

**ЯЗЫКИ НАРОДОВ ЗАРУБЕЖНЫХ СТРАН (С УКАЗАНИЕМ КОНКРЕТНОГО ЯЗЫКА ИЛИ ГРУППЫ ЯЗЫКОВ)/LANGUAGES OF PEOPLES OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES (INDICATING A SPECIFIC LANGUAGE OR GROUP OF LANGUAGES)**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60797/RULB.2025.71.7>

**INTERTEXTUALITY IN JONATHAN SWIFT'S ESSAY "THE ART OF POLITICAL LYING"**

Research article

**Potylitsina I.G.<sup>1,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Penza State University, Penza, Russian Federation

\* Corresponding author (irina\_ptl[at]mail.ru)

**Abstract**

This article examines the concept of intertextuality on the example of Jonathan Swift's essay "The Art of Political Lying" (1710). The paper examines the role of intertextual elements in revealing the content of the text and the author's ideas. The English essay, based on the interaction of various texts, ideas, cultural traditions and epochs, represents a unique literary form that still influences writers and readers. A distinctive feature of the genre of the English essay is that it cannot be considered outside the context of intertextuality. The article focuses on the intertextuality as a peculiar characteristics of the genre of the English essay. Being intentionally employed in the text, it makes the author's argumentation compelling and well-grounded.

**Keywords:** intertextuality, textual category, essay, allusion, quotation.

**ИНТЕРТЕКСТУАЛЬНОСТЬ В ЭССЕ ДЖОНАТАНА СВИФТА «ИСКУССТВО ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ ЛЖИ»**

Научная статья

**Потылицина И.Г.<sup>1,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Пензенский государственный университет, Пенза, Российская Федерация

\* Корреспондирующий автор (irina\_ptl[at]mail.ru)

**Аннотация**

Статья посвящена изучению категории интертекстуальности на примере текста эссе Джонатана Свифта «Искусство политической лжи» (1710). В работе рассматривается роль интертекстуальных элементов в раскрытии содержания текста и замысла автора. Английское эссе, основанное на взаимодействии различных текстов, идей, культурных традиций и эпох, представляет собой уникальную литературную форму, которая продолжает оказывать влияние на писателей и читателей до сих пор. Особенность жанра английского эссе состоит в том, что его невозможно рассматривать вне контекста интертекстуальных отношений. В статье интертекстуальность определяется как особая категория текста английского эссе. Автор намеренно прибегает к использованию интертекстуальности с целью подкрепления аргументации, делая её обоснованной и убедительной.

**Ключевые слова:** интертекстуальность, категория текста, эссе, аллюзия, цитата.

**Introduction**

The article is devoted to the intertextual analysis of J. Swift's essay "The Art of Political Lying". The theory of intertextuality has gained immense popularity in linguistic and literary studies. The ability to succinctly cover a variety of issues, to influence people's minds and emotions, makes intertextuality attractive for the widespread use in journalistic texts and essays, in particular.

The research material includes the text of J. Swift's essay "The Art of Political Lying", texts of the Bible (New Testament), philosophical, historical and religious interpretations.

The relevance of the study of the text of the English essay is predetermined by the fact that intertextuality is one of the main textual categories and a most important text-building strategy of the English essay. It serves as a key element in the author's attempt to influence the minds of the readers and becomes a peculiar characteristics of the genre of the English essay.

The purpose of the research is to comprehensively consider the phenomenon of intertextuality in the essay "The Art of Political Lying" written by the famous English writer and essayist Jonathan Swift in 1710.

**Main results**

Intertextuality as a linguistic phenomenon has been examined from various perspectives. The concept of intertextuality is primarily interpreted in a broad sense as literary trends and tastes shared by different authors, rooted in cultural continuity and a person's awareness of the world around them. This is a common approach in foreign language teaching, particularly in stylistics and translation, where intertextuality is typically explored within the categories of "tradition" and "innovation" [7], [10]: the analyzed material is compared with other texts to identify the borrowing and continuity of plots, images, and ideas from previously created works.

In other cases, where literary traditions and the writer's creative method are also considered, the primary focus is on comparing texts and examining the verbalized traces of "another voice" that play a significant role in the newly created work. The latter approach, in our opinion, is most appropriate for interpreting texts that contain inclusions of other texts in the form of quotations, reminiscences, allusions, etc. [1], [2], [5].

The means by which intertextuality is realized are allusive units that embody a complex of ideas (concepts). Incorporated into the text as a mechanism for intensifying utterance, the allusive device relies on the recipient — the reader — having

already represented a certain idea of the precedent text in their memory. During decoding, the information contained in the allusion is deciphered in relation to the author's ideas.

The English essay is a piece of prose dedicated to the author's description and reflection on a real-life, spiritual, or psychological topic, with a clearly expressed authorial assessment of the subject. Subjectivity and a personal approach are defining characteristics of the essay. The essayist is logical in their statements and expressive in their thoughts, which influences the way the essay's topic is developed. The theme, formulated at the beginning of the text, unfolds in a specific sequence; the main line of presentation is supplemented by enumerations, details, illustrations of the general position with specific facts, examples, and various means of creating expressiveness.

