Concepts of Intertextuality: A Cross-Sectional Study of Some Post-Structuralist Theories of the Literary Text

Ismail A. Ahmed, Ph.D.[*]

Intertextuality has become one of the main issues in postmodern literary criticism. Since its inception in the late sixties, it has gained much popularity among literary theorists, critics and academics. However, they widely differ in their definition of the term. Leon Roudiez (1980) argues that the concept, since its inception, has been much used and abused; it has been generally misunderstood, for "intertextuality has nothing to do with matters of influence of one writer upon another" (p.15). It is far more comprehensive and intricate than the mere influences of writers or texts on each other. Thus, post-structuralist theorists do not speak of "sources" and "influences," but of intertexts and intertextuality. Graham Allen (2000) illustrates the pivotal position of intertextuality and its function in modern literary theory:

> Texts, whether they be literary or non-literary, are viewed by modern theorists as lacking in any kind of independent meaning. They are what theorists now call intertextual. The act of reading, theorists claim, plunges us into a network of textual relations. To interpret a text, to discover its meaning, or meanings, is to trace those relations. Reading thus becomes a process of moving between texts. Meaning becomes

[*] Lecturer in English Literature, Faculty of Arts, South Valley University.

something which exists between a text and
all the other texts to which it refers and
relates, moving out from the independent
text into a network of textual relations (p.1).

Intertextuality is a term coined by Julia Kristeva, a
French linguist who has written much on this topic. This
term has a broader meaning and ramifications, both at its
theoretical and practical levels, in today's context than
the theories she expounds in her pioneer work on
intertextuality. Her notion of intertextuality refers to the
literal and effective presence in a text of another text. A
text, according to Kristeva (1980), "is a permutation or
combination of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a
given text, in which several utterances, taken from other
texts, intersect and neutralize one another " (p.36).

Intertextuality as a phenomenon presents certain
difficulties precisely because it is so widespread.
Concepts and theories dealing with intertextuality are
vast and complicated, and writings about it are
constantly expanding. Hillis Miller is quoted saying that
"the study of literature is the study of intertextuality"
(see Harris, 1992, p.176). A particularly important
problem has to do with the fact that the concept of
intertextuality appears to be infinitely expandable. This
infinite expansion leads to a loss of perspective to the
extent that the origin, context and purpose of the concept
fade and results become uncertain.

The problem is aggravated in the case of literature
because of certain aesthetic issues and contexts. As a
result, Jonathan Culler (1981) suggests some ways of
limiting the scope of the term 'intertextuality.' One way

of doing this is to apply the linguistic concept of presupposition to the way a text produces a "pre-text", or draws attention to its own conventions. Emphasizing the suggestive aspects of intertextuality while simultaneously calling attention to the many problems involved in its application, seems to be a recurrent issue in the short history of the concept (pp.100-105).

Intertextuality is the concept that all written works are made from other works, that all writing challenges, continues, restates, or modifies previous writing. Intertextuality then is part of the basic creation and interpretation of text. In general, intertextuality is defined as the relation between one text and its pre-texts. One can say that intertextuality is a text-overlapping phenomenon. Therefore, every text has its precursors to which it is referring in formal as well as in pragmatic aspects. In this sense, the text is not an autonomous or a unified object, but a set of relations with other texts. In other words, texts do not stand alone, but rather situate themselves in a field of other texts to which they refer explicitly or indirectly. Thus, intertextuality could be defined as an analytical approach that subverts the notion that texts are discrete and independent entities. Instead, the essence of a text is seen to reside in the web of relations it forms with other surrounding texts. One way of interpreting a text is conducted with regard to other texts that it, perhaps unconsciously, cites and refers to. These texts, in turn, refer to other texts, creating an indefinite network of textual relations.

Theorists of intertextuality problematize the status of authorship, treating the writer of a text as the orchestrator of the text rather than its originator

(Chandler, www). This concept makes the singular "author" nothing but "convenient fictions for domesticating discourse" (Porter, 1986 35). In other words, the writer is not creating new ideas, but somehow changing something previously written. Vincent Leitch (1983) states, "The text is not an autonomous or unified object, but a set of relations to other texts. Its system of language, its grammar, its lexicon, drag along numerous bits and pieces – traces – of history so that the text resembles a Cultural Salvation Army Outlet with unaccountable collections of incompatible ideas, beliefs, and sources" (59). This means that what we read, what we experience, and what we believe are inflected in our writing.

One can safely argue that texts owe more to other texts than to their own makers. Michael Foucault, in his essay "What is an Author?"(1989), unseats the author as the creator of truth. The author is a personality created by society after the work has been disseminated, and functions to limit possible interpretations of a text. In *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1976), He assumes that a text exists only in relation to other texts:

> The frontiers of a book are never clear cut...it
> is caught up in a system of references to other
> books, other texts, other sentences; it is a
> node within a network, [a] network of
> references (p.23).

Placing the text within a system of other texts blurs the borderline between it and other texts. Worton and Still (1990) point out that "the theory of intertextuality insists that a text ... cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system" (p.10). It also challenges the practice of New Criticism

that stressed the organic unity of the text and saw the exposure of internal structure as the goal of critical interpretation. By contrast, intertextual inquiry focuses on textual relations rather than the individual text.

This paper attempts to analyze some of the significant theories and types of intertextuality. It is a cross-sectional study of the main pronouncements of a number of influential theorists and critics, intending to underline the affinities and differences in their respective approaches towards the concept of intertextuality. In particular, the focus will be on the work of Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, Michael Riffaterre, Girard Genette, and Jonathan Culler.

