

How Influence Works in Shakespeare's Creation and Re-Creation

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The specter of influence is still haunting literary and cultural studies in the new millennium although postmodern theories have removed disciplinary boundaries that used to fence literature. The orthodox theory of influence, which is defined as the relation of writer to writer and writer to tradition based on the imitation model of literary history, has long been problematized even since the heyday of New Criticism when literature was considered an autonomous entity that only involves writer and text. Taking cues from T.S. Eliot's emphasis on the order of tradition that canonical writers have presumably made,¹ later New Critics went beyond the authorial intent. Although more sources of influence have been elaborated in textual features to testify to writer's subjectivity in the formalist criticism, the then dominant approach shares with orthodox theory a notion of influence based on binariness, causality and hierarchy in the tradition of literary order, which from a postcolonial perspective even endorses imperialist cultural hegemony. Challenging that order along with the authorial autonomy, critics of post-structuralist persuasion diminish the importance of influence as they put author and text in broader context, and particularly as they consider writing as an intertextual practice, in which the author is decentered from the role of text and meaning construction. Theorists, who see the necessity of the "death of the author," even separate influence from intertextuality. With or without the author, however, the problem of influence roams the now haunted house of literature, albeit in different ways as in various models of postmodern intertextual studies.

After a brief review of theoretical arguments about influence, this essay inquires about how influence works in contemporary discourses of Shakespearean intertextuality. Shakespeare as influence in literary and cultural history, as well as his literary and cultural influences, which have come into the formation of the texts attributed to him, has demonstrated a number of postmodern modes of intertextual conception. In some sense, Shakespeare's ways of intertextuality, if not anachronistically defined, have encouraged modern authors to develop their

approaches to intertextuality and influence. Meanwhile, contemporary critics attempt to theorize modern and postmodern intertextual practices that appropriate his texts. Some of the modes, furthermore, may even be applied to an analysis of Eliot's modernist intertextual configurations of Shakespeare as we will see in other essays of this *FWLS* issue.

Before Harold Bloom updated his *Anxiety of Influence*, its 1973 version or the concept in the book title had retriggered the already heated debate over influence for a couple of decades. Perhaps against an anxiety² over Eliot's definition of the western tradition, Bloom gives a Freudian edge to the theory of tradition and influence in literature. For Eliot, tradition works in the artist's consciousness of the past and postulates his loss of personality or a "continual self-sacrifice": "What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable."³ In Bloom's terms, influence acts upon the aspiring poet by exciting an oedipal or patricidal urge to rebel against the precursor(s). For Bloom, "Poetic Influence — when it involves two strong, authentic poets — always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation" so that the history of western poetry after Shakespeare is "a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature of distortion, of perverse, willful revisionism" (*Anxiety* 30). Elaborating on a reactive, dialogic poetics in the six revisionary ratios or patterns, in which poets devise texts by making intentional "misprision (misreading)" of earlier texts by the predecessors, Bloom develops an approach that marks a shift of critical focus from author to text and sees literary history as a network of connection between texts, and writing as an intertextual activity.⁴ This view seems to align with the post-structuralist discourse of intertextuality.

Nonetheless, theory of intertextuality in post-structuralism, especially that influenced by Julia Kristeva, tends to see intertextuality not as a way of influence but as its displacement. The literary text in this view is not the product of the individual author only; it is rather produced by a network of texts that includes history, culture, along with other literary texts. Any text "is constructed as a mosaic of quotations" and "is the absorption and transformation of another" (*Desire* 66). Intertextuality thus "situates the text within history and society, which are then seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them" (*Revolution* 59). As a result, post-structuralists regard writing as rewriting in a social and historical process in which the author's identity is lost in intertextual anonymity, a notion that is associated with Roland Barthes's concept of "the death of the author." When the author "enters into his own death," the text or word or "voice loses its origin" (Barthes 142). There are only parallel texts that are not restricted within the cause-

effect scenario. Influences are not counted since points of origin are not in the sources. In addition, without the binary subject-object relation or the hierarchy of the primary and the secondary, no one should be in the privileged position. If influence means some anxiety over the dominance of the status quo, removal of the authorial figure in intertextual practices virtually fits in the postmodern, postcolonial quest for multiculturalism and egalitarianism. This denial of influence exists not only in the acceptance of Kristeva's theory in the last decades of the 20th century but also in the construction of her theory itself. A Bloomian anxiety is latent in the Bulgarian-French philosopher's struggle for identity with background as an expatriate and in her intertextual revision of Bakhtin's spatialization of literary language according to Friedman.⁵

