

DAVID LODGE: THE ART OF (RE)WRITING A TEXT

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ABSTRACT. The present article, *David Lodge: The Art of (Re)writing a Text*, shows that intertextuality is the text's property of being bound to other previous texts. Having as point of reference quotations, styles and situations imagined by different authors, D. Lodge finds out original methods of expressing ideas, sometimes through literary games. The British writer uses explicit intertextual relations (e.g. quotation) and implicit intertextual relations (e.g. paraphrase, pastiche, allusion) transposing and adjusting happenings lived by other writers' personages to another historic time. In fact, D. Lodge proves that intertextuality is creative: a single word, expression or enunciation may generate or develop a new idea or a new variant of the same idea.

Introduction

According to the poststructuralist theory, the great number of novels that were written especially in the last two centuries exhausted any possibility of finding out new methods of writing. For this reason, contemporary authors submit them to a process of rewriting, by giving personal interpretations. That's why a text appears nowadays as a multidimensional space where various pieces of writing intermingle.

This theory is emphasized by R. Barthes (1994: 100), who considers that any text is a *texture* manufactured through a "perpetual intertwining". Since it is not a finite product destined to hide one or several senses, this linguistic configuration is submitted to a continuous process of transformation. The text cannot remain isolated, broken away from any links with other texts¹; on the contrary, it takes over and combines an ensemble of discursive practices, codes² and voices from texts whose origins are either known up to this time or they have been lost in the long run.

The text also has a variable structure, due to the possibility of being any time submitted to a process of restructuring. That's why a text is never finished, written once and for all. The author may rewrite it by making significant changes in the order of the ideas, or by adding new ideas to what has already been written. Such an overlapping of elements is made

¹ A similar idea is shared by J. Culler (1981: 103) who asserts that the autonomy of a text is a "misleading notion"; that text is endowed with meaning just because specific things have previously been written.

² In semiotics, the code comprises an explicit conventional system of signs and rules of using these signs, helping the information be transmitted from the author-source to the reader-receiver.

easily in literary texts –especially in novels- as several associations and subjective links can be achieved.

It is the interference of a literary text with other ones that have previously been written that comprises the essence of intertextuality. A whole universe is concentrated in a text as it is “crossed by texts, furrowed by texts, including astoundingly texts” (Hăulică 1981: 21). The literary text invites the reader to an *intertextual reading*, to make associations with other known pieces of writing and to discover the manner in which “a text reads the history and gets inserted into this history” (Kristeva 1980: 266).

Methods of achieving intertextuality

As an ex-professor of English literature at Birmingham University till 1987, D. Lodge is known especially for his books about life in Britain’s universities. Showing his refinement of intellectual and artistic taste, D. Lodge values an already established literary tradition through the voices of the university professors and other intellectuals contoured in his novels. Assuming that any text “is the product of intertextuality, an ensemble of allusions and quotations from other texts”, the British writer succeeds in putting his theory into practice, by creating suitable frames and determining the reader to make analogies with literary works previously written. He illustrates successfully two types of relations within a text: a) *explicit*, situation in which a known phrase is incorporated, without being modified; b) *implicit*, that favors the modifying of the essential elements enunciated before.

a) Explicit intertextual relations

D. Lodge makes use of explicit intertextual relations by taking quotations from the literary works of some British writers, bringing them into consonance with his own text. Outlining the image of Birmingham City, known in his novels under the name of Rummidge, located in the Midlands province, D. Lodge appeals to quotations from Thomas Carlyle and Charles Dickens. D. Lodge compares the image of the industrial city from the middle of the 20th century with a chaotic stretch of land that looked gloomy in the midday and frightening in the night; as in the first half of the 19th century, during the night the whole region was “a volcano splashing fire” (Th. Carlyle), being spread over kilometers of strips of land made of slag, burning furnaces, noisy steam engines” (Ch. Dickens). Thus, intertextuality consists in the effective presence of a text in another one, aim achieved through direct integration of a quotation met to another author.

The simple fact that some catchy phrases are fixed in the collective memory is also known as intertext. Even the title of a literary work can be framed in this subdivision of intertextuality being interpreted as a reference to a cultural thesaurus owned by the receiver. Taking into account his vast knowledge on literature, D. Lodge makes up literary games, puzzling the reader who doesn’t

know exactly certain writers' names. Such a puzzle is created in *The British Museum is Falling Down*: "Who is this John Bane?" Adam asked cautiously. 'John Bane, the author of the book entitled *Room at the Top*, or John Bane, the one who wrote *Hurry on Down*.'" Then, this utterance is left unexplained, everything being left to the reader's latitude to find out the confusion made by D. Lodge's personage. In fact, this literary game consists in the incorrect pronunciation of the writers' names: *Room at the Top* is a novel written by John Braine and *Hurry on Down* was written by John Wain.

b) *Implicit intertextual relations*

A text may incorporate and transform various texts, comprising either enunciations or fragments of enunciation or it may just integrate some ideas met somewhere else. In this case, the intertextual relations are implicit due to the use of paraphrase, pastiche and allusion.

