

Textual Transfusions

**A Transtextual Analysis of Cicero's *The Oration for
Sextus Roscius of Ameria* and Steven Saylor's *Roman Blood***

Jelige: detektív

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Abstract

The present study aims to analyze and compare Cicero's *Oration for Sextus Roscius of Ameria* and Saylor's *Roman Blood*, both belonging to two widely different genres, written in two entirely different times. Since the former text belongs to classical antiquity and the latter to contemporary popular detective fiction, first I shall present the relationship between the literary canon and popular fiction taking into consideration genre. The main focus of my paper is on the transtextual approach in the process of interpretation. The analysis operates with the method of transtextual comparisons based on Genette's theory to open the two texts up and show the relationship between them, while discovering the way they communicate through the course of time, and how they are related to each other.

The paper is original in the choice of the topic and method as well. Saylor's novel has not been discussed by scholars since it is not part of the literary canon. The study proves the complexity of the novel due to interweaving ancient and contemporary texts and genres.

Keywords: popular fiction, detective fiction, transtextuality, hypo- and hypertext

Introduction

Literary texts have some common features, which, to a certain degree, create similarities between them. When measuring these similarities, texts are sorted into different categories called genres. The value of a certain text is measured by how it can comprehend as many genres as possible. Does that mean that texts which are not as comprehensive as others have less value, if any? What is the truth in the case of popular fiction, where there is hardly any possibility for a work to be comprehensive regarding genre, mostly because such works are considered best when they fulfill the requirements of their specific genre?

In the first part of my paper, I shall present the theoretical basis of my analysis looking into the relationship between classical and canonical texts versus popular fiction focusing on the genre of historical crime fiction. Next, I shall try to clarify the term transtextuality, mainly based on Genette's theory, in order to explore the connections between two literary works written in two widely different eras, namely Cicero's *Oration for Sextus Roscius of Ameria* and Saylor's *Roman Blood*. In the analysis I shall apply both a close and distant reading, in order to establish the transtextual connections between them. After having done so, I shall draw the conclusions and establish further ways of handling Saylor's *Roman Blood*.

1. From Classical Literature and the Literary Canon to Popular Fiction

1.1. The Classical

The basic meaning of the word classic refers to "[works] belonging to the literature or art of Greek and Latin antiquity." (Pioldner 2010, 16) These works were written in languages widely spoken in antiquity and shared some qualities and ideas that are relevant even to today's readers via different translations. Nowadays it would be rather atavistic to adopt an attitude that establishes the only value of the classics in having been written in the antiquity, because "a classic work is not just the product of 'Graces that arise merely from the Antiquity of an Author...'" (Mikics 2007, 58) There is a continuity from the ancient up to contemporary texts as far as the presence of the classical value is concerned, even if palpable through change. (Mikics 2007, 58)

The interpretive community – a group of people who are studying literature – is trusted to judge whether a work meets a particular standard already established. According to their decision the reading public can, for example, state that William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* "is

a classic.” The literary works accepted by this community have to represent their own time originally, and need to have a value valid even in our days. It is obvious then that there is a unique value in Golding’s novel that not every literary work bears. This value differentiates it not just from other literary works written in its own time, but also from those published many years later.

There are at least two aspects on how the true nature of such a classic should be interpreted. One is time. It takes time for a literary work to be studied, commented on and estimated. The second factor is the community delivering the judgment. This comprehends only a small percent of the whole reading society, yet, they handle literature with the appropriate competency. They are considered the only ones entitled to understand and treat the value-system called the literary canon.

1.2. The Literary Canon

The word canon was already used back in antiquity. *The New Handbook of Literary Terms* consolidates this by saying that “canon comes from the Greek word *kanon*, a measuring rod used to ensure straightness.” (Mikics 2007, 47) At that time men of literature used it to name a group of works they determined as valuable, making them the very first interpretive community in the history of literature.

Canon in the present day is used to name a list of works that are considered classical, or refers to “the explanation of these lists.” (Tapodi 2008, 15)¹ A text that fulfills these requirements is considered *canonical* not only by bearing the expected qualities, but also by being “taught in schools and proclaimed as compulsory.” (Mikics 2007, 49) As a consequence, multiple explanations have emerged, pleading for the different sides of the different canons, authorized by the different interpretive communities of different cultures with values. What is important is that if a canon is established before a writer publishes their work, it follows that they and their piece of work are restricted by it in some way. Such a work is prejudiced against even before being created.

This roster splits the whole world of literacy into two separate parts, and the adjective ‘superior’ describes the relationship between the two of them, expressing the inferiority of the latter one. These two fields of literature are called “high-literature” and “popular fiction,” respectively. Given the fact that only those devoted to it can speak considerably about literature,

¹ Translated by the author of the present paper

“the scientific society specialized in the examination of high literature has to converse about popular literature” (Bényei 2009, 47)²:

[...] the spatial metaphor that is included in the designation [of high-literature] indicates the asserted or actual origin of the asymmetry [between high literature and popular fiction]: we have an insight into the “low(er-ranked)” popular culture, we look down on it, like on a plain slope of a lowland, hence it is evident that we are talking and expressing our opinion about it. (Bényei 2009, 46)³

Since high-literature delimits itself from popular texts, this means that there is an ongoing discussion on the topic and some of the works outside the canon can potentially become part of it or are placed at its periphery. Scholars handling a canon have to understand and estimate how certain works could or should be integrated into a certain canon.

What is the general difference between these two fields of literature? According to Bényei’s study, “popular fiction is a “relative concept” and as formulated by Tony Bennett a “residual” one as well, inasmuch as its meaning is nothing else than “everything that is not Literature [...] that which remained after the description and characterization of the sphere of Literature was closed.” (qtd. in Bényei 2009, 47)⁴ It would be basically accurate to say that works of popular fiction are created for the average public, with ‘lower’ aesthetic demands, named ‘mainstream’ by Maurice (2017, 2). The phrase used by Maurice gives an explanation to the question of popularity, and to the reason why it cannot be considered high-literature, if we accept that the prescriptions of high-literature in achieving cultural value are unimportant as far as popular fiction is concerned. (Bényei 2009, 47)⁵ It describes a different viewpoint on literature, namely that readers have to be taken into account.

The ‘text’ itself is the key to understanding the incomprehension between popular and not popular literature. Literature is about texts of different ranges, different values and different purposes. Therefore, the literary scholars created a system to arrange the numerous texts written before, by discovering the similarities between the texts of a given canon, the notion of *genre* comes into existence.

² Translated by the author of the present paper

³ Translated by the author of the present paper

⁴ Translated by the author of the present paper

⁵ Translated by the author of the present paper

1.3. Popular Fiction

It is quite hard to come up with a definition for popular fiction among the determined expressional parameters of ‘high-literature,’ given that the term itself is contradictory and asymmetrical in its own meaning, as Bényei points out in his study:

We are at a “scientific conference” which is about “popular literature.” It is scarcely impossible to imagine the opposite (a popular conference about the study of literature, or even high-literature). That is, a scientific community specialized in high-literature discusses popular literature. (Bényei 2009, 46)⁶

That may be similar to what is going to be done in the present work, a study trying to determine the nature of the continuance between ‘high-literature’ and popular literature as Bényei puts it, as well as to prove that there is a need for these types of discourses. The most evident explanation is that it is prominent for a wide layer of society. The simplicity of works that belong to popular fiction mainly comes from the intention that they were specifically created for a wide and non-academic audience. Given this common feature writings of popular fiction can easily be distinguished by “referring to a plot-driven, fictional work, which falls into one or more categories of the literary genres.” (Maurice 2017, 2) Writing popular fiction is aimed to create an audience, even if that means the labelling of all kinds of popular fiction with similar features and grouping them into different classes called genres.

