

Studies on Themes and Motifs in Literature

Rewriting Texts Remaking Images

Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Edited by
*Leslie Boldt, Corrado Federici,
and Ernesto Virgulti*

The twenty-four essays in *Rewriting Texts Remaking Images: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* examine the complex relationships between original creative works and subsequent versions of these originals, from both theoretical and pragmatic perspectives. The process involves the rereading, reinterpretation, and rediscovery of literary texts, paintings, photographs, and films, as well as the consideration of issues pertaining to adaptation, intertextuality, transcodification, ekphrasis, parody, translation, and revision. The interdisciplinary analyses consider works from classical antiquity to the present day, in a number of literatures, and include such topics as the reuse and resemantization of photographs and iconic images.

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Boldt, Federici, and Virgulti are co-editors of *Disguise, Deception, Trompe-l'œil: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Lang 2009), *Beauty and the Abject: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Lang 2007), and *Images and Imagery: Frames, Borders, Limits: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Lang, 2005).

Rewriting Texts Remaking Images

Studies on Themes and Motifs in Literature

Horst S. Daemmrich
General Editor

Vol. 103



PETER LANG

New York • Washington, D.C./Baltimore • Bern
Frankfurt • Berlin • Brussels • Vienna • Oxford

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Rewriting texts remaking images: interdisciplinary perspectives /

edited by Leslie Boldt, Corrado Federici, Ernesto Virgulti.

p. cm. — (Studies on themes and motifs in literature; v. 103)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Literature—Adaptations—History and criticism. 2. Intertextuality.

I. Boldt-Irons, Leslie Anne. II. Federici, Corrado. III. Virgulti, Ernesto.

PN171.A33R48 809—dc22 2010013287

ISBN 978-1-4539-0078-9

ISSN 1056-3970

Bibliographic information published by **Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**.

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the "Deutsche Nationalbibliografie"; detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de/>.

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council of Library Resources.



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29 Broadway, 18th floor, New York, NY 10006
www.peterlang.com

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Printed in Germany

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Introduction

The present volume comprises essays developed from papers presented at the fifth biennial Image & Imagery International Conference, held at Brock University, October 11–12, 2008. The theme of the conference was Re-writing, Re-making, Re-discovery.

The question of rewriting or adapting texts has been studied by such scholars as Todorov, Genette, Hutcheon, Eco, and Kristeva, among others. These critics discuss various concepts, including intertextuality, hypotext and hypertext, genotext and phenotext, and the recontextualization of narrative and aesthetic motifs. With respect to the visual arts, the recycling of pre-existing architectural and painted forms ranges from the Roman imitation of Greek forms to the revival of these very same forms in Romanesque, Renaissance, and Neo-Classical architecture and sculpture. In the post-industrial age, the re-adaptation of texts and images is realized through cinema and virtual reality technology, a phenomenon that has led to discussions surrounding simulacra and simulation, as theorized by Baudrillard. Studies such as these contribute to our understanding of the nature and functions of re-contextualized texts and images, in terms of both their reception and the intention of the artist, for example in the use of parody, pastiche, and satire.

The essays in this book are framed by these theoretical discourses and are intended to make a contribution to the debate by examining manifestations of re-appropriation across the centuries and the arts. They are organized according to four groupings. The essays in the first section, titled “Rewriting the Historical Event, Anti-archive, Countermemory,” address the issue of interpreting or reinterpreting the past through the filter of memory and ideology. The essays of the second part, titled “Rewriting Narrative, Reworking Texts,” provide a variety of readings of both narratives and poems, from those rewritings that are corrective in nature to those that pay homage to the source text. The third group, titled “Reworking the Image: Visual Encounters in the Text,” brings together essays that incorporate an original literary text or canonical image only to render them problematic in order that a new strand of meaning or voice may emerge, one that will enrich the source text or image without replicating it. Essays in the last part of the collection, titled “Refashioned by the Image, the Self redefined,” explore the effect of rewriting texts or remaking images on the experiences of the subject inscribed in the text.

Anderson Araujo studies Virginia Woolf’s *Three Guineas* of 1938 by applying the term “archive” with its double meaning of record and institution. He reads Woolf’s epistolary essay as a critique of the “cyclical nature

of patriarchy” and as an “anti-archive” or space of resistance. The work communicates its social message through photographs of the dead in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-37, which function as an archival record that preserves the past of a patriarchal society that deprived women of their rights. The latter is conveyed through a rereading of Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone*. For Araujo, Woolf “subjectivizes” the photographs by narrativizing them, which is to say, recontextualizing them to signify something other than their “official” or propagandist meaning. Araujo goes on to place the views expressed in *Three Guineas* into the broader context of Woolf's consideration of Fascism as merely another manifestation of a fundamental flaw in Judeo-Christian civilization. In this way, Woolf's essay contributes to the project of rethinking and rewriting history.

Rohini Bannerjee continues in this vein, shifting the focus to Mauritian history and the challenge to its official or orthodox representation as narrated in *Le dernier frère* (The Last Brother), a novel written by French-Mauritian author Natacha Appanah in 2007. In the narrative, Appanah has her protagonist of Indian descent revisit the historical conditions prevailing in 1944 in Mauritius, experienced through the childhood recollections of a second character of Jewish descent. Through the prism of two languages and two cultures, Hindi créole and Yiddish, the author corrects the stereotypical “picture postcard *exotique*” image of the former French colony. The central figures of the novel bring their painful memories of both imperial-ruled India and of the atrocities of the Holocaust to the suffering they encounter on the Indian Ocean island. In the course of the novel, the author examines the process of diaspora identity formation and revises the reader's knowledge of the history of what is today the Republic of Mauritius.