II

Heinrich Plett (1991) classifies intertextualists" into two types: "the progressive" and "the traditionalists." Both are confronted by the "anti-intertextualists." The progressive or theoretical intertextualists are those who "try to cultivate and develop the revolutionary heritage of the originators of the new concept" (p. 3). Drawing on the work of Michael Bakhtin, and Julia Kristeva, they approach intertextuality from a philosophical or semiotic perspective. Plett characterizes their work as "elitist" and "esoteric," and claims that this "school has never developed a comprehensible and teachable method of textual analysis. Its publications are marked by a strangely abstract quality, which impede their understandability but also surround their critical enterprise with an aura of mystery and exclusiveness" (p. 4).

The other type of intertextualists, namely, the traditionalist or practical, are conventional literary scholars who attempt to apply notions of intertextuality in their own work. They focus on the study relationships between a text and its pre-texts. According to this view, the intertextual relationship becomes interesting only when the connection can be clearly verified and pointed out in the text, and this textual relationship usually takes the form of an allusion, quotation, annexation, parody, etc. The dialogic interplay between a text and its pre-text may understandably create problems for interpretation, but then again this narrower view of intertextuality provides a sound, practical method of analyzing these questions. Some, who are more concerned with theory, use the term in order to "improve their methodological and terminological instruments," and thus make intertextuality more relevant and understandable. Nevertheless, the drawback of this is that some scholars and critics use the term without examining its background or meaning, thus turning it into a "vogue word" (p.4). Obviously, Plett's argument is rather pragmatic, preferring practice to theory, though the former cannot be soundly conducted without a solid ground of the latter. The theoretical framework is the basis of any sound and convincing practice.

On the other hand, Plett defines the anti-intertextualists as those scholars who deny new contribution made by the traditionalist intertextualists; they claim that intertextual work has been done since antiquity. They also brush off the work of progressive intertextualists. All we have is a change in terminology, or, as Plett puts it, it is "old wine in new bottles " (p.5).

The main concern of this paper is with "progressive intertextualists." In the foreground comes Julia Kristeva, not only because she was the first to coin the term, but also because her views have proved to be quite illuminating. In her essays "The Bounded Text," and "Word, Dialogue and Novel," she refers to the literal and effective presence in a text of other texts. Intertextuality, according to this view is a network of relationships, which underlies all the texts produced by a culture. It is "the transposition of one or more system of signs in another system of signs. This notion cannot be reduced to merely the influence one text has on another or the relationship between a text and its sources. Texts draw meaning from each other by a complex inter-relationship of shared codes and conventions." The literary text, according to Kristeva, is not an isolated phenomenon but is made up of "a mosaic of quotations." She points out that "any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and a poetic language is read as at least double (Kristeva, 1980, p. 66).

In her work, Kristeva shows a deep interest in the work of Michael Bakhtin whose contribution stretches over the fields of cultural studies, linguistics, social philosophy, and sociology. He proved to be exceptionally influential on Kristeva's own theories. He is much cited in her work and she acknowledged that he was a very important formative influence on her. She appropriated Bakhtin's ideas for her own purposes. One can argue that Kristeva's writing, in one sense, is an intertextualization of Bakhtin's. Bakhtin and Kristeva share an insistence that texts cannot be separated from the larger cultural or social textuality out of which they

are constructed. All texts, therefore, contain within them the ideological structures and struggles expressed in society through discourse.

Thus, it is helpful to deal, quite briefly, with some of the main views of Bakhtin in order to show their deep impact on Kristeva. She argues that Bakhtin was "one of the first to replace the static hewing out of texts with a model where literary structure does not simply exist but is generated in relation to another structure" (Kristeva, 1980, p. 64).

Among the range of Bakhtin's conceptual innovations appropriated by Kristeva are those of "dialogism", "carnivalism" and "heteroglossia." Dialogism is defined by Bakhtin (1986) as "the necessary relation of utterance to other utterances"(p. 69). It is a complex of signs, which could be a phrase, a poem, or a novel. The concept of dialogism was first introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin's as part of his critique of Saussurean linguistics. Bakhtin thought Saussure's rather abstract system was devoid of social context, and he argued that a speaker's utterances were always directed at others, who in turn would produce countering utterances, as in a dialogue, hence dialogism. Rather than having a relatively fixed significance, a sign was more of a changing field, a centre of contention between speakers in different voices. No utterance or written work is singular in meaning, unconnected to previous utterances or works. All utterances/texts are dialogic; they depend on previous and following ones. Moreover, because these voices are produced by different social conditions, the dialogue is profoundly ideological (Kristeva, 1986: pp. 36-38).

On the other hand, Kristeva understands carnivalism as the space where texts meet and contradict one another by using repetition, illogical construction, and non-exclusive opposition, thereby breaking through the laws of language censored by grammar and semantics. Laws governing grammatical and syntactical structures create the "lie" that language has boundaries, making it orderly like the social and symbolic order, but the order these laws create is only an allusion. Language has no boundaries, even though the lexicon makes us think that nouns cannot be verbs or adverbs, or that we can know the precise definition of words (pp. 35-36). Grammar, syntax, and semantics are not the issue. The issue is communication, and "intertextuality" is text as communication Where her thought diverges from Bakhtin's is her recognition that a textual segment, sentence, utterance, or paragraph is more than the intersection of two voices; it is the intersection of many voices and of many texts, combined in the semantic field as well as in the syntactic and phonic fields. Hence, she sees a plurality of phonic, syntactic, and semantic participation. She examines Bakhtin's thought as a linguist pushing his concept of the double character of language to the level of its syntax and its system.

