The Shadow of the Precursor

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Dedicated to Syd Harrex

The more parents the better. For such birth
there's no dishonour, no pride in scandal
for being a collective progenitor
of an infant text that has multiple
mummies and daddies . . .

Syd Harrex, "Bringing a Book to Life,"
in *Dougie's Ton & 99 Other Sonnets* (2007).

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Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow

—TS Eliot, “The Hollow Men”

CHAPTER ONE

THE SHADOW OF THE PRECURSOR FROM ACCOMMODATION TO APPROPRIATION TO RESISTANCE

MD REZAUL HAQUE, BEN KOOYMAN AND DIANA GLENN

> No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists.
> —TS Eliot[1]

> Tradition, a line of masters and predecessors, can be for the creator a line-current into which he is plugged. It can be a hill from whose top he sees beyond, and rules over, what is on the plain below. Or it can be a dead yesterday entombed in the night just past and grandly canceled [sic] by the creative sun that is the originality of his magic or his skill, making it new, darkening the past into mere History.
> —John Hollander[2]

Perhaps the best way to engage with the critical concept of the precursor (at least as understood in the West) is to keep in mind that it is neither a stable nor a universal category.[3] Nor is it so even across genres (for example, between tragedy and fiction) and mediums (between literature and film, for instance). It has changed both over time and across cultures and will possibly continue to do so in times to come. Of the two kinds of change that the idea of the precursor has undergone, the historical one is certainly more apparent if only because it has received a lot more critical attention than the cultural one (scholars have *just* begun to pay attention to the latter).[4] The reasons are necessarily historical. There has been a time when (colonising) Europe claimed for itself the right to provide the (colonised) world with all the models and templates in all spheres of life,

from (home) economics to (national) culture.[5] One simple example will suffice here. In his brilliant study of Indian nationalism, Partha Chatterjee takes issue with Benedict Anderson over the character/nature of anticolonial nationalisms in the so-called third world. Anderson claims (as Chatterjee puts it)

> that the historical experience of nationalism in Western Europe, in the Americas, and in Russia had supplied for all subsequent nationalisms a set of modular forms from which nationalist elites in Asia and Africa had chosen the ones they liked.[6]

Chatterjee counters: "The most powerful as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a *difference* with the 'modular' forms of the national society propagated by the modern West."[7]

It is important to take note of the fact that Chatterjee is able to emphasise the *difference* of anticolonial nationalisms from the "modular" ones (that is, from the so-called precursory ones) only after the former have effectively demolished the hegemony of colonial/imperial Europe. The same is also true of the notion of the precursor in so far as its difference across cultures is concerned. It is only in the context of decolonisation that a radical reconceptualisation of what goes by the name of canon/precursor/tradition has been possible in both the West and its former colonies. In a broad sense, then, the changing contours of the precursory shadow, as well as how they have been perceived over time and across cultures, genres and mediums, is what the present book is all about.

If there are lacunae in it, they are the two strongest biases undergirding the concept of the precursor, class and gender, since none of the authors has addressed them. The precursory shadow here is all male (e.g. Shakespeare in Ben Kooyman's chapter and Ovid in Irene Belperio's and Diana Glenn's chapter) and mostly upper-middle-class (no Robert Burns or DH Lawrence).[8] In addition, it is mainstream—that is, belonging to high rather than popular culture—except for John Lang in Rick Hosking's chapter. These absences/silences are not to be regretted, for they are indicative of the multiple politics that go into the making of the precursor and thus work towards encouraging a critical engagement with its multi-functional shadow. For to be able to see that the shadow of the precursor is a construct is an endeavour worth undertaking.

There are some other expressions, both new and old, that also connote the idea of the precursor. Of the old variety, such terms as "heritage," "legacy," "influence," "source," "tradition," and so on are found to have

been in use as late as the early 1970s.[9] With the publication of *Sémeiótiké* in 1969, the old terminology quietly gave way to the new: the reign of "intertextuality" began.[10] As is well known, the term "intertextuality" was coined by Julia Kristeva. Put simply, what Kristeva means by intertextuality is that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another."[11] Between influence and intertextuality, however, the face of the precursor has changed and so too the way to look at it.

It is possible to get a glimpse of the changing contours of the precursory shadow and the kind of treatment they have (historically) received from a brief foray into English literary criticism. At the outset, it should be made clear that the use of English literary criticism as an example here is not meant to be taken as paradigmatic of all other negotiations with the shadow of the precursor (with necessary modifications in place, it could possibly be used as a working template to deal with the other negotiations across cultures, genres and mediums). One possible justification for the choice can be: because of its once hegemonic status, readers are likely to be more familiar with English literary studies than with any other (except for the ones they are born into).

From Sir Philip Sidney, the first major English critic, to TS Eliot, the face of the precursor remains the same. That is, during the period in question, the shadow of the precursor implies the shadow of tradition, though the authority of tradition shifts from classical (Greek and Latin especially) to home-grown ones (e.g. Bardolatry in Britain). Between the age of Shakespeare and that of Eliot, however, the attitude to precursor/tradition changes radically. For example, Sidney criticises contemporary English dramatists for "mingling kings and clowns," that is, for producing what he calls the "mongrel tragi-comedy" because "the ancients ... never, or very daintily, match horn-pipes and funerals."[12] As Sidney sees it, what the classical tradition does not permit should not be attempted. In other words, Sidney is for absolute deference to classical models/strictures. The shadow of the precursor/tradition should be paid unalloyed homage. The mode of engagement with the precursory shadow should ideally be one of accommodation. The same mode is what binds together the chapters in the first section of this book, though here "accommodation" is not so straightforward: the element of ambivalence/tension—neatly captured by Gillian Dooley in the second half of her title "Iris Murdoch in the Shadow of the Precursor: A Fairly Honourable Defeat?"—is just below the placid-looking reassuring surface of accommodation.

