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**По ръба на сравнението. Яворов и „Ролинг Стоунс” и други не/възможни
интертекстове**

(Резюме)

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**On the Edge of Comparison. Yavorov and the Rolling Stones, and other
Im/Possible Intertexts**

(Summary)

The work aims to test the theoretical and practical limits and possibilities of intertextuality today on examples from both Bulgarian and world literature. The analysis often walks 'on the edge of comparison', offering parallel readings of seemingly incompatible texts and fields. In this way, unexpected things emerge about familiar and not-so-familiar words and authors, as well as about the very ways in which we compare. Each of the analyses, I hope, takes intertextual and interpretive risks to open up new spaces for thinking about literature, but also through literature here and now. This is why this book often speaks in the first person and discusses issues from gender to ecology without leaving the territory of literature.

In its introduction, the book proposes a possible intertextual genealogy of intertextuality by reading Julia Kristeva's idea of the communication between texts beyond any authorial intentions and influences alongside two other iconic texts of the same time, Roland Barthes' *The Death of the Author* and Michel Foucault's *What is an Author?*. Thus, Kristeva's idea, which is usually thought of through Bakhtin and Saussure, is also revealed as inscribed in the passions of the late 1960s around the status of the text and the figure of the author, passions that are part of a broader philosophical critique and deconstruction of the subject. The Kristeva-Bart-Foucault intertext demonstrates that the term the young Kristeva proposed shortly after settling in Paris is not just a new name for the well-known old comparativism, but part of an overall attempt to reconsider the monopoly on meaning in the field of textuality, and in neighbouring sign systems.

Along with this, the introduction examines intertextuality in two more perspectives – the perspective of the global-virtual world of today and a the perspective of a small literature such as the Bulgarian one.

The presence of the Internet, of Google, etc., is certainly a factor in the amplification of intertextual thinking today. The possibility to browse from text to text as well as the new

intensities and levels of communication stimulate these processes. Texts fall far more easily into new contexts, into unexpected trans-cultural juxtapositions that also provoke new readings. Who, when and how constructs intertext is a question that can illuminate important structural and sociological aspects of the literary field. The attitudes and competences of readers and interpreters also change. In parallel and probably not unrelated to this, recent years have seen a new rise of the concept of world literature in all its complex positioning between utopian ideal, market realities and ideological pressures.

Intertextuality contains an implicit utopia of equality. That is why the 1990s, the first decade of opening to the world and euphoria after the fall of the Berlin Wall, was marked (at least in Bulgaria) by dialogism and intertextuality. It quickly became clear though that the major languages and cultures remained "more equal" (in Orwell's terms) insofar as their texts were more widespread, more accessible, more visible. Small languages, literatures, and literary studies do not have the referential reach and scope that large ones do. Yet, Kristeva herself came from the small Bulgarian literature in the big French one, and to this we can attribute some of the drives of her early writing. The "Bulgarian connection" in the invention of intertextuality, according to an implicit hypothesis of prof. Nikola Georiev is discussed later in the book.

What are the intertextual readings offered in this book?

The opening text, *Yavorov and the Rolling Stones in the Hour of the Blue Haze*, is a parallel reading of the classic Bulgarian poem *In the Hour of the Blue Haze* (1909) by Peyo Yavorov and the lyrics of the Rolling Stones' first original song, "As Tears Go By" (1964). What (might) their striking proximity mean, what new meanings does it generate, where does it take us in terms of the texts and their cultural contexts? The reading begins with a close reading of the two texts and the circumstances surrounding their creation. It then goes on to trace the motif of the elderly man observing children at play in the Bulgarian and the English tradition, drawing in Pencho Slaveykov, Vaptsarov, Thomas Gray and especially Philip Larkin, in whom the motif is radicalized in an unexpected way.

In *The Infernal City: Geo Milev between Dante and London*, I set out to read Geo Milev's unfinished poem *Inferno* through its stated hypotext, Dante's *Inferno*. I was intrigued by how the Bulgarian text unfolds as an aggressive polemic and modernist rewriting of the Renaissance classic to claim that the new, post-Dantean hell is the modern city, the megalopolis. This led me to the previously unasked question of which the city in the poem

actually is. And the answer turned out to be not Rome or Berlin as we might suppose, but... London, a rare topos in Bulgarian literature. The second part of my essay follows in the footsteps of the emerging London cityscape in the poem and thus adds to the deficient English intertext of Bulgarian literature in general.

The Tenuity of Death in Early Post-1944 Poetry – the text is devoted to the banality and decline of the left-wing heroics in Bulgarian poetry after 9 September 1944, paradoxically just when the left victoriously came to power. This claim is based on a parallel reading not only of poems from the period, but also of several literary anthologies from that time. The examination of their concepts and content confirms the "other death" - the death of the author's *écriture*, the general flattening and banalisation of literary style at the dawn of, and even before, the imposing of orchestrated socialist realism.

