

## INTERTEXTUALITY IN EUROPEAN LITERATURE EXPRESSED THROUGH THE PRECEDENT SITUATIONS AND CHARACTERS

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This article aims in making a retrospective analysis of linguistic and semiotic researches, concerning intertextuality in European literature – expressed through precedent phenomena: a precedent name and a precedent situation (circulation of plots); and summarizing the main characters existing in written fiction.

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Quoting famous polish aphorist Stanisław Jerzy Lec: «Everything has already been said before, but luckily, not everything has already been thought of».

We analyzed the linguistic articles, philosophical treatises and studies of literature from 347 B.C. to modern times: Aristotle, J.C. Friedrich von Schiller, Victor-Marie Hugo, Georges Polti, Carlo Gozzi, Joseph John Campbell, Christopher Booker, Jorge Luis Borges and summarized the researchers' opinions about intertextuality in European literature and ways of its expression: through precedent situation and precedent name.

Indeed, modern world of science and culture tends to be constantly quoting itself. Which is not surprising, assuming our society is highly globalized. It happened even before Mass Media became so powerful throughout the planet. Scientific and artistic worlds and their creators, even if preferring to be independent, always happened to be aware of each other's works which, to different extends, were often interinfluencing. These days almost all segments of general thinking seem to be interpenetrative. In the field of science it can be perfectly explainable: no research in any possible area of study can be accomplished (and even started) without being based on the previously made set of works, no matter developing or disproving them completely. The whole history of science is based on the principle of taking into account prior techniques, research and exploration surveys.

However, for literature, a subjective zone of expressing each author's uniqueness, such a paradigm always looked inappropriate. Any work of art is supposed to reflect individual perception of the world described by means of the particular language and the precise resources of this language skilled by the author.

Usually, when comparing literature to science in general, the researchers mention that they both use the means of the language to verbalize their ideas, although the aims of the two are completely different.

Nevertheless, there is a very important aspect both literature and science share: both phenomena are drawn heavily on the basis of

all the previous experience. And, returning to the field of literature specifically, it doesn't involve the language itself only.

No text is being born in the modern world without being dependent on the previously created one.

This can be logically explained, given that generally Western civilization (also applying to Eastern Europe and countries whose history is strongly marked by European immigration or settlement, such as the Americas, and Australasia) shares the features of mentality in many areas: heritage of social norms, ethical values, traditional customs, religious beliefs, political systems, and specific artifacts and technologies, artistic, philosophic, literary, and legal themes and traditions.

### Intertextuality

Speaking of the tradition in literature, which Western world gave birth to, we shall of course mention the phenomenon of «novel». While epic literary works in verse such as the Mahabarata and Homer's Iliad are ancient and occurred worldwide, the novel as a distinct form of storytelling only arose in the West in the period 1200 to 1750. The phenomenon «intertextuality» and the term itself was introduced to linguistic study by Julia Kristeva in 1966. Intertextuality is the shaping of texts' meanings by other texts. It can include an author's borrowing and transformation of a prior text or to a reader's referencing of one text in reading another.

### Basic Plots

The 36 «basic» plots were suggested as the only number of universal plots by Aristotle around 347 B.C. Such an idea was afterwards supported and developed by **Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller** (1794) and **Victor-Marie Hugo** (1896) who also stuck to the number of 36 plots. The mentioned principle was further elaborated by **Georges Polti** (1895) in his research «The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations». Polti claims to be trying to reconstruct the 36 plots that Goethe alleges. **Carlo Gozzi** (1761) earlier in 18<sup>th</sup> century came up with the following list of fabulas:

1. Supplication (in which the Supplicant must beg something from Power in authority).
2. Deliverance.
3. Crime Pursued by Vengeance.
4. Vengeance taken for kindred upon kindred.
5. Pursuit.
6. Disaster.
7. Falling Prey to Cruelty of Misfortune.
8. Revolt.
9. Daring Enterprise.
10. Abduction.
11. The Enigma (temptation or a riddle).
12. Obtaining.
13. Enmity of Kinsmen.
14. Rivalry of Kinsmen.
15. Murderous Adultery.
16. Madness.
17. Fatal Imprudence.
18. Involuntary Crimes of Love (example: discovery that one has married one's mother, sister, etc.).
19. Slaying of a Kinsman Unrecognized.
20. Self-Sacrificing for an Ideal.
21. Self-Sacrifice for Kindred.
22. All Sacrificed for Passion.
23. Necessity of Sacrificing Loved Ones.
24. Rivalry of Superior and Inferior.
25. Adultery.
26. Crimes of Love.
27. Discovery of the Dishonor of a Loved One.
28. Obstacles to Love.
29. An Enemy Loved.
30. Ambition.
31. Conflict with a God.
32. Mistaken Jealousy.
33. Erroneous Judgement.
34. Remorse.
35. Recovery of a Lost One.
36. Loss of Loved Ones.

So, when the new book has the promising review, which pledges to have an audacious off-the-wall plot, the real outcome will most probably be questionable. The reader of any work of belletristic literature (given it belongs to the Western culture and being written after the appearance of Greek and Roman mythology and Bible) will of course be able to correlate the plots and guess the outcome of it.

**Joseph John Campbell**, an American mythologist, writer and lecturer in 1949 creates the work named «The Hero with a Thousand Faces» in which he refers to a basic pattern found in many narratives from around the world. According to Campbell, there is a so-called Monomyth: a phenomenon uniting all the plots of the Western literature and determining the behavior of each character in any given plot. Campbell breaks down the cycle of any fabula into three main stages: departure, initiation and return. His work is quite interest-

ing from the point of view of originality of all the plots, its genuine source. However, it seems logical to mention also the typical character of each plot, which this work lacks.