Jean-Pierre De Villers also engages in a reconsideration of a moment in history, in this case, that of the European cultural phenomenon, Futurism. De Villers is especially interested in re-examining and re-evaluating the critical reception of F.T. Marinetti's founding *Manifesto of Futurism*, composed in 1908 and published in 1909. De Villers re-examines the original reaction to the pronouncements made in the revolutionary text in the light of subsequent Futurist manifestoes and the avant-garde movements it inspired, such as Dada. While acknowledging that the cultural and literary importance of the manifestoes and of the Futurist movement in general has been restored in the last several decades by scholars, the author's aim is to re-assess the impact that the manifestoes had as they appeared in print in the first quarter of the twentieth century. De Villers argues that, beyond calling for a revolution in literature and the arts, Marinetti, via his many manifestoes, was calling for a complete renovation of the society of his day.

François Foley takes the discourse away from Western Europe to Egypt and its history as he studies the construction of the image of the pharaoh Ak-

henatem, who reigned in the 14th century BCE, in a historical novel by Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz (1988), titled *Akhenatem, Dweller in Truth*, written in Arabic in 1985 and translated into English in 1998. Foley interprets the text as an investigation into the contrasting two images of the pharaoh handed down to us by Egyptologists: one as an admired ruler, the other as an despised dictator. The originality of Mahfouz's approach lies in the use of multiple voices and, therefore, multiple viewpoints in order to reconstruct the image of what was once a long-forgotten historical figure. Through an imaginary and imaginative case of investigative journalism, the narrator interviews fifteen of the pharaoh's contemporaries that include Neferiti the pharaoh's widow. The result is the production of an ambiguous portrait of an androgynous figure that is both human and divine.

Lindsay Caplan considers the degree to which Pablo Picasso engaged in the French Resistance during the German occupation of France in 1940. Caplan investigates the question of whether his paintings of the time can be considered acts of resistance when the artist claimed not to be making political statements with his artworks. Examining the works produced by Picasso during the period, she demonstrates that the themes recurring in these works were directly influenced by the wartime conditions. She also contends that, rather than paint history explicitly or directly, Picasso painted "nature subjugated by history." By taking into account a range of factors, the author is interested in the construction of the "myth of Picasso" as hero in the Resistance without actively participating in it or publicly speaking out against Nazism. Furthermore, she argues that, in the postwar period, Picasso began to reinvent himself in the image that had been created of him by the newspapers that produced the heroic figure people wanted.

Anne Urbancic revisits the German invasion of Poland of 1914 through the perspective of the women characters in Anne Vivanti's play *L'invasore* (The Invader), first performed in 1915, as well as in two subsequent novels. Urbancic's theoretical framework consists of the concepts of collective memory, countermemory and cultural memory. The play dramatizes the crisis on multiple levels as the Germans troops invade not only a country but the private world of the two women protagonists, who are violated and impregnated. As a result, they face the moral dilemma of whether to keep or abort the foetus. Urbancic deftly interprets Vivanti's interweaving of the personal and the public, notions of friend and enemy, good and evil, producing a nuanced personal response to a traumatic historical event: one that suggests that interpreting even catastrophic events through a black and white ethical schema fails to capture important aspects of the events portrayed. Vivanti, Urbancic argues, rewrites World War I as collective, counter, and cultural memory, while leaving recorded history untouched.

John Baird takes *Lord of the Flies* as William Golding's rewriting of R.M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* as his jumping off point and reads William Makepeace Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* as a rewriting of Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*. Establishing repudiation and admiration as the two aesthetic poles of the imitation/adaptation process, Baird sets out to demonstrate that Thackeray's purpose is located at neither of these poles or extremes. Thackeray's objective, instead, is taken to that of surpassing the recreation or representation of history in Scott's historical novel with a more precise, authentic, and, therefore superior, artefact. Baird, however, reasons that, by foregrounding the family unit as opposed to the broader historical canvass on which Scott paints, Thackeray's work actually fails to achieve its intended purpose. In the end, as Baird persuasively argues, the central historical issues of Scott's novel are to a large extent, forced to the narrative background, while family chronicle emerges as the only history that appears to have significance.

Anton Jansen juxtaposes texts separated by time, language, and culture: T.S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*, on the one hand, and Euripides' *Alcestes* and *Heracles*, on the other. The connecting elements are the notions of "philia" and "xenia," as they are depicted in the works of the Greek tragedian. The first can be defined as friendship based mutual respect and affection, while the second is a social relationship that requires hosts and guest to treat each other cordially. Jansen argues that these same qualities reappear in Eliot's play, but with different weight attributed to each. Whereas the figure of Heracles typically illustrates the desirability of "xenia," Euripides prefers to use the heroic figure to make the point that heroism and social bonds can only exist where "philia" prevails. Jansen examines *The Cocktail Party* from this perspective, suggesting that Eliot adds the Christian concept of "agape" to Euripides' "philia," while at the same time reflecting on the dangers of a society constructed on such a form of friendship.

Carol Merriam continues this examination of a modern text in the light of an admired and emulated classical model. In this case, Merriam considers the thematic and stylistic connections between the poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay and that of Greek poetess, Sappho. Specifically, Merriam analyzes five poems that make up Millay's "Memorial to D.C.," composed on the occasion of the death of Dorothy Coleman, a fellow student of the poet at Vassar College. Merriam identifies in Sappho's elegies both stylistic and thematic devices found in the poems of the modern American writer. Beyond citing with precision the sources for Millay's expressions of grief and loss, seen as universal and seemingly eternal themes, Merriam makes the argument that Millay's poetic persona is modelled on that of Sappho, a figure that would be referred to as "the implied author" in narratological terms. Parallel

events in the lives of two poets, separated by more than two thousand years, give rise to parallel and corresponding commemorative poems.

Roberto Nickel remains in the classical context but, rather than examine a modern work set against a classical antecedent, he starts with Homer's *Iliad* and refers to the oral tradition in an effort to explain the unusual reference to Paris' anger as the reason for his withdrawal from the battlefield. Perhaps more importantly, Nickel argues his compelling thesis, which is that this Homeric depiction of Paris may be "European literature's earliest example of a literary rewriting, or more accurately for an oral poem, refashioning." By examining the narrative pattern of wrath, withdrawal, and return, which is discernible in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, Nickel advances the intriguing hypothesis that the author of the *Iliad* may have transformed an earlier oral mythical figuration of a heroic Paris into the cowardly, erotic figure we see in the epic. Hence, his conclusion that, if his deconstruction is correct, Paris might well be the earliest example in European poetry of a "wholesale refashioning of a traditional character."

