

When Books Speak of Books: G. Radvilavičiūtė's Intertextuality

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Abstract: The present article will analyze the intertextual dimension in the work of the Lithuanian essayist G. Radvilavičiūtė, especially focusing on her most successful book, *Šiandakt aš miegošiu prie sienos*. In the introduction a brief review of U. Eco's ideas on intertextuality will be presented, paying special attention to the notions of metafiction, dialogism, double coding, and intertextual irony. Within this theoretical framework, the main intertextual strategies used in Radvilavičiūtė's book are examined in the core of the study. Particular attention will be paid to dialogism; for this strategy a detailed classification based on the two parameters of target and modality will be proposed. Then a peculiar kind of intertextuality is presented: while the author frequently makes a conscious and obvious use of references to other texts, I will suggest that it could also be possible to find traces of unconscious "intertextual echoes". To demonstrate this, some similarities with V. Nabokov's novel *Laughter in the Dark* are discussed. Such similarities could be due to an unconscious influence of this novel on the author (in this case they would be "echoes"), or to pure coincidence. In both cases, however, this is an interesting instance of hermeneutic cooperation between the author and the reader. Far from diminishing Radvilavičiūtė's flourishing creativity, these considerations reinforce the idea that any open text calls for the addressee's cooperation. Hence, the reader not only decodes intertextuality, but also actively creates a net of references that sometimes go beyond the author's (conscious) intentions.

Key-words: Intertextuality; dialogism; postmodern literature; G. Radvilavičiūtė; U. Eco; V. Nabokov

*Now I realized that not infrequently books speak of books:
it is as if they spoke among themselves.
(Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*)*

Introduction

The term *intertextuality*, first introduced by the Bulgarian-French philosopher and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva in the 1960s (cf. Kristeva 1969), refers to a

literary and cultural theory that has its origins in the structuralist work of F. de Saussure and M. Bakhtin. In the last decades this concept has been thoroughly examined from the perspective of literary theory (cf. Culler 1976; Riffaterre 1979; Allen 2000 with bibliography) and, to a lesser extent, from that of rhetoric (cf. Leitch, 1983; Bazerman 2004; D'Angelo 2010) – that is, emphasizing the reception/interpretation or the production/invention of texts.¹ Consequently, several definitions have been proposed for it.² Despite their differences, theories on intertextuality are all concerned with the same point, i.e. describing the relationships that exist among texts. The basic idea is that the processes of creating and interpreting texts do not take place in a *tabula rasa*; on the contrary, any text is influenced – both synchronically and diachronically – by a number of factors, such as the author's and the reader's knowledge, experience, culture, society, and so on. According to such a definition, any instance of reference to other texts – both explicit or not – is considered an *intertext* in the present study.³

Though intertextuality in its broadest sense can be found in any text whatsoever,⁴ several scholars, especially deconstructionists, consider it one of the peculiar features of the so-called postmodern fiction. Some theorists claim that in postmodern times we cannot any longer speak of originality. According to Eco (1983; 2002), postmodern intertextuality usually manifests itself in four ways: *i*) metafiction, *ii*) dialogism, *iii*) double coding and *iv*) intertextual irony. Let us quickly review them.

Metafiction is the self-reflection of fiction on its own fictional status. In a metafictional work the attention is directed at the process of creation, so the authorial voice “breaks into” the text to openly comment on it.

Dialogism is establishing a dialogic relationship with other authors and/or with other texts according to the principle that “books always speak of other books”. It is worth noticing that Eco's definition of dialogism differs from Bakhtin's. While Eco stresses the intertextual relationship between creative and re-creative acts, for the Russian theorist the dialogic quality of language arises at the level of any single utterance. So, there is no unquestionable, monologic interpretation of an utterance (cf. Allen 2000: 28).

¹ These are defined the “two axes of intertextuality” by Still, Worton (1990: 2).

² For a survey of the concept of intertextuality and its development see Martínez Alfaro (1996).

³ Here I will not adopt Torop's (1995) distinction between *intertexts* (i.e. texts recalling other texts as a whole) and *intexts* (i.e. text fragments recalling other text fragments).

⁴ Cf. Barthes' view: according to him, any text is intertextual by default because it must necessarily contain elements of other texts or references to cultural stereotypes, social codes, commonplaces, etc.; see for instance the analysis of Balzac's *Sarrasine* in Barthes (1970).

There is *double coding* when the author addresses the readers on two levels at the same time: for educated readers s/he will make use of peculiar stylistic and rhetoric solutions, quotations, intertextual references, etc.; on the other hand, s/he will address a mass-audience with popular, entertaining, riveting devices such as gripping plots, intense fictional rhythms, fascinating settings, etc.

