1986). *The Kristeva Reader*, Toril Moi (ed.). Oxford: Blackwe.
- Santaella L (1998). *Media and culture from a semiotic point of view*. Soa Paulo: Sao Paulo Catholic University press.
- Wagner P (1996). *Ekphrasis, Iconotexts, and Intermediality-the States of the Arts*. Berlin press.
- Still J, Worton M (1990). *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*. Mamchester: Manchester University Press.