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Some Remarks on Intertextual Links in the Present-Day Russian Media, with Special Reference to the Types and Functions of Intertext in Advertising

1. Intertextuality and attendant theoretical reflections

Although the French semiotic tradition within which J. Kristeva introduced in 1967 her notion of intertext/intertextuality (The Kristeva Reader 1986) has never shunned studies of mass communication¹ and although the erosion of boundaries between “high” and “low” cultures is a universally acknowledged trend of the recent decades, researchers in Russia have always been very much inclined to concentrate their efforts on the former.²

Similar to semiotics, the science of signs, which has been formed by the extension of scientific knowledge about language onto non-linguistic sign systems, the theory of intertextuality arose from the study of intertextual links in fiction, especially quotations and allusions. But the realm of intertextuality is much broader. First, it is characteristic of most, if not all, verbal genres, not only those of belles-lettres. Second, intertextual links can be found not only in verbal texts but also in texts created by means of non-verbal signs: visual arts, architecture, music, theatre, and cinema art. For instance, Q. Tarantino's “Pulp Fiction” is almost completely composed of various plot, genre, and visual quotations, and when the character of B. Willis is choosing a weapon for revenge, every object he is looking at (a chain saw, a Samurai sword, etc.) refers to a well-known movie (like “Texas Chain Saw Massacre”) or even a genre as a whole.³ One can speak of visual

¹ See, first and foremost, works by R. Barthes (1957; 1964) and J. Baudrillard (1968).

² An interesting monograph (Fateyeva 2000) presents clear evidence of such predisposition; see also, among others, (Smirnov 1995; Proskurin 1999; Zholkovsky 1994) – the latter also definitely belongs to the Russian tradition.

³ Later on, his episode from “Pulp Fiction” was, in its turn, ironically reproduced in A. Mitta's “The Frontier. A Taiga Romance”.

and audio intertextuality; music, plot, ballet, quotations and allusions, etc. are not uncommon; see also Section 2 below.

Obviously, a present-day consumer of semiotic products comes across intertextuality not so much in poetry or prose of the “Silver Age” of Russian literature⁴ or in modern Post-Modernist art (be it even quite popular samples like poetry by Timur Kibirov,⁵ all-ironic chansons by Timur Shaov, or Tarantino's movies) but in texts circulating in the mass media, especially in press headlines. Tables of contents of many weekly magazines (such as *Itoги* “The Sum”, both before and, characteristically, after the non-voluntary change of the editorial board and authors,⁶ *Novoye Vremya* “New Times”, *Yezhenedel'nyi Zhurnal* “The Weekly Magazine”) and headlines of daily newspapers such as *MK* and even as respectable as *Izvestiya* sometimes contain up to two-thirds of various intertextual expressions. Elsewhere, I have analysed the table of contents of a randomly chosen issue of *Itoги* (January 23, 2001), and after a year, the situation in this respect remained the same. For instance, the table of contents of No. 6 of *Yezhenedel'nyi Zhurnal* (2002) includes the following titles: *Without a Tsar in the Head* (a reinterpreted saying which means something like ‘dull-witted’, an article about the February Revolution of 1917); *The Drunken Air of Freedom* (a quotation from the famous novel and movie “The Seventeen Moments of Spring”); *Who was That Who Invented You, the Motherland with no Alternative?* (a reference to N. Gogol's formula); *Во банк!* ‘This bank is really something’, in Russian sounds very much like French *va banque*; *Humanitarian Intervention* (an ironic allusion to stylistic peculiarities of the modern “politically correct” Western discourse of foreign policy); *Master-Playing Agents* (Russian *хозяйничающие субъекты*, which is a pejorative paronym of *хозяйствующие субъекты* ‘economic agents’: a reference to the practice of depicting political conflicts around the mass media as being of purely economic na-

⁴ The late 19th and the first quarter of the 20th centuries: this period is a favourite subject of literary studies of intertextuality.

⁵ Kibirov even provided his collection “Intimate Lyrics” with a list of references “to help tireless researchers of the problems of intertextuality” (Kibirov 2001, p. 334). This was definitely part of the game, because it was just in this collection that the forms and sources of intertextual links were far from being clear.