Numbers make literary writings popular, and we can conclude that the value of a work can be established by the rate of its audience, literally it is a more influential variable than a work’s true value. This is defined in Maurice’s study as follows: “a novel is ‘popular fiction’ if its success is measured as much by its sales and the devotion of fans as opposed to timeless quality.” (Maurice 2017, 2) The examination of popular fiction is used to approach the ‘popular’ from above. As we speak about literature and its scholarship, high-literature, it is hard to perceive something that cannot correspond to its requirements. Literary sciences are considered to validate the high, poetic categories only, in order to measure the ‘literariness’ of a piece of writing. Works which cannot conform to these conditions are simply left out from the corpus of, what is called literature. Later on, it was established that texts of popular literature are unreadable using the professional methods. As an example Bényei gives the case of Edmund Wilson who read a piece of popular literature, one of Agatha Christie’s crime novels and said that those were “impossible to read literarily; we just skim through them, to see how the mystery

⁶ Translated by the author of the present paper

will be solved.” (2009, 49)⁷ A change can be noticed here as far as the judgment of popular texts is concerned, because the inability to read them presupposes that this inability is not created by the text, it is a kind of inability of the reader, meaning that the ‘professional’ reader uses the traditional way of reading a text, which, consequently, in the case of popular texts is not appropriate. In the example given by Bényei it is clear that the problem no longer lies within the poorness of such a text anymore, instead it is “too exciting,” the reader, like Wilson, “wants to know what the end of the story will be, that is it requires a different mode of reading.” (Bényei 2009, 49)⁸

The society of readers and writers of popular fiction created a “change in the perspective [and thereby] a change in the aesthetics” (Hamilton and Jones 2009, vi) of literature that became so influential it made some works of popular fiction, such as “the stories of Sherlock Holmes or *The Lord of the Rings* saga, the popularity of which were not only temporary” become part of European culture. (Bényei 2009, 50)⁹ The truth is that high and popular literature depend on each other’s status more than ever. Why should the works of popular literature be discussed if they are valueless in the eyes of high-literacy and, approaching from another perspective, which are not interested in corresponding to any requirements of high-literature? Bényei’s answer to such a question is that “high literature needs popular fiction” (Bényei 2009, 47)¹⁰ to identify itself. Still, the term genre is used today to distinguish literary works, and therefore it shall be discussed in the following.

2. The Question of Genre: Historical Crime Fiction

Genre gives guidance both to writers and readers. It ties authors’ hands, dictating how to give form to a work of literature. Authors are supposed to follow these prescriptions for genre; they cannot do otherwise, because their works will be judged by this system accordingly. This is proved by Bényei, establishing the fact that “[t]he concept [...] is that it analyses popular fiction by its genres.” (Bényei 2009, 51)¹¹ Some authors followed the given pattern so strictly that business and marketing people responsible for distributing these works to the audience even wanted to rename popular fiction to genre fiction (Hamilton & Jones 2009). The “masterpiece of popular literature is precisely the book which best fits its genre.” (Todorov,

⁷Translated by the author of the present paper

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¹⁰Translated by the author of the present paper

¹¹ translated by the author of the present paper

1966, 43) The novel, that this paper discusses can be classified into two different genres; historical fiction and detective fiction respectively.

2.1. Detective Fiction

It is hard to define the genre of detective fiction because there is some sort of conflict present in every narrative starting from the oral tradition, myths (e.g. the myth of Oedipus), the Bible (e.g. the story of Cain and Abel), or *The Arabian Nights* told by Scheherazade. The medieval narratives about the dragon-slaying knights and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* also contain murders. Later, in the Renaissance period and after, many writings also involved crime; murder was, for example, a key plot element in many of Shakespeare's plays as well. Thus, murder has been part of the narrative for a long time, yet, in order to be able to speak about detective fiction there needs to be a detective in the story. (cf. Alexander 2010, 8)

Most critics and scholars agree that the first detective stories were written by Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849). In *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) it is detective C. Auguste Dupin who solved the mystery behind the murder of the two women. The unnamed first person narrator specific of detective fiction is also attributed to Poe. (cf. Alexander 2010, 8)

Probably the most famous detective is Sherlock Holmes, a character created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887 (Maurice 2017). Around Holmes a whole subgenre of detective fiction emerged, the stories of the typical private eye, who has to solve the case even if this puts his own life into danger. Detective fiction reached the peak of its popularity in the first decades of the twentieth century through the novels of Agatha Christie. (Maurice 2017) In this genre a person with supernatural or extraordinary knowledge and wit is placed into a puzzling situation, which has to be examined and solved by the so-called 'detective'. (Todorov 1966) Maurice sets out the three typical types of detectives, the "cerebral sleuths", which had its golden age in the early twentieth century, with novels written by the famous Agatha Christie. The type of the hard-boiled detectives, the intelligent, but lonely tough-guys, with a great sense of justice, capable of handling weapons and physically strong enough to take care of themselves in a fight. Authors of these novels were mostly British, "influenced very much by the Prohibition gangster culture of the period." (Maurice 2017, 20) The third stereotype is represented by the cops or coppers who stand for the law; even if they knew the truth, there is a rule they had to obey before acting.

A change occurred in the field of detective fiction with the appearance of the so called *whodunit*, introducing a kind of duality into the genre. "[A]ll detective fiction is based on two

murders of which the first is committed by the murdered, is merely the occasion for the second, in which he is the victim of the pure and unpunishable murderer, the detective” (Burton qtd. in Todorov 1966, 44) Todorov establishes that there are always two stories in such a piece of detective fiction. The first is the crime itself, which “cannot be immediately presented in the book” for the reason that it has to be investigated by the detective first. This is how the first story creates the second one, the story which is “present but insignificant”, meaning that it could not exist without the first one, that of the crime. Therefore, the first story has to be better elaborated as the map of the solution to the case, only clear in the author’s mind, this story gives “the ‘plot’ aspect of the narrative”. The second story is actually the reverse engineering of the first one, a path on which the detective, and thus the reader have to go along, reveal the beginning of the first story, at the end of this second one. Todorov calls this paradoxical for good reason, because it is not easy to see the same case from two different angles. That is why the author of a detective novel has to implicate a detective, as mediator, whose only role is to escort the reader throughout the mystery, who will eagerly accompany him or her, in order to solve the puzzle. (Todorov 1966, 46) This narrative is identified as “iterative” by Umberto Eco, who describes this process where “the reader continuously recovers, point by point, what he already knows, what he wants to know again: that is why he purchased the book.” (qtd. in Bondanella 1997, 58)

Todorov presents another type of detective novel, called thriller. Here the two narratives coincide, the crime is committed while the investigation is on its course. This type of detective fiction usually happens in the streets, where the detectives have to be capable of defending themselves. That is the reason for authors using the hard-boiled type of detective in their novels. Consequently, this eliminates the tension of guessing the possible outcome of the story, but the tension is not lost. Readers enjoy these novels too, Todorov differentiates “two entirely different forms of interests”, and names curiosity the first and suspense the second. He also establishes that the opposing effect produces the tension and enjoyment in the reader; the “effect to cause” and “cause to effect” issue creates tension in the narrative, and keeps the reader thrilled, hence the name.

An interesting fact, that detective fiction has a similar feature to historical fiction. It is not as factual as historical fiction, but it also shows how society functions, without the volition to be ‘historically accurate’. This idea appears in Maurice’s study, where she quotes Winks: “[detective fiction] becomes the mirror of society”. (Maurice 2017, 21 qtd Winks 1980, 9)

2.2. Historical Fiction

Works of historical fiction are intended to voluntarily or involuntarily show distinctions between the events of the past, which the book is about, and the time that the work itself is written. (Maurice 2017) This genre became unquestionably popular, beginning at the end of the nineteenth century, says Maurice, mentioning the thoughts of George Lukács (qtd. in Maurice 2017, 22), when a peculiar curiosity for history, appeared among the ‘common’ public. As this interest in history in general grew, the idea arose in the communities dealing with literature that for this layer of society the historical accuracy was not especially important. This genre earned its popularity partially because it was “more accessible than biography or ‘proper’ history”. (Maurice 2017, 23 qtd. in Young 2005, 4) Historians themselves started to recognize the value of historical fiction but, shortly after, arguments appeared about the different “methods of historians and novelists, the pages of histories and historical fictions.” (qtd. in Browne and Kreiser 2000, 1) Historical fiction is about how men and women lived in different periods of time, in the given social structure, and how they influenced society with their own actions. By the coming of the millenary, another desire arose in people for historical knowledge, although this knowledge did not mean the accurate historical knowledge anymore, but the interest in every kind of historical fictional subgenre from the Western, historical romance to war- and wartime novels for both sexes (Maurice 2017, 23) These were more interesting for the audience, who wanted to listen to a storyteller, instead of being lost in the many layers of a novel which could only be understood properly with the help of professional literacy. Historical fiction often presents famous, known people, and therefore authors of this genre tend to neglect the “lower-class people, those in the streets and in the hovels, only as a background or support for the lives of the elite. (Browne and Kreiser 2000, 6)

