

## INTERTEXTUALITY AS POSTCOLONIAL TECHNIQUES: AN ANALYSIS OF TEXT AND SOURCE IN DEREK WALCOTT'S *OMEROS* (1990) AND J.M. COETZEE'S *DISGRACE* (1999)

Flair Donglai SHI  
UCL (Comparative Literature)  
London  
[donglai.shi.14@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:donglai.shi.14@ucl.ac.uk)

### Abstract

*Just like Walcott's broken vase pieced back together, almost all aspects of postmodernism tend to share a kind of democratic concern for the fragmentation of modern humanity into a pluralism of different/alternative realities and identities, and for how these fragments can be productively reconciled in specific sociohistorical contexts to form a harmonious present and an illuminating future. Post-colonialism and intertextuality are two such aspects in postmodern literature that are closely linked by their counter-discursive antiauthoritarian nature. Therefore, this essay aims to demonstrate how intertextuality, as a philosophy of language, can be used to fulfill postcolonial literature's sociopolitical questionings, especially quests of identity, belonging and nationhood. It will first establish the theoretical foundation of this link, and then it will analyse the application of specific intertextual techniques in two "canonical" postcolonial texts respectively: Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990) and J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999). Basically, this essay argues that intertextuality is, one of if not the only one, the stylistical and philosophical cores of post-colonialism, and that this intertextuality essentially relies on transtextuality and contextuality as sources for the embroidering of its literary formation. It also argues, by various concrete demonstrations that the conscious manipulations of these textualities on the writers' side, in the production process of their phenotextual manifestations, significantly contribute to the successes of the enunciations of their postcolonial concerns their genotextual themes.*

*Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than the love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of its original shape. --Derek Walcott, "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory" (1992: p69)*

## Introduction

Just like Walcott's broken vase pieced back together, almost all aspects of postmodernism tend to share a kind of democratic concern for the fragmentation of modern humanity into a pluralism of different/alternative realities and identities, and for how these fragments can be productively reconciled in specific sociohistorical contexts to form a harmonious present and an illuminating future. Post-colonialism and intertextuality are two such aspects in postmodern literature that are closely linked by their counter-discursive antiauthoritarian nature. Therefore, this essay aims to demonstrate how intertextuality, as a philosophy of language, can be used to fulfill postcolonial literature's sociopolitical questionings, especially quests of identity, belonging and nationhood. It will first establish the theoretical foundation of this link, and then it will analyse the application of specific intertextual techniques in two "canonical" postcolonial texts respectively: Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990) and J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999). Basically, this essay argues that intertextuality is, one of if not the only one, the stylistical and philosophical cores of post-colonialism, and that this intertextuality essentially relies on transtextuality and contextuality as sources for the embroidering of its literary formation. It also argues, by various concrete demonstrations, that the conscious manipulations of these textualities on the writers' side, in the production process of their phenotextual manifestations, significantly contribute to the successes of the enunciations of their postcolonial concerns, their genotextual themes.

## Section 1: Theories of Intertextuality in the Postcolonial World--the Palimpsestic Liberation of Voices of Alterity

The most common understanding of intertextuality, of text and source, is that of Gérard Genette's notion of the intertext as the "*hypertext*", which can only be confirmed by the detectable presences or traces of its "*hypotext(s)*", or "*other pre-existent text(s)*" (Genette, 1997: p5). This means that there should be direct connections between the two texts: the hypertext can establish its intertextuality by borrowing certain characters, certain settings, certain plotlines from its hypotexts or by mentioning the names of its hypotexts straightforwardly. For example, the intertextuality of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* lies in its hypertextual connections with *the Bible*, its hypotext. However, Genette's intertextuality concerns more than this plain reading as he also brings up notions of the "palimpsest" and "transmotivisation". The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word palimpsest as "a

*parchment, etc., which has been written upon twice, the original writing having been rubbed out*", and focused on this superimposed duality, Genette suggests that the intertext is the "non-original rewriting of what has already been written" (Allen, 2000: p108). Key in this rewriting process is "transmotivisation", namely how the writer's hypertexts manage to give a character new motivations lacking in the hypotexts, and this transformation essential to the intertextual productivity nonetheless relates this "narrow" interpretation of text and source to the more broadly conceived notions of "appropriation" in Bakhtinian dialogism and "ambivalence" in Kristevan semianalysis--those of the more socially centered school of intertextuality.

Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva's discussions about intertextuality are about the social situatedness of text, of Foucaultian discourse, of language in general, and they both acknowledge that literary language, especially fiction, is the place where this intertextuality is symbiotically intense. Bakhtin proposes that all "utterances" are necessarily representative of a vast array of distinct worldviews based on the language users' own sociohistorical groupings and vested interests; and more importantly, this polyphony of perspectives articulated by these affiliations is in constant dialogues with one another, forming an ever-intertwining and ever-stretching web of "social heteroglossia" (Bakhtin and Medvedev, 1978: p120). So in the Bakhtinian sense, a text does not have to be ostensibly hypertextual to be intertextual: the mere utterance "I'm a gay Catholic" immediately puts two conflictory strands of social ideologies and identities onto a hybridised negotiating table. For Bakhtin, the value of literariness thus lies in the different forms these dialogues, processes called dialogism, manifest in--coalescence, hybrid, conflict, negotiation and etc., and the novel is therefore inherently dialogic since it always involves at least two consciousnesses uttering their sociohistorical standings at the same time: "the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author" (Bakhtin, 1981: p362 and p324). Kristeva, comparatively, is more concerned about the divorce of utterance and its producer, about how writing liberates the utterance from its originator and sublimates it into an "enunciation", a point where different sociohistorical voices intersect and a point that is itself ready for appropriation and restructuration (Hawthorne, 1992: p57). Hence, she poignantly points out fiction's extreme "ambivalence" in its double representation as textual society and societal text, with the latter finishing appropriating the former and waiting for its own appropriation as part of the former (Kristeva, 1980: p66).

Not so surprisingly, these theoretical frameworks of "rewriting", "intersection" and "ambivalence" strike a revealing resemblance with Homi Bhabha's (2004: p141) statement about the motivation for postcolonial writers: "We need another time of writing that will be able to *inscribe* the *ambivalent* and charismatic *intersections* of time and space that constitute the problematic 'modern' experience of the western nation". Essentially, the

polyphonic utterances fiction presents and represents, by exposing the role of social constructionism as the intrinsic means for identity formation, sets out to achieve a proliferation of counter-discursive worldviews that defy a authoritatively monolithic monologism. In other words, the intertext's equal juxtaposition of various discourses, together with the social ideologies behind them, brings an awareness upon the characters, the writers and the readers of the polyphonic novel that we are all constantly othering and being othered in our ambivalent dialogues with one another. Similarly, post-colonialism's essential aim also consists of these two liberatory features: providing alternative perspectives, usually those of the formally colonised, and exposing how they used to be othered by the colonisers whom they also have the power to other. This link is explicit in intertextuality and post-colonialism's shared emphasis on the concept of alterity: for Bakhtin, "*the novelist must understand his or her character from within...but must perceive it as other, as apart from its creator in its distinct **alterity***" and for Gayatri Spivak, the famous postcolonial theorist, "*the self identity of the colonising subject, indeed the identity of imperial culture, is inextricable from the **alterity** of colonised others*" (Ashcroft et al., 2000:p9-p10). This shared concern about the importance of alterity, of the role of otherness in the construction of subjectivity, thus defines postcolonial fiction's nature as a self-aware literary construction about its characters' self-awareness of their own identity construction, and thus its central mission is something of a palimpsestic liberation, of tracing the original writings and giving them new and broader meanings through reflective rewriting.

With the theoretical interconnectedness of intertextuality and post-colonialism firmly established, this essay now moves on to examine the application of specific intertextual techniques and their functions in facilitating the expressions of postcolonial concerns in two specific works: Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990) and J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999).

## **Section 2: The Polyphonic Anamnesis in Transposition--Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990)**

*Omeros* is often categorised by literary commentators as an epic poem, due to Walcott's more than obvious intention to rewrite Homer's epic poems the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in a St. Lucian setting with postcolonial rethinking (Cahill-Booth, 2010). However, despite its poetic forms and epic themes of identity/nationhood quests, it is problematic to pinpoint it as an epic, at least in terms of Bakhtin's interpretation of the epic in his intertextuality theory.

