

福建省社会科学规划项目资助

Intertextualized History

A Study of Historical Narratives in Graham Swift's Fiction

互文本编织的历史

——格雷厄姆·斯威夫特小说的历史叙事研究

◎ 王艳萍 著



福建省社会科学规划项目 (FJ2017B068)

资助出版

集美大学学科建设经费

INTERTEXTUALIZED HISTORY

A Study of Historical Narratives in Graham Swift's Fiction

互文本编织的历史

——格雷厄姆·斯威夫特小说的历史叙事研究

◎ 王艳萍 著



西安交通大学出版社
XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY PRESS

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

互文本编织的历史: 格雷厄姆·斯威夫特小说的历史叙事研究: 英文/
王艳萍著. —西安: 西安交通大学出版社, 2018. 2

ISBN 978-7-5693-0450-3

I. ①互… II. ①王… III. ①格雷厄姆·斯威夫特—小说研究—英文
IV. ①I561.074

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2018)第034109号

书 名 互文本编织的历史
——格雷厄姆·斯威夫特小说的历史叙事研究

著 者 王艳萍

责任编辑 魏 杰 于睿哲

出版发行 西安交通大学出版社
(西安市兴庆南路10号 邮政编码710049)

网 址 <http://www.xjtupress.com>

电 话 (029) 82668357 82667874 (发行中心)
(029) 82668315 (总编办)

传 真 (029) 82668280

印 刷 长沙市宏发印刷有限公司

开 本 880mm×1230mm 1/32 印张 10.25 字数 307千字

版次印次 2018年2月第1版 2018年4月第1次印刷

书 号 ISBN 978-7-5693-0450-3

定 价 88.00元

读者购书、书店添货、如发现印装质量问题, 请与本社发行中心联系、调换。

版权所有, 侵权必究



FOREWORD

Graham Swift (1949—) is one of the most famous novelists in contemporary Britain. His work, now consisting of nine novels, one non-fiction and a collection of short stories, has garnered significant critical acclaim and literary prizes and has won a large audience in England and abroad. His novels have been translated into more than twenty languages. *Waterland* was short-listed for the 1983 Booker Prize. It won the Guardian Fiction Prize, the Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize for the best regional novel of the year, and the Italian Premio Grinzane Cavour. It justified his inclusion in a list of the twenty-best young British novelists drawn up in 1983 by the Book Marketing Council. *Last Orders* received good reviews and won the Booker Prize in 1996.

The main theme of Swift's works is history and intertextuality is the main strategy for him to narrate history. His novels are extensively and consistently intertextual. First coined by Julia Kristeva, the term "intertextuality" refers to literary texts as "an intersection of other texts" ("Intimate Revolt" 446). This term should be understood from two senses — the narrow sense and the broad sense. In the narrow sense, it refers to a literary text which is based on and compiled with

Intertextualized History:
A Study of Historical Narratives in Graham Swift's Fiction

the pre-existent literary texts. Kristeva argues that there is no text that exists as a self-contained, self-sufficient, and closed system. In the broad sense, it refers not only to the literary text as an intersection of other literary texts, but also to the literary text as an intersection of literature, history, politics and the culture in which it is written.

Swift has been critiqued in terms of his expansive use of intertextuality. However, the majority of literary critics only focus their studies on the relationship between his text and other previous literary texts. This book explores intertextuality of Swift's fiction in the broad sense. It studies not only the intertextual reference to other literary artifacts, but also the intertextual reference to other genres such as detective fiction, romance and story. In addition, photograph and history as intertexts are also thoroughly studied. Swift occupies an important position in contemporary British literature, but till now, at home and abroad, there is not a systematic research done on his intertextuality. Therefore, this book has great theoretical significance and practical value.