Eco exemplifies *intertextual irony* with the incipit of his novel *Il nome della rosa* (*The Name of the Rose*): “Naturalmente, un manoscritto” (Naturally, a manuscript). At least for Italian readers, there is no need to explain that this is an allusion to the 19th-century classic *I promessi sposi* (*The Betrothed*) by Alessandro Manzoni. With that ironical “naturalmente”, the author admits the reference to a literary *topos* and invites the readers who can decode the message to interact with the tradition.

Note that all these strategies highlight the outgoing, open nature which is typical of any connotative text. It is a common experience, while reading a text, to perceive a network of explicit or implicit references which go beyond the text itself. Under the effect of these centrifugal forces, the text finds its natural place in that universe of semiosis that Lotman calls “semiosphere” (cf. Lotman 1984). That is a unified semiotic space in which each new text contains traces of the collective cultural memory. This happens because, like it or not, every writer is unavoidably (though not necessarily consciously) influenced by the texts s/he has been exposed to.

In this paper I intend to investigate the intertextual dimension that can be found in the work of the Lithuanian essayist Giedra Radvilavičiūtė, especially focusing on her most successful book, *Šiandakt aš miegošiu prie sienos* (*Tonight I Shall Sleep by the Wall*, 2010; henceforth: ŠAMPS). I will exemplify and discuss the main intertextual strategies adopted in her book. In doing this, I will be starting from the above-mentioned theoretical framework;⁵ however, it will be useful to develop Eco’s model by introducing some sub-categories especially concerning the dialogism.

⁵ No need to say that Eco’s framework is only one of the many available. It could have also been possible to adopt other models, such as the five relations of *transtextualité* suggested by G. Genette in *Palimpsestes* (Genette 1982), the criteria contained in the rich volume *Intertextualität* (Broich, Pfister, Schulte-Middelich 1985), or the quadripartite classification by Roux-Faucard (2006: 102–105).

2. Intertextual ego-fiction

Giedra Radvilavičiūtė is one of the most influential authors within the contemporary Lithuanian literary landscape. She made her literary debut in 2002 with the collective novel *Siužetą siūlau nušauti* (*I Offer to Shoot the Plot*). Later she published two collections of short stories: *Suplanuotos akimirkos* (*Planned Moments*) and the already mentioned *Šiandakt aš miegosiu prie sienos*. Her most recent book is *Tekstų persekiojimas. Esė apie rašytojus ir žmones* (*Text Persecution. Essays on Writers and People*). With her third book, she was awarded the European Union Prize for Literature in 2012. Thanks to this prize her success could exceed her national borders. This is clearly mirrored by the number of translations which have appeared since then.⁶

Giving a definition of the stylistic peculiarities of this author is quite a complex task. In Lithuania, her texts are usually referred to as *esė* 'essays'. Nevertheless, I find the description proposed by Katkus (2017: 122): "eine ichbezogene, tagebuch- oder memoirenahe Prosa" more appropriate. In other words, an "ego-fiction" in which the construction and the comprehension of the self-identity plays a major role.

As far as the style is concerned, an apposite definition by Andriuškevičius (2004) can be recalled: the structures of her texts resemble "moth movements". The narrator's voice suddenly and rapidly changes direction just like a flying moth. The storyteller shifts from one topic to another and from one event to another, often without any obvious reason, as if she were letting herself be dragged along by an infinite stream of digressions. And just like a moth suddenly disappears, blending into the light or into the dark, so the narrator blends into the author. This strategy creates a mirror labyrinth which in the end produces a new, unexpected image of everyday life, like a new solution to an old riddle.

The book under examination is highly (and explicitly) indebted to many other artistic expressions; therefore, it can be better understood within an *intertextual space*, that is a macro-system of previously-given meanings. Only if such meanings are recognised can the text be fully appreciated at each of its levels. Otherwise, the reader only has access to a part of the text's potentialities. Recognising the intertextual potentialities latent in the book calls for cooperation between the author and the reader (cf. Eco 1979).

In the light of this, Eco's ideas on double coding and intertextual irony perfectly fit in with the prose of Radvilavičiūtė. The Italian semiotician thought that forms of literature characterized by these two ingredients could be erudite

⁶ So far, translations of her works have appeared in English, Hungarian, German, Norwegian, Croatian, and Italian.

and popular at the same time. Such texts can be read naively, without grasping the intertextual references, or, conversely, with an awareness of their existence (cf. Eco 2002: 235). In Radvilavičiūtė's prose, double coding and intertextual irony are pervasive elements. As a matter of fact, instances of double coding cannot be isolated because it characterises the style of the book as a whole; it can be imagined as a container for the other strategies. As far as intertextual irony is concerned, it can be observed that almost any instance of intertextuality is used with irony. In other words, intertextuality is what makes Radvilavičiūtė's prose so playful and amusing. Therefore, in the following pages I shall focus on the different ways in which intertextuality is arrived at.