⁶ *Itoги* belonged to V. Gussinsky's media holding; when it was attacked and dissipated, the editor-in-chief was fired, and most of the staff left the magazine together with him; later, they launched a new project, *Yezhenedel'nyi Zhurnal* “Weekly Magazine”.

ture); *Bayonets for Democracy* (a model taken from and referring to Yu. Semenov's novel "Diamonds for the Dictatorship of Proletariat"); *The Anti-Hero of the Past Time* (a reference to "The Hero of Our Times" by M. Yu. Lermontov); *Образование стандарта* 'The Creation of the Standard', in Russian very similar to *образовательный стандарт* 'educational standard', which the article is about; *Until the Second Coming*; *Children of Professor Mishin* (a formula with numerous indexical connotations, for example, *the sons of Lieutenant Schmidt* in famous I. Il'f and Ye. Petrov's novel "The Golden Calf").⁷ Among the headlines on the first page of *Izvestiya* (March 30, 2002), the ratio between intertextual and non-intertextual expressions is 4 to 3: *They will clean strongly but accurately* is a periphrasis of Lyolik's words from "The Diamond Arm" movie (*I shall beat accurately but strongly*); *On the Right of Nations to Reproduction* refers to Lenin's *On the Right of Nations to Self-Determination*; *A Common Murder* to "A Common Wonder" (Ye. Schwartz's play), and "A Common Fascism" (M. Romm's documentary film); the title of the main article *Take Care of What You Say* (with the subheading *To Whom It Is Possible to Be Rude in Rus'*) consists of a speech formula and a periphrasis of the title of N. Nekrasov's long poem, respectively. And even to present sport news, in *The TsSKA Basketball Team Beats the Sons of Izrael*, a Biblical nomination is used.⁸

Scholarly works dealing with the "intertextuality explosion" are rather numerous. In general terms, this phenomenon can be associated with the Post-Modernist trend to "citation-thinking" (as R. Barthes stated, "any text is a new tissue of former citations") with a specific "semiotic oversaturation" of modern culture and feeling, as once formulated by the Polish paradoxist Stanislaw Jerzy Lec, "everything has been said already. Fortunately, not everything has been thought of". It is clear, by the way, that the very fact of

⁷ The name of the novel is intertextual as well, but in Russian, it is not a direct, but modified quotation (mundane *теленек* instead of Biblical *телец*).

⁸ A year and a half later, in August 2003, a similar elementary content analysis of headlines in the same periodicals again reveals a high level of intertextuality. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of intertextual play in mass media, being wide spread and rather stable, is by no means universal. There are periodicals (not necessarily supportive of traditionalist ideologies, the correlations here are much more complicated) that obviously avoid an intertextual play, probably because of its strong stylistic association with what is for them "the irresponsible negativistic journalism of the early 1990s". On intertextuality in media headlines, see also (Zemskaya 1996; Smetanina 2002).

adducing these quotations here is an illustration of what is stated through them. Albeit various cases of intertextuality have been known from the days of yore, the coining of terminology and formation of the theory just in the last third of the 20th century is not accidental, of course. The spread of education and increased accessibility of works of art to the broad public, the development of mass communication, and the expansion of mass culture (however different one's attitude towards these may be) has led to a new semiotic quality of human life. As a result, using the existing forms to express a certain content has become for a considerable number of people more prestigious than searching for brand new ones. A communicative strategy like this is considered a respectable way to demonstrate one's command of cultural and semiotic heritage, one's knowledge of "the treasures of the semiosphere", and one's ability to use them effectively. Art and, since a certain moment, the mundane semiotic processes in the late 20th century have become significantly intertextual.

It is not my task here to investigate in any depth the cultural reflection of intertextuality (cf., e.g., Rudnev 2001); neither shall I dwell upon historical uniqueness or non-uniqueness of the present-day situation (the appreciation of the originality of form as one of the highest artistic values is in no way a historical or cultural constant) and prospects for its development. The main topic of my remarks is only one component of mass communication, namely, advertising and, to be more precise, commercial advertising in today's Russia. I am going to show that this sphere has not remained intact by the "intertextuality explosion" of the last decades. And a question arises: Is the intertextuality in advertising just a corollary of general cultural development, a kind of "passing fad" – or are there any specific functions performed by intertextual links in advertising messages, both verbal and non-verbal?

