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Intertextuality in Contemporary Architectural Practice: Citation, Analogy, and the Fabrication of Referentiality in the Hypertextual Environment

Abstract: The contemporary cultural context is shaped by hyperlinks as a tool for establishing references that form our interpretations of notions, concepts, and phenomena into a cohesive narrative. This paper aims to examine the practice of visual citing in the architectural discipline as a methodology that takes the principle of intertextuality from the discourse of literary art and introduces it into the design process. Furthermore, the work intends to conceptualize a framework of stylistic functions that references serve in the design process relative to aesthetic qualities valued within different cultural and social conditions. Concerning examples of the analogical method in postmodern stylistic expression, the paper tries to translate the principles inherently found in the architectural discipline into the context of contemporary practice. In the process, the question of *anonymous reference sources* is posed due to the lack of a unifying method for their notation. Finally, by comparing the notions of hypertext and intertext, the intention is to understand the semiological relations established between the works of independent authors and the causes of the disparity between references used in the design process and those subsequently created.

Keywords: contemporary architecture; postmodernism; intertextuality; hypertextuality; analogical method; referentiality.

Introduction

Intertextuality has always been an inherent part of architectural expression. Examples of copying, citing, recycling, and other methods of appropriating and interpreting an existing work into a new one can be found in virtually all stylistic expressions throughout history. This principle was applied through different physical or formal methods, whether through spolia, forgeries, author's homages to existing works, or ideologically shaped expressions. In this paper, the principal terms related to the use of reference in the architectural process will be presented: citation, analogies, intertextuality, and hypertextuality, as well as their importance and ways of adaptation in the architectural process.

The term intertextuality was first introduced by Julia Kristeva in the text “World, Dialogue, Novel” as a neologism that serves to interpret the theory of dialogism of Mikhail Bakhtin into the structuralist framework of French literary theory, in which the literary structure is seen as a consequence of overlapping different structures by which meaning is derived. Kristeva appropriated Bakhtin’s idea of the structural relations found in speech and further developed it through the application of the concept to the analysis of the 20th century novel.¹ While interpreting the intertextual relations Bakhtin introduced into literary theory, Kristeva reiterates that every text is built as a “mosaic of citations and that every text is the absorption and transformation of another text.”² Kristeva’s thesis served to shape poststructuralist thought, by transcending the unidirectional outlook on the process of meaning creation. The concept was further developed by French philosopher Roland Barthes, who claimed that every text is an outcome of established citation relationships that arise from culture and history and are thus impossible to trace, remaining anonymous even to the author himself.³ Both Kristeva and Barthes positioned the role of the author as secondary to the dynamic between the text and the interpreter.

In the contemporary context, the questions of the intertextual approach in the design process and analyzing works of architecture are becoming increasingly important. The principles of employing analogies and other referencing mechanisms are no longer based on the works of established authors as legitimate and well-founded sources. However, with the advent of the Internet, an environment shaped by hypertextual connections, these relationships are developed relative to various aspects of reference sources and authors that are not attributed to the local context but belong to a global network. Term hypertextuality in semiotics was first defined by the French literary theorist Gérard Genette as a method of referencing in which hypertext (interpretation) and hypotext (source) are not connected by a relationship in the form of a *comment*. He also recognized all writing as *rewriting*, and all literature as *second degree*.⁴ Author Graham Allen notes that computer technologies established a new form of textuality, infinitely more flexible, and to a certain level, accessible than ever before. This new form – the hypertextual principle of referencing Allen describes as a variable structure, composed of text divided into *lexias* with connecting links, or a text with a range of other texts embedded within it.⁵ The problem that arises in this context is based on the automatization of indexing and filtering processes that generate the connections between these sources.

The central premise of this paper is that sources of references are changing with the use of new technologies, parallelly within the design process and in the method

¹ Julia Kristeva, “Word, Dialogue, Novel,” in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 64–91.

² *Ibid.*, 66.

³ Roland Barthes, “Teorija o tekstu,” *Republika* 9–10 (1986): 1098–1110.

⁴ Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 1–7.