Kate O'Neill interprets Robertson Davies' *Tempest-Tost* as an ironic rewriting of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, but she does so within the framework of postcolonial theory. Relying on the theoretical frame provided by Linda Hutcheon's work on parody and on adaptation, O'Neill reads the Davies novel as a Canadian parody of the original, thereby exploring the anxieties of the postcolonial Canadian identity." While parody in a postcolonial context places texts in a juxtaposition and thus creates the opportunity to reveal the biases of the original, the situation is more complex for a country like Canada, which has not completely shed its status as former British colony. O'Neill explains that Davies uses his novel, a Canadianized version of a play about colonization, for the purpose of exploring the problematic relationship between Canadian literature and the authority of British literature. The comedic effect of *Tempest-Tost* arises from Davies' seeming contention that emulation of the literature of the colonizer prevents the formation of an authentic cultural identity.

Sébastien Roldan reinterprets Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* as the original road novel and the model upon which the Beat Generation writer Jack Kerouac composed his *On the Road*. This represents an unusual reversal of the relationship between source text and target text in that normally one explains aspects of the more recent text by resorting to the earlier text. In this case, Roldan re-evaluates the canonical interpretation of the Melville text, not as a sea quest, but rather as a quest for space, which Roldan relates to the pioneering efforts of the early American settlers, conflating the conquest of the West with the conquest of the lunar surface in the process. Furthermore, Roldan argues that the entire structure of Kerouac's novel is modelled on that of Melville's, which Roldan hails as the "ideal narrative structure for

traveling through spaces and places.” He then goes on to read both texts as expressions of a rite of passage—from marginalization to re-entry into social reality.

Andrew Stubbs studies the works of Canadian writers Sinclair Ross, Lorna Crozier, and Dennis Cooley against the backdrop of contemporary theorizations on the relationships between geographical space, time, and writing. Using the Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope, Stubbs conducts a case study of the revision of the prairie as geographic and mental space as constructed by the literature it has inspired in the past, and continues to inspire. Stubbs argues that the poetry of Crozier, specifically *A Saving Game: The Collected Poems of Mrs Bentley*, and Cooley’s *The Bentleys* effectively reconfigures the traditional depiction of the Canadian Prairies as a static, unchanging, objective space, as imagined and depicted by Sinclair Ross in his novel *As For Me and My House*. Blending aspects of Northrop Frye’s notion of historical modes and aspects of Einstein’s notion of time, as formulated in his theory of relativity, Stubbs effectively investigates the implications of transporting the lived experience of the Prairies into textual expression.

Elizabeth d’Angelo examines Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deum Rex Judearum* in order to discover how a dissident subject space is articulated in the text. D’Angelo posits that the narrator of Lanyer’s text ultimately derives pleasure from her status of “inactive object”—enforced through the disciplinary apparatus of religious doctrine—by reappropriating what she has been denied. Lanyer embeds a series of triangulated and homosocial interactions in her text that blur lines of sexuality; all three points of the triangle, including that occupied by Christ, are feminized. This produces a counter-narrative in which a female subject, born of subordination, is strengthened in dissidence. In other words, Lanyer makes use of the socio-religious apparatus that is normally instrumental in creating a docile body to, in fact, liberate her female narrator. The latter responds to the incitement to sexuality—generated by this same socio-religious apparatus—by engaging in an eroticized quasi-deification of Lady Cumberland, whom she knows to be in love with her bridegroom Christ.

R. Bruce Elder begins his article by responding to the suggestion that his film cycle, *Book of All the Dead*, was inspired by his quest to film Paradise. While he acknowledges that this was his aspiration in filming the *Paradiso* section of the cycle, Elder disagrees that the quest to film Paradise has been successfully realized in his work. To illustrate this, Elder examines medieval precepts informing Dante’s *Commedia*. For Augustine and Aquinas, writes Elder, wisdom and truth pre-exist any human awareness that one might have of them; in its apprehension of wisdom and truth, the mind is transformed. Beginning with Descartes, however, for whom ideas are true to the extent that they derive from reason, modern thought no longer under-

stands knowledge as the “in-breaking of the radically Other.” When it attempts to understand or express what lies beyond reason, modern art is left without certain answers. Elder believes, therefore, that an artist in our digital age cannot hope to rewrite successfully the Paradise of Dante’s *Commedia* into film.

J. Douglas Kneale examines how *ekphrasis* functions in W. O Sebald’s novel *Austerlitz*, in which the narrator describes a painting by Lucas van Valckenborch. Noting that *ekphrasis* tends to pit the verbal against the visual in a “competition for aesthetic superiority,” Kneale asks why important details, prominent in the painting, are left out in the novel’s description of it. He wonders why Sebald includes photographs in his novel, but elects not to include a reproduction of Van Valckenborch’s painting. By not reproducing the painting, Sebald forces the reader to go outside of the text to corroborate the narrator’s version of Austerlitz’s memory of it. The uncertainty felt by the reader as to the authenticity of the *ekphrastic* description appears to be an effect deliberately sought by Sebald, who suppresses the visual in order to contain it within the verbal. According to Kneale, the muteness of the visual often signifies in Sebald’s texts a form of forgetting, for which a “talking cure” is not provided.

Catherine Manning begins her analysis of Titian’s *Diane and Acteon*, by observing that his painting takes liberties with Ovid’s version of the ancient Greek myth. Ovid had already drawn attention to certain aspects of the story, lending far more weight than had the Greeks to the question of guilt. He had also emphasized the injustice of the punishment meted out to Acteon for his accidental transgression. Manning argues that elements of Titian’s painting were most likely based on pictorial tradition as well as on vernacular translations of Ovid’s tale. In her view, Titian’s departures from Ovid’s account were meant both to diminish the danger inherent in the erotic encounter between Diana and Acteon and to intensify the story’s erotic content, thus providing King Philip II of Spain with “visual erotic enjoyment without danger of sanction.” By diminishing the representation of punishment in his painting, Titian also implicitly reduces any guilt his spectator might feel in voyeuristically observing the erotically charged scenario the painting conveys.

