# Rewriting/Reprising

# Rewriting/Reprising:
# Plural Intertextualities

Edited by

## Georges Letissier

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Part 2: Rewritings in the Victorian Age, Rewriting the Victorians**

**Part 3: Writing Back and Claims for Self-Authorization**

**Part 4: Artistic Dialogism**

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

GEORGES LETISSIER

The terms "Rewriting/reprising" seem to imply that art depends on art, that artistic creation as an autonomous pursuit is only concerned with itself and draws its material from its own practice. Art would exclude what does not belong to its own realm by short-circuiting any attempt at a direct, transitory relation with an unmediated reality. Such an accusation has indeed been levelled at postmodernism which often flaunts rewriting as a metafictional discursive strategy. Art, in its incapacity to deal creatively with the outside world, would surrender to narcissistic self-withdrawal. Terry Eagleton lamented the detachment of contemporary culture from social and civil commitments: "It is postmodernism which seeks to relieve the arts of this oppressive burden of anxiety, urging them to forget all such portentous dreams of depth, and thus liberating them into a fairly trifling sort of freedom" (Eagleton 16). Fredric Jameson put forward nearly the same sort of criticism when he deplored that "contemporary or postmodernist art [was] going to be about art itself in a new kind of way; even more [...] that one of its essential messages [would] involve the necessary failure of art and the aesthetic, the failure of the new, the imprisonment in the past" (Jameson 115). There would be something self-serving about art imitating art and producing its own criticism. In British contemporary fiction Peter Ackroyd could well be the paradigmatic example of such closing-in of novel-writing upon itself, and upon the past. By turning to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* this seminal work of English medieval literature, Ackroyd has managed to publish no fewer than three books within the space of five years[1]. The choice of Chaucer is itself most relevant as Chaucer is known for having plundered almost everybody from Virgil to Petrarch. Yet, in spite of Ackroyd's avowed intent to modernise

---

[1] The Clerkenwell Tales in 2003, Chaucer in 2004 and recently The Canterbury Tales: A Retelling in 2008.

and therefore facilitate access to a rather difficult canonical text by contemporary standards, the risk of shutting literature within a hermetically sealed network of cross-references and internal consonances cannot be totally dismissed. Let it be said at once, in some cases rewriting may lead to overwriting with the attendant danger of sterile iteration in the long term.

As will be clear from the title of this volume, with its emphasis on "plurality", the purpose of this collection is to counter the objections articulated in the first paragraph of this introductory chapter by putting forward some the many creative potentialities afforded by the "rewriting", or "recomposing" impulse. The word "reprising", that has been appended to "rewriting", participates in this plea for a sheer diversity of the (re)creative process, pre-empting the risk of any barren, parrot-like replication. To do justice to the almost infinite possibilities that "second degree"[2] art permits, it is fitting to begin with terminology. Julie Sanders in a book about adaptation and recreation highlights after Genette the range of subtle nuances that the lexicon of musicology offers when transposed to rewriting (Sanders 12). "Reprise", meaning the return to the opening material in a musical composition, could of course be added to the list. However, in a volume treating of the pluralism inherent in intertextuality, "reprise" through its own polysemy opens other perspectives. The repetitive process implied by the word evokes other absorbing tasks that are taken up over and over again, and that have been going on, sometimes nearly unchanged, from time immemorial – namely sowing and darning. It is no coincidence of course if the Text has been described, or rather experienced, as woof, and if the noun "web" is often used in relation to the adjective "intertextual". It is not merely a matter of etymology. Besides, the *text*ile metaphor has proved of special significance to semioticians like Barthes (1973 101) who draws the parallel between weaving and web-spinning, an activity associated with spiders featuring prominently in many of Emily Dickinson's poems. There is obviously a feminine, if by no means all-exclusive, bias, attached to the weaving/writing metaphoric strand. A.S. Byatt who, together with the previously mentioned Ackroyd, has practised rewriting most extensively and with consummate expertise, often introduces the spinning/penning motif in her writings. In *Possession* she refers to the Lady of Shalott with Tennysonian undertones (Byatt 187)[3]. This linking up of weaving and

---

[2] The phrase is of course intended as an echo of Genette's *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree.*

[3] The motif of the Lady of Shalott is itself the subject of countless poetical rewritings ranging from Margaret Atwood to Elizabeth Bishop.

representing, as a means of postponing the instant of death, cannot fail to bring to mind Scheherazade's repeated acts of story-telling as a way of putting off the completion of the vizier's sentence. These two instances of (re)creation closely tied up with attempts to negate, or deny, finitude provide insights into the polysemic notion of "reprise". Later, Byatt was to return to weaving and spinning in an essay devoted to Arachne, published in a collection revisiting/rewriting Ovid, that was aptly titled *Ovid Metamorphosed*. Arachne, an obscure weaver and embroiderer, dares to vie with the Goddess Pallas Athene by boasting that she can outdo her in the art of spinning wool. She is subsequently punished for her hubristic challenge by being turned into an obnoxious spider. Byatt's retelling of the Arachnean myth, which itself constitutes the material of Ovid's text, has much to tell us about the "reprise" motif. Through a blurring of inside and outside, Arachne is both a figure standing for the metamorphic quality of art, and metonymically she is both the tapestry that she wove in defiance of the Goddess and the webs that she has kept spinning ever since, under cover of darkness and anonymity. She is both in Ovid's florid style and in Dickinson's erratic lines.