⁵ Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London, New York: Routledge, 2000), 200.

of analyzing and interpreting contemporary architectural style. Concerning that, in this paper, the term intertextuality implies the references that are a part of the architectural design process and can be undisputedly connected with another previous work. In contrast, hypertextuality suggests using references that are posterior to the design process and belong to the interpretation and appropriation after the project's completion.

Further, the premise is that the disparity between the different sources of references arises for two main reasons: as a consequence of the natural process of comprehension through recognition, that is, by automatic detections of analogies that are inherently related to human understanding of the world; and as a consequence of inadequate indexing and notation in publishing the project (in the form of drawings, renderings or photographs) that belong to the architectural process, but also of the mechanisms of functioning and organization of Internet content.

Citation and the practice of referencing in the architectural design process

The term 'citation' primarily belongs to the field of literature, i.e., textual media, within which the practice of notation represents an essential aspect for interpreting and positioning the text in the correct genre and discursive context. Nevertheless, the very principle of citation appears within all forms of artistic expression, with the increasing importance of intertextuality, as a consequence of an interdisciplinary approach and stylistic and ideological positioning. The given principle is adapted to the type of expression in which it appears but still without a specific form of notation that would adequately position the work, with the connotative aspect primarily relying on the observer's interpretations.

Croatian literary theorist Dubravka Oraić Tolić defines citation as explicit intertextuality, a term that expresses the property of an artistic structure built according to citing principles.⁶ Within the architectural discourse, the term citing appears to the greatest extent in history-related texts, referring to interpretations of mutual connections and relations between two or more works of art or design principles that occur within them. Nevertheless, when it comes to contemporary practice, the term citation is rarely used to describe established intertextual relationships; more often, similar terms can be found, such as analogy, inspiration, homage, or interpretation.

In her thesis, Oraić Tolić defines the types of citation according to the intertextual relationship through four characteristic principles: exclusion – exclusion (allusion); inclusion (stylization, parody, pastiche); intersection – intersection (reminiscence); and matching – equivalence (citation, translation, plagiarism).⁷ The given principles refer to different types of interpretative methods, but at the same time, they also characterize the level of abstraction or analogical proximity to the source.

⁶ Dubravka Oraić Tolić, *Teorija citatnosti* (Zagreb: Grafički zavod Hrvatske, 1990), 9–11.

⁷ *Ibid*, 11–15.

Types of citations can also be categorized according to the used reference source, primarily divided into medial and intermedial sources.⁸ In the architectural discipline, medial sources can be interpreted relative to the expression of the form – characteristics of an object through different scales; and according to stylistic criteria relative to the original work. An example of such connection was presented in 2012. The 13th Venice Architecture Biennale – *Common Ground*, where a 5-meter-tall replica of Palladio's Villa Rotunda was constructed by team FAT, under the name The Museum of Copy, followed by a catalog *Book of Copies*, which presented a compilation of architectural works with matched reference sources.⁹

Intermedial sources can be adopted from various art forms, visual or narrative, or from non-art disciplines where they could refer to a citation of a utilitarian work (such as engineering or technological undertakings) or be connected to a project's programmatic disposition.

Maybe the most infamous example of an intermedial reference is Aldo Rossi's sketch *La Conica* from 1984, in which design of an Alessi espresso coffee maker is represented as a lighthouse. Rossi's design itself became the source for further interpretation, with a similar shape appearing in Valerio Olgiati's student project for a *Library in Einsiedeln* the same year.¹⁰

Consequently, the term citation can be understood as unifying for the specific methods of reference found in architectural expression and criticism. At the same time, it points to specific sources of inspiration, yet in expression it is characterized by higher proximity and a realized relationship within which an intertextual relationship is observable. Compared to the analogical method, it can indicate a more extensive scope (and type) of sources and is not characterized by logical equalization according to similarity but can enter a more comprehensive range of relationship categories on which the intertextual approach is based.

In architectural practice, the presented principles simultaneously arise from two parallel sources: as destinations for the stylistic, aesthetic, and ideological aspects of the designed object and as a principle that belongs to engineering design practice, as a method to overcome the initial obstacles while encountering an ill-structured problem.¹¹

Citation is defined as the process of embracing and adapting an existing text within the framework of another new text, with the intent to establish an explicit relationship and the analogical method in engineering practice as based on the

⁸ Pavao Pavličić, "Intertekstualnost i intermedijalnost," in *Intertekstualnost i intermedijalnost* (Zagreb: Zavod za znanost o književnosti Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 1988), 157–94.

