

# Intertextuality and Transtextuality: Theoretical Connections and Literary Illustrations

Zamira Ayimbetova

ayimbetova.z.m@gmail.com

Institute of Uzbek Language, Literature and Folklore of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of  
Uzbekistan, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

**Abstract:** Intertextuality and transtextuality are pivotal concepts in contemporary literary theory for understanding how texts relate to one another. This article provides a concise overview of Julia Kristeva's broad vision of intertextuality and Gerard Genette's systematic taxonomy of transtextual relations. Kristeva's notion of the text as a "mosaic of quotations" highlights the inherently dialogic nature of literature. Genette refines this view by distinguishing five types of transtextuality (intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, architextuality), offering precise tools for textual analysis. The article also examines how archetypes, motifs, and chronotopes serve as integrative analytical dimensions, revealing deep structural and symbolic linkages across works. Selected examples – from Homer's *Odyssey* to Joyce's *Ulysses*, from Pushkin to Bulgakov – illustrate how these frameworks illuminate literary interpretation. Together, they enable a richer comparative analysis by capturing both explicit references and the shared narrative patterns that bind literary texts.

**Keywords:** Intertextuality; Transtextuality; Julia Kristeva; Gerard Genette; Archetype; Motif; Chronotope; Hypertextuality; Literary Theory.

## Introduction

Modern literary theory increasingly views each literary text not as an isolated creation, but as part of a network of textual relations. The ideas of *intertextuality* and *transtextuality* describe how texts echo, influence, and converse with prior texts. Coined by Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s, *intertextuality* built upon Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic text – the idea that every text responds to and reshapes others in an ongoing cultural dialogue. Kristeva famously wrote that "any text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another". In this view, literature is fundamentally a tissue of echoes: even without explicit citations, a work's language and forms are imbued with traces of earlier texts and discourses. Roland Barthes similarly observed that a text is "a new tissue of past citations" drawn from innumerable voices and codes. This radical perspective shifts emphasis away from isolated authorship and original genius, towards a vision of writing as a *re-writing* situated within an endless web of cultural references. Intertextuality thus "blurs the outlines" of the individual book, revealing an "unbounded, illimitable tissue of connections and associations" that shape meaning.

Gerard Genette, a French structuralist narratologist, expanded and systematized these ideas in the 1980s. Finding Kristeva's use of "intertextuality" too broad to serve as a precise analytical tool, Genette introduced the overarching term *transtextuality* to denote "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts". Within this framework, he defined five subcategories of textual transcendence, of which intertextuality (in a narrow sense) is only one. Genette's typology offers a finer-grained vocabulary to describe the diverse ways texts can interact, ranging from direct quotation to implicit genre cues. In what follows, we briefly outline Kristeva's and Genette's approaches, then discuss the complementary role of archetypes, motifs, and chronotopes in comparative literary analysis. Finally, we apply these frameworks to selected literary examples – from Homer and Joyce to Pushkin and Bulgakov – to demonstrate how they enrich our interpretation of texts in relation to one another.

## Kristeva's Theory of Intertextuality

Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality posits that every text is inherently multi-voiced and multilayered, composed of the "absorption and transformation" of countless earlier texts. Writing in dialogue with Bakhtin's idea of the polyphonic novel, Kristeva asserts that a text is not a self-contained, original utterance but a node in a cultural mosaic of references. She introduced *intertextuality* to literary theory to

move beyond traditional studies of sources and influences, suggesting that the meaning of a text arises from its network of relations with the “already-written”. The implications of this view are profound: it “subverts the concept of the text as a self-sufficient, hermetic totality” and instead foregrounds that “all literary production takes place in the presence of other texts”. A novel or poem, on this account, lives at the intersection of multiple discourses – literary, historical, ideological – that it absorbs and reworks. The practice of intertextual analysis therefore goes beyond simply identifying explicit allusions or citations; it seeks to reconstruct the “field of cultural memory” that a text rewrites and reorganizes in a new configuration. One consequence of Kristeva’s thesis is a blurring of textual boundaries: a work exists at the intersection of many discourses, and each reading can reveal a new configuration of connections. In short, intertextuality for Kristeva is an ontological condition of textuality – *any* text is fundamentally intertextual. This broad vision provides a “wide-angle lens” for interpretation, capturing resonances and dialogues that a narrower focus on sources might miss. It does not, however, sharply distinguish among different kinds of relations; all forms of echo, allusion, or influence are part of the same general mosaic. This is where Genette’s contribution becomes valuable, introducing greater analytical precision while building on – and never refuting – Kristeva’s foundational insight.