The existing functional descriptions of intertextuality tend to be formulated in terms of self-expression by the authors who intensively use intertextual links in their works (cf. Fateyeva 2000, p. 20). However, in advertising messages – except in festival "ads for the sake of art" – self-expression can never be the principal functional constituent. One of the main postulates of advertising activities, repeatedly stated by leading experts, is that an ad must

sell,⁹ and all other aspects of it are to be subordinate to this primary function. Generally speaking, the universal correctness of this postulate may be questioned, but one could hardly doubt that the advertising discourse as a whole is surely more utilitarian than the discourse of arts and, first and foremost, functions as the “suasive diction”. Why, then, are intertextual links, generally considered as a type of artistic play, used in utilitarian texts of advertising? I have not seen a distinct answer to this question in scholarly literature. Even research dealing directly with intertextuality in advertising (including the most relevant to my knowledge (Manhart et al. 1997)) is concentrated mostly on the detection and classification of intertextual links in advertising and not on the discussion of its functions. The latter are supposed to be inferred from the general cultural background of modern communicative processes.¹⁰

However, the answer to the above questions seems to be quite obvious. Intertextual links in advertising texts are, in terms of their illocutionary force,¹¹ as utilitarian as everything else in its form and content, but their utilitarian properties are “built upon” their general communicative functions, which, thereby, are specifically transformed in an advertising discourse. To demonstrate this, I am going to discuss intertextual links in advertising texts in terms of R. Jakobson's classic six-element model of communication and, respectively, of the six functions of language (Jakobson 1960).

Before engaging in the discussion about functions, it is necessary to pay some attention to the formal typology of intertextual links. As already noted, this topic is much better covered in scholarly literature than that of functions of intertextuality; however, there are still some points to be reviewed here. It

⁹ Let me remind that such terms as “sell” and “product” are used in the theory of advertising very broadly: The first also means introducing ideas, awareness, and attitudes; the second includes services, people, places, brands, etc.

¹⁰ Quite recently, Ph. Alexandrov, a bright observer of Russian advertising, suggested what he called (a bit ironically) “a theory of borrowed images” (Alexandrov 2003, p. 63-59), according to which a use of intertextual links in advertising messages is a testimony for the lack of creativity of copywriters and art-directors, coupled with the desire, on the part of advertisers who often produce messages themselves, to save on advertising budget and to impose their cultural values on target groups. It may be true in some cases but can hardly be accepted as a general treatment of intertextuality.

¹¹ Not necessarily in terms of perlocutionary effect, of course, because any ad can fail.

is worth noting that if advertising discourse is taken in all varieties of its verbal and non-verbal forms, the multitude of its intertext types can only be compared with such a synthetic art as cinema. Perhaps intertextual links in advertising are even more diverse, because, for example, serial ads can be displayed in shorter time-limits than in movies; and there are also several possibilities of using olfactory and even haptic links. In cinema, this is possible only via synaesthetic stimuli.

2. Some typology

Any reasonable typology of intertextual links, in general, and intertext in advertising, in particular, is multi-dimensional, although some typological criteria may not be independent. Here I am not in the position to analyse the details of typology (this task presupposes a serious and much longer consideration). Besides this, for technical (and copyright) reasons, I cannot adduce here all relevant examples of, for example, visual and audio advertising messages (the latter is also true of the discussion in Section 3.). Therefore, I confine myself to a very sketchy presentation of principal typological parameters, sometimes accompanied by a purely verbal description of certain advertising messages. From the viewpoint of Piercian trichotomy of signs (symbols – icons – indices), the whole of intertextuality belongs to the realm of indexical signs.

2.1 Sensual channels

There are five of them, as you know (plus numerous “sixth senses”). The majority of intertextual links are of visual or acoustic nature. Note that this parameter is orthogonal to the second one (see below). The most common of visual intertextual links are pictorial reproductions of works of visual arts or well-known photographs (in Russia, e.g., V. Mukhina's *The Worker and the Kolkhoznitsa* or the photo of Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt at the Yalta summit; both are used in many ads); acoustic intertextual links include musical quotations and representation of voices and specific speech traits of celebrities. The other three sensual channels (gustatory, haptic, and olfactory) are rarely used for communication in Western (and Russian) culture, but one can imagine, for example, an olfactory intertextual link as an element of marketing communication in a restaurant or bakery, etc. There are also syn-

aesthetic effects used in advertising such as the "That very tea" campaign (with the well-known "Elephant" packages of the only available quality tea in Russia of the 1970s) or an interesting ad campaign of Hewlett-Packard photo printers with the slogan *Only reality looks more real* and pictures of, for example, a fan and a comb or a worn-out running shoe and a deodorant.

