

## **Introduction: Re-Writing History**

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Writing is always Re-Writing. We may describe the whole process as a Lacanian “loop,” a Nietzschean or Foucaultian genealogical abyss, a Derridean *différance*, a labyrinth of rhizomes. The spiral, or the vortex replace the straight line on the book, the phantasm replaces the sign itself, plot follows the patterns of chaos. The texts we read are warped by intertextuality and metafiction in a paranoid succession of anamorphoses.

The question goes further than merely thinking about each act of reading as an individual interpretive response to a text; further than considering the text as one, and its readings as many. That is, and is not the question. The text has ceased to be sacred, and in some sense, it has even ceased to exist as “the” text. It has ceased to be the target of exegetical quests, the forever absent grail of Arthurian criticism. It is not the grail, but its quest what makes the hero. The text is always—though never completely—the very quest of the text, with absence implied. However, this is not to mean that the text answers to the reader’s quest in the fashion of heroic tradition—though it does, as could not be otherwise. The text is being written through its quest, but is never completely “The Text” that devours writing.

We may consider reading as re-writing, but we would still be speaking of reading. The writing of a text is also the quest of the text, and the quest of writing itself. However, no quest is just a quest, but many quests at the same time. The quest for a text that is to be written, or that is being written during the process of its quest is the quest of all previous and later writing. It is writing the text what is re-writing, the text is always (an)other text(s), mirroring other texts and writings, text and writing mirroring each other too.

Writing a text is always reading previous texts, and reading is always re-writing. Therefore, when we write, we re-write both the texts we read and write. Reading and writing history must thus be re-writing history. However, to re-write history does not mean to make history, but to re-make, re-cycle it. From this perspective, history has always been previously written, and is always re-written when reading and writing it. This forever unfinished character of history locates history as such in a future to come. History is also what is to be written. Every act of writing, like every historical fact, is an act of remembrance; a journey back in time whose future horizon is a regression to its past origin. Thus, writing history can be considered both as a future remembrance, or a prediction of the past. The temporal movement of all historical writing has a double direction at the same time. It is not like two opposite narrative vectors meeting at one point. This double narrative direction is more like a line that is (must be) already drawn. The writing of history flows along that line in both past and future directions. Nevertheless, whether as an act of remembrance, or as foretelling, history is in fact, time present.

History cannot escape language, just the same as language cannot escape history, since telling is telling something, and something is not—for us?—until it is told. History-as-language replaces the fiction of fact, and redefines fact as fiction, or—at least—as a reflection of the fiction of fact. History as the simulacra of fact; fact as the conceptual product of its own simulacra. Whence comes the right to re-write (to re-right)? Or, in other words; whence comes the (re-)writing of right? The right to write (right?) history has its source of authority in the very act of writing itself. Writing history is an act of appropriation of right whose imperative violence is lessened by the linguistic agreement implied in every communicative act. History is always the writing of history. It is the present telling what was and will be told, but it is never The History out of time that annuls both time and history-as-telling. Like

all telling, history is already a repetition, an(other) image of history, a re-telling and a re-writing of (the virtual) fact, a (the) medium for human interaction with facts.

However, there is still another practice of re-writing history; the practice of telling re-writing. New narratives appear that do not only re-write as reading, remembering and foretelling. These new narratives are not only the present quest that continuously re-writes history; they give the screw one more turn and in telling history, they question and re-define both history and The History. Such narratives, inscribed as they are within what we might call the “non-Arthurian” critical frames, need a different approach that can describe their descriptions. They move along the unstable—yet never more accurate—re-writing of historical uncertainty. This number of AMERICAN@ looks at such practices, and the practice of critically re-writing them.