The third basic concept of Bakhtin is heteroglossia. While dialogism describes the way languages interact, heteroglossia describes the languages themselves. The heteroglossic perspective emphasizes the role of language in positioning speakers and their texts within the heterogeneity of social position and worldviews, which operate in a culture.

> Any speaker is himself a respondent to a
> greater or lesser degree to those positions and

views. He is not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the silence of the universe, so to speak. And he presupposes not only the existence of the language system he is using, but also the existence of preceding utterances-- his own and others'-- with which his given utterance enters into one kind of relation or another, building on them, or at least presuming that they are already known to the listener. Any utterance is a link in a very complex organized chain of other utterances (Bakhtin 1986, p. 69).

Similarly, texts are heteroglossic; they directly address themselves to, or at least implicitly acknowledge, a certain array of more convergent or divergent socio-semiotic realities. They address those alternative realities as expressed in previous texts, and they are expected to be realized in future texts. Consequently, every meaning within a text occurs in a social context where a number of alternative meanings could have been made, and derives its social meaning from the relationship of deviation or convergence into which it enters with those alternative meanings.

In the light of those notions of dialogism and heteroglossia, Bakhtin stresses the intertextual nature of all texts. He maintains that all texts necessarily refer to, respond to, and incorporate other preceding or forthcoming texts. Bakhtin argues that texts cannot be separated from the larger cultural and social textuality out of which they are constructed. All texts, therefore, contain within them the ideological structures and struggles expressed in society through discourse. He maintains, "language exists in specific social situations,

and is thus bound up with specific evaluations" (Allen, p.17). He argues that the word (utterance) itself is bound up with social implications:

> Every concrete utterance is a social act. At the same time that it is an individual material complex, a phonetic, articulatory, visual complex, the utterance is also a part of social reality. It organizes communication oriented toward reciprocal action, and itself reacts; it is also inseparably enmeshed in the communication event. Its individual reality is already not that of a physical body, but the reality of a historical phenomenon. Not only the meaning of the utterance but also the very fact of its performance is of historical and social significance, as, in general, is the fact of its realization in the here and now, in given circumstances, at a certain historical moment, under the conditions of the given social situation (Bakhtin, 1981, p120).

The text is seen by Bakhtin to be historically and socially significant, and its meaning is derived from both social and historical conditions, as well as by whom the text is addressed to. A word does not contain a single meaning, but is filled up with a whole list of meanings that history has endowed it with. At the same time, the same word, when addressed to different audiences, also takes on a different meaning. Thus, it is actually this "social context," the history behind the word, the relationship between the author and reader, the connections of the text with other works, that give the text its meaning. The text does not have a single and unified meaning because of the infinite variations of these social contexts (Allen, p.17).

Drawing on Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism, carnivalism and heteroglossia, Kristeva, in her important works *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1980) and *Desire in Language* (1984), argues for her theory of intertextuality. In *The Revolution of Poetic Language*, she defines it as "the transposition of one or more system of signs in another...[a]ny signifying practice is a field (in the sense of space traversed by lines of force) in which various signifying systems undergo such a transposition" (p.15). This notion cannot be reduced to merely the influence of one text on another or the relationship between a text and its sources. For Kristeva, a text consists of a complex system, a montage of heterogeneous discourses, or " a palimpsest of traces." Any text, literary or otherwise "is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva, 1980, p.66). She argues that "the text is a productivity, and this means: first, that its relationship to the language in which it is situated is re-distributive (destructive-constructive) 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" (p.66).

Kristeva draws a three-dimensional textual space whose three "coordinates of dialogue" are the writing subject, the addressee (or ideal reader), and exterior texts. She describes this textual space as intersecting planes, which have horizontal and vertical axes: the "horizontal axis" is the linear connection between the author and reader through the text, and a "vertical axis" connects the text to other texts. She argues that:

Horizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important factor: each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read...Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotation; any text is absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double (Kristeva, 1986: p.37).

Both the vertical axis and the horizontal axis underscore a significant fact, namely, that the text cannot be separated from its larger cultural and social textuality out of which it is constructed. In this sense, all texts contain or reflect ideological positions and therefore enter into relationships with a set of convergent or divergent social positions. In other words, every meaning within a text occurs in the framework of a larger and wider social context. Thus, the intertextual dimensions of the text cannot be studied as mere sources or influences.

Kristeva sees the text as a textual arrangement of elements with double meaning: one in the text itself and the other in the historical and social text. Like Bakhtin, she maintains that texts cannot be separated form the larger cultural or social textuality out of which they are constructed. All texts, therefore, contain within them the ideological structures and struggles expressed in society through discourse. Thus, her concept of intertextuality has a wider significance; it not only concerns the relations between texts, between books or writers, but also between a text and its broader "signifying system."

This signifying system includes the "text" of social discourse or subjective identity, through the operation of intertextuality the literary text re-articulates and perhaps pluralizes social discourse and the subject.

III

Roland Barthes is another major representative of the theory of intertextuality. In 1968, he wrote a highly acclaimed essay entitled "Death of the Author," in which he argues that the author is a modern figure; a capitalist one. Pre-capitalist eras of writing were not so attached to the name of the author as it were in the modern period. For Barthes it is the fact of intertextuality that allows the text to come into being:

> 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 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 ("Theory of the Text." In Young, 1987: p. 39).

