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## EXPLORING INTERTEXTUALITY IN CLASSICAL TEXTS AND THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

**Abstract:** This article investigates the concept of intertextuality and proposes a conceptual framework for the analysis of quotations in a classical text, employing the theories of intertextuality as expounded by Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes. It investigates the primary theoretical perspectives in the theories of intertextuality of Kristeva and Barthes, focusing on those aspects that may contribute to a conceptual framework for the analysis of a classical text.

**Key words:** Intertextuality, allusion, classical texts, the letter to the romans, modern literary theory, structuralism, post-structuralism, literary theory.

**Аннотация:** Эта статья исследует концепцию интертекстуальности и предлагает концептуальную основу для анализа цитат в классическом тексте, используя теории интертекстуальности, изложенные Жюлией Кристева и Роланом Бартом. В статье рассматриваются основные теоретические подходы в теориях интертекстуальности Кристева и Барт, с акцентом на те аспекты, которые могут способствовать созданию концептуальной основы для анализа классического текста.

**Ключевые слова:** Интертекстуальность, аллюзия, классические тексты, послание к римлянам, современная литературная теория, структурализм, постструктурализм, литературная теория.

### INTRODUCTION

Interest in the exploration of classical texts through the use of modern theoretical frameworks is on the rise, but these approaches are not yet mainstream. The complexity of a quotation-rich text such as *The Confessions* has not yet been thoroughly explored through the lens of a theoretical framework developed specifically for this purpose.

Interpretation is a vast and complicated field. A particular complication arises when we discover a piece of another text within the one we are reading, or even a similarity to something we have read before. Such phenomena have been described by many different names: allusion, reference, echo, quotation, intertext, allegory, pastiche, parody, influence, to name just a few. These terms have been the subject of thousands of studies across the ages.

The critic of this time was therefore considered a detective, searching for “clues” within texts, which then allow him or her to gain access to the ideas or experiences of the authors. While the traditional philology of the 19th century contributed greatly to our understanding of classical texts, the assumptions of this methodology came under scrutiny during the 20th century. The assumptions that were attacked include, firstly, the notion that the critic is objective in a scientific sense, something the traditional critics wished to emulate from the physical sciences; secondly, the attempt to psychologize the author through his or her texts; thirdly, the assumption that there exists a singular, coherent

“master” interpretation or image; and finally, the idea that such interpretive tools are essentially timeless and not subject to scrutiny over time (Fowler and Fowler, 2003: 871).

In order to grant literary studies the required objectivity, traditional classical methodologies employed the author’s point of view as the determining factor for the interpretation of a text. The 20th-century literary theory is characterized by a shift from an author-centric method to a text- and/or reader-centric one. The origins and impetus of this shift stem from the influential work of Ferdinand de Saussure. In his *Cours de linguistique générale*, published in 1916, Saussure redefined language as essentially a single system of interrelated parts with no actual external reference. This, in turn, inspired a collection of theoretical movements collectively called structuralism. Structuralism inspired a wide range of theoretical and literary pursuits and revitalized interest in the value of literary theory. Structuralism was succeeded by post-structuralism, a collection of theoretical movements that arose in reaction to the theoretical positions of structuralism, born from the political turmoil of the events of the student uprisings in France in May 1968.

Despite the rapid increase in interest in literary theory since 1916, classical studies have been far less eager to embrace novel theoretical positions. As early as the 1960s, classicists have been accused of resistance to theory. The 1962 issue of *Arion* opens with an editorial that addresses this very issue: “Classical studies have become increasingly isolated from all other literary disciplines and interests. Our literary studies, for example, exist in a closed world of their own; we employ a ‘critical language’ that bears no relation to any other critical language, and our literary tokens are never brought into contact with any other critical currency... The revolution in criticism and poetry, which has taken place in the last fifty years and whose founding fathers were deeply interested in classics, has gone on with minimal reference to the literatures of Greece and Rome. Alone among literatures, Greek and Latin are kept innocent of modern critical methods and discussion. Modern critics do not usually have the requisite knowledge of the languages, and professional students of classical authors frequently do not seem to know what criticism, or indeed literature, is, and petulant references to something called ‘The New Criticism’ suggest that they do not care.” (Arrowsmith et al., 1962: 3-4).

This was written half a century ago, and yet Schmitz’s introduction to *Modern Literary Theory and Ancient Texts*, first published in German in 2002, reflects a similar attitude: “Classics as a field has been rather slow to come to grips with modern literary theory... We have to catch up with most other disciplines in the humanities” (Schmitz, 2007: 5-6). However, he notes that “in the last few years, a number of classicists have become aware of the opportunities that literary theory offers and have developed fascinating new vistas on our ancient texts” (Schmitz, 2007: 5-6). The Fowlers (2003: 871) are of the opinion that “20th-century theorizing has a great deal to offer classical studies.” In his introduction to *Texts, Ideas, and the Classics: Scholarship, Theory, and Classical Literature*, S. J. Harrison writes that the new perspectives offered by literary theory can lead to new insights, which can revolutionize (no less) the interpretation of a text (2001: 7). Indeed, interest in literary theory in classical scholarship has provided a wealth of influential and novel avenues of study. One such avenue that relates to this study is the concept of allusion.