### Genette’s Five Types of Transtextuality

Gerard Genette proposed *transtextuality* as a more refined framework to classify the myriad ways in which texts relate to other texts. Transtextuality, according to Genette, is an inclusive term for “all aspects of a particular text” that place it in some relation to other texts. Within this umbrella, Genette delineated five specific types of transtextual relations:

– **Intertextuality (in Genette’s narrow sense):** the direct co-presence of one text within another, through explicit inclusion such as quotation, plagiarism, or allusion. This corresponds to the classical notion of identifiable references. For example, a line of poetry quoted in a novel, a recognizable allusion to Shakespeare, or even unacknowledged plagiarism all count as intertextuality in this specific sense.

– **Paratextuality:** the relationship between the main text and its paratexts – the surrounding framings and presentations that accompany the text. These include titles, subtitles, forewords, epigraphs, prefaces, footnotes, illustrations, book cover design, and so on. Paratexts act as thresholds or “entrances” to the text, guiding the reader’s reception and interpretation. They often signal genre, set tonal expectations, or provide interpretive cues. For instance, an epigraph from Dante at the beginning of a modern poem might prime the reader to read the poem through the lens of Dante’s themes and style, functioning as an “activation button” for certain architextual and intertextual associations.

– **Metatextuality:** a commentary or critical relation where one text references another text *without directly quoting it*, often in the mode of commentary, critique, or interpretation. This can be explicit or implicit. A common example is a critical essay or a review that discusses a novel – the essay stands in a metatextual relationship to the novel. Within literature, an author might have a character comment on or reinterpret another author’s work (for example, a novel’s narrator reflecting on a classic text) – this too is metatextual. Genette defines it as one text “speaking of” another text, often to explicate or evaluate it.

– **Hypertextuality:** the relation between a later text (hypertext) and an earlier text (hypotext) that the hypertext transforms, parodies, continues, or otherwise derives from. Hypertextuality covers deliberate transformations such as parody, pastiche, sequel, imitation, or transposition of an earlier work. Genette’s term *hypertext* here is not digital hypertext but a literary revision or transplantation. For example, James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) is a hypertext of Homer’s *Odyssey*, reimagining the epic’s structure and characters in a modern Dublin setting. Joyce’s novel *transforms* the ancient Greek narrative – a clear case of hypertextual transposition. Likewise, Virgil’s *Aeneid* is a hypertext of Homeric epic, an *imitation* that adapts Homer’s epic motifs and style to Roman national mythology. Genette distinguishes between transformational hypertexts (like *Ulysses*, which transposes its source with ironic and metaphysical inflections) and imitational hypertexts (like the *Aeneid*, which emulates the *Odyssey*’s style and structure for new ideological ends). In each case, recognizing the hypotext enriches our reading of the hypertext, but the modes of adaptation differ – one playful and transformative, one reverently imitative.

– **Architextuality:** the most abstract and implicit type, referring to a text’s generic or modal relationship to a larger genre, category, or literary code. Architextuality might manifest as a text’s announced genre (e.g. labeled a “tragedy” or “sonnet”), or simply the reader’s recognition that a novel belongs to, say,

the gothic genre or the epistolary novel tradition. Every text is implicitly situated in a system of genres and forms; these architextual affiliations shape a reader's horizon of expectation. For example, a novel written in the form of letters evokes the architext of the epistolary novel, activating conventions that trace back to Samuel Richardson or Goethe. In Eugene Onegin, Aleksandr Pushkin includes a famous letter from the heroine Tatyana to Onegin; this episode deliberately invokes the epistolary genre code, from classical love letters to European sentimental novels. By doing so, Pushkin not only pays homage to a literary tradition but uses the architextual frame of an intimate letter to deepen the reader's engagement with character psychology and themes of romantic confession.

Genette's taxonomy, often called his "famous five" categories, brought analytical clarity to the study of textual relations. It narrowed *intertextuality* to one specific mode (direct textual incorporation) and grouped all types of textual *transcendence* under *transtextuality*. This move, as Genette argued, was not a rejection of Kristeva's vision but a way to make it more operational for critical analysis. By distinguishing, for instance, between an overt quotation (intertextuality) and a genre association (architextuality), or between a parody of a source (hypertextuality) and a commentary on it (metatextuality), scholars can more precisely describe how a given text relates to others. The result is a toolbox of terms that allows us to dissect a text's relational architecture without losing sight of the overarching principle that every text resonates with others.

### **Archetype, Motif, and Chronotope in Comparative Analysis**

In addition to these textual links, comparative literature often employs broader conceptual lenses – archetype, motif, and chronotope – to explore how texts relate through shared fundamental patterns and structures. These concepts introduce psychological, narrative, and spatio-temporal dimensions that complement intertextual analysis, helping scholars perceive deeper unity across works beyond direct references.

