



INTERTEXTUALITY ACROSS TIME: FROM ARCHETYPES TO POST-STRUCTURALIST THEORY

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Abstract:

Intertextuality, since its formal articulation in the 1960s, has become a foundational framework for analyzing literature and culture. This article traces its evolution from implicit practices in ancient and classical texts, through archetypal motifs, mythic repetition, and dialogic engagement, to contemporary post-structuralist theory. Integrating perspectives from archetypal criticism, Bakhtinian dialogism, semiotics, and poststructuralist thought, it demonstrates intertextuality's dual function as a literary device and analytical lens. Close readings of texts such as *Ulysses* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* illustrate how intertextual strategies reshape interpretation, mediate cultural memory, and foster readerly engagement. The study further explores intertextuality's extension into digital media and interdisciplinary contexts, highlighting its role in bridging historical, cultural, and technological registers. By situating texts within dynamic networks of influence and dialogue, this work underscores intertextuality as both a conceptual and methodological tool for understanding literature's continuity, transformation, and socio-cultural resonance.

Keywords: intertextuality, archetypal criticism, dialogism, literary networks, poststructuralism, cultural memory, digital media

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1. Introduction

The concept of intertextuality has become a pervasive term in literary theory and criticism, yet its meaning remains both expansive and contested. First coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966, intertextuality describes the phenomenon by which every text is a “*mosaic of quotations*”, integrating and responding to other texts, both explicitly and implicitly. This notion challenged the formalist emphasis on textual autonomy, positioning literature as inherently social and dialogic. Over time, intertextuality has grown to encompass a wide array of theoretical perspectives, from post-structuralist critiques of authorship and meaning to archetypal literary analysis of recurring motifs and cultural memory (Baron, 2019).

The evolution of intertextuality can be traced along several axes. Historically, literature has always engaged with prior works, through practices such as quotation, allusion, adaptation, and influence. Baron (2019) notes that intertextuality emerged as a term to formalize and refine these concepts, capturing the complex relationships between texts that older terms like “*imitation*,” “*parody*,” or “*reference*” could only partially describe. Similarly, Bakhtin’s dialogism emphasized that every utterance, including literary texts, participates in a broader socio-cultural discourse, laying the conceptual foundation for Kristeva’s formalization.

This article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of intertextuality by situating it within both historical and contemporary frameworks. It integrates the perspectives of classical and modern theorists, demonstrating how intertextuality functions as both a literary technique and a methodological lens. It also engages with critiques, notably those of William Irwin (2004), who questions the conceptual coherence of intertextuality in post-Kristeva scholarship, arguing that its widespread adoption has often led to a relativistic and overgeneralized understanding of textual relations.

Basically, this study demonstrates that intertextuality operates simultaneously as:

- A historical literary practice,
- A theoretical reconfiguration of authorship and meaning,
- A contemporary cultural condition intensified by digital media.

In other words, by examining intertextuality across time, the study emphasizes three key objectives: first, to trace its emergence from implicit practices in ancient and classical literature to its formal theorization in the 20th century; second, to synthesize the theoretical developments that link archetypal criticism, post-structuralism, and semiotics; and third, to explore its practical applications and critical implications through case studies and interdisciplinary approaches. Therefore, this integrative perspective not only clarifies the evolving concept of intertextuality but also situates it as a dynamic framework for analyzing the ongoing conversation between texts, authors, and readers across historical and cultural contexts.

2. Historical and Classical Foundations of Intertextuality

Intertextuality, though formally theorized in the 1960s by Julia Kristeva, has roots extending deep into the history of literary production. The act of referencing, echoing, or adapting previous texts predates the formal term, reflecting a longstanding human engagement with narrative memory, cultural motifs, and textual interdependence. Early literary cultures, from classical

antiquity to the Renaissance, reveal implicit intertextual practices where texts participated in ongoing cultural dialogues.