In Barthes' view, there is no place for the hierarchy of texts. Hence, there is no difference between the work of art or literature and the criticism of it. There are no meta-texts. Instead, critical writing takes up a position next to its object. In fact, the intertextual nature of both

'creative' work and criticism subverts the difference between the two, making this distinction obsolete: "there are no more critics, only writers" (p. 44).

Barthes' version of intertextuality is in agreement with Bakhtin's notions of dialogism and heteroglossia, and consequently with Kristeva's appropriation of those views into the theory of intertextuality. In *Music-Image-Text* (1977), he points out that "the text is not a line of words but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (p.146). According to this view, each text has to be interpreted with regard to other texts that it cites or refers to, and that these texts, in turn, refer to other texts, creating an infinite network of textual interrelations. He further argues that:

> A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination (p.148).

Thus writing is always an iteration, which is a re-iteration, a re-writing which foregrounds the trace of the various texts it both knowingly and unknowingly places and displaces. Intertexts need not be simply "literary"— historical and social determinants are themselves signifying practices, which transform and inflect literary practices. Moreover, a text is constituted, strictly speaking, only in the moment of its reading. Thus, the

reader's own previous readings, experiences and position within the cultural formation also form crucial intertexts.

The concept of intertextuality, therefore, blurs the borderlines of a book, dispersing its image of totality into unbounded tissue of connections and associations, paraphrases and fragments, texts and contexts. The origin of the text, therefore, is not an authorial consciousness, but the plurality of voices, utterances and texts.

Closely related to Barthes' understanding of the nature of the text and intertextuality is his view of effective reading. The critic, Barthes argues, should not only read the text but also rereads it:

> Rereading, an operation contrary to the commercial and ideological habits of our society, which would have us "throw away" the story once it has been consumed (or "devoured"), so that we can then move on to another story, buy another book, and which is tolerated only in certain marginal categories of readers (children, old people, professors), rereading is here suggested at the outset, for it alone saves the text from repetition (those who fail to reread are obliged to read the same story everywhere) (S/Z, 1974: pp.15-16).

For Barthes, it is not the reading, but the rereading, of a text that really matters. This does not mean that the reader has to read everything twice, though this does not seem to be a bad idea. What Barthes is suggesting here is that the reader has to read attentively, to go beyond the surface meaning of the story in order to decipher the

subtexts, the patterns, and the echoes of other texts inherent and operating in the text at hand. This is important because it brings forward the idea that the reader of the text is formed by a plurality of texts, even when the texts are formed by codes whose origins are lost.

Since a text is involved with lots of other texts, and since the reader is creating new texts from that reading, then we can see how texts are never completely finished, in that they remain always open to new kinds of intertextuality. That is, they are open to being connected to other texts in unlimited ways.

The older model of reading, based on communication theory, of the work as transmitter and the reader as receiver, is replaced by a new epistemological analysis. The encounter between reader and work even carries, for Barthes, sexual overtones: "the reader is nothing less than one who desires to write, to give himself up to an erotic practice of language." In his view, every reader is also a writer, or rather should have been one, had the educational system only trained him properly" ("Theory of the Text," p.44).

In Barthes' world of texts there is no place for a hierarchy of texts, such as is established when we differentiate between the work of art or literature and the criticism of it. Here there are no "meta-texts." Instead, critical writing takes up a position next to its object, on a same level with it, and, in turn, establishes a new web of intertextual relations with it. In fact, the intertextual nature of both "creative" work and criticism blurs the

difference between the two, making this distinction obsolete: "there are no more critics, only readers" (P.44).

It is noticeable that the approach of Barthes and Kristeva moves away from the structuralism of de Saussure. It attacked the structuralist belief in the "possibility of a totalizing of scientific methodology." In the matter of textual analysis, Barthes refocused attention on meaning; it is not however, the traditional search of meaning; but tracing the manner in which the text explodes and disperses. According to the principles of such an analysis, the intertextual relations of the text cannot ever be stabilized and located. There is infinity of meaning. Textual analysis does not try to say from where the text comes or how it is made, but how it is unmade, how it explodes, dissiminates (Allen, p.76-78).

Barthes distinguishes between two kinds of text: "The Readerly text" and "the Writerly text." The readerly leads us towards a singular truth or representation of reality. The readerly text depends on stereotypical intertextual codes that can even create boredom in reader. The writerly text, on the other hand, is radically plural. It does not allow one code to dominate over any other. It is typical of modern, avant-garde writings (S/Z, pp. 4-5).

For Barthes, the readerly text is the old paradigm in which writers imagine themselves in control, more or less, of their texts, and thus meet the expectations of traditional readers. The readerly text is considered authoritarian, since it imposes the author's will on the reader. In contrast, the writerly text gives the reader some of the writer's powers by allowing multiple possibilities for choosing one's own understanding. In

Image, Music, Text, Barthes argues "to give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing" (p.147).

Writerly texts, of course, offer the reader more choice, and try much less to push him/her in one or the other direction. Hawkes (1977) summarizes Barthes' ideas somewhat enthusiastically: writerly (*scriptible*) literature "invites us self-consciously to read it, to 'join in' and be aware of the interrelationship of the writing and reading, and ... accordingly offers us the joys of co-operation, co-authorship (and even, at its intensest moments, of copulation)" (p. 114). Emphasizing the idea of plurality of meaning, Terry Eagleton (1983) describes what makes the difference: "the 'writable' text...has no determinate meaning, no settled signifieds, but is plural and diffuse, an inexhaustible tissue or galaxy of signifiers" (p.138). As "inexhaustible" as this "galaxy", thus, is the number of possible meanings a text can yield for different readers. Clearly, the writerly text is therefore much preferred: "why is the writerly our value? Because the goal of literary work (of literature as a work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text" (*S/Z*, p. 4).

