

Intersection and Juxtaposition of Wor(l)ds

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In its structures, writing reads another writing, reads itself
and constructs itself through a process of destructive genesis.

— Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel"

The study of literature today strongly contends that a literary text is no more self-contained or autonomous than any linguistic utterance is. For example, in a deconstructive reading which puts the self-evidentiality of psychoanalytic criticism into question, Jacques Derrida carefully teases out Lacan's blindness to the intertextual frame of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter." Although the *Seminaire* is able to constitute a metalanguage and focus on its attention on the *histoire* [story], it also excludes all of the general text, which as "the text in a text, framing of frames," is not limited to a narration, a tale, a story alone.¹

According to Derrida, the tale is not only a section of a trilogy of stories by Poe centering on the character Dupin, but a text referring to a still larger narrative corpus, built into and upon the novelistic convention while at the same time trying to evade it by absorption and transformation. And as we seldom approach a text without having some prior conceptions in mind, nor proceed without constantly going back to our previous experience of other texts, reading could be proven also to be a field of intertextuality: to understand we must possess "intertextual competence" or knowledge of overcoding or conventions, as Umberto Eco and Jonathan Culler remind us.²

Although the introduction of the concept of intertextuality into our contemporary criticism has been attributed to Julia Kristeva, it is in fact the Russian literary scholar Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin who lends her force in theorizing about the interrelatedness of literary discourse. As a stylistician working in the field of the poetics of novel, Bakhtin is famous for his studies on Dostoevsky (1929, 1963, English translation 1973) and Rabelais (1965, English translation 1968), and he is said to be also very largely responsible for, and actually by now it is certain that he is the author of, several books as well as papers published under other people's names.³

Mainly focusing his attention on the novel, Bakhtin looks upon the

literary word as an intersection of textual surfaces and a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or character), and the contemporary or earlier cultural context.⁴ For him the language of the novel, unlike the "monologic" unitary and singular "own" language in the lyric,⁵ is a system of intersecting planes, wherein the images of languages are connected to one another and to the author in unique dialogic relationships. Thus, another person's language is at the same time both represented and representing, constituting the dialogue from within: "All images truly typical of the novel are like this, they are internally dialogized images of other people's languages, and styles, and of other people's outlooks."⁶

Using Pushkin's description of Lensky's song (in *Eugene Onegin*) as an example, Bakhtin finds the poetic images which inform Lensky's song are not to be understood as the direct poetic images of Pushkin himself, for the song characterizes itself in its own language and is quite different from Pushkin's own description. As a result, the song of Lensky is heard and suffused with the parodic-ironic accents of the author, becoming the *object of representation*, of a parodically stylized representation.⁷ In another section of the narrative, Onegin's style, voice, and outlook is represented, yet while an object of representation the images of this section also express the author's thought, as Pushkin is no longer outside it, but in it and to a considerable extent himself speaks in his language, no longer representing this language. In this sense, Onegin is in a "zone of possible communication with him, in a zone of idialogic contact"; Pushkin sees the limitation and incompleteness of his hero's language and outlook, seeing its "ridiculous, abstracted and artificial" aspect, but at the same time finds it indispensable in expressing a whole series of important thoughts and observations. In this sense, language as a totality is doomed and every available style is limited, or even self-critical:

The direct poetic (in the narrow sense) means of expression and representation, when they become part of such an image, preserve their own direct meaning, but at the same time they have "reservations" put on them, they are "externalized," shown to be historically relative, limited, incomplete — in the novel they become, so to speak, self-critical. They both illuminate the world and are themselves illuminated.⁸

The language hence is polemized, disputed, agreed, questioned, or

mocked and parodied—in other words, the author is “conversing” with other people’s languages and styles, and the literary language is not the single, ready-made indisputable language; rather it is shown in its “living diversity of voices, in its becoming and in its renewal.”⁹ This plurality of voices (polyphonic text) is what Dostoesky achieves, as he is able to see the personality “objectively-artistically, and to show it as another, someone else’s, personality, without making it lyrical, without fusing his voice with its, and at the same time not reducing it to a reified psychic reality.”¹⁰ The character in the novel is itself a construct of contradiction and dialogue, becoming the “selfless man of an idea,” participant in “the great dialog.”¹¹ And in Rabelais Bakhtin also finds a full demonstration of how various forms of popular “laughter-culture,” unofficial “carnival” art are interfused to the effect of “decanonization,” breaking down the rigidity of hierarchical order the official culture tries to maintain. This “disunification” is achieved in Rabelais via the construction of series of the most varied types, which are at times parallel to each other and at times intersect each other, not only in terms of “chronotope,” but in language.¹²

