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## Destabilising the Canon: A Survey and A Bibliography of Intertextual Critical Theory<sup>1</sup>

Thus I rediscovered what writers have always known (and have told us again and again): books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told.

(Eco 1985, p.20)

The concept of intertextuality emerged from the specific historical and critical context of the nineteen-sixties: from Russian Formalism and French *Nouvelle Critique* in particular. During those years, as the notion of 'text' became central to the literary debate, critics began to analyse the historical process created by successive reader responses together with changes in the literary systems of reference which constitute the context for reading. The dynamics operating within one text and between different texts, and the typological systems to which the concepts of reader, author and historical context belong were under discussion.

Now, at the beginning of a new century, the concept of intertextuality has achieved wide currency, especially among critics of postmodernism and those with an interest in destabilising the traditional canon of Western literature. It has not yet, however, been widely used to investigate the multiple and fascinating interactions of women's writing in the broad context of Europe. Promising beginnings have been made in the parallel field of comparative literature,<sup>2</sup> but few of these exploit the potentialities of intertextual theory. The purpose of this essay is, therefore, to encourage and facilitate new work in this field. The essay has a

- 1 I wish to thank the AHRB for funding which enabled me to undertake this research.
- 2 Existing work in this field includes Labalme (1980), Ferguson et al. (1986), and Golberger (1987).

dual address: for readers unfamiliar with theories of intertextuality, it offers a survey of such theories relevant to the study of women's writing; for those pursuing more specific studies, however, its extensive footnotes provide many suggestions for further exploration. The bibliography, finally, is not a mere list of works cited, but the outcome of intensive research which is offered as a research tool in its own right. Based (with his permission) on the bibliography published by Andrea Bernardelli (1997), this expanded version is now probably the most comprehensive list available.

The term intertextuality was introduced by Julia Kristeva in her discussion of the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin, and is thus dependent on Bakhtin's analysis of language as dialogic. 'Dialogic' means here that every utterance is oriented towards an implied response, and interacts with the social situation, implying an interrelation of different social styles and voices. Starting from the Latin word, *intertexto*, to intermingle while weaving, Kristeva works with Bakhtinian ideas to produce her famous formulation:

any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read at least as *double*.

(Kristeva 1986, pp.36-7)

The seminal status of this definition is demonstrated by the fact that it is quoted in three other essays in this volume. Ana María Sánchez-Arce takes an extended version of the quotation as her starting-point to discuss the multiple voices of Europe, while Ana Zamorano's essay develops the psychoanalytic aspects of Kristeva's concept of intertextuality in relation to our sense of identity and foreignness; Susan Stanford Friedman, however, returns to Bakhtinian dialogics to challenge Kristeva's insistence on the anonymity of the intertextual process.

Though Kristeva's notion of intertextuality is strictly linked to psychoanalytic theories, other theorists have borrowed this term and adapted it in various ways. Closely related to the dialogic concepts of Bakhtin and Kristeva is Roland Barthes's idea of intertextuality, based on the analysis of the narrative work

as made of levels of codes involved in the production of textual meaning. As Barthes asserts in *S/Z*:

For if the text is subject to some form, this form is not unitary, architectonic, finite: it is the fragments, the shards, the broken or obliterated network – all the movements and inflections of a vast ‘dissolve’, which permit both overlapping and loss of messages [...] The code is a perspective of quotations, a mirage of structures; we know only its departures and returns; [...] they are so many fragments of something that has always been *already* read, seen, done, experienced; the code is the wake of that *already*. Referring to what has been written, i.e., to the Book (of culture, of life, of life as culture), it makes the text into a prospectus of this Book. Or again: each code is one of the forces that can take over the text (of which the text is the network), one of the voices out of which the text is woven.

(Barthes 1990, pp.20–1)

The ‘I’ that reads the text is itself made of a plurality of texts and codes; Barthes’s reader therefore is a producer of the text, not any more a mere consumer. In his reading he recognises the traces of other readings. It is this shift of focus to the reader as producer of the text which underlies Barthes’s famous announcement of ‘The Death of the Author’:

A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. [...] The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.

(Barthes 1977, p.148)

The concept of intertextuality today covers a wide range of literary and discursive devices such as: quotation, allusion, parody, pastiche, literary and discursive stereotypes (genre schemes), rhetorical figures and plagiarism. Drawing a map of intertextuality’s theories Andrea Bernardelli (1997) divides current notions of intertextuality into different categories or families: paragrammatic intertextuality (Riffaterre 1978a, 1983a), dialogic intertextuality, formal-evolutionary intertextuality (Genette 1979, 1982;

Jenny 1976), philological intertextuality (Corti 1978a, 1978b), dialectic intertextuality and postmodern intertextuality.