Interestingly, about two centuries later, Samuel Johnson, not only a moralist but also a neoclassicist, commends Shakespeare for mixing the genres of comedy and tragedy: "*Shakespeare*'s plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow."[13]

Johnson defends himself by arguing that, though "this is a practice contrary to the rules of criticism," "there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature."[14] Unlike Sidney, Johnson is not appealing to classical authority to argue his point but to what he thinks is true of human nature. That is, if need be, the shadow of the precursor/tradition has to be appropriated, if not outright rejected. Johnson is divesting classical precursor/tradition of its age-old authority to pass it on to the indigenous one. The second section of this book contains chapters in which the precursor is variously appropriated by the successor.

In his provocative book on *The Anxiety of Influence*, Harold Bloom excludes Shakespeare from "the argument of [his] book" on the grounds that "Shakespeare belongs to the giant age before the flood, before the anxiety of influence became central to poetic consciousness."[15] When did the (in)famous Bloomian anxiety become central then? Bloom points to the Romantic age, though not explicitly saying so: "As poetry has become more subjective, the shadow cast by the precursors has become more dominant."[16] In all probability, what Bloom is trying to suggest here is that the notion of the precursor became crystallised during the Romantic era.[17] In place of a rather diffuse concept of precursor/tradition, the idea of the precursor was now made flesh in the figure of individual literary forebears. Put differently, the fog of vagueness surrounding the face of the precursor begins to disappear in the Romantic period. The epic/mythic invocation to the traditional Muse for inspiration is replaced by the cult of hero/precursor and hero-worship/precursor-worship as genres become clearly demarcated with each having its own model to be emulated as precursor. Hence "For Fiction—read Scott alone." Why else should one be advised to do so?

The Romantic period is also notable for two other developments. First, writers now begin to speak of more than one literary tradition: one deriving from Shakespeare (the Romantic stream), the other from Ben Jonson (the neoclassical stream). To state the obvious, the Romantics turned to the Romantic tradition for inspiration. For them, Shakespeare and John Milton were *the* precursors. Second, the availability of two distinct traditions made freedom of choice (acceptance/rejection) possible. Although initially "unwilling to undertake the task," William Wordsworth

wrote the now classic Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* because he thought "that there would be some impropriety in *abruptly* obtruding upon the Public, without a few words of introduction, Poems *so materially different* from those, upon which general approbation is at present bestowed."[18] That is, in *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth (along with Samuel Taylor Coleridge) is offering the readers "a class of Poetry" that resists, in no ambiguous terms, the shadow of the neoclassical precursor.[19] The Preface is thus the first manifesto (in English literary criticism/history) to spell out resistance to the shadow of the (immediate) precursor. The chapters in the third section of this book enact the same mode of engagement with the precursory shadow.

The Romantic discourse on precursor/tradition remained more or less dominant all through the Victorian age, though by the time Matthew Arnold came to reflect on "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" in 1864, the function of both literature and criticism had become much more focused on social questions than it had been in the previous era.[20] This shift in the conceptualisation of the function of literature and criticism in turn paved the way for a gradual shift in precursory allegiance after World War I, replacing the one formed by the Romantics. The turn was towards classicism. The concept of literature as self-expression came to be discredited. Opposing Wordsworth, Eliot wrote: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality."[21] Yet what Eliot is doing here is exactly what his predecessors have done over and again, embracing a comparatively older tradition (deemed to be) suited to the needs of the times in which they wrote and discarding the relatively newer one (the Romantic tradition in the case of Eliot and his generation).

The really radical challenges came after World War II, especially in the context of decolonisation. The hidden agendas in the precursory discourse now received a lot more critical attention than ever before. Feminist, Marxist and postcolonial writers and scholars from around the world began to consider the dynamics of class, gender, imperialism, nationality, race and so on in the formation of the precursory shadow. In her pioneering work, *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf speculated "what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderfully gifted sister, Judith."[22] That apparently innocent speculation was in fact a not-so-innocent invitation to see the shadow of the precursor from a gendered lens. What followed (especially during the second wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s) is well known: a distinct female tradition was excavated whose precursory roots were traced back not to Shakespeare but to Aphra

Behn (1640–1689).[23] In the following decades, the feminist concern with the shadow of the precursor both deepened and expanded.[24]

In an influential critical essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), Eliot gives a narrow Eurocentric view of the tradition available to a (male) European writer. Emphasising the importance of what he calls "the historical sense" in poetic creation, Eliot asserts:

> [T]he historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.[25]

The literary tradition a European writer might draw upon in the early decades of the twentieth century was obviously not so Eurocentric as Eliot would have one believe.[26] At the turn of the century, for example, WB Yeats was secretly reading (and was much "moved" by) the poems of the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore that would ultimately win Tagore the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913.[27] Eliot himself drew upon the Hindu religious tradition in his masterpiece *The Waste Land* (1922). In other forms of art too, the precursory shadow was becoming global, as is evident from the following comment made by the British art historian, Frank Willet:

> Gauguin had gone to Tahiti, the most extravagant individual act of turning to a non-European culture in the decades immediately before and after 1900, when European artists were avid for new artistic experiences, but it was only about 1904–5 that African art began to make its distinctive impact ... The revolution of twentieth century art was under way![28]

Even before World War I, the shadow of the precursor/tradition had already become global.