2.3. Historical Crime Fiction

These two genres merged into a new genre, called historical crime fiction. A good example is Steven Saylor’s novel *Roman Blood* (1991) where the historical background is given by using the Ciceronian oration and the mystery-solving aspect of detective stories, the sample that was created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887, as Saylor himself states in his interview in 2004. (Saylor 2004, np) This common trait of the two genres allows the place for a new one, and also creates a similarity between the ‘fictional’ detective and the ‘true’ historian. Historical crime fiction, similarly to historical fiction is “concerned with the major drives of human life.” (Browne and Kreiser 2000, 2) The difference between the two genres is that “crime fiction

authors have developed [in their novels] an interest in those people who supported the elite” (6) and historical crime fiction “often deals more with the lower aspects of historical life.” (5) It takes their readers down to Chandler’s “mean streets”, where they can meet the hard but historically more accurate layers, as it turns out, where “more history passes than has generally been admitted.” (5) The “parallel between the historian and the detective, both of whom attempt to discover the true state of affairs from evidence painstakingly pieced together, also makes the two components of the genre compatible bedfellows” (Maurice 2017, 25 qtd Winks 1968, xiii-xxiv)

Umberto Eco with his novel, *The Name of the Rose* introduced another method of writing historical detective fiction, that of the *metaphysical crime fiction*. This type is built on the theory of the theoretical reader’s free interpretation, Eco enhanced it by exploiting the readers’ eagerness for cognition. *The Name of the Rose* “is situated between classic crime fiction and its rewritten forms, being a part of them as well as comprehending both of them”, in which Eco “included the characteristics of the analytical [i.e. the traditional] crime fiction” where “the progress of the investigation is a metaphor to cognition”¹². (Bényei 2000) Eco interprets his own work in the *Postscript to “The Name of the Rose”* where he compares the method he used to write the novel, to the rigorous system created by Edgar Allen Poe called *The Philosophy of Composition* and the step-by-step technique he used to create his famous poem *The Raven*” (Calinescu qtd. in Bondanella 2000, 100)

I rediscovered what writers have always known (and have told us again and again): books always speak of books, and every story tells a story that has already been told. Homer knew this, and Ariosto knew this, not to mention Rabelais and Cervantes. My story, then could only begin with the discovered manuscript, and even this would be (naturally) a quotation.” (*The Name of the Rose* 1994, 511-512 qtd. in Bondanella 2000, 100)

According to these statements Eco constructed his novel with precision, in order to satisfy as many readers as possible, “from the consumer of the best-sellers to the erudite academic in search of sources and literary allusions” (Bondanella 2000, 99) and to create a proclamation that people of such a wide reading scale comprehend.

The main aim of my paper is not to prove its genre, but to focus on the transtextual relationship between the novel and Cicero’s speech, however, the interpretation is going to reveal many of the main characteristics of these types of novels. The transtextual approach gives us a close look into the nature of the relationship between the characters, i.e. the detective, the attorney, the defendant etc. as well.

¹²Translated by the author of the present paper

3. Transtextuality – Theory and Method

Steven Saylor's *Roman Blood* and Cicero's *The Oration for Sextus Roscius of Ameria* are two texts related to each other; both discuss the same murder case. Do they present the case at issue from the same angle or from different points of view? To what extent is the oration present in the novel? Does the novel rely on the oration?

The method most appropriate to discuss relations and connections between two or more texts is based on the Theory of Transtextuality created by Gerard Genette. This theory presupposes that a text appears in another one. This appearance is transcendental, says Genette, it refers to "the textual transcendence of the text" (Genette 1997, 1), hence the name textual transcendency or transtextuality. There is a bilateral relationship between these sorts of texts, which can describe the actual appearance of a text in another text. Genette differentiates five types of transtextuality, all of them having different markers or notions to describe the possible and different textual relationships, "more or less in the order of increasing abstraction, implication and comprehensiveness." (Genette 1997, 1) Most of them deal with the particular texts that literally name the one that they refer to. The first three could be classified as such, whereas intertextuality, paratextuality and metatextuality are the ones according to Genette that represent a more identifiable connection between the two texts. Even if the term metatextuality suggests some unnamed connection, meaning that one text does not announce its own intention or purpose of being a 'commentary', – the way most times metatextual relationships are explained – still it "unites a given text to another, of which it speaks [...] even without naming it." (Genette 1997, 4) One text can address another, as in the case of Aristotel's *Poetics*, in which he 'speaks' about *Oedipus Rex*. These types of transtextuality are usually referred to as metatexts, or metatextual connections.

The fifth type is called architextuality. This type is too vague and at the same time too precise to represent the two notions (oration and historical detective fiction) manifested in the corpus of *The Oration for Sextus Roscius of Ameria* and of *Roman Blood* respectively. This type should function as an expansion to the theory of genres, discussed above, because the relationship consists "in any case of a purely taxonomic nature" (Genette 1997, 4).

There are some cases, where a certain text does not mention the/another text on which it is based at all, but it is indisputable, without any academic knowledge, for both the professional and the popular readers that the given text would not be the same, or could not exist without a prior text:

It may yet be of another kind such as text B not speaking of text A at all but being unable to exist, as such, without A, from which it originates through a process I shall provisionally call *transformation*, and which consequently evokes more or less perceptibility without necessarily speaking of it or citing it. (Genette 1997, 5)

Genette gives the *Odyssey* as text A, and Joyce's *Ulysses* as text B respectively, as an example of explaining how the actual textual transcendence could have happened. He states that the *Odyssey* is transtextually present in Joyce's *Ulysses* even if *Ulysses* does not 'speak' about, or refer to such a connection. This connection is explained by Genette as the *Odyssey*, being the source, called hypotext and *Ulysses*, the 'result' called hypertext. In this way the relationship between the two texts is more than metatextual. To a greater emphasis he even gives another text which is related to the *Odyssey*, that is Virgil's *Aeneid*. He presupposes that both *Ulysses* and the *Aeneid* were created based on Homer's *Odyssey* through a transformative process. This transformation links the two latter texts together, yet in the same way it also distinguishes them through the fact that two different transformations happened.

There is no proper term to describe such a connection, Genette says that a prefix should be used here that comprehends both "meta" and hyper". Until that term is found, the symmetric terms of hypotext and hypertext shall be used. In the case of my paper Cicero's oration would be the hypotext and *Roman Blood* the hypertext. In order to study a textual phenomenon like this, I want to draw attention to the notion of 'transformation', a term used by Genette himself, though an inappropriate one, trying to define the particularities of this complex process. He offers two different types of transformation. He baptizes the first category as 'transformation', meaning the transformation of a certain text into a different environment, in the case of *Ulysses* a transformation, or simple transformation happens, "one which consists in transposing the action of the *Odyssey* to twentieth-century Dublin." (Genette 1997, 5) The second category he creates is called 'imitation', where the transformation of the style of a particular story occurs, that is, regarding the hypotext, an entirely different story is told through the same or a similar method. This kind of narrative can be achieved by the writer through inspiration from the generic – i.e. at once formal and thematic – model established by the pretext. What I suppose, and what is supported by the theory is that Marcus Tullius Cicero's (Shackleton Bailey 1971) *The Oration for Sextus Roscius of Ameria* (Freese 1930) is transformed and integrated into the novel *Roman Blood*. From a different perspective, one could argue that the novel enriches the oration. I would say that the murder-case, the story or narrative itself has become independent with the new reading of Steven Saylor and it has been reloaded into the novel *Roman Blood*,

adding a deeper layer to it by linking the two texts together in the interpretation of the author, for the joy of the readers' comprehension.

4. The Transtextual Analysis of the Two Texts

4.1. Hypo- and Hypertext

By accepting the double-sidedness and the supplementary function of the terms hypertext and hypotext, we can also accept that transtextuality does not treat written texts as independent, but as relatives. It states that texts are reflections of each other, that "there is no literary work that does not evoke some other literary work, and in that sense all works are hypertextual". (Genette 1997, 9) This is the case of the chosen oration as well, being the hypotext that fulfilled the model-function and from which the above-mentioned inspiration was drawn. The question is to what extent the hypertext is determined by the hypotext or on which level does the hypertext have an influence on the hypotext. This is an important issue, because the less influential a work is – with lower hypertextual potential – the more interpretational freedom it allows and gives to the reader on estimating the relationship between the two texts given. Consequently, the hypothetical or "super-reader" is going to be endowed with the right to judge the hypertextual potential of a work. This suggests that the reader actually has a more significant role in the hypertextual hermeneutics than considered, even though the wording of Genette treats the subject with great care and discusses the "sunnier side of hypertextuality" in his study. (1997, 8-9)

Succinctly, what I consider here is that to some degree *The Oration for Sextus Roscius* dominates the novel *Roman Blood*, and likewise, *Roman Blood* scans or snoops the oration by using it as an architext or hypertext and opens up Cicero's oration hermeneutically. Nevertheless, the novel *Roman Blood* written by Steven Saylor is unique. It is readable and comprehensible on its sole status, without the need for extra textual knowledge. He built up a narrative which is understandable and enjoyable on its own, finding out all the mysteries but its hidden or not easily recognizable value is its way of creation.

