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were more concerned with lending the work a new, contemporary set of meanings, if necessary by deliberately 'misreading' it. (For certain critics, in particular, the American Harold Bloom, all readings of literary texts are 'misreadings'; other, DECONSTRUCTIVE, critics, having rejected the notion of a 'correct' reading, deny the distinction between 'true' and 'false' readings.)

Refunctioning, then, is a deliberate using or appropriation of an artefact. But it would insist, against those who would regard this as scandalous or unethical, that all criticism is, inescapably, a form of use of the text: there is in this sense no disinterested criticism. The difference is between those schools of criticism which frankly admit that they are using the work – often for political ends – and those which do not. The criticism of Coleridge or T. S. Eliot would in this view be quite as 'ideological', and ultimately political, as that of a Marxist writer; it is just that the latter makes his or her position plain.

An example of refunctioning would be Brecht's attempt to produce Shakespeare's politically conservative *Coriolanus* for socialist audiences and socialist political ends. Such an attempt, of course, may fail: it may be that changed historical conditions result in people's ceasing to extract any significant meaning from a work of the past, even a highly valued one. (It may also be that if we discovered more about the original meanings of certain past works – say, Greek tragedy – we might cease to value them as highly as we do.) If, on account of a deep historical transformation, people ceased to find relevance in the works of Shakespeare, it would be interesting to ask in what sense, if any, those works were still 'valuable'.

See T. Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin, or Towards a Revolutionary criticism* (1981); P. Widdowson (ed.), *Re-Reading*

English (1982); J. Willett (ed.), *Brecht on Theatre* (1964), *The New Sobriety: Art and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (1978).

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Representation See DECONSTRUCTION, DRAMA, IMITATION, REALISM, TYPICALITY.

Response See EFFECT, READER.

Revisionary writing Draws together theoretical developments in the fields of sociology and cultural studies but particularly, historiography and postmodernist literary criticism. Commencing from the post-structuralist recognition that all acts of communicative interchange involve a speaker, a hearer and a message, that each participant transmits or receives from a position of ideological partiality and that the message is equally contained by the ideological framework of discourse, revisionary critics (and writers) seek the tensions and discontinuities in this clashing of world views. Working with the concept of HEGEMONY, as formulated by Antonio Gramsci, these critics examine the textual products of a given society for the ways in which the political and cultural assumptions that those texts make about their society reflect (or possibly resist) the dominant forces that give shape to the experience of living. Because the hegemonic network of power relations that operates in any given society through the auspices of culture necessarily privileges voices that reinforce the stability of the ruling elite and maintain the political status quo, so certain subaltern voices are marginalized. Post-structuralism's attention to discursive practices of unconscious empowerment and post-modernism's interest in the contestation of totalizing ideas of truth enables critics to imagine other possible world formations by highlighting the narratives of the repressed communities.

Revisionary writing, or Revisionism as it is sometimes termed in academic circles, gained significant popularity during the 1970s and 1980s in the field of historiography. The work of Stephen Greenblatt, Louis Mink and, in particular, Hayden White, explores the structural and ideological parameters of historical writing to destabilize the claims to privileged status that the discipline has enjoyed since the mid-eighteenth century. White, in his celebrated books *Metahistory* (1973) and *Tropics of Discourse* (1978), studied the ways in which historiographical writing tended to mimic literary forms and tropes as rhetorical means for establishing a persuasive case for a specific reading of historical events. By employing the frameworks of fiction in the representation of supposedly 'truthful' and factual incidents, historians create, so White argued, certain well-defined and recognizable trajectories that may enable a satisfying narrative of cause and effect, but that indicate the containment of history within certain political, ethical and ideological boundaries. History's claim to 'truth-telling' was seriously undermined by the New Historicist movement (as it became known) and though extreme diagnoses that 'history is fiction' have been gradually tempered over time, the impact of the metahistorical turn has been significant far beyond the field of historiography.

If History, or for that matter Literature, is an ideological state apparatus designed to promote and preserve a particular hegemonic balance, then counter-histories resist the consensual imperative of that hegemony by demanding acknowledgement of their validity. This has been seen most strikingly in the field of literary studies where the traditional canon of English Literature (established in the early part of the twentieth century and heavily influenced by F. R. Leavis's notion of the

'Great Tradition') has had to be rethought in order to accommodate the claims of those previously excluded. Feminist, queer and postcolonial writing has sought the revision of the concept of Literature by revealing the exclusionary politics of a canon that tended to be built around dead, white, European men. Writers, such as J. M. Coetzee, have taken their own transgressive stance by literally revisioning classic texts: in *Foe* (1986) he takes an icon of protestant bourgeois culture, *Robinson Crusoe* (1720), and rewrites it from the perspective of a woman. In Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) and Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* (1985) the fairy story is disarticulated to reveal the implicit sexism and disempowerment of women that the form enshrines. Such revisions expose the inherent assumptions of a particular kind of text, but for some critics the indoctrinating impact of ideology manifests itself at the level of the word that needs to be depoliticized before a literature of genuine self-expression can be conceived. In the popular imagination, this sensitivity is often derided as political correctness but the repositioning of a grammatical imbalance is an important facet in an inclusive revisioning of power relations between individuals, groups and global communities.

Also of importance is Adrienne Rich's essay, 'When we dead awaken: writing as re-vision', where Rich argues that 'Revision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival... how our language has trapped as well as liberated us, how the very act of naming has been till now a male prerogative'. See also POSTMODERNISM and POST-STRUCTURALISM.