This trans-linguistic view of novelistic discourse goes back to Bakhtin’s disagreement with Ferdinand de Saussure and the formalists. In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* he writes:

The idea of *conventionality, the arbitrariness of language*, is a typical one for rationalism as a whole, and no less typical is the *comparison of language to the system of mathematical signs*. What interests the mathematically minded rationalists is not the relationship of the sign to the actual reality it reflects nor to the individual who is its originator, but the *relationship of sign to sign within a closed system* already accepted and authorized. In other words, they are interested only in the *inner logic of the system of signs itself*, taken, as in algebra, completely independently of the ideological meanings that give the signs their content.¹³

What is being ignored in Saussurian linguistics is the content, the “ideological meaning” of the whole utterance as a definite sociohistorical act. As to the formalist distinction between the “poetic” and “standard” language, Bakhtin not only objects to the concept of literary autonomy but attempts to develop out of it a “sociological” poetics:

If the poetic construction had been placed in a complex, many-sided relationship with science, with rhetoric, with the fields of real practical life, instead of being declared the bare converse of a fabricated practical language, then formalism as we know it would not have existed.¹⁴

The formalists only arrive at the idea of "literariness" by creating "the impression of the material unity," without realizing that the work is a part of social reality, not of nature, and "there is no need to speak of its physical nature," for what is organized is "the socially meaning sound, the ideological body of social intercourse. The sound cannot be understood within the bounds of the individual organism or of nature."¹⁵ This is where Bakhtin also departs from Sigmund Freud, and in his book *Freudianism* he raises a critique on Freud's asocial tautological notion of self-consciousness. He writes:

In becoming aware of myself, I attempt to look at myself, as it were, through the eyes of another person, another representative of my social group, my class. Thus, *self-consciousness*, in the final analysis, always leads us to *class consciousness*, the reflection and specification of which it is in all its fundamental and essential respects.¹⁶

Even within the self Bakhtin seems to overhear all social voices at work, and the analysis of the individual psyche is like an attempt to "disclose the objective production relations that determine his position in society."¹⁷ Consequently, the task of being human consists in causing a "*substantial* environment, which mechanically influences the personality—to begin . . . to reveal potential words and tones, to transform it into a semantic context for the thinking, speaking and acting (including creating) person, to turn it into a word."¹⁸

However, despite his perceptiveness in the novelistic discourse and human language, Bakhtin often fails to find in the lyric some traits of the polyphonic. In one place, he makes the following questionable statement:

The world of poetry, however many contradictions and hopeless conflicts are revealed in it by the poet, is always illuminated by unitary and incontrovertible discourse. Contradictions, conflicts and doubts remain in the object, in the thought and experiences,

i.e., in the material, but not in the language. In poetry the word about doubt must be a word without doubt.¹⁹

Obviously, Bakhtin is led astray by his conception of the super-genre or meta-genre—the novel, and attempts to exclude by simplifying and rationalizing the fact that the line clearly discriminating the novel and the poetry is not easy to draw. Here, Bakhtin himself should be subjected to the criticism that the desire to be fully in control of certain essential differences only renders one less able to attain the self-reflexivity that might otherwise be possible within itself.

W. B. Yeats' poem "Among School Children," for instance, embodies, despite the seeming univocality, various conflicting voices. Not only the theme of the poem (which is about life and art, age and suffering, passion and despair, dream and reality, the abstract and the concrete, etc.) is about hopeless contradictions, but the languages are of what Bakhtin terms as the "active type," in which there are the hidden dialogues communicated around and within the implied author about different views of life, love, labour (suffering), and art, as well as discourses that glance around and subsume other's discourse. Of the near or far past, several voices (that of the old nun, Maud Gonne, youthful mother, popular culture, philosophers, Yeats the everyman, and Yeats the artist) are recollected to be intersected, represented, and reflected in the consciousness, yet at the same time parodied, ridiculed, or brought into question, as in the end of the poem:

O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,
 Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
 O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
 How can we know the dancer from the dance?