3. Intertextual strategies

3.1. Metafiction. The book starts with an entirely metafictional essay entitled *Teksto trauka* (*The Allure of the Text*). The opening sentence is revealing: "Paveikiam tekstui turiu kelis jo kokybę patvirtinančius savo kriterijus" (ŠAMPS: 7) (I have several criteria for determining the quality of any effective text) (AT: 178).⁷ Afterwards, a fiction starts in which the narrator – very probably reflecting the author's mind – metafictionally articulates these criteria.

In the essay *Šiandakt aš miegosiu prie sienos* the narrator (a writer) asks herself why she has never completed a particular story about a woman growing old in solitude. For this story, as she admits, almost everything was ready: a plot, the death of the main character, a start and an ending, even quotations. And, curiously, as we go on reading the essay, we realise that this story is actually taking form: the plot develops, the main character dies, the quotations are used.

An even more complex instance of metafiction is found in *Ilgas pasivaikščiojimas ant trumpo molo* (*A Long Walk on a Short Pier*). Here the main character, that is the narrator, is a writer (and, to complicate things, she refers to her own name on the book's cover as Radvila – thus hinting at the real author's surname Radvilavičiūtė!). The writer quotes the opening paragraph of her first (fictional) novel entitled *Tomis dienomis, kai buvau gyva* (*In Those Days, When I was Alive*). Immediately after the quotation, she reflects on it and declares: "Kol kas šiaame tekste ma patiko tik viena dviprasmybė [...]" (ŠAMPS: 38) (So far, in this text, what I like most is the ambiguity about [...]) (TW: 72). What we have here is a second-level metafiction, that is a reflection on a secondary fictional text embedded in the primary fictional text.

⁷ For the abbreviations of the English translations see the Sources. When the source is not indicated translations are mine.

3.2. Dialogism. Dialogism is a dominant strategy in all of the author's texts. The different manifestations of dialogism found in the book give rise to a complex picture. For our purposes, it would be useful to adopt two main criteria: the *target* and the *modality* of reference. As far as the first point is concerned, dialogism comes into play when it involves other authors; however, dialogism can also be self-referential (or monologic) when the author refers to her own texts; see Figure 1.

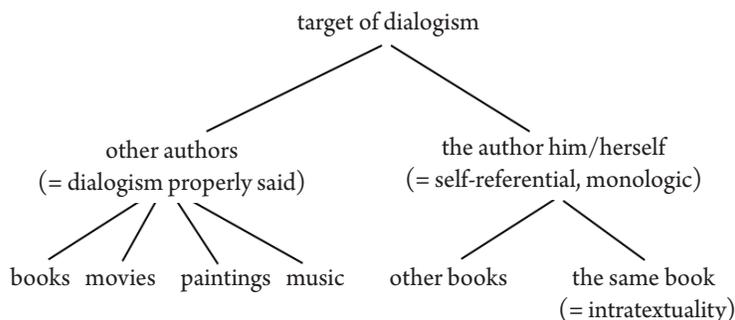


Figure 1. Target of dialogism.

The second criterion concerns the formal and rhetorical ways through which intertextuality is achieved. Here the main distinction is between quotation and allusion. The first strategy can vary along a *continuum* that goes from a formal pole (precise quotation in the original language, the author is named, etc.) to an informal one (free quotation, the author or the source is not mentioned, etc.); see Figure 2.

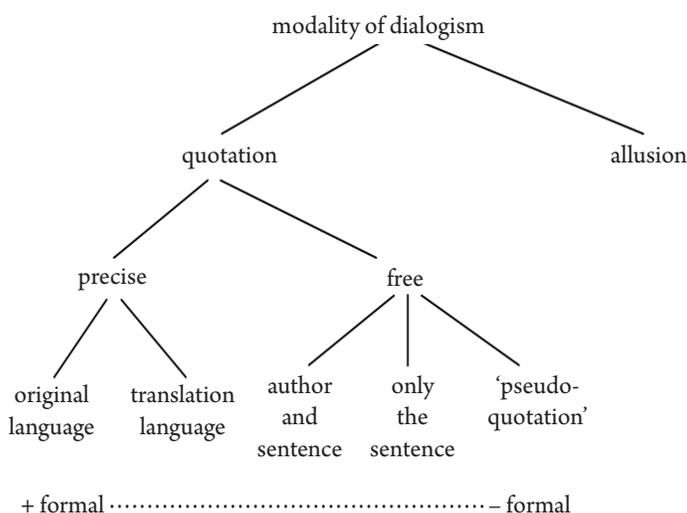


Figure 2. Modality of dialogism.

