

Perspectives of Intertextuality in Cinema, with Special References to the Work of Kristeva, Barthes, and Jenny: A Comparative Study

Vahid Rajabi

PhD student at Isfahan University of Art, Isfahan, Iran

Afsaneh Nazeri

Associate Professor at Isfahan University of Art, Isfahan, Iran

Samira Khodabakhshi

Master of Cinema, Tehran University of Art, Farabi Campus, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

Since its inception, intertextuality has been one of the fundamental literary theories and drawn the interest of numerous theoreticians. First-generation intertextuality thinkers, led by figures such as Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes, mainly considered the theoretical aspect of intertextuality. Conversely, the second generation, comprising the likes of Laurent Jenny and Michael Riffaterre, championed a more applied view of this theory. Having pervaded various art forms, particularly cinema, intertextuality has earned an important status in art criticism. This research presents a comparative study of the ideas of first- and second-generation intertextuality theorists in regard to cinema, seeking answers to the question of how intertextual expressions and the views of intertextuality theorists have manifested in film through descriptive-analytical and comparative methods. Our findings reveal how the different aspects of intertextuality theories are being used in films today.

Keywords: Intertextuality, Cinema, Kristeva, Barthes, Jenny.

1. Introduction

The concept of intertextuality finds its roots in, and may be described as a departure from, the paradigm of post-structuralism. Unlike structuralists who define meaning within a specific system, post-structuralists believe that texts could produce multiple, at times conflicting, meanings. According to post-structuralists, meaning is not static, and a text can be interpreted in different ways. In other words, the stability of a sign or meaning, which arguably formed the basis of structuralism, culminated in the disintegration of meaning in post-structuralism. This transformation could be identified in the theories of Foucault, Derrida, Kristeva, and Barthes. Lauding Bakhtin's eerie prescience of post-structuralism, in the late-1960s, Kristeva cited a celebration of ambiguity, endless interpretation and denial of singular meaning, as well as unstable identity as the cornerstones of post-structuralist thought (Stam 2000). According to Bertens, Post-structuralism emerged in the mid- to late-1960s, when structuralism was still in early development and finding its footing among more established ideas (Bertens 2001). Therefore, the two theories were growing in parallel. In

post-structuralism, it is assumed that the meaning of words, images, stories, or other texts cannot be found elsewhere (other than the text), such as in the mind of the author or in the world depicted in the text (Belsey 2002). Therefore, to post-structuralists, meaning is flexible and, as Eagleton puts it, meaning does not exist consistently in a sign; rather, it is scattered along a chain of signifiers. Thus, reading a text is more a continuous journey than as static a task as counting beads (Eagleton 2001).

2. Research Methodology

In terms of methodology, the present work is a descriptive, analytical, and comparative study based on the views of Kristeva, Barthes, and Jenny. In terms of objective, this study may be classified as developmental. The data for this study were collected from physical documents, online resources, and direct observation.

3. Discussion

3.1. Jacques Derrida and *Différance*

Building on Ferdinand de Saussure's idea of the arbitrariness of signs, Derrida developed a concept that became the foundation of post-structuralist thought. At the core of Derrida's work is the idea of *différance*, which he considered his most significant contribution to critical theory. According to Derrida, words gain meaning and significance based on their difference from other words, and interpretation depends solely on the reader. For Derrida, *différance* is a principle that informs all knowledge and determines all thought. He challenged the stable relationship between the signifier and the signified, arguing that while the signifier (the word we hear or read) is relatively stable, the signified is inherently unstable. In other words, if each sign had only one meaning, individual interpretations would cause its meaning to evolve over time. According to the principle of *différance*, meaning is not produced through the signified but rather through the relationships between signifiers. Therefore, the signified is constantly *deferred* through the network of *differences*" (Makaryk 1993). Derrida's novel idea would have a profound influence on Barthes and the duality of *writerly* (*scriptible*) and *readerly* (*lisible*) intertextuality, which we will discuss in the coming sections.

3.2. Deconstruction

Expanding on his principle of *différance*, Derrida introduced the concept of deconstruction. Rather than a theory, deconstruction is an interpretive approach that seeks out contradictions with the potential to challenge conventional interpretations. Deconstruction has often been criticized for overcomplicating texts by allowing for endless interpretations and possibilities. It also challenges long-standing assumptions in order to reveal new cultural and social trends. In essence, deconstruction is a method for reading texts to find multiple and variable meanings without concern for their “true” meanings. While structuralism seeks the “truth” of texts, post-structuralism holds that there is no truth, only interpretation. Regarding the fine line between post-structuralism and deconstruction, which is often blurred and can cause confusion, it should be noted that deconstruction specifically derives from Derrida’s work. In contrast, post-structuralism is a broader paradigm and a more general term that became popular in North America before being discovered in Europe. Another difference between the two is that while post-structuralism is primarily concerned with linguistics, deconstruction has been successfully applied to various other fields such as philosophy, literature, art, politics, ethics, theology, and architecture.