Apart from Julia Kristeva's dialogic intertextuality, I believe that the theoretical lines that can be most useful in a study of intertextuality and women's writing are the two last of these categories: *dialectic* intertextuality and *postmodern* intertextuality. Dialectic intertextuality derives from the notion of a dialectic relationship existing between the author and the literary tradition as exemplified in T.S. Eliot's theories and Harold Bloom's 'regressive model of literary influence' (Bernardelli 1997, p.11). Bloom's notion of intertextuality is linked to the idea of the literary canon and I will reserve comment on his work until later in this essay, as I believe that feminist and postcolonial reactions to Bloom's ideas offer new interesting and challenging perspectives.

Postmodern intertextuality is based on the intertextual awareness in both author and reader of the 'double coding' of art and its reading. The direct appeal, the clear and specific allusion to a previous text within a novel can be taken as one of the various examples of 'markers' of intertextuality that we can identify reading a literary or cultural text. Intertextuality as a postmodern concept, however, is not only based on direct quotations or allusions from previous works, but involves 'a self-consciously foregrounded intertextuality, an intertextuality theoretically conceptualised within the works themselves' (Pfister 1991, p.217). Intertextuality conceived in this way is not only a rhetorical device, but becomes the true kernel of the text's plot. It implies a redefinition of literary elements, a continuous renewal of meaning in the utilisation of themes, motifs, linguistic and stylistic modalities that are recurrent in literature. An author, always referring to a tradition and to some *topoi* or historical models (that are determined from a cultural, historical and aesthetic point of view), produces in his renewal of these elements a sort of recodification of them. The author creates a continuous dialogue between his text and other texts that exist outside of it, literary and non-literary. Intertextuality can operate by reproducing some literary codes belonging to a specific tradition, it can involve a recodification of social and political contents or it can determine the global ideological perspective of the work. Postmodern intertextuality is

a parodic intertextuality that plays with political and social subversion.

The main theorists of postmodern intertextuality are Linda Hutcheon and Umberto Eco, whose theories are linked to parody and based on the double level of reading and interpretation. Interestingly, Linda Hutcheon's discussion of intertextuality is strictly linked to her aesthetics of postmodernism, of which she is one of the main scholars. In *The Politics of Postmodernism* she states:

Parody – often called ironic quotation, pastiche, appropriation, or intertextuality – is usually considered central to postmodernism [...] For artists, the postmodern is said to involve a rummaging through the image reserves of the past in such a way as to show the history of the representations their parody calls to our attention [...] Duchamp's modernist 'ready made' has become postmodernism's 'already made'. But this parodic reprise of the past is not nostalgic; it is always critical. It is also not ahistorical or dehistoricizing; it does not wrest past art from its original historical context and reassemble it into some art of presentist spectacle. Instead, through a double process of installing and ironizing, parody signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference.

(Hutcheon 1989, p.93)

For Hutcheon intertextual parody is a means of value-problematizing, of acknowledging history and its politics of representation. She borrows the notion of intertextual double-coding from Charles Jenks's book, *What is Postmodernism?*, in which he defines 'the Presence of the Past' as characteristic of postmodern architecture (Jenks 1989 cited in Allen 2000, p.186). In a literary context, the postmodern concept of 'the presence of the past' becomes a specific parodic historical cross-reference, particularly visible in a specific genre that Hutcheon defines as 'historiographic metafiction' in which the 'theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs [...] is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past' (Hutcheon 1988, p.5).

For women, intertextual parody within historiographic metafiction becomes a critical reworking of the past. Through this 'past incorporation' the reader discovers the duplicity of meanings and the multiplicity of voices present in a text brought out through

cultural revision. The plurality of voices problematises the inscription of subjectivity within our culture and subverts the stability of a unique point of view, demonstrating how it can be the narrator's tool of reading-manipulation. In their own self-reflexive textuality, historiographic metafiction hide a Derridean network of traces, part of a larger set of Foucauldian discursive practices where 'textuality is inserted into history and into the social and political conditions of the discursive act itself' (Hutcheon 1988, p.81). Postmodern writers demand to the reader 'not only the recognition of textualized traces of the literary and historical past but also the awareness of what has been done – through irony – to those traces' (Hutcheon 1988, p.127). Between the narrative voice and the projected reader there is a dialogue and an awareness that fiction is both discursive and institutional, and that:

the problematic concept of historical knowledge and the semiotic notion of language as social contract are reinscribed in the metafictionally self-conscious and self-regulating signifying system of literature.