⁹ "Villa Rotonda Redux," FAT – Fashion Architecture Taste, http://www.fashionarchitectureandtaste.com/2012/08/villa_rotunda_redux.html, acc. on February 15, 2023.

¹⁰ Miroslav Šik et al., *Analogue Oldnew Architecture* (Luzern: Quart Publishers, 2019), 15.

¹¹ An ill-structured problem is a problem that cannot be solved by a routine procedure but requires several attempts aimed at finding a method that suits the specific demands. Using analogies and visual typological knowledge can aid in reframing an ill-structured problem into a well-structured one. See: Hernan Casakin and Wei Dai, "Visual typology in design: A computational view," *Artificial Intelligence for Engineering Design, Analysis, and Manufacturing* 16, 1 (2002): 3.

reconceptualization of previous solutions and their implementation on a new problem.¹² Here it becomes clear that the same methodological principle is found in different types of creative thinking, which further render the forms, the principles of expression, and functionality of the conceived object.

Thus, the practice of architecture, which is simultaneously positioned within the frameworks of art, engineering, and other cultural expressions, represents a composite of various aspirations within which the intentions for the appropriation of the previously existing works can be interpreted. However, the referential expression within the architecture medium must remain in the context of the semantic aspect – that is, the essential elements belonging to the construction process, i.e., non-specific aspects of construction and engineering solutions, cannot be understood as the subject of the citation.

Analogical method and its stylistic function

The interpretation of different forms of referentiality as stylistic determinants appears to the greatest extent in the expression and criticism of the postmodern period. According to art and architecture theorist Miodrag Šuvaković, postmodern architecture is based on an eclectic combination of different stylistic, national, and civilizational architectural codes: citing, collaging, or montaging of different stylistic patterns and aestheticization, i.e., the pleasure of architectural space that should overcome modernist functionality.¹³ The advent of postmodernism in architecture is based on the criticism of the modernist movement as a style that led to the complete anonymization of space. In the new context, citations were used to assign meaning to a *locale*. The references were primarily based on ornaments and structures that belonged to preceding styles, most often through the interpretation of motifs from examples of classical architecture. In this particular stylistic manner, the analogical method was developed in the design and theory of the Italian architect Aldo Rossi.

A refined expression of classical style characterizes Rossi's neo-rationalist approach. In his work, analogy relies on a subjective process in assigning meaning – with a particular accent directed towards the ethos of a place as a source linked to a specific location that cannot be subjected to a *universal interpretation*. In his text *The Architecture of the City*, Rossi presents a thesis on the return of meaning in architecture through the interweaving of typology and memory of a place – by creating an analog city.¹⁴ His works are based on rational, stripped-down representations of objects that serve to create meaning with their simplicity, scale, and contextual relationship.

¹² A comparison of the use of analogies in the design process in mechanical engineering and architectural practice has shown several differences in the method of reconceptualization of the initial reference. See: Martin Stacey, Claudia Eckert, and Christopher Earl, "From ronchamp by sledge: On the pragmatics of object references," in *About Designing: Analysing Design Meetings*, ed. Janet McDonnell and Peter Lloyd (Leiden: CRC Press, 2009), 361–79.

¹³ Miško Šuvaković, *Pojmovnik suvremene umjetnosti* (Zagreb: Horetzky, 2005), 477–78.

¹⁴ Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 1984).

However, the theorist Charles Jencks associates their formal expression with works of fascist architecture and rationalism, and further states that these objects achieve this type of connection precisely because of their simplicity and monotony.¹⁵ Consequently, we can recognize two simultaneous types of analogies within the discipline of architecture: methodological, which belong to the architect's intention, and retrospective, which are found in the interpretation of observers and critics.

