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## CONTENTS

### ARTICLES


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Züleyha Çetiner-Öktem | 1 | Chaucer's Mythic Men in *The Legend of Good Women* |
| Rachel Edford | 13 | Testimony, Objectivism, and Poetic Form in Charles Reznikoff's *Holocaust* |
| Seçil Erkoç | 27 | Transformation from Madness to Rehabilitation in Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain: The Knight of the Lion* |
| Kübra Kangüleç Coşkun | 37 | Enchanting Histories of the Empires in Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* |
| Ansı Sev Ateş | 47 | A Utopian Decay: Oscar Wilde, Art and Utopia |
| Ng Lay Sion | 61 | Toward the Mastery of Submission: Robert Cohn's Problem with Masochism in *The Sun Also Rises* |
| Margaret J-M Sönmez | 73 | Walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death: Pip's Comfortless Progress through a Decaying World in *Great Expectations* |
| Kun Xi | 87 | Picturing an Aesthetic and Homoerotic Space: Harold Acton's Travel Writing of China in the 1930s |
| Victoria Bilge Yılmaz | 95 | Bakhtin's Notion of Decrowning in Virginia Woolf's *Flush* |
| | | **REVIEWS** |
| Antonio Sanna | 105 | *Star Trek: Into Darkness*, A Remake with Contemporary Concerns (and Faults) |
| Salwa Tariq Fizee | 113 | Gillian M. E. Alban *The Medusa Gaze in Contemporary Women's Fiction: Petrifying, Maternal and Redemptive* |
| | 117 | **CONTRIBUTORS** |

*In Loving Memory of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Laurence Raw*
(1959 – 2018)

*In gratitude for his enthusiastic support and valuable contributions to our journal*

**Chaucer's Mythic Men in the *Legend of Good Women*[1]**

**Züleyha Çetiner-Öktem**

**Abstract:** Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* introduces a dialogic relationship between the poet's memory and cultural memory where mythic narratives are restructured and adapted to suit a fourteenth-century English society. In the *Legend of Good Women* there is a sense of deliberate forgetting where Chaucer seems to be distancing himself from the current state of affairs by gazing into a mythic past in order to formulate a sense of unity in the present. Using the dream vision as a framing device, Chaucer relates nine independent Greco-Roman stories of how "good" women are betrayed by "false" men. This article offers a mythocultural reading of Chaucer's text by focussing on how the images of men are related in these stories that are supposedly about women and argues that the narrative offers renewed images of men and masculinities diverging from previously established constructs and portraying them not as virtuous heroes but simply as men.

**Keywords:** Medieval Literature, Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*, dream vision, myths, memory, men, masculinity

The *Legend of Good Women*, gathering its material from ancient Greco-Roman narratives, constructs a bridge between a mythic past and the poet's present memory. In doing so, Chaucer is able to utilise a mythic template to freely explore his comprehension of the male body along with the features that define manhood. According to Blustein, even though the memory of the collective preserves and transmits knowledge of the past, collective memory also functions as an element that binds community members, inspiring collective action, and encoding the values that give meaning to its collective pursuits similar to the functions usually associated with myth (181). I argue that mythic narratives, in this sense, become templates where the referent images constitute meaning for the collective and by using these images embedded within the collective, the poet is able to reconstruct and revise their meaning. The *Legend of Good Women*, therefore, may be seen as a work constructed on the *loci* of the heathen landscapes of antiquity where images of men display signs of weakness, humbleness and passivity as established in the late medieval perception of manhood coloured by Christianity. Chaucer's use of ancient landscapes as sites of remembrance re-inform cultural memory and in return these *loci* become invested with new masculine imprints as previously idealised images of virile and virtuous men are re-membered and re-created. Yet, why does Chaucer return to a mythic past?

In her seminal work, *The Mythographic Chaucer*, Jane Chance considers the mythological references, images and characters in Chaucer's poetry from within the medieval mythographic tradition with the aim of elucidating the truths enshrouded within the text, possibly for various literary, social, or political reasons. Chance points out that medieval mythographers are generally known for their inclination to moralise and allegorise, whereas Chaucer "often inverts typically allegorical signification for psychological or political and ironic purposes in developing characterization. In doing so,

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[1] This article is a revised subchapter from my PhD dissertation "Memory, Men and Chaucer" (Ege University, 2013).

he rewrites—vernacularizes—the Latin and patristic tradition from an English and medieval perspective: his is an antimythography" (xx). Within Chaucer's "antimythography", then, we see how "he will often deliberately conjure up an ambiguous range of readings, some *in bono*, some *in malo*, to enrich his poetry" (Chance xxi). The classical divinities and heroes found in Chaucer's poems "reveal feminizing and subversive attitudes not readily apparent on the surface because he appropriates the essentially patriarchal discourse of medieval exegesis for ironic (or even antiphrastic) use" (Chance xxiv). This is why, argues Chance, "so many of the myths involve, center on, elaborate female figures and characters" (xxiv). Amongst such a fertile feminine milieu, it becomes almost impossible to identify the male image. One way of doing so would be through the feminine gaze and another way of comprehending the male body would be through comparison, through references made regarding other mythic and legendary male bodies.

The *Legend of Good Women*, according to Williams, may be considered "as a Janus face. The *Prologue* looks back at the three visions that preceded it, and the nine stories of the 'good women' that follow it anticipate the *Canterbury Tales*, a collection of stories that are distinct yet linked" (172-73). Regarded as a prototype for the *Canterbury Tales*, the *Legend* also commences with a prologue acting as the general introduction to the matter and theme of the poem from whence the narrative moves forward to portray the various legends of "good" women. Williams suggests that the seed for the *Legend* was probably planted during the compiling of ill-fated lovers in the Temple of Venus in the *Parliament of Fowls*. The common denominator of these tales is "women who are unlucky in love".

> Dido, for example, appears in the *Parliament of Fowls* as one of the unhappy lovers painted on the walls of the Temple of Venus, and in the *Book of the Duchess* in the Dreamer's catalogue of women who have died for love. She provides an important example, in the *House of Fame*, of multiple, conflicting interpretations of the same event. Yet in the *Legend of Good Women*, her story gets the full treatment. We have seen how interpretations of Dido's story shift according to the agenda of the author, and the *House of Fame* highlighted the fluidity of reputation and the contingency of historical narrative. Whereas Dido is a negative example in the *Parliament of Fowls* and the *Book of the Duchess*, in the *Legend of Good Women*, she is a paragon of loyalty and virtue. (Williams 173)

It seems Chaucer has solved the dilemma of treacherous Fama and her duality embodied in Fame and Rumour in the *House of Fame*. As the question of rumour and fame—falsehood and truth—is raised, the authoritative power wielded by books and the perspectival truths they convey within cultural memory become one of Chaucer's longstanding preoccupations. Books, says Chaucer, are where we find

> Thurgh whiche that olde thinges ben in mynde,
> And to the doctrine of these olde wyse,
> Yeve credence, in every skylful wise,
> That tellen of these olde appreved stories
> Of holynesse, of regnes, of victories,
> Of love, of hate, of other sondry thynges,
> Of whiche I may not maken rehersynges.
> And yf that olde bokes were aweye,
> Yloren were of remembraunce the keye.
> Wel ought us thane honouren and believe

> These bokes, there we han noon other preve. (18-28)[2]

Consequently, the written word in the form of old stories bound in books serve as keys to remembrance as they operate as archival platforms wherein a wide range of human experience is stored. Building on time-honoured tradition and "olde appreved stories" (21), Chaucer's "agenda" has shifted once again to the theme of love with the focal point on the female condition. With the transformation of Dido in his own poetry, as Williams remarked earlier, Chaucer has come to realise during his mature years as an established poet that as much as poetry is informed through cultural memory, poetical expressions also have the ability to re-inform cultural memory.

The *Legend of Good Women* accordingly inverts mythocultural memory as it transports classical myths to Chaucer's own time. In this sense, the *Prologue* of the *Legend* establishes a bridge between the classical past and Chaucer's present. Unlike the *Anelida* and *Troilus* poems, the *Legend of Good Women* merges Greco-Roman myths with Christian mythology as the stories of women of the classical period are extrapolated in the form of saint's lives.[3] However, as much as the suffering of saints was comprehensible in Chaucer's Christian world, the suffering and pathos expressed with these mythical women remain ambivalent as their pain is derived from temporal love and not from love eternal; their love refers to the earthly love of mortal men and not to that of the divine. Their suffering also remains earthly rather than spiritual. Although the legends "follow an established literary genre, that of the catalogue of holy or virtuous women", notes Saunders, "their subject is as much literary interpretation as the defence of women" (61).

> We are made constantly aware of Chaucer interpreting and rewriting his sources, sometimes seriously, sometimes subversively, so that we are never quite sure of the status of the legends. Do they defend or condemn the passive, virtuous women they claim to celebrate? Are they comic in their concealment of negative details, and their frequent ellipses? Or is their pathos genuine, their adaptations suggestive of the possibilities of writing the female voice? The work moves between high seriousness and comedy, cliché and intense emotion, convention and originality. Its uncertain status has perhaps inspired more critical debate than any other work—but also less critical writing, for until recent feminist interest, the *Legend* was often considered dull and impossible to place. (Saunders 61)

Due to this rise in interest, the *Legend of Good Women* has indeed proven to be a rich poetic landscape where medieval feminist scholars have indulged themselves in questioning whether Chaucer was a protofeminist or a misogynist. Sheila Delany, for example, argues that "Chaucer both 'is and is not' the friend of woman" (83), to the extent that late medieval culture would allow him to be: for even though women were socially integrated into the labour force they were nevertheless excluded from significant social arenas such as universities and priesthood, thus Delany argues that Chaucer's ambivalence reflects this structural feature of late-medieval culture (83-4). Likewise, Catherine Cox

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[2] All citations of Chaucer's poetry are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson, 3rd edition, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988, and will be identified parenthetically by line numbers within the text. Quotations regarding the *Legend of Good Women* are from the F Prologue unless otherwise noted in parenthetical citations.