## Plural Readings of Intertextuality

Whilst favouring literature as its main focus of study, this collection is by no means confined to it. The fine arts and musicology are also among the subjects that are broached, if only more tentatively. Pluralism is the overarching notion covering the different directions that come under scrutiny. Julia Kristeva, when she coined the concept of *intertextualité*, made it clear that it was not only literature, but more generally art – i.e. music, drama, dance and so forth – that she wished to include. Art in all its guises was to be seen in terms of a living mosaic, a dynamic intersection of signifying practices, and in short as kinetic processes of transposition and transmutation. Toril Moi has perceptively exposed what was at stake in Kristeva's definition:

> [...] *the passage from one system to another.* [...] The term *intertextuality* denotes this transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into one another; but since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of 'study of sources', we prefer the term *transposition* because it specifies that the passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic – of enunciative and denotative positionality. (Moi 111, original italics)

Intertextuality thus eschews any predefined patterns such as the precedence of the sourcetext over its hypertexts, reducing the latter to a mere secondary, ancillary position. Rather than considering "rewrites" as offshoots of antecedent sources and analysing the hypertextual links through categories such as difference, lack or loss, Kristeva's notion of intertextuality underscores the plural, polysemic and multidimensional, and in so doing, precludes any fixed grid of analysis. So, not only does this volume address different sign systems – fiction, poetry, essay, drama, painting, opera-writing – but it also highlights the ongoing processes of textual transformation, from *Ur-text*, to text, with in its wake a whole series of potential hypertextual follow-ups. The example of Woolf is a good case in point, as it shows transfers from short-stories to novels, and, subsequently to later rewritings. A whole constellation of terms such as prequel, coquel and sequel, that have been designed to account for the many, endless rewritings of books like *Jane Eyre* or *Dracula*, goes some way towards establishing this never-ending process of literary mutations, pre-empting the possibility of closure.

The contemporary obsession with literary repetition is, as might be easily guessed, not a novelty in itself. The example of *imitatio auctorum* of course immediately springs to mind. The imitation and emulation of the great prose and poet writers were advocated as part of rhetorical training. But without going as far as to prioritize the didactic function of rewriting, it may be observed that the act of storytelling *per se* cannot be separated from some form of retelling, both being consubstantial, as it were. Margaret A. Rose shows how the Greek etymology of the term parody – παρῳδός designating both an "imitating singer" and "singing in imitation" – points to the fundamental reproducibility of story-telling (Rose 7). Travelling bards would add their own variations to the tale of the rhapsodists who were themselves given to embroidering on the Homeric legend. Moreover, the prefix "para" bears a semantic ambivalence that is crucial to any reflection on "rewriting" as it conflates both nearness and opposition – a pair of binaries that survives in the current dichotomy between "adaptation" and "appropriation".

What marked out the twentieth century, from the Modernists onwards, was making of rewriting a matter of concern in its own right. Quoting, borrowing, cannibalizing, revising, refurbishing, or plainly plagiarizing became well-identified practices, meticulously documented and sometimes warranting full-length studies.[4] What also came in for further consideration

---

[4] Antoine Compagnon's *La Seconde main ou le travail de la citation* would be a good example of this type of study.

was the overrated value which, following the Romantics, had been granted to originality. In his famous 1919 essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent", T.S. Eliot stated that originality had been unduly praised, both as difference from anything that had been done before, and as referring to the artist's individual essence. Instead of striving to single out what distinguished the creator from his immediate precursors, T.S. Eliot preferred to insist upon the coterminous existence of past and present in the creative act. Indeed, and however paradoxical this might seem, what is deemed the best and the most personal achievements in an artist's work are precisely those parts "in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality vigorously." And T.S. Eliot went on to add that "[n]o poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone" (T.S. Eliot 38). In a way, by challenging the fallacious admiration for the original as foundational aesthetic value, T.S. Eliot initiated a transhistorical approach that was to pave the way for twentieth and twenty-first century criticism. Eliot's most valuable contribution to any current investigation of the "rewriting" phenomenon lies therefore in the central role attributed to the temporal perspective in the creative act. Meaning then results from the confrontation between texts – the new being of necessity predicated upon the past.

Other critics were to follow this direction by no longer considering the text as a self-contained entity, but rather through its links with previous writings. Harold Bloom, by drawing from the Freudian Œdipal complex, established a complex, but fascinating, relation of tension between strong (i.e. major, creative) poets and their forerunners. The former elect their own precursors on account of their own intrinsic qualities, but soon experience the urge to wrestle with them and ultimately to surpass them. The guilt-ridden hatred of the Father that Freud saw at the root of family relations is thus transferred from the figure of the son to that of young poets intent on ridding themselves of the author-ity and influence of their predecessors. The "strong poet" is the one who has the strength to subvert the tradition he inherits by "troping" the writings of his literary forefathers. The masculinist slant of Bloom's thesis can of course arouse controversy, and so can his almost exclusive stress on the individual that is so heavily indebted to Romanticism, however his major contribution to the issue of rewriting can hardly be questioned. The line of influence that he staked out from Spenser, and through Milton to Blake, Shelley and subsequently such Modernists as Yeats and Lawrence introduced a transgeneric and transhistoric pattern that could be fruitfully transposed to other corpora. Equally central to the posterity of Bloom have been his concepts of "misprision" and his re-appropriation of the Greek

"apophrades", or return of the dead (Bloom 139-155). The former refers to the inevitable happenstance that is bound to come as a result of any engagement with previous writers:

> Authentic, high literature relies upon troping, a turning away not only from the literal but from prior tropes. Like criticism, which is either part of literature or nothing at all, great writing is always at work strongly (or weakly) misreading previous writing. Any stance that anyone takes up towards a metaphorical work will itself be metaphorical. (Bloom XIX)