(Hutcheon 1988, p.99)

According to Hutcheon intertextuality is created through parody's double-coding and its erasing of boundaries between high art and popular art, the mingling of literary genres and popular culture. It is very important that with her notion of postmodern intertextuality Hutcheon opens the notion of literary intertextuality to other cultural realms: the visual arts, architecture, television and film. Hutcheon takes into consideration examples of films that through parody subvert both the tradition of filmmaking and its intransitive representation (films that recall previous films), and the intertextual references between novels and films and their respective politics of representation. Postmodern films, as well as postmodern novels, question historical and cultural representations. As Hutcheon suggests,

postmodern film is that which paradoxically wants to challenge the outer borders of cinema and wants to ask questions [...] about ideology's role in subject-formation and in historical knowledge.

(Hutcheon 1988, p.117)

Intertextuality across artistic boundaries has been discussed by other theorists, and in his recent mapping of the concept of intertextuality Allen takes as touchstone for the relationship between literature and cinema T. Jefferson Kline's work, *Screening the Text: Intertextuality and the New Wave French Cinema*, and concludes that 'literary texts [...] function as ways of authorizing artistic, cultural, and even ideological positions whilst at the same time being repressed or 'screened off' in the films themselves' (Allen 2000, p.180). Starting from the assumption that cinema is 'literary' since it adapts both narrative techniques and plots, Kline underlines the intertextual web between films and literary texts. Textual allusions in films:

institute a complex and highly mobile configuration of meanings, memories and associations. [...] Filmmakers [...] may invoke one text to displace and/or repress another, thereby subsuming literature into figures not reducible to semiotic components.

(Kline 1992, p.4)

The screen becomes the mirror for the director's memories of texts. The respective influence between literature and cinema has been previously analysed also by Robert Richardson in his text *Literature and Film* where he has mapped a chronological route of the repercussions of techniques and themes from one art to the other. More recently, talking about the intertextual relationship between texts (the written word), and cinema (the visual image), another theorist, John Orr, discusses the project of the picture-book taking into account the referentiality and the narrativity of both forms of art and then outlining the differences between cinema and literature.<sup>3</sup> In a recent publication, Erica Sheen has borrowed Foucault's notion of 'the return of the text' in order to outline the relationship between the English literary canon and

3 See Orr (1992, pp.1-9). There is an extensive bibliography on the relationship between film and literature, but we include here only some references. For a detailed introduction and bibliography of film's relationship to literature see Ross (1987). It is not possible to discuss here the theories of adaptation of literary texts into films; for references see Richardson (1969), Kline (1992), Cartmell and Whelehan (1999), and Giddings and Sheen (2000).

contemporary cinematic adaptation of literary classics (Sheen 2000, pp.6–13).

In *The Politics of Postmodernism* Hutcheon also takes as example of postmodern parodical intertextuality the relation between images and words in postmodern photography<sup>4</sup> and states:

If photography is, as a visual medium, inherently paradoxical, it is also semiotically hybrid. In Peirce's terms, it is both *indexical* (its representation is based on some physical connection) and *iconic* (it is a representation of likeness) in its relation to the real. This complex hybrid nature is another reason why photography has become particularly important in a time of challenge to modes of representation. Photographic postmodern art contributes yet another complication and another level of challenge: in Peirce's terminology, the addition of language is the addition of the *symbolic* to the *indexical* and the *iconic*. The process of 'reading' the conventions of both the verbal and the visual can now be seen as related, though different: both involve hermeneutic work by the viewer, but this work includes the interpretation of three types of signs, as well as their combinations. This semiotic 'fringe interference' contests at once two related assumptions: that the visual and the verbal are always totally independent sign systems, and that meaning is universal.

(Hutcheon 1989, pp.130–1)

Photographic images, therefore, present nowadays intertextual references not only to other arts but also to other media, especially television and advertising. As Allen suggests:

recent photographic artists and critics have argued that the meaning of the photographic image depends upon its deployment of and its viewers' recognition of established codes and conventions. Cindy Sherman employs recognizable styles and specific visual intertexts from painting, photography and film to portray her own image. Such practice not only makes plain the intertextual nature of the photographic image but serves also to make points about the construction of female identity within culture's network of available visual codes.