Catherine Parayre compares Sophie Calle’s *Suite venitienne* and W. G. Sebald’s *Austerlitz*, two works that feature the theme of the face-to-face encounter with an unknown other. While both texts make use of photographs, the latter are not included in order to convey the authenticity of the real, but rather to highlight the literariness of each work. This is achieved, somewhat paradoxically, by deflating the impact of the face-to-face encounter, the approach to which had been the source of each narrative’s suspense. In the case of Calle’s novel, the dreaded event is met with disappointment as the

stranger reveals his awareness that he has been followed. Sebald's amnesiac protagonist searches longingly for his mother's gaze, which is finally retrieved in recovered photographs that nonetheless do not unlock his memories of her. In both cases, "the psychological truth promised by the about-face remains forever blurred." At the same time, the photographs inserted into the body of the texts weaken the impact of suspense that the narrative had promised to deliver.

Alla Boldina and **Michael DeVito** focus on the image of the looking-glass in Virginia Woolf's writing. Woolf suggests that the images viewed in the looking-glass are already "reproduced / simulated and further transformed in the mind of the viewer," thus establishing a web of simulations and simulacra that the looking-glass finishes by multiplying. The mind that contemplates the reflection is shown to engage in an "ever-transforming reflection upon the reflections in the mirror," thus seriously undermining the dichotomy that traditionally views the mirror as a source of distortion rather than, as Woolf would have it, a means of transforming unreality into its true state. Boldina and De Vito note that the simulations and simulacra reflected in and by the looking-glass allow Woolf to question whether it is ever possible to attain any knowledge "beyond our subjective and speculative assumptions." Rather, the image in the looking-glass participates in a series of reverberating reflections that make it impossible to capture a "singular, total and fixed version of one's identity or self."

Marzia Caporale contends that the fairytale narrative of a poor woman or female orphan saved by a prince and raised to the level of princess is a Western motif that cannot be rewritten in Jacques Doillon's *Raja*, in which the female Moroccan protagonist is forced into prostitution in order to survive. The wealthy Frenchman who "saves" her keeps her on her knees, digging in his garden, rather than elevating her to the level of mistress of his estate. While Vivian in *Pretty Woman* escapes her status as prostitute, Raja remains exploited and sexually available to her master, who retains his authority over her as a "male, post-colonial dominator." Caporale argues that Doillon's film cannot adhere to the fairytale transformation of orphan/prostitute into princess /wife because, in North African countries like Morocco, the prostitute is a socially and culturally constructed figure "who will always be subjugated by the "repressive sexual politics perpetrated equally by both African and Western patriarchy."

Catherine Heard investigates a novel genre of sculpture in which body forms are depicted as being "on the verge of syntactic collapse." These apocalyptic bodies are suggestive of the "unmappable abyss" that subtends them. Heard links this form of sculpture to poststructuralist theory that tends to emphasize moments of rupture, the undermining or dissolving of forms that foregrounds uncertainty. In a similar way for Heard, postmodern bodies

are sculpted as permeable, as threatening to dissolve into formlessness. It is as if one were living in the shadow of an apocalypse at once imminent and yet in abeyance. In some cases, threats to the body are conveyed through dismemberment, through “nightmare proportions of the morbidly obese,” or through the transformation from flesh to architecture or from architecture to flesh. In all cases, these sculptures of apocalyptic bodies function to remind the viewer of the “entropic principle that destabilizes all seemingly reliable systems.”

Brian Lightbody links Foucault’s definition of truth and power to the distinction he makes between bio-power and sovereign power. Whereas sovereign power engages the relationship of sovereignty to subjectivity, bio-power establishes a relationship of domination to subjugation. In Lightbody’s words, it is “geared towards discovering the secrets of bodies in order to normalize them.” When a specific code of behavior is imposed onto bodies, for example, they become docile, disciplined and therefore more efficient. Like truth, individual subjects are “merely a construction of power,” but this power is constantly dynamic, arising from the struggle between two competing forces, making resistance always possible. However, given that they and their truths are not constructed independently of power relations, subjects cannot re-create themselves by “discovering an authentic mode of being” or by drawing upon “a primordial freedom that lies outside power.” Lightbody argues, rather, that they must find ways of self-expression that come from the very normalizing discourses of any regime of truth.”

Nancy Pedri examines the ways in which forbidden narratives draw attention to the impossibility of telling that which they nonetheless long to reveal. Since the nature of their testimony is troubled and complex, authors of forbidden narratives are often obliged to seek innovative ways to present the “divided, multiple, ultimately unknowable, unintelligible and unrepresentable self.” Given the representational impossibility of the texts they produce, these authors often turn, somewhat surprisingly, to photography, choosing blank or blurry photographs to “foreground the importance of seeing that which cannot be seen.” The lack of clarity in these photographs serves, as well, to manifest a “pointed act of resistance” to easy interpretation. In the case of Janice Williamson’s evocation of childhood incest in *Crybaby*, the *real* narrative “lies in what is not said and, most importantly, in what the photograph does *not* show.” While they appear on the surface to be ghostly and empty images, photographs used in forbidden narratives show and tell their story through an “aesthetics of invisibility, of visual silence.”

Rosa Saverino provides a detailed account of Sophie Calle’s experiments with autobiographical writing. Whereas this genre usually operates on the assumption that the author, narrator and subject of an autobiographical text are one and the same person, Calle dislocates the three positions from

one another in innovative ways. In a double game played between autobiography and fiction, Calle authorizes the novelist Paul Aster both to create a fictional character whose acts are modeled on real events in Calle's life, and to assign her instructions for her to accomplish in her lived, daily activities. The intended result of this double game is that factual events become interchangeable with fictional details. Given these scenarios, the self-representation that appears in Calle's autobiography is no longer the product of a static narrative told from a singular subject position, but is rather an account characterized by "shifting boundaries between fact and fiction," where "multiple subject positions" are depicted using a "more open negotiating style."