This book is composed of "Introduction," the main body and the "Conclusion." The introduction gives a general outline of Swift's life and literary career, a survey of his criticism and the structure of this book. The main body consists of five chapters. Chapter One discusses how Swift's fiction makes intertextual reference to canonical texts. His fiction is full of intertextual echoes of canonical literary works, such as works of Geoffrey Chaucer (1343), William Shakespeare (1564), John Donne (1572), William Wordsworth (1770), Charles Dickens (1812), William Faulkner (1897), etc. This book mainly analyzes two canonical works embedded in Swift's fictions — Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

and Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. This chapter expounds on how *Ever After* becomes a parody of *Hamlet*. In *Ever After*, the protagonist Bill has experienced a series of attacks in his life and has lost his self-identification. Hamlet can function as a means for him to develop a sense of identity since he has found some similarities between himself and Hamlet. He draws on *Hamlet's* structure, themes, and language to represent events in his own life. Identifying himself openly with Hamlet raises him to the level of the tragic hero and gives him the nobility and chivalric value. However, Bill feels he falls much short of his imaginary hero. Unlike Hamlet, Bill is a sheer failure and a rather boring and unexciting figure. Ultimately, Bill finds that his identification with the tragic hero is an illusionary and frustrated imitation. In fact, Hamlet is the ironic projection of Bill's self-alienation. This chapter also expounds on how *Last Orders* becomes a palimpsestic rewriting of the canonical work *The Canterbury Tales*. A palimpsest is a manuscript page from a scroll or book from which the text has been scraped or washed off, so the page can be used again. *Last Orders* can be seen as a modern Canterbury pilgrimage after Chaucer. The four characters in this novel make a journey from London to the Kentish coast to scatter the ashes of their recently deceased friend. The journey is very rich in its meanings. It is not only a physical journey from south London to Kent, but also a psychological (a journey of memories) and spiritual journey (a journey of soul-searching). Shaken by loss and frustration, these characters implicitly seek growth, faith and life meaning through the journey, just as Chaucer's pilgrims long to find regeneration for their souls by journeying to Canterbury Cathedral.

Chapter Two explores how Swift's fiction makes intertextual reference to text embedded inside the novel. In *Ever After*, the narrator, Bill Unwin constantly refers to his Victorian forefather Matthew Pierce's notebooks. In *Shuttlecock*, the narrator Prentis makes a bountiful intertextual reference to his father's war memoirs entitled "*Shuttlecock: The Story of a Secret Agent*." These two novels present a special case of intertextuality. In *Ever After*, Bill's narrative intertextually refers to Matthew's notebooks not in the ordinary sense. Rather, Bill recreates a new text based on Matthew's original text. His interpretation of Matthew's text is prominently characterized by the elements of the imaginative invention. Bill is uncertain of his own validity and tortured by the disconnections he feels from his familial continuum. Through reconstructing Matthew's past, Bill finally successfully bridges the void between the past and the present and comes to terms with his present life. *Shuttlecock* plays with the idea of the narrative within the narrative. The framing narrative is made by Prentis, and the embedded narrative is made by Prentis' father, a British war hero. Prentis keeps living in the shadow of his father's glorious past. In order to get rid of the pressure given to him by his father and satisfy his own power desire, he starts to rewrite his father's memoirs by guiding readers to believe that his father is a traitor rather than a hero. The strategies Prentis adopts to get his purpose is "mise-en-abyme" and "Gaps" in Narration. "Mise-en-abyme," as a prominent postmodernist device, is an embedded narrative that reflects the framing narrative with the purpose to rob events of their solidity. "Gaps," a term coined by Wolfgang Iser, refer to the places where information is not given completely

and fully.

Chapter Three makes a study on how Swift's fiction makes intertextual reference to different genres. These genres include detective fiction in *Shuttlecock*, romance in *Ever After* and story in *Waterland*. In *Shuttlecock*, Prentis' narrative contains a lot of detective elements. Through intertextual reference to detective fiction, *Shuttlecock* shows us both epistemological crisis and ontological construction of historical past events. Swift manifests the provisional, indeterminate and constructive nature of historical narratives. The boundary between reality and narrative, between fact and fiction, and between story and history is totally blurred. In *Ever After*, there is a lot of intertextual reference to the genre of romance. The theme of romance includes death, love, repentance and resurrection. In *Ever After*, romance expresses itself mainly from the quest for love. Bill cherishes the love between himself and his wife Ruth very much and he describes in detail about their love. In addition, Bill imagines that his ancestor Matthew loves his wife Elizabeth and they have once lived happily together before the divorce. Bill believes "Love Conquers All" (*EA* 45). *Waterland* is a novel with bountiful intertextual reference to the story. There are 52 chapters in *Waterland*, half of which are narrated in the form of a story. Swift uses detective story to illustrate the reconstructing process in historiography. He uses fairy tales, superstitions and rumors to construct history, which manifests that the boundary between history and story is very fluid and both of them are creative and constructive results. Meanwhile, Swift shows us how storytelling helps people to ward off the "nothingness" of reality and give order and meaning to people's

