

## Tracing Intertextuality

Zuzana Mitošinková

### Abstract

*The paper introduces intertextuality as a widely used phenomenon, draws attention to its historical background explaining Bakhtin's theories of dialogic and polyphonic character of the novel thus promoting Bachtin as the first to deal with the relations among texts, presents different attitudes of Riffaterre and Kristeva towards given problem, compares Genette's theory to the former theoreticians' views, underscores usefulness of Genette's taxonomy while explaining preference for centrifugal concept of intertextuality and declares intertextuality a divergent variant of Bachtin's theories.*

Mutual relationships between texts, mainly labeled by the term inertextuality seem to be motive factor of contemporary literary criticism. However, the province of this phenomenon is not restricted only to literature, intertextuality has long time ago gone beyond its competence and it has equally important function also in film, where its concept is elaborated as a set of mutually intertwined cinematographic codes. Following a similar principle it also works in music, fine art or theatre...actually it permeates all media and has become inseparable part of (post)modern artistic practice. Often labeled as intermediality, it is perpetually subjected to further development and changes. From this point of view it might seem to have a very wide scope which creates a nursery of as many opinions as there are users of this term, which has resulted in the criticism of the groundwork of intertextuality as we can hear it from critic Irwin, according to whom omnipresence of this term has caused that it has gone beyond the boundaries of utility.

However, because we are interested in the original province of mutual ties between texts, therefore let's go back to literature. Due to the same reason, why the utility of intertextuality should not be restricted only to literature, because as a part of wider artistic practice it obviously crosses its boundaries, also within literature it does not bear upon contemporary texts only, even if it is most often treated as one of the constituent attributes of (post)modern texts. Its origin goes back deep into history, reference to it can be found in the Book of the books (anyway, intertextuality is a common part of biblical studies), quite so the whole generations of literary critics, without realizing that, contributed by their critical works to development of the phenomenon of intertextuality.

As it was already mentioned, intertextual ties between texts are widespread phenomenon, therefore it's natural that they have become subject of interest of many critics in our country as well as abroad: e.g. J. Kristeva, M. Riffaterre, G. Genette, L. Hutcheon, U. Eco, T. Žilka. But above all I consider it important to emphasize the role of Russian literary critic M. M. Bakhtin, who was, according to my opinion, the first to deal with mutual relations between texts, and that was long before the term intertextuality was coined by J. Kristeva (Paris 1966). It was his studies on mutual dialogic relations of texts and hybridization of genres which later significantly contributed to formulation of the theory of intertextuality.

On the other hand, probably because we encounter intertextuality nearly everywhere, it really has wideranging scope of competence and the way individual theoreticians elucidate its essence differs a lot. While e.g. Riffaterre's concept is that of a summary of any relations between texts, of any transformations in a literary work caused because of its relationship towards the work by which it's preceded or followed, manifested on the ground of reader's perception, Kristeva went even further, talking about retransformation/transfer of one (or more) sign system to another one.

More light on the problem has been shed by Genette's taxonomy within which five possible kinds of relations between texts were named, while intertextuality is one of them, one of the subcategories. Thus it's obvious that in comparison to Riffaterre or Kristeva, Genette understands intertextuality in a wider sense as an actual presence of one text within another one in the form of quotation, plagiarism or allusion and together with other subcategories of relations between texts – paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality and architextuality – falls under the umbrella term *transtextuality*. It logically follows from that that whatever it is what places text into relation to other texts – in Riffaterre's or Kristeva's terminology labeled as intertextuality – is called *transtextuality* by Genette. Notwithstanding the preference for either terminology, it's necessary to realize two things.

At first: even if Genette himself from time to time tidies up in his 'kitchen', which caused 'restructuring' of terms in his terminology (what was firstly called architextuality was later renamed as *transtextuality*) and in his notes to his work (*Palimpsests*) Genette writes wittily about high time to delegate somebody to create and push forward coherent and consistent terminology, his taxonomy, as he presents it in *Palimpsests*, proved to be very useful if not indispensable for effective determination of arrangement and classification of individual relations between texts, without that an attempt to analyse *transtextuality* would result in confusion.

Secondly, there are perennially many critics who let themselves be attracted by centripetal tendencies of intertextuality and their attention is directed at examining sources and roots of discourse instead of accepting more interesting offer of intertextuality to focus, via imaginary bridge it creates, on the places where due to it the boundariers in between texts dissolve and thus transferring into other texts, other displays of culture, in order to reveal deeply rooted foundations whose component is an examined text itself. In other words, in present-day 'transtextual' times it's not anymore that important to chase after discovering and detecting connecting links between texts (intertextual links which seem to be not only a 'cement' uniting a text but also a significant element which determines its meaning); equally important is the realization how these texts fit into a wider cultural background and heritage, and from a reverse point of view it's necessary to take into account in what way do the manifestations of intertextuality influence reading and perception of texts themselves. And this is a sort of approach towards examination of texts which was typical for M. M. Bakhtin.