3.3. Différance and Cinema

Cinema holds an important place in Derrida’s body of work because, according to him, the intersection of the signifier and signified does not produce merely a single sign (meaning), but rather multiple signs and meanings in a constantly evolving chain. To illustrate this point, consider a brilliant scene from Iranian cinema. Close-up shots in film provide minor or detailed information to the viewer and are typically used to convey love and evoke empathy. However, in Abbas Kiarostami’s *Through the Olive Trees* (1994), the filmmaker creatively sets up a scene that represents cinematic *différance*. In this film, a young man named Hossein is in love with Tahereh. In the finale, Hossein yearningly follows Tahereh through a green field, hoping to win her heart. They move so far away from the camera that they become two indistinct dots in an extreme long shot. After a pause, one of the dots, Tahereh, continues on its way, while the other dot, Hossein, happily returns along the same path he previously took. Kiarostami’s unconventional method to capture this romantic scene is through an extreme long shot, which is virtually the exact opposite of a close-up. Therefore, the sign in this case is not fixed and it is given a unique, original meaning by the filmmaker.



Image 1 – *Différance* in cinema; a shot from *Through the Olive Trees* (1994) (URL1)

3.4. Deconstruction and Cinema

Deconstruction in cinema involves challenging the rules and conventions of mainstream filmmaking. It can be applied to various elements of a film, such as genre, narrative, time, music, cinematography, etc. Noel Burch considers *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Wiene 1919) as the first deconstructive film (Howard 2009). There are countless other examples of deconstruction in cinema. For instance, with *Bad Education* (2004), Pedro Almodovar employs all the components and techniques associated with *Film Noir* to pay tribute to the stylish crime dramas that became popular in the late-1930s to early-1950s American cinema. One of the integral elements of films noir is the *femme fatale*, a seductive female character who is often presented as an amalgamation of beauty, seduction, ambition, and cruelty (ibid). The *femme fatale*’s function is to trap, tempt, and manipulate the helpless male protagonist through her seductive tricks and ploys. However, in this film, Almodovar deconstructs the genre rules by using an *homme fatale*, a male seducer, instead of a female one.

Examples of deconstruction can also be found in Iranian cinema. For instance, in *Risk of Acid Rain* (Sanaiha 2014), the protagonist is Manouchehr, a man of around 60, who has never been married and only had a close friend named Khosrow, whom he has not seen for years. A desperately lonely Manouchehr decides to track Khosrow down at any cost and is repeatedly seen asking acquaintances if Khosrow has been married. In one especially telling scene, a young woman named Mahsa asks Manouchehr if he has ever had anyone in his life. “It was not... possible,” he replies. In the final scene, Manouchehr finally finds Khosrow after years and, from distance, sees him with a woman in a car. Visibly sad and distraught, Manouchehr quietly leaves. While the film may be depicting the loneliness and alienation of the modern human, a deconstructive interpretation may suggest that the relationship Manouchehr and Khosrow shared in their youth may have been a homosexual one. The dialogues and signs subtly dispersed in the film support this deconstructive interpretation.

3.5. Types of Intertextuality

Intertextuality can be approached from three perspectives:

1. First-generation intertextuality (founders): Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes are the originators of intertextuality who mostly focused on developing the theoretical aspect of intertextuality.
2. Second-generation intertextuality (reformers): Laurent Jenny and Michael Riffaterre are considered the leading second-generation intertextuality theorists who took up a more practical approach to the concept.
3. Gennettian intertextuality: As mentioned earlier, Genette introduced the idea of transtextuality, and Gennettian intertextuality is arguably a subcategory of his transtextuality. We will discuss this topic in detail in the upcoming sections.

3.5.1. First-Generation Intertextuality Theorists (Founders)

3.5.2. Kristeva and intertextuality

Widely regarded the originator of the concept of intertextuality, Julia Kristeva remains a pre-eminent theorist in the field. Drawing on the ideas of Bakhtin and dialogism, she laid the foundation for one of the most important theories of the 20th century. The influence of the *Tel Quel* circle, considered to be among the post-structuralist text theorists, on Kristeva's thoughts and ideas cannot be ignored. The debates and discussions held in this circle on linguistic subjects, particularly concerning the interrelationship of artistic texts would provide the basis for intertextuality as a theory (Namvar Motlaq 2015). In addition, the widespread social upheavals and radical developments occurring in the 1960s, which had profound effects on social, political, and cultural structures of the modern world, also inspired Kristeva. The emergence of intertextuality should be understood against the backdrop of the *Theory Time*, an unprecedented period in recent French history during which a considerable number of influential theories emerged between 1966 and 1975 (Allen 2000). Interestingly, Kristeva's first works, including one of her most important studies, published as *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974), were published during this very period.

Kristeva coined the term 'intertextuality' in 1966, when she expounded Bakhtin's ideas in an essay titled, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," originally published in 1969 in the book *Semiotikè*, which is the first collection of author's published articles (Namvar Motlaq 2015). According to Kristeva, no text exists that has not drawn on previous texts. Therefore, other texts are always involved and actively participate in the formation of new texts. It is perhaps necessary to emphasize that images may also be read as texts. According to Gillian Rose, intertextuality refers to the way in which the meanings of any image or discourse are not only informed by and dependent on that image or discourse, but also on the meanings of other images and texts (Rose 2015).

Kristeva developed the concept of intertextuality by fusing Bakhtin's theories, particularly the dialogic process, with her own semiotic theory. To Kristeva, every text has a horizontal and a vertical axis. Through the horizontal axis, the author communicates with the reader, and on the vertical axis, forms connections to previous or contemporaneous texts. Thus, Kristeva's innovation consisted of borrowing Bakhtin's concept of dialogic, which concerned language and words, and applying it to texts. As Kristeva put it, every text may be regarded as a mosaic constructed of numerous quotations, a mixture and transfiguration of another text. Intertextuality supplants the concept of intersubjectivity and poetic language should be read as at least double (Kristeva 1969), asserting that each text is, already upon its conception, dominated by other discourses which impose the world, as they see it, on the text (Chandler 2018).