Whether to be read as a rhetorical question, or an open-ended question on the duplicity of figurative language (as Paul de Man suggests), it is obvious that here the word is not without doubt and, as a matter of fact, it may imply that the authority of the artifice (language included) presupposed by the poetry is obscured from within by the difficulty of discriminating between art and life, the representing and the represented.

The difference among genres is hence one of degree, rather than one of kind. It would be of equal validity to apply Bakhtin's view of the word in the novel to poetry, making his notion of intertextuality practiceable in the field of comparative poetics.

Expanding on Bakhtin's theory, Julia Kristeva finds a new subject for consideration in the field of semiotics: translinguistic operation through and across language.²⁰ According to her, a literary text is a translanguistic apparatus that redistributes the order of language by relating communicative speech, which aims to inform directly, to different kinds of anterior or synchronic utterances. The text is seen as a *productivity*, and this means:

First, that the relationship to the language in which it is situated is redistributive (destructive-constructive), and hence can be better approached through logical categories rather than linguistic ones; and second, that it is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another.²¹

Here, Kristeva reminds us that her approach to the problem will be a logical one, rather than stylistic or linguistic, and indeed with her genuine knowledge of structuralism Kristeva is able to go beyond Bakhtin's post-formalist stylistics as well as his static view of literary genres. She poses the hypothesis that "any evolution of literary genres is an unconscious exteriorization of linguistic structures at their different levels."²²

Following Bakhtin's conception of the three dimensions of textual space, Kristeva defines the word *horizontally* and *vertically* (i.e., seeing the word in the text as belonging to both writing subject and addressee; and as oriented toward an anterior or synchronic corpus), and as making the two axes (subject-addressee and text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important fact: "each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read."²³ Once we read the other text within a text or see a text as dependent upon other texts that it absorbs and transforms, Kristeva tells that we are entering into the intertextual space, in which "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*."²⁴

For Kristeva, then, intertextuality becomes a condition of signification or the sum of knowledge that makes it possible for the text to have meaning, and not just a designation of the text's relationship to certain precursor texts. Against the traditional sources and influences study she poses intertextuality. In the classification of words within the narrative, she singles out the third type ("ambivalent") as the special feature that characterizes the novel. The ambivalent word, which results from joining of two sign systems when the

writer uses another's word, giving it a new meaning while retaining the meaning it already had, is constructed on the principle that "two texts meet, contradict, and relativize each other," and hence can be *stylizing*, *parody*, or *hidden interior polemic*, but never simply "imitation" which occurs only when the word (text) imitated (repeated) is taken seriously, claimed and appropriated without being relativized.²⁴ The three categories of the ambivalent are respectively built upon distance (stylizing), opposition (parody), and active modifying (hidden interior polemic) in relation to other's word. Kristeva seems to think that the novel is the only genre in which ambivalent words appear, particularly in Menippean and carnivalesque texts, yet again this is subject to objection, for in poetry we do have ambivalent words, as we will find in some Chinese examples.

Like Bakhtin, Kristeva reserves the notion of intertextuality for the novel, which rises forth through the textual trajectory of the duplicity and univocity. Using Antoine de la Sale's *Jehan de Saintrre* as an illustration, she observes that the novel "absorbs the duplicity (the dialogism) of the carnivalesque scene while submitting it to the univocity (monologism) of the symbolic disjunction guaranteed by a transcendence—the author—that subsumes the totality of the novelistic utterance."²⁵ It is at the point in the textual trajectory that Kristeva finds the word "actor" is inscribed and the writer is both actor and author, looking upon the text as both practice and product, process and effect, play and value, making speech inserted into utterance, thereby binding together two modes of the novelistic utterance, *narration* and *citation*, into the single speech of him who is both subject of the work and the object of the spectacle. The function of such enunciation consists in blending the author/actor's discourse to his readings, his speech act to that of others, tying two minimal narrative and citational utterances within the global (*junctive*), and transferring an utterance from one textual space into another (*translative*), thus structuring the text through and across a permutation of *other* utterances, admitting the existence of an *other* discourse only to the extent that it makes it its own.²⁶