Barthes concept of the writerly text completely removes the location of meaning from the text, and places it entirely with the reader, who thus becomes more than 'just' a reader: "the more plural the text, the less it is written before I read it" (*S/Z*, p. 10). This means that the reader has a positive role; he *writes* the text -- "the writerly text is *ourselves writing*" (*S/Z*, p.5). Again, this completely reduces the author to simply the physical producer of the work, taking away any authority to determine the text's meaning. The author, then, is only

another reader of the text, and his idea of the text's meaning is just as valid as anyone else's.

IV

Gerard Genette, the French theorist and critic, views the issue of intertextuality from a different angle. Like Kristeva and Barthes, he maintains that literary works are not original and unique wholes, but selections and combinations of an enclosed system. They may not display this relation. It is the function of criticism to reveal such relation. The task of the critic, which he terms a "bricoleur", is to create "the structure out of the previous structure by rearranging elements which are already arranged within the objects of his or her study" (Allen, p. 96).

Thus, the bricoleur breaks down literary works into themes, motifs, key words, quotations, references…etc. then the relation of these elements to the original work can be displayed. The author and the critic, according to Genette, are both bricoleurs, but with one difference. The author takes elements of the enclosed system or structure and arranges them into work, so he obscures the relation of the work and the system. Such a structural analysis is possible, because literature is based on conventions of which he is mostly not aware. The critic, on the other hand, returns the work to the system and illuminates the relation of the work to the system.

However, unlike Kristeva and Barthes, Genette in his study *Palimpsests* (1992) advances a new theory that redefines the ontology of the text in terms of its origin and place in a sequence of texts. A text is not self-sufficient or closed but implicated in an "explicit or

implicit relationship with other texts." He coined the term "transtextuality" to define textual transcendence "that sets the text in relationship, whether obvious or concealed with other texts"(p.13). Transtextuality, according to Genette, is an umbrella term that covers all aspects of a particular text. Transtextuality is, in fact, Genette's version of intertextuality. He classifies it into five types: intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality and architextuality.

Genette defines the first sub-category of transtextuality, namely intertextuality, as a relationship of co-presence between two texts or among several texts, or actual presence of one text within another. According to this definition, intertextuality is no longer concerned with the semiotic processes of cultural or textual signification. Such an intertextual relationship is very pragmatic and determinable. In this definition, he lists three types of intertextual elements, namely, 'quoting,' 'plagiarism,' and 'allusion.' According to his definition, it is only the use of quotation marks that distinguishes quoting from plagiarism (pp.1-2). The third element of intertextuality is "allusion," which is defined by Genette as "an enunciation whose full meaning presupposes the perception of a relationship between it and another text, to which it necessarily refers by some inflections that would otherwise remain unintelligible" (p. 2).

The second type of Genette's theory of transtextuality is that of "paratextuality." A paratext includes all elements and conventions both within and outside the text that mediate between the book, the author and the reader. Paratextual elements include such

matters as: titles, subtitles, inter-titles, prefaces, notices, forewords, epigraphs, illustrations, covers, reviews, private letters, dedications, and all other authorial and editorial discussions. Genette defines paratexts as the thresholds of interpretation, offering a detailed view of these mediations and showing how these paratexts interact with general questions of literature as a cultural institution (p.3).

The third type is "metatextuality," which he defines as "a form of commentary linking one text to another without necessarily citing it" (p.4). It is a kind of casual connection between a text without explicit naming of the other text. The attentive reader is supposed to discover the relation between the texts. Genette does not link the term metatextuality to the literary concept of metafiction, the description applied to self-conscious fiction, and therefore the two terms should not be confused.

The fourth type of transtextuality is "hypertextuality," which Genette defines it as "any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (p.5). As we shall see later in this paper, hypotext has been also named "inter-text" by Michael Riffaterre. Homer's *Ulysses*, for instance, is a major intertext or hypo-text for Joyce's *Ulysses*. It involves pastiche, parody and travesty. Genette also describes how an original text can be transformed: by self-purgation, extension, reduction, and amplification. The purpose of such processes could be, Genette argues, mere entertainment. In this regard, he defines pastiche as "a

playful imitation of the hypotext, which has the primary function of pure entertainment" (1992b, p.85).

The fifth type of Genette theory is that of "architextuality." Architextuality, according to Genette is the generic matrix out of which all texts emerge. An architextual relation is the one "that links each text to the various types of discourse it belongs to... thematic, formal, or modal" (Genette, 1992b, p.82). It is an entire set of general or transcendental categories: types of discourse, modes of enunciation, literary genres to which each individual text belongs. In his attempt to link these categories in a system embracing the entire field of literature, Genette. points out, Western poetics has divided literature into three kinds: dramatic, epic and lyric. This division, generally accepted since the eighteenth century, has been wrongly attributed to Aristotle with great detriment to the development of poetics. Genette disassembles this triad by retracing its gradual construction and distinguishes among the architextual categories that this division has long obscured. The architext is everywhere, above, beneath, around the transformed text (1992, pp.13-15).

What is noticeable in Genette theory is its ascending level of abstraction in the types of transtextual relations. While intertextuality and paratextuality can be exemplified with reference to specific textual forms defined by their primary texts such as titles and references, metatextuality and hypertextuality refer to less concrete instances of relations between primary texts. Finally, architextuality refers not to the relations among individual texts, but to the theme and style of a text, which position it within a larger corpus of texts.