2.1 Ancient and Classical Practices

In classical literature, intertextuality is manifested through mythological allusions, heroic archetypes, and conventional narrative structures. Greek and Roman authors routinely relied on earlier works, whether Homeric epics or canonical tragedies, to anchor their narratives within a shared cultural and literary memory. This process reflects the conceptual underpinnings of what Kuang (2023) describes as archetypal literary criticism, wherein recurrent motifs, symbolic imagery, and character types form a repository of collective memory across texts. For instance, Virgil's *Aeneid* not only draws from Homeric epics but also actively reshapes their mythological and ethical paradigms to address Roman sociopolitical contexts, exemplifying early intertextual engagement.

Similarly, medieval and early Renaissance literature demonstrates complex intertextual layering. The medieval practice of exempla in sermons and narratives, as well as literary paraphrase in scholastic traditions, created textual mosaics that operated simultaneously as homage, reinterpretation, and critique. These practices laid the foundation for what Kristeva would later theorize as a text's social embeddedness: literature was never autonomous, but inherently linked to prior narratives, cultural norms, and rhetorical conventions.

Importantly, classical literary culture did not operate under the modern assumption of autonomous authorship. Textual production was embedded within collective tradition, rhetorical pedagogy, and the circulation of communal narratives. What later theory would identify as intertextuality was, in antiquity, an ordinary condition of literary creativity. Thus, intertextuality in classical contexts should not be retroactively imposed as a modern concept, but recognized as a latent structural principle of literary production, one that poststructuralist theory would later render explicit.

2.2 Literary Memory and Archetypes

Archetypal criticism provides a theoretical bridge between ancient textual practices and modern intertextual theory. Kuang (2023) emphasizes that literature functions as a repository of memory, with texts preserving, transforming, and transmitting recurring archetypes across historical periods. This perspective aligns with the dialogic view of Bakhtin, in which each utterance, literary or otherwise, exists in relation to preceding and contemporaneous discourses. Archetypes such as the hero, the quest, and the transformative journey recur not as static templates but as adaptable structures that interact dynamically with the socio-cultural and literary context.

Through this lens, intertextuality is not merely a postmodern or structuralist innovation; rather, it formalizes a principle long operative in literary creation: texts communicate with their predecessors to construct meaning. Baron (2019) notes that early theorists coined "*intertextuality*" precisely to replace insufficient terminology, quotation, allusion, parody, pastiche, because these terms failed to capture the systematic, pervasive, and networked nature of textual relations that had always characterized literary production.

2.3 Dialogism and Early Semiotic Links

Bakhtin's work on dialogism further illuminates intertextuality's historical foundations. His conception of discourse as inherently social posits that every utterance, be it literary or conversational, is shaped by prior discourses and anticipates responses from others. In classical texts, this dialogic interplay is evident in the ways authors engaged with canonical works while simultaneously asserting originality. For example, Dante's *Divine Comedy* dialogues extensively with Virgil, the Bible, and classical allegories, demonstrating how literary meaning is co-constructed through intertextual engagement. However, Bakhtin's framework differs from later poststructuralist formulations in an important respect. While Kristeva abstracts dialogism into textual relationality, Bakhtin maintains a strong emphasis on historical situatedness and ideological struggle. His concept of heteroglossia foregrounds the material and social dimensions of language. Thus, dialogism does not dissolve textual specificity into infinite reference; it anchors discourse within concrete sociohistorical tensions.

This distinction is crucial. One of the central critiques of intertextuality, articulated by Irwin (2004), is that post-structuralist expansions risk reducing textual analysis to an endless play of references detached from historical grounding. A return to Bakhtin reminds us that textual interconnectedness is not merely aesthetic but ideological. Intertextual relations are shaped by power structures, cultural hierarchies, and institutional contexts. Complementing Bakhtin's dialogic framework, semiotic approaches further expand the scope of textual relationality.

Morgan's (1985) semiotic perspective conceptualizes intertextuality as a network of sign systems rather than isolated literary works. In this view, texts operate within broader semiotic economies composed of motifs, codes, conventions, and symbolic structures. Literature becomes one node within a larger cultural matrix of meaning production.