3.2.1. Dialogism with other authors. The dialogic dimension takes place first of all with respect to other writers and other books. They are quoted, hinted at, praised, distorted and intertwined; they are used in the most diverse ways in accordance with different fictional necessities (cf. Bertašavičiūtė 2012). A list of the writers mentioned in the book includes an array of authors of different ages, origins, genres and fortunes.

The following passage illustrates the usage of intertextual dialogism. After having received a flattering phone call by an important publisher, the narrator decides to become a *real* writer – that is, to write a three-hundred-page novel, instead of the essays she had been writing until that moment. She feels ready to meet the challenge of becoming an artist, to face any deprivation and hardship. So she leaves home and immediately feels the creative inspiration to such an extent that her own thoughts start taking the form of titles of novels:

Romanistas privalo klausytis altorių šešėlyje, kam skambina varpai. Klaidžioti priešaušrių vieškeliais anapus upės medžių ūksmėje. Kaip Homo Faber, kilnojamosios Röntgeno stotys ar stiprusis angelas. Atsisukau... Antrame aukšte pro lino užuolaidas sunkėsi šviesa, būtasis dažninis kartas. “Selgos” parnešk. Du pakelius... Šokoladinių. Priekyje miestas ir šunys. Ledynmečio žvaigždės. Šimtas metų vienatvės ir nemirtingumas. Jausdama, kaip akyse tvenkiasi ašaros, spyriau bromos vartus... Lyg viskas būtų paskutinįkart. Bučiuoju tamsą. (Bučiuoju Žalį.) Išėjusiems negrižti. (ŠAMPS: 36)

(The novelist must listen for whom the bell tolls, and climb the magic mountain. Wander from here to eternity, across the river and into the trees. Like Homo Faber, the invisible man, or the mighty angel. I turn around... On the second floor, light leaks through the linen curtains, out here into the heart of darkness. Bring some wafers. Two packages... chocolate. Ahead: the city and the dogs. Or do I mean the time of the hero. Light in August, anyway. One hundred years of solitude. Immortality. Feeling the tears brimming up in my eyes, I'm gone with the wind... Yes, blown from here to eternity. Look homeward, angel. But it's not for those who have left to return.) (TW: 70)

In this pastiche, a cocktail of titles is used in order to create complete sentences. A *latere*, it should be noticed how the English translator has substituted some titles with others more accessible to the new readers. That is the case for Lithuanian novels like *Altorių šešėly* by Mykolaitis-Putinas (replaced by Mann's *The Magic Mountain*) or *Būtasis dažninis kartas* by Kunčius (replaced by Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*). What is important here, rather than the blind adherence to the original, is the effect of “intertextual bombing”.

In Radvilavičiūtė's dialogism not only literature, but any piece of art is a possible interlocutor. The cinema has an important role; the author likes using

film titles, plots, scenes and characters. We encounter the American movies *The Hours*, *Frida*, *The Wrestler*; the French *Fantômas*, *Le vieux fusil*; an old film from Soviet times: *Letjat žuravli*; and Fellini's *E la nave va*. Furthermore, pieces of music and musicians are recalled: from Bach and Beethoven to the young Lithuanian songwriter Alina Orlova; the same applies to paintings and painters: Bruegel, Liotard, Vermeer, Ingres, Pirosmeni, etc.

3.2.2. Self-referentiality and intratextuality. Another interesting dimension of dialogism is the self-referential one. Indeed, the multi-voiced universe of textuality also comprises the author's own voice. In the above-mentioned phone conversation, the director of a publishing house says to the narrator: "klystate teigdama, had siužetą reikia nušauti" (ŠAMPS: 29) (You're mistaken when you say [...] that the plot should be shot dead) (TW: 64). As a matter of fact, he is referring to the title of the first book *actually* published by the *author* (who in this case coincides with the narrator). The same happens with the title of her second book, that is cited twice (ŠAMPS: 25, 159).

There are also intra-, rather than intertextual instances. That is, references to other texts of the same book. See the following passage:

Paskutinio jos karto patirtis buvo toks Vitka. Dažytojas. O ne jos buto bendro koridoriaus perpirkėjas, kaip rašoma viename tekste. (ŠAMPS: 222)
(*Her experience of the last time was with a guy named Vitka. A painter. And not the real estate agent representing her as one text has stated.*)

In fact, in a previous text of the book, the narrator has a new neighbour called Vitka. He proposes a real estate deal and she accepts in exchange for a "big favour". At first, allusive tones lead the reader to think about a sexual favour, but later it turns out to be something much more complicated... Now, in this passage this story is retracted. But is it the same Vitka or another one? The play of references creates a disorientating mirror effect.