V

Michael Riffaterre has played a central role in advancing poetic theory by integrating a theory of intertextuality with semiotic theory and by providing a flexible definition of the notion of intertext. He begins by defining the semiotic process within the context of the reader and the act of reading and then distinguishes two levels or stages of reading: "heuristic," or linear reading where meaning is apprehended and the reader's competence comes into play. It is followed by "retroactive," or hermeneutic reading, whereby the reader performs a structural decoding as a variant of the same structural matrix. A matrix is "a semantic given or the minimal and literal sentence transformed into a longer, complex, and non-literal periphrasis that results in the text" (Riffaterre, 1987, pp.5-6). In other words in the "retroactive reading," the reader tries to make order out of the disparate pieces of the text, to decode its mysteries

Riffetarre suggests an interesting distinction between two types of intertextuality: "obligatory" and "aleatoric." Whereas obligatory intertextuality is encoded in the work and needs to be deciphered, aleatoric intertextuality is brought to bear on the work by the reader, and is therefore incidental or contingent, i.e. as the throw of dice (Worton & Still 1990: p.24-27).

In *Semiotics of poetry* (1978), Riffaterre introduces the concept of interpretant, which is a textual sign, "a fragment of that text actually quoted in the poem it serves to interpret." It may be a quotation marked as such, or a quotation not differentiated from its new

textual context (p.109). Riffaterre classifies interpretants into two types: "textual interpretants" and "lexematic interpretants." He defines textual interpretants as texts which might be either quoted or alluded to; these texts can mediate between one semiotic code and another. Lexematic interpretants, on the other hand, are words, which might generate two "hypograms" (systems of signs) simultaneously. The interpretant, therefore, is an intertextual sign, a sign that "translates the text's surface signs and explains what else the text suggests" (p. 81). When the reader observes that a text (intertext) is ungrammatical in its semiotic system, then he assumes this intertext belongs to another semiotic system (p. 164).

In his study of intertextual relationships in literary texts, Michael Riffaterre identifies *indirection* as the fundamental characteristic of poetry; that is, a poem says one thing and means another. He therefore distinguishes the *meaning* of a poem from its *significance*. The meaning is the" mimetic" content of a text, its attempt to *represent* some sort of reality. The significance is the content of a text, which is articulated indirectly. The act of reading a poem involves, according to Riffaterre, a transformation from meaning to significance, a process carried out by the reader retroactively: one initially reads a poem for its "meaning," its reference. Such a reading will always be unsatisfactory in a poem, leading the reader to make another attempt to comprehend the poem on a different level of organization. The path which will lead to the *significance* of the poem is made manifest by some sort of "ungrammaticality," some element or feature which does not seem to fit into the mimetic level of the poem's structure. The shift from meaning to

significance is made possible by the reader's intervention, but Riffaterre asserts that such a shift is implied by the organization of the poem, its indirection (pp.164-165).

In *Fictional Truth* (1990), Riffaterre defines the intertext as "a text or series of texts selected as referents by the text we are reading" (p.86). In "Compulsory Reader Response," (1990) he puts it differently as "one or more texts which the reader must know in order to understand a work of literature in terms of its overall significance" (p.56). Although it is hidden, we can identify it from elements in the text, and in fact, the reader is persuaded to do so He calls the intertext the "unconscious of fiction" (p.91). He suggests that literariness can only be found where texts combine or refer to other texts on the level of intertextuality. However, he also points out that the reader should distinguish between knowledge of the intertext's form and content and an awareness that an intertext exists, although simply being aware may be enough to experience the literariness of the text.

Riffaterre distinguishes between the intertext and intertextuality; the intertext is "one or more texts which the reader must know in order to understand a work of literature in terms of its overall significance", whereas intertextuality is "web of functions that constitutes and regulates the relationship between text and intertext" ("Compulsory," pp.56-57). Riffaterre suggests that there are "signposts," by which he means words and phrases that indicate an obscurity or difficulty in the text, and where the solution might be found: these signposts link the text and intertext. However, the reader can

compensate for the loss of the intertexts since they are stabilities in the text ("Compulsory," pp. 57-58, 74).

Intertextuality, according to Riffaterre, is characterized by five main features: it excludes irrelevant data, it is generated by textuality, it connects existing texts with other texts, it de-contextualizes the text and focuses on its literariness and finally it is a closed exchange between the text and intertext ("Intertextuality," 786). This is a way of looking at intertextuality not as a web, but rather as an infinite line or chain of signification. According to Riffaterre's model, therefore, it is not appropriate to pick up texts randomly to associate, but rather one must pick texts that seem already to be associated in some way. For Riffaterre, then, unlike in Kristeva's work, intertextuality is not something that operates as an interrelationship between all texts, through the tool of the interpretant. Intertextuality is not a free-flowing concept, but rather a "structured network of text-generated constraints on the reader's perceptions" ("Intertextuality," p.781).

The significance of Riffaterre's work on intertextuality springs mainly from his insistence on the importance of the reader in the text production. The reader is the only one who makes the connection between the text, interpretant or the intertextual sign and intertext (*Semiotics*, p. 164). In *Text Production* (1983), Riffaterre confirms that "the literary phenomenon is not located in the relationship between the author and the text but between the text and the reader" (p. 89). Nevertheless, the process of reading is restrictive. The reader is under the guidance and control of the various intertexts; when

the text activates an intertext, it controls the reader's response, thus maintaining the text's identity ("Compulsory" 57). Even so, reading is also unstable, and "interpretation is never final" as the text cannot be "corrected or amended" by the reader (*Semiotics*, p. 165). Textuality and intertextuality cannot be separated, in Riffaterre's view, because what the text leaves unsaid, the intertext spells out ("Intertextuality" 781).