Bakhtin (1981) views the epic poem as always authorially monologic since the omniscient author, also as the forever heterodiegetic narrator, enforces a singular, authoritative voice upon the world, and *Omeros*'s ostensible polyphony clearly contradicts this: it is made up of three main interrelated narratives of various narrative modes--the first-person narration of the St. Lucian fisherman Achille, the third-person story of a white man Plunkett researching to find St. Lucia's "true" history and the metafictional first-person voice of the narrator,

supposedly Walcott himself, constantly reflecting on the sociopolitical burden upon poetry during his travels across continents. Therefore, what happens in this intertextuality between *Omeros* and Homer is a Bakhtinian approach called “*genre appropriation*”: similar to the Kristevan sublimation of the “utterance” into the “enunciation”, genres, once finished and established, “*become more free and flexible, their languages renew themselves by incorporating extraliterary heteroglossia and the ‘novelistic’ layers of literary language*” (ibid: p7); and in this sense Walcott has turned the “imperial genre” epic into the novel by inserting an interactive dynamism of the dialogism of a still-evolving contemporary reality, namely, the ongoing conflicts and reconciliations of St. Lucia’s colonial past and its postcolonial present, into it. Therefore, its postcolonial call lies in its success in liberating new worldviews from the monologic western canon by parodying it. Built upon this realisation about the formal appropriation, this section will now further discuss the relationship between text and source manifested in two intersectional points where all three narratives are connected: the central female figure Helen, and the motif/symbol sea-swift.

Helen, the name given to *Omeros*’s central female character, is conspicuously intertextual, and its simultaneously transtextual and contextual sources immediately produce multiple dialectics of colonial and postcolonial struggles. Firstly, transtextuality with Homer’s Trojan War (together with Achille and Hector’s rivalry over Helen) and with the nickname of St. Lucia (Helen of the West Indies, as a result of the rivalry between colonial Britain and France) evokes St. Lucia’s colonial past and propels the reader to view the character as a metonymic symbol for the nation itself--this constitutes the foundation/regained layer of the palimpsest.

Secondly, contextuality, or rather recontextualisation, puts this St. Lucian Helen in the teeth of the storm of a present of neocolonial global capitalism, of which the legacy of colonialism is just a part. Just as Bakhtin (1981: p340)’s emphasis on the power of appropriation: “*the context embracing another’s word is responsible for its dialogicising background...Given the appropriate methods for framing, one may bring about fundamental changes...*”, the insidiousness of this contemporary reality Helen is catapulted into is evident in her connections to all three major narratives: 1. Achille at one moment poignantly observes the harm modern tourism has inflicted upon her, both Helen the female and Helen the motherland, when he states “*her high head moving through the tourists/...she was selling herself like the island, without/ any pain, and the village did not seem to care/ that it was dying in its change, the way it whored/ away a simple life that would soon disappear/...*” (Walcott, 1990: p111), while neither him nor Hector can be exempted from participating in this capitalistic exploitation when they seek money to win her (e.g. Achille’s “*Money will change her*” (ibid: p44) and Hector died “*for her and tourism*” (ibid: p230)) by diving into the sea and driving taxi respectively; 2. Despite having sparked Plunkett’s inspiration to

search for the island's "*true place in history*" (ibid: p64), Helen's role as a housemaid in his family is marked by the danger of transgressing her subservience, exemplified by the conflict between her and the mistress Maud over a frock which "*had an empire's tag on it*": "*...Helen had kept the house/ as if it were her own, and that's when it all begins:/ when the maid turns into the mistress and destroys/ her own possibilities...*" (ibid: 64); 3. The narrating poet reflects on his own complicity in exploiting island's poverty as the source of his art: "*Hadn't I made their poverty my paradise?*" (ibid: p228) and "*I had read and rewritten till literature/ was guilty as History...*", and also his complicity in facilitating the westernisation of the island by linking Helen and Homer: "*There, in her head of ebony, there was no real need for the historian's/ remorse, nor for literature's. Why not see Helen/ as the sun saw her, with no Homeric shadow...*" (ibid: p271). Ultimately, all these post-/neo-colonial struggles surrounding Helen, derived from Walcott's own sociohistorical context, constitutes the creatively superimposed upper layer of the palimpsest.