Through paraphrase, a familiar saying –usually involving common experience or observation- is reproduced in a personal formulation. In fact, it is developed or reformulated in the same grammatically self-contained speech unit another idea or variant of an idea. In *Small World*, D. Lodge uses the paraphrase through Michel Tardieu's and Moris Zapp's voices. Both of them take adages and well-known statements, modifying and adapting them to different situations or events. Therefore, the French adage *C'est la vie, c'est la guerre* is paraphrased by M. Tardieu through *C'est la vie, c'est la narration*. Or, during a theatrical performance that takes place on Lausanne's streets, the same M. Tardieu changes T. S. Eliot's verses –"Mister Eugenides, merchant from Smirna/ Unshaven, with the pockets full of sultanas"- into "My name is Eugenides, merchant from Smirna. Please, taste the merchandise". And, saying this, he takes out of his pocket a few wrinkled sultanas. Then, the notorious adage belonging to the French philosopher Rene Descartes *Cogito ergo sum* is paraphrased by M. Zapp through *I can die, therefore I exist*. Uttering these words, the two characters are either in search for a particular thing, or perform something for their own amusement or try to find out a solution to a particular problem.

Making use of pastiches, D. Lodge creates a new reality transposing and adjusting happenings lived by characters imagined by different authors, present in other locations and belonging to another historic time. Thus, D. Lodge writes passages where the style and manner of other writers coexist. A relevant example is *The British Museum is Falling Down* where Adam Appleby, a doctoral student in English literature, is so much preoccupied by his readings, that his life is influenced by literature. He associates all that he sees around him or the things that happen to him with a situation imagined by one of the modern writers. Consequently, many paragraphs from the novel comprise imitations of some literary works studied by him. For instance, the strikes of the famous clock from London, Big Ben, remind

him that this shows the time passing in Virginia Woolf's novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*. Being so much broken away from reality, Adam Appleby thinks that the old lady who is staying on the edge of the pavement is even Clarissa Dalloway³, the personage from the novel with the same name. Or, the episode when Adam Appleby has to prolong the permit to the British Museum reading room, reminds us the atmosphere from Franz Kafka's novel, *The Trial*: a janitor "with a severe look and a huge key in one hand" lets him enter into a long corridor, and after that he is ringing a bell, closing the door behind him. From now on, Adam's hallucinations begin; he identifies himself with Appleby A.⁴ who comes into contact with two mysterious clerks who makes him move uselessly from one to another; finally, one of them tears his permit without making a new one.

In order to understand these implicit textual interferences, the reader must have a certain culture, necessary for recognizing similar situations or characters met to other authors. There are numerous proper names fixed in the collective memory; thus, a single proper name helps the author make analogies between two situations or two events. That's why the allusion is an indirect reference to a famous character that has previously been created (e.g. a hero, an individual who had a certain influence upon other individuals at a given time etc.).

According to J.A. Cuddon (1998: 27) an allusion "may enrich the work by association and give it depth". When writing a text, the author may find out connections between two objects, two ideas, or an object and an idea; in fact, any sensory perception of an object or an idea may be associated with something from the past. A relevant example is the novel *Small World*, where Persee enters the Repertory Theatre building and sees a man that "due to his clothes you would have said that he was Robin Hood." Then, Persee associates Angelica Pabst, a very good runner, to the heroine from the Greek mythology, Atalanta. Or, Fulvia Morgana had "a vague and enigmatic smile as well as Gioconda". Instead of telling directly the way in which things really are, the author finds out similarities between different objects: knowing the British traditional legends whose main character was Robin Hood –always depicted as wearing clothes manufactured from a kind of material called "Lincoln green"- or the legend about Atalanta –well-known for her agility and rapidity at the races- and Mona Lisa's portrait painted by Leonardo Da Vinci, the reader makes for oneself an opinion about the man's clothes that looks like Robin Hood, Angelica Pabst's rapidity and Fulvia Morgana's smile.

³ In D. Lodge's novel, Adam Appleby is just approaching the old lady calling her "Clarissa".

⁴ This is an indirect reference to Josef K., F. Kafka's character sent in front of a mysterious law court and judged by peculiar public officials who apply laws without knowing their essence and communicate sentences whose cause is unknown to them.

In the reality created by D. Lodge, there are some allusions either to objects existent in the real life or to events lived or imagined by other characters. In *Nice Work*, the campanile⁵ of Rummidge University is seen as an “enlarged copy, made of red brick, of the inclined tower from Pisa”. Then Robyn Penrose, lector at the same university, makes an allusion to Dante’s *Inferno* when visiting Pringle’s factory. Robyn Penrose sees here the image of the Hell where various categories of sinners are assigned, owing to the noises, smoke, flames and silhouettes dressed in overalls and wearing protective masks. In *Changing Places*, Moris Zapp has an apocalyptic vision: being in an airplane that flies towards England, he imagines that airplanes belonging to different companies collide in the air. So, Moris Zapp makes an allusion to the biblical place Armageddon, where the battle between good and evil will take place.

Through these indirect references, the writer urges the reader to share some experience with him. The writer displays a body of common knowledge (e.g. from literature, mythology, painting, architecture, the Bible etc.) sharing it to a target audience that has to “pick up” the reference.

Conclusion

Starting from the premise that a text is built up from other texts, being situated at the interference with other already known pieces of writing, intertextuality consists in the relationship between a text and other written texts that have been previously read. Consequently, two main features of intertextuality are inferred:

1. The textual interferences take place inside a single text, this text being perceived as a *plurality of texts*. Writing a text, the author makes an appeal, more or less consciously, to the anterior experience. In the author’s mind, just a word may evoke other words and other secondary meanings of these words; or, an enunciation may stir up other manners or styles for expressing an idea. Then, the reader’s task is to discover the plurality contained within a text.

2. Intertextuality is *creative*. The author not only takes an enunciation or a fragment of an enunciation met in a previous text, but he modifies it as well, adjusting it to another situation. A proper name or a well-known statement has the power to recall an idea, idea that can be developed in another context.

⁵ D. Lodge makes here an indirect reference to the University from Birmingham, a university made of “red brick” as the other institutions of higher learning built in Britain.

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