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**Intertextuality and Parody in Selected Novels  
by David Lodge**

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## ABSTRACT

Intertextuality is a concept that enjoys a wide appeal in all literary genres. Related to the theory of intertextuality are well-known critics such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Harold Bloom, and Julia Kristeva. The aim of this thesis is to show that David Lodge (1935- ) assimilated their views on intertextuality and employed them in his own writing practice through the use of parody, primarily for the sake of questioning the conventions of realism. Lodge's **The British Museum Is Falling Down** (1965), **Small World: An Academic Romance** (1984), and **Nice Work** (1988) are studied in this thesis in relation to parody which is an outstanding form of intertextuality.

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about intertextuality and parody in selected novels by David Lodge. Generally speaking, intertextuality can be defined as the process by which a given text is made up of a multiplicity of other texts. This process has several implications about the elements that constitute the signifying process, namely, the text, the author, the reader as well as the use of language. These elements are problematised in postmodernist literary works and are approached differently from traditional realist ones in a manner that does away with all forms of authority, finality, and determinacy. Texts are open to other texts. An intertext, thus, becomes simultaneously the text within other texts and a text made up of several others in a dialectical to and fro relationship. These ideas are inherent in the theoretical views of Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Harold Bloom, and Julia Kristeva respectively.

Though intertextuality is primarily coined by Julia Kristeva, yet the Russian Bakhtin is hailed as the initiator of the concept in his theory of the dialogism of an utterance. Perceiving the novel as one, Bakhtin challenges the traditional notion of authorial omniscience and opens the novel to a polyphonic interplay of different perspectives.

Roland Barthes recaptures the implications of the Bakhtinian dialogic utterance and goes to the extreme of announcing the 'death of the author' in a ground-breaking article that bears the same name. For him, the death of the author is indicative of the termination and coming to an end of all forms of authorial control and with it all notions of authorial creativity and originality. With the death of the author the text is set free and becomes the arena of the interplay of other texts. Thus perceived, the text is no longer the site of an easily graspable meaning, ready to be consumed. Rather, it is a multi-dimensional space for numerous interpretations. The ideal

Barthesian text is, thus, a text of renewable pleasure i.e. the one open for a multiplicity of equally valid interpretations. In this context he differentiates between the readable or *lisible* text and the writerly or *scriptible* one.

Harold Bloom adopts these ideas and recreates his own version of intertextuality in terms of "the anxiety of influence". He is interested in poetic language and in the way younger poets, in order to outdo their forebears, "misread" their works. The sense of anxiety the younger poets get is analogous to the constant tribal strife of the "ephebe" against the daunting weight of the tradition of his precursors.

Julia Kristeva interweaves Bakhtin's theoretical insights in the dialogic utterance with those of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in the investigation of the linguistic sign, and formulates her own perception of literary influence in terms of the textual "transposition" of other texts. In this process of transposition, the "instinctual intermediary" is of major importance. This instinctual intermediary relates to her conception of the *genotext*, which she differentiates from the *phenotext*. Though she does not reject altogether the phenotext, yet she is in favour of a text that combines these two characteristic features.

The thesis also focuses on parody as a writing manoeuvre through which intertextuality is carried out. Parody in this sense becomes the textual device for the appropriation and transformation of previous literary texts. The theoretical views of intertextuality and parody will be expounded in this study, with a view to relate them to selected novels written by David Lodge.

Lodge (1935- ) occupies a unique position in modern English letters. He is not only a highly successful novelist who wrote enjoyable novels but also a consistently lively and

perceptive critic. He is also an academic professor, a reviewer, an editor and a playwright. He is a prolific fiction writer whose work has achieved a great market success and a considerable critical acclaim. The ease and clarity of his style, sometimes paradoxically disguise the intelligence of what he says and the weight of scholarship behind it.

Early in his career as a novelist, Lodge came to be aware that conventional realism is culturally outmoded. He began to realise in the early 1960s that intertextuality is an inevitable feature of every written literary text. He states: "[y]ou can not begin to write novels without having read at least one, and probably hundreds" (1995, 146). He believes that meaning is not a property of a single text but that it is diffused in the interanimation of texts by each other. Thus for Lodge, a writer has to define himself as a writer in relation to other writers in terms of similarity and opposition. His use of intertextuality and parody is an intentional measure based on his own modern understanding of the process of writing as a whole. He explains the concept of intertextuality in a way that points to his own writing practice. His ideas appear in many of his critical works, which include: **The Novelist at the Crossroads** (1971), **Working with Structuralism** (1981), and **After Bakhtin** (1990).