[3] For a detailed analysis of how Chaucer meshes hagiography and classical literature in the *Legend of Good Women* see Kiser, *Telling Classical Tales: Chaucer and the "Legend of Good Women"*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1983.

poses the question of why Chaucer, “the ‘humanist’ and ‘women’s friend,’ so frequently casts women in the role of victim”, (53) to which she answers similar to Delany that “Chaucer’s work is the product of a social system inextricably bound to institutionalized gender bias, suffering is an integral part of Chaucer’s concern with gender, and it is situated in relation to convention” (54). Here the victimization and consequent suffering of the female in semblance with martyrdom is aligned with the victimizing male. As much as the women in the *Legend* portray various forms of piety and submissiveness in line with the late-medieval notion of “good” women, the “false” men are also pacified. Carolyn Dinshaw, for example, sees the *Legend of Good Women* as an antifeminist work that “not only silences women and constrains the letter but makes every man in the text unspeakable and, at last, unspeaking” (72); while Louise Fradenburg poetically points out that “the legends’ repetitively failed unions, their ceaseless slippage from truth to treachery; despite the cradling framework of the ‘good’ women’s constancy, of the object’s phantasmatic capacity to endure, the wind of faction and betrayal blows throughout” (145). “In the *Legend of Good Women*”, writes Jill Mann, “there are no warnings against generalizing about a whole sex on the basis of an individual case; on the contrary, the falsehood and treachery of men is reiterated with a vigorous monotony that fully matches the unrelenting misogyny conventional in so much medieval literature” (26). Continuing this line of thought, Boffey and Edwards point out that “the succession of legends contrives steadily to intensify the blackening of men and to draw them together more deliberately into an indivisible body of wrongdoers” (120). Yet, there is a seemingly tangible reason behind purposefully demeaning these images of men belonging to an earlier heroic age.

Under the carapace of the woman condition, the *Legend of Good Women* not only offers a platform where Chaucer employs poetical expression as an implement that has the potential to rewrite, or reformulate, former means of cultural retention by inverting mythocultural memory but also constitutes a desire to escape from authority. And he does so by undermining earlier constructs of the male image and its referents. In *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, Lee Patterson points out that this poem “registers Chaucer’s desire to escape from subjection to a court, and to aristocratic values generally, that are felt as increasingly tyrannical” (237). In this respect, the diminished men in this poetic narrative may be regarded as a reflection of an uprising against a dominant masculine culture where, in the poetical context, Chaucer transfers authoritative power to the female. Moreover, the authority of the written word, in this case history, is established and promptly dispersed as Chaucer rewrites the “olde appreved stories” (21) that served as keys of remembrance and offers a new perspective as he deconstructs the past to accord with his present.

Having abandoned books in exchange for a “holyday” (35), preferring the flower over the leaf (188-96), Chaucer’s persona revels in daisy worship which Patterson considers to be “an act of instinctive poeticizing” (237). Turning towards nature embodied in the flower, the leaves of books representing the authority of the literary tradition is set aside; thus, the heliotropism of the daisy reflected in the narrator bears the representation of “an instinctive, unmediated, almost prelapsarian affinity between man and the natural world” (Patterson 238). Chaucer is able to celebrate his independence only until he enters the dream-world where he boldly engages in an active debate with the God of Love who accuses Chaucer of having committed serious crimes against love. According to Patterson, “[t]he heliotropic calling of daisy to sun that [Chaucer] celebrated while awake is now refigured as the sovereignty of the tyrannical God of Love over his sacrificial consort Alceste. What was before an instinctive symbiosis here becomes hierarchy” (238). So, to atone for his offences, the poet at the behest of Alceste is condemned to return to the

written word and "olde auctours" (575) for sources concerning "goode" women.[4] From this perspective, it is possible to read Chaucer as unable to break away from the hierarchical ordering of things.

Although the *Prologue* of the *Legend of Good Women* subtitled "The Seintes Legende of Cupide" attempts to collate a pantheon of classical heroines under the façade of saints, it also simultaneously protrudes to emphasise the unworthiness of the prominent men pertaining to the classical period: thus, the more the female is venerated, the more the male becomes generatively degraded. Where the *Prologue* acts as a retainer, reeling in the poet from heliotropism, the legends themselves offer a space where Chaucer is able to exact his revenge, as Patterson notes,

> [i]n the event he enacts his revenge upon authority in a number of ways: by radically deforming his *auctores*, by unmasking the misogynist violence that underwrites Alceste's version of feminine virtue, by simply refusing to fulfill his commission. But the form of resistance of most interest to us now is the irony with which he treats the noble cult of 'fyn lovynge': subject to the intransigent and uncomprehending demands of a *gentil* audience, the poet in turn subjects *gentillesse* itself to relentless critique. (238)

At this junction, addressing the "male condition", I would suggest that Chaucer not only critiques the conventions of *fin' amors* but also criticises the structurally adamant images of the Greco-Roman male. As most of the men depicted within the *Legend* counterbalance and accentuate the hardiness of the warrior with the *gentillesse* of the lover, the two idealised forms of the male image undergo a process of merging and inverting which depict them in a more ordinary light, with all their blemishes and characteristic flaws. However, from the point of *fin' amors*, Patterson notes that "[i]n the world of the legends *gentillesse* designates not nobility of spirit but social advantage, a superiority of place that unprincipled men use to victimize grasping women" (239). Yet, when the male body is considered as a whole, it seems that *gentillesse* is exactly what makes these men attractive to most of the female characters in the first place, at least from the perspective of a male poet. Hence, Antony, having forsaken both Rome and Octavia, is still defined as "a ful worthy gentil werreyour" (597) and it is "Thourgh his desert, and for his chyvalrye" (608) but more rather for his "gentillesse" (610) that Cleopatra is attracted to. For Antony represents the power of Rome and his image is initially painted according to his social standing.

> That out of Rome was sent a senatour
> For to conqueren regnes and honour
> Unto the toun of Rome, as was usuance,
> To han the world at hire obesaunce,
> And soth to seyne, Antonius was his name. (584-88)

[4] Here, when the last two lines of the F-Prologue and G-Prologue are considered, we have two very different interpretations. In the F-Prologue, immediately after receiving orders from Alceste, Chaucer picks up his books and begins working on the *Legend*: "And with that word my bokes gan I take, / And ryght thus on my Legende gan I make." (F 578-79); whereas in the revised G-Prologue, Chaucer first wakes from the dream and then begins writing: "And with that word, of slep I gan awake, / And ryght thus on my Legende gan I make." (G 544-45). Thus, while the F-Prologue remains a part of the dream vision, the G-Prologue is composed in waking life only inspired by the dream, making the revision closer to the *Canterbury Tales*.

This powerful Roman senator falls from Rome's grace when he falls in love with Cleopatra. Instead of conquering kingdoms to gain honour, he himself is conquered. The legend briskly runs through the love story of Cleopatra and Antony, anchoring more on the naval battle scene between Octavian's Roman forces and the lovers' Egyptian fleet. The greater detail given to this scene serves to emphasise the warrior image rather than the lover. It is against these "stoute Romeyns, crewel as lyoun" (627) that "Antony is schent and put hym to the flyghte" (652). Having been beaten and forced to flee, Antony finds the loss of his honour remedied in taking his own life as he "rof hymself anon thourghout the herte" (661). Antony, in the end, chooses to die by his own hand not for love of his lady—it would seem—but love for self and preservation of personal honour, unlike the rare breed of men such as Pyramus who being in love both "trewe and kynde" (921) would take his own life without hesitation for his lady Thisbe.

Dido, similar to Cleopatra's sentiments, sees Aeneas as "a verray gentil man" (1068). Numerous factors play into her judgement and approval of the body of Aeneas most of which are fundamentally concerned with his social standing: Aeneas is a nobleman from fallen Troy, he is a great warrior, he is semi-divine as he is the son of both immortal Venus and mortal Anchises. In contrast to Aeneas, who considers himself shamed as he gazes upon the depiction of the fall of Troy on the temple wall, Dido, through the colouring of *gentillesse*

> [...] saw the man, that he was lyk a knyght,
> And suffisaunt of persone and of myght,
> And lyk to been a verray gentil man;
> And wel his wordes he besette can,
> And hadde a noble visage for the nones,
> And formed wel of braunes and of bones.
> For after Venus hadde he swich fayrnesse
> That no man myghte be half so fayr, I gesse;
> And wel a lord he semede for to be. (1066-74)

It is to this man that Dido decides to give her heart as she words her sentiment to her sister Anne (1172-81). Aeneas, however, is a man on a divine quest, the land of Carthage being only a temporary delay. It is to his quest that he is forced to return as he tells Dido in his own words that his father's spirit bore the gods' message that he must continue on the path destiny paved for him, he must sail to Italy even though his heart breaks at the thought of leaving her (1295-1300). From this point on, Aeneas becomes one who sheds "false teres" (1301) and a "traytour" (1328) as he sails on his way to fulfil his destiny.

Another man on a quest that proves to be "false" towards his lady—or ladies in this case—is Jason. The stories of Hypsipyle and Medea are treated under the same legend as they both have Jason as the common denominator. The stories of both women are also very similar in content, which only emphasises Jason's track record of being consistent in his inconsistency towards women. The introduction to the dual legend begins with twenty-eight lines of pure poetic rampage against Jason where he is depicted as the root, the very source, of false lovers, a sly devourer of *gentil* women, a well-established liar, and a false fox (1368-95), characteristics for which he will be exposed in the English language, writes Chaucer (1382). The legend of Hypsipyle, thus begins by exposing Jason's lineage and moves on to define him as "a famous knyght of gentillesse,/Of fredom, and of strengthe and lustynesse" (1404-5) who was sent on a quest by his uncle to retrieve the legendary golden

fleece. It was on this single quest that Jason conquers Hypsipyle and Medea respectively, both women who are overcome by his *gentillesse*. Arriving first on the isle of Lemnos, Hypsipyle greets Jason and Hercules observing that they "were gentil-men of gret degre" (1504) and "worthy folk" (1518). She soon becomes enamoured with Hercules's praise of Jason as he is described by his peer to be wise, brave, trustworthy and rich (1528), but more to the point "so gret a gentilman was he,/And of Thessalye likly kyng to be" (1532-33). In short, they wed, have two children, and then Jason along with his Argonauts set sail to resume their quest for the Golden Fleece. Hypsipyle left with the fruits of their marriage sends Jason a letter wherein she threatens to kill both her children. Jason, however, has already reached the land of Colchis where he re-enacts a similar scenario with Medea who is also besotted with his man "lyk a lord, and hadde a gret renoun,/And of his lok as real as a leoun" (1604-5). Comprehending that without the aid of Medea he will never retrieve the Golden Fleece, Jason weds her "as a trewe knyght" (1636), then steals away both "prizes" and reaches Thessaly. Once Jason sets his eye on yet another advantageous prize, the daughter of King Creon, he leaves Medea and the two children she bore him.