Thus, a complete comprehension of the novel can only be achieved by considering its transtextual aspects, thus, the experience of and the tendency towards a personal interpretation becomes essential, because some aspects of both the novel and the oration could not be understood without some reading experience. The reader's reception determines the awareness of the intertextual mechanisms present in many layers of the novel. The novel is a complete work in itself, without its hypotext, but not taking the intertextual approach into consideration

would greatly narrow down the reception, the readers' interpretational freedom and possibilities to enter the realm of this continuous inter- and transtextual discussion between the two works.

Why are many readers interested in entering this 'conversation', especially when most of the readers are not even aware of the process, or actually are not having and are not interested in the knowledge of the academic and in a way abstract term, transtextuality? A possible answer could be that the novel belongs to the field of popular fiction, which is 'manufactured' for the "populus, populi" themselves. I think that is the key to answer the question of popularity and a proof of transtextuality of the two works as well. To understand how the readers think it is advisable to approach the issue from their point of view, considering of course that it is approved by literary sciences. Readers' approach can be described as "We readers of popular fiction do not seek [...] all the literary hardware that at least since Joyce has proven so attractive to authors and scholars alike. What we seek instead is the spellbinding, atavistic magic of a tale well told." (Hamilton and Jones, 2009, vi) At the same time authors with the aim of writing to the audience, like Saylor, should not be considered just as traditional writers in the classical meaning of the term, but storytellers who create works like craftspeople do. They forge their writings for people, and have a critical viewpoint on what is needed for a typical layer of readers, regarding their cultural and intellectual/spiritual wellbeing. Similarly to the storytellers from the ancient times, who for example appear in *Roman Blood* as caretakers of culture itself. (Hamilton and Jones, 2009, introduction)

It would be appropriate to say that there is a vacancy in culture today, namely the place of the former storytellers that is in need to be occupied by someone and this need for storytelling has been created by the audience themselves in the recent decades. A desire from part of the audience is reborn to be invited into the realm of stories, yet not the ones with the help of which they could exit from, or escape their own reality, but instead stories that are meant to strengthen and confirm their knowledge about the past, which they can also relive this way. This vacant seat has been taken by two groups of authors that both make their living from providing entertainment by affirming their audience's historical knowledge. That is what the people of the twenty-first century are interested in, they "are concerned with the major drives of human life" including "crime and punishment and sin and retribution." (Browne and Kreiser 2000, 2)

On the one hand, historians are considered the ones who try to fulfill this newly-emerged need for historical satisfaction. The audience's desire can be noticed and tracked through the rise of popular culture at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century by the appearance of historical-themed movies and series as Maurice points out. However, historians themselves recognized the importance and the cultural value of historical fiction,

“and a large number of historical and pseudo-historical documentary productions by such sources as The History Channel” (Maurice 2017, 26) has appeared. This subtle change in making history ‘consumable’ for the audience, actually left the true purpose of their own subject behind, and they became partially unfaithful to their profession, which is “to discover and separate truth from fiction.” (Browne and Kreiser 2000, 1) Popular culture is not interested in the precision of the historians about the past anymore, because people are concerned with the process of discovering the truth about the past and this creates a considerable opposition in what is considered history or historical knowledge and what is not. This is valid for popular fiction and thus to historical crime fiction as well:

[J]ust as film and television had developed their own approaches that reflect the unique social, cultural, political, and industrial dimensions of each medium, so popular fiction [and any genre and subgenre] should occupy its own critical space (qtd. in Maurice 2017, 4).

This ‘golden means’ was used by Steven Saylor masterfully, after all, the factor for historical trustworthiness, Cicero’s oration is present in his novel, meaning that the author creates the circumstances of entertaining the audience that can only be achieved by understanding, realizing and last but not least enjoying the historical accuracies and inaccuracies of the novel. Saylor emphasizes his intention in the Author’s Note section of the book by *caveat lector*, namely that “*Roman Blood* is also a mystery; certain matters germane to its solution are discussed here, if only obliquely.” (Saylor 1991, 385) The present question of this study is how Saylor managed to complete the historicity of Cicero’s oration, how he guided the line of historical narrative of the defense speech to “demonstrate the value of the fiction of everyday life of the past in adding a new depth and warmth of understanding to the world long gone.” (Browne and Kreiser 2000, 10)

The subtlety of *Roman Blood* arises from its double historicity. The reader might have a previous, ‘historical’ knowledge – acknowledged and affirmed to be right and true by historians; probably the most renowned case of Cicero was that of being the attorney of Sextus Roscius. Those who read or know of this speech is clear that Sextus Roscius, the son was successfully defended on his trial on a charge of parricide by Cicero. Yet, readers of this novel also know that Sextus Roscius was indeed guilty of having killed his own father because Saylor told them so. It is self-evident that these different presentations of the past are undeniably contradictions, and they are kept separate in the mind of the reader, as a ‘fictive’ knowledge, as Ellen O’Gorman declares. (1999, 19) In this way the fictive element in *Roman Blood* creates the opportunity to be compared with the justice of history. The possibility of a comparison is given by the historical discrepancy present in the novel, and this is what makes the work

enjoyable for the readers, who find pleasure in discovering the similarities of their historical and fictive knowledge. Retelling the *Oration for Sextus Roscius of Ameria*, which itself is “full of fiction and special pleading, and these elements are not lacking here either” (Grant 1990, 21) in the form of a detective novel “appeals for the verisimilitude not only to the ‘fictive’ [...] but also to the reader’s ‘historical’ knowledge.” (O’Gorman 1999, 19) Presumably, Saylor completes the given historical knowledge with fictive one, by taking Cicero’s oration as a guide, and expanding or filling the possible places with ‘fictional’ knowledge. By mixing the two types of knowledge an abstract meaning is created to some degree, which if discerned or not taken into account, may deprive one of the understandings of a layered comprehension.

The layered comprehension of the modest narrative of *Roman Blood* can be achieved by its textual analysis. With an intertextual research a text can be opened up, and the possible parts of the hypotext, the inserted intertextually can be analyzed through their semantic functions and their role in the whole text-structure. The involvement of the intertextual concerns into the narrative analysis creates a unique contextual sensibility. Here context should be interpreted far more complex than the totality of texts, Julia Kristeva, for example, viewed the whole culture as a text, while Genette interpreted this term restrictively, only as the “copresence between two texts or among several texts [...]” (Genette 1997, 1). He named the process, as discussed above, “hypertextuality” but the phenomenon incorporates all the terms of architextuality, transtextuality, paratextuality and intertextuality as well.

The comparison between the two different interpretations of the same historical event – or to call a spade a spade, if the reality of the novel overlaps with the one defined by historians and is considered ‘true’ reality – indicates that there must have been a past which corresponds to the peculiar parameters of the mixed historical knowledge of the reader. This is appropriate to assume when talking about the historicity of Saylor’s *Roman Blood* as historical detective fiction: “Above all, this model of detective fiction as history presupposes the existence of one prior, correct version of the past, at which it is possible to arrive by a careful process of recovery, and to which it is imperative to owe allegiance” (O’Gorman 1999, 20)

This collaboration of the novel *Roman Blood* and *The Oration for Sextus Roscius of Ameria* presupposes only a plausible past which cannot be and will never be considered as a true one. What is true is that the novel itself presupposes a certain prior, correct version of the past, which would be the oration, thereby creating a connection not only between the two texts, but between time and culture as well.

This kind of textual connection, considering Cicero’s oration – given its proven historical correctness –, a substantive pretext or hypotext could possibly be best analyzed with

the help of hypertextuality¹³. It has to be noted about the different textualities, although differentiated and sorted by Genette that “first of all, one must not view the five types of transtextuality as separate and absolute categories without reciprocal contact or overlapping.” (Genette 1997, 7) The notion of transtextuality cannot be monotypical, but should be considered the amount of the different characteristics between the texts compared. This and the suspected, hypothetical, virtual past created by the fusion of the two texts, eventuate, and actually renders a clear denomination of the matter impossible. The chosen works can only be classified confusingly, and therefore, cannot be estimated until this intersecting interpretation is applied and the fact is revealed that Saylor’s *Roman Blood* is built up of clues or parts from *The Oration*, connected to the novel through these indications. However, when revealing these clues, finding the general structures, where the explored texts possibly belong to, is of a greater relevance than finding the actual hypotext at the base of the transtextual connection.