The English essay being highly artistic employs various expressive means and stylistic devices. Since the main goal of the essay is to influence the reader and convince them of the correctness of the author's ideas, the essayist must resort to compelling arguments, citing sayings of famous thinkers, biblical and mythological stories, literary works, and everyday facts. As a result, intertextual connections can be traced in the essay texts, and intertextuality itself becomes an integral characteristic of the English-language essay.

Jonathan Swift's essay "The Art of Political Lying" [9] serves as an excellent example for analyzing the nature of intertextuality and its role in the development of the topic of the essay and revealing the message. In the essay, the author reflects on the nature of politics.

"The Art of Political Lying" is a masterpiece of satirical prose, with a variety of expressive means and stylistic devices used to ridicule and criticize the political culture of the time — the practice of political deception — by exposing its absurdity.

The essay begins with the assertion that lying has become inseparable from politics. In the author's opinion, the devil invented lying ("...the devil is the father of lies"), and although this art has been honed over many years, we are not given to know who introduced it into the political space ("Who first reduced lying into an art, and adapted it to politics, is not so clear from history"). J. Swift specifically notes that lying "...has been cultivated these twenty years past in the southern part of our own island", and that politicians use this "art" for political reasons — to remain in power or, in case of losing it, for revenge. He mentions "our island" to imply an accusation of lying against Irish politicians, but he will do the same to the English when he cites England's undisputed leadership in this area. J. Swift ironically notes that the English government lie because it is considered democratic, meaning the people have approved of such a practice and, therefore, can defend themselves by the same method of lying. According to the author, the idea of lying was akin to politics in general and to the politics of England and Ireland, from the very beginning.

J. Swift's essay is permeated with intertextuality, enhancing the ironic and satirical description. The main source of intertextual inclusions is the Bible. The quote "the Devil is the father of lies, and was a liar from the beginning" is an allusion to the Bible, John 8:44 [6]. The purpose of the allusive quotation is to prove the antiquity of the art of demagoguery aimed at gaining the authority. Thus, the essayist associates lie with the struggle for power. It should be noted that power, in the Christian understanding, is sinful under all circumstances; there is something demonic in it [3, P. 78]. The first experience of lying, says J. Swift, is political in nature and is associated by the author with the devil's attempt to surpass God by inclining people to his side, seducing them, instilling false thoughts and evil desires in them. People being under the dominion of the devil are unable to distinguish lies from truth. The devil's essence is expressed in the modified allusive quotation, in the essay it acquires a new, political connotation: the image of the politics is invariably associated with lies. The quote forms the basis for the extended metaphor "lies are the devil's invention", which permeates the whole text. The argument becomes absolute, leaving no room for doubt. Thus, the author not only acknowledges that politics is riddled with lies, but goes further and ascribes a political character to the original lie.

Another example of intertextuality is the use of an allusive proper name in "where (as Milton expresses it) he had been viceroy of a great western province". By invoking the celebrated 1650s writer John Milton, the author makes the reader refer to his great work "Paradise Lost", specifically to its hero, the fallen Lucifer, a former powerful archangel. This expands the biblical allusion, ironically emphasizing the might of the "inventor", whose creation (a lie) is now being exploited by much less influential political figures.

Since the essay's theme is connected to the author's contemporary political situation in the country, the text contains hidden references to politicians and the realities of the time. Thus, the author speaks of a "great man" with a short memory who has been practicing the art of lying for twenty years and is quite accomplished in this talent: "... and my imagination this minute represents to me a certain great man famous for this talent, to the constant practice of which he owes his twenty years' reputation as the most skillful head in England, for the management of nice affairs". Evidently, this is an allusion to the Tory leader Robert Harley. The satire becomes particularly relevant and lends the text a topical quality, requiring the reader to know the context (a historical fact) to fully understand the satire.

The essay contains references to folk wisdom and proverbs. For example, "Truth will at last prevail" is a variation of the proverb "Truth will prevail". Swift questions this statement: "I have been perplexed what to do with that maxim, so frequent in every body's mouth", and then reinterprets it at the end: "Truth will at last prevail". This added element ("at last") enhances the emotional context, leaving room for hope for a change.

### Conclusion

Summing up the results of the study, it should be noted that J. Swift's essay is characterized by complex intertextual connections. Intertextuality employed by the essayist serves as a powerful tool of satire, linking contemporary political vices with eternal biblical sins, ancient myths, and literary images. By embedding references to other well-known texts, Swift borrows their cultural and historical authority to frame political lying as an evil of universal proportions. Intertextuality elevates the satire, provides a moral framework, and sharpens the criticism.

To conclude, the role of intertextuality in J. Swift's "The Art of Political Lying" is 'to arm' satire with the authority of tradition. By framing his criticism within a context of biblical morality, epic poetry, and classical mythology, J. Swift expands on the topic — the essay is not just about politics; it's about the eternal struggle between the good and the evil, order and

chaos. The essay appeals to a reader who values learning and tradition, suggesting that the current political practices are a betrayal of those very values. Intertextuality allows J. Swift to write not just as a political essayist, but as a moralist and a philosopher, judging the follies of his time by the enduring standards of Western civilization.

### Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

### Рецензия

Все статьи проходят рецензирование. Но рецензент или автор статьи предпочитают не публиковать рецензию к этой статье в открытом доступе. Рецензия может быть предоставлена компетентным органам по запросу.

### Conflict of Interest

None declared.

### Review

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

### Список литературы / References

1. Арнольд И.В. Семантика. Стилистика. Интертекстуальность / И.В. Арнольд. — Москва: LENAND, 2016. — 448 с.
2. Потылицина И.Г. Дискурсивный аспект аллюзивной интертекстуальности английского эссе dis... ..Candidate of Sciences: 10.02.04 : защищена 2005-04-21 : утв. 2005-07-15 / И.Г. Потылицина. — Москва: 2005. — 213 с.
3. Философский словарь: основан Г. Шмидтом / Под ред. Г. Шишкоффа. — Москва: Республика, 2003. — 575 с.
4. Beaugrande R.De. Text Linguistics at the Millennium: Corpus Data and Missing Links. / R.De. Beaugrande // Text - Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse. — 2000. — № 20. — P. 153–195.
5. Broich U. Formen der Markierung von Intertextualitaet / U. Broich // Intertextualitaet: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien. — Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1985. — S. 31–47.
6. The Holy Bible. The King James Version of the Holy Bible // Bible. — 2019. — URL: <https://www.o-bible.com/kjv.html>. (дата обращения: 15.09.25)
7. Kristeva J. Word, Dialogue and Novel / J. Kristeva // Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art. — 1986. — URL: <https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/u.osu.edu/dist/3/29382/files/2016/03/Kristeva-Word-Dialogue-and-Novel-2kauf14.pdf>. (дата обращения: 29.08.25)
8. Pfister M. Konzepte der Intertextualitaet / M. Pfister // Intertextualitaet: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien. — Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1985. — S. 1–30.
9. Swift J. The Art of Political Lying / J. Swift // The Best of the World's Classics. In Ten Volumes. Vol. III. Great Britain and Ireland. — 1909. — URL: <https://archive.org/details/swift-the-art-of-political-lying-1710>. (дата обращения: 15.09.25)
10. Zengin M. An Introduction to Intertextuality as a Literary Theory: Definitions, Axioms and the Originators / M. Zengin // Pamukkale University Journal of Social Sciences Institute. — 2016. — №25. — URL: <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/411869>. (дата обращения: 09.09.25)

### Список литературы на английском языке / References in English

1. Arnol'd I.V. Semantika. Stilistika. Intertekstual'nost' [Semantics. Stylistics. Intertextuality] / I.V. Arnol'd. — Moscow: LENAND, 2016. — 448 p. [in Russian]
2. Poty'licina I.G. Diskursivny'j aspekt allyuzivnoj intertekstual'nosti anglijskogo e'sse [The Discourse Aspect of the Allusive Intertextuality of the English essay] dis.....of PhD in : 10.02.04 : defense of the thesis 2005-04-21 : approved 2005-07-15 / И.Г. Потылицина. — Moscow: 2005. — 213 p. [in Russian]
3. Filozofskij slovar' [A Dictionary of Philosophy]: founded by G. Shmidt / Ed. by G. Shishkoff. — Moscow: Republic, 2003. — 575 p. [in Russian]
4. Beaugrande R.De. Text Linguistics at the Millennium: Corpus Data and Missing Links. / R.De. Beaugrande // Text - Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse. — 2000. — № 20. — P. 153–195.
5. Broich U. Formen der Markierung von Intertextualitaet [Forms of Marking Intertextuality] / U. Broich // Intertextualitaet: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien [Intertextuality: Forms, Functions, Anglistic Case Studies]. — Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1985. — P. 31–47. [in German]
6. The Holy Bible. The King James Version of the Holy Bible // Bible. — 2019. — URL: <https://www.o-bible.com/kjv.html>. (accessed: 15.09.25)
7. Kristeva J. Word, Dialogue and Novel / J. Kristeva // Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art. — 1986. — URL: <https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/u.osu.edu/dist/3/29382/files/2016/03/Kristeva-Word-Dialogue-and-Novel-2kauf14.pdf>. (accessed: 29.08.25)
8. Pfister M. Konzepte der Intertextualitaet [The Concept of Intertextuality] / M. Pfister // Intertextualitaet: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien [Intertextuality: Forms, Functions, Anglistic Case Studies]. — Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1985. — P. 1–30. [in German]
9. Swift J. The Art of Political Lying / J. Swift // The Best of the World's Classics. In Ten Volumes. Vol. III. Great Britain and Ireland. — 1909. — URL: <https://archive.org/details/swift-the-art-of-political-lying-1710>. (accessed: 15.09.25)
10. Zengin M. An Introduction to Intertextuality as a Literary Theory: Definitions, Axioms and the Originators / M. Zengin // Pamukkale University Journal of Social Sciences Institute. — 2016. — №25. — URL: <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/411869>. (accessed: 09.09.25)