> For as a traytour he is from hire go,
> And with hire lafte his yonge children two,
> And falsly hath betraysed hire, allas,
> As evere in love a chef traytour he was. (1656-59)

As questers, Aeneas and Jason could not have been more different considering their intent: where the former is divinely spurred forward to accomplish a great deed for the benefit of his people, the latter is stimulated by personal gain and honour. Yet, when their *gentillesse* is taken under consideration, the way they have been perceived could not have been more similar, for the women they cross paths with, according to Patterson, "are easily deceived by a man who fulfills their social expectations" (239). Thus, through the feminine gaze these men are initially evaluated according to their superiority within the social hierarchical structure and then they are appraised in accord with how such a male should conduct himself concerning the matters of the heart, a matter in which they both fail miserably.

Other male bodies that undergo similar feminine evaluation in terms of *gentillesse* are Theseus and his son Demophon. In the *Legend of Ariadne*, the imprisoned body of Theseus arouses great pity in Ariadne as he is considered to be first and foremost a "kynges sone" (1975), a "woful lordes sone" (1979), currently in a "povre estat" (1981). It is not only Theseus' current condition that moves Ariadne into helping him but the fact that he is the son of a king. Against her offer to aid Theseus, he pledges to forsake his heritage and serve her as a page even though he is "a kynges sone and ek a knyght" (2055). At this point, the poet interrupts the dialogue between Theseus and Ariadne to describe the physical traits of Theseus emphasising that he is a young and handsome knight. Ariadne, on the other hand, does not want Theseus to forsake his heritage as it is this social inheritance she holds high in esteem repeating that "A kynges sone, and ek a knyght" (2080) should not subjugate himself "To ben my servaunt in so low degre" (2081) but instead proposes that "[y]it were it betere that I were youre wyf, Syn that ye ben as gentil born as I" (2089-90). Since her sister Phaedra is also involved in aiding and abetting Theseus, Ariadne continues with her verbal contract by adding an article that would also see her sister safe: she requests that Phaedra "unto youre sone as trewely/Don hire ben wedded at youre hom-comyng" (2099-100). Only upon accepting this verbal contract will Ariadne help Theseus to overcome the Minotaur at the heart of the labyrinth as she concludes "[t]hat is the final

ende of al this thyng;/Ye swere it here, upon al that may be sworn" (2101-2). Theseus duly promises to comply with Ariadne's proposition and as she has seemingly secured a place for her sister and herself, "Now, syster myn," she whispers softly to Phaedra.

> Now be we duchesses, both I and ye,
> And sekered to the regals of Athenes,
> And bothe hereafter likly to ben quenes;
> And saved from his deth a kynges sone,
> As evere of gentil women is the wone
> To save a gentyl man, emforth hire myght,
> In honest cause, and namely in his ryght.
> Me thynketh no wight oughte us herof blame,
> Ne beren us therfore an evil name. (2126-35)

Ariadne's speech suggests the main reason for her helping this king's son and knight is the prospect of furthering her noble status. As Patterson suggests, "*gentillesse* is a claim to social superiority that tries and fails to dignify the appetite by which the inhabitants of this world are at once driven and undone" (239). It is her future expectation of being associated with the Athenian court that drives Ariadne into betraying her own people in a Medean fashion and she is also undone similar to Medea, as Theseus,

> Whan Adryane his wif aslepe was,
> For that hire syster fayrer was than she,
> He taketh hire in his hond and forth goth he
> To shipe, and as a traytour stal his wey,
> Whil that this Adryane aslepe lay,
> And to his contre-ward he sayleth blyve. (2171-76)

Turning to Demophon, son of Theseus and Phaedra, the negative impact of *gentillesse* that weaves itself throughout the narrative is highly observable. As Theseus was constantly referred to being a "kynges sone" so too is Demophon; yet the reference to Demophon's lineage is not that expectations run high of his noble conduct but rather the opposite, that he *is* his father's son as "wiked fruit cometh of a wiked tre" (2395). Sailing forth from the victory gained in Troy towards Athens, due to rough weather Demophon and his crew are forced to dock for repairs and provisions and it is where he makes his landfall that he is counselled to seek the aid of Phyllis, the queen of the land. Although Demophon bears the generative marks of *gentillesse* in terms of the warrior figure like his father, he lacks nobleness when it comes to dealing with love, also like his father:

> Men knewen hym wel and diden hym honour;
> For of Athenes duk and lord was he,
> As Theseus his fader hadde be,
> That in his tyme was of gret renoun,
> No man so gret in al the regyoun,
> And lyk his fader of face and of stature,
> And fals of love; it com hym of nature.
> As doth the fox Renard, the foxes sone,
> Of kynde he coude his olde faders wone
> Withoute lore, as can a drake swimme
> Whan it is caught and caryed to the brymme. (2441-51)

The continuous emphasis laid out in how Demophon walks in his father's footsteps does not leave much to imagination, as the expectancy that bearing so much resemblance to Theseus will eventually unfold within the narrative. Being false in love is second nature to Demophon, so when we hear that Phyllis "liketh wel his port and his manere" (2453) we are immediately reminded of Ariadne and how she was betrayed by Theseus. Perhaps even Chaucer has grown weary of the repeatedness that he decides to cut the story short and simply reminds his audience that however Theseus betrayed Ariadne, Demophon treats Phyllis in the same manner (2458-64) since "fals in love was he, ryght as his syre" (2492). The letter Phyllis sends to Demophon is conceivably better situated in enlightening Demophon's manhood from the feminine perspective wherein she writes she trusted much in his lineage and fair tongue (2525-6). So Demophon's lineage, the source of his *gentillesse*, was significant in guiding Phyllis's judgment and it is also this heritage that she curses.

> That it mot be the grettest prys of alle
> And most honour that evere the shal befalle!
> And whan thyne olde auncestres peynted be,
> In which men may here worthynesse se,
> Thanne preye I God thow peynted be also
> That folk may rede forby as they go,
> [...]
> But sothly, of oo poynt yit may they rede,
> That ye ben lyk youre fader as in this,
> For he begiled Adriane, ywis,
> With swich an art and with swich subtilte
> As thow thyselven hast begyled me.
> As in that poynt, althogh it be nat fayr,
> Thow folwest hym, certain, and art his ayr. (2534-49)

In the classical sources as well as the poetic output of the early Middle Ages, lineage was one of the milestones from whence a man's sense of manhood was established. In this tale, however, this former constituent of masculinity has been inverted to such a degree that it degrades the man's honour specifically in matters pertaining to the heart.

In the legends of Lucretia and Philomela, the gradual blackening of the male image becomes more vivid as both women are raped; consequently, Lucretia commits suicide for she cannot bear to live with the shame and Philomela is mutilated as her tongue is cut out by her rapist in an attempt to silence her. In Lucretia's case, unlike the other women in the *Legends*, she is set as the paramount example of virtuous women, a characteristic that her husband Collantinus boasts to the Roman king Tarquinius who in turn sees her as a coveted prize to be conquered. "I am the kynges sone, Tarquinius" (1789) he says in an authoritative manner as he climbs into Lucretia's bed with a sword against her heart. It is the imminent prospect of death that frightens her as well as the words Tarquinius spills forth promising to slander Lucretia's name by killing the stable boy, laying his dead body in her bed, and accusing her of adultery. The poet reminds his audience that "[t]hese Romeyns wyves lovede so here name/At thilke tyme, and dredde so the shame,/That, what for fer of sclaunder and drede of deth" (1812-14). The fear of slander and of death causes Lucretia to actually lose consciousness and become numb so "She feleth no thyng, neyther foul ne fayr" (1818). Chaucer's voice intervenes, questioning the foundations of Tarquinius' *gentillesse* as he says

> Tarquinius, that art a kynges eyr,
> And sholdest, as by lynage and by ryght,
> Don as a lord and as a verray knyght,
> Whi hastow don dispit to chivalrye?
> Whi hastow don this lady vilanye?
> Allas, of the this was a vileyns dede! (1819-24)

Full of shame and humiliation, Lucretia relates being raped by Tarquinius to her loved ones and then kills herself with a dagger. Once word gets out of Tarquinius' foul deed and all of Rome learns the truth, Brutus swears "[t]hat Tarquyn shulde ybanysshed" (1863) and because he has committed a "horryble dede of hir oppressyoun,/Ne never was ther kyng in Rome toun/Syn thilke day" (1868-70). Subsequently, this legend becomes the history of the exiling of kings, the end of the regal period in Rome paving way for the Republic to emerge. Chaucer's critique on *gentillesse* is on the extreme negative end of the spectrum in this legend as his words suggest: simply because he holds power this does not give him the right to possess all that his eyes devour, as this is not what knighthood and chivalry means. In this light, Chaucer's words also suggest that he might have had a romantic notion of what true *gentillesse* encompassed and that he was gradually growing disenchanted with this notion as the ideal image of knighthood and reality clashed. The following image of noble manhood is even further removed from that of Tarquinius as Tereus surpasses all the men in the legends as one of darkest images of manhood.

The *Legend of Philomela* begins by addressing God the giver of forms, asking him "[w]hy madest thow, unto the slaunder of man" (2231), "[w]hi sufferest thow that Tereus was bore" (2234). Under such a severe introduction does Tereus enter the scene. The next glimpse into his constructed personage is that "[o]f Trace was he lord, and kyn to Marte" (2244). No other mention of his noble status is given within the legend; yet since he is married to King Pandion's daughter Procne, one unfamiliar with the myth may surmise that he is of noble birth.[5] Tereus being related to Mars, "[t]he crewel god that stant with blody darte" (2245) and the fact that neither Juno (the goddess of marriage), nor Hymen (the god of wedding ceremonies) attended the union between Tereus and Procne but that "[t]he Furies thre with al here mortal brond" (2251), leads to a conscious foreboding that not all will end well. Thus, five years after his marriage to Procne, his wife asks to see her sister Philomela whom Tereus agrees to escort back to Thrace himself; yet once his eyes look upon the young and fair Philomela "[h]e caste his fyry herte upon hyre so/That he wol have hir, how so that it go" (2292-93). Similar to Tarquinius' glimpse of Lucretia and his undoing of her, so Tereus treats Philomela, who was supposedly under his protection. Once the vessel reaches Thrace, Tereus "up into a forest he hire ledde,/And to a cave pryvely hym spedde" (2310-11). She the lamb, he the wolf "[b]y force hath this traytour don a dede,/That he hath reft hire of hire maydenhede" (2324-25). But even worse than raping her, Tereus goes further and mutilates Philomela.