In line with this development, it is sensible to illustrate the class-based and postcolonial negotiations of the precursory shadow through examples taken from former European colonies, caught in the process of globalisation driven by European modernism motored by capitalism. One of the finest examples of class-based engagement with the shadow of the precursor comes from colonial Bengal/India. At the peak of the Indian nationalist struggle in the 1920s and 1930s, a whole generation of Bengali writers inspired by Marxism/socialism rejected Tagore on the grounds that he could not give an authentic picture of Bengali middle-class life because he came from a rich land-owning family.[29] Of the many instances of postcolonial resistance to the shadow of the European/Western precursor,

Chinua Achebe offers a memorable one. Achebe plainly declines to accept the Africa and Africans that Joseph Conrad presents in his novella *Heart of Darkness* in so far as the book "parades in the most vulgar fashion prejudices and insults from which a section of mankind has suffered untold agonies and atrocities in the past and continues to do so in many ways and many places today."[30] In his two early novels, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964), Achebe sets out to counter the dark precursory shadow that has long fallen on the so-called Dark Continent.

In 1968, Roland Barthes announced "The Death of the Author."[31] The next year Michel Foucault felt compelled to ask, "What Is an Author?"[32] In the space of one year the *author* died, was cremated and became part of critical memory. Interestingly, the book (Kristeva's *Sémeiótiké*) that made the term "intertextuality" popular was also a 1969 product. If this chapter were being written in, say, 1967, it would be possible to ask: who is the precursor? After Barthes, Foucault, and Kristeva, it is (politically) correct to ask rather: what is a precursor? The answer is a complex web of intertextuality where the shadow of the precursor multiplies and is negotiated in terms of accommodation, appropriation or resistance.

In the world of film the 1942 classic *Casablanca* offers a useful example of this web of intertextuality and its negotiation. Umberto Eco, in a memorable essay on the film, characterised it as an intertextual collage, noting it is "a cult movie precisely because all the archetypes are there, because each actor repeats a part played on other occasions, and human beings live not 'real' life but life as stereotypically portrayed in previous films."[33] Eco identifies five different film genres evoked in its first five minutes: the adventure, the patriotic movie, the newsreel, the refugee odyssey, and international intrigue.[34] Once we arrive at Rick's café, we are plunged into another multiplicity of genres and significations: the archetypes of the Foreign Legion, the Grand Hotel, Mississippi River Boat, New Orleans brothel, and Smuggler's Paradise all make an appearance, among others.[35] When Peter Lorre enters the story and exchanges words with Bogart, viewers are intertextually whisked back to their memorable interactions in *The Maltese Falcon*, released the previous year, while the much-misquoted line "Play it!" transports contemporary viewers forward to Woody Allen's *Casablanca* love letter *Play it Again, Sam*.[36] *Casablanca* testifies to Eco's assertion that "[w]orks are created by works, texts are created by texts, all together they speak to each other independently of the intention of their authors."[37]

However, that is not to suggest that cinematic intertextuality necessarily exists outside the domain of authorship. Intriguingly, while 1968 witnessed the death of the author, it also marked the rise of the

auteur, as French auteur theory achieved its widest international exposure with the publication of Andrew Sarris's *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions, 1929–1968*.[38] While auteur theory has shifted in and out of popularity within the academy, the notion of the film director-as-author maintains considerable cache, and satisfies, as Timothy Corrigan observes, "[t]he desire and demand of an industry to generate an artistic (and specifically Romantic) aura."[39]

While the film medium's unique grammar, conventions, and assortment of auteurs have collectively established a pool of precursory texts and contexts for its products to refer to and draw from, the medium also looks outwardly for inspiration, and the literary precursor in particular continues to cast a shadow over film. Literature and related art forms continue to provide cinema with a bounty of materials to utilise, whether through direct adaptation or loose appropriation. Often the precursor is explicitly acknowledged and courted, no matter how significantly the adaptation or appropriation reinvents the precursor. Note the rush of film adaptations of canonical texts in the 1990s which courted their literary precursors in their titles—*Bram Stoker's Dracula*, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*—and the fact that each new instalment of the popular James Bond film series identifies its lead actor—be it Daniel Craig or his own esteemed precursors—as playing "Ian Fleming's James Bond 007." Elsewhere, the literary precursor can go unacknowledged: Bill Finger and Martin Nodell, creators of the Green Lantern comic book character, are nowhere credited in the recent film adaptation *Green Lantern*. Whatever the case, the literary precursor continues to cast a shadow over the film medium, and that shadow is both energising as well as undermining in its "valorization of historical anteriority and seniority: the assumption, that is, that older arts are necessarily better arts," as noted by Robert Stam.[40]

A shadow, in the most literal sense of the word, is both the projection of a silhouette against a surface and the obstruction of direct light from hitting that surface in its entirety. The use of shadows can create a dark or ominous atmosphere, summon a premonition or adumbration of events to come, or give rise to an intriguing effect when light and shade are cast together to produce a *chiaroscuro* treatment. At a metaphorical level, the notion of shadows can convey allegorical meaning and metaphysical conceits. Dante's living protagonist in the *Comedy* walks among and interrogates the shades who inhabit the realm of the dead, while Shakespeare's Macbeth declares: "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, / And then is heard no more" (5.5.24–26).