Through a polysemic interplay with Shakespeare's use of "misprision", which unlike "mistaking" implies not only misunderstanding, but also unjust imprisonment, Bloom suggests that the failure to grasp literal meaning may prove to be liberating. More or less deliberate or apparently wilful misinterpretation can in a sense open the doors of creativity. Such is the relation between texts that it allows for potential misreading that later turns out to be at the root of the creative process. Literary history is made up of a succession of deviations, or "revisionary swerves" away from artistic father-figures. Once again the subtle dialectic between nearness and opposition comes into play. "Apophrades", for its part, is seminal to the issue of rewriting in so far as it somehow calls up the illusion that the "rewrite" somehow precedes what is in actual fact its hypotext. It has been convincingly argued for instance that Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* creates the illusion that it precedes its "mother-poem [i.e. *Jane Eyre*] in time" (Maurel 140), so that "the uncanny effect is that the new poem's achievement makes it seem to us, not as though the precursor were writing it, but as though the later poet himself had written the precursor's characteristic work" (Bloom 15). For a lot of readers *Jane Eyre* is now approached through the lens of Rhys's fiction, and through Gilbert and Gubar's famous paradigm of the "madwoman in the attic". This is a perfect example of the supplementary function, in the Derridean sense, of rewriting. In a way, it is as if the so-called original work could never ever be complete or self-sufficient in itself. Prequels, coquels and sequels – virtually countless in the case of *Jane Eyre* – are proofs of the fact that the chronological, hierarchical relation of subservience between hypertext and hypotext is somehow misleading. This merging of origin and supplement, occurring whenever the hypertext gives the illusion of being the pre-text of its original sourcetext, demonstrates that the intertextual link is by no means a one-way process, but should be envisaged in its plurality, i.e. as multidirectional.

   The deconstructionists, by questioning the tenets of structuralism, notably the self-sufficiency of the text, testifying in the last resort to

principles of order and stability, contributed to propagating the idea of free textual interplay. Writing, or rewriting, thus became indistinguishable – both caught up in differential structures of meaning. According to Derrida, there is always an "opening" which baffles and hampers the closure of the text: "What I can never understand, in a structure, is that by means of which it is not closed" (Derrida 1978 160). Furthermore, the all too famous concept of *différance*, by positing the constant temporal deferring of meaning as pure, self-present awareness, entails the dissolution of the boundaries that mark off one text from another, and by extension between texts and criticism. The French post-structuralist movement, with Barthes as one of its chief exponents, was to denounce as illusory any notion of the autonomy of the text, through one of these catchphrases destined to posterity: "any text is an intertext" (Barthes 39). Barthes not only meant that literature is crossed by other forms of cultural expression – codes and references, ideological spectres, stereotypes – and that it is haunted by the persistent trace of other texts, but more importantly, that readers played a crucial role in the production of meaning. So the intertextual plurality may stem from the readerly activity itself, probably as much as it originates in an authorial intention. Indeed, the reading subject is already made up of a plurality of other texts whose origins may not always be traced. This leads Barthes to make the paradoxical statement that the more plural the text is, the less it is written, prior to being actualised through the act of reading.[5] What is implied is that the text depends, to a large extent, upon the hermeneutic activity of the reader, and upon what Eco designates as the reader's own encyclopaedia. It goes without saying that the intertextual web needs not be conscious, as Michael Riffaterre has argued – a fact which should not be underestimated in any appraisal of rewriting. Repression and foreclosure intervene in the rewriting process.

Rewriting raises the question of faithfulness to, or respect for, the hypotext. From pastiche to parody, a whole range of incremental shifts are possible. The list is hard to draw and the nuances difficult to pinpoint, notwithstanding repeated efforts to discriminate between: "(in no particular order) [...] borrowing, stealing, appropriating, inheriting, assimilating [...] being influenced, inspired, dependent, indebted, haunted, possessed [...] homage, mimicry, travesty, echo, allusion, and intertextuality" (Poole 2). In the field of narrative poetics, the most thorough investigation of transtextuality, i.e. all that establishes links between a text and other texts, has been conducted by Genette in his major work *Palimpsest: Literature in the Second Degree*. It is now taken for granted that all text is

---

[5] "Plus le texte est pluriel et moins il est écrit avant que je le lise", *SZ*, 16.

by definition palimpsestuous: "Any text is a hypertext, grafting itself onto
a hypotext, an earlier text that it imitates and transforms" (Genette IX). A
split nevertheless arises between texts celebrating canon literature and
those that purport to take issue with it. Yet the distinction between respect
and challenge may not be blunt or cut and dried, but often a fraught one,
involving an odd blend of both loyalty and distance. Inevitably, the issue
of rewriting is bound to cross over into political or ethical questions. The
dichotomy between, on the one hand, adaptation: "a transpositional
practice, casting a specific genre into another generic mode, an act of re-
vision in itself [...] the exercise of trimming and pruning [...] also an
amplificatory procedure engaged in addition, expansion, accretion,
interpolation" (Sanders 18), and on the other, appropriation: "carry[ing]
the same sustained engagement as adaptation but frequently adopt[ing] a
posture of critique, even assault" (Sanders 4), is one way of attempting to
discriminate rewriting according to ideology and axiology. Two areas
have proved to be especially sensitive: the postcolonial question and the
feminine one. Rewriting has taken the form of writing back in the
literatures of former colonised countries. The target was the hegemonic
cultural control exerted by the metropolitan centre through imposed
acculturation. Yet the breakaway from the canonical works of imperialist
countries entail complex discourses; indeed postcolonial writings seldom
boil down to an outright dismissal of the European legacy. They testify to
a complex, ambivalent relation in so far as these authoritative texts from
the colonising culture persist in the collective memory of the colonised.
Hence "talking back" to the imperial centre results in subtle discursive
strategies such as double coding, mimicry, hybridity and also creative
syncretism. The parallel between the situation of post-colonial writing and
that of feminist writing has often been brought to the fore. "Writing back"
calls for its complementary double "looking back", to take up the words of
Adrienne Rich's 1971 essay entitled, after Strindberg's play: "When We
Dead Awaken". For the American critic and poet, it was vital that women
should return to the writings of a past steeped in the patriarchal tradition in
order to expose the logic of discursive oppression in which they had long
been trapped:

> Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering
> an old text from a new critical direction. [...] We need to know the writing
> of the past and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass
> on a tradition but to break its hold over us.[6]

---

[6] Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken", 369.