Semiotic theory intensifies the implications of dialogism: if texts are sign-systems embedded within other sign-systems, then meaning emerges through differential relations rather than intrinsic properties. Archetypes, narrative structures, and rhetorical devices function as circulating signs that accumulate cultural memory across time. Yet here another theoretical tension emerges. If meaning is always relational and signs derive significance from their position within networks, can interpretation ever reach stability? Does the semiotic expansion of intertextuality risk infinite regress, where every sign refers to another sign without terminus?

Indeed, archetypes themselves are paradoxically stable and flexible. The heroic journey, the trickster, the innocent, the shadow, these enduring patterns provide readers with recognizable structures, yet they also invite creative reinterpretation. How might a contemporary author subvert the heroic archetype or invert the trickster motif? By engaging with archetypes dialogically, writers participate in a historical conversation while simultaneously exercising creative freedom, transforming inherited forms into innovative narratives.

Taken together, these perspectives reveal a continuum of intertextual practice: from the archetypal motifs and mythic repetition of classical literature, through medieval allusion and Renaissance paraphrase, to the explicit theoretical frameworks of Kristeva and Barthes. What distinguishes contemporary intertextuality is not the mere presence of textual referencing, but the conscious recognition of networks, dialogues, and resonances as central to meaning-making.

Whereas early authors operated intuitively within these networks, poststructuralist theory illuminates them, offering scholars and readers the tools to trace influences, adaptations, and creative transformations across cultural and historical contexts.

Thus, intertextuality emerges not merely as a literary phenomenon but as a space for imaginative engagement, where creativity operates dialogically, within inherited forms yet beyond their limitations. Can we then view every act of writing as simultaneously homage and innovation? Does each textual reworking enrich the archetypal canon, or risk diluting it? By linking archetypal criticism, dialogism, and semiotic frameworks, we begin to see intertextuality as both a methodological lens and a creative practice, one that positions texts as socially embedded, historically situated, and endlessly responsive to the imaginative energies of authors and readers alike (Kuang, 2023; Baron, 2019).

3. Kristeva, Barthes, and the Poststructuralist Expansion of Intertextuality

The formal articulation of intertextuality emerged in the 1960s with Julia Kristeva, who, drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, reframed literary texts as inherently social and relational entities. Kristeva (1966/1980) posited that "every text is a mosaic of quotations," emphasizing that no work exists in isolation but is the product of continuous textual interplay. This conception departed from the formalist and structuralist preoccupation with textual autonomy and interior coherence, situating the meaning of a text within an expansive web of prior and contemporary literary productions.

3.1 Kristeva's Theory of Intertextuality

Kristeva's intertextuality rests on the principle that texts are interdependent and dialogic, their significance emerging from their relationships with other texts. This insight extends Bakhtin's notion that all utterances are shaped by prior discourse and anticipate future responses, transforming literary analysis into a study of networks, references, and cultural dialogues (Morgan, 1985). For instance, James Joyce's *Ulysses* demonstrates a richly layered intertextuality with Homer's *Odyssey*, not merely reproducing its narrative structure but actively reshaping its moral and psychological dimensions to engage twentieth-century social and literary concerns. Similarly, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* subverts and dialogues with Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, reframing characters and themes through postcolonial and feminist lenses.

Kristeva's oft-cited formulation that "every text is a mosaic of quotations" (Kristeva, 1966/1980) should not be understood as a metaphorical flourish, but as a theoretical claim about textual ontology. A text does not precede its relations; it is constituted through them. Meaning emerges not from internal coherence nor from authorial intention, but from the intersection of multiple textual traces embedded within cultural discourse. This marks a crucial departure from Bakhtin. Whereas Bakhtin foregrounds historical situatedness and social voice, Kristeva abstracts dialogism into a semiotic framework. She conceptualizes the text as a site where horizontal (author–reader) and vertical (text–text) axes intersect. The horizontal axis emphasizes communicative exchange, while the vertical axis situates the text within a stratified archive of prior discourses. Intertextuality thus becomes both structural and relational.