In the context of the analog method, only a few works produced by Rossi were subjected to reflective analysis of the author. It is more significant to observe his pedagogical approach's influence on architecture's development from postmodernism to the present day. During the short period he worked as a visiting professor at the ETH University in Zurich, Rossi and his associates developed a methodological approach that was based on the use of analogies in the design process. According to the Czech architect Miroslav Šik, Rossi's student and later a professor at the department, the first references were carefully selected by professors and assistants. They commonly consisted of either prominent structures or specific typologies that could be studied, interpreted, and then used as a starting point for developing a new design. This methodological approach under the professorship of Miroslav Šik was later transformed through the introduction of other cultural and artistic forms as a source of analogies – such as film, sculpture, or photography, within which the focus of the analogy shifts from typological to the interpretation of ambient entities. Further, in this new context, a departure from the forceful postmodernist approach was created, especially towards ornaments as symbols for generating new meaning.¹⁶

Saturation with cultural forms on which the postmodernist approach is based, the interpretation of classical motifs, simultaneously stems from the cultural and the socio-political context of late capitalism. Many authors criticize the postmodern expression precisely for subordinating the aesthetic expression to the political and economic aspects of social life. Graham Allen analyses the postmodern condition and states that in a culture that is dominated by codes so pervasive that they appear natural, *the intertextual* can seem as a saturation of cultural stereotypes.¹⁷ Author Frederic Jameson calls this approach *aesthetic populism* and states that this phenomenon is most visible in architectural practice, as it is directly related to the functioning and regulation of the financial system. He also states that the postmodern aesthetic is increasingly based on *revivalism and pastiche*.¹⁸ This type of criticism can also be found in other authors – the British cultural theorist Mark Fisher uses Derrida's term *hauntology* to characterize the cultural phenomenon of a *canceled future* within which new technological advances are subordinated to the aesthetic principles of the past. He describes the cultural stagnation caused by neoliberalism by interpreting the future as bleak and the present as a product of short-term solutions and the repetition of established principles.¹⁹

¹⁵ Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modernist Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1977), 20.

¹⁶ Šik et al., *Analogue Oldnew Architecture*, 12–35.

¹⁷ Allen, *Intertextuality*, 183.

¹⁸ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London, Verso, 1991), 1–6.

¹⁹ Mark Fisher, "What is Hauntology?" *Film Quarterly* 1, 66 (2012): 16–24.

The problem of architectural expression in the new context of the neoliberal society of late capitalism is not found within the social and political influence itself, as they have always represented its essential part, but in the sources of meaning belonging to new cultural forms. With the beginning of postmodernism, these forms are no longer based on ideological principles – ideas around which different social groups could unite and establish common interests that would further dictate the cultural movement's functional, programmatic, and aesthetic aspects. Nevertheless, Graham Allen is far less critical of this phenomenon, stating that postmodern architects practice intertextual architecture, which appropriates styles from different eras and combines them in ways that attempt to reflect the historically and socially plural contexts within which *their buildings now have to exist*.²⁰

In the absence of dominant cultural forms, contemporary architecture is based on concepts dictated by economic interests and, and on the other hand, on a pluralistic understanding of the present. The principles of this pluralistic approach are founded on addressing users' specific requirements – by identifying cultural relations as elements that dictate spatial disposition and ambient experience.²¹ The problem with this approach is that it leaves a void in articulating cohesive aesthetic qualities by directing the efforts toward constructing a new social structure.

This is mainly visible in the method of selection, interpretation, and the selected aspects of the references. A significant example of reaction to this phenomenon in the context of contemporary architecture can be found in the work of Valerio Olgiati, previously a student of Miroslav Šik, through the introduction of the term *non-referential space*. He defines non-referential architecture as conceived outside the ideological narrative, completely stripped of the meaning, symbolism, and influence found outside the architecture itself.²² However, while analyzing Olgiati's work, other types of references can be recognized, mainly achieved through a mimetic approach to forms that appear in nature or through a rationalist expression. Even the simplicity and lack of ornamentation of Olgiati's Yellow House (2000) in Flims, carries connotations that can be linked to postmodernist principles in Rossi's design of San Cataldo Cemetery (1971) in Modena and even further to Giovanni Guerrini's Palazzo della Civiltà del Lavoro (1941) in Rome. In Olgiati's thesis, the autonomy of architecture is realized through the complete exclusion of other cultural forms. This reaction can be understood as a desire to change the value system that obstructs the progress of contemporary architecture, which is precisely found in inadequately regulated economic and political influences.