3.2.3. Quotation. The most frequent form of dialogism is the *quotation*, which can appear in different forms. The first possibility is the obvious quotation in the original language (in the following example, however, the English translator has not maintained the original languages):

Negana to, jos rusiškai pradėtą Mandelštamo eilutę jis baigdavo cituoti vokiškai. [...] Vidinėje vieno pusėje išgraviruotos raidės: „Ja i sadovnik, ja že i cvetok...“ Ant kito: „...Im Kerker Welt, da bin ich nicht allein.“ (ŠAMPS: 61)
(*And if that wasn't enough, every time she began a line of Mandelshtam in Russian, he would finish it in German. [...] Engraved in Russian inside of one of the rings*)

were the words: 'I am both the gardener and the flower.' And inside the other, in German: 'In this dungeon world, I am not alone.' (T: 123)

At other times, the author quotes in her own language whatever the original language happens to be, as in the case of Hamsun's *Pan*, Faulkner's *Light in August*, Paasilinna's *Jäniksen vuosi*, and Pilch's *Pod Mocnym Aniołem*. In doing so, she relies on the Lithuanian edition of these books.

While these are precise and faithful textual insertions, Radvilavičiūtė more often resorts to other texts in a less precise and more informal way. Sometimes she does not even mention the author, thus teasing or challenging the reader:

tuo metu [...] mylėjau du vyrus. Tamsų – kalbininką, šviesų – poetą [...]: „... ant stalo apšviesto salos / briaunuotas rašalinės rūkas...“ (ŠAMPS: 172)
(At that time [...] I was in love with two men. One dark-haired, a linguist, and one blond, a poet [...]: "... on the island of the illuminated desk / the multi-faceted shadow of an inkwell...")

„slyvom užspringusiame sode“ (ŠAMPS: 13)
(in the "orchard chock-full of plums") (AT: 187)

For whoever might be interested, the blond poet is V. Sirin (pseudonym of Vladimir Nabokov) and the quoted poem is *Ot sčastija vľjublennomu ne spitsja* (1928), while the second quotation is from the recently deceased Lithuanian poet Kęstutis Navakas (1964–2020).

At other times, the author is mentioned without any further information, thus the sentence is used as a sort of wellerism:

B. Schulzas rašė: „Aš neatsakau už savo sapnus.“ (ŠAMPS: 47)
(Bruno Schulz wrote: "I am not responsible of my dreams") (T: 113)

Mallarme sakė, kad pasaulis egzistuoja tam, kad patektų į knygą. (ŠAMPS: 23)
(Mallarmé said that the world only exists in order to end up in a book.)

In similar cases, the author is using someone else's words "as if" they were her own. She is giving voice to her personal cultural memory. The other writer's text is so deeply intertwined with her own, that it becomes almost indistinguishable. Using quotation marks and/or naming the original author is a way of declaring that the sentence has been previously used by someone else.

There is also a singular passage which contains a pseudo-quotation attributed to Nabokov. In a letter addressed to her daughter, the narrator says: "Nabokovas pasakytų, kaip smėlį ant sniego" (ŠAMPS: 85) (Nabokov would say like sand on

snow) (TW: 96). I do not know whether such a line really exists. Probably, it is just something that Nabokov *could have* said, an expression that would fit in with his poetic style.

Pieces of the visual arts are also quoted. For instance, the protagonist, who has just returned to Vilnius after a work trip to Vienna, finds herself caught up in the whirlwinds of the annual city fair. The whole confusing situation is a reference to a famous painting by Bruegel which is preserved in Vienna (ŠAMPS: 205).

3.2.4. Allusion. A less frequently adopted strategy is allusion:⁸

Tie durniai kaimiečiai anksčiau varnas iš neturėjimo ką veikti šaudė, dar mokykloj kažkokią poemą apie tai mokiausi, o dabar išprotėjo dėl paukščių gripo. (ŠAMPS: 107)

(It used to be that these stupid hicks would sit around shooting crows because they had nothing better to do, but now they've gone nuts because of the bird flu...) (TW: 115)

Unfortunately, the English translator has omitted the sentence “dar mokykloj kažkokią poemą apie tai mokiausi” (I studied a certain poem about that at school). Here the character is actually recalling a piece of knowledge from his school years without being able to give any further specification. The poem in question is *Metai* (*The Seasons*) by Kristijonas Donelaitis (1714–1780), who is considered the father of Lithuanian literary language. It should be borne in mind that this author is part of the school curriculum of every Lithuanian student. The full comprehension of the passage requires a common cultural background between the author and the readers. In a different cultural context – e.g. in translation – this is often not the case. The translators can decide to omit the allusion (as the English translator did) or adopt paratextual devices such as footnotes (as in the Italian translation).