From Kristeva's statements about the dynamism of the text and the idea that the meaning of texts is at least two-fold, it can be understood that there are no fixed or isolated meanings in a text and, as a corollary, meaning is indeterminate. Since texts are in a process of always entering new contexts and relationships, it follows that new meanings are always produced beyond what the author may have originally intended" (Malpas & Wake 2006). Therefore, it is the reader that takes precedence over the author in creating and processing meaning. According to Linda Hutcheon, no matter the medium in which a work is presented, it is in actuality created and understood by people. It is this very human and experiential texture that makes it possible to study intertextuality (2006).

From another viewpoint, intertextuality is quite similar to iterability, a notion extensively addressed by Jacques Derrida. Every iteration, Derrida asserts, must be different at the same time; otherwise, it cannot be independent. Similarly, every time something is quoted, it is given a different meaning by its latest context (Barrentine 2017). Derrida has shown that the aforementioned 'something' can never be completely exclusive. Therefore, his idea has a great deal in common with Kristevan intertextuality.

A question that may arise in relation to intertextuality regards the distinction between intertextuality and imitation or allusion. Laurent Jenny proposes that true intertextuality be clearly distinguished from allusion. He asserts that, with allusion, a part of a previous text is repeated in the present text regardless of its meaning. However, in the case of true intertextuality, a general structure, or pattern, of previous texts is referred to or used elsewhere (Culler 2002). Sharing a similar view to Jenny, Abbott states that while narratives (texts), like all other works of art, draw on pre-existing genres and imitate or allude to their previous texts, the terms imitation and allusion draw the focus away from the intertextual network that generates the narrative and its effects. Instead, they focus on a completely personal and original narrative created through skillful choices by the author (Porter Abbott 2002).

The important point here is that, despite having been influenced by Bakhtin, Kristeva's approach

is characterized by traits that separate it from Bakhtin's. Perhaps the single most significant point of distinction between Kristeva and Bakhtin is her profoundly structuralist view. As such, Kristeva departs from Bakhtin when she scrutinizes the text through structuralist semiotics because she believes, as a principle, in a linguistic structure in texts. Conversely, Bakhtin emphasizes the impact of the outside world, especially that of society and history (Namvar-Motlagh 2015). It may now be time to fully examine Kristeva's approach and its difference with source criticism.

3.5.3. *Kristevan Intertextuality and Source Criticism*

In her book *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Kristeva describes the difference between intertextuality and 'source criticism', which refers to the systematic process of examining the origins of information and tracing the roots of a text. Importantly, source criticism can only be applied to works that have been informed or inspired by other texts. However, to Kristeva, intertextuality is never restricted to examining the perceptible and traceable presence of a text within another, because intertextuality is based on the principle that *all* texts are influenced by other texts and most influences take place indirectly and unconsciously. Therefore, finding the source(s) of a text is virtually impossible and, at any rate, worthless (ibid). Now, if intertextuality does indeed take such an approach to source criticism, the inescapable question will be: what is the use of studying and applying intertextuality? Kristeva considers intertextuality to be much more crucial than source criticism, stating that intertextuality adds dynamism to the text. That is, due to the diverse origins of the elements that gather in a text, the interaction of these elements creates a sort of semantic fluidity within the text (ibid).

3.5.4. *From Intertextuality to Transposition*

Believing intertextuality, as she saw and understood it, to be different from source criticism, and aware that some had mistakenly considered intertextuality as a mere extension of source criticism, Kristeva decided to put an end to the confusion in *The Revolution of Poetic Language*. Consequently, Kristeva abandoned the term intertextuality in favor of her newly-coined term: transposition (Allen 2000).

3.5.5. *Genotext and Phenotext*

Kristeva addresses the production and meaning of a text as a central subject in her work. She classifies texts into two categories: the 'genotext,' which is obscure and ambiguous, and the 'phenotext,' which is apparent and clear. The genotext is located at the deepest level of the textual process and forms the basis of the language by which humans communicate (Namvar Motlaq 2015). It can be recognized by devices that pertain to phonemes, including repetition, intonation, rhythm, melody, and in some cases, narrative arrangements. In contrast, the phenotext is the very language that people use to communicate (Allen 2000). In other words, the genotext operates as the foundation of the phenotext to generate meaning.

Now, what can be said of the relationship between the two types of texts proposed by Kristeva and intertextuality, especially with regards to artistic and literary works? As mentioned earlier, Kristeva holds that all texts are intertextual and intertextuality makes texts dynamic and generate meaning. Hence, intertextuality occurs not only at the level of the phenotext, but also in the space between the genotext and phenotext (Namvar Motlaq 2015). It can thus be argued that the phenomenal level of the text, which is characterized by clarity and precision, has a more pronounced presence in academic and scientific texts, whereas the generative level, which stems from the subconscious and is the origin of texts, pervades literary and artistic texts. Moreover, the generative level of the text dominates over its phenomenal level. Therefore, Kristevan intertextuality is more closely connected to the genotext, while second-generation intertextuality is more related to phenotexts (Namvar Motlaq 2015). Lastly, it should be noted that Kristevan intertextuality is largely theoretical and not overly concerned with the reading and perception of texts; therefore, it may appear inapplicable.