(Allen 2000, p.177)

Cindy Sherman and Barbara Kruger are two examples of women's artistic intertextuality that Hutcheon takes into account

4 For a very interesting book on the relation between literature and photography see Rabb (1995).



in her study of postmodernism analysing their parodic modality of intertextual references with other arts.<sup>5</sup>

The other theorist of postmodern intertextuality, Umberto Eco, also strictly connects his notion of intertextuality to his theory on the role of the reader in the formation of textual meaning. As he outlined in *Open Work*:

the reader of the text knows that every sentence and every trope is 'open' to a multiplicity of meanings which he must hunt for and find. Indeed, according to how he feels at one particular moment, the reader might choose a possible interpretative key which strikes him as exemplary of this spiritual state. He will *use* the work according to the desired meaning.

(Eco 1989a, pp.5–6)

Rethinking Luigi Pareyson's aesthetical theory Eco asserts that:

*every* work of art [...] is effectively open to a virtually unlimited range of possible readings, each of which causes the work to acquire new vitality in terms of one particular taste, or perspective, or personal *performance*.

\*\*\*\*\* (Eco 1989a, p.21)

It is in the act of reading that the reader chooses his own path through the story, and he does so according to his literary and cultural encyclopaedia. Since 'no text is read independently of the reader's experience of other texts' (Eco 1979, p.21), intertextuality is a matter of decoding the text according to the reader's knowledge and culture. Intertextuality is picked up by the postmodern reader aware that the past is unavoidable and reappears through intertextual traces within the new text. And this past is revisited with irony, as Eco says:

I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows he cannot say to her 'I love you madly', because he knows that she knows (and that she knows that he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still there is a solution. He can say, 'As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly'.

(Eco 1985, p.67)

5 See Hutcheon (1989); for more information on both artists see: Linker (1990), Cruz (1997) and Morris (1999).

According to Eco the reader must be able to interpret the text in terms of its intertexts: as a collection of more or less overt allusions and quotations from a rich literary and cultural encyclopaedia. In 'Casablanca: Cult Films and Intertextual Collage' he asserts:

works are created by works, texts are created by texts, all together they speak to each other independently of the intention of their authors. A cult movie is the proof that, as literature comes from literature, cinema comes from cinema.

(Eco 1986, p.199)

Any artistic work of art therefore, possesses in itself echoes from previous works. The word 'intertext' is used in slightly different ways by different critics, but it is most commonly used to mean the text which is alluded to or called upon by the text in question. For Eco, intertexts can be *frames*:

stereotyped situations derived from preceding textual tradition and recorded by our encyclopedia, such as, for example, the standard duel between the sheriff and the bad guy or the narrative situation in which the hero fights the villain and wins, or more macroscopic textual situations, such as the story of the vierge *souillée* or the classic recognition scene (Bakhtin considered it a motif, in the sense of a chronotope). We could distinguish between stereotyped intertextual frames (for instance, the Drunkard Redeemed by Love) and stereotyped iconographical units (for instance, the Evil Nazi).

(Eco 1986, p.200)

Eco defines some films as 'postmodern films' 'where the quotation of the topos is recognised as the only way to cope with the burden of our filmic encyclopedic expertise' (Eco 1986, p.209). The expertise of the viewer of the movie must be 'intermedia'; that is to say, the addressee must be able to recognise the films 'quoted' in the postmodern film and also 'all the mass media gossip about films' (Eco 1986, p.210).

From the intertextual mapping outlined up to now it seems that nowadays the reader must be able to retrace in a text not only the literary intertexts but also the cultural ones. In the postmodern aesthetics the mingling of literary genres is accompanied by quotations and allusions to other forms of art and also to popular

expressions such as comics or television programmes.<sup>6</sup> From this perspective intertextuality becomes *intermediality* between different forms of artistic expression, as I have already anticipated in my discussion on the relationship between literature, cinema and photography in postmodern culture. As Graham Allen suggests:

It is possible to speak of the 'languages' of cinema, painting or architecture: languages which involve productions of complex patterns of encoding, allusion, echo, transposing of previous systems and codes. To interpret a painting or a building we inevitably rely on an ability to interpret that painting's or building's relationship to previous 'languages' or 'systems' of painting or architectural design. Films, symphonies, buildings, paintings, just like literary texts, constantly talk to each other as well as talking to other arts.