Importantly, Kristeva's theory displaces the stability of meaning. If a text is composed of prior textual fragments, transformed, recontextualized, and reaccentuated, then meaning is inherently plural. Interpretation becomes an act of tracing these relational pathways. In this sense, intertextuality introduces an epistemological shift: meaning is not discovered as a hidden essence but produced through differential positioning within a network of texts. Yet this radical reconceptualization introduces theoretical tension. If all texts are always already intertextual, does the concept risk universality to the point of analytical redundancy? As Irwin (2004) suggests, the expansiveness of intertextuality can render it conceptually unstable. When textual interconnectedness becomes ubiquitous, distinguishing between deliberate citation and structural relationality becomes methodologically challenging. Nevertheless, Kristeva's intervention remains transformative. She reframes literary production as a process of textual transposition, where signifying systems intersect and reconfigure one another. This is particularly evident in modernist works such as *Ulysses*, where Homeric structure is not merely imitated but resemanticized within twentieth-century urban consciousness. The intertextual relation here is not decorative; it generates thematic and ideological transformation.

Kristeva's contribution, therefore, lies not simply in naming textual interconnectedness, but in theorizing its structural inevitability. She shifts the focus of literary analysis from isolated works to relational matrices. The text becomes a site of negotiation among competing discourses, ideological formations, and cultural memories. At the same time, this redefinition destabilizes authorship. If texts are intersections of prior texts, the author ceases to function as the singular origin of meaning. This theoretical trajectory will reach its most provocative articulation in the work of Roland Barthes, whose "*death of the author*" radicalizes Kristeva's relational insight.

Thus, Kristeva's theory marks the formal transition from intertextuality as a latent literary practice to intertextuality as an explicit critical methodology. She provides the conceptual bridge through which archetypal repetition, dialogic exchange, and semiotic relationality converge into a unified theoretical framework. Kristeva's approach underscores two central dimensions: textual sociality and readerly participation. Whereas classical literature relied on implicit intertextual awareness, Kristeva formalizes the role of the reader as an active interpreter who recognizes and reconstructs textual relationships. Here, intertextuality is not merely historical or mimetic; it becomes epistemic, shaping interpretive strategies and enhancing critical literacy (Baron, 2019; Kuang, 2023).

3.2 Barthes and the Death of the Author

If Kristeva destabilizes textual autonomy, Roland Barthes radicalizes that destabilization by directly confronting the figure of the author. In his seminal essay "*The Death of the Author*" (1967/1977), Barthes argues that the traditional attribution of meaning to authorial intention restricts interpretation by imposing a singular origin upon a fundamentally plural structure.

Barthes' intervention must be understood as a logical intensification of intertextuality. If, as Kristeva contends, texts are composed of prior textual traces, then the author cannot be the sovereign source of meaning. The text becomes a multidimensional space where various writings intersect, none of which can claim absolute authority. Meaning is produced not at the moment of inscription but at the moment of reading. Here, intertextuality shifts from a structural condition to an interpretive practice. The reader becomes the site where textual networks are

activated. Barthes famously declares that “*the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author*” (Barthes, 1967/1977). This is not a literal erasure of authorship but a theoretical repositioning: interpretation is liberated from biographical determinism and opened to multiplicity.

This move has profound epistemological consequences. If textual meaning emerges through the reader’s engagement with intertextual references, then interpretation becomes an act of relational mapping. The text is no longer a container of stable meaning but a field of possible associations structured by cultural memory. However, this radicalization introduces significant tension. Does the displacement of authorial intention risk interpretive relativism? If the reader becomes the primary site of meaning production, what constrains interpretation? Critics such as Irwin (2004) argue that post-structuralist intertextuality may dissolve critical boundaries, transforming analysis into an unrestricted play of associations. Yet Barthes’ position does not eliminate structure entirely. The plurality of meaning remains conditioned by the text’s linguistic and cultural codes. Intertextuality is not infinite chaos but structured multiplicity. The reader does not invent meaning *ex nihilo*; rather, they activate pre-existing discursive threads embedded within the textual fabric.

Moreover, Barthes’ argument must be situated within its historical context. His critique responds to a tradition of humanist criticism that privileged authorial psychology and intentional coherence. The “*death*” he proclaims is methodological rather than ontological, a rejection of interpretive authority, not of textual craftsmanship.