In this way, Kristeva blends her "semanayse" with de Saussure's structural linguistics, Marxism, and even feminism (the opposing Other—Woman as a permutative center, p. 49), viewing the act of writing as the differential act reserving for the text the status of *other* and also the correlational act opening up to an infinite arrangement, and as a consequence she is able to go beyond the limitation of formalism, making it evident that "the concepts of 'arbitrariness' or 'literariness' can only be accepted within an ideology of

valorization of the oeuvre (as phonetic, discursive) to the detriment of writing (textual productivity); in other words, only within a bounded (cultural) text."²⁷ And since the textual productivity is possible only when the writer fuses what he reads (other's word) into his own, writing inevitably reads another writing, and as we have quoted from the very start "constructs itself through a process of destructive genesis."²⁸

Stressing on the "readerly," Roland Barthes also writes, "The *I* that approaches the text is itself already a plurality of other texts, of infinite or, more precisely, lost codes (whose origins are lost),"²⁹ and furthermore cautions against the "myth of filiation":

Every text, being itself the intertext of another text, belongs to the intertextual, which must not be confused with a text's origins: to search for the "sources of" and "influence upon" a work is to satisfy the myth of filiation. The quotations from which a text is constructed are anonymous, irrecoverable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without quotation marks.³⁰

In other words, it is senseless and impossible to trace the origin, since the intelligibility of literature is due to the fact that a code always refers to what has been "already read, seen, done, lived and written."³¹ Yet, as Ann Jefferson argues, Barthes' "le scriptible" (writable, writerly) does not seem to be condified or "based on convention since it does not supply or construct meanings," and what Barthes calls "perspectives of quotes" (*S/Z*, codes, p. 27) that constitutes the readerly intelligibility (readable, *lisible*) have "ultimately a negative" as well as "passive" quality.³² Another difficulty that Barthes' conception of intertextuality might encounter is that the intertextual space is too general and broad to be the object of study. Consequently, the attempts to demonstrate the practicability of intertextuality have led several scholars to focus on the other texts identifiable in and behind a text and try to specify them, or even to theorize about them, and among these people Michael Riffaterre and Harold Bloom are the most representative literary workers who take the intertextual references in poetry as their major interest.

Unlike many of our contemporary literary critics who no longer believe in the static status of literary works,³³ Michael Riffaterre advocates that the meaning of poetry is finite and closed, and that the characteristic feature of the poem is its unity.³⁴ Still holding on to the formalist stance, Riffaterre looks upon the poem as something which results from the transformation of a

minimal and literal sentence (the "matrix"), into a longer, complex and non-literal periphrasis. The expansion or conversion of a matrix into text may further produce "poetic signs," which are determined by "hypogrammatic derivation": "a word or phrase is poeticized when it refers to (and, if a phrase, patterns itself upon) a preexistent word group." Riffaterre calls this preexistent word group a "hypogram," as it is "already a system of signs comprising at least a prediction, and it may be as large as a text . . . potential, therefore observable in language, or actual, therefore observable in a previous text" (*SP*, p. 23). For the poeticity to be activated in the text, the sign referring to a hypogram must also be "a variant of that text's matrix," in other words, poetic signs not only referring to a preexistent hypogram, but also variants of transformations of a matrix.

A poet creates something new, then, by absorption and transformation: taking a word or sentence and expanding it into a text by both using and modifying a series of hypograms, which may be a cliché, a quotation, a derivational metaphor or rhetorical figure, or a group of conventional associations. The reader, in his turn, interprets a poem by recognizing the references to the hypograms and reconstructing the original matrix identifiable. Riffaterre uses Rimbaud's "Fetes de la faim" to demonstrate the way in which idioms and clichés of a language can be transformed into variants of a matrix, and how the reader's identification of the matrix and hypograms helps to construe the poetic unity and make it intelligible (*SP*, pp. 78-80). In another instance he also points out how Rosard's and Magny's verses "derive logically" from Aristo's (*SP*, pp. 82-83).