Another point which shall be emphasized regarding the particularity of the two chosen texts and their relationship is that the one, representing a correct version of the past defined by O’Gorman is indeed the actual, correct version of the past events, as long as we take it into consideration. Besides its fictive elements, Cicero’s oration represents the true past on which *Roman Blood* is based, not to mention that Saylor himself states that “the prolific Michael Grant’s translation of Cicero’s *Murder Trials* first set me on the trail of Sextus Roscius.” (Saylor 1991, 387)

4.2. The Oration as Hypotext

Antecedents to *Roman Blood*, both in the field of genre and Saylor’s personal interest in Roman history are helpful in determining the particularities of the relationship between the two chosen texts. By identifying their genres, the actual discussion between them is being revealed. Saylor himself stated that he had read a lot in the particular genre of detective fiction and his desire and enjoyment in describing Roman culture, in a way that the reader could imagine it lively, motivated him to write a piece of historical detective fiction. He did so in a detailed manner that would represent credible, real-like life and would create characters with traits and features with a similar effort to what a realist novel would achieve. The “*microcosm*”

¹³ It is interesting that Genette defines this relationship with the term hyper-textuality and does not use Hypo-textuality, whereas he considers the hypotext as the original or at least the earlier one, yet he states that the hypertext is created later, influenced and guided by the former one. Still he names the whole process as hypertextuality, and refers to works with greater influential power as the ones with more hypertextual force or value.

of the oration will be analyzed by stating the architextual and the hypotextual features of Cicero's speech, as well as through the method used by Saylor, how he managed to expand the oration based on his knowledge of ancient Roman culture.

The investigation comprehends the transtextual analysis of the oration used by Steven Saylor, *In Defence of Sextus Roscius of Ameria* (translated by Michael Grant) and its correspondent, in the 31st chapter of the novel. Saylor did not use this version of Cicero's speech by chance. Michael Grant redacted the murder trials of Cicero in an explanatory way. This made not only the speech, but the whole case, the situation easily understandable, by rendering the political and cultural background of the ancient people of Rome, and of several orations respectively. Thus, Grant explains how Roman culture was constructed and how they started to hold trials for people found guilty of murder (Grant 1990,1-16); he also presents the case of Sextus Roscius, the son briefly, referring to how the case was viewed on at its time, and referring to Cicero's credibility as well (Grant 1990, 17-23); in other words, he created the appropriate circumstances for a narrative, which, eventually was created and written by Steven Saylor. Another thing that Saylor does, and what the novel offers is called "transmotivation" by Genette. Transmotivation or "[t]he substitution of motive is one of the major procedures of semantic transformation." (Genette 1990, 324) Using this process Saylor 'transmotivizes' the unspoken motives of Cicero from the Oration into the novel, to which he adds detailed cultural and social background. In this way he creates a credible world in which his character may operate as it could be deduced from the oration.

A literary work written by a character within the fictional narrative, given that the particular text exists extra-textually, that is in the real world, this possibly would be the greatest evidence for a transtextual connection. Cicero's oration appears in the novel similarly, what is more, the oration is under composition throughout the greater part of the novel and the reader is only faced with the speech when it is literally uttered by Cicero's character. The creation of the speech is in the center of the novel, and is formed, shaped and fashioned correspondently to the actual state of the actual investigation. The occasionally uptight atmosphere prevailing in the novel is a sign of the transcendental merge of *Roman Blood* with the original speech, it should be allowed and appropriate then to fill in the variables of the equation created by Genette, through the words I find applicable, words which are true for the present case: "By hypertextuality I mean [the] relationship uniting [Steven Saylor's *Roman Blood*] (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to [the] earlier [*The Oration for Sextus Roscius of Ameria*] (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that it is not that of a commentary. [...] [A] text derived from another preexistent text." (Genette 1997, 5) This is the clear instance

of an issue, where the novel *Roman Blood* does not speak directly of Cicero's oration at all but it is unable to exist without it, being the hypertext and hypotext of each other, respectively. The defense speech being the hypotext, or skeleton of the novel, it is evident that the fictional narrative is based on and is about the creation of the speech and unarguably the focal point is going to be the part, when it is presented, uttered by its creator.

No wonder then that the respective chapter of the novel cannot start with the oration immediately, not to mention that it is situated at the end of the third part of *Roman Blood*. The several first pages at the beginning of chapter 31 function as a tool of making the original oration of Cicero lively, by disrupting its continuity with intercalations. These are descriptions of the environment and presentations of characters which are present at a particular moment, meant to show their reactions as the events progress. The first few paragraphs of the chapter are supposed to present Cicero's character moving to the Rostra¹⁴, as described by one of the characters in the previous chapter:

[T]he Rostra itself – that giant pedestal decorated with the prows of Carthagian ships taken in battle. The speaker mounts it from stairs around the back, then addresses the audience from the platform on top where everyone in the square can see him. (RB, 326).

The description of the place that existed in reality in the Roman times shows the historical awareness of the author and presents the fictive place to the reader, while creating the background to the preliminary scene of the oration. The oration does not mention the Rostra, nor does Grant in the introduction, which proves that these paragraphs from the novel have the only function to create the setting. In fact, this makes the oration architextual, by giving a fabricated reality to the speech, for Saylor states as well that “There is a considerable doubt, for example, that certain satirical jabs at Sulla found in the written text of the *Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino* would actually have been spoken from the Rostra while the dictator was still alive.” (Saylor 1991, 385) This is a created reality but not fictitious, meaning that the Rostra truly existed in the ancient times, and this fact gives a certain verisimilitude to the scene. This can be considered an intertextual connection according to the interpretation of Julia Kristeva, who considered the description of the time, history and culture, when used for the configuration of a fiction, as a text, or according to Genette, a transtextual connection.

¹⁴ Rostra - any platform, stage, or dais on which public speakers stand to address an audience; from Latin *rōstrum* beak, ship's prow, from *rōdere* to nibble, gnaw; in plural, *rōstra*, orator's platform, because this platform in the Roman forum was adorned with the prows of captured ships (collinsdictionary.com)

Throughout the novel, the delicate and sensitive points of the case have been made clear to the readers, namely defending a man who has been accused by the people in power, which is almost an impossible task, because if any subtle offense will be uttered in the speech against the ruler, the dictator Sulla, in any way, it would cost the life of Cicero, who is willing to defend him. The evidences building up the tension are presented by the character of Gordianus, the Finder, the fictional detective and protagonist, the limited omniscient narrator of the novel. He is the one who describes the people present at the event, their behaviour and reaction when Cicero utters the different parts of the speech. “I glanced at Tiro, who was gnawing on one of his thumbnails, and at Rufus, who sat with his hands folded in his lap and a barely suppressed smile of adoration on his face.” (RB, 334) These two phrases are already the sings of proof that Saylor uses a balanced narrative process, which compensates reality and fiction, by describing the reactions of the two historically accurate characters to the fictional events happening in the given situation. Tiro is presented as Cicero’s slave, who is and was in a close relationship with the orator. It is known from Cicero’s correspondences (Morello 2013) that a certain Marcus Tullius Tiro was Cicero’s slave, but apparently, after his manumission, Tiro also earned the name of Cicero as a freed man. He was Cicero’s secretary, he attended his trials and helped him create his speeches, which is described in many different parts of the novel. Saylor invests into the character of Tiro, he says he was actually “a composition collaborator. [...] Tiro revised and edited texts for Cicero, but there is also evidence from letters that Tiro collaborated with Cicero in the composing process.” (Bankston 2012, 211) It is evident then that Cicero’s orations, which we have today are likely not the same speeches as the ones delivered by Cicero in the past. In the hypertextual reading Tiro’s name acquires an informative meaning, ‘tiro’, which means ‘novice, beginner or recruit,’ (Glare 1968, 1943) it could be interpreted as the personalization of one of the main treats Cicero has at this point of his life; he is only a beginner in the field of justice and politics. The other historical character who is present in this scene is Rufus, “recurring character of the patrician politician M. Valerius Messalla Rufus” (Lewis 2000, 25).