Gian Biagio Conte’s *The Rhetoric of Imitation*, published in 1986, combines traditional classical scholarship and modern literary theory to reassess the concept of allusion. Steven Hinds’ influential work, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry*, published in 1998, deals with allusion, as well as the notion of intertext, in the context of Roman poetry. Published shortly after this, in 2001, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Roman Poetry* by Lowell Edmunds considers the concept of “intertextuality” from the theoretical perspectives of the last century. Works such as Schmitz’s *Modern Literary Theory and Ancient Texts*, and the papers from the conference “Working Together: Scholarship and Theory in Classical Literature,” held at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in April 1997, published in the collection *Texts, Ideas, and the Classics: Scholarship, Theory,*

and Classical Literature, edited by S. J. Harrison, demonstrate the increasing interest in modern literary theory within classical scholarship.

The focus of this study is the significance of traces of other texts in a particular text, specifically traces of The Letter to the Romans in Augustine's Confessions. The topic of "traces," "quotations," "allusions," "intertexts," and other such terms describing similar phenomena has been a prominent focus in theoretical studies in classical scholarship, as evidenced by the works mentioned earlier. The beginning of serious theoretical consideration of this topic can be attributed to Giorgio Pasquali and his influential article *Arte Allusiva*, published in 1951. Since then, numerous studies on the topic have been made, many of which employ modern literary theories and methods. One of the more popular terms to describe this area of inquiry is "intertextuality." Unfortunately, it has become an overused term in contemporary criticism. A brief survey of academic works with the words "intertextuality" or "intertext" in the title will reveal an inordinate number, particularly in the fields of classical and biblical literature. The term "intertextuality" has become fashionable in academic circles, often as a means of replacing the terms "source" or "influence study." Graham Allen warns against such casual use: "Intertextuality," he says, "is not a transparent term and so, despite its confident utilization by many theorists and critics, cannot be evoked in an uncomplicated manner" (Allen, 2011: 2). Miller (2010: 285) notes that within Old Testament research (and indeed, this can be extrapolated to other fields as well), it is impossible to speak of an "intertextual method," owing to the myriad ways in which scholars employ the term. Tull (2000: 62) identifies two broad groups of scholars employing the term, which he calls the "traditionalists" and the "radical intertextualists." (2000: 62). Miller, in his interpretation of Tull's description, describes the former as relying on "linear, historicist models of interpretation that seek to identify chronological relationships among texts," and the latter as conforming more to "the kind of study that [Julia] Kristeva was advocating when she coined the term 'intertextuality'" (Miller, 2010: 286). As such, Miller considers the so-called "radical" approach as a "more authentic application of intertextual study than the traditionalist approach" (2010: 286).

Miller, however, reinterprets the "traditionalist" approach as "author-oriented," and the "radical" approach as "reader-oriented," in an effort to convey who gives meaning to the intertextual relationships. He describes the reader-oriented approach as follows: In the reader-oriented approach, it is the reader alone who creates the meaning. Even if one could determine which texts the author is alluding to, or could ascertain the author's purpose in composing this text, such considerations are irrelevant. The author is merely 'a reader, "digesting" and rearranging texts and experiences' and cannot endow a text with meaning. (Miller, 2010: 286).

The approach to intertextuality followed in this study aligns with Miller's idea of a reader-oriented approach, and therefore Kristeva's interpretation of intertextuality. The term "intertextuality" first appears in the essay "Le mot, le dialogue et le roman" by Julia Kristeva, published in 1967. Her topic is the literary theory of Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, and her theory is largely a synthesis of his theory with Saussurean linguistics. Following her, many theorists have used the term "intertextuality" in a sense derived or developed from her original definition, and later completely different approaches appeared, using the same term to describe a variety of perspectives. The first prominent theorist to expand on Kristeva's concept of "intertextuality" is Roland Barthes. Around the same time, Jacques Derrida, while not specifically utilizing the term "intertextuality," developed a theory that shares many characteristics with Kristeva and Barthes' development of the ideas of intertextuality. These theorists have often been grouped together under the umbrella term of "post-structuralist" thinkers (Allen, 2011: 92). Such post-structuralist approaches to the concept of "intertextuality" were not the only ones to arise.

**In conclusion,** the exploration of classical texts through modern theoretical frameworks, especially the concept of intertextuality, offers valuable new perspectives on ancient works that were

previously understood through more traditional methods. The case of Augustine's *Confessions* and its traces of *The Letter to the Romans* exemplifies how intertextuality can illuminate the complex layers of meaning within a text. By shifting the focus from authorial intent to the dynamic relationship between texts and readers, we can uncover deeper, more nuanced interpretations of classical literature.

While classical studies have been slower to embrace modern literary theory, the growing interest in intertextuality and other contemporary theoretical approaches has enriched our understanding of ancient texts. The work of scholars like Kristeva, Barthes, and Derrida, along with the increasing integration of modern theories in classical scholarship, demonstrates that these ancient texts continue to offer new insights when viewed through the lens of modern theory.

As the field of classical studies continues to evolve, further exploration of intertextuality and its various applications will undoubtedly reveal even more layers of meaning, highlighting the timeless relevance of classical works in the ever-changing landscape of literary theory.

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