This further leads to the question of preferences in using references as a part of the design process. The lack of a coherent stylistic manner according to which classification would be formed and authorities set in terms of architectural expression, caused the complete abolition of the structural approach in selection and employment

²⁰ Allen, *Intertextuality*, 185.

²¹ Roberto Mangabeira Unger, "The Better Futures of Architecture," in *Anyone* (Los Angeles: Rizzoli, 1991), 28.

²² Markus Breitschmid, *Non-Referential Architecture: Ideated by Valerio Olgiati* (Basel: Park Books, 2018).

of references. Sources of meaning in the contemporary context derive from all cultural forms that can be subject to interpretation, free from stylistic and typological determinants. The rapid progress of technology, the expansion of the availability of information, and the need for optimized production dictate the new global context. Partly a result of economic pressure and the lack of an ideological context, references are based on the speed and efficiency of their application. David Harvey addressed this problem in 1990 while analyzing the postmodern experience of *time-space compression* observed in the second part of the 20th century, which has led to two outcomes: the acceleration of the production processes and higher efficiency; and the transition from consumption of goods to consumption of services. Harvey here emphasizes the role of commodification of images, as their ephemerality suits the objectives of capitalist development.²³ Even though his reasoning predates the expansion of the Internet we experience today, in retrospect it seems evident that this hypertextual environment was modeled to support the ephemeral nature of its data – allowing meaning to be reconstructed in real time.

Hypertextuality within the contemporary cultural context

Within the contemporary practice, in addition to the mentioned cultural aspects, one can recognize the apparent influence of new technologies that radically transformed the design process. Consequences of this can be seen both through the time devoted to the execution of the project and in its aesthetic qualities. Encompassing the significant impacts of technological changes on the processes and aesthetics of architecture has pointed out the need to look at the design process in a broader context. The Internet has radically changed the referencing method due to the greater availability of information in various forms. The new infrastructure for exploring for inspiration or references contributed simultaneously to the transformation of the inception of the reference source – from project-based to image-based references. Unlike the previous analogical method employed in the works of Aldo Rossi, the sources cease to be based on works of relevant authors but can be found on projects or images with unattributed origins. With that, the model of indexation of content on the Internet is transferred into the field of architecture. The influence of hypertextual connections in the architectural process formed another layer in the referential relations between different authors' works.

The divergence that arises during the reconceptualization of the project can be viewed precisely through the relationship between intertextual and hypertextual referencing. The term intertextuality refers to the connection within the meaning relationship between two or more texts. Croatian writer Pavao Pavličić defines it according to three essential characteristics: both works must use similar stylistic, compositional, or other processes, or one paraphrases the other; and the connection that is constructed between the texts must be filled with meaning, that is, the latter text

²³ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1990), 284–307.

cannot be fully understood without the former.²⁴ In contrast, the term hypertextuality, as defined by Miodrag Šuvaković, is an information technology based on individual blocks of text that are electronically non-linearly connected into possible new texts. He further states that a specific text or text element can be intertextually connected with all other texts with which it can be intentionally and meaningfully related.²⁵ Consequently, 'hypertextual' in the context of architecture can be understood as the collective relationship of one author's work with all the author's works with which it can be related – without reference to the criteria for its interpretation. Further, an author's work is positioned in a new context, within which it tends to lose the original, referential, and intertextual relationship conceived by the author due to the non-linear method of association. For instance, Adalberto Libera's infamous Casa Malaparte (1938) is simultaneously connected to Kyriakides Residence (1933) from the architect Georgios Kontoleon, as its referential predecessor, to Loba House from Pezo von Elrichshausen (2017) due to context and disposition, and to Guillermo Acuña's wooden stairs of a refurbished boathouse (2019) due to its color and form.²⁶

Corresponding to that, the problem of the lack of notation of references in architecture and other non-textual arts is particularly pressing. As the structure of the reference source changed with the advent of the Internet, a system was created at the same time that could provide an adequate method of notation of given relationships – through prior indexing of sources that belong to the design process. However, with the development of technology, the indexing process was transferred from textual (as primarily images required a certain number of tags through which related images were connected) to visually based references – created by an AI-generated algorithm. Another critical concern in preserving digital heritage is based on the lifespan of digital data that relies on hyperlinks, as those links could be deleted, moved, or rendered inaccessible.²⁷