Part I

Rewriting the Historical Event, Anti-archive, Countermemory

1.

“Pictures and Voices”: Virginia Woolf’s *Three Guineas* as Anti-archive

Anderson Araujo

From its etymology in the Greek *arkhē*, “beginning” or “government,” to its suffixal form, *arkheion*, “ruler’s house” or “public office,” the term “archive” has long connoted power. This sense is still somewhat evident in its present meaning as a site in which public or historical records are kept. In *Three Guineas* (henceforth *TG*), published by the Hogarth Press in 1938 in a series of feminist books, Virginia Woolf recasts photography as the visual archive of patriarchy in the twentieth century. “Patriarchy,” it is worth bearing in mind, itself combines the Latin *patria* (“family”) and the Greek *arkhē*. It follows—at least for Jung and Freud—that the *paterfamilias* and the strongman differ only in degree, not in kind.¹ Or, to quote Woolf, “the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other” (*TG* 258). Her anti-Fascist, feminist polemic likewise blurs the lines between private and public spheres by staging a selective historiography of patriarchy in three open letters about how to prevent war. The epistolary form, traditionally meant for private consumption, takes on the public exigency of the political pamphlet. To prop up her anti-war case, she reprints contemporary newspaper photographs at various points throughout the book. The subjects constitute a veritable cross-section of the British Establishment: university professors in procession, a general, a judge, an archbishop, and heralds blowing trumpets, all of whom appear in full regalia. Needless to add, all the subjects are male. For Woolf, the photographs illustrate, above all, the cyclic nature of patriarchy. “Pictures and voices are the same to-day as they were 2,000 years ago,” she writes (257). Encoded in this transhistorical celebration of pomp and ceremony—vividly conveyed in the photograph of the heralds—is a phallogocentric celebration of war. The following discussion enlists the twin senses of “archive” as public record and public office as a point of departure to explore Woolf’s interdisciplinary use of photography as a semiotic nexus in which competing tropes—visual, aural, and linguistic—inscribe themselves.

Yet, significantly, it is not so much the *printed* photographs, but rather the photographs of the war dead, to which the text merely *alludes*, that animate Woolf’s cultural politics. As Maggie Humm points out, it is “the absent

photographs, or rather the narrator's memory of these photographs, which in a major way shape the narrative of *Three Guineas* and its dense visual plenitude" (197). I would go further and propose that Woolf complicates the "dense visual plenitude" of Humm's description with a key acoustic image: the gramophone. It is, then, these often-cited photographs of "dead bodies and ruined houses" (a phrase repeated ad nauseam) from the Spanish Civil War that Woolf enlists to unsettle the ruinous refrain of war, grinding out "like a gramophone whose needle has stuck" (*TG* 107–08).

The skipping record trope is apt indeed. By repeatedly *textualizing* (rather than *imaging*) the Madrid massacres of 1936–37 by Franco's Fascist war machine, Woolf hopes that the readers will create an inner slide show of the horror and probe its cultural, political, and psychosexual roots. In this way, she anticipates current theories of trauma.² Woolf also in effect empowers "her reader's own eyes" (Cuddy-Keane 33). Hence, she also renders photography subjective. This is a surprising twist on this most visual of mediums. Put another way, it is her prose, which seeks photographic verisimilitude, while the actual photographs are narrativized, which is to say, decomposed and translated into new contexts. She thus reimagines writing as the laying of a "crudely colored photograph" (*TG* 34). As Jane Marcus aptly observes, Woolf "seems to be testing the limits of writing the visual against the actual pictures of 'our fathers and brothers'" (lxi). Her experimental method complicates staid notions of photography as a transparent, objective mode of representation.³

Woolf's argument is wilfully self-disruptive. Her prose enlists photography's factual value even as it undercuts it as an authoritative mode of representation. The absent photographs inform Woolf's project to move beyond the hegemonic politics of propaganda. She relies, for the most part, on intensely visual metaphors to amplify the affect of her argument. In a telling instance of this technique, she puts forth the idea that people "are not pawns and puppets dancing on a string held by invisible hands" (*TG* 13).⁴ Her iconoclasm moves beyond the pictorial, however. She goes so far as to discard "feminism" itself as an antiquated category. Alluding to the Sex Disqualification Removal Act of 1919, which effectively "unbarred the professions" to women, Woolf reasons that feminism has, in effect, fulfilled women's struggle to enter the professions, and will thus only serve to widen the gap between the sexes (*TG* 30, 184).

The multi-situational, stylized posture of Woolf's literary non-fiction as exemplified in *Three Guineas* contrasts starkly with the political activism of other anti-Franco leftist intellectuals and artists, including the French novelist André Malraux, Hemingway, and Orwell. W. H. Auden, arguably the furthest left of the British activist-writers in the period, spent time in Spain writing antifascist propaganda during the war, and in 1938 he and Isherwood

toured Communist China.⁵ Though Woolf attended Fabian conferences with her husband, Leonard, beginning with the conference in Keswick, in July 1913, she was embarrassed “at the thought of being mocked for taking an interest in politics” (Lee, “Introduction” 329).⁶ The war nonetheless probably held more personal significance for Woolf than it did for most of the British *intelligentsia*. Her own nephew, Julian Bell, was killed by Franco’s forces while working as an ambulance driver in July 1937.

For Woolf, the species of modern barbarism unleashed by Fascism is but the latest episode in a periodic, chronic psychosexual malaise deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian civilization. As Marie-Luise Gätgens notes, moreover, “fascism is not treated as some kind of extreme aberration but as the *consequence* of the patriarchal sex-gender system” (21. My emphasis). Free to work but barred from public discourse, women, Woolf contends, have yet to engage in radical political action to end war and the “tyranny of the fascist state” (*TG* 102). It is fair to say that her brand of (post)feminism is resolutely political. And yet, her skepticism of phallogentric culture puts her at odds with the normative cultural politics of antifascist propaganda. In a typical anti-Franco Republican lithograph, for instance, alongside a soldier wielding a rifle in combat, his companion in the foreground wields an oversized book. The accompanying caption unpacks the poster’s semiotics in bright yellow typeface: “*La cultura es un arma mas para combatir al Fascismo.*”⁷ Woolf, however, fears that the mimicry of totalitarian violence, even in a just cause, can only reset the cycle anew, like the skipping record of her favored analogy. In lieu of endorsing this mirror typology, she turns her critical gaze inwardly.