> For fere lest she shulde his shame crye
> And don hym openly a vilenye,
> And with his swerd hire tonge of kerveth he,
> And in a castel made hire for to be
> Ful pryvely in prisoun everemore,
> And kepte hire to his usage and his store,
> So that she myghte hym neveremore asterte. (2232-38)

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[5] See Book VI of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* where the myth of Tereus and Philomela is given in full.

Ironically, Tereus is full aware that his actions in no shape of form conform to the unwritten codes of noble conduct; he has kidnapped his sister-in-law who happens to be the daughter of a king, has consistently raped her, has mutilated her, and shut her away from the rest of the world, telling her loved ones that she was dead. The act of cutting out her tongue lest she speaks of Tereus's gross misconduct speaks volumes in terms of Tereus's manhood. Philomela's voice was considered to be the only power that she wielded that would be able to bring him shame, so in his mind by silencing her Tereus removes the possible threat to his manhood. Now his complete subjugation of the forbidden female is complete. Yet, having been kept under these conditions for about a year or so, voiceless Philomela literally weaves her tale by embroidering the past year scene by scene onto a cloth; even though she is tongueless, she finds a way of delivering her message to her sister Procne. Chaucer ends the tale with the two sisters uniting and warns his audience to be wary of men.

Although the *Legend of Good Women*, as the title suggests, is woven around the stories of ten famous/infamous women of the classical period, their tales are formulated according to how they were mistreated by various men, most of which are considered to be false and unworthy.[6] Thus, similar to the poem *Anelida and Arcite*, the *Legend* inherently composes portraits of men from the perspective of the female; or rather, the men are painted in accord with the feminine gaze that substantiates the lack of true manhood. In this sense, Chaucer inverts mythocultural images of men and their masculinities as the men in this poem are not strictly categorised under the concepts of physical strength, honour and valour which were nominative of battlefield culture in the epic tradition nor are they evaluated solely under the paradigms of *fin' amors* where such characteristics as *gentillesse* and *largesse* were prominent; Chaucer rather fuses the two creating an amalgamation of previously rigid structures. The *Legend*, thus, transgresses both of these clear-cut constructions as it focusses on the ways in which these men were far removed from any idealised pattern or structure of manhood as comprehended and informed by earlier literary texts. As much as the earlier narratives focussed on the generative and positive aspects of the male body and its contingent designations, the *Legend of Good Women* zooms in on the negative facets, transforming the male's fame into infamy. In this sense, the *Legend* carries overtones of the *Anelida* text where the body and voice of the masculine counterpart Arcite was more or less devoid of any physical substance as his manhood was dually composed by both the female and the narrator. Likewise, the *Legend* is no exception as it weaves a similar path in diminishing designations of manhood as the men are assessed in relation to their malevolent treatment of women.

All in all, the *Legend of Good Women* explores Chaucer's deliberate historical and cultural distancing where he utilises the mythic template to generously delve into his comprehension of the male body and designations of manhood. Through subverting the memory images of formerly established classical male bodies and by empowering the feminine gaze as an authoritative evaluator of manhood, Chaucer re-informs previously idealised legendary and mythical men by defaming them, creating distorted if not more ordinary men that are fallible. Playing with the notion of how the "olde appreved stories"

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[6] Although the *Legend of Good Women*, unsurprisingly unfinished, depicts stories of ten women, there are only nine legends. The stories of Hypsipyle and Medea are handled under one legend. The unifying factor for the stories of these women is Jason. Thus, the denomination of ten women, nine men, and nine legends may also suggest that the women were considered in accordance with the men they encountered. Hence, the attempt to dismantle the sense of masculine authority seems to have gone amiss, making this poem as much about manhood as it does womanhood.

(21) did not always necessarily confer with the truth, or that there could be more than one reality specifically when human relations were concerned, Chaucer's poetic landscape becomes a fluid *locus* where new meanings are ascribed onto old, authoritative images of men. The poetic distancing as well as the pastness of the subject matter leaves Chaucer somewhat dissatisfied, an intuition that what is sought lies not in a distant past but in the presentness of his own time paves way for the construction of the *Canterbury Tales* where a multitude of contemporary fourteenth-century human images favourably flood the scene.

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## Testimony, Objectivism, and Poetic Form in Charles Reznikoff's *Holocaust*

**Rachel Edford**

**Abstract:** This essay examines the gradual development of Charles Reznikoff's testimony form Holocaust poetry, which ultimately rejected the traditional lyric forms of his earlier works in favor of a stark, Objectivist poetry that culminated in *Holocaust* (1975)—a poem based on the transcripts from the Nuremberg and Eichmann trials. The WWI poems from Reznikoff's first volume *Rhythms* (1918) underscore the importance of music to his early elegies in contrast to the blunt, impersonal testimonies in *Holocaust*. In *Rhythms*, Reznikoff employs traditional conventions ironically to convey war's unpoetic reality while the poetic speakers in *Going To and Fro and Walking Up and Down* (1941) seek refuge in those forms at the same time they question the value of the forms when confronted with violence. However, thirty years after the Holocaust, the traditional forms could no longer provide solace in the face of an overwhelming history of suffering.

**Keywords:** Charles Reznikoff, Holocaust poetry, Objectivism, poetic form, testimony, *Holocaust*, *Rhythms*, *Going To and Fro and Walking Up and Down*

In his essay "The Holocaust as Literary Inspiration", Elie Wiesel argues that the voices of witness testimony constituted to an important new genre in the post-World War II literary imagination, "[b]ut then there are the witnesses and there is their testimony. If the Greeks invented tragedy, the Romans the epistle, and the Renaissance the sonnet, our generation invented a new literature, that of testimony. We have all been witnesses and we all feel we have to bear testimony for the future" (9). Bearing witness to the Holocaust has taken a variety of forms including legal testimonies, survivor narratives in written and video formats, as well as poetry. However, as Sue Vice claims "it is not poetic but prose testimony that is typical of Holocaust eyewitness, while Holocaust poetry is considered a separate and self-contained genre" (7). The work of American Objectivist poet, Charles Reznikoff, challenges such generic distinctions between legal and artistic and prose and poetry testimony, particularly his poem *Holocaust*, which is based on transcripts from the Nuremberg and Eichmann trials. He created the work by editing the transcripts, removing most of the personal names and first-person utterances, and providing the testimonies without a poetic speaker's overt emotional response. The formal complexity of *Holocaust* has sparked more critical debate than any of his other works, perhaps because of the enormity of the poet's task to find a poetic form that represents the experiences of Holocaust victims without objectifying or aestheticizing their suffering. Charles Bernstein classifies the poem as "Reznikoff's most problematic work at a technical—in the sense of aesthetic or formal—level, in the sense that no American work of poetry had found a form to adequately acknowledge that which is beyond adequate acknowledgement; so that *Holocaust* stands apart and beyond the achievement of Reznikoff's *Poems* and *Testimony*" (238). While I agree that *Holocaust* confronts weighty formal as well as aesthetic issues by transforming survivor testimonies in a long, free-verse poem, I would argue that the form of the poem developed gradually out of Reznikoff's formal experiments in *Poems* and *Testimony*. Few critics have examined *Holocaust* in relation to his earlier poems, particularly those in *Rhythms* (1918) and *Going to and Fro and Walking Up and Down*

(1941). These earlier works reveal a gradual shift away from traditional forms and figures toward a free-verse form of seemingly objective testimony. Reznikoff employs the testimony form in *Holocaust* to represent and to critique simultaneously the Nazi's objectification and dehumanization of the Jews. This testimony form of *Holocaust* objectifies the individual voices of its human subjects in order to show the horrors that can result from such an objectification.

Before analyzing Reznikoff's poetry, though, it is important to examine Objectivism and Reznikoff's role in that movement. The "Objectivist" label is often invoked in criticism of Reznikoff's work; for example, Norman Finkelstein argues that *Holocaust* "could be regarded as the endpoint of Objectivism's testimonial strain, as the subjectivity and presence of the poet virtually disappears" (31). Yet, definitions of "objectivism" vary from critic to critic and even from the creators of the movement themselves. In the February 1931 issue of *Poetry*, Louis Zukofsky, Charles Reznikoff, and other Jewish American poets published works influenced by Ezra Pound's "Imagism" under the name "Objectivists". However, from the beginning of the movement, the term was only loosely defined, and poets developed their own versions of Objectivism. Reznikoff himself downplays the significance of the label, claiming "[w]e picked the name 'Objectivist' because we had all read *Poetry* of Chicago and we agreed completely with all that Pound was saying. We didn't really discuss the term itself; it seemed all right—pregnant. It could have meant any number of things" (1969, 196-97). The variety of the poetry in that 1931 issue demonstrates the distinct approaches of the individual Objectivist poets. To Reznikoff, "objectivism" was clearly tied to his training and experiences as a lawyer evaluating the testimony of witnesses.