# Crossing Boundary-lines

A first set of essays open up directions to investigate rewriting, and argue convincingly that this practice is by no means merely a playful exercise devoid of any intentionality. The collection opens on Prusse's structuralist close-reading of McGahern's short story "Korea" alongside Hemingway's well-known "Indian Camp", that is shown to be its indubitable hypotext. More precisely, the analysis documents a stylistic feature common to both authors, namely the prevalence of both structural and lexical chiastic patterns. The literariness of McGahern's narrative is thus demonstrated from a method of close-reading, foregrounding striking architectonic correspondences between a classic of American literature and a profoundly Irish narrative. Significantly, McGahern has naturalised Hemingway's story by imbuing it with a typically Irish spirit. Of course, the kinship between both writers is blatant and the father/son relationship which is the subject of both stories could be extrapolated to include the filial relation of homage between McGahern, known for vastly overwriting before paring down his texts, and Hemingway who pioneered the "iceberg technique". Precisely, chiasmus as a structuring device calls for meticulous arrangements whose purpose is to make people feel more than they understand. Ultimately, the recurrent echoes between hypotext and hypertext are rendered even more intricate when it is shown that a second Hemingwayan source has been grafted on to the first, to heighten the dramatic tension in the opening of McGahern's "Korea."

Some forms of writing are especially suited for rewriting, and this is particularly the case with the fairy tale and the Gothic that come for consideration in three essays of this section (Dupont, Vara, Walezak). Haunting has been shown to be the form of all textuality, and it should therefore come as no surprise if Gothic literature, with its ghosts and spectres, lend itself to rewriting. From its inception, the Gothic has indeed invariably presented itself as a copy of something else, relegating its authors to the position of editors. As for the fairy tale, in its written version it sprang from the transcription – with significant alterations – of narratives that had been passed down orally through succeeding generations. Besides, the Russian formalists have amply demonstrated the formulaic, potentially repeatable quality of the tale, relying on a fairly limited range of variations from a set pattern. Two essays address the Gothic (Dupont) and the tale (Walezak) in turn, a third consider the overlap between the two modes (Vara), thus propounding a type of inter-relational reading that is well-adapted to a work on rewriting, implying incessant border-crossing.

As a postmodern offspring of the Gothic, the New Gothic, illustrated by Patrick McGrath in the present collection, has higher intellectual ambitions than more mainstream contemporary Gothic, without of course disclaiming the readerly pleasure that the latter affords. McGrath's originality stems from his own idiosyncratic recycling of Gothic elements, through the means of parody. The more exterior fixtures of the genre such as horror and terror, which are probably the easiest to counterfeit, are less often summoned up in McGrath's fictions than in other revisionist Gothic narratives. Displacement is carried out through an iconoclastic use of laughter. Moreover, the emphasis on the diseased minds of narrators, which may evoke Poe's tales of psychological terror, point at a disturbing form of interior entropy. As in many instances of rewriting analysed in this book, McGrath's use of parody is not an end in itself. It participates in a process of weaving an intricate intertextual fabric. So the Gothic crosses over into other literary, or epistemological modes. *Martha Peake*, McGrath's fifth novel, does not confine itself to any skilful pastiching and parodying of the Gothic, because it is intended primarily as a historical novel about the American Revolution. In the last resort, rewriting and parody are invested with an axiological function, that of calling into question a foundational metanarrative: the epic of the American history.

Contesting the authority of anterior texts takes on various expressions in Jeanette Winterson's reprising of the Grimm Brothers' tale *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*. The first and most salient feature is a typical deterritorialization of the hyposource, as the tale itself is woven into the novel's fabric, instead of being embedded in it. The erasure of narrative levels is further discarded by the subversive appropriation of the highly coded conventions of the fairy tale. To the traditional marvellous is substituted a satirical impulse. The Carnivalesque use of Menippean discourse, in particular, does away with the hierarchical distribution of the enunciators. Significantly, eleven of the twelve princesses assume a phallic enunciation, with echoes of Juvenalian retributive satire being articulated through their seemingly light-hearted words. On the elusive Fortunata – the twelfth princess –, whose name evokes both chance and good luck, is devolved the novel's *ars poetica*: in the present case, the ideal of Eliotian impersonality.   Jeanette Winterson's approach to rewriting is remarkable in that it is predicated on both transgenericity (poetry, novel, and the marvellous) and transgendering, while eschewing all allegiance to anterior texts. Instead of being weighed down by the load of the patriarchal Tradition, *Sexing the Cherry* capitalises on intertextuality as a release from gravity. To the genetic, determinist metaphor of gendering to account for hypertextual relations of dependency,

it prefers the free wandering circulation of contingent grafting, precluding any traceable origin.

Patricia Highsmith's *Little Tales of Misogyny* connects the Gothic with the fairy tale by recasting the motif of the passive heroine in the seemingly uneventful context of contemporary reality. All the ambivalence of the collection of short stories can be brought out by perusing it in the light of Angela Carter's "exercise in cultural history": *The Sadeian Woman* and *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories*. Carter's reading of de Sade was aimed at collapsing the myth of the blameless, passive heroine, which contributed to incensing the feminists back then. Highsmith was the butt of similar attacks on account of what was regarded as her ambiguous gender politics. What antagonised Highsmith's detractors most, was the fact that not only are her female characters in *Little Tales* deprived of any agency – which after all is in keeping with both the Gothic and the fairy tale traditions –, but worse, that the writer herself eschews the prism of both essentialism and morality. Drained of identity, the women characters enact, to the utmost degree, the roles assigned to them within the patriarchal framework. No ethical agenda is interposed, so that the pensive heroine is reprocessed and emptied out of her tragic dignity as a woman in terror, in a way reminiscent of what happens to Justine in de Sade's eponymous work.