The aim of the study is to examine Lodge's use of intertextuality and parody in three of his novels, namely, **The British Museum Is Falling Down** (1965), **Small World: An Academic Romance** (1984), and **Nice Work** (1988). Two reasons go into the selection of these novels in particular. Firstly, the fact that collectively they illustrate Lodge's use of intertextuality and parody as conspicuous features of his style of writing. Secondly, the fact that each of these novels has a certain peculiarity in relation to intertextuality:

**The British Museum Is Falling Down** is a turning point in Lodge's career as a novelist. Before this novel, he used to write in the mode of conventional realism. With **The British Museum Is Falling Down**, he began to develop a vein for the comic parodic writing. **Small World** is adequately described by Himmet Umunc as "A Mosaic of Intertexts"(1996, 1).As for Lodge's **Nice Work**, it simultaneously presents a recognisable picture of Britain during the rule of the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979- 1990), and is a parodic remodelling of the nineteenth century 'Condition of England' novel. In these three novels Lodge challenges realism from the conventions of realist writing. All three will be examined with a view to stress Lodge's similarity to, and difference from his predecessors. This thesis has an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion.

CHAPTER ONE presents a detailed account of the theoretical views on intertextuality as exposed by Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Bathes, Harold Bloom, and Julia Kristeva. In addition, the chapter presents a brief idea about Lodge's own conception of intertextuality.

CHAPTER TWO examines **The British Museum Is Falling Down**, with a view to reveal Lodge's parodic recycling of the Catholic novel, a genre that was in vogue in the 1940s and 1950s, for the portrayal of a major social issue in the life of a young devout Catholic tormented by the Catholic Church's ban on the use of the contraceptive pill in family planning. Beside the Catholic novel, Lodge interweaves the campus novel to the narrative fabric of **The British Museum Is Falling Down**.

CHAPTER THREE highlights Lodge's dexterity in interlacing popular myths and legends in **Small World: An Academic Romance** to parody primarily the genre of the campus novel, that was in vogue in the 1950s, to satirise the private and public lives of the university staff members.



CHAPTER FOUR deals with Lodge's transposition of several narrative aspects characteristic of the 'Condition of England' novel in his **Nice Work**. Lodge interweaves to this major narrative intertext the parodic remodelling of the campus novel and of the romantic love relationship, through the coming together of a female university lecturer and a male industrialist.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

- BM** : **The British Museum Is Falling Down**  
(London: Penguin Books, 1983).
- SW** : **Small World: An Academic Romance**  
(London: Penguin Books, 1985).
- NW** : **Nice Work** (London: Secker & Warburg,  
1988).

# CHAPTER ONE

## Theoretical Views on Intertextuality

This chapter presents a general introduction to intertextuality, followed by an explanation of the concept as handled by Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Harold Bloom and Julia Kristeva respectively.

In his definition of Postmodernism, Graham Allen states that

[m]any descriptions of Postmodernism depict a transnational cultural situation in which ... parody of earlier forms and styles predominate[s]. Postmodern art,... rejects notions of originality and Modernism's desire to 'Make it New', and cultivates a wilfully derivative, mixed and thoroughly intertextual approach which attempts to capture a new age in which old certainties ... have collapsed (2000,217).

Allen may appear to be claiming that the drift towards intertextuality and intertextual art is peculiar to the postmodern cultural context. Nevertheless, one can argue against such a claim by reference to two important facts that relate to intertextuality. As a term, the etymology of intertextuality goes as far back to the Latin word "intertexto", meaning to "intermingle while weaving" (Godard, 1993, 568). As a practice, intertextuality has a long history that extends as far back as the ancient Greek and Roman literature. This can be verified in view of the concept's "shadow lands", namely, "influence", "imitation" and "quotation" respectively. Together, these last constitute what Mary Orr describes as "the spectrum of [the] long cultural history" of intertextuality and its ideological manifestations (2003, 169).

Intertextuality as used by Allen in the above quoted

passage originates from the French "intertextualité", first coined by Julia Kristeva in 1968 (Orr, 2003, 3). As a concept, it generally "indicate[s] a *Text's* construction *from* texts" (Payne, 1998, 258).

Since its inception as a critical construct, intertextuality has served as a symptom of a decisive cultural change in the late sixties of the twentieth century when, as Orr remarks, literary history, critical theory and cultural studies seemed to be emerging from an outmoded past (2003, 87-88). This past proved to be no longer able to accommodate the radical change in the dominant cultural reality of that interval. Therefore, intertextuality has accrued a great deal of critical reception and consideration let alone debate and negotiation to the extent that it has become one of the most controversial concepts in critical theory and cultural studies.

With the advance of intertextuality and its critical premises, there appeared the tendency to question and challenge the assumptions and presuppositions that used to support a specific cultural perspective at a time. Main among these are the hierarchical distinctions that previously caused a great number of gaps in the cultural fabric. Thus, John Barth attacks the traditional notion of the artist on the grounds that

It's an aristocratic notion on the face of it, which the democratic West seems eager to have done with; not only the 'omniscient' author of older fiction, but the very idea of the controlling artist, has been condemned(2000,311)

The magnitude of the event of bringing intertextuality into focus has been recorded by Orr as follows

As... [a] catchphrase, intertextuality captured the mood of May 1968 in its spearheading of extensive cultural reappraisal. Non-hierarchical and democratically inclusive notions of text in a vast

mosaic of other texts could now be prioritized. Such notions directly questioned and challenged the pre-1968 ideologies (2003, 1).