Another example is the sentence “įkapės - nedega” (ŠAMPS: 224) (shrouds don't burn), that should be intended as an ironic reinterpretation of the famous quote “manuscripts don't burn” from Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*.

A few pages later, we encounter “vienas truputį snobiškas XX a. rusų rašytojas” (a particular, somewhat snobbish, twentieth-century Russian writer) (ŠAMPS: 226). Though he is not named, the reader can identify him with Nabokov because of the previous references disseminated in the book. Nabokov is imagined wearing a nightcap made of butterfly netting. Only someone who knows about Nabokov's passion for butterflies can appreciate the implicit content of the reference to the butterfly netting.

⁸ For a theoretical framework on allusion see Valotka (2016) with bibliography.

There could be many more examples of the different intertextual strategies adopted by the author. However, what we have seen so far should suffice to convey the sense of their role and function. This can be summarised as follows:

- Intertextuality is a major peculiarity of Radvilavičiūtė's prose.
- Its use is functional to double coding, i.e. to create a literature that can be erudite and popular at the same time.
- Its instances are often correlated with irony: the author implicitly states that no 'original' contemporary literature – including her own! – is possible. When it is not ironical, the tone is playful: she invites the reader to play with tradition. The reader who is able to recognise the cultural references will enjoy the text on both the explicit and the implicit levels.
- Metafiction serves as a form of self-irony: Radvilavičiūtė deconstructs her own authorial status and laughs at the social implications of being a successful writer.
- Dialogism concretely demonstrates that this book stems from other books, just like any (post-)modern form of art is overtly influenced by the masters of the past.

But that is not the complete picture. According to an interpreter-oriented view of creative works, a text "cannot only be freely interpreted but also cooperatively generated by the addressee" (Eco 1979: 3). The generation of new meanings (and new intertextual connections) is therefore highly dependent on factors that are beyond the author's control. Let's consider a possible example of this.

4. Intertextual echoes? The case of Nabokov's *Laughter in the Dark*

Each of the above discussed instances of intertextuality are surely due to a conscious choice of the author. But the existence of the so-called "intertextual echoes" is well known (cf. Hollander 1981). This expression refers to the unintentional use, made by an author, of sentences, expressions, images, symbols, etc. that are part of his/her knowledge: "An echo is a faint trace of a text and might be quite unconscious" (Moyise 2002: 419).⁹ The echo may derive from a previous experience or from a direct exposure to a stimulus (e.g. a line, a poem, a plot, a picture, etc.). This experience can "decant" and disappear from the horizon of self-awareness. Nevertheless, traces of it can re-emerge later, maybe even after years or decades.

Nabokov is Radvilavičiūtė's most beloved writer; she quotes him in many passages, she even makes him a character of her stories, since the narrator

⁹ The concept of intertextual echo has received a special attention in biblical studies, see for instance Hays (1989) where the concept of echo is applied to St. Paul's letters.

declares having an (imaginary) relationship with the great Russian novelist. Hence, I was curious to read more of his works and I came across *Laughter in the Dark* (henceforth: LD). The origin of this book dates back to the early 1930s.¹⁰ The first version of the book was published in Russian and it appeared in the periodical *Sovremennye zapiski* between 1932 and 1933 under the title *Kamera obskura*. Shortly afterwards (1934) a French translation appeared in Paris; two years later the novel was also published in England. Nabokov's letter to the publishing house Hutchinson & Co. (28th August, 1936) bears witness to his discontent with regard to the English translation, which he judges to be "inexact and full of hackneyed expressions meant to tone down all the tricky passages".¹¹ Therefore he committed himself to a work of re-translation in English, which soon afterwards became a re-writing process. Finally, in 1938 a new edition was released in the United States. The new text displayed several innovations in the content, in the structure and even in the title: *Laughter in the Dark*.

Several interesting analogies between this novel and Radvilavičiūtė's book attracted my attention. Some of them are vague, others more marked. In the following pages I would like to bring them to the attention of the reader.

