

Intertextuality in Sacra Scriptura¹

*Nullum est iam dictum, quod non sit dictum prius.
Nothing is said that has not been said before.*

The motto for this article is the famous locution of Publius Terentius Afer (195–159 BC) known as Terence – a comic playwright during the Roman Republic. The dictum is taken from his play *Eunuchus* (The Eunuch). I have chosen this motto for two reasons. Firstly, the locution defines in a very consistent way the essence of the phenomenon of intertextuality. Secondly, the aim of my short paper is to report what has been written on intertextuality in the Polish scholarship and how the phenomenon has been used in biblical exegesis by Polish scholars.

¹ The paper was first delivered at the International Society of Biblical Literature Meeting in Berlin, August 9, 2017.

Preliminary remarks

Before entering into details, I need to mention a few words on my understanding of intertextuality since today the term is used in many different contexts and its definitions by different authors can profoundly differ. Without entering into sophisticated distinctions made by contemporary linguists and philosophers, such as J. Culler, R. Barthes, J. Derrida, M. Riffaterri, M. Phister, R. Lachmann, G. Genette, L. Jenny and many others, I am going to share the basic understanding of the phenomenon proposed by the Bulgarian-French literary critic and philosopher J. Kristeva (born in 1941) who coined the term in her well known book *Semiotikè: recherches pour une sémanalyse*, published in Paris in 1969². The aim of Kristeva's research was to synthesize F. de Saussure's semiotics that derived the meaning of a text from studying relations between signs present in its structure with M. Bakhtin's theory of dialogism according to which the meaning of a text derives from its dialogue with other works of literature. For Kristeva the meaning of a text is not transferred directly from the writer to the reader, but it also depends on codes that relate the given text to other literary works. Without knowing the codes that a writer purposefully uses in his or her text, readers are not able to fully acquire its meaning. Therefore, intertextuality in its essence involves both relationships: common literary motives that relate texts by having common codes, and relations between texts and their readers. It is important to mention them here since the latter level is often neglected by scholars who perceive intertextuality mainly as a literary device that creates an "interrelationship between texts and generates related understanding in separate works"³.

Nowadays, the term "intertextuality" is very popular in postmodern societies and has been applied not only to literary works but also to other realities, like visual art (paintings and movies), music, etc. Thus, the caution of the American philosopher W. Irwin (born in 1970) seems to be appropriate when he states that the term intertextuality "has come to have almost as many meanings as users, from those faithful to Julia Kristeva's original version to those who simply use it as a stylish way of talking about allusions and influence"⁴.

² English translation: *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Oxford 1980.

³ See "intertextuality" in the Online Etymology Dictionary: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/intertextuality> (access 28.11.2017).

⁴ See W. IRWIN, *Against Intertextuality*, *Philosophy and Literature* 28 (2004) 2, pp. 227–242, the quotation is from p. 228.

Polish linguists' contribution to intertextuality

While presenting the issue of intertextuality it seems indispensable to mention at least the contribution of a few Polish linguists as they greatly influenced the manner in which intertextuality was applied to Polish biblical studies.

The first to be mentioned is W. Borowy (1890–1950), a historian of literature, a critic, and a professor of Warsaw University⁵. His work *O wpływach i zależnościach w literaturze* [*On Influences and Dependencies in Literature*] was first published in Kraków in 1921, almost fifty years before the term “intertextuality” was coined by Julia Kristeva. Borowy argued that influences of motifs were quite natural in literature and authors used them deliberately. He classified influences and dependences into five categories:

- ideological – when an author refers to another author’s ideas. It is typical, for instance, for the deliberate usage of motifs from classical literature as well as motifs from religious, historical, philosophical and physiological literature;
- technical – imitation of formal technical elements in the framework of a literary genre;
- thematic – using the themes taken from previously written texts;
- stylistic – every writer consciously or unconsciously inherits some of the style of the authors he has read;
- phraseological – influences and dependences that come from phrases typical of earlier writers; they can be intentional, inadvertent or plagiaristic.

I have related Borowy’s proposal to a broader extent because it had been formulated long before the theory of intertextuality was developed. On the other hand, three other Polish linguists, whom I am going to refer to, put forward their proposals under the influence of Kristeva and other Western associates (some of whom have already been mentioned).