A very remarkable research summarizing seven basic plots in literature has been done by **Christopher Booker** (2005) in his work «The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories». He describes seven stories that, as he claims happen to be the example of any other story ever told in the western world. The mentioned plots can be summarized as: Overcoming the Monster, Rags to Riches, The Quest, Voyage and Return, Comedy, Tragedy and Rebirth. His research seems remarkable from the point of view of describing the particular characters, typical for each plot.

For the first type, summarizing the similar stories under the shared title «Overcoming the Monster» he gives the examples of Cinderella (Rags to Riches), Jason and Ulysses (The Quest), Robinson Crusoe, Alice in Wonderland (Voyage and Return), Elinor Dashwood, Edward Ferrars, Elizabeth Bennet, Mr Darcy (Comedy), Faust, Macbeth, King Lear (Tragedy), Biblical characters and Sleeping Beauty (Rebirth) and David and Goliath, Dracula (Overcoming the Monster). Unfortunately, the author is not seeking for the original prestories of the typical plots in literature. Therefore, we can hardly trace historical development of fabula and diachronic continuation of typical characters of literature in his work.

A fascinating work on the topic has been done by a famous Argentinian writer and researcher **Jorge Luis Borges** (1980) in his set of novels «El oro de los tigres». His short and laconic, yet pretty convincing novel titled «The Four Cycles» dwells upon the idea that throughout the history of literature or whatever originally existed before it was concentrated around the four basic plots. Which were, according to Borges, the following:

– «The Doomed City **under Attack**» (the oldest type of story): all citizens know that they will not survive over the battle. The main hero knows that he'll die without seeing the victory. Typical characters: Achilles, Sigfrid, Hercules, Sigurd;

– «Travelling of The Lost Soul»: the main character is not understood by the society, he searches the world to find answers and to discover who he really is. Typical characters: Don Quijote, Beowulf;

– «The Big Journey in Search of Treasure»: the main character greatly differs from the previous one, because he hasn't been rejected by the society. Typical characters: Jason, Frodo Baggins;

– «Sacrifice of a God-like Creature»: the main character tries to save the world, the peo-

ple, searches for religion or the meaning of life. Typical characters: Attis, Odin, Andrey Bolkonsky, Master («Master and Margarita» by M.Bulgakov), Zarathustra.

**Paulo Coelho** (2000) summarized the pre-stories mentioned in «The Four Cycles» saying that: «Borges said there are only four stories to tell: a love story between two people, a love story between three people, the struggle for power and the voyage. All of us writers rewrite these same stories ad infinitum». Well, that is not precisely the essence of it. Coelho simplified the idea of Borges and adapted it for the modern popular fiction.

Originally Borges looked deeper into the religious texts as well as into folklore and mythology to find out the genuine «stirps» of every story we are now having in the European culture.

The first story is about the fateful hero who is doomed to die in the besieged town. It is the story about the rebellious warrior, someone who looks fearlessly into the face of death, knowing there is no chance of deliverance. As an example, Borges brings on the story of Troy and its main character – Achilles. The second story is the story of Great Return. Its main character is, of course, Ulysses. The third story is the story of the Searching. The central figure, mentioned by Borges describing such adventures is Jason, searching for the Golden Fleece. The fourth one is the plot the story of which tells us about the Suicide of the God. Among others Borges mentions the central Biblical saga about Jesus Christ, sacrificing himself for the humankind.

### Basic Characters

So, being based on the research made by Borges, we may point out the most nameable and therefore influential characters of pre-stories of ancient literature, folklore and mythology created in early ages:

1) **Achilles** (Greek mythology, Iliad.), Siegfried (Das Nibelungenlied), Sigurd (The Poetic Edda), Herculēs (Greek mythology, Iliad) = **the devoted fighter**;

2) **Ulysses/ Odysseus** (Greek mythology, Odyssey), Beowulf (heroic epic poem under the same title), Don Quijote (The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha) = **the adventurous traveler**;

3) **Jason** (Greek mythology, Odyssey, Iliad) = **the searcher of the great answers/treasure**;

4) **Attis** (the consort of Cybele in Phrygian and Greek mythology), Odin (the god of war in Norse mythology), Jesus Christ (Bible), Zarahustra (legends of the «death of God»), and the «prophecy» of the Übermensch, «Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None» by Friedrich Nietzsche) = **the sacrificing god**.

André Gide's gives a very comforting remark on the subject: «Everything that needs to be said has already been said. But since no one was listening, everything must be said again».

Summarizing the retrospective analyses of the works devoted to the intertextuality in European literature, we shall draw a conclusion, that theorists of literature, literary critics and scholars name different number of basic plots, on which the whole amount of fabulas of modern prose and poetry builds itself. We made an attempt to distinguish the basic characters of the mentioned fabulas and name typical plots in accordance to that. The analyses brought us to the number of 4 characters. The theory of intertextuality in the modern literature and linguistic studies has the problem of functioning criteria among its main discussion points. Consequently, we may suggest, that intertextuality, expressed through precedent phenomena, such as a character or a plot, shall be studied through the mentioned aspects.

«At the beginning there was the Word – at the end just the Cliche», – Stanisław Jerzy Lec.

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