To begin with, let us compare the following passages:

As an art critic and picture expert he had often amused himself by having this or that Old Master sign landscapes and faces which he, Albinus, came across in real life: it turned his existence into a fine picture gallery [...] all suddenly coming to life with that little man in red putting down his tankard, this girl with the tray wrenching herself free. (LD: 6–7)

Mano artimoji dar yra šokoladininkė. (Paveiksle.) Ta romi moteris tiesia nugara neša ir neša man porceliano puodelį ir stiklinę vandens ant padėklo į lovą kiekvieną rytą [...] (ŠAMPS: 50–51)

(Another dear friend of mine is the beautiful chocolate girl. (In Liotard's painting.) That gentle woman with a straight back and a tray in her hands serves me a cup of coffee and a glass of water in bed.)

The common *topos* here is crossing the border that divides reality and imagination. Thus, the subject of a famous painting can become real, or be interpreted as such, and viceversa. Moreover, both the scenes have a little, yet curious, detail in common: the girl with the tray.

In the following passages a common, not obvious, point is stated by both the authors, i.e. the seductive effect of stuttering:

¹⁰ For the story of the text see Raguét-Bouvard (1995).

¹¹ I take this quotation from Raguét (2009: 82).

He was a good talker, with just that very slight hesitation in his speech, the best part of a stammer, which lends fresh charm to the stalest sentence. (LD: 9)

Sušveplavo, kai tarė „Šermukšnių“. Ir atmintyje pažadino vokišką žodį *verführen*, vilioti. Jau seniau buvau pastebėjusi, kad šveplumas, ir net žvairumas, kartais keistai kelia erotinį efektą. (ŠAMPS: 12)

(She lisped when saying ermukni, the name of the street I was looking for. This woke a German word from my memory: verführen—to seduce. I noticed a long time ago that people with lisps, or even people who are cross-eyed, can give rise to an odd erotic effect.) (AT: 183)

Sometimes similarities can be found at the level of simple objects or images:

In the back window hung a plush monkey (LD: 130)

Vyras liko sėdėti ant priekinės sėdynės pirštu sprigtuodamas kabantį pliušinį voriuoką (ŠAMPS: 117)

(The man got into the driver's seat, flicking the toy spider dangling from his rear-view mirror) (TW: 124)

[...] the spinach-green Gobelin in the dining-room, a hunt in the forest (LD: 30)

[...] taures vynui su medžioklės scenomis (ŠAMPS: 90)

([...] an old set of wine goblets with hunting scenes) (TW: 100)

[...] a dusty ray of sunlight slanting across the room (LD: 127)

Saulė jau leidosi, įstrižuose šviesos pluoštuose suspindėdavo, bet spindulio užribyje vėl tuoj prapuldavo skraidantys vabaliukai. (ŠAMPS: 12)

(The sun was already setting; slanting filaments from it still shone, however, and on the other side of each of these rays, one was instantly attacked by swarms of flying insects.) (AT: 182)

[...] a queer, twisted thought occurred to him; he followed its weird, bat-like shudder and flight [...] (LD: 142)

[...] kiekviena išskyrusi moteris patvirtintų, kad apskritimas išdilo skrendančio šikšnosparnio forma. (ŠAMPS: 49)

([...] every divorced woman can confirm that the stamp frays in the pattern of a bat in flight.) (T: 115)

The narrators' attention sometimes focuses on similar details. In the following passages, the description of two newborn babies lingers on the same aspect (i.e. the wrinkles on their little faces), though with different similes:

The boy was at first red and wrinkled like a toy balloon on its decline. (LD: 12)

Kai mane atnešė ligoninėje pirmą kartą žindyti, motina sakė, veido raukšlėlėse miltų dar buvo likę. (ŠAMPS: 9)

(In the hospital, when I was brought over to be breastfed for the first time, my mother said there was still flour in the creases of my face.) (AT: 180)

While the same simile is applied in the following passage, where God is compared to a stage manager/director:

The stage manager of this performance was neither God nor the devil. (LD: 118)

[...] nepriklausomo (kaip yra Dievas) režisieriaus sukurtas kruvinas [...] istorijas (ŠAMPS: 83)

([...] bloody stories created by an independent film director (like God))

A passage like the following presents a more coherent series of analogies:

Margot, snake-like, shuffled out of her black skin, and, without nothing on but high-heeled slippers, slicked up and down the room, eating a sibilant peach; and stripes of sunshine crossed and recrossed her body. (LD: 74)

Ji nuspirs rožinius kroksus, bet kaip išmėtys atsivežtus savaitgaliui drabužius, [...] įsipils ant stalo pastatyto brendžio, [...] užsirūkys [...]. Kambario prieblandoje imsiu matyti tik pliką draugės kelį, raudoną cigaretės tašką ir gestikuliuojančias šešias jos rankas. Prieblanda - mėgstamiausias mano paros metas [...] (ŠAMPS: 111)

(And she'll kick the pink crocuses by the door, but by the time she's finished scattering around the clothes, [...] she's poured herself some brandy from the bottle I've left on the table, [...] she thinks to have another smoke [...]. In the dusk of the room I'll soon see only my friend's bare knees, the red point of her cigarette, and her six gesticulating arms. Dusk is my favorite time of day [...]) (TW: 118–119)

First of all, the same fictional situation is presented, i.e. the entrance of two women into a room where they are guests. Secondly, both the characters behave with ease and this is reflected by their similar actions: they undress, they help themselves to drinks and food. Lastly, in both cases – like variations on the same partiture – the conclusion of the scene is a focus on the effects of sunshine on the body of the two women.