For writers and artists, the shadow of the precursor can consist of a subtle dalliance with the themes of the literary antecedent or be a deliberate projection and/or interfering obstruction. The variety of textual allusion or direct reference can be something consciously evoked by authors for the purpose of homage or bricolage, or can manifest as an intrusive, haunting, prohibitive presence that cannot be shaken: a burden that brings little profit. As mentioned above, this book is structured around three modes of authorial grappling with the precursor's shadow represented as accommodation, appropriation, and resistance. In other words, it deals not just with thoughtful transactions between admirers and those they admire, but with transactions which challenge, rewrite, or threaten to engulf the original; after all, as Julie Sanders has noted, "it is usually at the very point of infidelity that the most creative acts of adaptation and appropriation take place."[41] With its focus on intertextual relationships between precursors and their successors, this book contributes, broadly speaking, to the thriving fields of adaptation studies and studies of intertextuality. However, each chapter employs its own critical vocabulary —its own set of precursors, if you will—to advance and develop knowledge of its subject matter.

Part I: Accommodating the Shadow of the Precursor

The first section of this book deals with accommodating the shadow of the precursor. The accommodation of the precursor can take many forms—direct citation or adaptation, veneration or homage, intertextual play or association—but hinges on the desire to acknowledge the precursor's shadow. Examples abound across eras and mediums, from James Joyce's modelling of *Ulysses* after Homer's *Odyssey* to the Coen Brothers' own evocation and emulation of Homer in their film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* To accommodate the precursor is to perpetuate their value and canonicity, and by extension court association with that canonicity. Derek Attridge notes that "[t]he perpetuation of any canon is dependent in part on the references made to its earlier members by its later members,"[42] and Charles Martindale observes that "[a]uthors elect their precursors by allusion, quotation, imitation, translation, homage, at once creating a canon and making a claim for their own inclusion."[43]

Gillian Dooley's "Iris Murdoch in the Shadow of the Precursor: A Fairly Honourable Defeat?" opens proceedings with a case study of what happens when an author becomes fixated on a particular precursor to the detriment of their own work. Dooley examines the influence of the nineteenth-century novelistic tradition on the work of Iris Murdoch.

Murdoch revered the nineteenth-century novel and looked down upon the novels of her own era in comparison. This led, Dooley contends, to a double bind in Murdoch's writing, where she strove to emulate the "free" characterisation of her venerated precursors even though her creative skills were better suited to the creation of exciting plots. In this respect, the precursor doubled as both inspiration and impediment for Murdoch, motivating her to emulate a particular type of fiction while also constraining her development as a writer by binding her to a style ill-fitted to her strengths.

In contrast, John McLaren's "Vincent Buckley and His Land of No Fathers: The Irish Shadow on His Work" considers the precursor in a more positive light. McLaren examines the shadow of Irish poetry and politics on the work of Irish-Australian poet Vincent Buckley. The poetry of WB Yeats and Seamus Heaney informed Buckley's work in different ways, and McLaren discusses Buckley's evolving engagement with these Irish poets and Irish politics, charting his gravitation from one precursor to another alongside, and in light of, his expanding political awareness. McLaren's analysis of Buckley testifies to the positive impact the precursor can have on the literary and ideological development of their successors, and the freedom that the successor has in choosing and prioritising their precursors in response to their own developing personal and ideological interests.

Ralph Spaulding's "'Past Shapes of Things Present' in the Poetry of Syd Harrex" also casts the shadow of the precursor in a liberating light. Spaulding examines the work of celebrated Australian poet Syd Harrex and his engagement with both canonical precursors and distinguished contemporaries. Spaulding finds no trace of Bloom's notion of "anxiety of influence" in Harrex's work, but rather kinship and camaraderie with his fellow poets, and he characterises Harrex's poetry as being in creative dialogue with his precursors.[44]

"Intertexts of *Capricornia*" by Russell McDougall examines another Australian writer, Xavier Herbert, and his multiple precursors. Herbert's 1938 opus *Capricornia* is an Australian literary milestone, and McDougall explores the diverse range of intertexts and precursors underpinning that novel, including Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan* novels and many of the popular films of the time. Furthermore, he examines *Capricornia*'s own precursory relationship to Baz Luhrmann's epic film *Australia*, illustrating how Herbert's novel reverberates throughout that text, thus demonstrating the evolutionary cycle by which successor texts become precursors themselves.

"John Lang's *Wanderings in India* (1859) and Rudyard Kipling" by Rick Hosking sheds light on a neglected Australian precursor to Rudyard Kipling. Hosking identifies the Australian-born John Lang, who lived and wrote in India, as a likely precursor to Kipling, and illuminates traces of Lang's influence on Kipling's work. While Kipling fashioned himself as an author *sans* precursors, Hosking reveals that Lang, although hardly a major creative influence, nonetheless preceded and informed Kipling's writing in a number of important ways. In doing so, he retrieves and restores a shadow that had diminished over, and potentially been erased by, the passage of time. Hosking's chapter testifies to the importance of preserving the precursor's shadow to better illuminate and complement the work of their successors.