Compared to the character/island Helen, the sea-swift, as a symbol, is more implicit in revealing its hypotext and has more in-depth connections with colonial histories and literary explorations. As suggested by Tynan (2006), the transtextuality of the swift may lie in its similarities with the goddess Athena in the *Odyssey* as a benevolent guiding force for Achille's dream journey back to Africa, as Odysseus's protector happens to have transformed into a swallow in Book 22 as well. But what is more significant is the swift's symbolically inter-sociohistorical journeys leading to alternative contextualities--colonial origins and potentially cosmopolitan futures. Firstly, the swift symbol occupies an important role in the theme of the wound and its cure. While Philoctete, a character appropriated from Homer without whom the Trojan War would not be finished, thinks his wound is the historical echo of pain of slavery: "*He believed the swelling came from the chained ankles/ of his grandfathers...*" (Walcott, 1990: p19), the narrator Walcott points out its thematic ubiquity through a metafictional voice: "*He [Philoctete] has to be wounded, affliction is one theme of this work...*" (ibid: p28), and thus it becomes highly crucial that the flowers Ma Kilman found to cure this wound is linked to the swift too: "*a swift had carried the strong seed in its stomach/...she aimed to carry the cure/ that precedes every wound; the reversible Bright/ of Benin was her bow...*"(ibid: p239). By tracing the wound's cure to its contextual origin of the colonial transatlantic slave trade, Walcott reveals a postcolonial philosophy of "what harm you will eventually heal you" and thus purports a necessity to face the injured past in order to build a healthy future. That is why, secondly, at the beginning of Achille's sun-strike imaginary journey back to Africa and his father, he was also "*lured by the swift*" and "*for the first time, he asked himself who he was*", and thus just like Pollard (2004: p185) says, the swift is a "*transatlantic muse*" who prompts him to question "*his name and origin*" (Walcott, 1990: p130). Similarly and thirdly, in an inter-narrative encounter in Chapter 32 part 3,



Achille watches the narrator's plane fly over his canoe as the narrator leaves the island for the US, and shortly after this the poet starts the narration about similar histories of colonisation in America and Europe--while the plane can be read as the modern reincarnation of the guiding swift, images of birds are not lacking in the narrator's journey in the now-dead empires at all: "[in Spain]...*the swifts from the opening eye of a tower*" (ibid: p190), "[in Portugal] *pilgrims...carried the salt of their eyes...to the blue where forked swifts navigated...*" (ibid: p191) and "[in London]...*the sparrow, rubbing both hands...London rustled with pride*" (ibid: p195). Hence, lastly, having showed the bloody division of the coloniser and the colonised in the imperialistic past, the swift is now the cosmopolitan vanguard, uniting "*the interlocking basins of a globe...the New World...*" (ibid: p319) just like how the swift embroidered by Maud on her silk is "*not only the African swift but all the horned island's birds, bitterns and herons, silently screeching there*" (ibid: p267).

To sum up, this section has shown how the palimpsestic liberation of postcolonial perspectives is achieved by Omeros's novelistic appropriation of Homer's epics. Walcott has polyphonised the monologic epic genre by hybridising the white man's, the black man's and the authorial voices into one text, whose wide range of intertextual sources stretch from canonical hypotexts and contextual brutality of colonial times to postcolonial dangers of an encroaching globalisation and hopes of an emerging cosmopolitanism. Through his fusionally polyphonic transposition of literal hypotexts and sociopolitical contexts, Walcott manages to reach a supra-Platonic stage of anamnesis: Omeros's palimpsestic liberation is not only about rediscovering pre-existent knowledge but also about creating new knowledge out of it.

### **Section 3: Intertextuality as Metafictional Paths Towards the Bildungsroman--J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999)**

Compared to *Omeros*, the intertextuality of Coetzee's *Disgrace* is a much more indirect and sporadic presence: while it has to some degree appropriated the Plaasroman genre, there is no particular canonical work or author it sets out to mimic or parody; the quoted hypotexts from Byron, Wordsmith and various foreign works do not directly play a role in the progression of the plotline; and its attitude towards the post-Apartheid south African context remains ambiguous (Smet, 2004). However, although the novel does not necessarily require the readers' sophisticated knowledge of these intertexts for them to understand the protagonist Lurie's frustrated realisation about his (thus the white people's) fallenness, their existence as subtle metafictional clues/comments is nevertheless a constructive part of Coetzee's genius in linking western Romanticism and South African post-colonialism in his text. This section will examine how the literary traditions of western Romanticism serves as a mediating space where Lurie's solipsistic eroticism, representing the unjust pre-Apartheid discourse, can, like a Bildungsroman, develop into a much more bucolically harmonious hybrid with a continuing

sense of unresolvedness nonetheless.