3.6. Kristeva and Cinema

As mentioned in the previous section, Kristevan intertextuality is more theoretical and has limited practical use. However, films can be viewed as artistic texts through the prism of Kristevan intertextuality, which has been applied to cinema, painting, music, architecture, photography, and all cultural and artistic productions (Allen 2000). It should be noted, however, that Kristeva's views constitute a basic step in the realm of intertextuality, as the theory has been scrutinized and complemented by various theorists, before finally being upgraded by Genette to transtextuality, of which intertextuality is only a part.

Kristevan intertextuality, as applied to cinema, holds that the entire film-text (no matter consciously or unconsciously) is borrowed from other texts. The screenplay, narrative, mise-en-scène, cinematography style, etc. are all factors that establish an intertextual relationship with the film. Renowned film scholar Susan Hayward has elaborated upon this idea, noting that a film may be based on a play or novel, its style of cinematography may follow a specific painting style and/or evoke paintings to which the film may refer (1996). Whether these references are explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious, is a matter that would later be addressed at length by thinkers such as Genette.

Thus, according to Kristeva, every film is intertextual in its totality and heavily reliant on works preceding it. The cinematographic effect known as deep focus may be an appropriate example in this regard. A treasured technique in film studies today and considered revolutionary at the time, the development of deep focus is often attributed to Orson Welles (Ibid) and his trailblazing cinematographer Greg Tolland. Although many credit Jean Renoir and William Wyler as the first directors to make use of this cinematic technique, Welles was arguably the first filmmaker to

make full use of the aesthetic value of depth of field in film, such that the different layers of image in terms of perspective (i.e. foreground, middle-ground, and background) in a single film frame are distinctly visible. The arrangement of these levels in a shot often points to a certain meaning. For example, in a shot that has undergone extensive analysis, Charles Foster Kane's wife, Suzanne, makes an unsuccessful attempt at suicide. In the foreground, a large bottle of medicine is prominently visible; in the middle, Mrs. Kane is lying in bed, presumably having taken too much of the medicine; and in the background, toward the top of the frame, a distraught Mr. Kane is seen entering the room. At its most basic, this shot implies a clear cause-and-effect relationship: 1) poison has been consumed, 2) by Mrs. Kane, 3) due to Mr. Kane's lack of affection toward his wife. There are many such purposeful uses of the aesthetics of depth of field in *Citizen Kane*. Still, the better question in this regard, perhaps, is whether the technique, as an integral part of an artistic text, originates in cinema. The answer is an emphatic no. The use of depth as an artistic technique is one of the prominent features of Baroque art. According to Gardner, the artists of the Baroque period had developed a strange interest in infinite space, with architects and painters of the era avidly using the technique in their works. Giovanni Bernini is said to have had a significant role in devising and establishing the principles of visual depth that inform much of Baroque art and theater (1970). *Las Meninas* (1656) by Velazquez is a masterpiece of Baroque painting that depicts depth of field with particular skill. This was a simple example of a classic film and its use of prior texts, the depth of field technique and its roots in Baroque art.

There are, as one would expect, various examples in modern cinema, as well. There is a shot in Roy Andersson's *About Endlessness* (2019) that evokes Mark Chagall's painting *Over the Town* (1918) for the viewer. Chagall's influence can be seen also in other films.



Image 2 - *Painting Over the Town* (1918) - Mark Chagall (URL2)



Image 3 - A view from the film *About Endlessness* (Source: Film)

It cannot be said with absolute certainty that the filmmaker deliberately referred to the Chagall painting or created a self-aware intertextual relationship in the shot. However, Kristevan intertextuality would assert that this shot can be considered a form of intertextual relation. Wim Wenders' telling remark may be a suitable conclusion to the discussion on Kristeva and cinema. According to the German filmmaker, it is no longer possible to show a tree in film that represents the world outside of cinema, that is, the natural world, because by now, every tree we see in a film reminds us of a tree in another (Ahmadi 2018).

3.7. Postmodernism and Intertextuality

Due to the breadth and depth of the subject, it is not possible to discuss postmodernism and its various aspects in this paper. However, it is necessary to briefly discuss the relationship between postmodernism and intertextuality because any discussion of intertextuality in art inevitably leads to postmodernism (Allen 2000). The question here is whether intertextuality is a postmodern concept. Scholars have considered intertextuality as an aesthetic component in contemporary culture and art. For instance, there are countless instances in the fashion industry where designers have appeared to use intertextuality as a tool; the same is true of the music of the postmodern era. Therefore, the examples above come from different corners of culture.

While displaying minimal interest in such an interpretation of intertextuality and its relation with postmodernism, Jean Baudrillard redefines intertextuality as a dimension of chaotic sounds and images. To Baudrillard, intertextuality means drowning in a pornography of information, a pornography of all functions and subjects as fluid, readily, accessible things. However, he notes that the problem with this process is that everything becomes the same and, consequently, everything loses its reality and real meaning. Ward, however, agrees with Kristeva in that all texts are inherently intertextual, stating that in all types of authorship, we tap into a vast treasury of codes, rules, customs, and influences, no matter how minor. Therefore, intertextuality has no significant relationship with style and is not a structural quality that

allows readers to read and allows texts to be generated (Ward 2018).