The final chapter in this section, "From Attack of the 50 Foot Bard to The Incredible Shrinking Bard: Shakespeare Cinema in the Noughties" by Ben Kooyman, does not discuss specific instances of accommodating the precursor, but rather examines how one precursor's body of work has been re-contextualised and accommodated within celluloid culture. Kooyman examines how the theatrical works of Shakespeare have been transplanted to the film medium, a mode of textual production and dissemination significantly removed from the plays' origins on the Renaissance stage. He also investigates the declining investment in Shakespeare's work within contemporary mainstream film, highlighting the commercial pragmatics and motivations underpinning the promotion and preservation of this precursor in contemporary material and media culture.

Part II: Appropriating the Shadow of the Precursor

To appropriate the shadow of the precursor is to set in motion a process of creative transformation that reshapes and reinvigorates models drawn from the so-called canonical paradigm, whether ancient or modern, thereby fashioning a template that can inspire new audiences and, if successful, consolidate the new work's identity as an original and influential undertaking. Such a form of engagement involves a more complex relationship with the precursor, and the resulting endeavour can occur within the same genre or be articulated by means of an entirely different medium.

The seven chapters grouped in this section on appropriation offer a range of variations on the theme of appropriating material from the precursorial source in order to recast a nuanced or even dramatically altered model of homage to the writer's *auctores*. As a result, the recognition of one's precursory models and influences is manifested in a

diversity of ways, ranging from the unapologetic plundering and radical reshaping of sources to vibrant attempts to cast one's own shadow as precursor, and even, ultimately, to transcend the model formulated by one's predecessor in an ancient era.

The creative impulses presented in this grouping of chapters range across a vast spectrum of writing cultures and historical periods, from the Latin poets Virgil and Ovid, from whom the authors in this section trace the influences upon Dante Alighieri and Christopher Marlowe, to the juvenilia of Charlotte Brontë and Dick Doyle, who were both inspired by the medieval sagas in the historical novels and poems of Sir Walter Scott. The analysis then turns to the twentieth-century legacies of Italian playwrights Luigi Pirandello and Dario Fo, the former as a precursor for the detective fiction of Sicilian writers Leonardo Sciascia and Andrea Camilleri, and finally to a consideration of the adaptations of two novels in cinematic form. The first is Ian McEwan's novel *Atonement* and its contemporary film treatment by Joe Wright and, secondly, Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and its 1966 adaptation by François Truffaut.

"'For Fiction—Read Scott Alone': The Legacy of Sir Walter Scott on Youthful Artists and Writers" by Christine Alexander explores the theme of parodying and denying the shadow of the precursor, in this case, the long shadow cast by the celebrated poems and novels of Scott upon two talented young readers in the nineteenth century. Alexander explores the juvenilia of the fifteen-year-old visual artist Dick Doyle, who became famous as cartoonist and satirist Richard Doyle, and the youthful creations of Charlotte Brontë, for example, in *The Green Dwarf* and *Villette*. The analysis traces Scott's lasting contribution to the revival of British medieval heritage; a medievalist resurgence that was translated into the British arts and craft movement, as well as the writing culture of the nineteenth century. In her chapter, Alexander demonstrates how Scott's work exercised an indelible influence on the creative development of Doyle and Brontë, whose historical consciousness was steeped in the milieu of Scott's fictional creations. Nevertheless, in their complex artistic engagement with Scott, both Doyle and Brontë achieve a level of sophistication that makes evident their original responses to the masterly influence of their precursor. Whether in Doyle's parodying and satirising of the absurd conventions associated with medievalist revivals or Brontë's deft use of irony, Alexander elucidates how both artists respond in unique ways to a major literary impulse during their formative years.

Barbara Pezzotti's "Truth, Humour and the Mafia: A Story of Sicilian Betrayal" offers an incisive look at the work of two Sicilian crime writers of renown, Sciascia and Camilleri, both of whom acknowledge their debt

to Sicilian precursorial influences and inspiration. In the case of Sciascia, the considerable influence of Nobel Laureate Pirandello is cited, while in the case of Camilleri, both Pirandello and Sciascia are seen as key sources of inspiration. However, as Pezzotti convincingly demonstrates, it is in their treatment of humour that Sciascia and Camilleri steer a different course from their revered master's stance on the use of humour. The strong irony and political savvy evident in the detective novel genre explored by Sciascia and Camilleri can be seen as overturning Pirandello's philosophical and intellectual position on the use of humour. By means of this "betrayal," as Pezzotti terms it, both writers have exposed, through irony, the socio-political tensions casting a dark shadow over their society.

In "Dario Fo's Invented Quotations," Luciana d'Arcangeli portrays the unconventional and satirical Fo at his playful best, as he plunders the shadows of multiple precursors, as only Fo knows how, and succeeds in getting away with it. Using examples from Fo's prolific *oeuvre*, d'Arcangeli relates the story of Fo's professional development in the theatre commencing from his childhood rapport with his storytelling grandfather, to the university student who never missed an opportunity to entertain an audience and, finally, to the mature artist who achieved international fame as a master of verbal wit and political satire. In her chapter, d'Arcangeli explores the ambiguity of Fo's relationship with his predecessors and sources, whether real, invented or manipulated to suit the writer's purpose. Yet despite the elements of collage and pastiche, in his writing Fo recaptures the essence of the works of his admired precursors, such as the theatrical inventiveness of Renaissance artist Angelo Beolco Ruzzante. In this respect, Fo's manifold appropriation of the shadow of the precursor is one of his most endearing legacies.