Although Riffaterre's reader is presented with a semiotics which promises to enable him to solve the mystery of a poem and find "then suddenly the puzzle is solved, everything falls into place" (*SP*, p. 12), there are some puzzles left to be solved. One of his major difficulties lies in his attempt to do away with the referent while asking at the same time the reader to recognize references to hypograms, in bringing up the issue of the poem's intertextual referentiality while stressing on its own unity. As Jonathan Culler points out succinctly, Riffaterre, in combining the theory of reading (semiotics) and that of the interpretation of literature, arrives to his own dismay at a theory "torn between its general and its specific claims."³⁵

Earlier we mentioned that Kristeva regards writing as a construction through a process of destructive genesis, and none has exceeded Harold Bloom in propounding the theory of poetic struggle as a symptom of psychological repression against the strong father figures. In a self-analytic interpretation

(in the sense of what Geoffrey Hartman says, in *The Fate of Reading*, pp. 3-19) of Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*, Bloom confesses that all his books are attempts to develop a theory of poetry concerning the sources of the powers of poetry *already written, already read*, and that he thinks poets make themselves free by their stances toward earlier poets: by a kind of strong "troped" reading encounter, which he terms as "misreading" and a combat of meaning against meaning.³⁶ It is the poet's entry into this area of reading and struggle that provokes anxiety, and the play of intertextuality is limited to the relationship between a text and its particular precursor text(s), between the poet and his major predecessor(s).

Since the text exists only in the form of reading, someone else's, one's own, and a composite reading, it cannot but be an "inter-text," and Bloom laments the fact that "any poem is an inter-poem, and any reading of a poem is an inter-reading".³⁷

Alas that words should be only words and not things or feelings, and alas again that it should be, as Stevens said, a world of words to the end of it. Words refer only to other words, to the end of it. Words will not interpret themselves, and common rules for interpreting words will never exist.³⁸

Writing as well as reading is then an intertextual activity, and as a result one cannot "write or teach or think or even read without imitation."³⁹

To compare him with other theorists on the notion of intertextuality, Bloom seems immediately obsessed with the poetic precursors: Marlowe as the prime precursor of Shakespeare, Spencer of Milton, Milton of Wordsworth, Blake of Stevens, and to add to the list (which is questionable), Nietzsche and Freud of Bloom.⁴⁰ It is no wonder then Culler should tease him by saying, "if we ask why this should be so, why the intertextual should be compressed to a relationship between two individuals, the answer seems to be that a man can only have one father; the scenario of the family romance gives the poet but one progenitor." Oscillating between the concept of intertextuality as a condition of signification or an indication of influence, Bloom obviously leans toward the study of how poems come into being through misreading and misprisonment (transformation): the troping on or modification of a previous text or poet, instead of troping on the hypograms or past poetic discourse (as in Riffaterre).

Though not specifically touching upon the concept of intertextuality

Bloom's late colleague Paul de Man sees not only in the text but interpretation of the text a perpetual difficulty in distinguishing grammar from rhetoric, theme from logic; he writes, "Only if the sign engendered meaning in the same way the object engenders the sign, that is, by representation, would there be no need to distinguish between grammar and rhetoric."⁴¹ Within any reading, which is figural by its very nature, there is a self-deconstructive movement, implying its own undoing. The text asserts and denies the authority of its own rhetorical mode, and by reading it we are only trying to come closer to being as rigorous a reader as the author had to be in order to write (p. 17). The process of self-deconstruction is endless process, in which what constitutes the literary text turns into retotalization which still needs another deconstruction. At a passage on how philosophy (truth) turns out to be an endless reflection on its own destruction at the hands of literature (rhetoric) (pp. 115-116), de Man makes clear that this is also an endless intertextual relationship between what deconstructs and what is being deconstructed, prior (de)construction and the subsequent deconstruction, and that literature is only too capable of producing such endless deconstruction (detotalization) and self-deconstruction.

A central figure of the deconstructive criticism, Jacques Derrida views the signifieds as "already in the position of the signifying substitution," and signs as "trace of differences," thus not only mocking at the unity of the text, but turning it into a kind of productive mechanism, inscribing within itself the perpetual conflicting demands of desire and control.⁴² Reading and writing are hence endless affirming dissemination, which each neither arrests nor controls, and every concept is within a chain referring to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences (*differance*), which as the "possibility of conceptuality" is of a conceptual process and system in general.⁴³

