The Intimacy of Influence. Narrative and Theoretical fictions in the works of George Eliot, Virginia Woolf and Jeanette Winterson

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I am afraid that the anxiety of influence, from which we all suffer, whether we are poets or not, has to be located first in its origins, in the fateful morasses of what Freud, with grandly desperate wit, called the “family romance” (Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, 1973: 56-57)

Indeed, the whole progress of society rests upon the opposition between successive generations (Sigmund Freud, “Family Romances” 1909; SE IX: 237).

But whatever effect discouragement and criticism had upon their writing - and I believe they had a very great effect - that was unimportant compared with the other difficulty which faced them ... when they came to set their thoughts on paper - that is that they had no tradition behind them, or one so short and partial that it was of little help. For we think back through our mothers if we are women (Virginia Woolf, A Room of One’s Own, 1929; 1983: 72-73, emphasis added).

We are born with the dead; See, they return, and bring us with them (T.S. Eliot, The Four Quartets 1944; 1986: 47).