Robert Kolker considers the boundary between intertextuality and postmodernism to be delicate and argues that these fields have a remarkable tendency to interact with, attract, and inform one another. According to Kolker, intertextuality serves as a constant reminder of how conscious we are of the pop culture with and within which we have grown up. The overwhelming rate at which cascades of images are hurled at us by films, television programs and commercials practically coerces us into analyzing and grasping this visual frenzy. Music accompanied by incessant screams and shouts in a television commercial inevitably reminds us all of Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). The opening notes of Richard Strauss' "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" is played in a commercial for a local car dealer and immediately reminds us of Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Every episode of *The Simpsons* contains references to multiple films. Everyone is aware of sounds and images ingrained in culture, although perhaps no one is more aware than others (Kolker 2015).

3.8. Barthes and intertextuality

Roland Barthes is widely considered one of the most influential theorists in the field of intertextuality who, drawing inspiration from Kristeva, made a significant contribution to its development as a critical methodology. Barthes markedly enhanced the position of intertextuality among the other, often remarkable, theories and ideas of the time. Barthes' theories have a great deal in common with Kristeva's ideas, in that neither thinker truly, or seriously, sought to investigate the ways a text influences, or is influenced by, another text and both rejected source criticism (Namvar Motlaq 2015). This denial of source criticism as a viable approach may be considered a point of agreement between the two theorists. According to Barthes, a text is entirely intertextual and should not be mistaken with its origin, and attempting to find the sources and origins of a text is fundamentally futile as it originates from the myth of genealogy and kinship of man, especially in its traditional sense. Barthes used all his efforts to deny the myth of genealogy in texts. He believed that genealogy in literature and art belongs to old criticism and the traditions associated with it. Hence, Barthes did not champion a traditional, investigative view towards the influences and inspirations of texts. Barthes viewed intertextuality as a tacit, obscure property because it is scattered within the text and is far beyond the direct quotations that had always been a cornerstone of traditional criticism. To Barthes, it is not possible to separate intertextuality from the text, and the intensity of this intertwining is such that text and intertext eventually acquire a single identity (ibid). Summarizing Barthes' ideas, Eagleton concludes there is no such thing as literary originality nor can one trace the first work of literature because all literary works are intertextual (2001). On the other hand, by putting forth other ideas, such as distinguishing "work" from "text," the death of the author, and the readerly/writerly duality in texts, Barthes invented a reading-based

intertextuality that was in contrast with Kristeva's generative intertextuality. Barthes' ideas, which we will discuss in the following sections, would prove to be a turning point in literary and art studies, especially in the realm of film.

3.8.1. Work vs. Text

Barthes considered "work" and "text" as two separate entities and distinguishing between the two came to form a major part of his theoretical efforts. According to Barthes, the work is a finished product, a measurable thing that can be placed in a physical space, such as library shelves. On the other hand, the text has to do with methodology. You can hold the work in your hand but the text is held in language (1981). The work is linked with fixed and unchanging meanings and with the author's intentions. But the text is a foundation from which meanings are constantly produced. The critic's job is to find a single, central meaning that is hidden in the work; however, the multiplicity of meanings causes each individual to discover, or even create, a meaning among various meanings" (Namvar Motlaq 2015).

The distinction Barthes makes between work and text resembles Kristeva's idea of phenotext and genotext. Barthes' text theory thus involves an intertextuality theory. The text not only sets multiple meanings in motion, it is also woven from multiple discourses and an intermingling of existing meanings (Allen 2000). The 'signification' process, which applies to the work, morphs into significance in which the audience has a dynamic role and actively participates. Multiplicity and semantic plurality are the foundation of the text and each reader infers a meaning through their own reading that has not necessarily been intended or predetermined. These ideas led to the inception of another of Barthes' seminal theories, which will be discussed in the next section.

3.8.2. Death of the Author

One of Barthes' fundamental theories is what he termed as the death of the author, which has its roots in post-structuralism. According to Barthes, meaning is no longer under the control of the creator, a. k. a. author, of the work and the reader assumes a higher position than the author. Barthes announced the 'Death of the Author' and 'Birth of the Reader' in 1968 and asserted that the unity of the text lies in its destination rather than its origin and that readers have higher authority with respect to the text than authors (Chandler 2003). To Barthes, the authority and supremacy of the author is very fragile in modern criticism, as opposed to traditional criticism. With the author eliminated, the claim as to discovering the code becomes futile. To claim that an author exists for a text is to assume a final, unchanging signified for it and, ultimately, to assume that the written material has been eliminated altogether (Barthes 1967). Barthes also addresses the relationship between the death of the author and intertextuality, stating that as the role of previous texts in the birth of new texts grows in importance, the author's role progressively diminishes (Namvar Motlaq 2015). In this regard, Barthes may have been

referring to the idea of readerly intertextuality, which is the opposite to Kristeva's generative intertextuality and genotext.

3.8.3. Readerly text vs. Writerly Text

In his book *S/Z*, which is an extensive study of Honoré de Balzac's *Sarrasine*, Barthes proposes that texts be classified into two categories: readerly ("texte lisible") and writerly ("texte scriptible"). Readerly texts impose on the reader that meaning which is in the author's mind. Conversely, writerly texts invite the reader to intervene and participate in the text production process (Rashidian 2015). Put differently, writerly text represents writing as the text, as an endless process; and readerly text representing writing as the work, as a closed object (Makaryk 1993). Given the lofty position and credibility that he attributes to the reader, it is rather obvious that, to Barthes, writerly texts are more significant than readerly texts as the reader is active in the process of creating the former and in making meanings. Intertextuality also takes on heightened importance and manifests more clearly in writerly texts, as they draw attention to intertextuality, reject coherent plots that usually characterize narrative texts, and invite the reader to perceive and embrace semantic diversity (Malpas & Wake 2006). Barthes considers classic texts to be readerly and modern texts to be writerly, believing that while writerly texts frequently guide the reader toward one meaning, modern texts appear to celebrate a perceptible fluidity in meaning (Allen 2000).