(Allen 2000, pp.174-5)<sup>7</sup>

While discussing intertextuality within the visual arts we must also refer to the numerous intertextual references between literature and painting, music and poetry taking into account that studies on the relationship between literature and painting have been numerous and contradictory.<sup>8</sup> It is not possible here to develop a comparative perspective between the different arts but it is important to underline the centrality of the concept of intertextuality in interdisciplinary studies. In his introduction to *Victorian Contexts: Literature and the Visual Arts*, Murray Roston responding to the objections to the search for parallels between literature and visual arts, states:

The principle adopted in this present study assumes the existence of a more subtle, and for the historian, more stimulating configuration. It recognizes the predominance in each generation of a central complex of inherited assumptions, of emergent bias, of urgent contemporary concerns, to which each creative artist needs to respond individually. [...] Moreover, in

6 A very interesting use of intertextuality in a discussion of comics is in Hutcheon (1999). For television intertextuality see Fiske (1992).

7 See also Hutcheon (1989, p.105; and 1985, p.47).

8 See Hogstrum (1958), Meyers (1975), Marshall (1997), Mace (1997). For recent studies on specific periods see: McKay (1980), Evett (1990), De Girolami Cheney (1992), Smith (1995), Roston (1990, 1996), and Roston (1999).

contrast to those historians adopting the more traditional diachronic method, tracing the sequential 'influence' of an artist's work upon a later writer, where such relationships must be historically proven before such deductions can be made, here, in the synchronic approach, the focus upon the simultaneous response of writer and artist to current problems makes such requirements superfluous. [...] Writer and artist should be seen as responding, each in his or her own way, to that central amalgam of contemporary concerns in a manner appropriate to the medium in which they work, often unaware of the innovations being effected in the kindred arts. What they share are the challenges specific to their time; and a close study of the techniques, themes and symbols they employ to deal with those challenges can often prove mutually enriching to an analysis of the works produced.

(Roston 1996, pp.3-4)

What Roston calls 'the more traditional diachronic method' has nevertheless been important for women's critical positions. As I have previously suggested this other theoretical line of intertextuality is linked to the notion of literary tradition and the 'anxiety of influence'. Harold Bloom's notion of intertextuality focuses on the idea that canonical literary works are examples for the new writers, and therefore in his account of intertexts the 'canon' assumes a central role as it is delineated in his controversial book *The Western Canon*. According to Bloom, the canon is a repertoire of texts considered compulsory to read and study in order to acquire a literary knowledge and it is rich in intertextual references:

A poem, play, or novel is necessarily compelled to come into being by way of precursor works, however eager it is to deal directly with social concerns. Contingency governs literature as it does every cognitive enterprise, and the contingency constituted by the Western literary canon is primarily manifested as the anxiety of influence that forms and malforms each new writing that aspires to permanence. Literature is not merely language; it is also the will to figuration, the motive for metaphor that Nietzsche once defined as the desire to be different, the desire to be elsewhere. This partly means to be different from oneself, but primarily, I think, to be different from the metaphors and images of the contingent works that are one's heritage: the desire to write greatly is the desire to be elsewhere, in a time and place of one's own, in an originality that must compound with inheritance, with the anxiety of influence.

(Bloom 1995, pp.11-2)

Bloom considers his canon, twenty-six authors he chooses as models for the Western tradition, as an aesthetic position against which he considers the 'School of Resentment', namely feminists, marxists, lacanians, new historicists, deconstructionists and semi-oticians that underline the importance of ideology within the construction of the literary canon. Bloom has been criticised for his conservative position towards an opening of the canon that seems necessary with the emergence of multiculturalism, especially in the United States. Bloom's position is strictly linked to the concept of works' influence; it is based on the concepts of rhetorical rules and poetics, which is at the base of a literary tradition and determines a series of other works. But the canon should also be considered from the perspective of readers of a literary text, in the aspect of reception. If the first aspect underlines the 'universal' value of the work, the second focuses on the notion of identity of the readers and is linked to all the concepts of cultural hegemony that have been central in the critique of Bloom's text. What he defines as the 'School of Resentment' has been of primary importance in the re-discussion of the notion of literary canon in the last thirty years. Bloom denies an historical reading of the texts in favour of an aesthetic one, but the importance of aesthetic values should not obliterate the complexity of literary culture after modernism, colonialism and the revisions of the new literary theories. Postcolonial, African American and feminist theories have demonstrated that the canon had a normative and hegemonic power for the readers. These theories have exposed the pretended 'universalism' of the concept of Western canon. The identity of the reader has become the central focus in their re-evaluation of the literary tradition. The classics that should have been mirrors for all the readers have been put under discussion, not for their intrinsic literary value but for their notion of the 'universal reader'. Readers have a specific identity, they embody a social class, race and gender.