lives. He implies that for stories, what matters is not their truthfulness or plausibility, but their performative effect in people's lives. The story is not a means to make present a reality or a history, but a means to help people to be able to make unbearable situations tolerable. That is, we can not live without narratives.

Chapter Four expounds on how Swift's fiction makes intertextual reference to photograph. In *Out of This World*, the intertextual reference to photography is remarkable. This novel reflects Swift's post-modernist exploration of the paradoxical relationship between reality and its representation, with photographs as its focus. Harry Beech, the main narrator, provides the reader with a lot of descriptions of photographic images. He also provides the reader with a good deal of meditations on the essence of the photograph. There is no simple shift from narrative to the image, but the relationship between narrative and photograph is examined implicitly — Harry's photographs are entirely represented in the narrative itself — and explicitly, in Harry's own metafictional reflections. Swift suggests that photograph simultaneously represents and distorts reality. Based on Baudrillard's simulacra theory, this chapter analyzes how Swift takes advantage of the photograph to manifest the impossibility of the truthful representation of the past. Baudrillard argues that "simulation" disconnects the relationship between image and historical reference; "simulated" history is "a real without origin or reality" (*Simulations* 2). During the process of infinite reproducing and copying, the boundary between the truthful and the fictional, the original and the imaginary, has been completely dissolved. Hence people live in a "floating chain of significance" (qtd.

in Halley 69). In addition, this novel manifests that photographing can not only help people to ward off the sense of illusion, but also help people to fight against the sense of horror induced by the brutal events.

Chapter Five delves into how Swift's fiction makes intertextual reference to history, taking *Waterland* as the example. The word "history" can be understood in two related but distinct aspects: the real things that had happened in the past; the narrative or presentation of the past. That is, we can regard history from both ontological and epistemological aspects. In this chapter's discussion, history means both a reference to the real past world, and a text or discursive construct. As far as the intertextual reference to history is concerned, Linda Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction serves as the best theoretical basis. Hutcheon coined the term "historiographic metafiction" to refer to "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages" (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* 5). Firstly, this chapter explains how Swift uses real past events as intertexts. Through the narrator Tom's narratives, we can see not only his personal and family history, but also the national history of England the world-wide history. The history he narrates consists of the Dutch wars, the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions, the French Revolution, World War One and World War Two, and the growth of the British Empire, etc. Secondly, this chapter explores how Swift uses history artificially constructed as the intertext. Swift highlights the process of recreating the past by language. This novel challenges the traditional opinion that language is transparent and trustworthy, that the word is the direct and accurate

means to the thing it represents. It suggests that language is highly subjective, contingent and biased. Genre mixture is another technique to show that history is an artificial construction. These genres consist of historiography, natural history, autobiography, psychological novels, initiation, murder mystery (with strong Gothic elements in it), fairy tales, geographical description, encyclopedia entries, newspaper reports, love stories, journals, etc. Moreover, Swift adopts a special writing skill to show what history itself cannot show — circular narration. Tom's choice of language and form is responsible for the circularity in a way that the events themselves could not be. Thirdly, this chapter analyzes the dichotomy between history as past action and history as narrative. Linda Hutcheon describes the postmodern as the "contradictory phenomenon that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges..." ("Beginning to Theorize Postmodernism" 10). Swift's attitude towards the opposition between narratives and actions is just in line with Hutcheon's opinion. Swift sets up the dichotomy and then subverts it, which manifests that narrative and actions are mutually dependent on one another. History as narrative depends on actions having taken place. It is equally true that the actions that have taken place in the past depend on a narrative of it.