VI

Jonathan Culler deals with the concept of intertextuality rather implicitly while he reviews the works of Kristeva, Barthes and Riffaterre. However, one can infer a number of pronouncements that reflect his own stance. He assumes that intertextuality is the "fancy" name of a relation between the work and certain earlier texts. In *Structuralist Poetics* (1976), Culler defines intertextuality as "the relation of a particular text to other texts. ... A work can only be read in connection with or against other texts, which provide a grid through which it is read and structured" (p. 139). In *Literary Theory* (1997), he reiterates the same view:

> A work exists between and among other texts, through its relation to them. To read something as literature is to consider it as a linguistic event that has meaning in relation to other discourses: for example, as a poem that plays on possibilities created by other poems or as a novel that puts on stage and criticizes the political rhetoric of its day (pp. 33-34).

This confirms the notion that texts refer to and depend on each other. This dependence can take different forms:

a quote, a reproduction, a commentary, an interpretation, a summary, or an addition. Intertextuality, thus, is a non-closable system in which texts take on their meaning within a network of mutual references.

In *The Pursuit of Signs* (1981), Culler argues that intertextuality has a double focus. On the one hand, it reveals the importance of previous texts; it points out that the notion of the autonomy of texts is misleading, because texts have meaning only because other texts have been written. On the other hand, it leads us to consider the previous texts as contributing to a code, which makes meaning possible (p.103). Thus, Culler situates intertextuality in a larger, cultural context:

> Intertextuality thus becomes less a name for a work's relation to particular prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture: the relationship between a text and the various languages or signifying practices of a culture and its relation to those texts which articulate for it the possibilities of that culture (p. 103).

This means that the scope of intertextuality is wider than the mere study of sources or influences of texts on each other.

Jonathan Culler suggests that a linguistic model might be a fruitful way to explore intertextuality. Language as it is spoken and written often includes presuppositions that require the listener and reader to place themselves in imaginary frameworks with only a few details to guide them. Usually context alone will determine

whether a sentence contains a presupposition, but certain words often serve to introduce presuppositions.

For Culler, the process of intertextuality does not rely upon the author's intentions, or upon the readers' expectations:

> In relating [a presuppositional] sentence to other [presuppositions] which form, as it were, its conditions of possibility, one need not enquire whether the speaker of the sentence has previously encountered these other sentences [...], nor even whether anyone has actually produced these sentences. None of these sentences is a point of origin or moment of authority. They are simply the constituents of a discursive space from which one tries to derive conventions (p.117).

The interpretive act by which we make sense of these presuppositions does not simply rely on receiving signs and recognizing their signifieds. Instead, we insert these signifiers into the network of discourses always already present but never fully elaborated during our reading of the text. Intertextual interpretation is therefore the survey of a set of possible meanings that readers attempt to disentangle from a text which is nothing more than fragments from countless other texts knitted together.

The experience of an all-pervading intertextuality cannot simply be confined to the side of the reader, though. Partly, this can already be deduced from the point made earlier that the author turns out to be in effect nothing more than another reader of their work. Culler makes the idea much clearer by directly attacking the

notion that all structuralist work is done when the author is reduced to relative meaninglessness: "to say that a poem becomes an autonomous object once it leaves the author's pen is, in one sense, precisely the reverse of the structuralist position. The poem cannot be created except in relation to other poems and conventions of reading" (*Structuralist Poetics*, p.30). While not anymore involved in determining the meaning of the work, the author thus at least is pointed out as the main focal point of the intertextuality flowing into the creation process of a text.

Culler cautions that restricting the scope of intertextuality for the practical reasons of textual analysis is not innocent, but rather questions the claims made for the concept of intertextuality as a whole. Intertextuality is meant to be a general theory, but when it is applied, it is often narrowed down to such a point that the generality of the theory is arguable (p. 105). Thus, he argues that when we look at intertextuality, we should focus on "the conditions of meaning in literature" and "relate a literary work to a whole series of other works, treating them not as sources but as constituents of a genre, for example, whose conventions we attempt to infer" (p. 117). In this way, we can look at intertextuality as a tool for examining the place of various literary works in genres. By looking at how texts interrelate, we can see what they have in common that we might otherwise overlook.

Culler offers both a critique of other works on intertextuality. He makes some interesting observations about some of the other theorists that have already been discussed here. He points out that Kristeva's procedure of looking at source texts for analysis of intertextual

space shows how the concept of intertextuality leads to a concentration on cases that question the general theory of intertextuality. He argues that while Krestiva claims that meaning is made possible through a general intertextuality, through her examples we see that intertextuality works best when we can identify the pre-texts (pp.105-107). When dealing with the work of Riffaterre, he asks whether the reader is obliged to perceive what Riffaterre has done in the text, or whether the reader has freedom of interpretation. He points out that there is a tension in Riffaterre's work, between his desire both to out-perform other scholars, and his desire to develop a semiotics that explains how readers interpret (pp. 93-94).