The essential difference between intertextual and hypertextual relations is derived from the difference between linear versus the non-linear principle of referencing, within which the hypertextual relation embraces the intertextual but does not require that this relation be conceived on preconceived meaning. With that, referential relations in the contemporary context of architecture are threatened with the loss of opportunities for adequate interpretation – as reference sources cease to be based on relevant authors or projects. At the same time, new references are continually assigned according to one of the visual aspects found in the result. It is important to note that the reference, in this case, does not have to be based on inherent design decisions – it can belong to any random feature of the image – through the interpretation of the ambiance, framing, or other secondary characteristics. Within this framework of

²⁴ Pavličić, "Intertekstualnost i intermedijalnost," 157–94.

²⁵ Šuvaković, *Pojmovnik suvremene umjetnosti*, 264.

²⁶ Survey of the author.

²⁷ Arjun Sabharwal, "Digital history, archives, and curating digital cultural heritage," in *Digital Curation in the Digital Humanities: Preserving and Promoting Archival and Special Collections* (Kidlington: Chandos Publishing, 2015), 55.

indexation, the designed work remains subject to the continuous demarcation of new meanings – as a result of which the question of the autonomy of architectural practice is shifted from the problem of cultural and ideological influence to the problem of tools and techniques that shape the design process, but at the same time serve to erase it.

Concluding remarks

The objective of this paper is to understand the phenomenon of referentiality in the context of contemporary architecture, by recognizing the principles of intertextuality, which belong to the postmodern interpretation of meaning and hypertextuality, which are inherent to the present cultural context, as its fundamental counterparts.

The term 'citation' was chosen as a unifying term for the specific methods based on the principles of referencing within the architectural discipline – analogies, inspirations, or homages, terms that often conceal the design intention. In the design process, intertextuality is simultaneously found in the profession's aesthetic, formal, and engineering aspects, as the same methodological principle is recognized within different types of creative thinking.

Consequently, one can better understand the intertwining of aesthetic, engineering, and other cultural forms that together create the meaning of an author's work. While interpreting this practice in the contemporary architectural discourse, the criticism of the postmodern movement as an uninspired form of expression and cultural stagnation due to reliance on previously established aesthetic expressions, sheds light on the positions of the social context and the principle of efficiency on which it is based. To the greatest extent, this criticism refers to the broader social dependence on the regulation of the financial system, which in late capitalism is based on hyperproduction and maximization of efficiency in an effort to sustain continued economic growth. This type of social regulation replaced the earlier influence of the ideological narrative, which further resulted in the absence of consistent stylistic forms that would dictate the development of architectural practice.

Within the new context, the problem of unrecognized reference sources arises as the postmodernist structural approach in their selection and interpretation is abolished. In contrast, in contemporary architecture, the sources of meaning can be found within all cultural forms that can be the subject of interpretation without a connection to its aesthetic or formal determinants. Sources that appear in the hypertextual reading of a project do not coincide with the intertextual relations found in the design process. The hypertextual connection is frequently based on general categories (color, material, constructive system) or aspects related to the medium of representation (drawings, renders, collages) in which it becomes dominant over the content. This type of meaning-based connection that is established serves the process of exploring different, non-specific design solutions according to specific parameters. However, the construction of real meaning or the certainty in claiming an intertextual

relation within these works cannot be considered relevant. Further, this problem of inadequately constructed relations is grounded in the principles of indexing and filtering content.

This issue is additionally expressed in the present-day context, with the influence of new informational technologies based on hyper-referencing as a method for indexing and navigating through text. As a result of the lack of notation of employed references in the design process, the hypertextual content becomes the center of interpretation, and the methods of analysis and indexing are passed on to web algorithms. This further transforms the interpretation of intertextual relations from a referential-linear to a comprehensive-non-linear principle, within which the design process is subordinated to the continuously formulated meaning. New meaning is constructed according to general categories, within which kinships between sources and hypertextual references can be recognized but do not have to be based on conscious connections; or in other words, existing intertextual relations remain hidden in the abundance of *related content*.

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