Kristeva's influence, literally, on the discourse of intertextuality and on intertextual practices is another story, though, notwithstanding salient resistance to the "orthodox" understanding of her theory. Followers of post-structuralist theory actually divide in viewing the role of the author in intertextuality. Friedman has noted different ways of cross-Atlantic adaptation and application of French theory (155-60). As discussed earlier, in fact, Bloom's dialogic theory of influence already incorporated the discourse of intertextuality during the early introduction of post-structuralist theory to the United States although Bloom's dialogue is limited to that between texts.⁶ In addition, multiple forms of intertextuality have been developed in its intertextual importation, such as Jonathan Culler's "transposition" of the theory with an integration of Bloom's and Barthes's positions in an argument for the "rebirth" of the author (Friedman 155-56) and Nancy Miller's model of "political intertextuality" (157).

As a focal point, the presence or absence of the author is responsible for division in French post-structuralist theory and in its American modes of intertextuality. However, the author is always there in Bloomian and Eliotian theories of influence. Bloom's writing agent experiences an internal struggle and has to react to the suppression of the influential predecessors to claim for a poetic identity through conscious misprision while Eliot's poet has to take external influence, the tradition of great poets, as a condition for identity by surrendering to the tradition and imitating influences. What's more, if we rethink of Eliot's poetic writing, we may well see how it falls into a mode of intertextuality. Most importantly, all theorists and writers, from Eliot to Bloom⁷ and to post-structuralist critics, have engaged Shakespeare for intertextual uses in their poetry and for illustrating their theories.

Shakespeare's importance lies not only in that his texts function as the canonical prototypes to rival against or pretexts for creative inspirations, but also in that his skills in creative uses of influences from his peers and classical sources exemplify

intertextual practices. And in most cases, influence and intertextuality are compatible and can be interchangeably used. Shakespeare offers various modes of intertextuality. In the seven types of intertextual transactions in early modern literature, as Miola observes, most are evident in Shakespeare (13). In *Julius Caesar*, for instance, the playwright departs from his proximate source in Thomas North's English translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* by aggressively reworking the historical narrative into dramatic form (19-20). Shakespeare revises classical traditions of character and situation in *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *The Tempest* by "creating various combinations of character, action, and genre" (21). As an example of genetic intertextuality, Shakespeare adapts Petrarch's conventional lover into the Romeo figure in *Romeo and Juliet* (22). To be sure, Shakespeare's innovative ways of rewriting always provide models for imitation, emulation, creative revision, and critical exploration.

Essays in this issue of the *FWLS* approach the problem of Shakespeare and influence with unique analyses and fresh observations that illustrate, supplement, or critique theoretical models of intertextuality discussed above.⁸ First of all, Jill Levenson investigates how the Bard is immanent in a review of political adaptations of Shakespeare in modern drama since the 1960s, an era when literature began to be politicized. In this context, modern playwrights adopt Shakespeare as a model but not without ambivalence towards his authority. In the two notable kinds of political appropriations — postcolonial revisions of *The Tempest* in particular and feminist rewritings of Shakespeare in general —, modern playwrights approach Shakespeare in "a range of styles from subtle parody to undisguised insults" with mixed feelings.⁹ Their ambivalences are also rooted in "the anxiety of influence" in Bloom's terms. The anxiety has motivated them to free themselves from the examples of their predecessors. According to Levenson, "modern dramatists have crossed Shakespeare with other texts in both their art and their thinking, practicing intertextuality which always comments, often subversively, on the writers quoted." As such, modern playwrights disrupt the Shakespearean prototypes with the often celebrated non-Shakespearean material — from music to elements of Caribbean culture. This approach to influence is an example of the Miller model of "political intertextuality,"¹⁰ through which feminist and postcolonial revisionists assume their agency in intertextual dialogue with their dramatic predecessors and peers. Though disrupted or subverted, Shakespeare is always recalled in these adaptations since practitioners of the political methodology of intertextuality, as well as of that of Bloomian anxiety, "have refused to let the author die" (Friedman 159). Subjectivity of the author is essential for postmodernists to assert their own identity, and influence is welcomed back in revisionary rewriting of Shakespeare for justices in contemporary society in terms of gender, class, and race. For that reason, political intertextuality antithetically

coexists with Bloom's anti-political intertextuality in the American critical scene.