Bakhtin, in his discussion about the double-voiced discourse, namely the co-existence (conflictory or else) of different sociohistorical ideologies in a single subjectivity, mentions the Bildungsroman potential of the dialogic confession: “[confession is] *a representation of the struggle waged by the voice of conscience with other voices that sound in a man, the internal dialogism leading to repentance and so forth*”, (Bakhtin, 1981: p276). While its application to the novel is most obvious in the confession Lurie was forced to make in front of the university committee (Truth and Reconciliation Committee style), the true Bildungsroman power of this confessional dialogism lies in the ways Lurie interprets and enacts “*the middle path that Romanticism as a culture espouses*” (Gaylard, 2005: p3)--in how he shifts from the indulgent side of Romanticism to the idyllic side of it, for which the gang rape of his daughter Lucy is a watershed.

Before the hideous accident, Lurie’s interpretation of Romanticism overemphasises its spontaneous sensuality. The underlying Romanticising mentality behind the English Literature professor’s unusual geriatric hypersexuality is subtly hinted at by his literary preferences: “*Faust...vision as eros (The Vision of Richard of St Victor)...Wordsmith...*” and the forthcoming operas on Byron, the notoriously seductive lothario (Coetzee, 1999: p4). The way he distorts Wordsmith’s idyllic image of nature against a realistic view on women is particularly interesting: in his lecture on *The Prelude*, he states “*do you truly wish to see the beloved in the cold clarity of the visual apparatus? It may be in your better interests to throw a veil over the gaze, so to keep her alive in her archetypal, goddesslike form*” (ibid: p22), and correspondingly, he himself later enacts this interpretation of the romantic veiling of the erotic gaze out when he forces himself to commit the “*not quite rape*” on Melanie, whose unkempt appearance he originally “*finds silly, tasteless*”--“*He...kisses her feet...Strang love! Yet from the quiver of Aphrodite, goddess of the foaming waves, no doubt about that*” (ibid: p25). Other explicit instances of the infiltration of Romanticism into Lurie’s self-perception and views on women are, his egoistic self-identification as “*a servant of Eros*” (ibid: p89) and his “argument” for his sexual entitlements-- “*a woman’s beauty does not belong to her alone...she has a duty to share it...From fairest creatures we desire increase...that thereby beauty’s rose might never die*” [underlined part from Shakespeare’s Sonnet 1]” (ibid: p16). According to Clarkson (2009), the reason behind his predatory sexuality and Romanticising justifications is essentially the postcolonial anxiety of the decaying old generation of white man. Lurie’s solipsistic clutch to a sexist eroticism is thus indicative of the declining white people’s desperate grasp of any hierarchical privilege left in post-Apartheid South Africa. However, as a result of Lucy’s rape, or rather, of the vicarious torment it revengefully inflicted upon him, Lurie began to reflect on the inappropriateness of relying too much on Romanticism’s indulgent side and started contemplating its idyllic qualities of peacefulness as