VI

The intertextual approach opens up new directions for criticism. It shakes out the habitual mode of thinking about texts. Instead of reading and analyzing the text as an autonomous, self-enclosed entity, intertextuality opens new vistas for literary understating, through opening discovering the web of intertextual relation between the text and other preceding texts. Dealing primarily with literature, intertextuality offers the reader another view as to how to approach a text intellectually, and applied previous texts, and discourse to its further enjoyment and inspection. This would be very helpful in a literature class, where various works are being read, and offer the teacher as well as the students, further ideas of learning and knowledge gaining.

Through intertextual analysis, the reader will be able to bring his storehouse of previous knowledge and views based on previous readings. Thus, the act of reading

becomes more active and opens a dialogue with the work. Instead of being a passive response, a "mere act of consumption," reading is now assigned a positive and creative role, sharing in the creation of the text. As a flexible, fluent structural and semantic unity, the text therefore becomes a conglomerate of knowledge systems and cultural codes. From this point of view, intertextuality then becomes a general characteristic of texts.

Intertextuality is, in a way, a demarcating line between structuralism and post-structuralism. Intertextual analysis goes against the Saussurean idea that language has a static, monolithic structure. It is a shift from "work" to "text", as Barthes puts it. Instead of reading a poem or a novel as a self-enclosed and self-referential entity, with certain definite meanings, where the function of criticism is to decipher those meaning, it is now seen, from the intertextualist perspective, as indefinitely plural, an endless play of signifiers that can never be finally fixed to a single center. The concept of intertextuality upholds that each text exists in relation to others. Indeed, texts owe more to other texts than to their own authors. The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut. It is caught in a system of references to other works. The unity of a work becomes variable, relative and indefinitely plural.

It is true that intertextuality allows for a challenging task for the reader who attempts to recognize the intricate and subtle relations between the text at hand and the larger web of its pre-texts. It generates tensions and excitement, even if the reader fails to solve all the intertextual "riddles" which he is faced with. However, the major defect of intertextuality is that there is no clear

limit to the degree of liberty allowed by the play of text with intertext. The borders between the acceptable and non-acceptable cannot be defined or sketched. Both the strength and the weakness of the intertextual approach derive from the impossibility of positing critical criteria, of distinguishing between a reading that is enriching and one that is simply irrelevant. Th enrichment resulting from breaking the barriers between writer and reader and transforming the act of reading from passivity to activity, it becomes the task of the reader to produce not only new but also interesting and thought-provoking reading.

WORKS CITED

Allen, Graham (2000). Intertextuality. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Bakhtin, Michael (1961). The Dialogic Imagination (ed. Michael Holoquist). Austin: University of Texas Press.

_____ (1986). Speech Genres and Other Essays (eds. Carl Emerson and Michael Holoquist). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Barthes, Roland (1970) S/Z. New York: Hill & Wang.

_____. (1977) Image- Text- Music. London: Collins/ Fontana

_____. (1987)." The Theory of the Text," in Untying The Text, ed. Robert Young. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Pp. 31-48.

Chandler, D. Semiotics For Beginners. [On-Line] www. aber.ac.uk/media/documents/s4b/sem02a.html

Culler, Jonathan (1997). Literary Theory :A Very Short Introduction. New York: Oxford University Press.

_____. (1981) The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press.

_____. (1976) The Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.

Eagleton, Terry (1983). Literary Theory: An Introduction. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Foucault, Michael (1989)."What is an Author?" In The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends. Ed. David H. Richter. New York: Bedford-St. Martin's, pp. 978-988.

_____.(1976). The Archeology of Knowledge. London: Tavistock.

Genette, Gerard (1997). Paratexts: The Thresholds of Interpretation. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press.

_____.(1992). Palimpsests: Literature in The Second Degree. Lincolin: Univ. of Nebraska Press.

_____. (1992b). The Architext: An Introduction. Berkley: Univ. of California Press.

Harris, Wendell (1992). Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory. New York: Greenwood.

Hawkes, Terence. (1977) Structuralism and Semiotics. London: Methuen, New Accents.

Kristeva, Julia (1980). Desire in Language : A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art, (ed. by L.S.Roudiez ;

transl. by T.Gora, A. Jardine, and L.S.Roudiez), New York : Columbia University Press.

_____. (1984). Revolution in Poetic Language, (transl. by M.Waller, with an introduction by L.S.Roudiez), New York: Columbia University Press.

Leitch, Vincent B. (1983). Deconstructive Criticism. New York: Cornell University Press.

Moi, Toril (ed.) (1986). The Kristeva Reader. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Plett, Heinrich (ed.) (1991). Intertextuality. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Porter, James E. (1986) "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community." Rhetoric Review, Vol. 5 No.1. 34-37.

Riffaterre, Michael (1978). Semiotics of Poetry . Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press.

_____ . (1983).Text Production. New York: Columbia Univ. Press.

_____ .(1990) Fictional truth, Baltimore Johns Hopkins university press.

_____ .(1990) "Compulsory Reader Response." In Michael Worton and Judith Still, (eds.) Intertextuality: Theories and Practices. Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press. 56-78.

_____. (1994) "Intertextuality vs. Hypertextuality." New Literary History, 25: 779-788.

Roudiez, Leon S. (1980) "Introduction" in Julia Kristeva Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art. Oxford: Basil Blackwell

Scholes, Robert. (1974). An Introduction to Structuralism in Literature. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.

Young, Robert. (ed.) (1987) Untying The Text: A post-Structuralist Reader. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

_____. (1994). "Intertextuality vs. Hypertextuality." New Literary History 25.4: 779-788.

Widdowson, H. G. (1992). Practical Stylistics. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Worton, Michael and Still, Judith (eds.) (1990). Intertextuality: Theories and Practices. Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press.