2.2 Verbal vs. non-verbal intertextual links

This parameter admits the exceptional role played in communication by natural language. This Number 1 code is opposed to all other codes, which are very numerous (see, e.g., Chandler 2001). It is important that verbal intertextual links may be both visual and acoustic.

2.3 G. Genette's typology

This typology, suggested by a French specialist in literary studies (Genette 1982), distinguishes between different modes of interaction between texts: **intertextuality** proper, understood as a presence of more than one text within the formal textual limits (quotations, allusions, or plagiarisms); **paratextuality** as a relationship between a text and its title, epigraph, foreword, afterword, etc., in advertising texts also a relationship between different elements of the advertising message: the body text, title, slogan, and echo-phrase; **metatextuality** as a comment on and reference to the pretext (a relation important for understanding complex serial ads such as those in the Tuborg beer ad campaign in Russia in 2002, where the whole message could be fully understood only after all specific ads have been appreciated); **hypertextuality** as an ironic interpretation or travesty of pretext(s); in the ad world, this relation is common in all kinds of parodies produced mostly for festivals but sometimes used also in real commercials, as in the famous Yu. Grymov's ad of *TV-Park* weekly, which was a metaparody travesting the whole class of advertising methods, but, nevertheless, quite effective in promotional terms; and, last, **architextuality** understood as a reverberation of genres (such as TV commercials using typical genre features of, e.g., Western or horror movies).

2.4 Content vs. form

Intertextual links may not only refer directly to a specific content represented (more or less precisely) by this or that type of quotation but also to a specific idiosyncratic form, that is, style, easily recognisable and strongly associated with some cognitive structures, values, etc. The common term used here is stylisation. In advertising, we can see a reproduction of the artistic manner of Dali, El Lissitsky, or van Gogh in the Lipton ads or numerous representations of stylistics of Soviet political posters of the 1920s and 1930s (and sometimes even 1950s and 1960s). A specific province of this type of intertextual links is the use of fonts with a strong “semantic halo” (to use K. Taranovsky's term coined for a different purpose) or indexical connotations such as the Egyptian Grotesque of Traktir in Russia (the latter is well-known as the font used during the Civil War in Russia and strongly associated with those times).

2.5 Recognisable vs. non-recognisable

Recognition of intertextual links is a matter of personal culture and “semiotic literacy”, and that is why analysis of intertextual links is an important source of data about the society's culture. However, there are quotations that are almost universally known (such as Julius Caesar's formula *Veni, vidi, vici* ‘I came, I saw, I won’) and quotations about which one may have more than 99 percent awareness of the inability of the recipients to recognise them, for example, quotations from Hegel in the ad of Unibank or quotations from A. Lincoln, G. Garcia Marquez, J. B. Shaw, Napoleon Bonaparte, and others in the serial ad of Johnnie Walker in Russia. In the latter cases, what is recognised is the name of the author, not his words, although sometimes even the name can say nothing to the public such as the name of Titus Maccius Plautus quoted in an ad of the Renaissance Assurance Company. The content of his words (*In our lives, unexpected events are more common than expected ones*), however, is highly relevant to the idea of assurance.

2.6 Attributed vs. non-attributed

All non-recognisable and some recognisable quotations may be attributed in this or that way (e.g., in an ad of Isuzu Trooper, the saying of Caesar is ac-

accompanied by a picture of Caesar's statue, the latter being both the attributive mark and the visual intertextual link). Sometimes, as we can see, the attribution may be more important than the quotation itself.

2.7 Precise vs. modified

Both textual and imagery intertextual links may be precise quotations or periphrases (sometimes travesties) of the original. Naturally, the latter cannot be possible unless the original is highly recognisable and stored in the memory of recipients (as in the Diesel clothing ad where seducing girls are inserted into the photo of the Yalta summit, in ads using variations of Mukhina's image,¹² or in numerous modifications of Caesar's formula mentioned above). Modifications are often used for evaluative purposes, mostly in order to "lower" the communicative register as well as the source or the target of intertextual links, or even both (cf. also Zemskaya 1996 and Section 3. below).