Lucy Potter's "Casting a Shadow of One's Own: Christopher Marlowe's *Dido* and the Virgilian Intertext" underscores the "regenerative" strategy of Marlowe who seeks to cast his own shadow as precursor through a radical translation of the fate of Virgil's Dido in his play, *The Tragedy of Dido, Queen of Carthage*. Potter's analysis makes evident the central place that Virgil's epic poem *The Aeneid* held in the Tudor education system, alongside other key poetic works in the curriculum, including Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. However, in her discussion Potter contends that rather than simply paying homage to his precursor, Marlowe sought to extricate himself from the canonical shadow cast by Virgil's great epic in order to establish his own reputation as a master of the dramatic form. In *The Tragedy of Dido*, Marlowe's *translatio* links the regal figure of Dido to Helen of Troy and humankind's first mother Eve. In seeking to "improve" upon the Latin poetic model by contemporising and recontextualising it as

tragedy, amid the diversity of literary models that were appearing in England in the 1500s, Marlowe endeavoured to cast a significant shadow as a celebrated and inventive precursor among his artistic peers.

In "The Precursor as Shadow and Light: Ovid in Dante's *Comedy*," Irene Belperio and Diana Glenn explore intertextual links between Dante, the Florentine poet in exile who composed the *Comedy*, and the Latin poet Ovid, author of the *Metamorphoses*, who was sent into exile in 8 AD. The discussion commences with an exploration of Dante's engagement with Ovidian themes and imagery across the entire *Comedy*—for example the numerous references to Ovid in the first and second canticles and the many Ovidian similes in the third canticle. There follows a close textual analysis of analogous figural and thematic elements in two episodes that focus on unlawful sexual desire and its violent denouement: the myth of Procne, Philomela and Tereus from *Metamorphoses*, Book 6 and the story of Paolo and Francesca from Canto 5 of Dante's *Inferno*. The authors conclude that in his reinterpretation of Ovidian themes articulated in a Christian framework, Dante transcends the shadow of his pagan predecessor in order to fashion his own salvific poetics.

"Precursor Texts in the Novel and Film of *Atonement*" by Giselle Bastin offers a close reading of twentieth-century literary and cinematic texts, debates and styles that have exerted an influence on the creation of Ian McEwan's novel *Atonement* (2001) and its 2007 screen adaptation by director Joe Wright. At the same time, Bastin's chapter shows how McEwan's novel, which undeniably abounds in literary antecedents, also engages in a complex artistic discourse involving both the classic realist novel and the depiction of modernist and postmodernist themes. Moving on to the film adaptation, which aligns itself closely with McEwan's narrative text, Bastin then raises pertinent questions about the representation of the themes of the classic realist novel and how Wright's adaptation addresses both the realist and recognisably modernist and postmodernist approaches. Bastin shows how Wright's allusions to the English heritage film, conveyed by the languid shots of the Tallis estate, are subverted by the stark confrontation with scenes of war and devastation that demythologise the Romantic historical purview evident in the opening sequences. Bastin argues that by suspending the shadow of the precursor between homage and critique, both McEwan and Wright succeed in debunking sentimental expectations, thereby offering a more enduring legacy about the role of art and artists. Bastin's analysis of McEwan and Wright foreshadows the appropriation of and resistance to Charles Dickens carried out by Peter Carey, Lloyd Jones and Richard Flanagan as examined in Part III: Resisting the Shadow of the Precursor.

Finally, "Pages on Fire: *Fahrenheit 451* as Adaptation" by Laura Carroll examines another film adaptation of a literary text—François Truffaut's 1966 film of Ray Bradbury's 1953 novel—but from an altogether different angle. Whereas Bastin elucidates an intertextual dialogue between Wright's film of *Atonement* and its cinematic precursor, the English heritage film, Carroll identifies in Truffaut's film a sustained dialogue and fascination with the materiality of the literary original. Discussing how Truffaut chooses, excludes, and dwells on books as material constructs, Carroll illuminates the film's meditation and commentary on the film medium's relationship with and treatment of its literary precursors.

Part III: Resisting the Shadow of the Precursor

It is not always the case that a (literary) precursor will necessarily be approached by his/her successors from one uniform perspective. The kind of shadow that a precursor is finally (en)able(d) to cast depends on the historico-cultural background of the successors concerned. Even similar circumstances can generate very different responses, ranging from homage to critique. The postcolonial context, for example, is commonly taken to be subversive in its engagement with the English/European classics/masterpieces such as *The Tempest*, *Jane Eyre*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Heart of Darkness* and so on.[45] But subversion is *not* the only postcolonial approach to the canonical texts of British/European imperialism. The point is cogently argued by Janet Wilson in "Antipodean Rewritings of *Great Expectations*: Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997) and Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip* (2007)" where she compares two recent antipodean responses to one of the major works of Victorian fiction, *Great Expectations*. The two postcolonial responses are radically different. In other words, Dickens casts two very different shadows on two postcolonial successors.

As is obvious from her title, the two texts compared by Wilson are the Australian Carey's *Jack Maggs* and the New Zealander Jones's *Mr Pip*. As the title *Jack Maggs* seems to suggest, Carey puts the story of the convict Abel Magwitch centre stage in rewriting the Dickensian text and thus takes up the "writing back" model Jean Rhys so powerfully utilised in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Although Jones approaches the precursor text from a *postcolonial* point of view, his response can hardly be considered adversative. Rather, Jones can be said to be forging a deferential relationship to Dickens in that he uses the story of Pip as a pedagogic apparatus. The native school children of Bougainville, the village in which

Mr Pip is set, are taught *Great Expectations* so that they can imbibe the civilising values of Europe, with no irony intended.