Totalitarianism and Quasi-Translatability is a study on the translation paths of Bulgarian literature during socialism based on materials from the Sofia Press Agency archive. The piece is different in object, approach and methodology. But since many of the premises of today's Bulgarian literary situation are there, I thought it had a place in this book. The painful questions are: why does Todor Zhivkov remain the most translated Bulgarian 'author'; where do we stand in relation to the translation statistics of other Eastern European countries; why did we remain aloof from the exchange of world literature while the Sofia Press 'translation machine' was creating an expensive translation showcase? I owe the time and opportunity for this research to the Centre for Advanced Studies (CAS), Sofia.

Not all the analyses and interpretations suggested here start from the beginning with an 'intertextual intent' in the sense of 'now I'm going to juxtapose this and that'. But the very course of interpretation at some point required an intertextual turn, a parallel reading with other texts/authors, a listening to other voices.

Thus, the obsession with age in Atanas Dalchev's intellectual poetry and prose, and especially his strong pull towards maturity - his own and that of literature in general - unexpectedly highlighted the haunting shadow of the dead radical modernist Geo Milev. A shadow traumatically embedded in Dalchev's writing from a forgotten early episode, the consequences of which I am reconstructing. (*Dalchev: Policy of Maturity in the Shadow of Geo Milev*)

There was also an element of surprise in my delving into Konstantin Pavlov's dissident poem *Alchemists*, where, past the silhouette of a suffering and wicked horse, the intertextual shadows of Dostoyevsky, Shakespeare, Smirnenski, and even Nietzsche were lifted, engaged

in a debate about empathy. (*Alchemists: Nietzsche, Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, and Other Intertextual Shadows in Konstantin Pavlov*)

What other predominantly Bulgarian topics are there in the book?

A piece on people and wolves in Yovkov, on maternal law and the ineptly cruel rebellion of a supposedly kind man. (*The Mimicries of White: on People and Wolves in Yovkov*)

An interpretation of Vera Mutafchieva's centaur novel *I, Anna Komnina* - read as an autotextual hybrid between her *The Case of Jem* and *The Book of Sophronius*, which brings to light the drastic disjunction between authors and works, between lived experience and written testimony. (*The Trials of Self Identity: I, Anna Komnina, the Centaur Novel*)

A piece on what I call 'the minimalist sublime' in the poems of Ekaterina Iosifova and her early insight into what is later known as *The Matrix* (after the Wachowskis' movie) and whether there is a prognostic drive in the so-called 'quiet lyricism'. (*Ekaterina Yosifova and the Sublime: Ironies and Gaps*)

Again about the 'quiet lyricism' and its green idea in the poems of Ivan Tsanev (adding to the unexplored eco-text in Bulgarian literature). (*The Green Idea of The 'Quiet Lyricism': Ivan Tsanev*)

In two of the texts, the focus of consideration are Bulgarian literary theorists for whom intertextuality is in different ways part of their own critical and research projects. The first one is Nikola Georgiev, who, in a series of intertextual works, continuously elaborated approaches and concepts in this field, insisting that intertextuality could place even the literary periphery in the intermediary centre of meaning.

The other project is by Miglena Nikolchina, who traces the im/possible female literary history through the intertexts Virginia Woolf - Julia Kristeva and Bagriana - Dora Gabe - Blaga Dimitrova in two successive books.

Exculpation of the Evil Stepmother offers a subversive take on three beloved fairy tales by three negative heroines. With the help of Freud, Philip Aries, Shakespeare, and Disney's Malificent, a common hidden drama emerges in the familiar stories: the early marriages in the 'age of brief childhood' (a drama not without relevance today). We are thus challenged to rethink what fairy tales finally tell us, and whether the usual beloved ending involving a prince and a wedding is in fact a happy ending.

The text *Event and Empathy: Sylvia Plath* continues the line of 'bad women' who have a reason for being so. At its center is "Lady Lazarus," one of Plath's most dramatic and achingly ironic poems about one woman's 'private' suicides and resurrections, refracted

through the collective trauma of the Holocaust. The juxtaposition with both the gospel resurrection of Lazarus (suggested by the title) and a reflection on death by Jacques Derrida allows us to see how Plath, as early as the early 1960s, put the very possibility of the event to the test pushing it to the extremes of shock empathy and staged media repetition. In the Plath-Derrida relation, the hierarchy between text and metatext is removed and the reading is as much of poetry through theory as of theory through poetry.

The book concludes with an essay on Roberto Bolaño's irresistible and devastating prose - on his image of the 1990s, distant yet strangely close to ours, on the effect of documentality in fiction, on the death of magical realism, and why Bolaño belongs to us... My work on Bolaño was made possible by my stay at IWM, Vienna, in autumn 2016.

When this book was already finished, the news that Julia Krasteva was a collaborator of the Bulgarian secret services suddenly appeared. Should this change our ideas about intertextuality, and to what extent? It is clear that the files and the archive of the recent past before 1989 in general is, so to speak, the great subversive intertext of our culture, but also of every sphere of our life, which, if not brought to light, read, made sense of, will continue to fray the fragile fabric of our already deficient civil society.