Cicero engages in delivering his speech that is divided by the author in order to insert environmental descriptions between the different parts, continuing the hypertextual development of the original oration, creating a living speech from the original version, translated from Latin into English by Michael Grant. In the first paragraph from *In the Defense of Sextus Roscius* Cicero establishes his position as a defense attorney:

You must find it very surprising, judges, to see all these notable orators and eminent citizens firmly rooted in their seats, whereas I, on the other hand, am standing up here and addressing you. For, after all, I cannot compare with these seated personages in age, and still less in influence. It is true enough that every one of them – every single man you see here today – is utterly convinced that the charge on which this case is based is an unjust one which it is imperative to refute, a charge which only an unprecedented act of criminality could ever have concocted. Nevertheless, they do not actually venture to undertake the refutation themselves – owing to the hazardous times in which we are. They are here, that is to say, because they consider it their duty to be here. But they want to stay out of danger, and that is why they are keeping so quiet. (Grant 1990, 24)

It was not ordinary indeed to see an orator at such a young age stand up on the part of the defense. Cicero mentions his young age – being only 26 at the time according to Saylor, 27 as Grant claims – while the senators participating in the event are presumably older and more experienced, more appreciated, and also more influential. He establishes that the charge is unjust, and therefore has to be solved at a short notice, and that it is created by the criminal minds. Cicero emphasizes the rarity of such a murder, and refers to the current political situation of the time – under the dictatorship of Sulla – and justifies the withdrawal of the other orators from taking the role of an attorney, saying that they are afraid of getting caught and that is why they are staying silent.

Saylor uses Cicero's oration trustworthily, yet simplifying the mood of speaking in order to make it easier for the readers to comprehend, with less periphrasis and a less ornamented language, but he still keeps the loftiness and fairness of the speech. He creates a whole scene by interrupting the flow of the speech to describe the reactions of the characters and the environment:

“Judges of the court: You must be wondering why, of all the distinguished citizens and eminent orators seated about you, it is I who have risen to address you...” “Indeed,” Erucius muttered under his breath. There was scattered laughter from the crowd. Cicero pressed on. (RB, 344)

This break in the flow of the speech by Erucius answering an utterance to which no reply or comment was expected creates a lifelike situation, as if the situation had happened like this. Saylor integrates the historically accurate character of Gaius Erucius correctly into the narrative, the latter is presented as a ‘bad-character’, as an obnoxious person. Through this the author subtly enforced the hierarchical and practical differences between the young and novice

Cicero and the respected and experienced orator Erucius, who is overly certain of his victory, knowing that he will speak on behalf of the current political power. Saylor, abbreviates the original speech and keeps the verb ‘concocted’ which appears both texts, as a perfect intertextual and paratextual reference between the two works. It appears as a descriptive verb, but paratextually signals a “transaction”, “marks a zone of transition between text and non-text” (qtd. in Allen 2011, 100) of semantical means by comprehending the circumstances that specify the murder, everything that is investigated in the novel. “Such paratextual elements also help to establish the text’s intention”; (Allen, 2011, 101) Saylor probably found this verb highly descriptive, considering that it bears a connotation that genuinely illustrates the complexity of the murder case, which seems only a simple murder case from the outside, but from the inside, using a present-day expression of “money-laundering”, it is a well conspired plan to legalize the untruly acquired estate of the Roscii. Describing Cicero’s motion and gestures during his speech also creates a verisimilar background, as well as introducing the reason, ‘spoiling’ his proper intention, a political assault against Sulla, the dictator and his regulations at the time, with an ambiguous phrase: “due to the inclement conditions of the day” (RB, 334) Saylor emphasizes the sensitive matter that the oration represents, by including how Cicero raises his hand to the sky and to the equestrian statue of Sulla, a supplementary detail that is added to the place that functions in building up the fictional setting of the event in the novel, thereby completing the original oration.

“Among the judges there was an uneasy shuffling of chairs.” (RB, 334) Saylor “transformed”, a term used by Genette to describe a transposed text or phrase from one text to another, Grant’s “hazardous times” expression, which he supplemented by letting Cicero point at the statue of Sulla, emphasizing the gravity of his statement, making the audience tremble. “Erucius, who was inspecting his fingernails, did not see. Cicero cleared his throat again. His voice returned, stronger and louder than before. The quavering vanished.” (RB, 334) In the last two sentences the author compares the two lawyers on an emotional level, making Erucius inferior to Cicero’s just and enthusiastic character, which is emphasized by strengthening Cicero’s voice. The text and language of the hypotextual oration translated by Grant are rephrased and recreated by Saylor in the hypertext, using a more comprehensive language in order to make it easier to understand, and therefore he also had to shorten it. The following two quotes are supposed to present the difference in style and footage between the two texts:

But I, on the contrary, can say every single thing that needs to be said, and say it with the most complete freedom, without there being the slightest question of my speech

becoming known or achieving publicity to anything like the same degree. For the others are men of rank and position, and nothing they say can pass unnoticed; besides, they are of such ripe age and experience that no allowances will be made for the smallest indiscretion they may commit. But my case is quite different. If I speak out of turn, either nobody will ever hear of it, because I am someone who has not even started his public career, or, if they do hear of it, they will pardon the lapse on the grounds of my youthful years – though the term ‘pardon’ has lost its real significance these days, when the custom of holding judicial inquiries, to which the word ought exclusively to apply, has virtually been swept out of existence. (Grant 1990, 25)

Cicero does not consider himself superior to the other orators, neither to his opponents, just states that he is thankful for his immaturity in politics, because in this way he is allowed to say anything that a known orator would or could not do, being limited or restricted by politics. The ripe age, experience of a speaker does not allow for them to say anything inappropriate because the others would not tolerate it. If they should commit the smallest indiscretion, it would deteriorate their or the others’ political or other kind of reputation.

I, on the other hand, can say everything that demands to be said in this case, without fear of adverse attention or untoward controversy. That is because I have not yet begun a public career; no one knows me. If I should speak out of turn, if I should let slip some embarrassing indiscretion, no one will even notice, or if they do, they will pardon the lapse on the grounds of my youth and inexperience – though I use the word pardon rather loosely, since actual pardons and the free judicial inquiry they require have of late been abolished by the state. (RB 335)

At first glance it is evident that Saylor’s version is much shorter, though he kept the phrases: “public career”, “If I speak out of turn” and he transposed the specific meaning of the term ‘pardon’. In this way the essence, the fundamental meaning of the longer hypotextual part remained. The speech is interrupted again, by another descriptive part: “There was more rustling of chairs. Erucius looked up from his nails, wrinkled his nose, and gazed into the middle distance, as if he had just discerned an alarming plume of smoke on the air.” (RB, 335) Another implied part, with which Saylor creates suspense, assisted by the verb ‘rustle’ which marks the difference between the two orators, by making Erucius to stare in the mid-distance as if recognizing that Cicero makes a point here. What is interesting in this part of novel is how the character of Cicero is made alive by Saylor, and how this can be noticed by the transtextual viewpoint of transmotivation, that is, “[h]ypertexts can give a character motivations lacking in

the hypotext” (Allen, 2011, 107), by letting the ‘rigid’ Cicero of the oration react to his created environment. “‘So you see, I was not singled out and chosen because I was the most gifted orator.’ Cicero smiled to ask the crowd’s indulgence. ‘No, I was simply the person left over when all others had stepped aside.’” (RB, 335) By inserting this description, the author shapes the character of Cicero and at the same time he also transforms the speech as if uttered for an audience, where the physical expressions and gestures of the great orator are very important. Cicero probably hears the rustle between the members of the senate and reacts to it with a smile, noticing that he gained the floor and successfully surmounted the superstition of the audience, and the feeling of complacency and self-confidence overwhelm him, which could have been considered insolence, regarding his young age besides the other orators and members of the senate, if he had not put the others before him in his praise. The following two sections from the novel and the oration respectively visualize the transtextual connection between them:

It is not a question of having been singled out as the most talented pleader. No, the point was that I was the person left over, the person who could plead with the least danger. To say that I was chosen in order to guarantee that Sextus Roscius should have the best possible defence would not be the truth. I was chosen in order to ensure that he had any defence at all! (Grant 1990, 26)

“So you see, I was not singled out and chosen because I was the most gifted orator.” Cicero smiled to ask the crowd’s indulgence. “No, I was simply the person left over when all others had stepped aside. I was the man who could plead with the least danger. No one can say that I was chosen so that Sextus Roscius would have the best possible defense. I was chosen simply so that he would have any defense at all.” (RB, 335)

What is conspicuous to the eye of the reader here is that Saylor’s version is significantly more straightforward. The exclamation mark is missing from the end of the phrase, but it is transformed into the descriptive part inserted. On the one hand, it diminishes the indignation marked by the outcry in the original as well as the phrase “so you see” seems ordinary, but gives the opportunity to the author to describe Cicero’s pride, on the other hand.