2.8 Direct vs. indirect relevance

The content of intertextual links (which are more often verbal ones) may be of direct or indirect relevance to the product advertised. The most typical cases of direct relevancy are represented by authoritative quotations in which a celebrity either recommends a product or, more often, uses it (so called testimonials). Interestingly enough, this kind of intertextual links is quite atypical of Russian ads. Perhaps this is evidence of a distance between prestigious and mass consumption in this country.¹³ On the other hand, we can see ads, like that of Johnnie Walker, where the quotations, wise and aphoristic as they are, have no overt relevance to the advertised product at all and,

¹² Among them – a young man wearing a smoking and a girl in an evening dress, standing in a typically Mukhina position and keeping a fancy chair over their heads (an ad of the Angelina furniture salon), the Worker and the Kolkhoznitsa keeping a torch borrowed from the Statute of Liberty (a poster of "Cannes Lions in St.Petersburg" show), etc.

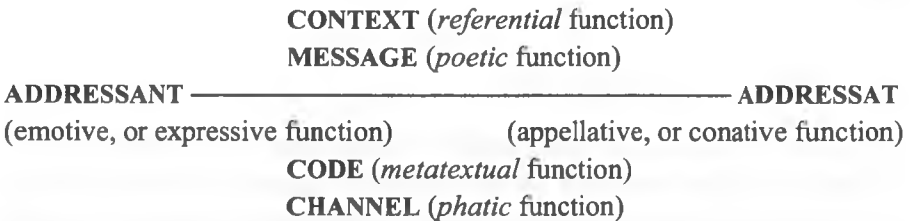
¹³ The natural consumer behaviour of present day celebrities arouse indignation, while former stars in ads of budget goods tend to arouse pity. There are some examples of commercials in which "acting" pop stars advertise budget goods; as Alexandrov notes, they look absolutely false (Alexandrov 2003, p. 27).

only if being read in their entirety, form (judging from some words) a vague message depicting the process of alcohol consumption.

Of course, there are some other typological parameters used by researchers of intertextuality like that of allusion (a reference to the text) vs. reminiscence (a reference to reality) and some others, but they are of minor importance for the present study.

3. The functions of intertext in advertising

As claimed above, the central idea of this section is to apply Jakobson's model of the functions of language to the study of intertextuality in advertising. Let me state again that this model distinguishes between six elements of communication:



R. Jakobson's (1960) model of communication

Intertextual links in all kinds of texts are capable of performing all kinds of functions from this classic model. Ad texts are by no means an exclusion from this statement. Let me demonstrate this using one impressive (to my mind) example: the print ad campaign of the FM station *Haue paduo* ("Our radio").

This was¹⁴ a serial ad (intertextual in this sense *ex definitione*, but in many other senses as well). Each advertising message consisted of 3 principal elements: an emblem and a large logotype of the station, which occupied the lower half of the vertical page of the approximately A4 format, a verbal quo-

¹⁴ In 2003, the campaign has been resumed, and at least one more message of the same format appeared in press.

tation from a certain Russian rock composition, and an illustration of these words.

Let us now discuss in brief the functions of intertextual links in advertising, primarily with reference to the “Our Radio” campaign.

The *expressive* function of metatext is manifested insofar as the author uses intertextual links to state his/her cultural and semiotic preferences and values, and sometimes pragmatic and even political attitudes: Texts and authors referred to may be prestigious, fashionable, popular, odious, etc. The selection of quotations, their stylistics, character of allusions, and derivative elements of the message triggered by the intertextual link(s) – all of these are important elements of (sometimes non-deliberate) self-expression of the author (or the one who takes responsibility for the advertising message). In particular, by giving references to rock compositions, the advertiser signifies his/her aesthetic values, and by providing them with witty and sometimes frivolous illustrations (thus, an excerpt from Zhuki group *But the battery of our love has died* is illustrated by a picture of a vibrator with an anonymous battery falling out of it, while an excerpt from B. Grebenshchikov *Some marry, some do it so simple* is illustrated by copulating rabbits) positions him/herself as a person “without prejudices”.

The *appellative* function of intertext is especially clearly manifested in advertising discourse and, in fact, is transformed into a well-known marketing function of **segmentation** and **targeting**. Intertextual links are numerous and diverse, and this fact makes it possible to address an ad message to a very specific audience – only to those who are able to recognise them and trace the links and, ideally, evaluate the choice of a specific quotation and the intention behind it. The ad of “Our Radio” is addressed to a certain segment of the young audience, and, in fact, all quotations, as I have learnt from experience, can be recognised by students but not by older people.