When considered alongside Kristeva, Barthes extends intertextuality into a fully reader-centered hermeneutics. The text becomes a site of convergence, where cultural codes, prior narratives, and ideological formations intersect in the act of reading. The implications for literary theory are profound: interpretation becomes dialogic not only across texts but also between the text and the reader. This theoretical trajectory also anticipates contemporary digital environments. Hypertextual platforms, remix culture, and fan fiction communities embody Barthes’ vision of distributed authorship and participatory meaning-making. In such contexts, textual authority is visibly decentralized, reinforcing the relational model of textual production.

Thus, Barthes does not merely complement Kristeva; he reorients intertextuality toward reception. If Kristeva formalizes textual relationality, Barthes democratizes it. Together, they transform literature from an object of contained meaning into a dynamic network of interpretive possibilities.

3.3 The Conceptual Expansion and Tensions of Intertextuality

The trajectory from Bakhtin to Kristeva and Barthes reveals not merely a development of terminology but a profound transformation in how textuality itself is conceptualized. Intertextuality evolves from a descriptive recognition of discursive interaction into an ontological and epistemological framework that redefines authorship, meaning, and interpretation. Yet this expansion introduces conceptual instability.

Originally emerging as a refinement of terms such as influence, allusion, or imitation, intertextuality sought to capture the systemic and pervasive nature of textual relationality (Baron, 2019). However, as the concept broadened to include structural embeddedness, reader-centered interpretation, archetypal recurrence, and digital remix culture, its boundaries became

increasingly diffuse. This raises a central methodological question: If all texts are always already intertextual, what analytical work does the term perform?

The risk, as Irwin (2004) argues, is that intertextuality becomes a universal descriptor of textuality itself. When relationality is assumed as a default condition, the concept may lose its discriminatory precision. Without methodological clarity, intertextuality risks collapsing into a generalized assertion that “*everything connects*,” a proposition that is philosophically intriguing but analytically insufficient. At the same time, abandoning the concept would mean relinquishing one of the most powerful frameworks for understanding literary production as historically embedded and culturally dialogic. The challenge, therefore, is not to discard intertextuality but to recalibrate it.

A more disciplined understanding requires distinguishing between at least three dimensions:

- **Structural intertextuality** – the inherent relationality of textual production within cultural discourse (Kristeva).
- **Hermeneutic intertextuality** – the activation of textual networks through readerly interpretation (Barthes).
- **Strategic intertextuality** – deliberate citation, adaptation, or transformation employed by authors for aesthetic or ideological purposes.

Making such distinctions restores analytical clarity without sacrificing theoretical depth. It allows scholars to trace textual relations while remaining attentive to historical context, authorial agency, and ideological structure. Moreover, the conceptual expansion of intertextuality reflects broader intellectual shifts in twentieth-century thought. Structuralism and post-structuralism dismantled notions of origin and stable meaning, replacing them with systems, and networks. Intertextuality emerged as part of this broader epistemic transformation. It is therefore inseparable from modern critiques of metaphysical presence and singular authority.

What becomes evident is that intertextuality is not a static theory but a symptom of a larger cultural reorientation toward relational thinking. In this sense, its elasticity is both a weakness and a strength. It resists rigid codification precisely because it mirrors the fluidity of cultural production. The task of contemporary scholarship is to negotiate this tension productively—to employ intertextuality as a rigorous methodological lens rather than a loose metaphor for connection. Only then can the concept retain its explanatory power while avoiding theoretical dilution. This recalibrated understanding provides the foundation for examining contemporary literary and digital practices, where intertextuality is not merely implicit but often overtly staged, performed, and technologically mediated.

3.4 Intertextuality in Contemporary Literary Practice

Contemporary literature exemplifies post-structuralist intertextuality through explicit and implicit dialogues with canonical works. Joyce and Rhys exemplify the postmodern engagement with literary predecessors, while more recent authors, such as Margaret Atwood in *The Penelopiad*, and Jeanette Winterson in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, engage classical and biblical texts, weaving them into new sociopolitical and feminist narratives. This aligns with Kuang’s

(2023) observation that intertextuality operates through literary repetition, archetypal motifs, and textual memory, facilitating continuity between past and present literary practices.