There is a part that was omitted from the novel, where Cicero says he knows more about the case, than the others, that is also a reason why he chose to defend a case that seemed lost from its beginning, and that he is thankful for the persons’ whose reconnaissance helped him in the search for truth and whose “friendship I regard as carrying an enormous weight; I cannot forget all the services I have received from them, not to speak of the high positions they occupy in the state. [...] and so I felt that I could not ignore their wishes.” (Grant 1990, 26) He was the

only one who had been asked for the defense of Roscius, the person left over, who had the least risks by taking this role. He clarifies that nobody wanted to take the case, a serious one, where a man's "life and property are at stake." The reason why Saylor considered it unimportant to include this part is because this "friendship" and help from these friends are described in the novel. This is another example of a metatextual reference in the transtextual relationship between the two texts, where the metatextuality "of which it speaks without summoning it [or] without naming it" can be seen (Genette 1997, 4). In the following Cicero establishes that the prosecutors did not mention the real motive behind Roscius' accusation:

But a certain young man claims that he has bought it, and he has to admit that the sum he paid for it was only *two thousand sestertii*¹⁵. The young man is Lucius Cornelius Chrysogonus, whose position in our country today is exceptionally powerful. And the alleged seller was the valiant and glorious Lucius Sulla – whose name, of course, I mention with all due respect. (Grant 1990, 26-27)

The explanation of the difference between the values of Sextus Roscius' property, six million sesterces, and the sum which Chrysogonus paid for it, two thousand sesterces, is retained by Saylor, though he changed the name of the ancient currency from 'sestertii' to 'sesterces' wholeheartedly, so that the sounding of the latter is more familiar to the contemporary ears. This could show the time distance between the appearance of the two works, presumably, today's readers are more familiar with financials than the people from the ancient times, and that is why emphasizing these parts is reasonable. He explains that the estate belonged to Roscius' father and was worth six million sestercei, while the purchaser only paid 2000 sestercei for it. This after putting the son in the situation of parricide, in order to make it able for the estate to be sold, to bypass the denial of its rightful owner, Roscius, the son. Cicero even mentions that this could only happen under Sulla's legislation. With full respect, but he accuses the former dictator indirectly.

'Yet this entire estate was purchased by a certain young man, presumably at public auction, for the astonishing sum of two thousand sesterces. Quite a bargain! The thrifty young buyer was Lucius Cornelius Chrysogonus—I see the very mention of his name

¹⁵Converting the value of ancient currencies into recent currencies is almost impossible. But Burnett managed to figure out, what Cicero means here, by judging and estimating the precious metal-rate of the mentioned sesterces, and ended up in the sum of 5-6 US dollars for one sesterce. Doing the math will reveal that 6 million sesterces will end up in around 36 million US dollars. Cicero's manipulation about estimating the estate of the Roscii is revealed if the sum in sesterces is converted into the much more valuable Aureus, which contained a fair percentage of gold in it. Calculating it would end up in around 80.000 Aureus. It can be seen that the sum is not as much as Cicero poses it, he used this exaggeration to dramatize the situation. (Burnett, 1987)

causes a stir in this place, and why not? He is an exceptionally powerful man. The alleged seller of this property, representing the interests of the state, was the valiant and illustrious Lucius Sulla, whose name I mention with all due respect.’ (RB, 336)

The question uttered by Cicero in the novel does not appear in the original speech, it solely functions as the building stone of the life-likeness of the speech. At this point in the novel, in the next insertion the three historical persons and fictionalized characters, Gaius Erucius, Titus Roscius Capito and Mallius Glaucia are shown. Saylor developed their physical appearance, knowing from the hypotext that Capito was a gladiator¹⁶ and Glaucia an ex-slave, both dependent on Lucius Cornelius Chrysogonus, another historical person. That is why the importance of transtextuality would be meaningless to deny, after all, the hypertextual relationship between the texts creates the possibility for the perceptive reader to interpret the trial in *Roman Blood* as a verisimilar historical event that is described in *The Oration for Sextus Roscius of Ameria*, allowing them at the same time to fulfill their hypotextual “hermeneutic activity” (Genette 1997, 9) by discovering and understanding the similarities of the event retold.

At this point a soft hissing filled the square like a rain of mist on hot stones, as men turned to one another and whispered behind their hands. Capito clutched at Glaucia’s shoulder and croaked into his ear. All about me nobles in the gallery crossed their arms and exchanged grim glances. Two elderly Metelli on my right nodded knowingly to each other. Gaius Erucius, whose plump jowls had abruptly turned scarlet at the mention of Chrysogonus, gripped a young slave by the neck, spat an order at him, and sent him fleeing from the square. (RB, 336)

Creating tension in the present situation by naming the dictator Sulla, and the name of his favored ex-slave which the environment reacts to, makes the speech and the set life-like. There are numerous and similar examples to prove how the different aspects of the collaboration of the several types of textualities enlisted by Genette create the transtextual connection between the hypo- and hypertext of the oration and the novel respectively. However, there is another aspect that, albeit accepted by Genette’s structure, is closer to how Kristeva interprets the term intertextuality; „Genette terms his first kind of transtextuality, perhaps a little confusingly, intertextuality.” (Allen 2011, 98) Transtextuality can be present in the literary

¹⁶Both Mallius Glaucia and Capito were called gladiators or as the gladiator and his student in the novel and in the oration as well. These were metaphors according to Imholtz, used by Cicero to call the two persons assassins, murderers or butchers. The etymology of the Latin word is Etruscan, the language of the people that lived in this part of the peninsula, before the Latin defeated them. Cicero used this and many other Latin words originating from the Etruscan language to heighten the dramatic effect of his speech. (Imholtz, 1972)

works written by a character in the narrative. This is exactly what occurs in *Roman Blood*, where the fictive version of the hypotextual oration, the speech is being constructed as the reader progresses with the novel. In the following, textual examples will be presented, which will show that a reenactment can be created by a narrative process that is balanced on the edge of fiction, between fiction, imagined narratives and between the reality of history. The actual historical place of Rome, its different locations, and its surroundings – and the historical knowledge of Steven Saylor about Roman beliefs, behaviour, culture and life are masterfully crafted into a meaningful unity. Beyond fictionalization there is the extratextual, factual evidence.

As for the old man, his own life is now devoted solely to pleasure. In its pursuit he walks the streets of the city at all hours of the day and night, attended only by his slaves.” “He has no bodyguard?” I said. “None to speak of. Two slaves accompany him. More for convenience than protection.” “Armed?” “Probably not.” “My hypothetical father is asking for trouble.” Cicero nodded. ‘Indeed. The streets of Rome are hardly the place for any decent citizen to go gadding about in the middle of the night. Especially an older man. Especially if he has the look of money about him, and no armed guard. Foolhardy! Taking his life into his hands, day by day—such an old fool. Sooner or later he’ll come to no good end, or so you think. And yet, year after year he keeps up this outrageous behavior, and it comes to nothing. You begin to think that some invisible demon or spirit must be looking after him, for he never comes to harm. Never once is he robbed. Not once is he even threatened. The worst that occurs is that he may be accosted by a beggar or a drunkard or some vagrant whore late at night, and these he can easily handle with a coin or a word to his slaves. No, time seems not to be cooperating. Left to his own devices, the old man may very well live forever.’ ‘And would that be so bad? I think I’m beginning to like him.’ Cicero raised an eyebrow. ‘On the contrary, you hate him. Never mind why. Simply assume for the moment that, for whatever reason, you want him dead. Desperately.’(RB, 35)

This fragment from chapter four is a truly metatextual reference to the oration. In the first line “the streets of Rome” is an allusion to a typical feature of historical crime fiction, Raymond Chandler’s “mean streets”. It is clear that Cicero searches for an answer to the question of why S. Roscius, the son would have killed his father. The discourse between Cicero and Gordianus not present in the oration translated by Grant, only a few passages: “Here was a man, one would say, who was manifestly rejoicing in the victory of the aristocratic party.”