a post-disillusionment solution. This Bildungsroman transition from the indulgent towards the benign rural side of western Romanticism is evident in three aspects of Lurie's life: his revised view on Byron, his shift of literary interest to Teresa, his newly found bond with animals. Firstly, once the libertine and literary icon Lurie admired, Byron's true face as a rapist became more and more clear to him after the accident enabled him to gain the perspective of the victim: "*He thinks of Byron. Among the...maids Byron pushed himself into there were no doubt those who called it rape...from where he stands, from where Lucy stands, Byron looks very old-fashioned*" (Coetzee, 1999: p160). Secondly and consequently, Lurie shifted the target of his creative exploration towards Byron's abandoned lover Teresa and vicariously uttered the voices of her broken heart: "*Come to me, mio Byron...come to me, love me!*" [Coetzee's own italics]" (ibid: p185). Thirdly, Lurie's "*trajectory ...from absorption in his own inner enculturated world towards an attenuation of that world via abrasion on the hard edges of the 'new' South Africa*" (Gaylard, 2005: p7) forced him into a Yeatsian epiphany--"*No country, this, for old men*" (Yeats 1982: p217 quoted in Coetzee, 1999: p190)-he had to acknowledge, just as Lucy pitifully acknowledges the coldness towards animals in South Africa: "[o]n the list of the nation's priorities, animals come nowhere" (ibid: p73). This shared sense of marginalisation thus propelled Lurie to sympathise with the dogs and goats, because he himself was then, zoomorphically, "*like a dog*", embodying the disgrace, suffering and cruelties an unbalanced postcolonial order has inflicted upon him/them (ibid: p205). Moreover, there is one particularly poignant scene where all three aspects are connected, visioning a peaceful hybridity of western canonicity and African locality: in the last chapter, Lurie was playing *Byron in Italy* using the African banjo while the **dog** was "*fascinated by the sound of the banjo*", and "*when he hums Teresa's line...the dog seems on the point of singing too...*" (ibid: p215). Though a continuing sense of unresolvedness lingers at the end of the story, Lurie's lesson, indeed the lesson for post-Apartheid South Africa in general, is essentially about the importance of compromise: though Lurie still thinks in terms of "*we westerners*" (ibid: p202) when confronted with the idea of Lucy and Petrus marrying, he has to accept this new familial mode and his grandchild's existence as South Africa's future despite their brutally complex origins, just as he has learned to let his dog (the zoomorphic self) go at the very end.

To sum up, similar to Rimmon-Kenan (1983)'s theories about how arranged surroundings can be trait-connoting metonymies absorbed into characters of fictional works, the attitudes of fictional characters towards other literary (inter)texts and literary traditions can be equally revealing about the novel's stance on contended issues. This section has examined the ways western Romantic intertexts in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* act as metafictional clues that subtly inform the readers of the protagonist Lurie's gradual Bildungsroman transition, from a hypersexual old roue constantly romanticising his colonial/sexist exploitation of women, to a

psychologically debilitated father who has been forced to recognise the demise of his colonial privilege resulted from an equally disruptive but nonetheless concrete postcolonial reshuffling. In his transposing various intertextual sources into the text to address contextual struggles, Coetzee has successfully demonstrated the danger of (post)colonial alterities (indeed, that of any kind of self-serving othering process) by the presentation of intertextual alterities (the exposing of characters from within).

## Conclusion

Kristeva (1984: p87) coined the terms “*phenotext*” and “*genotext*” in her discussion about the dialectics between the symbolic and the semiotic forces, an intertextuality combining language philosophy with Lacanian psychoanalysis. In the context of post-colonial intertextuality, the phenotext can be understood as the explicit/implicit references to pre-existent, usually western canonical, literary texts (hypotexts/transtexts) and the subsequent societal and cultural constraints caused by these appropriations--the foundation layer of Genette’s palimpsest, while the genotext is the writer’s postcolonial reflections, usually along with cosmopolitan hopes, hidden in his/her intertextual inferences to previous or contemporary contextual realities--the superimposed new layer of Genette’s palimpsest which makes the unoriginal creatively original. Hence, what this essay has done is demonstrate the ways postcolonial writers negotiate the relationship of text and source, the hyper-intertextual methods they utilise to bridge phenotextual devices with genotextual themes. Section 1 first introduced three major schools of intertextuality theories, concluding that a shared democratic concern about a proliferation of perspectives and the exposition of alterities has proved intertextuality and post-colonialism to be strongly linked together. Section 2 and 3 then showed how this link can be resourcefully applied and handled by close readings of Derek Walcott’s *Omeros* (1990) and J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (1999) respectively: *Omeros* has blended Homeric transtextualities (exemplified by Helen) with St. Lucian contextualities (exemplified by the swift, linking its colonial past to its post-/neo-colonial present) in its novelistically polyphonic appropriation and restructuration of the western canonical epic, while *Disgrace* has interspersed intertexts of Western Romanticism as metonymic metafictional clues for a Bildungsroman journey of South Africa into its post-Apartheid present. Therefore, ultimately, all these intersections of past and present texts and contexts regarding colonialism and its evolving legacies help us to fully understand Walcott’s love for the “broken vase” in the sentence following the beginning quote: “*It is such a love that resembles our African and Asiatic fragments, the cracked heirlooms whose restoration shows its white scars*” (Walcott, 1992: p69).

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