Civilization—*qua* psycholinguistic and psychosexual construct—is to be continuously interrogated, deconstructed, and reconfigured.⁸ But Woolf’s photographic text moves the analytical process beyond the psychoanalyst’s divan. She maps this interrogative mode onto the goings-on of daily life in London. “Think we must,” she exhorts; “Let us think in offices; in omnibuses; while we are standing in the crowd watching Coronations and Lord Mayor’s Shows; let us think as we pass the Cenotaph; and in Whitehall; in the gallery of the House of Commons; in the Law Courts; let us think at baptisms and marriages and funerals” (*TG* 114). Every cultural marker ought to trigger our skepticism in an ongoing dialectic between culture and power. To avoid becoming a pawn in the patriarchal machinery (a phrase Woolf would use in her 1939 essay “A Sketch of the Past”), the twentieth-century “androgynous” woman ought to dismantle it altogether. Hence, again, I would offer that she deploys *Three Guineas* as a kind of “anti-archive”—a site of resistance, rather than an ideational storehouse. Her project is interdisciplinary in the sense, as Barthes reminds us, that “to do something interdisciplinary, it is not enough to choose a “subject” (a theme) and gather around it

two or three sciences. Interdisciplinarity consists in creating a new object that belongs to no one" (qtd. in Clifford 1). As we have seen, Woolf brings a trans-individual experience to her eccentric brand of feminism.

Woolf retrieves one of the most enduring literary archives of Western culture, Sophocles's *Antigone*, to paint a scathing portrait of tyranny in the figure of Creon, regent of Thebes. Antigone's defiance of Creon's edict forbidding the burial of her brother, Polynices, results in her being buried alive in a cave. The episode illustrates for Woolf the misogynist psychology and arbitrary exercise of power of the patriarchal state. It follows that absolute rule is anathema to justice. Quoting from Sir Richard Jebb's translation of the play, she has Creon announce to the Thebans, "Whomsoever the city may appoint, that man must be obeyed, in little things and great, in just things and unjust [...] disobedience is the worst of evils [...]. We must support the cause of order, and in no wise suffer a woman to worst us" (*TG* 256). For Woolf, the passage perfectly illustrates the obduracy and narcissism of the male ego. Antigone's abjection moreover is not unlike that of Woolf's feminist peers. Holloway, the London prison for women, many of them suffragettes, stands for the latest version of Antigone's tomb. The domestic space—with its hidden cruelties—is another. The dilemma facing modern women is stark, "how can we enter the professions and yet remain civilized human beings; human beings, that is, who wish to prevent war?" (136). History, as Woolf sees it, bears out an entrenched androcentric bias in government and the law. Its self-perpetuating nature, buoyed by millennia of tradition, dooms humanity to repeat the errors of the past. It is "as if there were no progress in the human race, but only repetition" (120), she laments. Behind twentieth-century totalitarianism still echoes "the voice of Creon, the dictator" (256).

Woolf associates Creon's brutality with the Spanish photographs of "dead bodies and ruined houses" (257). The besieged liberal democratic government of Spain sent the photographs twice weekly in a bid to garner support for the Republican cause.⁹ The *Antigone* intertext invests the absent photographs in *Three Guineas* with ghastly familiar patterns from the past. The unseen images are thereby freighted both with transnational resonance and transhistorical determinism. In her endnotes to the text, Woolf also situates Creon on a par with the iconic *arkhēs* of Fascist tyranny, Hitler, and Mussolini. Yet, she is careful to note that the association can only go so far, as the modern tyrants "suggest too much" (302). The aestheticization of Fascism holds danger-fraught possibilities for political discourse. But propaganda, as she is careful to note, can just as easily stir up sympathy for the enemy, be it Creon or his modern doppelgängers, *il Duce* and *der Führer*.

Woolf felt keenly the spellbinding power of political cults to trump logic and reason. As such, she seeks to avoid inciting "the sterile emotion of hate"

(258). Doubtless this is her main reason for not reproducing the grisly photographs of dead children and women, then a staple of antifascist agitprop. Perhaps, too, this is why she chooses an archetype of tyranny in Creon and, more important, its antitype in Antigone. Both lend a Manichean timelessness to her manifesto, while the photographs that actually appear in the text elicit a subversive reappraisal of patriarchal *mythoi*. To wit, Woolf provides generic captions for the printed photographs of eminent British patriarchs: Lord Baden-Powell, a military hero of the Boer War, Stanley Baldwin, former prime minister, Lord Hewart, the sitting lord chancellor, and Cosmo Gordon Lang, the archbishop of Canterbury, all of whom, it bears repeating, remain nameless. The dryly-cited illustrations—"a general," "a university procession," "a judge," "an archbishop"—render anonymous the well-known subjects, on the one hand, while telegraphing their positions of power and privilege, on the other. To unsettle the archive, in the sense I have suggested, Woolf adopts "an ethos of tropological mobility," to borrow Paul Morrison's phrase (5). Here, no symbol remains stable, no tradition taboo, no icon sacrosanct. This is Woolf as *eikonoklastēs*, "image-breaker."

