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Rewriting, Scale Shifting and the Worlding of the Novel”

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Rewriting previously canonized works is an increasingly widespread (and award – winning) narrative strategy among novels of global circulation. Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire* (2017), Salman Rushdie’s *Quichotte* (2019), or Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *The Perfect Nine* (2020) are but a few examples of this tendency that has become a trend and arguably a trait of the global novel. Combining formal analysis with attention to the mechanisms of scale shifting in the literary market, this paper addresses the booming production of contemporary rewritings as formal devices with the potential to rescale literary works as world literature. The paper develops the notion of rewriting as networks of transhistorical and transcultural significance that produce lines of continuity and rupture in time and space. Rewriting a text from the past, transforming it, implies the encounter in the present between works and readers situated in disparate contexts. An encounter full of tensions and anxieties of all kinds: of influence, of dissent, of appropriation, of falsification. Through the analysis of a selected corpus of novels, we will see how the act of rewriting, often announced from the title or other paratextual elements (cover, flaps, epigraphs, interviews, reviews), is substantiated in a recurrent series of narrative strategies: the recovery of minority plots and characters, the change of narrative point of view, temporal and geographical displacements, adaptation of themes and motifs, recourse to metafiction. It is therefore generated at the level of form, but it is also a mechanism that helps literary works to shift scales and attain a wider readership, thus compelling us to attend to the patterns of circulation and consecration through which these rewritings travel and acquire new value.