



Rewriting/reprising: Plural Intertextualities

By *Georges Letissier*

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This volume comprises sixteen essays, preceded by an introductory chapter focusing on the diverse modalities of textual, and more widely, artistic transfer. Whereas the first 'Rewriting-Reprising' volume (coord. by C. Maisonnat, J. Paccaud-Huguet & A. Ramel) underscored the crucial issue of origins, the second purports to address the specificities of hypertextual, and hyperartistic (Genette, 1982) practices. Its common denominator is therefore second degree literature and art. A first section, titled 'Pastiche, Parody, Genre and Gender,' delineates what amounts to a poetics of rewriting/reprising, by investigating a whole range of authorial stances, from homage - through a symphonic play of intertexts - to varying degrees of textual deviance, or dissidence. Some genres, like the fairy tale or the Gothic, through their very malleability, are indeed more apt to lend themselves to rewriting/reprising. However, hypertextuality is not merely ornamental, or purely aesthetic; its subversive potential is perceptible notably through its many attempts at emancipating the genre from the ideological fetters of gender. Over the past two decades, Victorian literature and culture has become an inescapable field of investigations to any study on intertextuality in the English-speaking world. In a second part, diversity has been preferred to any single, specific angle to approach the Victorian/neo-Victorian tropism. The purpose is to provide as complete a spectrum as is reasonably possible in such a volume. The practice of rewriting in the Victorian age is thus studied alongside contemporary appropriations of the Victorian canon. The question is raised of whether literary fetishism may not result in a form of counterfeit classicism, while the more challenging neo-Victorian rewritings would make a claim for the need to choose one's literary heritage and ancestors. This is where the post-colonial agenda comes in. Precisely, the third part investigates the question of rewriting-reprising as a way of writing back. The myth of Frankenstein's creature bent on wreaking vengeance on his creator is of course seminal as it offers a myth of transgression which, in its turn, becomes a 'foundation myth.' Not only are post-colonial responses to their (disclaimed) parent-texts highly theory-informed, but they also evince an awareness of such contemporary issues which are direct consequences of the colonial past. In the last section of this volume, the scope of what comes within the range of intertextuality per se is widened to cover artistic dialogism. In the exchanges between theatrical texts, reprise may be construed as a metaphor standing for the pleasure inherent in the process of recreation. The interaction between embedded paintings and the embedding canvas offers yet another variation on the reprise motif, as does the meta-

aesthetic discourse of the critic on the work of art. What begins as mere repetition is soon colored by the personal inflections of the interpreter. In operatic performances, updating a classical text to make it suitable to contemporary audiences, and in close harmony with the role assigned to music, is liable to spur on the creativity of recreation.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Georges Letissier is professor of Victorian and contemporary British literature at the University of Nantes (France). He has published articles on many neo-Victorian novelists: Ackroyd, Byatt, Swift, Waters. Some of his recent publications include: "Dickens and Post-Victorian Fiction", in *Refracting the Canon in Contemporary British Literature and Film* (S. Onega & C. Gutleben eds.) Rodopi, 2004, and "Passion and Possession as Alternatives to 'Cosmic Masculinity' in 'herstorical romances'" (A. Heilmann & M. Llewellyn eds.) in *Metanarrative and Metahistory in Contemporary Women's Writings*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. He has also published a book on *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford. He is currently editing a collection of essays on the Darwinian Legacy in European Cultures.

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