

Introduction for *Reinvention* Special Issue 'Reeling and Writhing'

A dialogue between the students and tutor, and the reader

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Alba: Hello, how are you? I know this is probably not how you were expecting this introduction to start, but I thought it would be a good idea to let you know about this special issue. This won't be a typical issue; in between the carefully researched, meticulously written, calculated articles, there will be poetry, which tends to break the rules. However, it is precisely this combination that will make this issue memorable, so there's no need to proceed with caution; just let it wash over you and accept the voices that colour the papers. Some of these voices are very old, some are Greek, some are Saxon, some seem to be blasphemous. Please listen to them regardless; they have travelled a long way to get here, and gone through many forms and accents and they have been assembled carefully.

Giulia: This special issue was inspired by and compiled from the Warwick Writing Programme (WWP) module 'CW310 Reeling & Writhing: Poetry & Intertextuality for Advanced Studies' created by Professor Michael Hulse, who retired in December 2020. Professor Hulse, along with the whole WWP staff – Professor Ian Samson, Dr Chantal Wright, Dr Gonzalo C. Garcia, Dr Tim Leach, Professor David Morley, Professor Maureen Freely and Dr Lucy Brydon – offer to students an exciting and innovative list of modules that allow their creative and intellectual talents to flourish and develop. (Want to see this exceptional course list? Click [here](#)). In addition to being inspiring educators, they are also kind and supportive colleagues to whom I am extremely grateful for a year of collegiality and of learning about pedagogical practices. And let's not forget the doctoral students whose tutor work in the department only strengthen it. I have only had the pleasure to meet and collaborate with three of them during the 2020–21 academic year, but I know the WWP would not be the same without all of them; thank you Arianna Autieri, Lúcia Collischonn de Abreu and Johnny Lynas.

Alba: This module is very much like what the above introduction promises, and was one of the most interesting classes I took as part of my undergraduate degree. It was a combination of theory and practice that made every class exciting and challenging – two words that apply to the entirety of the WWP. I loved to learn about myths and retellings, as well as being given the chance to explore characters through my own poetry and that of my peers. But more than anything, it was fascinating to see how a lot of the concepts we explored in class still echo today.

Giulia: As one of my most favourite modules that I have ever had the pleasure of teaching, ‘Reeling and Writhing’'s focus on adaptation engaged with my interest in post-colonial and decolonial rewriting of canonical literatures. However, what made this class and experience most memorable were the brilliant, beautiful, witty, moving and powerful pieces of work created by the students weekly, and I am extremely thrilled that *Reinvention* is giving us a chance to share some of their outstanding work – both their research and creative productions – through this special issue. This special issue, as was the module, is a space of polyphony and inclusion; similarly, we hope to provide an introduction to this issue that allows multiple voices to share their experience, but also to share where they are now, nearly a year after some of them brilliantly completed their BA. I might have been the tutor, but I am the one who was doing most of the learning that year. Thank you all for your intellectual and creative generosity throughout the six months we spent together.

Alba: I am currently studying a Publishing MA at the University of the Arts London, and continue to read and write poetry. I keep in mind what my years at Warwick taught me, striving to grow as an author without losing those ancient whispers, and hoping to see more of my work published.

Italo: [In reference to this module] the only quote that I can think of is this one by T. S. Eliot: ‘Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different.’

Estelle: One of the first pieces of advice we often get as aspiring writers is to make sure to read as much as possible – perhaps even to read more than we actually write. A huge part of the writing process, we are told, is taking inspiration from the world, our experiences and other works of writing. We

borrow techniques that we enjoy reading and incorporate them in our own styles. This is true, of course. Intertextuality has been practised for nearly as long as text itself has been around. Myths are often constructed on top of other stories, a web of interconnected stories using the same characters and worlds. No work is produced in a cultural vacuum; authors are constantly influenced by the writings they admire, and even the ones they despise. However, through my course, I have often found the reverse to be true as well. Not only does reading influence my writing, but the pieces that I write have often impacted my reading of particular texts. Through its focus on the relationship between poetic intertextuality and literary analysis, the 'Reeling and Writhing' module has been especially insightful in this area.

As I wrote my own take on the Virgin Mary, on Pygmalion, on the Creation myth, I reshaped my own perception of the original texts, which made me consider new and perhaps more interesting perspectives in my interpretation. The poetic medium is a particularly personal one, where it is often expected for an author to construct a close emotional connection not only with the reader but also with the topic addressed by the poem. Thus, the poem recontextualises a text on a level that 'classical' academic analysis does not always achieve. It builds emotional attachment and connection through sensory appeal – through carefully crafted connotations, through a practical experience of a text, rather than through theoretical debate. Poetry and creative writing complete literary analysis to enrich the reading of a work whose long history within a framework of creative processes often takes on a new depth in the writer's mind.

Giulia: We are so grateful that you have picked up this special issue of *Reinvention* and would like to acknowledge and thank from the bottom of our hearts the amazing and hardworking editorial team of *Reinvention*; this issue would not exist without them – especially Shreya Sridharan and Mara Caldarini. Thank you for your insightful comments, your kindness and your patience. Nor would this special issue exist without the precious help of the anonymous academics around the globe who generously helped us by peer-reviewing each research article and taking time out of their busy schedule to support all the authors in developing their work and strengthening it. Finally, all our thanks to Dr Ian Sansom, the director of the WWP, for your constant support and kindness towards staff and students alike.

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