> By the term "objectivist" I suppose a writer may be meant who does not write directly about his feelings but about what he sees and hears; who is restricted almost to the testimony of a witness in a court of law; and who expresses his feelings indirectly by the selection of his subject-matter and, if he writes in verse, by its music. Now suppose in a court of law, you are testifying in a negligence case. You cannot get on the stand and say, "That man was negligent." That's a conclusion of fact. What you'd be compelled to say is how the man acted. […] The judges of whether he is negligent or not are the jury in that case and the judges of what you say as a poet are the readers. That is, there is an analogy between testimony in the courts and testimony of a poet. (1969, 194-95)

Paradoxically, Reznikoff's poet as witness "restricts" himself to factual testimony precisely to stir emotion; testimony poetry is "objective" not in its absence of emotion but in its indirect expression of the poet's feelings through the choice and arrangement of source material. Reznikoff's legal training undoubtedly shaped his poetics. After studying at New York University Law School, he was admitted to the bar in 1916 but gave up private practice in 1917 when he discovered that his interest in law was scholarly. Reznikoff published his first volume of poetry, *Rhythms*, in 1918 and began contributing a wide range of prose and poetry to the *Menorah Journal*, an influential English-language Jewish literary and intellectual journal. Following a series of assorted jobs, he returned to his legal roots in 1930 by working as a writer for the legal encyclopedia *Corpus Juris* at the American Law Book Company in Brooklyn. In 1934, Reznikoff published a long prose work, *Testimony*, based on the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century American court cases he had read for the *Corpus*. He converted a section of *Testimony* into verse and published it in his 1941 collection *Going To and Fro and Walking Up and Down*. Reznikoff

released the first poetry volume of *Testimony: The United States 1885-1890: Recitative* in 1965 followed by the second, *Testimony: The United States 1891-1900: Recitative*, in 1968. At the recommendation of his wife Marie Syrkin, Reznikoff applied his testimony technique to *Holocaust*, published in 1975.[1]

In the autobiographical section "Early History of a Writer" from his 1969 collection *By the Well of Living and Seeing*, he claims his study of the law taught him how to judge his own poetry with a critical eye and pare it down to its essential elements.

> I saw that I could use the expensive machinery
> that had cost me four years of hard work at law
> and which I had thought useless for my writing:
> prying sentences open to look at the exact meaning
> weighing words to choose only those that had meat for my purpose
> and throwing the rest away as empty shells.
> I, too, could scrutinize every word and phrase
> as if in a document or the opinion of a judge [...]
> leaving only the pithy, the necessary, the clear and plain. (*The Poems* 329)[2]

The metaphor of the poet "prying" sentences apart as if they were "shells" searching for the "plain" "meat" and discarding the rest echoes Pound's Imagist advice to poets, advocating "the direct treatment of the 'thing'" by stripping poetry of unnecessary artifice and rhetoric (199). Reznikoff came to view conventional forms and techniques as empty shells that must be discarded. In "Obiter Dicta", a manuscript found among his papers after his death, Reznikoff goes into more detail listing the shortcomings of traditionally formal poetry: "[W]hen I grew older [...] I grew tired of regular meters and stanzas; they had become a little stale; the smooth lines and the rhymes I used to read with pleasure now seemed affected, a false stress on words and syllable" (*The Poems* 371). He equates the "pleasure" of conventional poetry, its "smooth", seamless technique, with deceit. For Reznikoff, free verse became the antidote to "stale" forms: "The brand-new verse some American poets were beginning to write [...] seemed to me, when I first read it, just right: not cut to patterns, however cleverly, not poured into ready molds, but words and phrases flowing as the thought; to be read just like common speech" (*The Poems* 371). Here, Reznikoff equates metrical poetry with static "molds" and artificial "patterns" and the "irregular", "rough" rhythms of free verse with authentic "common speech".

This rejection of traditional forms and effects toward an Objectivist, free-verse testimony form, however, did not occur as quickly as Reznikoff's autobiographical writings suggest. The poet sought comfort in traditional forms and genres in his poems written during World War I, World War II, and the Holocaust. Thirty years after the Holocaust, however, those forms could no longer provide solace in the face of an overwhelming history of violence and suffering. The WWI poems from his first volume *Rhythms* (1918) underscore the importance of music to his early elegies in contrast to the blunt, impersonal testimonies in *Holocaust* (1975). In *Rhythms*, Reznikoff employs traditional forms and conventions ironically to convey war's unpoetic reality. However, the poetic speakers in

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[1] Syrkin writes in "Charles: A Memoir", "while he was obdurately producing more *Testimony* I urged him to use the technique of law cases for another project—the Nazi extermination of European Jewry" (64).

[2] All citations to Reznikoff's poem's, except *Holocaust*, correspond to page numbers in *The Poems of Charles Reznikoff*. As Seamus Cooney notes in his edition, Reznikoff often omitted sequence and section titles and numbers in various editions of his works.

*Going To and Fro and Walking Up and Down* (1941) seek refuge in those forms and figures at the same time they question the value of the forms to represent violence and suffering. Reznikoff's post-WWII poetry moves away from traditional forms, rhymes, and rhythms, culminating in *Holocaust*. The formal features of *Holocaust*—including a distanced, third-person perspective, awkward syntax resulting from passive-voice constructions, sequential organization of impersonally numbered poems with blunt titles, harsh rhythms, extreme irony and understatement, and avoidance of figurative language, poetic diction, and rhyme—grew out of a long process of searching for an appropriate form to portray sympathetically the suffering of Holocaust survivors without aestheticizing their pain. This testimony form of *Holocaust* objectifies the individual voices of its human subjects, simultaneously recording the Nazis' dehumanization of the Jews in the camps and the horror of Nazi anti-Semitism.

In the World War I poem 13 "Romance" from *Rhythms* (1918), the speaker clings to traditional forms and genres, like the romance, even while asserting their disappearance.

> The troopers are riding, are riding by,
> the troopers are riding to kill and die
> that a clean flag may cleanly fly.
>
> They touch the dust in their homes no more,
> they are clean of the dirt of shop and store,
> and they ride out clean to war. (*The Poems* 6)

The opening lines echo the refrain from Alfred Noyes's popular poem "The Highwayman": "The highwayman came riding—/Riding—riding" (192). Reznikoff's troopers, like Noyes's highwayman, are riding towards their own death. The pat, monosyllabic end-rhymes—*by/die/fly* and *more/store/war*—reproduce the neat, "cleanliness" of the soldiers going to war. Each line also contains four stresses. Yet, as Robert Franciosi argues, "the innocent rhythm in the opening lines and the use of 'clean' throughout the poem is an ironic attack on the illusion of clean war" (266). Indeed, the allusion offered in Rupert Brooke's famous WWI sonnet "Peace" in which soldiers go off to war like "swimmers into cleanness leaping" further supports Franciosi's claim (312). The ironic repetition of "clean" registers the impossibility of a tidy war for those who are "riding to kill and die". The neatness and order of the poem are deceptive like the false claim of a clean war. "Romance" voices the death of chivalric figures of romance that influenced Victorian poets like Noyes. The poem criticizes the idea of a chivalrous death in battle, but it does so by employing traditional formal figures and techniques ironically. Here, we see the beginning of Reznikoff's movement away from traditional forms and effects. His poem criticizes its own form, but it does not completely reject it.

Like "Romance", the following poem "14", originally titled "On One Whom the Germans Shot", registers the devastating effects of war while critiquing its own traditional figures. The poem laments the death of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, the young Vorticist sculptor killed in the First World War, with suspiciously pastoral imagery.

> How shall we mourn you who are killed and wasted,
> sure that you would not die with your work unended,
> as if the iron scythe in the grass stops for a flower? (*The Poems* 6)

The subject is conventional: the young artist killed in his prime. In the tradition of lyric poetry, the first-person speaker focuses on the effect of the artist's death on "we [who]

mourn you". The poem assembles the traditional imagery of the pastoral mode (the scythe, the grass, and the flower), but it also registers the effect of the mechanized warfare of WWI on that imagery. The poem designates the scythe, which is typically associated with the Grim Reaper, as an "iron" scythe, a machine of war, dispassionately cutting down the young soldier. The final punctuation mark in poem "14" questions the effectiveness of the scythe as war figure, and this suspicion of figures and metaphors intensifies in Reznikoff's later Holocaust poetry. The poem is strategically open ended: "'[S]hall' implies a selection of possible responses, but Reznikoff seems to question whether one *can* find an adequate response by furnishing no answer within the poem", a question at the heart of *Holocaust* as well (Franciosi 265) (emphasis original). Although the poem questions the usefulness of pastoral imagery in an elegy commemorating a young artist killed in a modern war, it does not completely abandon tradition. Its lines may not rhyme, but they are shaped into one stanza with each line containing five stresses. "Romance" and "On One Whom" rely on traditional forms to critique earlier conventional depictions of death and war in poetry.

Like these two poems from *Rhythms*, poem "VIII" from the first section of Reznikoff's 1941 volume, *Going to and Fro and Walking Up and Down*, questions the form that a poetic elegy should take; this time in reference to World War II rather than World War I. *Going* consists of five large sections—"A Short History of Israel; Notes and Glosses", "Autobiography: New York", "Autobiography: Hollywood", "Testimony", and "Kaddish"; each section contains discrete poems ranging from a representation of the biblical exodus of Israelites recounted in extensive catalogues and repetitions, to short Objectivist portraits of contemporary city life and city dwellers, to a four-part testimony-form poem based on early American law reports, and ending with a Kaddish for Reznikoff's mother. The free-verse poem "VIII", from "A Short History of Israel" section, examines the efficacy of a metaphor comparing dead birds to the destruction of the Jews throughout history. Like the earlier Gaudier-Brzeska elegy, this poem does not provide an answer; it ends with a question.

> A dead gull in the road,
> the body flattened
> and the wings spread—
> but not to fly out of the dust
> over the waves;
> and a robin dead beside a hedge,
> the little claws drawn up
> against the dusty bundle:
> has there been a purge of Jews
> among the birds? (*The Poems* 181-82)

The speaker contrasts the "flattened" gull, its "wings spread", with the robin's claws "drawn up/against the dusty bundle". Even though the gull and robin are opposed in their positions, the *spread/dead* rhyme and the *dust/dusty* associations link them, as do the semicolon between the two descriptions and the repetition of "and". The poem's first eight lines would seem a prime example of Objectivism, heavily influenced by Imagism, more so than the previous two poems in *Rhythms*. The distanced speaker witnesses the details of two images and avoids commenting on their significance. However, the last two lines introduce an observant speaker searching for interpretive significance and asking how the history of the exodus of the Jews, a history related earlier in the sequence, influences the way he understands two dead birds on a New York street. The syntactic structure draws

together the two bird descriptions and the destruction of the Jews into the speaker's provocative question. Reznikoff's Objectivism combines precision with the indirect evocation of emotions. The ending simultaneously clarifies the relationship between the birds and the Jews by constructing a metaphor and undercuts that metaphor with a question, casting doubt on that very metaphor. "VIII", like "Romance", draws on an earlier poetic tradition while it reveals the obsolescence of the figures it derives from the past. The poem alludes to famous bird poems like Shelley's "Skylark" and Keats's "Nightingale", and the seagull imagery in particular evokes the birds in Old English elegies like "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer" where human-sounding gulls' cries stir up memories of the speaker's former life. In "VIII", the robin, usually associated with springtime and renewal, symbolizes death and destruction. The poem's other formal features enhance the emotional impact of these figurative details. The three shortest lines in the poem, two beats each—"the bódy fláttened", "óver the wáves", and "amóng the bírds"—suggest the human lives cut short by violence. The choice of "body" humanizes the dead bird, and "Over the waves" points the poem toward the violence occurring overseas in European battlefields. These devices and precise free-verse lines in "VIII" create an alternative free-verse song in place of the silenced birds.