Another way of crossing boundary-lines consists in getting beyond the limits of a completed work to set off a chain of intertextual relations made up of a selection of its antecedent versions and subsequent spin-offs. The potential mutability of the finished text, i.e. *Mrs Dalloway,* is examined in an essay focusing on the novel's fore- and afterlife (Girard). Horticultural metaphors come in handy to depict the process of growth and later ramifications of this classic Modernist work. An investigation of the genesis first demonstrates the impossibility of fixing a definite, well-circumscribed *Urtext.* From entries in notebooks, to various drafts and short-stories in different states, the completed novel still bears the marks of its intrinsic status as "permanent" work in progress. Predictably enough, the novel that originated from short stories was in its turn destined to be the starting point for a posterior collection of shorter narratives, deepening or offering another outlook on its themes and characters. It may therefore appear as an instance of poetic justice that this project of continuation that was to remain unachieved, should have been made up for in the postmodern era thanks to three fiction writers: Robin Lippincott with his novella *Mr Dalloway*, Michael Cunningham with *The Hours*, and – in a less obvious way – by Ian McEwan in *Saturday*.

# Rewriting and the Victorian Tropism

In the English-speaking world the question of rewriting is sooner or later bound to overlap with that of Victorian rewriting. Far from being neatly circumscribed, the return to the Victorian era follows different, and often markedly contrastive, tracks. Cora Kaplan has aptly summarised this plural, multifaceted attraction exerted by the "long nineteenth century" over contemporary writers:

> The variety and appeal of Victoriana over the years might better be seen as one sign of the sense of the historical imagination on the move, an indication that what we thought we knew as 'history' has become, a hundred years and more after the death of Britain's longest-reigning monarch, a kind of conceptual nomad, not so much lost as permanently restless and unsettled. (Kaplan 3)

Following its guiding principle of opening multiple directions, the section devoted to the question of rewriting in the context of Victorian and neo-Victorian studies favours diversity of approaches. To begin with, envisaging Victorian re-writings, i.e. rewritings in the Victorian age, prior to tackling the much-covered issue of rewriting as a contemporary mode of relating to the Victorian period, offers thought-provoking perspectives. It may be observed that some Victorian works have spawned an incredible number of literary offspring – *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Great Expectations, Dracula* and *Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* are only a few examples of such master-texts at the hub of a constellation of secondary texts. This striking instance of textual proliferation is addressed with the representative example of Doyle. The question is raised of whether the convergence of rewritings of certain canonical texts at a given moment in time, does not ultimately lead to the production of a secondary canon. Is there not a neo-Victorian canon which, by drawing extensively on the Victorian one, would eventually generate its own set of formulæ, with a view to pandering to the expectations of a certain class of late twentieth, and twenty-first century readers? As may be expected from literary rewritings of a historical period that was so deeply engaged in the colonial adventure, some Victorian rewritings can be said to constitute a sub-category of post-colonial studies. Two essays fall into this field of analysis, the first by propounding an in-depth investigation of a paradigmatic post-colonial rewriting of a classic text: Peter Carey's revision of Dickens's *Great Expectations* in *Jack Maggs*, while the second adopts an unwonted angle on *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the first neo-Victorian novel and a classic in its own right by now.

Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came", which is quite unique in the poet's output (Armstrong 314), takes up Edgar's words in *King Lear* (III, iv, 174) to call up the chivalric world the Victorians often represented. However, it is a far more remote past that the poem recreates through a rewriting of the Homeric Nekyia (Perquin). The age-old Nekyia was indeed a source of inspiration, and a structuring matrix in the Victorian age. What marks out this particular poem from the rest of Browning's production is the sense of loss of teleological and existential certainty that it conveys. Actually, the classical Greek myth is adapted to the Victorian epistemological context, by focusing not so much on what is going on outside: an adventurous journey into the underworld fraught with encounters with monsters, as with an inner exploration of a tortured consciousness. No spatial progression may be expected from a poem underscoring a journey through often unreliable words. The format of the famous dramatic monologue itself has been interfered with, in as much as no interlocutory situation is staged. Childe Roland is absorbed in an inner dialogue with his own self, without being able to exert his full control on the language he uses. In pre-Freudian times, Browning's insightful poem, with its central phallic symbol, already hints, if only tentatively, at the unchartered complexities of the human psyche.

Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson have also attracted the attention of critics, well-versed in psychoanalysis, but this is another aspect which Nathalie Jaeck's essay purports to document, by showing the Doylian eminent "scriptability", i.e. the process of dynamic textification inherent in the Holmesian tales, through their second lives in Michael Dibdin's novel: *The Last Sherlock Homes Story*. The latter turns out to be a subversive hypertextual revision of its hypotext, by exposing the seamy side of Victorian society through generic mixing. The dark spectre of Jack the Ripper invites itself in the narrative when Watson argues that the expeditions of the butcher of the East End fit the holes and tears in Holmes's time schedule. Yet, in his repeated endeavours to tire out, and exhaust the meaning of Doyle's text, though a most iconoclastic supplement, Watson only succeeds in proving its fundamental iterability. Doyle's text is indeed one which resists *any* form of stabilisation.