The conclusion gives a summary of Swift's intertextuality and highlights the significance of this study. The functions of Swift's intertextuality are multiple. Firstly, by echoing the grand experiences of classical heroes and heroines, the lives of the ordinary lower-class people are endowed with certain nobility and dignity. Secondly, it suggests that there is a culture that is shared between past and present, between

the poorly educated and high art. Thirdly, it foregrounds fictionality of history. The focus of Swift's works is history and intertextuality is the main strategy to narrate history. By means of intertextuality, Swift illustrates how the narratives of the past are rewritten in the present. He suggests that for narratives, what matters is not their truthfulness or plausibility, but their performative effect in people's lives. The narrative is not a means to make present a reality or a history, but a means to help people to be able to make unbearable situations tolerable. Swift suggests that narrating the past can enrich our present lives and offer a way of coming to terms with the present and the future.



A NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

Through the dissertation, parenthetical references to Graham Swift's works use the following abbreviations:

SSO = The Sweet-Shop Owner

S = Shuttlecock

LS = Learning to Swim and Other Stories

W = Waterland

OTW = Out of This World

EA = Ever After

LO = Last Orders

LD = The Light of Day

T = Tomorrow

ME = Making an Elephant

WYWH = Wish You Were Here



CONTENTS

A Note on Abbreviations	1
Introduction	1
Chapter One Canonical Text as Intertext	23
I. <i>Ever After</i> : A Parody of <i>Hamlet</i>	25
i. Rebuilding Self-identification by Echoing Hamlet	28
ii. A Frustrated Imitation of the Tragic Hero	34
II. <i>Last Orders</i> : A Palimpsestic Refashioning of <i>The Canterbury Tales</i>	40
i. A Journey to Obtain Dignity	51
ii. A Journey to Obtain Holiness	58
iii. A Journey of Reconciliation and Redemption	65
Chapter Two Text Embedded inside the Novel as Intertext ...	71
I. Rewriting Forefather's Notebooks in <i>Ever After</i>	72
i. A Special Case of Intertextuality: Recreating the Original Text	80

Intertextualized History:
A Study of Historical Narratives in Graham Swift's Fiction

ii. Epistemological Crisis: the Common Topic for Both Texts	87
II. Reinterpreting Father's War Memoirs in <i>Shuttlecock</i>	100
i. Unreliable Narrators in "Mise-en-abyme"	103
ii. "Gaps" in Narration	110
iii. Fulfilling Power Desire through Intertextual Reference to Father's War Memoirs	117
Chapter Three Genre as Intertext	129
I. Detective Fiction in <i>Shuttlecock</i>	130
i. Elusive Mystery: Epistemological Quest	132
ii. Fact or Fiction: Ontological Constructions of History	136
II. Romance in <i>Ever After</i>	147
i. An Illusionary World without Meaning	148
ii. "Love Conquers All"	152
III. Story in <i>Waterland</i>	162
i. The Relationship between Story and History.....	162
ii. Crime Story and Historical Construction	166
iii. Fairytales, Superstitions and Rumors and Historical Construction	172
iv. The Performative Effect of Story: Warding off "Nothing- ness" and Creating Meaning	184
Chapter Four Photograph as Intertext in <i>Out of This World</i>	205
I. Paradoxical Functions of Photograph	206

i. Photograph Recording History	208
ii. Photograph Distorting History	210
II. “Simulated” History in Photograph.....	213
i. Baudrillard’s Simulacra Theory	214
ii. Photograph as “a shadow, an echo, a model of itself”	216
iii. Photograph “Conferred” History	218
III. Photography as a Way of Fighting against Illusion and Horror	
.....	222
i. Fighting against Illusion	222
ii. Fighting against Horror	225
Chapter Five History as Intertext: Historiographic Metafiction in	
<i>Waterland</i>	229
I. History as the Real Past Event	234
i. Family History of the Cricks and Atkinsons	235
ii. Extensive Reference to Wars	238
II. History as an Artificial Construction	245
i. History as a Linguistic Construction	246
ii. Mixed Genres Constructing History	251
iii. Circular Narration Reflecting the Cyclical Nature of	
History	257
III. History as Past Action vs History as Narrative	270
i. The Reversion of Story-telling and World-making ...	270
ii. Narrative Making Things Happen	275

Intertextualized History:
A Study of Historical Narratives in Graham Swift's Fiction

Conclusion	287
Works Cited	295
Acknowledgements	309