In a critical reply to the speech-act philosopher John R. Searle, Derrida plays with the concepts of the proper name (with his own name, with the letters and syllables, Ja, Der, Da; and even *derrière*, *déjà* in *Glas* and *La Carte Postale*), copy-right (SarI/Sec), and speech act (the very communicability of language propounded by Austin is turned against itself). The author, according to Derrida, is itself "divided and multiple," and always has been.⁴⁴ The Searle that signed and placed "Copyright (c) by John R. Searle" has already had within himself a and many Derrida(s), and the confrontation is not therefore a simple one: everything begins always as transcription, reproduction, iterability, citation, translation, interpretation, multiplicity of

codes and of parasitisms and is hence intertextual.⁴⁵ The result is to turn what has been taken for granted (center, origin, propriety, entity, difference between commentary and literature, etc.) upside down from within, and "reconstruct" through a kind of "negative cognition" or "contrary logic."⁴⁶ Though difficult to work with or put into actual practice, deconstruction at least proposes a notion of intertextuality that with its stress on the marginal and its contesting of the dominant may caution us from running into the too easy judgment that the meaning of a certain text is finite and that writing or reading can be free from other texts.

In comparison to the theorists just mentioned, the function of the other texts and conventions has been the main focus of Jonathan Culler. He writes, "To study writing, and especially literary modes of writing, one must concentrate on the conventions which guide the play of differences and the process of constructing meanings."⁴⁷ In explaining a piece of literature to a stranger from another culture, Culler tells us, we inevitably postulate an intersubjective body of knowledge, and the discussion is intelligible only in terms of a "prior body of discourse—other projects and thoughts which it implicitly or explicitly takes up, prolongs, cites, refutes, transforms," that is in the light of intertextuality.⁴⁸

Listing the powers and limitations of several representative theories on intertextuality (Laurent Jenny, Julia Kristeva, Harold Bloom, Michael Riffaterre, and Roland Barthes as the spokesmen), Culler advocates a rather synthetic view of presupposition and intertextuality: in approaching a text, we are guided by some "logical" (syntactic, sequential) as well as "pragmatical" (contextual) presuppositions, and as a condition of signification intertextuality points at the knowledge of a prior body of discourse, which informs one's writing and reading, rather than at the genetic theory that would satisfy itself with sorting out the pre-texts and by interpretation (however new and powerful) explaining away how a text comes into being. Yet, Culler's eclectic attempt aimed at bringing together semantics and intertextuality in order to open up a new working space for the practicing critic is only a suggestion, rather than a solution: what linguists elaborate on the logical and pragmatical presuppositions may advance one's understanding of the local meanings (how the operations of sentences or their context of individual texts help construct intelligibility), but cannot yet offer a comprehensive theory of the way "we go about making sense of various kinds of texts" (p. 125).

Without being generalized into a system, Chinese concepts of intertextuality have been raised for discussion or hinted at by many writings

and talks on poetry. Before trying his hand at literature, a poet had to acquire considerable awareness of the tradition through the study of earlier texts. Not just in the yüeh-fu poetry alone, which like the western pastoral lyrics (Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Lover," for instance) is often sung or put to music and which invites replies, many Chinese poems absorb and transform by taking up the same theme or by employing similar (sometimes just the opposite) words or syntax to refresh an artistic experience of the earlier poets or texts. Frequently Chinese poets would approach an aesthetic experience through the reshaping of words to test their creative potentiality, bringing their own works into an intertextual (dialogic) relationship to those of others.

Concerning the three major concepts of intertextuality, the renowned Northern Sung poet Huang T'ing-chien, chief spokesman of the Kiangsi school, writes:

It is most difficult to coin one's own literary expressions. When Tu Fu composed poetry and Han Yu wrote prose, there was not a single word that did not refer back to some sources; now later men as having not done much reading should say Han and Tu made up these phrases themselves. Those who wrote in the old days were truly capable of utilizing as well as blending the myriad sorts of materials into their own writings. Even though they drew on the stale words of the ancients, they were able to exploit them in such a manner that the phrases, as if wrought on through some catalytic transformation, would change from iron into a piece of gold.