The form of that poetic song changes throughout the individual poems and sections of *Going*. As a case in point, the fourth "Testimony" section consists of four, numbered free-verse poems. The section title "Testimony" and its footnote—"based on cases in the law reports"—frame the poems in legal terms, distinguishing these poems from others in *Going* (*The Poems* 206). In 1933, Reznikoff initially published this same material, based on the law reports from early American history that he read for his work on the *Corpus Juris* encyclopedia, in the form of a long work in prose. However, he later recast sections of the prose into these free-verse poems. Reznikoff created this testimony form for his wartime volume and continued to develop it for the next thirty years of his life. In fact, Stephen Fredman connects these early testimony works to Reznikoff's last major poem, claiming that "the American text of *Testimony* (in each of its several forms) forms a direct precursor to Reznikoff's last book of poems, *Holocaust*" (114). Similarly, Sylvia Rothchild connects the historical records of violence from those works directly to *Holocaust*.

> Reznikoff, writing his Testimonies, caught previews of the violence and pain in other places and generations that show how far men can go. The poems created from the law reports of several states offer a record of human behavior different in scale but not in substance from the testimony Reznikoff took from the Nuremberg Military Tribunal Trials and the record of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem. (292)

Reznikoff himself invokes T.S. Eliot's concept of the "objective correlative" to explain his approach to the poems: "*Testimony* may be explained by T. S. Eliot's 'objective correlative', as I understand it. Something happens and it expresses something that you feel, not necessarily because of *those* facts, but because of entirely different facts that give you the same kind of feeling" (1969, 202). "Testimony" links the outrage Reznikoff felt in response to World War II to the cruelty of early industrial American society and paves the way for Reznikoff's use of testimony in *Holocaust*.

Reznikoff's first three free-verse "Testimony" poems in *Going* chronicle the violent details of law reports in plain language from a third-person perspective, repeating significant words and phrases for emphasis. The individual poems function as discrete units, like law reports for distinct cases; they vary in terms of their number of lines, use of rhyme, meters, use of dialogue, and imagery. In "Testimony", Reznikoff details the

violence against those who are marginalized by society, particularly "minorities, women, and immigrants" (Jockims 111). The free-verse poem "II" represents the objectification of a child laborer as becomes a victim of an industrial machine. The speaker introduces its subject: "Amelia was just fourteen and out of the orphan asylum; at her first job—in the bindery, and yes sir, yes ma'am, oh, so anxious to please. She stood at the table, her blonde hair hanging about her shoulders" (*The Poems* 207). The poem opens with an intimate portrait of Amelia; it names her and offers details about her life. However, the speaker also situates Amelia in an impersonal, mechanized environment, a place for counting and accounting. Her job in the bindery is "knocking up": "[C]ounting books and stacking them in piles to be taken away". The lines assimilate Amelia into the counting; she is "fourteen" working at her "first" job at one of the "twenty wire-stitching machines" bending down to pick up the "three or four" books that fall under the table. She is thus part of the industrial machine by being part of the workforce, a fact that is gruesomely actualized with her merging with the bindery machine in the poem's final lines.

> She felt her hair caught gently;
> put her hand up and felt the shaft going round and round
> and her hair caught on it, wound and winding around it,
> until the scalp was jerked from her head,
> and the blood was coming down all over her face and waist. (*The Poems* 207)

The machine "gently" catches her hair just as the systematic r*ou*nd/w*ou*nd/ar*ound* assonance conveys the steady movement of the hair winding into the machine. On the one hand, the poem is objective in its use of the third-person perspective and blunt language to describe the scene. However, Reznikoff is not merely transcribing testimonies here. He mobilizes the formal features of poetry, such as the long lines and the repeated sounds, to convey the violent way an industrialized society treats marginalized figures like Amelia. Though the poem details the way vulnerable young workers, like Amelia, become victims of an industrial machine, thereby losing their identities, it also seeks to restore Amelia's humanity by recounting her story that might otherwise have been lost among a piles of historical testimony.

Thirty years later, we see the results of Reznikoff's continued exploration of the testimony form in *Holocaust*. Reznikoff's wife describes the poet's method for letting the facts of the survivor testimonies speaker for themselves: "Only the records of the Nuremberg Trial and of the Eichmann Trial were to be his sources; nor would he allow himself any subjective outcry. Again the bare facts, as selected by him, would speak for themselves: there would be no tampering with the experience through imagery or heightened language" (Syrkin 64). Some critics did indeed praise the poem's presentation of "the bare facts", for example, Henry Weinfield identifies Reznikoff's "move away from lyric subjectivity, toward what we have come to refer to as 'Objectivism'" as an important development in his poetry (227). Todd Carmody argues that Reznikoff's "unwillingness to step into the position of the survivor" (104) resists dangerous or ineffective "models that often call on us to identify with survivors in order to understand the Holocaust" (86). Other critics, though, consider Reznikoff's blunt presentation of the material as insensitivity toward the suffering of Holocaust victims. Paul Auster contends that Reznikoff's formal strategies are ineffective and even disingenuous: "The holocaust, which is precisely the unknowable, the unthinkable, requires a treatment *beyond the facts* in order for us to be able to understand it—assuming that such a thing is even possible" (161). Robert Alter also faults *Holocaust*'s dispassionate representation of testimonies, claiming it contains a

"numbing pointlessness in the constant repetition of savagery and murder without the slightest interpretative response on the part of the poet, without the slightest intimation of historical options beyond or after genocide" (50).

In response to such criticism, I would argue that the abstraction of a poetic presence from *Holocaust* does not admit an unwillingness to engage with the material or insensitivity towards it; rather, it enables the poet to focus on the individual testimonies. By suppressing his own emotional responses to the testimonies in his poem, Reznikoff elicits a complex reaction in readers. In his last interview in 1976, Reznikoff defends his approach to the material: "You don't just throw up your hands and say 'Oh, how terrible!' You don't simply go and put out your own emotions. But if you stay faithful to the facts themselves—for they are the important part—if you present them as clearly as you can, then a response will surely follow" (1976, 14). Reznikoff places the responsibility of the emotional response and interpretation on the reader, not on the text of the poem itself, and this connects to Reznikoff's theories of an Objectivist poetics that achieves an emotional reaction through the selection and arrangement of the source materials. The poem's preface relentlessly establishes the validity of its subject, stating "*[a]ll that follows is based on a United States government publication,* Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals, *and the records of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem*" (*Holocaust*) (emphasis original). The International Military Tribunal tried twenty-four high-ranking military and political leaders of Nazi Germany for crimes against humanity from November 14, 1945 to October 1, 1946. A United States Military Tribunal later prosecuted more than one hundred additional defendants in a series of twelve trials from October 1946 through April 1949. Nazi S.S. Lieutenant Colonel Adolf Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem lasted 114 sessions from April 11 to August 14, 1961 and was broadcast worldwide. The Tribunal convicted Eichmann and executed him by hanging. Hannah Arendt published her well-known *Eichmann in Jerusalem* in response to the trial, arguing that "the trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal" (276); thus, the trial revealed, in her now-famous phrase, the "banality of evil" (292). Arendt's contention that the first Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion's Zionist motives confused the issues in the trial and that Jewish Councils played a collaborative role in the Holocaust sparked a backlash among Jewish intellectuals such as Reznikoff's wife, who "led the charge in the Jewish press" against Arendt (Carmody 95). During the trial, Reznikoff worked as a typesetter at Syrkin's *Jewish Frontier*; in that position "he must have been exposed to the controversy brought about by the Eichmann Trial and brought to a head by *Eichmann in Jerusalem*" (97).

Published in 1975 more than ten years after the Eichmann trial and thirty years after the event itself, *Holocaust* immerses its readers in factual testimonies Reznikoff altered and transformed into free-verse poetry. The poem enumerates the deportation, torture, and murder of Jews from the early 1930s to the 1943 rescue in Sweden. *Holocaust* is the product of a poet deeply engaged with history and the assessments of historical events over time. Its overall organization and structure seem to cast Reznikoff as a historian rather than as a poet. Unlike Reznikoff's other poetry volumes, this one contains a "contents" page uniformly listing its twelve sections in Roman numerals as if they were chapters in a book, beginning with "Deportation" and ending with "Escapes". The chronological progression of the sections from "Deportation", to "Invasion", "Ghettos", "Gas Chambers and Gas Trucks" implies a mechanistic organization depicting the escalation of early Nazi policies forcing Jewish emigration in 1933 to the systematic extermination of the Jews and the Final

Solution. A section titled, "Author's Notes", follows the last poem, further adding to the historicity of the poem. The ordered contents page, author's notes, and preface identifying the sources indicate that what follows is not a book of poems but rather a methodically organized historical account of a methodically organized atrocity.