Feminist criticism has replied to Bloom's concept of the anxiety of influence with discussion on 'the anxiety of authorship' and debate about the 'opening' of the canon. The term 'anxiety of authorship' was coined by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in

their research on the woman writer in relation to her precursors, and indicates 'a radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a precursor the act of writing will isolate and destroy her' (1979, p.49). Gilbert and Gubar develop the line of female literary tradition that Elaine Showalter's critical approach known as 'gynocriticism' and her touchstone text, *A Literature of Their Own* began.<sup>9</sup> In a later essay, 'Feminism Criticism in the Wilderness' Showalter states:

Women's writing is a 'double voiced discourse' that always embodies the social, literary and cultural heritage of both the muted and the dominant. And insofar as most feminist critics are also women writing, this precarious heritage is one we share; every step that feminist criticism takes to defining women's writing is a step toward self-understanding as well; every account of a female literary culture and a female literary tradition has parallel significance for our own place in critical history and critical tradition.

(Showalter 1986, pp.263–4)

Some pages later in the same article she states that 'a woman's text is not only mothered but parented; it confronts both parental and maternal precursors and must deal with the problems and advantages of both lines of inheritance' (Showalter 1986, p.265). In another article, 'Towards A Feminist Poetics', Showalter differentiates two varieties of feminist criticism, the first type concerned with the woman as reader – the feminist critique, and the second type concerned with the woman as writer-producer of textual meaning, *la gynocritique*, gynocriticism. She develops this idea of 'gynocriticism' defining it as:

the feminist study of women's writing, including readings of women's texts and analyses of the intertextual relations both between women writers (a female literary tradition) and between women and men.

(Showalter 1986, p.189)

According to Showalter we can retrace a set of images, metaphors, themes and plots which connects women's writing across periods and national divisions. But the feminist critics must be aware that

9 Another important text for the study of women's literary tradition coming out in the same period is Moers (1977).

'women writing are not, [...] *inside* and *outside* of the male tradition, they are inside two traditions simultaneously, "under-currents", in Ellen Moers's metaphor, of the mainstream' (Showalter 1986, p.264). In her famous essay 'A Map for Re-Reading: Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts' Annette Kolodny discusses Bloom's and Adrienne Rich's different notion of 're-vision' and proposes a 'revisionary rereading' (Kolodny 1986, p.60) of the literary canon in order to trace a female tradition. Kolodny's response to Bloom's, clearly perceivable from the title which recalls Bloom's *A Map of Misreading*, is carried on through a critique and questioning of the sense of tradition. Taking Rich's notion of revision as a key to reinterpret literary history, Kolodny opens the canon to other authors, readers and intertextual references.

The gynocritical approach is also developed by Nancy K. Miller's work and her differentiation between male and female authors. In her book *Subject to Change*, Miller (1988) asserts that the female signature is important and that a writer's relation to language, literary tradition and social production is fundamental. She quotes Barthes's *The Pleasure of the Text* and makes an interesting connection between the term 'text' and the term 'web'. In her essay 'Arachnologies: the Woman, the Text, and the Critic' Miller challenges Barthes's notion of the 'death of the author' as desirable by arguing that it assumes all authors to occupy 'the confident posture of mastery that a post-Cartesian subject enjoys in relation to the texts of his culture' (Miller 1988, p.83). Therefore, to the Barthesian deconstructed subject Miller contrasts a 'poetics of the underread and a practice of "overreading"' (1988, p.83). In so doing Miller proposes a new way of reading, a practice of reading women's texts as women searching for a women's literary tradition. She points out the importance of finding the connections among myths for a female intertextual tradition through the metaphor of weaving. She deconstructs Barthes's position taking her readers back to classical mythology and to the figures of Arachne and Ariadne. Arachne becomes the symbol for an aesthetics of the 'over-reading' in a project that:

involves reading women's writing not 'as if it had already been read', but as if it has never been read, as if for the first time [...] Overreading also involves a focus on the moments in the narrative which by their representation of writing itself might be said to figure the production of the female artist.