Speaking out from the borderlands of upper-class privilege as one of the "daughters of educated men," Woolf strips bare some of the most cherished ideographs of male civilization. Rendered meaningless by her satire, ceremonial spectacle seems farcical, absurd. The tradition of "wearing pieces of metal, or ribbon, colored hoods or gowns," she mocks, "is a barbarity which deserves the ridicule which we bestow upon the rites of savages" (*TG* 39). The shocking ethnocentrism of this passage is beyond the scope of this short discussion. Suffice it to say that it opens up at a stroke Woolf's own entanglement in the caste-like system of British society. More specifically, the imperial-colonial subtext of the passage indicates the "Victorian affiliation still powerfully at work in Woolf," as recently shown at length by Steve Ellis (153ff.). In a scathing 1938 review in *Scrutiny*, Q. D. Leavis likewise observes that, "the author of *Three Guineas* is quite insulated by class."¹⁰ Leavis' sentiment echoes that of an earlier reviewer, who wonders whether Woolf's "shell" might be "a little provincial, even a little shrill?"¹¹ Accordingly, the feminine-collective "we" for whom Woolf presumes to speak in the book is much less self-evident, I think, than she realizes. Yet the dichotomy she posits between the perceptual and cognitive apparatuses of women and men dovetails with her notion that memory and tradition constitute gendered categories. Put another way, for our purposes, we "archive" reality as conditioned by gender. Or, as Woolf puts it, "though we see the same world, we see it through different eyes" (*TG* 34).

Woolf consciously situates herself as a capital-O "Outsider," aligning British (all-male) institutions with the enduring—and profitable—business of war. In essence, her satirical sketches seek to alter our very perception of the

photographs of British leaders. “It is the figure of a man,” she quips, “some say, others deny, that he is Man himself, the quintessence of virility, the perfect type of which all the others are imperfect adumbrations” (257). She goes on to heap scorn upon hypermasculinity as coded in the strongman. In her sardonic portrait,

[...] his eyes are glazed; his eyes glare. His body, which is braced in an unnatural position, is tightly cased in a uniform. Upon the breast of that uniform are sewn several medals and other mystic symbols. His hand is upon a sword. He is called in German and Italian Führer or Duce; in our own language Tyrant or Dictator. And behind him lie ruined houses and dead bodies—men, women and children. (258)

A dark joke lurks in this none-too-subtle caricature. It could just as well of course gloss the photograph of Lord Baden-Powell, who, incidentally, also happened to be the founder of the Boy Scouts. Given the striking likeness between, say, the uniforms of the Scouts and the Hitler Youth, the irony doubtless was not lost on her readers. Here, too, I believe, is the *raison d'être* for the photographs reproduced in the text—British *arkhēs* are complicit in fostering militarism and the buildup to war. Dictators, as it turns out, can be homespun, too. “And he is here among us,” Woolf warns, “raising his ugly head, spitting his poison, small still, curled up like a caterpillar on a leaf, but in the heart of England” (97).

Hence the dialectic between the *narrativized* photographs and the *printed* photographs is meant to shock us into realizing the nearness of war, its uncanny hominess. The dead, too, lie close at hand. “We cannot dissociate ourselves from that [dead human] figure but are ourselves that figure,” Woolf urges (258). It is photography that imprints the war dead upon the brains of the living. Its truth-value affect is collectively cathartic, however fleeting. Yet Woolf also re-inscribes photography as a medium open to interpretation. The black and white photographs in the text—wrenched out of their commemorative contexts—thus come to signify the male proclivity for aggression. As she wryly notes, “the connection between dress and war is not far to seek; your finest clothes are those that you wear as soldiers” (39). These “sartorial splendors” act as a dissociative mask to cloak the ghastliness depicted in the Spanish photographs. Woolf seeks to disallow the aestheticization of politics. She allies the project to render politics aesthetic with Fascism, not unlike Walter Benjamin’s formulation just two years prior to the publication of *Three Guineas*. In the epilogue to his oft-quoted essay on mechanical reproduction, Benjamin sees aesthetic Fascism as underlain by the logic of war, “the dreamt-of metalization of the human body” (241).

Is, therefore, Woolf's leaving out the atrocity photographs a conscious way to avoid aestheticizing the Spanish air strikes? And is this *via negativa* a kind of protest against the society of spectacle, a withholding of the prurient pleasure of gazing at the carnage from afar? The textual maneuvers in *Three Guineas* suggest both possibilities. Consider how Woolf telescopes the inhumanity of war in interpreting the photograph of a corpse so misshapen by a bomb explosion that it might as well be that of a pig. The violence in the unseen photo has not only de-humanized the subject, but it has also de-gendered it. The body might be a man's or a woman's, "but those certainly are dead children, and that undoubtedly is the section of a house" (TG 20). With this arresting caption to the absent photograph Woolf supersedes the image itself. While a birdcage still hangs "in what was presumably the sitting-room," the rest of the ruined edifice resembles "a bunch of spillikins suspended in mid air" (21). A "spillikin" is a straw used in the game of jack-straw. The reference thus effectively collapses the boundaries between play and war. Her imagistic protest invests the carnage with a dimension of the uncanny that unites the real and the surreal, the (violated) domestic space and the public. Eschewing fixed categories, her brand of pacifism inhabits the interstices between the linguistic and the optical, image and propaganda. She thus seeks to bring a human dimension to the photographic archive of war.

Woolf's pictorial rhetoric thrives in the open-endedness that Rosalind Krauss accords to photography, "the paradox of reality constituted as sign—or presence transformed into absence, into representation, into spacing, into writing" (112). However, for Woolf a photograph is not, strictly speaking, an "argument." It is, rather, "simply a crude statement of fact addressed to the eye" (TG 21). A photograph bypasses rational cognition, even if the objectivity of the camera lens endows it with mimetic fidelity. As Susan Sontag states in *On Photography*, the medium is a "narrowly selective *transparency*" (6). Woolf, however, complicates this transparency by "coloring" it, as it were, or by occluding it altogether. As an anti-war text, *Three Guineas* nods to the likelihood that a narrative may perhaps be "*more* effective than an image," to quote Sontag in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (122. My emphasis). In the event, Sontag makes a glaring omission of her own in this later work. Though *Three Guineas* forms the basis of *Regarding the Pain of Others*, nowhere does Sontag mention the *absence* of gruesome images. And yet, it is precisely this absence that enables Woolf to retrace the presence of hidden subtexts in the archives of war and patriarchy. She mediates a fraught but creative tension between the seen and the unseen.