(Grant 1990, 33) and “one evening, my client’s father was returning from a dinner party.” (Grant 1990, 34) Saylor transforms this section of the speech into a discussion between the main characters, by doing so he creates the ‘possible past’ to the hypotext as well. He gives an example to the idea of transtextuality, the two works, through their transtextual relationship, are in constant discussion with each other, meaning that *Roman Blood* is present in the original oration as well. This happens both textually and timewise, because it is not proved, whether Cicero had such a conversation with somebody or not.

’How exactly did he die, the old man? Bludgeons, knives, stones? How many assailants? Were they seen? Can they be identified? Where was the son at the very moment the crime took place, and how did he learn the news? Who else had reason to kill the old man? What were the terms of his will? Who brings the charges against the son, and why?’ I paused, but only to take a sip of wine. “And tell me this—” “Gordianus,” Cicero laughed, “if I knew all this, I would hardly be needing your services, would I?” “But you must know a little.” “More than a little, but still not enough. Very well, I can at least answer your last question. The charges have been lodged by a prosecutor named Gaius Erucius. I see you’ve heard of him—or has the wine turned to vinegar in your mouth?” ‘I’ve more than heard of him,’ I said. “From time to time I’ve actually worked for him, but only from hunger. Erucius was born a slave in Sicily; now he’s a freedman with the shadiest law practice in Rome. He takes cases for money, not merit. He’d defend a man who raped his mother if there was gold in it, and then turn around and prosecute the old woman for slander if he saw a profit.’ (RB, 48)

This section from chapter five is connected to the actual murder, but it mentions data, which cannot be found in the hypotext. There are three allusions to Gaius Erucius in the introduction of the hypotext, the translation by Michael Grant that the prosecutor on the trial was “a certain Erucius, perhaps a Sicilian Greek by origin.” (22), and that he did not make the effort to prove anything besides arguing on the motive for murder; “It is true we have not got the speech of Erucius to refer to, but if we may trust Cicero he made no attempt to prove anything. Erucius based his charge on arguments of motive, arguments which were of the flimsiest character.” (24) The description of his character in the quoted fragment is another example of how the author completed the hypotext of *Roman Blood*, and gave a verisimilar history to the audience. Gaius Erucius is presented in the novel as the counterpart of Cicero, a villain-like character, who makes contemptuous physical comments on Cicero while he is giving his oration. Moreover, the importance of Gordianus is presented, as well as that of the

author, who is needed just like the detective to discover and tell the story of the murder, which is hidden between the lines of the oration. Not to mention that the rape here bears a strong cultural meaning this cannot be fully understood without Saylor's historical knowledge.

'And so the two sons of Titus Cloelius were acquitted....' "Yes, yes, that part's very good, very good, not a word needs changing." He loudly cleared his throat, then whispered rapidly to himself before raising his voice again. "Legend tells us of sons who killed their mothers to avenge their fathers: for such is the nature, even when justified by committing an act of filial duty on behalf of a murdered father, of the nature...No, no, wait, that won't do. No, it doesn't make sense at all. Too many words, too many words..." "Shall I open the curtains?" Tiro asked. I sat on the divan, rubbing my eyes and licking my parched lips. The room was like an oven, oppressively hot and airless. The yellow curtains were suffused with a light as harsh as Cicero's voice. "Absolutely not." I said. 'Then I'd have to watch him as well as listen. Besides, I'm not sure I could stand the brightness. Is there anything to drink?' (RB, 227-228)

The importance of this part is that this fragment truly suggests that transtextuality helps construct the characters of the novel. With the help of the few descriptive sentences: "a hesitant and timid man [who could] speak out in support of his ideals – among which hatred of any sort of tyranny figured very prominently" (Grant 1990, 7) Grant also states that Cicero's true nature and a faithful representation of the social and political state of Rome are presented in his numerous, personal letters, but these were not mentioned by Saylor as texts that had influenced him in writing his novel. In this part Saylor presents the great orator, Cicero in his work. He is telling his speech to himself aloud, constantly commenting upon it and correcting himself. At this intimate moment two fictional characters, Gordianus and Tiro are present. Knowing who Tiro was and being aware of the meaning of 'tiro', it is clear that he represents Cicero's allegorical state of mind. The reader would interpret the phrase "Shall I open the curtains" as an act of opening Cicero's mind, allowing the reader to take a view on his thoughts. The descriptive sentence that follows, "The room was like an oven, oppressively hot and airless", shows a stuffy, stifling room, to which Gordianus' personal way of feeling "rubbing my eyes / licking my parched lips", the symptoms of tiredness are added, creates a closed atmosphere, as if the reader were inside of Cicero's skull or his mind, where his thoughts being the hypertextual oration, are shining through the shroud created by Saylor. This short passage from the novel excellently exemplifies how the Genettian "transmotivation" (Genette 1997, 324) is being used voluntarily or involuntarily by the author.

Conclusions

Summing up the transtextual analysis of the chosen texts I can say that the present relation of the two is interwoven in time as well, given the fact that those were created at two different times, “[a] continuous dialogue between the past and the present [that] also require[s] some ‘lateral’ dialogue”. (Maurice 2017, 6) Therefore, a discussion between the different epochs is also present, with the help of Saylor as a mediator, who opened Cicero’s oration up and created this textual and temporal convergence, which matches the ideals developed by Umberto Eco in *The Open Work*: “this kind of openness results in an ‘increase in information.’” (qtd. in Bondanella 1997, 28) Revealing Cicero’s presentation resulted in an immense increase in information in *Roman Blood* through the development of the speech itself, creating a plausible world around the narrative and shaping the historical characters of the Roman times. Saylor needed to elaborate on the speech – an amount of complexity according to Eco –, which I interpret here as history, needed for a popular work to be considered original, to unmask the complexity of things, to serve as an honest entertainment. (qtd. in Bondanella 1997, 52) To achieve a verisimilar historical honesty Saylor had to “implicate the investigators, [a] historian and a detective” (O’Gorman 1999, 24), under the mask of Gordianus’ and Tiro’s characters.

The mastery of Saylor’s talent in this novel is partially due to his ability of mixing fiction with reality, which almost fits into the Todorovian “two stories” identified in crime fiction; “two stories of which one is absent but real, the other present but insignificant.” (Todorov 1966, 46) I am inclined to say ‘almost,’ because in the case of *Roman Blood* the situation differs. The first story is accurate, with its “many conventions and literary devices” the crime is committed, and an implied character has to report it in the second story. The second story, as stated by Todorov, “has no importance in itself, [...] serves only as a mediator between the reader and the story of crime.” (46) In this case the second story earns its importance for the reason that it is actually the hypotext, a historically accurate and canonical text, and because the mediator, the investigator is the historian and the detective himself. In the case of *Roman Blood*, the second story becomes important and realistic because it serves as the basis of historical enjoyment, “because of its reference to another text, which through *its* realism claims an authoritative relationship to reality and knowledge.” (O’Gorman 1999, 25)

Another conclusion is establishing the true nature of the mediator itself. It is the author who accomplished to merge the investigator Gordianus and the indirect historians, Tiro and Cicero, the story with a text given. Todorov among others explains the need for a mediator, an investigator, occasionally a detective. The detective, “Gordianus himself is primarily an agent of justice” (Lewis 2000, 26), and as such he himself becomes the historian, but in the role of

the detective, he is a mediator who has no direct influence on his environment. What he can do, is give information to the fictional characters, who have the power or chance to act, so his main objective in the novel is to do what a historian does: “collect, interpret, and then explain his evidence”. (Browne and Kreiser 2000, 2)

The analysis has proven that Saylor reconstructed the circumstances of the oration, using a “well documented era, allowing for a greater realism by incorporating the known social political details.” (Lewis 2000, 22) He did so in order to create a fictional but verisimilar past sorting out both historical and fictional verities to retell a story that has never existed before. He completed the oration, because as he himself said, “Cicero is best read between the lines” (Saylor 1991, 386), which indicates that it is the unique interpretation of the author, as the first reader of *The Oration for Sextus Roscuis of America*. Thus, his comprehension got manifested in *Roman Blood*, a novel with some historical accuracy in it. This common historical truth connects all the readers’ fictive and non-fictive historical knowledge, and makes the novel interesting even though it is being retold over and over again. Therefore, the paper demonstrates that Saylor, considering the features of transtextuality, is the reader, the detective, and the historian of *Roman Blood*.

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Record of Abbreviation:

RB = Saylor, S. 1991, *Roman Blood*. St. Martin’s Minotaur, New York