(Miller 1988, p.83)

Miller's work occupies an important place in Susan Stanford Friedman's essay, later in this volume, and what emerges with these theorists is the importance for women of retracing a woman writer's intertextual connection within literary tradition, and outside of it.<sup>10</sup>

The different reception of the text according to the gender of the reader is touched upon also by Jonathan Culler in his *On Deconstruction* (1982), where he dedicates an entire paragraph to 'reading as a woman', and to the different focus of a text by a woman reader. According to Culler, the woman reader accomplishes a process of deconstruction of the text she reads; she revises it from a feminine perspective. As Culler suggests, a woman reader analyses the situation in the text looking at it from a very different perspective from the male one. She reads about women invented by men and is not able to perceive her identity in these characters. Culler quotes Maurianne Adams's book, *The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism*, that emphasises the experience of women as readers and the feminine characters they find in the novels. He also mentions Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, a feminist touchstone in terms of the sexual ideologies intrinsic in men's novels, which presents some simplifications but has been crucial in the process of deconstructing the position of the writer. Another theorist considered by Culler is Judith Fetterley who, in *The Resisting Reader*, underlines the issue of a woman reader's resistance to identification with the masculine characters of canonical literature. In this paragraph of the book Culler stresses a strong link between the practice of reading and the reader's experience as a woman.

10 An interesting essay on the concept of author and reading is Baccolini's 'Introduction' in Baccolini et al. (1997).



These are important texts in the history of feminist criticism which, by identifying the connections between deconstructionists and feminists have unmasked the role of language and writing in the construction of feminine representations, but they have undervalued the problematic of race and of ethnic groups in their consideration of a universal feminine condition. From the Eighties many theorists have begun to talk of multiple feminisms that contemplate a dialogue in which race, as well as gender, is acknowledged, as in the geography of identity proposed by Susan Stanford Friedman:

I cannot accept the notion that the racial privilege of my whiteness should enforce my silence about race and ethnicity, issues of vital importance not only in the United States but also in a global context [...] I ask that you hear me out. I offer these reflections in the spirit of dialogue, of what Sharon Holland calls 'complementary theorizing' among people of different perspectives and racial identities – a precondition, I believe, for growth and change in the academy and feminist movement.

(Friedman 1996, p.5)<sup>11</sup>

I do not want to discuss here all the theories that have emerged around *positionality*<sup>12</sup> and the different perspectives of women not only as readers and writers but as social individuals, but I want to underline the importance of taking into consideration in our reading of the canon, and of intertextuality, the different readers that approach a text and the social and historical implications that are behind them. If we talk of the few texts written by women that have been included in the canon and that have been utilised as intertexts within a female literary tradition,<sup>13</sup> we cannot ignore Spivak's criticism as regards novels such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. In 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', where she

11 Friedman develops her theory in her book, *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (1998).

12 Concerning *Black Feminism* see Spelman (1988), McDowell (1995), Anzaldúa (1987), Anzaldúa (1990), Moraga and Anzaldúa (1981), Mohanty et al. (1991), Minh-ha (1989), Spivak (1989); see also De Lauretis (1990), and Haraway (1990).

13 See Stoneman, and Federici (1997).

deconstructs the reading of what she perceives as imperial texts, Spivak analyses the character of Bertha Mason, Rochester's Creole wife, in comparison with the English heroine Jane, and takes into consideration one of the evolutions of the famous Brontë novel, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. At the very beginning of the essay Spivak states:

It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English. The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored. These two obvious 'facts' continue to be disregarded in the reading of nineteenth-century British literature. This itself attests to the continuing success of the imperialist project, displaced and dispersed into more modern forms.

(Spivak 1985, p.243)<sup>14</sup>

The access to the coloniser's language and literature has been for the colonised subject a process of acculturation to the master's culture. As Franz Fanon said 'to speak a language is to take on a world, a culture' (1986, p.15); that is to say there is a strong and strict link between language and culture. The rewriting of canonical texts within postcolonial literature is undoubtedly a very interesting utilization of intertextuality within the contemporary literary panorama. In these texts intertextuality becomes a translation of interculturality. Talking about interculturality José Antonio Giménez Mico (1997) underlines the transformation of cultures through intertextual recontextualisations of colonial and postcolonial texts. The culture of the coloniser and the colonised are in a dialogic relationship; while the latter is colonised by the coloniser's language and literature at the same time s/he rereads them and offers new rewritings of canonical texts. As Homi Bhabha has stated:

For a willingness to descend into that alien territory – where I have led you – may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *inter*-national culture, based

14 Spivak expands these ideas in her last work, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999).

not on the exoticism or multi-culturalism of the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between*, the space of the *entre* that Derrida has opened up in writing itself – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, antinationalist, histories of the 'people'. It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this hybridity, this 'Third Space', we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves.