The appellative function of intertextual links is closely related with the *phatic* (contact-establishing) function that is usually treated as a “check-out” of the communicative channel. In this case, the two functions are merged into the function of **mutual recognition**, thus establishing “self-other” relations. The communicative exchange and the ability to recognise a specific

intertextual link allows the discovery of the presence of at least semiotic and perhaps also cultural shared memory or maybe even shared ideological and political positions. Such tuning via intertextual links can be very fine (something like “A close one is the person who reads novel X and the memories of Y”). A phenomenon of a dialogue in which one participant quotes from a certain source and the other answers by a continuation of it usually means a very high degree of cultural closeness, and the “Our Radio” ad with V. Tsoi’s words *I am planting aluminium cucumbers* definitely suggests in its visual component the continuation ... *on a tarpaulin field* as a way of expressing approximately the following content: ‘I recognised the quotation and inform you that I know this text too, and you can make certain inferences from this fact’.

The next function of advertising intertext is *poetic*: In most cases it is realised as an **entertaining** one. For many (perhaps most) people, advertising is, psychologically, an unavoidable evil and, for them, having fun with it is (at least a partial) compensation for the necessity to be exposed to an inflow of ads.¹⁵ There are different aspects of the intertextual entertainment game: pleasure of recognition, close to that of solving a crossword puzzle;¹⁶ pleasure induced by the unexpected choice of quotation and elegant insertion of it into the message; pleasure caused by a witty illustration, etc. In another “Our Radio” ad (the best, to my mind), a quotation from the Nautilus Pompilius group, *“The truth is always singular”, that’s what the Pharaoh said*, is illustrated by a picture of a road policeman (in the Russian uniform; the word *pharaoh* has been used in the past as a slang name for a policeman). The verbal intertext here is supplemented by visual intertextual links: This “Pharaoh” is standing in an unnatural position typical of people depicted in ancient Egyptian visual art, and his stripped traffic baton is made as long as the

¹⁵ Metaphorically speaking, the aesthetic pleasure (and, respectively, the realisation of the poetic function of language) can often be treated as a bribe suggested to us by those who are interested in trespassing the protective barrier of our consciousness.

¹⁶ The level of difficulty of an “intertextual puzzle” can vary considerably from a faultless recognition of quotes from cult movies such as *The peacocks, you say?* or *If I stand up, you lie down* in Russia (from “The White Sun of Desert” and “Operation Ё”, respectively) or *I’ll be back* (from “Terminator”) in English-speaking countries to deep investigations aimed at the detection of intertextual links that the author perhaps has not the least idea about (the so-called uncontrolled subtext, etc.). In the case of advertising, the right tuning of the difficulty is one of the factors of the communicative effectiveness of the ad.

Pharaoh's staff. And, last but not least, the contrast between the notions of 'truth' and 'road police' is felt by every Russian driver.

Intertextual links, definitely, can perform a *referential* function: that of presenting information about the world. For instance, the "Our Radio" ads inform the audience about the content and format of its musical programmes. Moreover, a reference to pretext involves an activation of the information about the pretext. In this respect, intertextual links work similarly to such "interdomain" cognitive operations as metaphor and analogy. Again, the level of activation varies considerably: From just reminding that somebody has already said something relevant to a full activation of everything that is stored in the recipient's memory about the content and conception of the pretext, its form, stylistics, argumentative structure, effects that accompanied its appreciation, etc. This is the mechanism responsible for the elevating or (which is much more common in the Russian mass media) lowering effects of intertextual links. Interestingly enough, the referential function can interact with the entertaining one: An intertextual link can usurp emotions or knowledge from the source pretext. Thus, the intertextual link (to "The Diamond Arm" movie) *The trousers are transforming ...* in an ad of Columbia Sportswear refers to a funny episode, and although the trousers in that episode failed to transform into elegant shorts, the advertisers surely decided that the "borrowed fun" is more important than a potential negative connotation (the ad depicts, among other things, transforming trousers).

At last, the intertextual link trivially performs a *metatextual* function, being an instruction for text understanding. However, the question of its specific transformation in advertising discourse needs further investigation – as well as many other topics left without proper attention in the above brief remarks.

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