Furthermore, intertextuality extends beyond literature into interdisciplinary studies. Semiotic approaches treat texts as sign-systems (Berger, 2025) embedded within cultural networks, allowing analysis of media, visual arts, and digital texts through intertextual principles. Baron (2019) highlights how intertextuality's theoretical breadth, from Darwinian and Freudian paradigm shifts to post-structuralist critique, enables cross-disciplinary dialogue, situating texts within both historical evolution and contemporary cognitive frameworks.

3.5 Toward a Holistic View

The post-structuralist expansion of intertextuality synthesizes classical and contemporary insights: texts are simultaneously archetypal, dialogic, and socially embedded. Kristeva and Barthes formalize what has always been a latent feature of literary creation, the interplay between textual memory, cultural discourse, and readerly engagement, while postmodern literature exemplifies its operationalization. Intertextuality thus functions both as a critical lens and a methodological principle, guiding the interpretation of literature as a dynamic, relational system rather than a collection of isolated works (Kuang, 2023; Baron, 2019).

4. Contemporary Applications, Digital Intertextuality, and Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Intertextuality has evolved beyond a purely literary lens to encompass contemporary cultural production, digital media, and interdisciplinary scholarship. As scholars like Baron (2019) and Kuang (2023) note, modern texts operate within intricate networks of references, archetypes, and symbolic memory, reflecting both historical depth and technological transformations. The post-structuralist foundations laid by Kristeva (1966/1980) and Barthes (1967/1977) provide a theoretical framework for analyzing these dynamic textual interactions.

4.1 Intertextuality in Contemporary Literature

Contemporary authors frequently employ intertextual strategies to interrogate canonical works, reframe cultural narratives, and subvert genre expectations. For example, Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005) revisits Homeric myth, giving voice to previously marginalized perspectives, while Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) integrates biblical and autobiographical references to critique religious orthodoxy and construct alternative narrative trajectories. These works exemplify Kristeva's notion of texts as mosaics of quotations, demonstrating how intertextual engagement can generate new interpretive and ethical possibilities (Kuang, 2023).

Archetypal criticism further illuminates contemporary intertextuality by tracing recurrent motifs, symbolic structures, and mythic archetypes across temporal and cultural divides (Kuang, 2023). For instance, dystopian motifs in Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* (2008) echo classical heroic narratives and revolutionary archetypes, establishing dialogues between past and present literary traditions. The interplay of archetypes and intertextual references creates a layered interpretive experience, reinforcing literature's role as a repository of cultural memory (Kuang, 2023; Baron, 2019).

Intertextuality has been radically transformed in the digital era, where hypertext, multimedia platforms, and fan-driven content expand the scope and immediacy of textual relationships. Digital narratives, from interactive novels to web-based serials, often embed hyperlinks, references, and remediations of prior texts, facilitating a networked reading experience. For example, online adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in multimedia formats connect classical text, video, commentary, and interactive forums, creating a participatory intertextual web that aligns with Kristeva's (1966/1980) and Barthes' (1967/1977) emphasis on readerly co-construction of meaning (Baron, 2019).

Fan fiction communities exemplify neo-intertextuality, in which readers become writers, actively participating in the reinterpretation and extension of canonical works. This practice integrates literature, popular media, and fan culture into collaborative storytelling ecosystems, demonstrating intertextuality as a social and creative practice. Works such as *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Rhys, 1966) or contemporary reimaginings of *Harry Potter* illustrate this iterative process, wherein texts are continuously recontextualized in response to cultural, political, and affective concerns. Fan fiction further exemplifies these dynamics: authors reimagine established characters, explore alternative narratives, and produce derivative or appropriative works that expand the source material while maintaining its recognizability (Belibou, 2024; Derecho, 2006; Busse, 2017).

This genre demonstrates the democratization of authorship, challenging traditional hierarchies by positioning readers as co-creators and cultural intermediaries. As such, fan fiction functions as both a literary and sociocultural phenomenon, expanding the boundaries of intertextuality into digital and community-based contexts, and highlighting the relational, dialogic, and socially embedded nature of texts in the 21st century.