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1975) was a Russian philosopher, linguist, aesthete, literary critic, whose research in the field of literary criticism, especially concerning genre of the novel, significantly influenced modern literary criticism. He is often labeled as one of the greatest thinkers of 20th century, which agrees with a kind of revival of interest for his work, noticeable in 80s of 20th century in anglophone world, prevailing up to now, presumably started by M. Holquist and C. Emerson's translation of four Bakhtin's essays, which were published under the title *Dialogic Imagination* (from Russian original *Voprosy liteartury i estetiky*, first time published in Moscow in 1929, in our countries it was published under the title *Román jako dialog*).

Bakhtin was an adherent and follower of so called formalistic school. Paradoxically, at first he came up with the criticism of this school – he drew attention to its insufficient, to a great extent reductive approach towards examination of a work of art. His own approach meant deepening and widening the way of looking at the work of art. He blamed the formalistic school for being interested only in extrinsic facet of the work of art and a set of techniques which shape it, by which it reduced an essence of works of art to an instrument of hedonistic pleasure. The result of such approach was description of a literary work by terms of traditional linguistics, what was understood as problematic by Bakhtin, because according to him, verbal reality of a work of art is only its extrinsic technical facet. In this sense Bakhtin blamed formalists for elimination of the moment of creation from the object of their

examination, according to him it is the work of art as a unique product of human communication, which should be in the centre of attention, which means that an object of an aesthetic activity of an artist and recipient aren't extrinsic factors of the work of art, but their meaning which might be thus called aesthetic object and through which it is possible to interpret the meaning of a material work of art deeper than a sensual pleasure. Thus, according to Bakhtin, an essence of art doesn't reside in distinctiveness of artistic material, e.g. 'poetical language' - according to him nothing like that exists, but in the sphere of an aesthetic object, where a negation of utilitarian (cognitive and ethical) approaches is going on, while the meaning of an aesthetic object isn't (in the work of art) unequivocally given, but rather anticipated, hypothetically built up with perception of the work of art, therefore every reconstruction of the work is a creative activity. Nor is the contents of an aesthetic object determined by logical thought or moral instruction, but by an attitude of a man towards purport of thoughts or imperatives, sense for evaluative activity. Bakhtin thus interprets the work of art as a proposal of an independent relation to noethical (epistemological) and ethical contents of a period, as an offered possibility to go beyond objectifying traits of modern life practice and all era characteristics, as an appeal of freedom, from which it's obvious that what we have here is the manifestation of the tradition of romantic aesthetics with its central category of irony demanding the work of art to instil an ability to persifly (make ridiculous) and make relative every content, rise above everything what has been attained by a man and what renders sense of his thinking and will.

The core of Bakhtin's research was language, and it was different approach towards the concept of language that enabled him, while examining works of art, to form the theory of dialogisms (he operates with this term on various levels, therefore it should not be understood as an equivalent of polyphony) and polyphony, on the road to which he enriched literary criticism with other authoritative terms as polyglossia, heteroglossia or carnivalization.

Bakhtin's unique approach to language was made feasible by thinking in wider time context. He considered as a breaking point a transition towards polyglot world, which enabled mutual confrontation of languages. Language had become a phenomenon within which a constant battle of centripetal (unifying) and centrifugal (diversifying) forces was (and still is) going on, which is most strikingly manifested in the genre of the novel, therefore while examining works of art, Bakhtin directed his attention to the novel in particular, where polyglossia in a highest possible measure attains the function of a creative factor.

From the realization of a significant change in perception of language caused by transition to a polyglot world, that is from the realization of polyglossia, there was only a small step towards understanding language as a living phenomenon and not as an artificial, nearly a computer system, as it's traditionally perceived by professional linguists. In this sense, language is never uniform – it might be understood as uniform only on the basis of normative forms of grammatical system – but in every moment, it's stratified to different horizons (social, verbal-ideological...) within which uniform abstract elements of language start to sound differently, because they gain different content as far as value and context are considered. Standard language is therefore uniform from an abstract-language- point of view, however, Bakhtin was interested in an intentional point of view – that is in its meaningful and expressive elements – demonstrating the power that stratifies and diversifies language. He doesn't talk about stratification and diversification of neutral linguistic language system, but about utilizing its intentional possibilities. Standard language is then in every moment stratified by means of genres, professions, social adherence, Bakhtin even speaks about the language of generations or days. All these various languages can be mutually confronted just because they actually are specific views of the world, which in their reciprocal dialogic relations supplement or contradict each other and thus coexist in the mind of a novelist via whom they are taken into the novel.