Yet, however much *Holocaust* is structured as a historical document, it is also a highly crafted work of art in which Reznikoff stages his own trial. The poem's twelve sections suggest the twelve trials under the US Tribunal. The purpose of this poetic trial, however, is not to judge or sentence the guilty. Gone is the legal apparatus in the original testimony—records, judges, lawyers, juries, sentences, and verdicts—and in its place are the voices of the survivors. *Holocaust* tests the limits of poetic form to represent and respond to an event that many claim is unrepresentable and unspeakable. In *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive,* Giorgio Agamben explores the problem of representation in terms of survivor testimony, arguing that "testimony contained at its core an essential lacuna; in other words, the survivors bore witness to something it is impossible to bear witness to" (13). According to Agamben, in order for language to convey this impossibility, it has to break down and "give way to a non-language [...] that no longer signifies" (39). Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub also identify complexities in Holocaust testimony by examining the Holocaust as "a radical historical *crisis of witnessing*, and as the unprecedented, inconceivable, historical occurrence of 'an event without a witness'—an event eliminating its own witness" (xvii). This "crisis of history" is then "translated into a *crisis of literature* insofar as literature becomes a witness, and perhaps the only witness, to the crisis within history which precisely cannot be articulated" (xviii). The "imperative to tell the story of the Holocaust" conflicts with "the impossibility of telling" (Ferman and Laub 79). As a poem that bears witness to the testimonies of others, *Holocaust* is thus inevitably characterized by contradictions.

Its contents page creates an illusion of order and logic only to convey, paradoxically, a lack of order and logic. The individual poetic sequences are far from uniform: "Work Camps" consists of ten numbered sections, while "Research" and "Escapes" each contain only two. And "Escapes", the longest and final section of the volume, is ironically more about death than liberation. "Research" includes a poem from the perspective of German physicians justifying their torture of the Jews as scientific experimentation "for the good" of the German people; while the "Entertainment" section details how S.S. officers tormented prisoners for their own enjoyment (*Holocaust* 9). The notes to those sections don't clarify the poetry with objective facts and figures, as notes in a typical historical document would; they complicate it with irony and understatement, for example, the note on the Warsaw ghetto uprising section juxtaposes the deaths of "thousands of Jews" with "the burden on every S.S. man or German police officer during these actions to drive out the Jews from Warsaw" (9). The final note, which concludes *Holocaust* as a whole, only condemns the Nazis through irony: "the spirit of the S.S. men and the police officers, it was noted by one of their superiors, was 'extraordinarily good and praiseworthy from the first day to the very last'" (90). The poem does not attempt to explain why the Holocaust happened or how the atrocities committed should be punished; instead, it examines the operation of the Nazis' brutal and systematic practices.

The poem connects the Nazis with organization, efficiency, and technology at the same time it exposes that the blind pursuit of these practices, often considered a mark of a highly civilized culture, can result in the utter destruction of civilization. The S.S. officers in *Holocaust* are constantly preoccupied with procedures and orderliness in service of horrific immorality. They reduce the prisoners to abstract numbers, force prisoners to place

the bodies of murdered Jews "on the ground/ in a pattern:/Jews and Poles/in groups of five" (17-8) and "behind trees that had been cut down/and set up in rows" (46). The insistent repetition of the Nazis "ordering" throughout the poem—"the S.S. men ordered the Jews off the wagon" and "then ordered them to take off their clothes" and "then they ordered the Jews to get on their knees"—stresses the importance of organization and commands in relation to the work camps, death camps, and trains while contrasting this order with the complete breakdown of a moral law and order (7). The Nuremberg and Eichmann Trials attempted to define legally "crimes against humanity" and to prosecute the defendants according to a new set of legal criteria. However, Arendt argued that the Eichmann Trial exposed "the inadequacy of the prevailing legal system and of current juridical concepts to deal with the facts of administrative massacres organized by the state apparatus" (294).

On the surface, *Holocaust* itself seems to approach its subject and sources in a distanced and systematic way, suggesting "the Nazi ideology and methods [that] imposed anonymity upon their victims as part of their program of genocide" (Shevelow 304). For the most part, the poem employs passive voice and a distanced third-person perspective, omits personal names, avoids metaphors and figurative language, and is unemotional, all characteristics conveying the S.S. officers' depersonalization of individual prisoners. Yet, sections of *Holocaust* flatly contradict those formal characteristics; the poem does not blindly follow its own orders. The poems in which Reznikoff switches perspective, employs figurative language, or conveys subjective emotions stand out against the backdrop of formally flattened testimonies, thereby acknowledging the impossibility of a completely objective poetic treatment of the Holocaust. For example, the first-person perspective, figurative language, and irony in "Research" register the loss of individual and collective identities. The first poem is from the Nazi doctors' point of view justifying their torture of the Jews.

> We are the civilized—
> Aryans;
> and do not always kill those condemned to death
> merely because they are Jews
> as the less civilized might:
> we use them to benefit science
> like rats or mice:
> to find out the limits of human endurance
> at the highest altitudes
> for the good of the German air force. (9)[3]

The ironic repetition of "civilized" registers the barbarism of the scientists. The *c*ivilized/*sc*ience alliteration connects human experimentation and study with this supposedly advanced society. The uncharacteristic use of "we" here conveys Fascism's destructive nationalism and insistence on a collective, homogenous Aryan identity. The composite "we" crushes the voice of the individual "I". Vice claims that "the only first-person utterance that remains in *Holocaust* is in the section entitled 'Research'" (11), and Carmody argues that "when the first-person 'I' does appear, it is always spoken by a Nazi" (91). However, neither of these claims is entirely accurate. There are instances of prisoners

[3] Reznikoff refers to the contemptuous association between Jews and rodents put forth in Nazi propaganda like the anti-Semitic film "The Eternal Jew" (1940), created at the urging of the Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, which juxtaposed images of rats in cellars with Jews emigrating from Palestine.

and S.S. guards asserting their individuality and speaking in the first person, as with the "slender young woman with black hair, [who] pointed to herself and said, 'I am twenty-three'" (*Holocaust* 24) and the S.S. man who "would say a kind word" to the Jews and confesses, "I didn't know where I was being sent to/I didn't know about this,/and when I found out I asked at once for a transfer" (48). The shifts in perspective indicate moments when individual voices break free from the constraints of the historical record and trial testimony.

While "Research" sets up a strict division between us and them, the poem's metaphor confuses that distinction. The separation of the poetic line after "science" instead of after "mice" invites the question of who really is the rat in this comparison. From the doctors' perspective, the scientists "use" the Jews as they would a lab rat or mouse. Yet, the line break implies that the experimenters are the rats. Here, Reznikoff is mobilizing the power of lines breaks in his free-verse poem to complicate the prose testimony and create new meanings and associations. "For the good of the German air force", "for the good of the German navy", and "for the good of the German army" is an empty refrain (9). There is nothing "good" about "Research." Instead, the poem lists the graphic mutilation of the Jews in elaborate catalogues.

> wound them and force wooden shavings or ground glass
> into the wounds,
> or take out bones, muscles, and nerves,
> or burn their flesh—
> to study the burns caused by bombs—
> or put poison in their food
> or infect them with malaria, typhus, or other fevers—
> all for the good of the German army.
> *Heil Hitler!* (9)

The poem's first twenty lines are all part of one single sentence linked together by punctuation—commas, dashes, colons, and semicolons—and conjunctions—*and, for, or*—that magnifies the overpowering effect of all these experiments, as torture itself aims to amplify pain and push human limits. The repetition of "wound" and the *w*ound/*w*ooden/*w*ounds alliteration aurally "forces" sounds into the ear as doctors "force" wood and glass fragments into open lacerations. The "or" repetition registers the unending forms of torture occurring in the camp hospitals. In "Research I", torture and violence breed more hate. "Research I" expresses emotion indirectly; it attacks the Nazi ideology by adopting a detached voice and revealing the gross irony of its appeals to a civilized and scientifically advanced society. The repetitions, punctuation, and line breaks all work to enhance the emotional effect of the words.

"Research" also demonstrates the way the meanings of words themselves are infected by Nazi ideologies. The poem betrays a deadly mistrust of language. While it is true that Reznikoff's earlier poems question the very metaphors they construct in *Rhythms* and *Going*; those poems still suggest faith in language's ability to communicate clearly and concisely. In *Holocaust*, though, language is deliberately used to conceal what is really happening at the camps. For example, the poem marks the Nazis' deceptive use of language with quotation marks: "the entertainment squad" (4), "Cloakroom [and] hairdressers" (28), "To the baths" (28), "Lazarette" (38), and "road building" (59). These are euphemisms for Jews tortured for entertainment, rooms for their clothing and hair removed from the bodies sent to the gas chambers, the building where doctors experiment on Jews, and hiding traces

of mass graves sites. In some cases, surviving in the camps requires prisoners not only to decode these lies but even to lie convincingly themselves about their health, age, or occupation. In another instance of verbal deception, the trains on the way to the death camps and work camps pass through stations disguised to hide their real purpose:

> And the transports were arriving all the time;
> large transports daily—even twice a day.
> Flower beds were later set up around the platform to which the transports came;
> and there were signs with arrows reading "To the train" or "To Bialystock,"
> a city known for the number of Jews who lived—or rather had lived—there;
> so that those arriving would not know at first where they were:
> it looked like a kind of transit station, a railway junction. (39)

The Nazis use language, literally "signs", to disorient the Jews, and thus the signifying relationship between words and their source objects breaks down, demonstrating Agamben's claim that the language must breakdown in order to bear witness to the Holocaust (39). Similes and metaphors also obscure clarity and concision. The Nazis want the camp station to seem like an ordinary railway stop. However, the aside "or rather had lived" indicates the presence of a poetic speaker interpreting the scene and insisting that this is a death station, not an ordinary railway stop. The other prisoners inscribe the actual destination for the Jews in the concentration camps on notes: "[T]he men who had been sent away had said that if they were sent to the woods / they would send those who were left behind a note [in the truck]—/and they did:/it was in Hebrew and all it read was: 'To death'" (75). The troubled simile and wordiness in the final line, "it looked like a kind of", registers the speaker's hesitancy to employ figurative language and difficulty in verbalizing the experience. The dashes qualify the previous statements; the speaker defines and refines what he means by "all the time". The repetition of "transports" suggests the continuous arrival of the death and transport trains in the stations. The speakers in *Holocaust* fight to express themselves through a language that the Nazis employ to deceive them and even to obliterate their very existence. Indeed, the flowers planted in the station and the falsified signs serve as implied metaphors for the Nazi attempt to hide the extermination of the Jews.