It is in light of the two almost antithetical responses to Dickens, the precursor, that Wilson is able to conclude that, though both *Jack Maggs* and *Mister Pip* can be read using the counter discourse/writing back paradigm, as rewritings of the Dickensian pre-text the two novels are much more profitably engaged with, from the postcolonial/diasporic narrative perspective, which is focused on home and homecoming. What emerges from the contrary shadows of the colonial precursor on two successors is the important insight that postcolonial discourse is *not* a homogeneous body of (subversive) writings.

Though postcolonial in approach to the shadow of the precursor, the postcolonial successors in both Gay Lynch's "Intertextuality as Discord: Richard Flanagan's *Wanting* (2008)" and Md Rezaul Haque's "The Precursory Dialectic in *The Circle of Reason*" work with a rather diffuse notion of the precursor in that they engage with the entire inheritance of the European Enlightenment. It is now a well-established fact that the whole edifice of the Enlightenment ideology rests on two key ideas: race and reason. Judged in terms of rationality, the different races of the world occupy differential positions in the racial hierarchy. Not surprisingly, the colonial/imperial expansionist project drew its rationale from the Enlightenment ideological apparatus. Both Richard Flanagan and Amitav Ghosh interrogate the Enlightenment legacy of reason and its perversion not only in the so-called uncivilised colony but also in the so-called civilised metropolis. In *Wanting* (2008), Flanagan tests the endurance of rationality against the force of libido, while Ghosh brings out the limitations of the rational/realist paradigm by juxtaposing it with the magic realist one in *The Circle of Reason* (1984). In both cases, the inadequacy of reason is patently obvious.

Lynch considers *Wanting* an intertextually rich historical novel, for it abounds with a whole range of Victorian figures and themes. Flanagan weaves together the two narrative strands of the novel by way of examining the force of desire, especially sexual desire, in human affairs. In both strands, the white male protagonists—Dickens in one and Sir John Franklin in the other—victimise young girls to satisfy lust. Driven by libido, Dickens exploits Ellen Ternan, an eighteen-year-old actress, while Sir Franklin rapes Mathinna, an Indigenous Tasmanian girl adopted by his wife Lady Jane Franklin. The two sites of white male violence are as dissimilar as two sites can possibly be: one is the heart of light, Victorian England; the other is the so-called heart of darkness, colonial Australia, where Magwitches were once sent into exile.

If aging, civilised, enlightened and rational English men can be so vulnerable to libido in so disparate circumstances, one is justified to ask (as Flanagan does) which of the two forces—passion and reason—is more powerful in human life. In the face of (sexual) desire playing a more decisive role than rationality in the lives of the emissaries of light and progress, the civilising rhetoric of the colonial/imperial venture falls apart. The enlightened shadow of the colonising European Self appears to be no different from the so-called benighted soul of the colonised Other. Rather than re-inscribing the shadow of the European Enlightenment, Flanagan resists it by way of, as Lynch puts it in her title, generating "discord."

If Lynch sees "discord" as a form of resistance to the shadow of the precursor in Flanagan, Haque sees "dialectic" as such in Ghosh. Although Ghosh is as preoccupied with the European Enlightenment in *The Circle of Reason* as Flanagan in *Wanting*, the postcolonialism of the former is to be found, according to Haque, not so much in its disclosure of the obverse of reason as in its exposure of the limits of reason and the view of life and reality it champions, treating other worldviews with (racial) contempt. To register his resistance to the hegemony of the realist/rationalist paradigm of the central, colonial, enlightened group of precursors represented by Louis Pasteur, Ghosh brings in, Haque argues, the magic realist paradigm, an inheritance of a group of marginal, postcolonial, magical precursors such as Gabriel García Márquez and Salman Rushdie. The resultant dialectic shows up the inadequacy and (racial) politics of the empiricist-rationalist worldview on the one hand and the necessity and (humane) worth of the magic realist one on the other.

The juxtaposition of high science associated with Pasteur with the so-called pseudo-sciences such as criminology, phrenology and so on in *The Circle of Reason* further undermines the supremacy of the enlightened precursor by pointing to the historical fact that it is only by discrediting certain sciences as pseudo-sciences that some other sciences are able to secure for themselves the status of mainstream science. In other words, the hegemony of the rational-scientific view of the world rests, Ghosh contends, on the subjection of other worldviews both within and without the West. The shadow of the enlightened precursor is actuated only by virtue of its suppression of Other shadows.

"'As if the sky were one gigantic memory for us all': Louise Erdrich and Native American Authorship" by Linda Karell can be seen as a radical amplification of the argument constructed by Lynch and Haque. So far there has been no difficulty in identifying the precursors and the kind(s) of response that they have invited from the authors/successors discussed in individual chapters. On the whole, the mode of engagement has been

resistance: the postcolonial successor "writes back" to the shadow of the colonial precursor. With Karell, one enters a "discursive practice" where one has to re-orient oneself to the whole issue in question.[46] Karell discusses the fictional work of the mixed-blood Native American writer, Louise Erdrich. In Western critical theory and practice, such concepts as author(ship), creativity, function of language, precursor, relationship between language and meaning, between reader and text have been more or less straightforward, at least until the advent of postmodernism. Many of these ideas do not seem to work in a non-Western literary-critical context. The work of Erdrich, as Karell reads it, provides one such context.