The second Polish linguist is H. Markiewicz (1922–2013), a professor of the Jagiellonian University. He defined intertextuality as a textual interaction that is generated in a text. Markiewicz indicated three determinants of intertextuality: direct quotation of prototype (e.g., in *Nie-Boska komedia* [*The Non-Divine Comedy*] Z. Kasiński indicates Alighieri’s masterpiece *Divine Comedy*),

⁵ See more on his scholarly activities in L. PŁOSZEWSKI, *Wacław Borowy (1890–1950)*, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 53 (1962) 3, pp. 101–103.

quoting passages from a work to which an author refers; a clear reference to the prototype's content.

E. Kasperski (1942–2016), a professor of Warsaw University, disagreed with scholars (e.g., B. Schulz) who argued that the Bible was an arche-text for the Western civilization. Kasperski claimed that they were four basic relationships in literature: contacts between writers of different nationalities, translations, the permeating of literary motifs from one country to another and cultural borrowings.

The fourth Polish linguist whose contribution must be mentioned is R. Nycz (born in 1951), a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) and a professor of the Jagiellonian University. He believes that intertextuality is a key category in postmodern literature. In his opinion every author signalizes determinants of intertextuality which he classifies into three groups: presuppositions (to force readers to take into consideration other judgments beside those evident in the text); attributions (intertextuality permits to attribute properties characteristic of other types of texts to a text) and anomalies (inconsistencies and unintelligible passages usually signal intertextuality)⁶.

Other Polish linguists working on intertextuality that are worthy to be named here include M. Głowiński, J. Sławiński, T. Cieślakowska, W. Bolecki, S. Balbus, Z. Mitosek and A. Dziadek.

Polish applications of intertextuality to biblical scholarship

The usage of the phenomenon of intertextuality in biblical scholarship is not restricted to any specific methodological procedure. Treating the phenomenon in its broad sense renders its efficient implementation possible both in the diachronic and synchronic approach. Therefore, every biblical scholar who intends to trace, for example, the origins and transmission of a biblical motif makes use of the phenomenon of intertextuality, without even referring to the specific terminology coined by Kristeva and other linguists.

Many Polish biblical scholars use the historical critical method as their primary tool. A part of the examination of any passage is often the history of its redaction and how the motifs, present in the passage, relate to other biblical

⁶ See more in R. Nycz, *Intertekstualność i jej zakresy: teksty, gatunki, światy*, Pamiętnik Literacki 81 (1990) 2, pp. 95–116.

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and extrabiblical texts. All of this involves the phenomenon of intertextuality even though the term itself does not appear in articles and monographs showing their investigation results.

Many contemporary Polish biblical scholars use various methods to study how certain Old Testament themes and motifs are developed in the New Testament or how they function in a single OT or NT book or a collection of books. This is their major area of employing intertextuality. Considering the plethora of Polish biblical scholars' significant contribution to intertextuality I will confine myself to a few examples.

During the last twenty years, a co-worker of mine, Rev. Prof. W. Linke, CP, member of the Institute of Biblical Sciences at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, published several articles in which he extensively and deliberately applied the phenomenon of intertextuality. The first one entitled *Intertekstualizm w badaniach biblijnych na przykładzie Apokalipsy* [*Intertextualism in Biblical Studies on the Example of the Book of Revelation*] was published in 2002⁷. Although the term "intertextualism" is used in the title, in the introduction the author explains that he meant the term "intertextuality." Then he extensively presents the contemporary *status questionis* on the literary genre of the Book of Revelation, concluding that the book is actually an example of a mixed genre. The second part of the paper is dedicated to the presentation of intertextuality as a literary theory and of its benefits for exegetical studies. The emphasis is given to postmodernist linguists who postulate "going out of literary genres borders," referring to the phenomenon of intertextuality. The concept of intertextuality helps the author argue that the Book of Revelation uses a mixed literary genre.

The other article in which Linke makes use of the phenomenon of intertextuality is *Księga Ezechiela w Apokalipsie według św. Jana* [*The Book of Ezekiel in the Revelation of John*]⁸. Although the word intertextuality does not appear even once in the article, the author lengthily uses the phenomenon in his exegetical practice, analyzing the first quotations from Ezekiel in the Book of Revelation, then structural similarities between both books. The main part of the article is dedicated to an investigation of theological motifs that the author of Revelation took from Ezekiel and reworked in the framework of his theological strategy.