In marked contrast with this capacity of Victorian hypotexts to constantly generate new texts that never quite exhaust their constitutive plurality, there is also a tendency in neo-Victorian fictions to ossify patterns and contents. From many respects, Michel Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* can be read as a typical exemplar of a form of (re)writing that is in the process of turning into second degree canon, i.e. implementing a certain number of rules which other similar fictions

(Susan Barrett *Fixing Shadows*; D.J. Taylor *Kept, A Victorian Mystery*, Jane Harris *The Observations*, Wesley Stace *Misfortune*, Michael Cox *The Meaning of Night,* and the more recent *The Glass of Time* etc. ) adhere to and emulate in their turn. Faber offers a skewed return to the Victorian canon and ultimately surrenders narrative order to the anarchical historical "real" (Letissier). Interestingly, Faber's eight-hundred-page blockbuster revived the Victorian tradition of serial publication, since it was to be followed by *The Apple, Crimson Petal Stories*, a much shorter volume, which nonetheless promised to reconnect Faber's readers with the all-too familiar cast surrounding Sugar the prostitute.

Whereas novels like *The Crimson Petal and the White*, which was occasionally hastily labelled as "Dickensian", recombine a variety of different sources, others are committed to a single text. This is the case of Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* with its exclusive concern for *Great Expectations.* Carey's agenda is pretty similar to Rhys's in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. In both novels, rewriting may be equated with re-righting (Parey). The Australian novelist flaunts his freedom to manipulate the Victorian classic, thus denying its superiority as anterior, and its authority through its antecedence. On top of decentering Dickens's novel by making of the convict the focus of the diegesis, *Jack Maggs* also reflects the ideological context in which such a literary figure as the convict came into being as artistic creation. In other words, rewriting also implies pre-writing, in delineating the conditions of emergence of the original. Explaining how the hypotext was first created helps reveal it as a crafted element, rather than as an immanent one. Oates, the intradiegetic double of Dickens, who is to all intents and purposes a grossly exaggerated  image of its model, keeps the reader privy to the manipulative power inherent in fiction-writing. All in all, Carey's novel is a prototypical militant revisionist fiction, underscoring the seminal contradiction sustained in colonial discourse in presenting Australia at one and the same time as convict hell, and the site of Arcadian promise.

The centrality of spatial perception in colonial discourse is also touched upon in the essay dedicated to Rhys. The originality of the approach, when treating of this novel that has already elicited so much criticism, resides in its introduction of primary sources: Trollope's travelogue *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* and a short story by the same author: "Miss Sarah Jack of Spanish Town, Jamaica." Rhys, who was a Dominican, does not rely on a single source, *Jane Eyre*, but weaves three strands. Her attempt to voice the point of view of those left behind by history is consonant with Trollope's own compassionate tone in his minute observation of the plight of the Creole destined to be sacrificed in

the name of historical progress. It is not the least of Rhys's contribution to demonstrate how Antoinette/Bertha's crisis also stands for the collapse of a minor social class to the good conscience of a nation in the wake of the Emancipation Act. And the essay concludes by adumbrating another line of escape: Jenny Diski's *Monkey Uncle*, also written from the perspective of a mad woman.

## Post-Colonial Directions

Two contributions tackle the post-colonial issue from an unwonted angle, either by showing that rewriting may mean not so much writing back to, or against, the colonial canon, as appropriating it for the purpose of patching up a foundation myth (Martinière), or by demonstrating how theory-informed readings of a classic of English literature: *Heart of Darkness* deepen an understanding of current systems of oppression (Deandrea).

It has become generally accepted that in most post-colonial literature, rewriting implies lending a voice to silenced characters, or developing some marginal aspects of the initial plot of the colonial hypotext. However, this needs not be always the case. *My Life as a Fake*, by Peter Carey, shows how a myth, i.e. Frankenstein is used as a basic pattern to be transposed onto a genuine episode of Australian literary history (the Ern Malley Affair). Issues of originality and authorship are particularly sensitive in a country whose literary output has sometimes been frowned upon as merely derivative. In this context, parody appears as the perfect mediator in the production of fiction, and the English canon for once may prove to be resourceful. It is no longer held as a persecuting and silencing force as in *Jack Maggs*, because it can also offer foundational transgressive myths, like Frankenstein. Indeed, the monster stands for the break of natural bonds of obligation towards blood relations, mostly filial ties. The creature ends up equalling, or perhaps even eclipsing the creator. To this extent, it could be seen as the perfect symbol of derivative cultures and literatures, by spurning legitimacy as a requirement, and correlatively by championing self-authorization.

The reception of *Heart of Darkness* constitutes a landmark in post-colonial studies. Chinua Achebe's bitter onslaught on Conrad's novel is a standard reference. By studying recent "rewrites", such as *The Intended* (1991), by the Caribbean David Dabydeen, and *Paradise* (1994) by the Tanzanian Abdulrazak Gurnah, it can be argued that the postcolonial approach has gained in complexity. In the first novel, the trope of the journey into the African heartland is turned into both an exploration of

London, and a voyage into the world of sex, while in the second, the all-corrupting plague of trade, which looms in the background of Conrad's hypotext, is taken to the fore. Through its main protagonist, *The Intended* provides insights into the British canon from a peculiar, sometimes satirical angle. In the last resort, Dabydeen's fiction turns out to be a revelation of the impossibility of revelation. As for *Paradise*, it widens the historical, social and ethnic context of *Heart* by expanding the spatial and temporal frame of the exploitation of the Congo region. In so doing, it goes beyond the scope of the literary by raising questions of human rights and touching upon the devastating consequences of local warfare.

## Dialogues between the Verbal, Visual and Aural Arts

A volume on "plural intertextualities" would not be complete if it did not set out to investigate different, though often complementary, directions in the realm of the arts (painting, drama, opera, aesthetic essays). A last section is devoted to issues bearing on what art does when it concerns itself with recycling or recomposing previous, or more or less closely-related artistic forms. Some critical categories that have been inserted to deal more especially with literature still prove pertinent. This is the case principally with Genettian criticism. However, a more targeted array of analytical instruments also turns out to be most valuable (Barasch, Didi-Huberman, Freedberg and, Warburg, to quote but a few). The aim of this last part is to give a sample of hyperaesthetic explorations and to suggest means of fostering thought-provoking exchanges between artistic forms.