The evolution of the spirit for cultural reassessment brought about a whole set of new values and approaches that were considered unthinkable and inconceivable in the period preceding 1968. These include the spread of a wide-scale democracy. If by democracy is meant "[n]ot the mere opportunity for expression at any rate, but values corresponding to a new and appropriate *structure* of expression" (Hirschkop, 1999, 203), then intertextuality as a concept is a tenable avenue towards the attainment of such a democratic state.

On the level of the opportunity for expression, intertextuality can be seen as a twentieth-century legacy that advocates the foregrounding of what was previously absent or relegated to a secondary importance as marginal. It implies an acceptance of the *other*, regardless of his gender, class, or race. That is why intertextuality is, in a sense, a reintegration of the contributions of feminist, gay and postcolonial cultures into the official or mainstream culture (Orr, 2003, 4).

On the level of the new structure of expression, intertextuality implies a challenge to previously recommended notions as the "proper stuff" of literature. In this sense, intertextuality is a celebration of "the interpenetration of elements regarded at other times ... as mutually exclusive" (Clark and Holquist, 1984, 296). The concept of carnival is an attendant concept to intertextuality that verifies this orientation. This inclusiveness of intertextuality makes the establishment of a plurality of attitudes and inclinations an inevitable corollary. This drift towards plurality is a stance that opposes the monism and dogmatism of earlier ideologies with their use of referential language. For example, in terms of literary production, the author was assigned full agency as the sole originator of the

meaning expressed in his own work. In this sense, any interpretation, before 1960s of the meaning inherent in the work was regarded as impossible except in view of the author's life and critical pronouncements. David Lodge explains that these pronouncements are of minor importance because they imply a move from the domain of literary criticism to, what he calls, "[the] [domain] of psychological or biographical speculation" (1966, 50). Against this notion of the literary work, intertextuality presents the idea of a text as a counterpart.

Thaïs Morgan sees plurality as part and parcel of the nature of intertextuality, being based on hybridity as its hallmark. She explains that, examined from within,

the notion of intertextuality emerges from the cross-fertilization among several major European intellectual movements during the 1960s and 1970s, including Russian formalism, structural linguistics, psychoanalysis, Marxism, and deconstruction at the least (1989, 240).

Morgan's attempt to account for the plurality inherent in intertextuality, in terms of its multiple origin as referred to in this quoted passage, regarding hybridity as the source of the term's breadth and comprehensiveness, is one that anchors the term to the cultural milieu of postmodernism. This orientation has been invalidated earlier. However, Morgan's attitude can be considered as an indication of the problematics of intertextuality.

Reference to the above mentioned facts about intertextuality as a neologism is necessary for two main reasons. First, to emphasise, as Orr does, the interrelational thrust of intertextuality; a feature implied in the "inter—" prefix of the term (2003, 4). Michael Payne expressed this idea in dynamic terms that underline the existence of a link or a relationship between a given text and many others. Payne states that: "a work is the absorption and transformation of other texts" (1998, 258). These

processes of "absorption" and "transformation" are meant to stress the dynamic interaction among texts.

Secondly, it is to stress the idea that theoretical formulations of intertextuality have frequently retained some of the terminology relevant to the world of textile and weaving in describing a text and its construction out of a multiplicity of other texts. In addition, they have drawn heavily on the figurative idea of the threading together of disparate elements from various sources. Roland Barthes describes the text as: "woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages ... antecedent or contemporary, which cut across it through and through" (1977, 160). Linda Hutcheon claims that in these two senses, intertextuality serves to "underline the concept of *process* that is at the heart of the postmodern" (1988, xi). It follows, as Hutcheon says, that intertextuality as a term represents what the concept, with all its attendant theoretical formulations, seeks to problematise and represent.

Though intertextuality as a practice dates back to the pre-postmodern cultural situation, yet in the context of the present study with its focus on Lodge's novels, it reveals aspects constantly associated with the postmodern cultural milieu. Main among these is the tendency for cultural revisionism and recycling, dynamism and interaction as well as plurality and inclusiveness. These aspects are revealed and underlined by the revolutionary stance towards language, initiated and propounded by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). Saussure's revolutionary views on language were recorded by his students and were published posthumously in a book under the title **Cours de Linguistique Générale** (1915). This was republished in translation as **Course in General Linguistics** (1986). For an account of these views (see Culler; 1975; Saussure, 1986; Hawkes, 1991; Allen, 2000). Saussure's work on the linguistic sign was adopted and further modified by critics interested in intertextuality including Lodge himself.