**Archetypes:** Stemming from C. G. Jung's depth psychology, archetypes are primordial images or character types residing in the collective unconscious (such as the Hero, the Mother, the Wise Old Man, the Trickster, the Shadow). In literature, archetypal criticism identifies recurring symbolic figures and story patterns that appear across cultures and epochs. Recognizing an archetype in different texts can reveal an "inner unity" between them. For example, the character of Hamlet in Shakespeare's play has been linked by some scholars to the Orestes archetype from Greek myth. This connection is not due to direct borrowing by Shakespeare, but because both Hamlet and Orestes embody a universal pattern: the son called upon to avenge a father's murder, struggling with moral conflict. The archetypal lens thus exposes a deep psycho-mythological parallel between two works otherwise separated by language and time. Archetypes provide a *content-psychological* dimension to comparative analysis, explaining "the universality of images and situations, and the recurrence of conflicts and roles" across literature. They remind us that texts may be related not only by explicit allusion but by tapping into the same timeless well of human imagination.

**Motifs:** In literary theory (especially following the Russian comparatist A. N. Veselovsky), a motif is defined as "the simplest, indivisible narrative unit" – a basic plot element or situation that repeats and recombines in literature. Common folkloric and literary motifs include scenarios like "the abandoned child," "the magical helper," "the trial or test of the hero," "a deal with the devil," and countless others. Whereas archetype refers to symbolic character patterns, motif refers to plot components or images that travel from tale to tale. Veselovsky's historical-poetic method involved *mapping motifs* across cultures and eras, tracing their diffusion and transformation. For instance, the motif of the dangerous bargain – a pact with dark forces trading one's soul or freedom for knowledge or power – can be seen in the Faust legend (Goethe's *Faust*), in Russian folklore, and in modern novels like Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. By identifying such motifs, we see how a text participates in a transhistorical conversation: Bulgakov's Satanic "contract" motif resonates with its literary predecessors even without direct citation. Motif analysis offers a *structural* comparative dimension, allowing scholars to dissect a plot into fundamental formulas and follow their variations through literary history. It complements Genette's hypertextuality: even when one text is not a deliberate rewriting of another, shared motifs can link them in a web of narrative parallels.

**Chronotope:** Borrowed from the theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, the chronotope refers to the "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships" in narrative, which shapes how events unfold and what kinds of stories can be told. It is essentially the configuration of time and space that defines a given genre or narrative world. For Bakhtin, chronotope is a *constructive principle* of the artistic universe: it "defines genre

and generic distinctions” by determining the horizons of possible events and the logic of their development. For example, the road is a classic chronotope, from Homer’s *Odyssey* through *Don Quixote* to modern road novels. In a “road chronotope,” space is one of open-ended journey and chance encounters, and time is often fluid, allowing for digressions and episodic adventures. This chronotope brings together characters of diverse social backgrounds and facilitates transformative experiences (think of the many meetings and trials Odysseus faces on his voyage). Another example is the threshold chronotope – doorways, border crossings, or critical turning points – which often symbolize moments of decision or transition to another world (frequent in gothic, romantic, or mystical narratives). Chronotopes are not merely setting; they embody the “rules of the game” for a narrative’s world, governing what events are likely or even possible. Comparative analysis using chronotopes (a *spatio-temporal* dimension) can reveal, for instance, that a 20th-century existential novel and a 19th-century picaresque both share a “road” structure, linking them in how they portray the hero’s journey through space and time. As Bakhtin notes, the chronotope’s temporal patterns profoundly shape plot dynamics and character development. This concept thus helps critics compare texts at the level of narrative world-models, beyond surface content.

These three analytical dimensions – archetype, motif, chronotope – enrich intertextual and transtextual frameworks by accounting for deep-seated commonalities among texts. They help explain *why* certain stories or figures recur across cultures (through collective psychology or narrative logic), not just *how* one author might have borrowed from another. In Genette’s terms, they add “additional planes” to our view: archetype addresses universal psychic content, motif addresses recurring plot construction, and chronotope addresses the temporal-spatial design of narratives. Used together with intertextual/transtextual analysis, these concepts enable comparatists to trace everything from minute allusions to grand mythopoetic structures, creating a comprehensive map of literary connectivity.

### Conclusion

Intertextuality and transtextuality together offer a powerful lens for understanding literature as a network of relations rather than isolated works. Kristeva’s notion of the text as a mosaic of quotations emphasizes the inherently dialogic nature of writing, while Genette’s taxonomy – through intertextual, paratextual, metatextual, hypertextual, and architextual links – provides clearer analytical tools to classify those connections. When complemented by archetype, motif, and chronotope, these approaches reveal how texts not only quote or transform one another, but also share deeper narrative structures, symbolic patterns, and spatio-temporal models. Taken together, these frameworks show that meaning in literature is generated through continuity, transformation, and cultural memory across time.

### References

1. Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.
2. Barthes, Roland. “Theory of the Text.” In *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, edited by Robert Young, 31–47. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.
3. Genette, Gerard. *The Architext: An Introduction*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
4. Genette, Gerard. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.
5. Genette, Gerard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
6. Jung, C. G. *The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious*. Collected Works Vol. 9 (Part 1). 2nd ed. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968.
7. Veselovsky, A. N. *Historical Poetics* (Istoricheskaya poetika, 1894).
8. Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.