If for postmodernists Shakespeare's afterlife is in revisionist, parodic, political intertextuality, he lives in tradition for modernist Eliot. Francios Laroque's essay studies Eliot's intertextual uses of Shakespeare and other writers in *The Waste Land*. Shakespeare exerts influence on the modernist in two ways: the Bard's rewriting of classical and Renaissance material offers the latter a practical example of the past literary riches to appropriate; Eliot reworks the tradition by frequently drawing on Shakespeare's canon, as for Eliot, Shakespeare is "the creator of the English language and the pillar of tradition" as well as a modern. In his long poem *The Waste Land*, written shortly after his modernist treatise *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, Eliot fragmentally yet explicitly alludes to Shakespeare's poetry and plays. These Shakespearean allusions have an ambivalent function. As Laroque concludes, the image of Will in the "Waste Land" echoes "the poem's deep pessimism" and "hope of a possible re-creation"¹¹ at once. In a nutshell, Eliot's modernist mode of intertextuality is based on a vision of Shakespeare's influence on, and his central position in, English or American literary tradition, and this vision is pervasive in intertextual studies of Shakespeare even after the Kristevan model and the American variations of post-structuralist theory have taken hold of the landscape of literary and cultural studies since the 1960s.

Alongside the Anglophone modes of intertextuality in Anglo-American literary scholarship, comparative scholarship in East Europe, Asia, and other parts of the world has contributed cross-cultural modes of intertextuality to literary and cultural studies. Influence is not a word of taboo in the cross-cultural or inter-literary approach to intertextuality, even though comparatists are aware of its colonial, hegemonic use in traditional conception. Rather, they recast influence in intertextual uses for comparative literary and cultural studies across national borders. As Juvan argues, studies of influence in transnational comparative scholarship "have indeed long exceeded the limits of simple hierarchic and binary relations between two authors, works, or national literatures" (4). In various theorizing attempts, discourses of diverse nature, including Kristeva's denial of influence and Bloom's insistence on it, are interwoven in intertextual formulations, so that intertextuality in literary scholarship has "provoked the appearance of polycentric and pluralistic models of influence as discursive force and other inter-literary relations" (8). By reading socio-cultural practices as texts and comparing them with Shakespeare's texts, Ibrahim Yerebakan's essay in this issue offers us a look into one of the new models. Yerebakan investigates into the problem of honor killing and honor-based violence in Shakespeare's early modern drama and in certain contemporary tribal, patriarchal communities in the Middle East and elsewhere. This intertextual analysis lets us see that our encounters with honor-related

violence are true no matter if they are in imaginative work or in real life. In this sense, comparative intertextual studies collapse various boundaries, such as, between the literary and non-literary, text and context, east and west, past and present.

Finally, Sophie Chiari's biographical approach to Shakespeare's intertextuality returns Shakespeare to his time, when the playwright had to rival for creative identity with his contemporaries, who were both his precursors and peers in creative work. Bloom has expounded on how Shakespeare might have encountered his "anxiety of influence" in his relations with Marlowe.¹² Patching clues drawn from Shakespeare's plays, Chiari relates Shakespeare's growth, from a green hand to a dramatic master, to his relations with Robert Greene's critique of his originality in *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, and argues that Shakespeare returns favor to his ill-fated predecessor and shows his appreciation of his precursor in dramatic allusions. Moreover, Shakespeare makes Greene his "posthumous intellectual collaborator" and beautifies his best enemy by "taking up the same poetic topics in order to develop them in unexpected directions." Meanwhile, a lesson the young writer learns from his predecessor is that he may "cultivate his reputation not only by imitating, but by rewriting Ovid, thereby further differentiating himself from his proud rival."¹³