Themes for poetry are inexhaustible, but man's talent has a limit. Even a T'ao Ch'ien or a Tu Fu could not engage his limited talent in chasing inexhaustible themes. Thus, not to change the meaning but to create one's own words to express it is called the method of changing the bone; to introduce one's meaning but (use the original diction) to describe it is called the method of exploiting the embryo.⁴⁹

Scholars disagree on the question whether these three methods mentioned are types of imitation, assimilation, derivation, semantic inventiveness (in Paul Ricoeur's words), or even plagiarism.⁵⁰ However, judging from the context, Huang does not seem to advocate imitation, rather he instructs Hung Chufu, the addressee, to learn from the ancients only *other's* word (texts) to

be exploited and relativized. In other words, another's word is simply used to serve one's own purpose, and other's utterance is absorbed into the polyphonic text in which another's word is revealed to be limited, relative, incomplete, or even ridiculous. Thus, it can be "ambivalent": stylizing, parody, or hidden interior polemic, not imitation or mere allusion. In addition, what is often neglected is the Chinese poetic conventions (lexical, syntactical, phonetic, as well as regulated formal) which enable the poem to appear and readings to become meaningful. It is within these conventions that poetry arises and gains intelligibility, and in the case of the regulated verse these conventions are most obvious, if not inevitable. Consequently, poets are from time to time aware of the larger corpus, bearing in mind a prior body of discourse, to be actively modified, opposed, juxtaposed, relativized, or stylized. It is no wonder then Huang should take Tu Fu as his model, for Tu is famous for his derivational regulated poetry, which he carefully works out within and against the convention.

Huang's poem on bamboos has the lines "Setting sun reflects the waves on the stream/ The bright rays seem to contest in color." This is a poem very similar to that of Tu Fu ("Dream about Li Po"): "Light from the descending moon fills my room / Still wondering if it shone on my friend's face," and is hence a poem "exploiting the embryo," i.e., using the general form and even the words of a former poet's writing to express an idea that goes beyond or is different from that in the original poem. One can clearly sense the active modification of Tu's line in Huang's, such as the brighter tone and colors, and multiple signification in the word "contest" (compare, contrast) or face (color), but what is important in Huang's and Tu's poem is their function as the already written, already read to open up the intertextual space in which the one serves as a condition of signification for the other, and is transformed to construct a semantic innovation.

In another poem by Huang, "Climbing the Yüeh-yang Pavilion during the Rain," which according to Ko Li-fang is using a method of changing the bone, i.e., using the meaning of the ancients while reworking and refining it, there are two lines ("It's a pity one is not in a situation facing the lake / Within the silver mountain pile one sees the green peaks") that use Liu Yu-hsi's poetic lines ("From distant gaze there is blue water around Tung-t'ing lake / And one green conch reflected within the silver bowl"). Huang's lines are only intelligible when they are brought into an intertextual relationship with those of Liu: Huang's not "facing the lake" introduces a signification opposed to that of Liu, and is a parody of the convention presupposing that only when

the poet faces the scenery is he able to describe. Yet, this convention does not trace back to Liu alone; it belongs to a tradition, no longer identifiable.

This kind of joining or juxtaposing of two signs is most apparent in Chinese lyrical criticism, as many of the poet-critics would write poems in commentary to express their appreciation of or feeling evoked by a poem or painting (the way Wallace Stevens responds to Picasso's "The Man with a Blue Guitar"), making the one exist side by side with the other and signifying, in the words of J. Hillis Miller, proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority, and making the absence no longer alien to the presence.⁵¹ As a result, not only is the commentary a literature,⁵² but an intertext, which is both constructed upon and against the convention as well as another's discourse.

If we are to expand Bakhtin's (and others') views of intertextuality and made them intersect or juxtapose with those of Chinese lyric criticism, we do find some similar aspects that might help further a comprehensive theory of intertextuality. Yet, to engage in this comparative study, one is tempted by the possibility of dialogic contact while being wary of the differences the prior bodies of discourse will eventually produce. To write a comparative poetics can we hope, as John Donne did, that we might be "carried toward the West," when the soul's form "bends towards the East"?

Notes

- 1 "The Purveyor of Truth," *Yale French Studies*, 52 (1975), 99, 100, 110. The article is included in Derrida's *La Carte postale*, English translation forthcoming from Univ. of Chicago Press.
- 2 *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of the Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 19-21; *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 131-60.
- 3 Ann Shukman, "Between Marxism and Formalism: The Stylistics of Mikhail Bakhtin," in *Comparative Criticism*, Vol. 2, ed. Elinor Shaffer (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 221-22.
- 4 Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora, et. al (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1980), p. 65.
- 5 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1981), p.46, hereafter cited as *DI*; also partly translated in Shaffer, by Ann Shukman as "The Word in the Novel," p. 216; here further reference to the essay will be to Shukman and will be incorporated into the text as *WN*.
- 6 *DI*, p. 46; also translated in Shaffer as "The Word in the Novel," p. 216.