Thus heteroglossia is a basic category, much more significant than polyphony or carnivalization, even if these are mentioned in connection with Bakhtin by far more frequently. Actually they are specific phenomena, via which heteroglossia expresses itself, which means that in a certain sense they are the manifestations of heteroglossia. Heteroglossia thus becomes a Bakhtinian way of reporting on the fact that in every word-utterance there is going on a constant interaction on one side of more or less fixed system (within which no communication would be possible) and on the other side of a specific context, within which a word-utterance happens, while this context might refract, add or detract multitude and sort of meaning that might be ascribed to a word-utterance, when it's understood only as a systematic manifestation independent on context. Therefore even if a voice in any utterance provides an illusion of unity of utterance, in fact it constantly expresses manifold of meaning, either intended or those of which a speaking person isn't aware. This exceptional sensitiveness to abundant plurality of experience is what entirely distinguishes Bakhtin from any modern linguist, and at the same time his approach towards examining the novel is completely different.

If Bakhtin looked at living language as a deeply diversified and stratified, equivalent thinking on a smaller level, on the basis of rudimentary building element of the novel – the word of the novel – led him to realization of its dialogic character. But because linguistics and stylistics where solely focused on unity of language, dialogic moment of the word, that Bakhtin came up with, remained completely strange to them, thus while a dialogic character of the word resulting in specific feeling of language found its expression in all dominant novels, it was not theoretically understood nor explained. Therefore it was left for Bakhtin to draw attention to specific artistic-prosaic possibilities created by such a word. Bakhtin distinguishes between two basic forms: a form of inner dialogization given by encounter with other word in the object of the word and a form of inner dialogization given by encounter with other word in a subjective horizon of a listener. With the first type, he doesn't mean a direct word which, according to traditional stylistics, heading towards object, doesn't encounter divergent counter-appeal of the other word, but a living word, which on its road to object goes through dialogic surrounding of other words directed at the same object and theme and forms stylistically, its meaning is influenced.

Thus, while examining specific artistic-prosaic possibilities and functions of an inner dialogic character of the word, Bakhtin elucidates actual sense of every utterance residing in its orientation on apperceptive background of a recipient's perception, when an active understanding is realized on the grounds of recipient's answer. With this active understanding there happen several dialogic relations: not only does a speaker adjust an utterance to a horizon of a listener, thus enriching the utterance with new moments and reciprocally various opinions, contexts appeal to each other, but a counter-appeal surrounding given to the speaker in the listener's soul represents other utterances on the same theme, as well as other opinions and evaluations. If an appeal of various opinions, contexts on the part of a speaker, or other utterances on the same theme, other opinions, evaluations within listener's perception gain palpable textual shape, that is they are directly projected to the text, we can speak about various dialogic relations and Bakhtin could be thus marked as the first literary critic to deal, on a basic level, with relations between texts, which is nowadays labeled by a popular term intertextuality. Similarly with heteroglossia, where the term hybrid construction, which Bakhtin often works with – it's an utterance that we, on the basis of syntactic and compositional devices, ascribe to one speaker, but in fact there is a mixture of two utterances, double-style, double-language and the same pays for value and meaning horizon, while such utterances are often not isolated by formal grammatical means, by quotation marks – also comprises basics of a future theory of intertextuality. Thus no matter whether we speak – in

a wider sense – about a presence of one text within another one in the form of quotation, plagiarism or allusion in terms of Genette's narrower sense of intertextuality, or other Genettian forms of mutual relations between texts like paratextuality, metatextuality or architextuality as individual aspects of transtextuality, or intertextuality in a wider sense as understood by Kristeva or Riffaterre, it's beyond discussion that Genette, Riffaterre or Kristeva are the godparents of these indubitably interesting theories, but their cradle and at the same time their grandfather is BAKHTIN. From this point of view, Bakhtin was a pioneer, dealing with mutual relations between texts long before the term intertextuality was coined by J. Kristeva (Paris 1966). It was his studies on mutual dialogic relations of texts and hybridization of genres which significantly contributed to forming the theory of intertextuality. In this sense the theory of intertextuality is a divergent variant of Bakhtin's studies.

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Zuzana Mitošinková  
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky  
Filozofická fakulta  
Univerzita Sv. Cyrila a Metoda  
Námestie J. Herdu 2  
91701 Trnava, Slovenská republika  
e-mail: zuzana.mitosinkova@ucm.sk