3.8.4. Barthes and Myth

The concept of myth and its meaning are central to Barthes' ideas. The meaning that Barthes attributes to myth is completely different from the conventional understanding of myths as fictional tales and legends. To Barthes, myth is a communication system, a message. Therefore, we realize that myth cannot be an object, a concept, or an idea. Myth is a method of signification; it is a form, a pattern (Barthes 1957). According to Barthes, signs can have implicit as well as explicit meanings. Explicit signs comprise a pair of signifier and signified that are relatively easy to perceive. He calls this a first-order semiotic system (Rose 2015). The second-order semiotic system is derived from implicit signs. The signifiers of an implicit signification, which we can call "connotators," are actually made up of the signs of an explicit sign system in which there is unity between the signifier and signified. An implicit signifier is created by placing several explicit signs next to each other to create (Barthes 1967). The implicit signifier also comes with its own signified and forms second-level signs. Barthes considered myth to be a second-order semiotic system. This semantic system refers to implicit signification that will most likely come under the control of implicit semiotics in the future (Rose 2015).

3.9. Barthes and Cinema

Roland Barthes was one of the few prominent literary theorists who had a special, affectionate relationship

with film. He was, in particular, a keen admirer of Charlie Chaplin and his cinema. According to Barthes, Chaplin's was a composite art that weaved several tastes and languages into a whole. Such artists, he proclaimed, create 'complete' pleasure by depicting a cultural image that is simultaneously unique and universal, that is diverse and multiple (Sontag 1983). In 1979, he appeared in front of French filmmaker André Téchiné's camera in the film *The Brontë Sisters*, in what would be his first and last acting experience. However, he contributed to a few films as writer. Claire Denis' *Let the Sunshine In* (2017), for instance, is an adaptation of Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*.

The influence of Barthes' work on art and especially cinema is virtually undeniable. According to Jameson, Barthes was an enormous earthquake on the literary criticism fault (Sontag 1983). As expected, his allure and influence found its way into the realm of film theory. The 1970s' film theory is indebted to Barthes' *S/Z*. The first cinematic essay influenced by Barthes' textual analyses is the now classic article "Young Mr. Lincoln by John Ford," published in *Cahiers du Cinéma*. The central idea of the article, namely the text as the creation of the interaction of codes, significantly borrows from *S/Z*. Stephen Heath's essay, "Film and System: Terms of Analysis" published in the film magazine *Screen*, examined Orson Welles' *Touch of Evil* (1958) with regards to Barthes' signature method of textual analysis (ibid). These examples clearly portray Barthes as an influential figure also in film studies.

3.9.1. Readerly and Writerly Texts in Cinema

Although Barthes' classification originally concerned only literary works, it came to be useful also in film analysis. As mentioned earlier, readerly texts, a. k. a. pleasurable or reader-friendly texts, are closed texts that tend to impose a single meaning on the reader. The focus of these texts is on pleasing the reader and satisfying to create a sense of satisfaction (Etherington-Wright & Doughty 2011). In "The Pleasure of the Text," Barthes defines a pleasurable text as one that pleases, fulfills, and gives joy; a text that comes from culture and is not separate from it; a text characterized by an easy reading process (Sontag 1983). In cinema, the classic, commercial, and genre films can fall into the category of readerly and pleasurable texts. Writerly texts, on the other hand, are the opposite of pleasurable texts in that they invite the reader to produce meaning. Barthes refers to the latter as "blissful texts" that bring about a kind of lack, that upset the reader. Blissful texts may cause the reader to feel a certain degree of boredom and challenges the historical, cultural, and psychological beliefs of the reader, dismantles the coherence of their tastes, values, and memories, and create a full-blown crisis in their relationship with language (ibid). Modern cinema and the works of prominent filmmakers such as Bergman, Tarkovsky, and Antonioni can be regarded as writerly texts; works that have tantalizing open endings, reject strictly causal relationships, and refrain from denying the prevalence of loneliness and death, ultimately creating thoughtful cinema that compel their

viewers to observe and contemplate. Blissful writerly texts are still widely produced and screened in across the world, today.

We have established up to this point that Kristeva and Barthes, as the first-generation theorists of intertextuality, were the originators of two types of intertextuality: Kristeva with generative intertextuality and an emphasis on text production, and Barthes with the readerly-writerly duality in intertextuality and an emphasis on the reading and reception of the text. In the next section we will discuss the second-generation intertextuality theorists, known as the reformers, who championed a more applied approach to the concept.

3.10. Second-Generation Intertextuality (Reformers)

3.10.1. Laurent Jenny

Another French theorist who appears to have remained less known in the field of intertextuality, Laurent Jenny strived to discredit the reductive view of intertextuality as a largely theoretical framework and to demonstrate its practical potential. Far from indifferent to reading the work, he is more fascinated by the creation and evolution of the work and emphasizes productive, or generative, intertextuality (Namvar-Motlagh 2015). Jenny and Kristeva thus appear to be on the same side, although their views on source criticism differ a great deal. Jenny has openly acknowledged this difference of opinion, positing that contrary to Kristeva's ideas, intertextuality in its specific sense is related to source criticism (ibid). Therefore, unlike Kristeva, Jenny has a more flexible, favorable view toward source criticism. Jenny's reputation in the field of intertextuality stems from his idea of "weak" and "strong" intertextuality, which will be discussed in the coming sections.