Ruskin launched his career as an art critic by denouncing the public's negative reaction to Turner's paintings (Roussillon-Constanty). From then on, a privileged relation between the essay-writer and the painter ensued. Ruskin uses Turner as an ever-shifting mirror, an instrument allowing him to interrogate the very nature of landscape painting. Ruskin shows in particular how Turner goes beyond mere truth to nature. Turner's torrent, for example, embodies a kind of moral truth far exceeding the painter's skills or any supposed realistic rendering. It is the depiction of the sunlight that Ruskin admired the most in Turner's art, since it is for an artist the hardest task to accomplish, given that nature can never be surpassed, nor even equalled. Through his long, detailed descriptions of Turner's art, Ruskin makes up his own verbal canvas, weaving a complex self-portrait of the art critic.

The insertion of miniature paintings inside the settings of Hogarth's *Marriage-A-la-Mode* could be seen as the nearest equivalent to the practice of citation in the literary art. The English painter and engraver has

been too often regarded as chiefly a realist and a moralist, which does not do justice to his poetic talent (Baron). The paintings within paintings which clutter the rooms of *Marriage-A-la-Mode* account for the seduction exterted by the artist. They include copies of old, Italian masters of the Renaissance, and baroque painters, without forgetting self-quotations when Hogarth taps into some of his earlier works.The interaction between the two levels of pictorial representation is of course what engages the attention: jarring oppositions, metonymic chains between both the paintings within paintings themselves, and between the paintings within paintings and the main painting. Particularly noticeable is the way in which Hogarth pokes fun at the carefully contrived lines of the Baroque style by advocating the naturalness of the waving "line of beauty".

When it comes to the aural arts, the concept of "plural intertexts" proves most pertinent. Thomas Adès's operatic rewriting of *The Tempest* inscribes itself within a line of scores by musicians who have all been attracted by the musical quality of Shakespeare's play (Michael Tippett, Tchaikovsky, or Sibelius). Meredith Oakes, the librettist, altered the original Shakespearean text to leave ample room for Adès's music (Heberlé). Condensation for the sake of operatic efficiency was favoured, which entailed the inclusion of alliterations, assonances and inner rhymes. In keeping with contemporary interpretations of *The Tempest*, ambivalence and complexity were foregrounded instead of viewing the play as a story of reconciliation and forgiveness. This aesthetic stance is carried out through the choice of voices and music. A darker Prospero, characterised by an ambiguous, fickle nature, is expressed by means of heterogeneous musical instrumentation. Thomas Adès's adaptation of Shakespeare's play is not a simple re-appropriation of the original text, but rather a meta-operatic work, looking back on the operatic tradition to revitalize this musical genre.

The last essay of the volume is dedicated to the figure of the courtesan who is, from many respects, emblematic of much that has been said before. Not only is she a standard character in literature, but she also stands out as a dense palimpsest of textual, visual, and musical "reprises" (Vernadakis). Going as far back in time as the Egyptian, the Greek and, of course Biblical times, she nonetheless features prominently in the decadent age (Huysmans, Mallarmé). Wilde's reprises of the courtesan through Salomé have been variously appraised, from spurious second hand work to forerunner of postmodernism. Through the complexity of the courtesan, Wilde propounds a politics of gender, by undermining conventional cultural representations. There is an undeniable phenomenon of personal identification at work in Wilde's erudite creation of *Salomé*

and *La Sainte Courtisane* and a similar process is at stake in Tennesse Williams's shaping of Alma in "The Yellow Bird". Alma indeed bears within herself not only Wilde's courtesans, but the trace of their own creator or adaptor – Wilde himself, so that Alma, on one hand, and Salomé and her likes on another, are pretty much ink relatives.

# Bibliography

Ackroyd Peter, *The Clerkenwell Tales*, London, Vintage, [2003] 2004.

—. *Chaucer*, London, Chatto & Windus, 2004.

—. *The Canterbury Tales: A Retelling*, London, Penguin Classics, [2008] 2009.

Armstrong Isobel, *Victorian Poetry,* London & New York, Routledge, [1993] 2002.

Ashcroft Bill, Griffiths Gareth, Tiffin Helen, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, London, New Accents, Routledge, [1989] 2002.

Bacchilega Cristina, *Postmodern Fairy Tales: Gender and Narrative Strategies*, Philadelphia, U. Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

Barasch Moshe, *Icon. Studies in the History of an Idea*, New York, New York University Press, 1992.

Barrett Susan, *Fixing Shadows*, London, Headline Review, 2005.

Barthes Roland, *SZ*, Paris, Seuil, 1970.

—. *Le Plaisir du texte*, Paris, Points Seuil, 1973.

—. "Theory of the Text", R Young (ed.) *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, London, Routledge, 1982.

Bloom Harold, *The Anxiety of Influence*, New York & Oxford, Oxford University Press, [1973] 1997.

Brontë Charlotte, *Jane Eyre*, New York & London, A Norton Critical Edition, [1847] 2001.

Byatt Antonia S., *Possession,* London: Vintage, [1990] 1991.

—. "Arachne", *Ovid Metamorphosed*, Philip Terry (ed.), London, Vintage, 2001, 131-157.

Compagon Antoine, *La Seconde main ou le travail de la citation*, Paris Seuil, 1979.

Cox Michael, *The Meaning of Night*, London, John Murray, 2006.

—. *The Glass of Time*, London, John Murray, 2008 [2009].