- 7 Holquist, "Discourse in the Novel," p. 286; also in Shukman, p. 226. Although Bakhtin constantly limits his comments to lyrics "narrowly" conceived or lyrics in a narrow sense, he is obviously seeing the opposition as either static or necessary (convenient for his way of argumentation) and hence regards the novel as a super genre. His criticism of the formalist or historical-cultural stylistics at the earlier part of the book-length essay does not rid him of his formalist tinge, and his observation on the development of the novel in the West seems to be based on a closed system viewing all the major novels deriving from two lines: singular or multiple-voiced, homogeneous or heterogeneous. Professor Holquist relates this quite well to the intellectual background in his "Bakhtin and Rabelais: Theory as Praxis," *Boundary 2*, 11 (1983), 5-19.
- 8 *DI*, p. 45.
- 9 *DI*, p. 47
- 10 *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. R. W. Rotsel (Ann Arbor: Michigan Univ. Press, 1973), p. 9. Hereafter cited as *PDP*.
- 11 *PDP*, p. 70.
- 12 *DI*, p. 170.
- 13 Trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (New York: Seminar, 1973), pp. 57-58.
- 14 *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978), p. 98. Hereafter cited as *FM*.
- 15 *FM*, p. 105.
- 16 *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique* (New York: Academic, 1976), p. 87. Hereafter cited as *Fr.*
- 17 *Fr.*, p. 97.
- 18 Michael Holquist, "Answering as Authoring: Mikhail Bakhtin's Trans-linguistics," *Critical Inquiry*, 10 (1983), 318.
- 19 *DI*, p. 286.
- 20 Kristeva, p. 36.
- 21 Kristeva, p. 36
- 22 Kristeva, p. 66.
- 23 Kristeva, p. 66.
- 24 Kristeva, p. 66.
- 25 Kristeva, p. 44.
- 26 Kristeva, p. 46.
- 27 Kristeva, p. 59.
- 28 Kristeva, p. 77.
- 29 *S/Z*, pp. 16-17.
- 30 "From Work to Text," in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josué V. Harari (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1979), p. 77.
- 31 *S/Z*, p. 28.
- 32 "Intertextuality and the Poetics of Fiction," in Shaffer, p. 236.
- 33 See, for instance, J. Hillis Miller, "Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure," *Georgia Review* (1976), for the distinction between the "canny" and "uncanny" critics.
- 34 *Semiotics of Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1978), p. ix, 2.
- 35 *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1981), p. 99.
- 36 "The Breaking of Form," in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed. Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Seabury, 1979), p. 5.

- 37 *Poetry and Repression* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1976), p. 3.
- 38 Hartman, p. 9.
- 39 *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), p. 32.
- 40 *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), p. 8.
- 41 *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), p. 9.
- 42 *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 3-30.
- 43 *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 11.
- 44 "Limited Inc. abc. . .," *Glyph*, 2 (1977), 167.
- 45 "Limited Inc.," 173; *Writing and Difference*, p. 211.
- 46 Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 149-56.
- 47 *Structuralist Poetics*, p. 133.
- 48 *The Pursuit of Signs*, p. 101.
- 49 Cf. James J. Y. Liu, *The Art of Chinese Poetry* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 78; William Craig Fisk, "Formal Themes in Medieval Chinese and Modern Western Literary Theory: Memesis, Intertextuality, Figurativeness, and Foregrounding," (Diss. Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin, 1976), p. 62; Adele Austin Rickett, "Method and Intuition: The Poetic Theories of Huang T'ing-chien," in *Chinese Approaches to Literature from Confucius to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 109-19.
- 50 S. Y. Tiang, for instance, thinks that the three terms are one, following Yang Wan-li and some earlier scholars, "Huang T'ing-chien's Theories of Poetry," *Tamkang Review*, 10 (1980), 430-442; cf. Rickett. Concerning the metaphoric semantic innovation, see Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1977), pp. 134-215.
- 51 "The Critic as Host," in Hartman, p. 219.
- 52 Geoffrey Hartman, *Criticism in the Wilderness: The Study of Literature Today* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1980), chap. 8.