⁷ Published in: *Roczniki Teologiczne Warszawsko-Praskie* 2 (2002), pp. 81–111.

⁸ See: *Collectanea Theologica* 77 (2007) 4, pp. 79–101.

Finally, Linke's third article *Pieśń nad pieśniami w Apokalipsie? Aluzja literacka lub zbieżność wyrazowa w badaniach intertekstualnych* [*The Song of Songs in Revelation? A Literary allusion or lexical convergence in intertextual analyses*]⁹, is mainly dedicated to a concise presentation of the origins and development of linguistic studies on the phenomenon of intertextuality. The author also applies the theory to explore the convergences between the Song of Songs and the Book of Revelation. He puts a question mark in the title to indicate that the author of Revelation might not have been influenced by the Song of Songs. Yet, his analyses show that the diverse formulas and symbols common to both texts suggest that the author of Revelation was *de facto* inspired by the Song of Songs.

Also, the doctoral dissertation written by Rev. Asst. Prof. Adam Kubiś, a member of the Institute of Biblical Sciences at the Catholic University in Lublin, is an interesting example of the application of intertextuality in Polish Biblical Scholarship. His doctoral thesis *The Book of Zechariah in the Gospel of John* was defended at the École Biblique in Jerusalem in 2011¹⁰. Kubiś does not refer to any terminology or theory of intertextuality, but he examines extremely precisely (the book contains 590 pages) all the quotations from Zechariah and all allusions to the Book of Zechariah in the Fourth Gospel. The results of his investigation are very valuable. He argues that the author of the Gospel of John used the Book of Zechariah "to address one of the most important issues for both the early Church and first century AD Judaism: the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. The Johannine references to this prophecy served to express the revolutionary truth that there is a new temple, the body of Jesus, the King-Messiah, which is rebuilt by means of his resurrection." The main contribution of his intertextual research consists in showing the relevance of Zechariah for the Johannine Christology and pneumatology. A similar methodological procedure was employed by Kubiś to explore parallels between the canonical Gospels and Old Testament passages (mainly from the Prophets).

A great sensitivity to the phenomenon of intertextuality, although often without special reference to linguistic terminology proposed by Kristeva and her successors, is shown in all the studies in the field of the canonical approach (B. Childs and his followers). All Polish biblical scholars who used elements of

⁹ See: *Collectanea Theologica* 78 (2008) 4, pp. 71–103.

¹⁰ The thesis was subsequently published in: Gabalda, Pendé in 2012.

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this approach while explaining various Old and New Testament passages have necessarily referred to the concept of intertextuality.

At this point, I want to point out just one contribution – the unpublished doctoral thesis of Dr M. Zmuda entitled *Szawel historii a Paweł kanonu. Możliwości egzegezy kanonicznej w kontekście osiągnięć metody historyczno-krytycznej* [*Saul of History and Paul of the Canon: The Potentiality of Canonical Exegesis in the Context of the Achievements of the Historical Critical Method*]¹¹. Zmuda widely refers to the theory of intertextuality, not only presenting the theoretical premises of the canonical approach but above all the internal relationships between the texts belonging to *Corpus Paulinum*. The author rightly argues that intertextuality played an essential role in the subsequent relectures in the process of the formation of the *Corpus-Paul List* as a coherent entity. He correctly emphasizes that the contemporary reader of the Corpus must be aware of intertextuality so that not to miss the hermeneutical key to the proper interpretation of a single letter or its passage. Further, he claims that the Letter to the Romans, which begins the collection, and the Pastoral Letters, which close it, play a crucial role in the interpretation of smaller entities inside this inclusion.

The most wide-ranging and sophisticated use of the phenomenon of intertextuality by Polish biblical scholars was made by Prof. B. Adamczewski. He builds on intertextuality a whole methodological system, which he has consequently applied in all his major works published since 2010 by Peter Lang (at least ten books in English, among others the hypertextual commentaries to the Gospels of Mark, Luke and John). The basic notion of his methodology is hypertextuality.