Deleuze Gilles & Guattari Félix, *Capitalisme et Schizophrénie 2, Mille Plateaux*, Paris, Minuit, 1980.

Derrida Jacques, *Of Grammatology*, Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore Md, Johns Hopkins University Press, [1967] 1977.

—. *Writing and Difference*, Trans. Alan Bass, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, [1967] 1978.

Dickinson Emily, *The Complete Poems*, Thomas H. Johnson (ed.), London, Faber and Faber, [1970] 1975.

Didi-Huberman Georges, *Devant l'image*, Paris, Minuit, 1990.

Eagleton Terry, *The Idea of Culture*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2000.

Eco Umberto, *Lector in Fabula*, Paris, Poche Essais, [1979] 1985.

Eliot T.S., "Tradition and the Individual Talent", *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot* (Frank Kermode ed.), New York Farrar, Straus and Giroux, [1919] 1975.

Evans Ruth, Hughes Terence, Letissier Georges, *Secrets, Mysteries, Silences,* Nantes, CRINI/CERCI, 2005.

Freedberg David, *The Power of Images. Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, Chicago, U. Chicago Press,1989.

—. *Iconoclasts and their Motives*, Maarsen, Gary Schwartz, 1985.

Genette Gérard, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinski, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, [1982] 1997.

Gilbert Sandra & Gubar Susan, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, New Haven, London, Yale U.P., 1979.

Harries Elizabeth Wanning, *Twice Upon a Time, Women Writers and the Fairy Tale*, Princeton, Princeton U. P., 2001.

Hewitt Martin, "Why the Notion of Victorian Britain *Does* Make Sense", *Victorian Studies*, vol. 48, n° 3, (2006), 395-438.

Harris Jane, *The Observations*, London, Faber, 2006.

Heilmann Ann & Llewellyn Mark, *Metafiction and Metahistory in Contemporary Women's Writing*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Hutcheon Linda, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*, New York and London, Methuen, 1984.

—. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth Century Art Forms,* London, Methuen, 1985.

Jameson Fredric, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society", Hal Foster (ed.) *Postmodern Culture*, London, Pluto Press, [1983] 1985.

Kaplan Cora, *Victoriana – Histories, Fictions, Criticism*, New York, Columbia U.P., 2007.

Kristeva Julia, Σημειωτι ή Recherches pour une sémanalyse, Paris, Seuil, 1969.

—. *La Révolution du langage poétique*, Paris, Seuil, 1974. Trans. as *Revolution in Poetic Language* by Margaret Waller. Intro. Léon S. Roudiez, New York, Columbia University Press, 1984.

Kucich John & Sadoff Dianne F. (eds.), *Victorian Afterlife: postmodern culture rewrites the nineteenth century*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Maurel Sylvie, *Jean Rhys*, London, Macmillan, 1998.

Moi Toril, *The Kristeva Reader*, Oxford Blackwell, [1986] 1993.

Poole Adrian, *Shakespeare and the Victorians*, London: Thomson Learning/Arden Shakespeare, 2004.

Rich Adrienne, "When We Dead Awaken: 'Writing as Revision'", Maggie Humm (ed.), *Feminisms: A Reader*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, [1971] 1992.

Riffaterre Michael, "The Intertextual Unconscious", *Critical Inquiry*, 1986, 13.2, 371-385.

Rose Margaret A., *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Postmodern*, C.U.P., 1993.

Said Edward, "On Originality", in *The World*, *The Text, and The Critic*, Cambridge M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1983.

—. *Culture and Imperialism*, London, Vintage, 1993.

Sanders Julie, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, London & New York, Routledge, 2006.

Stace Wesley, *Misfortune*, London, Cape, 2005.

Stoker Bram, *Dracula*, New York & London, A Norton Critical Edition, [1897] 1997.

Taylor DJ, *Kept: A Victorian Mystery,* London, Chatto & Windus, 2005.

Warburg Aby, *Ausgewählte Schriften und Würdigungen*, Baden Baden, Wutke, 1979.

Zipes Jack, *Fairy Tale and the Art of Subversion*, London & New York, Routledge, [1983] 2006.

—. *Why Fairy Tale Stick*, London & New York, Routledge, 2006.

# PART 1:

# PASTICHE, PARODY, GENRE AND GENDER

CHAPTER TWO

SYMMETRY MATTERS:
JOHN MCGAHERN'S "KOREA" AS HYPERTEXT
OF ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S "INDIAN CAMP"

MICHAEL C. PRUSSE
(ZURICH UNIVERSITY OF TEACHER EDUCATION)

In memory of John McGahern (1934-2006), whose writings inspired this paper, and of Max Nänny (1932-2006), Professor emeritus of English and American Literature at the University of Zurich, who taught me to read Hemingway.

Most critics perceive John McGahern as an original creator of a microcosmic Irish universe that revolves around a limited number of recurrent themes. This fictional world with its intense focus on a very specific Irish locale nevertheless succeeds in transmitting universal experiences and thus has resulted in accruing a large and dedicated readership. A lot of research, in particular since the publication of McGahern's *Memoir* in 2005, is directed towards tracing the sources of these topics in the author's biography. McGahern habitually denied links between his life and his texts, maintaining that "[a]utobiographical stuff isn't much use for writing because it's never according to shape" (cited in Kampen 336) and that his narratives "create worlds, which people inhabit," and thus "grow out of the words, not the other way round" (1998). In his most vehement denial the author even stated: "I think that all autobiographical writing is by definition bad writing unless it's strictly autobiography" (Gonzales 20). Nevertheless, several critics have discovered connections between the author's biography and certain recurrent themes in his fiction. These links are confirmed when one reads *Memoir* and instantly notices the resurfacing of specific incidents in McGahern's carefully crafted autobiographical narrative that one has already encountered in fictional form in his novels and short stories.