(Bhabha 1995, p.209)

If Bhabha advocates 'hybridity' woven in intertextual literary, cultural and political writings, another theorist, Judie Newman, discussing the device of intertextuality in postcolonial texts points to the danger of textualising the postcolonial text within Western frames. Taking as example V.S. Naipaul's novel *Guerrillas*, Newman outlines how:

as readers we are [...] invited to consider whether we are dealing with 'real' people or with characters in a novel – Jane Eyre and Rochester – and as the pair descend from the 'Heights' of the Ridge to the Grange, whether they are moving across a physical reality – an unnamed Caribbean island – or from one text to another – from *Jane Eyre* to *Wuthering Heights*. Naipaul highlights here the tendency of the West to textualise the colonial, to transform the Other into a set of codes and discourses which can be recuperated into its own system of recognition.

(Newman 1995, p.5)

Keeping this in mind, I believe that the canonical intertextuality utilised by postcolonial writers remains a powerful tool of revision and of rewriting both of political and literary issues; moreover postcolonial intertextuality enlarges and transforms once again the meaning of intertextuality itself charging it with other meanings.

In conclusion, I want to summarise the different points that have come out from my personal history of intertextuality's theories for a study of women's intertextual writings: first of all the revision of the canon from a feminist point of view and the search for textual and cultural intertexts within the female tradition/canon; secondly, the use of devices such as parody,

pastiche and rewriting of canonical and cultural texts typical of postmodern literature; thirdly, today's 'open' notion of intertextuality which includes the intertextual references between different arts and becomes intermediality. Finally, it is extremely important to take into account the rewriting of canonical texts produced by postcolonial women authors where the translation of a text from one culture to another operates a practice of interculturality.

Since the focus of this book is on 'Women's Writing in English in a European Context' I would like to end this theoretical *excursus* on intertextuality with a question to the reader: what does it mean today to study European women writers' intertextuality? Which place does this study acquire in a theoretical landscape of Eurocentric deconstruction and multiculturalism?<sup>15</sup> Personally I find it extremely challenging to explore a comparative study of women writers from a European perspective which is still quite an unexplored field of research and one that can open a new perspective on European literatures and cultures within literary studies. Up to now very few studies have been dedicated to European women's writings from a global and comparative perspective, and when so they have been dedicated to specific periods of time. Certainly some periods, such as for example the first decades of the twentieth century, have been particularly rich in cultural exchanges among women writers. Women modernist writers, in fact, wrote and produced their works in cultural urban centres that were literary and cultural laboratories generating creativity and cross-fertilization among writers belonging to different cultural heritages, and their works are full of intertextual and intercultural references. At the same time, if we think about Virginia Woolf's statement that 'a woman has no country'<sup>16</sup> and we accept it as a different perspective that women had, at least until the modernist period, regarding their position as citizens,

15 From this perspective there are two interesting recent studies which consider the connection between gender, immigration and Europe: Brinker-Gabler and Smith (1997), and Alliston (1998).

16 In *Three Guineas* Woolf asserts: 'As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world' (Woolf 1992, p.313).

then the relationship between writing, identity, citizenship and belonging to a nation can be analysed from a different perspective for women writers. If this is more evident in the authors of the past because of the social and political restrictions on women at the time, nowadays writers have to deal with the issue of multiculturalism that opens a new and challenging path to the idea of intertextual references. Moreover, it is important to take into account that the representation of Europe and of the 'other' has always presented a different perspective in women's writings, and this is particularly evident in the field of travel literature.<sup>17</sup> Today, the notion of weaving, of reciprocal intertextual references and influences between writers of different European cultures remains a field to be explored, and so is an analysis of the mingling of different literatures and cultures embodied by authors belonging to more than one cultural area, and authors who come from other cultural heritages than Western Europe. I like to believe that through a mapping of linguistic, literary, cultural and artistic exchanges among women writers the European landscape can, perhaps, acquire a new perspective on cultural boundaries and their disruption.

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17 See for example Foster (1990), and Pratt (1992).

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