3.10.2. Weak and Strong Intertextuality

Jenny turned intertextuality into a more applicable approach by the virtue of articulating the distinction between weak and strong intertextuality. To Jenny, intertextuality is the co-presence of one text within another. Weak intertextuality refers to a situation where the relationship between the two texts is based solely on this co-presence that has not spread to the deeper thematic layers of the text. Weak intertextuality, as its name suggests, is superficial to the point that the second text cannot benefit from the first text as much as it should. The situation, however, is completely reversed with the other type. Intertextuality truly comes into its own when the two texts are multilaterally linked and communicate and collaborate with one another from various standpoints. Intertextuality may be called strong when the intertextual communication takes place between the two texts in both form and content (Namvar-Motlagh 2015). Theorizing the existence of weak and strong intertextuality marks the decisive point of difference between Jenny and Kristeva, as the latter regards intertextuality as such a simple concept that it operates in much the same way as a mere system of signs.

3.10.3. Collage

The subject of collage is of great importance in literature and art and, due to its diverse nature, also has an inseparable connection with intertextuality. Jenny is one of the first intertextuality theorists to turn his attention to collage and became into a considerable exponent of intertextual collage through his influential essay "Semiotics of intertextual collage, or literature in scissor cuts". A favorite among cubists, Dadaists, and surrealists, collage or patchwork refers to a style of making art in which pieces of various materials (e.g. cardboard, fabric, thread, newspaper clippings, photographs, etc.) are glued to a canvas to form a meaningful whole. The resulting composition is sometimes complemented with other writings and/or drawings (Pakbaz 2017). Collage has an extensive scope; it is not limited to visual, musical, theatrical, or cinematic sign systems. It also includes other systems, such as verbal content, and has a strong presence in literature and poetry, as well (Namvar-Motlagh 2020).

As the definition of collage suggest, this technique share similar characteristic with intertextuality because it provides the possibility to have several texts present in the same work. The coexistence of heterogeneous parts in a text causes them to interact in different, unexpected ways. Intertextuality is created by this very coexistence and can lead to dialogism and polyphony. To be sure, not every collage is necessarily intertextual and vice versa; however, collages have a clear potential be intertextual and it can be said that the most radical and diverse types of collages are often intertextual (Namvar-Motlagh 2015).

3.11. Laurent Jenny and Cinema

Jenny's ideas on intertextuality can be applied to cinema with relative ease. Weak and strong intertextuality, as well as his view of collage can certainly be identified, and adopted in film. The application of Jenny's ideas in cinema will be discussed further in the coming sections.

3.11.1. Weak/Strong Intertextuality and Cinema

One of the prime manifestations of weak intertextuality in cinema is when there is a film within a film, with the characters watching a film as part of the narrative. According to Jenny, in such cases, the second text has failed to have a profound effect on the first. As an example, Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar is fascinated by the idea of having his characters watch films to convey thematic undertones and used the technique multiple times. The characters in *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* (1984) are seen watching Elia Kazan's *Splendor in the Grass* (1961) and the characters in *Bad Education* (2004) watch Mario Camus' *Esa mujer* (1969). Seeing movies through Almodóvar's characters makes their lives more realistic. It seems that such scenes are constructed solely to express the inner truths of the film. For instance, when the titular character in *Kika* (1993) is watching Joseph Losey's *The Prowler* (1951), she realizes the by-then unknown truth behind her mother's death (Alberto 2013).



Image 4 - Weak intertextuality in cinema - A shot from *Bad Education* (2004) (Source: Film)

On the other hand, strong intertextuality in cinema is perhaps best typified by adaptations. When a novel or play (as the first text) is adapted to film (as the second text), the film is strongly influenced by the work from which it has been adapted from various standpoints. To cite examples from Almodóvar's work again, *Live Flesh* (1997) is an adaptation of Ruth Rendell's novel and *The Skin I Live In* (2011) is based on Thierry Jonquet's novel *Tarantula*.

3.11.2. Collage and Cinema

Collage has also been a fairly popular technique since the invention of cinema. A collage film is one that puts together pieces of films that are not ostensibly related to each other. However, the filmmaker relies on collage to emphasize the dissonance of sounds and images, making the viewers experience an imaginary leap. Chris Marker's *Letter from Siberia* (1957), Vilgot Sjöman's *I Am Curious - Yellow* (1967) and *I Am Curious - Blue* (1968), and Dušan Makavejev's *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism* (1971) are among the most well-known collage films (Ouhadi 2012).

4. Conclusion

As one of the most important literary and artistic discourses, intertextuality has been subject to endless exploration and scrutiny over the past decades. Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, and Laurent Jenny, widely considered as influential theorists in this field, have each contributed specific perspectives on intertextuality. In this study, we analyzed the views of first- and second-generation intertextuality theorists and discussed the way their theories apply to cinema. We showed that the major ideas of the thinkers in question, such as readerly and writerly texts, weak and strong intertextuality, collage, and other concepts are adaptable for use in cinema. It is our hope that the findings of this study will prove useful for fellow researchers and scholars of film art and literary studies.