4.2. Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Beyond literature, intertextuality informs research in semiotics, linguistics, philosophy, and digital humanities. Thaïs Morgan's (1985) work in semiotics emphasizes the cross-cultural and cross-media applicability of intertextual analysis, showing that texts operate as sign-systems embedded within cultural and historical networks. Baron (2019) situates intertextuality within broader epistemological shifts, from Darwinian evolutionary frameworks to Freudian and poststructuralist paradigms, demonstrating its relevance across disciplinary boundaries. For instance, in education, Hartman (1992) highlights how intertextuality fosters critical reading and interpretive skills, guiding students to identify connections, motifs, and intertextual dialogue in literature.

4.3 Critiques and Contemporary Debates

Despite its utility, intertextuality remains conceptually contested. Irwin (2004) critiques Kristeva and Barthes for their ambiguity, cautioning that an overemphasis on textual networks risks interpretive relativism and neglects authorial intention and historical specificity. Similarly, some scholars argue that intertextuality's widespread application across disciplines can dilute analytical rigor, turning texts into a semiotic playground devoid of ethical or historical anchoring. Nonetheless, contemporary scholarship generally treats intertextuality

pragmatically: as both method and lens, capable of illuminating textual relations, historical resonance, and cultural dialogues without enforcing rigid definitions (Baron, 2019).

4.4. Toward a Synthesis: Intertextuality Across Time and Media

By bridging classical, modern, and digital texts, contemporary intertextuality synthesizes archetypal patterns, dialogic relations, and socio-cultural networks. It demonstrates that literature has always been relational, from oral traditions and mythic repetitions to printed and digital forms, and that texts acquire significance through their ongoing interaction with predecessors, contemporaries, and audiences (Baron, 2019). This holistic view aligns with the post-structuralist insight that reading, writing, and interpretation are inseparable from historical and social interconnections, rendering intertextuality a vital instrument for literary and interdisciplinary inquiry.

5. Discussion: Intertextuality Between Theory and Analytical Practice

The evolution of intertextuality from Bakhtinian dialogism to poststructuralist textual relationality reveals both the strength and instability of the concept. While Kristeva and Barthes dismantled notions of textual autonomy and authorial sovereignty, subsequent theoretical expansions have stretched intertextuality to encompass nearly all forms of textual interaction. This expansion raises an important methodological question: does the concept retain analytical specificity, or has it become a generalized metaphor for textual connectedness?

The radical implications of the “*death of the author*” suggest that meaning emerges within the reader’s activation of textual networks. However, this shift risks obscuring material, historical, and institutional dimensions of literary production. If every text is always already intertextual, the term may lose its discriminatory power as an analytical tool. At the same time, contemporary literary and media practices, especially in digital environments, appear to confirm post-structuralist insights. Remix culture, hypertextual storytelling, and transmedia narratives foreground textual relationality as an explicit aesthetic strategy. Thus, intertextuality persists not merely as a theory but as a defining condition of cultural production.

The challenge for contemporary scholarship is therefore not to abandon intertextuality but to refine its usage, distinguishing between structural textual embeddedness, deliberate citation practices, and reader-generated associative meaning. A rigorous theoretical framework must balance openness with analytical precision.

6. Conclusion

Intertextuality emerged in the twentieth century as a decisive challenge to the notion of the autonomous literary work. From Bakhtin’s dialogism to Kristeva’s formulation of textual mosaics and Barthes’ proclamation of the death of the author, the concept reoriented literary theory toward relationality, plurality, and interpretive multiplicity. In doing so, it transformed not only how texts are understood but also how meaning itself is conceptualized. Yet the very expansiveness that gives intertextuality its explanatory power also threatens its coherence. As the term has broadened to encompass diverse textual and media phenomena, its theoretical

boundaries have become increasingly diffuse. Future scholarship must therefore negotiate between inclusivity and conceptual rigor. Rather than viewing intertextuality as a completed theoretical doctrine, it may be more productive to regard it as an evolving methodological orientation, one that foregrounds relational thinking while remaining attentive to historical specificity and analytical clarity. In this sense, intertextuality continues to function not as a static concept, but as an ongoing critical practice.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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