A last, general *trait d'union* is the theme of blindness. It is central in Nabokov's story; here, the main character, Albinus, has a car accident and loses his sight. Blindness is also a recurring theme in Radvilavičiūtė's book: in *Susipažinkite: tie,*

kuriuos sutikti norėčiau dar kartą (*Those Whom I Would Like to Meet Again: An Introduction*) the narrator's uncle is blind, so is the lawyer who used to go to the restaurant where she worked as a waitress in Chicago. The old lady in *Nekrologas* is half blind, with milky eyes. Moreover, there are some considerations on blindness at the end of *Be pavadinimo* (*Untitled*).

5. Conclusions

Intertextuality is a major dimension of the creative style of Radvilavičiūtė. Her prose can be well interpreted within the framework of postmodern literature in which two key roles are played by *double coding* and *intertextual irony*. That is, the author amuses and challenges her readers at the same time, and she does it by playing with the literary tradition and with her cultural background.

While double coding and intertextual irony are pervasive elements and they are widespread in the texts, in this paper a more detailed analysis has revealed the different ways in which intertextuality is arrived at. The two main intertextual strategies are *metafiction* and *dialogism*. In the first case, attention is directed at the process of fictional composition itself. In the second one, the text is placed in a net of connections with other texts according to the motto that “books speak of other books”. Dialogism, in turn, manifests itself in different ways. Firstly, the author refers to the works of other artists or, less frequently, to her own previous works. Secondly, the modality of dialogism varies. The main distinction here is between *quotation* and *allusion*. Radvilavičiūtė quotes in several ways. Formal quotations appear like text insertions. However, the author more frequently uses informal, free quotations. A less obvious intertextual strategy is allusion. Decoding allusions implies a common cultural background shared by the author and the readers; therefore, it can give rise to interpretation and translation problems.

In section 4, I have brought to the reader's attention a peculiar, veiled kind of intertextuality, namely, the so-called “intertextual echo”. An “echo” is an unconscious, unintentional use of sentences, expressions, images, etc. that the author “knows” (i.e. s/he has been exposed to), one could say, “without knowing”. I think that it is possible to identify a number of similarities between the book under analysis and Nabokov's novel *Laughter in the Dark*. How should we interpret such similarities? There are, I think, only three possibilities: plagiarism, tacit quotation, and intertextual echo.

This study has shown that Radvilavičiūtė makes frequent and manifest use of intertextuality. Moreover, she declares her love for Nabokov in several passages. This could already suffice to rule out the hypotheses of plagiarism and tacit quotation. In addition to this, the similarities with Nabokov's book only involve

elements that play a secondary role; why should the writer have plagiarised these passages? Tacit quotation should also be excluded because elsewhere in the book this kind of dialogism is always made evident by the declaration of the authorship or, at least, by quotation marks. Therefore, the only remaining explanation is that of intertextual echoes.

One may object that this hypothesis goes beyond the author's intentions. Yet, on the other hand, when a text activates the mechanisms of cooperation, some unexpected effects can also be produced that were not foreseen by the author.¹²

If truth be told, there is also one last possibility that cannot be excluded *a priori*: coincidence. Actually, it is the *only* remaining explanation when the author has never come into contact with the other text. Therefore, one might want to ask Ravilavičiūtė whether she has ever read *Laughter in the Dark*. But, after all, the question would be pointless; as Eco (2002: 245) points out: "Se si va alla caccia di allusioni sotterranee, è difficile dire se abbia ragione l'autore che le ignorava, o il lettore che le ha trovate." (If you go searching for hidden allusions, it is hard to say who is right: the author who ignored them, or the reader who found them.). I prefer remaining in this uncertainty where both are right.

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¹² I thank Simon Radchenko (p.c.) for suggesting the idea that the reader/interpreter of the text, while creating new, unforeseen meanings, can in some cases run into the phenomenon of *pareidolia*, i.e. the tendency to recognise a figure or a pattern where it is absent. A crucial question would then be that of the limits of interpretation: is any meaning – even a pareidolic one – legitimate?

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