Bibliography

- Abbott, H. Porter. 2002. *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ahmadi, Babak. 2018. *From Visual Signs to Text: Toward a Visual Semiotics*. 17th edition. Tehran: Markaz.
- Allen, Graham. 2018. *Intertextuality*. Translated by Payam Yazdanjoo. 6th edition. Tehran: Markaz.

Barthes, Roland. 1967. "Death of the Author." Translated by Farzaneh Sajoudi. *Structuralism, Poststructuralism and Literary Studies*. Edited by Farzaneh Sajoudi. 3rd edition. Tehran: Soureh Mehr.

Barthes, Roland. 1967. *Elements de semilogie*. Translated by Sadeq Rashidi and Farzaneh Doosti. Tehran: Elmi-Farhang.

Bertens, Johannes Willem. *Literary Theory: The Basics*. 2001. Translated by Farzam Sajoudi. Tehran: Elm.

Bordwell, David. "Observations on film art: Kiarostami." <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/category/directors-kiarostami>. Last access on 12.05.2023.

Brunette, Peter. 2000. "Post-structuralism and Deconstruction" In *Film Studies: Critical Approaches*. Edited by Pamela White Gibson and John W. Hill. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chandler, Daniel. 2018. *Foundations of Semiotics*. Translated by Mehdi Parsa. 6th edition. Tehran: Soureh Mehr.

Culler, Jonathan. 2002. *The Pursuit of Signs*. Translated by Leila Sadeghi and Tina Amrallahi. 2nd edition. Tehran: Elm.

Eagleton, Terry. 2001. *Introduction to Literary Theory*. Translated by Abbas Mokher. 4th edition. Tehran: Markaz.

Etherington-Wright, Christine, and Ruth Doughty. 2018. *Understanding Film Theory (Vol. 1)*. Translated by Rahim Ghasebian. Tehran: Vahed.

Gardner, Helen. 2017. *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*. Translated by Mohammad Taghi Faramarzi. 19th edition. Tehran: Nashr-e-Negah.

Hayward, Susan. 2009. *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*. Translated by Fattah Mohammadi. Zanjan: Hezare Sevom.

Hutcheon, Linda. 2012. *A Theory of Adaptation*. London: Routledge.

Kolker, Robert. 2015. *Film, Form, and Culture*. Routledge.

Kristeva, Julia. 1969. *Sēmeiōtikē: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

Letter from Siberia (1958). Directed by Chris Marker. France: Icarus Films. DVD.

Makaryk, Irene Rima. 2006. *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theories*. Translated by Mehran Mahajer and Mohammad Nabavi. 2nd edition. Tehran: Agaah.

Malpas, Simon, and Paul Wake. 2006. *The Routledge Companion to Critical Theory*. London: Routledge.

Mira, Alberto. 2013. "A Life, Imagined and Otherwise: The Limits and Uses of Autobiography in Almodóvar's Films." In *A Companion to Pedro Almodóvar*. Edited by Marvin D'Lugo and Kathleen M. Vernon. New York: Wiley-Blackwell.

Namvar-Motlagh, Bahman. 2015. *Introduction to Intertextuality: Theories and Applications*. Tehran: Sokhan.

Namvar-Motlagh, Bahman. 2020. "Intertextual Collage Aesthetics". *Kimia-ye Honar*. 9(36): 25-36.

Pakbaz, Rouein. 2017. *Encyclopedia of Art*. 14th edition. Tehran: Contemporary Culture.

Rashidian, Abdolkarim. 2015. *Postmodern Culture*. 2nd edition. Tehran: Ney.

Rose, Gillian. 2015. *Methodology and Method of Image*. Translated by Seyed Jamal al-Din Akbarzadeh Jahromi. Tehran: Research Institute of Culture, Art and Communications.

Ryan, Michael. 2016. *An Introduction to Criticism: Literature/Film/Culture*. Translated by Sara Kazemimaneh. Tehran: Avand Danesh.

Sontag, Susan. 1983. *A Barthes reader*. New York: Hill and Wang.

Stam, Robert. 2014. *Introduction to Film Theory*. Translated by Ehsan Norouzi. 3rd edition. Tehran: Soureh Mehr.

Ward, Glenn. 2017. *Postmodernism*. Translated by Ghader Fakhr Ranjbari and Abouzar Karami. 6th edition. Tehran: Mahi.

Filmography

About Endlessness (2019). Directed by Roy Andersson. Sweden: Magnolia Home Entertainment. DVD.

Bad Education (2004). Directed by Pedro Almodovar. Spain: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment. DVD.

Citizen Kane (1941). Directed by Orson Welles. USA: Warner Home Video. DVD.

I Am Curious – Blue (1968). Directed by Vilgot Sjöman. Sweden: The Criterion Collection. DVD.

I Am Curious - Yellow (1967). Directed by Vilgot Sjöman. Sweden: The Criterion Collection. DVD.

Kika (1993). Directed by Pedro Almodovar. Spain: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment. DVD.

Risk of Acid Rain (2015). Directed by Behtash Sanaeeha. Iran: Facets Video. DVD.

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920). Directed by Robert Wiene. Germany: Kino International. DVD.

The Skin I Live In (2011). Directed by Pedro Almodovar. Spain: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment. DVD.

Through the Olive Trees (1994). Directed by Abbas Kiarostami. Iran: The Criterion Collection. DVD.

W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism (1971). Directed by Dušan Makavejev. USA: The Criterion Collection. DVD.

URL1: <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/category/directors-kiarostami/page/2>

URL2: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/marc-chagall/over-the-town-1918>