Shakespeare's "intertextual" appropriations and appreciations of his influences — his precursors and peers — may well be a lesson for contemporary theorists: theoretical discourses are intertextual practices and are always subject to further intertextuality. To second the point, we can also suggest that along with the rebirth of the author to literary creation, influence must be restored to the critical terrain of intertextuality. Theorists and critics "have come full circle, back to the fabric of a text, this time an intertextual web of critical discourses that are endlessly woven and rewoven" (Friedman 173), and fortunately, Chiari's findings may evidence Friedman's assertion that "[c]entral to this (intertextual) reweaving of the critical discourses of intertextuality is the reinsertion of the author, along with some of the biographical and historical methodologies of influence studies (173).

The canonical Bard still has a position in the postmodern discourses of intertextuality. His influence is materialized in studies of his intertextual construction and more importantly in similarly intertextual deconstructions and reconstructions, which help perpetuate his tradition, if not his locus in the western canon as well as his afterlife in postmodern eras.

Notes

1. In the early 20th century, Eliot granted a positive sense to tradition in *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1919) and depersonalized the individual talent in his theory of "Objective Correlation" as defined in his essay "Hamlet and His Problems." For its Euro-centrism, Eliot's notion of tradition as

the great minds of Europe is at odds with postcolonial, feminist, and cultural theories.

2. In formulating his own theory, Bloom may have experienced *agon*, as defined in his book, struggle against his New Critical mentors as well as Eliot in inventing his identity in poetic theory by revising this theoretical precursor.

3. Eliot, *Tradition* (online), section II, par. 9.

4. It must be noted that Bloom's revisionary intertextuality is against parodic reconstructions of Shakespeare in ideological or political readings by postmodernists.

5. See Susan Friedman, 147-48. Also, Friedman historicizes Kristeva's conception of intertextuality, which this study is indebted to in the discussion of poststructuralist theory. See Friedman, 146-53. Marko Juvan offers another historical review of theories of intertextuality that have "reshaped the understanding of influence" as he concludes (8).

6. Bloom rejects reading literary texts as social-political documents and has not considered socio-cultural context as a factor of intertextual dialogues. His "context" refers to relation of a text to another or other texts: "The meaning of a poem can only be another poem," as Bloom asserts in his *Anxiety of Influence* (94).

7. In Bloom's books, from *The Western Canon* to *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, he upholds Shakespeare's supreme position in the western canon and advocates a "secular religion" of bardolatry (*Invention*, xix). Shakespeare's originality lies in "the depiction of self-change on the basis of self-overhearing" so that his characters have become "free artists of themselves" (*The Western Canon* 46). *The Anxiety of Influence* remains his most influential theoretical work. In the Preface to its second edition, he examines Shakespeare's uses of sources from Ovid and Chaucer and adds a discussion about Shakespeare's debts to his peer Christopher Marlowe. Bloom did not think of this influence when he published the first edition of the book, which traces Shakespeare's influence on modern literature through John Milton and James Joyce. Most recently, he once again comes back to the topic of influence in his 2011 book *Anatomy of Influence: Literature as a Way of Life*, his "virtual swan song," in which he reflects on his work in literary criticism and reiterates Shakespeare's centrality to literature, his career, and his life. Once again, he insists that aesthetics is an individual rather than societal concern yet in a milder tone than he did in the 1990s. At that time he defended the canon and Shakespeare against scholars of the "School of Resentment" — new historicists, feminists, and Marxists — who have been influenced by French thought and attempted to expand the canon with the concerns of justice in terms of class, gender, and race.

8. Several of the essays, including those by Levenson, Laroque and Chiari, are revised versions of papers presented at "The Third International Symposium on Shakespeare" (November 16-17, 2013) organized by Wuhan University and the Shakespeare Association of China.

9. See Levenson in this journal issue. Quotations from essays in this issue are not paginated.

10. Friedman has offered a detailed analysis of how Nancy Miller has incorporated theories of various sources — not merely French post-structuralism — to come to terms with her methodology of political intertextuality (159-62, 175).

11. See Laroque's essay in this issue of the journal.
12. See note 7 of this essay.
13. See Chiari in the issue.

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