In his first book *Q or not Q? The So-Called Triple, Double, and Single Traditions in the Synoptic Gospels*¹², he argues that:

[a]ll three Synoptic Gospels should be therefore regarded as results of creative hypertextual reworking of earlier gospel works (including Paul's letters) and not as effects of slavish literary dependence of postulated gospel 'redactors' on some hardly identifiable, oral or written 'traditions'¹³.

¹¹ The dissertation was defended at the Pontifical University of Pope John Paul II in Kraków in 2014.

¹² Published by Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main 2010 (p. 554).

¹³ B. ADAMCZEWSKI, *Q or not Q*, p. 444.

Then he goes farther:

The interplay of various literal, allusive, metaphoric, symbolic, adapted, and other levels of referential-intertextual meaning is therefore an inherent phenomenon of the synoptic tradition, and it is by no means peculiar to, for example, the Fourth Gospel. The synoptic tradition grew as a result of gradual, but not always linear, widening of the range of meaning of earlier texts in the process of their reinterpretation by subsequent evangelists, which at times resulted in fascinating chains of variously reinterpreted motifs and ideas¹⁴.

Adamczewski's methodological proposal and his controversial results have been debated in scholarly circles in Poland and abroad.

Finally, I would like to present my humble contribution to the implementation of intertextuality in exegesis. Some ten years ago I published *Jesus' Final Call to Faith (John 12:44-50). Literary Approach*, a monograph in which intertextuality was the foundational phenomenon of my methodological procedure¹⁵. My work aimed at finding the reason of existence for the concluding verses of the first part of the Fourth Gospel, which exegetes call "corps étranger" – "a strange body." Analyzing the inner intratextual relationships between the verses and other passages from chapters 1–12, I proved that John 12:44-50 was produced at the last stage of the literary development of the Gospel of John as a result of the process of relecture. From the pragmatic point of view, John 12:44-50 is a metalevel-text that summarizes the main themes from chapters 1–12 in order to recontextualize them and to give a universal dimension to Jesus' public teaching.

The other major work of mine in which I extensively used the phenomenon of intertextuality is *Nowe życie uczniów Jezus. Jan 21 jako owoc eklezjologicznej relektury J 1–20 we wspólnocie Umiłowanego Ucznia [The New Life of Jesus' Disciples. John 21 as a Result of the Ecclesiological Relecture of John 1–20 in the Community of the Beloved Disciple]*¹⁶. My aim was to prove that John 21 was a pragmatically intended relecture of chapters 1–20 – which were already meant as an accomplished work – in view to repragmatize them by emphasizing the reality of the presence of the Risen Lord in the Church.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 446–447.

¹⁵ Published in: Series Biblica Paulina 4, Częstochowa 2007.

¹⁶ Published in: Rozprawy i Studia Biblijne 33, Warszawa 2009 (p. 455).

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The popularity of the phenomenon of intertextuality in Polish Biblical Scholarship, especially among young scholars, can also be measured by a large number of doctoral dissertations in which it has been used. Let me mention just three of them that have recently been written under my supervision at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw: J. Wojcieszki, *Od szabat do niedzieli. Studium historyczne, egzegetyczne i teologiczne* [From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical, Exegetical, and Theological Study], defended in 2013¹⁷; K. Grzemski, *Repragmatyzacja motywów z Ez 47,1-12 w przekładzie Septuaginty oraz w J 21,1-14* [The Repragmatization of Motifs from Ez 47:1-12 in the Septuagint and in John 21:1-14], defended in 2015, and J. Kwiatkowski, *Konceptcja oddzielenia w narracjach Rdz 1 – 3 i jej recepcja w Rz 1 – 8* [The Concept of Separation in Gen 1–3 and Its Reception in Rom 1–8], defended in 2017.

Conclusion

Summing up, I would like to pose three challenges for Polish biblical scholars and any other scholars who treat intertextuality as an important phenomenon in their exegetical praxis.

1. A much more extensive use of the theory of intertextuality, especially in canonical approach and exegesis, would be desirable.

2. Intertextual exegetical analyses should be methodologically supported by social scientific studies – written texts are products of real societies facing particular circumstances that have to be well exposed in order to correctly understand the meaning of an interpreted text.

3. It is necessary to supply analyses of literary intertextual relationships between texts with studies of oral traditions (orality vs. literacy), especially in connection with social memory theory.

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¹⁷ Published in: *Lingua Sacra. Monografie 4*, Warszawa 2014 (p. 341).