In particular, Erdrich challenges the standard Western models of author and precursor. In contrast to the Western notion of the author as the exclusive originator and thus the sole owner of a story, Native American storytelling is a communal activity. A Native American story belongs not to one particular individual but to the community it circulates in. To be consistent with the communal rather than individual ownership of stories, the Western view of precursor also needs to be reconceptualised. In the Native American literary-critical context, the precursor is thus the whole community and the stories it knits together to heal itself in times of crisis.

Erdrich started her writing career with a novel, *Love Medicine*, in 1984.[47] The key character in the novel is a woman called June who also appears in later novels. Though following *Love Medicine* in terms of publication, these novels are often set in times prior to the ones with which *Love Medicine* deals. According to Karell, it is through the character of June, who walks in and out of these stories and thus works to fuse them together, that Erdrich is able to show the reader that the long-standing white binaries such as darkness/light, reason/superstition, animal/human and so on—so dear to the West—can capture neither the fullness of the world nor its potential for healing. By the same token, the white critical binary that pits individual author/creativity against individual precursor/influence is too simplistic, Karell argues, to account for the kind of poetics that goes into the making of non-white cultural productions.

In substituting the high-sounding ideals of individual creativity and sole authorship with an extensive network of tribal storytelling and creativity, Erdrich is in fact doing the same thing as Carey, Flanagan and Ghosh have done with the Enlightenment-derived Western worldview: she is resisting the West-derived poetics by exposing its inadequacy to deal with non-Western cultural productions and thus can be seen as enacting a postcolonial (meta)poetics. With the very concept of the precursor (as understood in the West) undermined in Erdrich, one would do well to look

not for the shadow of the precursor but for a very different idea of the precursor in her work.

Notes

[1] TS Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B Leitch (New York and London: WW Norton, 2001), 1093.

[2] John Hollander, "Introduction," in *Poetics of Influence: Harold Bloom*, ed. and intro. John Hollander (New Haven, Connecticut: Henry R Schwab, 1988), xv.

[3] In other words, the concept/discourse of the precursor is no longer (construed as) a "grand narrative," to borrow from Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (1979; Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiii.

[4] The number of post-Victorian pieces included in the *Anthology* used here amply demonstrates the point.

[5] The West still does so, though not as confidently and as openly as before. Otherwise why should one be talking of neocolonialism?

[6] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1983), 4–5.

[7] Ibid., 5.

[8] Jean Rhys gets a brief mention in Md Rezaul Haque.

[9] Consider the following titles, for example: FR Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (1948; London: Chatto & Windus, 1960), Gene Kellogg, *The Vital Tradition: The Catholic Novel in a Period of Convergence* (Chicago: Loyola Univ. Press, 1970), Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973). Robert A Logan makes a convincing case for the importance of distinguishing influence studies and source studies in *Shakespeare's Marlowe: The Influence of Christopher Marlowe on Shakespeare's Artistry* (Hampshire and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 1–29.

[10] Julia Kristeva, *Sémeiótiké: Recherches pour une Sémanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969).

[11] Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," trans. Alice Jardine, Thomas Gora and Léon S Roudiez, in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 37. Two crucial points should be taken note of here. The term "intertextuality" is largely misunderstood. It has little to do with how a pre-text influences a successor text. As Kristeva uses it, intertextuality is (the) interaction between different signifying systems in any signifying practice. Secondly, Kristeva herself preferred the term "transposition" to intertextuality.

[12] Sir Philip Sidney, "An Apology for Poetry," in ed. Leitch, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 357.

[13] Samuel Johnson, "Preface to Shakespeare," in ed. Leitch, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 471.

[14] Ibid., 472.

[15] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), 11.
[16] Ibid., 12.
[17] For a lucid Marxist discussion of how "literature," "criticism" and some other associated categories took on "a specialized resonance" in the Romantic period, see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), 45–54.
[18] William Wordsworth, "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems*," in ed. Leitch, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 649. Emphasis added.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Matthew Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," in ed. Leitch, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 806–25.
[21] Ibid., 1097.
[22] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929; London: Hogarth Press, 1974), 70.
[23] On "female genealogy," see Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (1977; Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985).
[24] For the newer developments, see Mary Eagleton, ed., *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986).
[25] Ibid., 1093.
[26] On the contribution of non-Western culture to Modernist literature and thought, see Louise Blakeney Williams, *Modernism and the Ideology of History: Literature, Politics, and the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002).
[27] WB Yeats, *Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 387–95.
[28] Cited in Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," in ed. Leitch, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 1792.
[29] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton Univ. Press, 2000), 155–63.
[30] Achebe, "An Image of Africa," 1791.
[31] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," trans. Stephen Heath, in ed. Leitch, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 1466–70.
[32] Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" trans. Donald F Bouchard and Sherry Simon, in ed. Leitch, *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 1622–36.
[33] Umberto Eco, "*Casablanca*: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage," in *Travels in Hyperreality: Essays*, trans. William Weaver (London: Pan Books, 1986), 208.
[34] Ibid., 203.
[35] Ibid., 204.
[36] Ibid., 205–6.
[37] Ibid., 209.
[38] Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions, 1929–1968* (New York: Dutton, 1968).