Perhaps unconsciously, Woolf seems to concur with Brecht, for whom "the camera is just as capable of lying as the typewriter."¹² As her aforesaid rendering of a dead body bearing the likeness of a pig suggests, Woolf in the end seems skeptical of photography's myth of objectivity. In denying us vis-

ual access to propaganda-laden snapshots, she also seems to resist the kind of “totalization” that Julian Thomas situates as “close in spirit to totalitarianism” (31). Put simply, she will not play the anti-war game by the rules of counterpropaganda. It may be said that she instead politicizes aesthetic perception. In textualizing or narrativizing the image, she seeks to prevent it from becoming morally meaningless. Photojournalism may stir outrage, but it may also render evil banal. But, as we have seen, that is only half the story. Woolf unhinges the archive by reimagining Britain’s *crème de la crème* as emblems of patriarchal tyranny. Where her prose is photographic it is also kinesthetic. Unmoored from the male archive, the worn-out slogan “culture” now triggers a sensory shutdown. At its mere mention, “the head aches, the eyes close, the doors shut, the air thickens” (*TG* 180).

For Woolf, a photograph begs to be not just looked at, but *felt*. The psychoneural stimuli that she traces in the act of regarding a photograph are designed to arouse fleshly, visceral responses. Hers is no ghostly gaze hovering Cartesian-like above the image. “The eye is connected with the brain,” she says, “the brain with the nervous system. That system sends its messages in a flash through every past memory and present feeling” (21). The photograph thus allows for the instantaneous “internalization of objectivity,” to borrow Pierre Bourdieu’s phrase.¹³ This transaction is never innocent of meaning, however. Nor is the gaze that consumes the image. As Woolf suggests, a photograph has to navigate a densely packed nexus of subjectivities. In this, she anticipates Roland Barthes, who would postulate in 1977 that the “gaze seeks: something, someone. It is an *anxious* sign: singular dynamics for a sign: its power overflows it.”¹⁴ Woolf harnesses the anxiety-ridden energies of the seeking gaze by discursively reworking the Spanish atrocity photographs. She textualizes the war photographs to produce a collective “fusion,” collapsing differences in education, class, race, and gender. In regarding such photographs “our sensations are the same; and they are violent” (*TG* 21).

And yet, perhaps ironically, void of a caption or verbal gloss, a photograph is always already open to misreading. The chemically (or digitally) recorded image—unlike a painting—belongs, as it were, to no one. So, too, the semiotic valence of a photograph is as situational as it is subjective. Photography is an art of surfaces, Woolf concedes. It is ekphrastic insofar as it relies on language to decode its surfeit of signs, or as she puts it, the “many inner and secret chambers that we cannot enter” (41). As such, there is much more to the archive than meets the eye. And it is also this wide scope that renders the archive less inviolable and open to re-vision. Hence, the writer-as-photographer trumps the photograph, as *poesis* trumps *techné*. At the end of the book, Woolf brings together that most “photographic” mode of writing—poetry—and the en-texted image of the horror in Spain to exhort her

readers to put a stop to war, "Let us then leave it to the poets to tell us what the dream is; and fix our eyes upon the photograph again: the fact" (260).

Notes

¹ See Jung's "father-imag" in "Freud and Psychoanalysis," which for both psychologists underlay our ideas of divine authority: The religion of the Old Testament exalted the paterfamilias into the Jehovah of the Jews, whom the people had to obey in fear and dread. The patriarchs were a stepping-stone to the Deity. The neurotic fear in Judaism, an imperfect or at any rate unsuccessful attempt at sublimation by a still too barbarous people, gave rise to the excessive severity of Mosaic law, the compulsive ceremonial of the neurotic. (*Aspects of the Masculine* 68). Jung's "compulsive ceremonial of the neurotic" intersects Woolf's satirical critique of male-dominated ceremonial spectacle, of which more later.

² See, for instance, Dori Laub's argument that "trauma survivors live not with memories of the past, but with an event that could not and did not proceed through to its completion, has no ending, attained no closure, and therefore, as far as its survivors are concerned, continues into the present and is current in every respect" (69). It is possible to see Woolf's gramophone metaphor as an extension—on a civilizational (in lieu of, strictly speaking, individual) level—of Laub's theory of the traumatic event.

³ I thus find Elena Gualtieri's point too simplistic when she claims that *Three Guineas* "does not so much demonstrate the existence of a link between patriarchy and Fascism as state it as a matter of fact, needing as little logical proof as the pictures of dead bodies from Spain which work as the subtext of the essay" (85).

⁴ Alison Booth, however, notes that Woolf's pacifism and her belief that "improvement of one's own moral state" was the "answer" to fascist "horror and violence" are signs, for Quentin Bell, or her spinsterish, Victorian sensibility, tied to popular feeling. At a Labour Party meeting, she steered the debate toward local gossip, while her nephew, a committed socialist, watched in dismay: "She was much nearer to the feelings of the masses [...] than I was. I wanted to talk politics, the masses wanted to talk about the vicar's wife. (204–05n)

⁵ See Norman Page's study on the years spent by Auden and Isherwood in pre-Nazi Berlin, focusing on Berlin culture from 1928 to 1933, *Auden and Isherwood: The Berlin Years* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).

⁶ Elsewhere in her biography of Woolf, Hermione Lee suggests that Woolf was not alone in her embarrassment. The derisory reactions to *Three Guineas* following its publication embarrassed most of Woolf's friends, including John Maynard Keynes, who "thought it silly," Quentin Bell, who thought the argument was "wholly inadequate," and even Leonard, who "thought it her worst book" (*Virginia* 692).

⁷ "Culture is yet another weapon in the struggle against Fascism" (my translation).

⁸ *TG*, p. 114.

⁹ *TG*, p. 20.

¹⁰ Leavis goes on to say that "what respectable ideas inform this book belong to the ethos of John Stuart Mill," and that "Mrs Woolf, by her own account, has personally