Reznikoff's *Holocaust* challenges such attempts to obliterate or silence the testimonies of the witnesses, voices in danger of being forgotten as "individuals who personally survived the Shoah are dying out" (Gubar 1) and its events continue "to recede further from view" (5). One the surface, the poem seems to be a transcription of witness testimony into a long, free-verse poem detailing the horrific experiences in the concentration camps from a distanced, third-person perspective. An analysis of the poem, however, reveals that this initial assessment is too simplistic. The poem lapses into first-person perspective, conveys irony through repetition and word choice, and creates relationships through the use of sound effects and line breaks. The poem tests the limits of an objective approach to history; it ends up revealing the dangers of objectifying human beings, as the Nazis dehumanized the Jews; as the Nuremberg and Eichmann Trials turned private, individual experiences into objects to be consumed by viewers and readers; and as historical accounts transform people into collections of impersonal facts. *Holocaust* resolutely condemns an impersonal poetics of order and productivity by illustrating the dangers of ideologies based solely on order and efficiency. The ironic use of traditional forms and figures in *Rhythms* and *Going* reveals Reznikoff's questioning of the value of those formal features to elegize the casualties of mechanized war and of industrialization. In Reznikoff's Objectivist poetics, the poet takes on the responsibility to find a form

capable of bearing witness to events that many claim are unspeakable and unknowable. For Reznikoff, poetic form has a moral dimension. Indeed "in Reznikoff's poetry we see the combination of objectivist poetics with one of the most profound moral sensibilities of any twentieth-century poet" (Shevelow 291). It is this combination of ethics and form that make Reznikoff a particularly important figure in the development of modern and contemporary American poetry. In particular, *Holocaust* stands out as a formally experimental work of art that engages with the complex history and historicity of the Holocaust and fights against forgetting by memorializing the voices of the witnesses.

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# Transformation from Madness to Rehabilitation in Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain: The Knight of the Lion*

**Seçil Erkoç**

**Abstract:** Composed around 1177 Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain: The Knight of the Lion* questions the ideals of the Arthurian court by portraying the adventures of a knightly figure, Yvain, who undergoes a psychological transformation following the disappointment that he has inflicted on his wife. Torn between the ideals of knighthood and the responsibilities that he is expected to fulfil as a husband, Yvain fails in ascertaining a stable position for himself—which in the long run earns him a fragmentary perception that prevents him from seeing the broader picture—that he can both be a good knight and a good husband. Only after Yvain's sense of self does get shattered and he loses his mind in the face of various humiliations and misadventures, his vision gets regenerated and he manages to prove himself as a worthy lover. Hence, the aim of this article is to present a detailed examination of the transformation that Yvain undergoes and to analyse the process in which he cleanses himself of his lack of true feeling and of foresight.

**Keywords:** Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain: The Knight of the Lion*, Arthurian Romance, knighthood, transformation of the self

Chrétien de Troyes, French court poet of the twelfth century, holds an important place throughout the history of Arthurian research in that he was "the first to combine a series of Arthurian motifs and episodes into extensive and carefully organized compositions" (Hasselmann 1). The fact that Chrétien's works reflect the interaction between variable sources and traditions can be interpreted as a testimony of the cosmopolitan characteristics of the town of Troyes in the Middle Ages. Located in the southeast of Paris, Troyes was the residence of the count and countess of Champagne, and it was also the location holding a very important fair where merchants and traders from all over Europe gathered to sell their goods annually, exposing Chrétien to a multitude of influences, since during such fairs it was not only the financial resources that were exchanged but also the ideas and the stories (Duggan 206). Similar to the town of Troyes, Chrétien's works stand at the crossroads where at least "two strands of the tradition" meet: written tradition from the British Isles of Latin and vernacular history, together with the oral tradition of Arthurian story-telling that mainly comes from the regions of Celtic settlement (Hasselmann 10). Integrating these two practices, therefore, Chrétien "may not have been the progenitor of Arthurian romance, but he is usually thought of at least as its adoptive father", which enables him to formulate a new synthesis (Owen vii). Out of this synthesis do emerge his verse romances: *Erec* (1170), *Cligés* (1176), *Lancelot* (1177), *Yvain* (1177) and *Perceval* (1182). For the aim of this article, *Yvain: The Knight of the Lion* is chosen for analysis in that through the quest of Yvain, Chrétien not only illustrates the heroic achievements of a knightly figure in the face of physical and moral difficulties, but he also responds to "a need for examining the subtleties of motivation in human conduct" (Duggan 225). Straddling between the ideals represented by the Arthurian court and the duties expected of a husband/worthy lover, Yvain cannot develop a unitary perception—that he can both be a good knight and true husband/lover—and it causes his ultimate fall

into madness. Ironically enough, only after his sense of self gets shattered and falls to pieces, does Yvain become able to find an organic "balance between the duties of marriage and demands of knighthood" (219). Hence, through the dilemmas of a knight/husband, Chrétien points to the complexity of Yvain's character, and he illustrates the way in which Yvain cleanses himself of the reductionist perceptions of his former self and replaces it with a unitary perception following his encounter with the lion in the forest.

The gradual replacement of the old heroic epic by the new genre of romance in the middle of the twelfth century France is significant in terms of marking the transition from the prioritisation of actions and words in epics to that of feelings and emotions in romances. Hence, instead of the larger-than-life heroes that are emblematic of their own societies, in the romances of Chrétien we meet "real" characters with whom we can associate ourselves. In relation to that, Owen argues that Chrétien's "physical portrayal of people seldom overstepped the conventional", yet "he did go further than most in the interior portrait" (x) Therefore, "we do meet *real* characters in his works, people we feel to be further removed from us in time than in humanity" (x) (emphasis mine). In this sense, as Duggan also asserts, the Arthurian romances "responded to a need for examining the subtleties of motivation in human conduct, nuances that could not be explored in the other great narrative genres of the period" (225). In the same vein, as a keen observer of life and a master of dialogue, Chrétien was quite successful in portraying the conflicts, tensions and dilemmas that a character undergoes through his applying to various techniques such as "direct dialogue, monologues and interior debates in the style of Ovid" (Owen x). Moreover, Chrétien was also good at cultivating various levels of ambiguity and irony; thus, his romances are marked by the presence of several meanings that are embedded into one another, thereby enabling the poet to investigate the complexities of human sentiments and motivations from a wider perspective.

Chrétien's *Yvain: The Knight of the Lion* "probably composed around 1177, either shortly after or shortly before *Lancelot*", is considered to be one of the best examples of the poet's artistic effort (Duggan 206). According to Topsfield, it stands out as the "most 'complete' romance" of Chrétien in terms of providing "a *summa* of the themes of the earlier works, love, knighthood, virtue, humility and charity" (176) (emphasis original). In comparison to *Lancelot*, *Yvain* is based on a more systematic narrative structure which is linked to a main setting, the Fountain at Brocilande; hence, the incidents in *Yvain* are much easier to follow as opposed to the diversity of the multiple episodes in *Lancelot*.

While it is possible to point out certain parallels between *Yvain* and the Celtic tradition such as "the figure of Morgan le Fay, [...] the lady of Noroison, whose name signifies 'black bird' and who may have been herself a manifestation of Morgan" (Duggan 212), as well as "[t]he fairy realm, the hospitable host, the giant herdsman, the madness consequent on forsaken love" (Nitze 1), still it is difficult to conclude that the poet based his work on a single, clearly defined source. Instead Chrétien "demythologized and rationalized" the Celtic sources and in place of an "awareness of mythic meaning" he brought his own "concerns for courtliness, personal worth, and correctness of knightly behaviour" to the foreground (Duggan 215).

As for the structure of *Yvain*, there are various interpretations that consider the work as either bipartite—while the first section deals with the events leading to the marriage and estrangement of Yvain and Laudine, the rest recounts the events culminating in their reunion; or tripartite—that is the first part, again, dealing with the events leading to the marriage of Yvain and Laudine, followed by the second part where the crisis in their relationship comes to the surface and finally the adventures ending with the reconciliation

of Yvain and his wife (Zaddy 523). Nevertheless, instead of applying to a somewhat mechanic methodology that allows a systematic interpretation of *Yvain*, considering the complexity of Yvain's character it may prove more helpful to analyse the work in the light of Yvain's moral rehabilitation into a better knight, friend, husband, lover, and in the wider perspective, a better person who is aware of his inadequacies and faults.

Within this framework it is also significant to pay attention to the gradual process of Yvain's transformation from madness to rehabilitation. This transformation does not happen overnight but follows various stages that are linked to one another. In this respect, it is possible to form an analogy between the Fountain—as a source of water it brings the idea of ongoing action to the foreground since it flows; moreover, it also holds a central place in the narrative structure of *Yvain*—and the regeneration process of Yvain's fragmented self through his quest into "becoming". This is the reason why it is difficult to make distinctions that compartmentalise the process of moral and ethical transformation of Yvain into different boxes that are strictly separated from one another. Correspondingly, in relation to Chrétien's prioritisation of the process before the end-result, Owen argues that Chrétien "was less interested […] in proposing solutions or norms of conduct than in investigating a variety of problems and conditions involving love and knightly life" thus he "worked through situations, offering, but not insisting on, solutions" (xv). In other words, similar to the fluid nature inherent in the fountain/spring/water that cannot be contained, Chrétien foregrounds the notion of "becoming" before that of "being", adding complexity and depth to *Yvain*. Thus, throughout the romance, we see Yvain struggling hard to shatter his fragmented perception that does not allow him to go beyond the frame.

In the same vein, be it indirectly or not, Chrétien tries to convey a message to his audience since he asks them to differentiate between illusion and reality which is made apparent through the contrast he develops by setting the world of Arthurian court against that of the lion and nature. Here it is also important to note that Chrétien uses Calgrenant as his mouthpiece at the beginning of his work because as a poet Chrétien is not overtly didactic in purpose. As the reporter of his past experiences in Brocelande forest, Calgrenant assumes the role of the narrator of his own story and recounts what has befallen on him. Yet, following the introduction of Yvain, the focus shifts to his adventures and there comes the Narrator, presenting the main body of the work itself. Though it is not possible to speak of the existence of two narrators in the strict sense of the word, still in this way Chrétien implies at the multi-layered structure of his work, and thus enables his audience to have a closer look at the Arthurian court from within. By using Calgrenant as his indirect mouthpiece, the poet in fact gives a warning against taking everything at face value:

> Give me your ears and mind!
> The spoken word is lost
> If your heart and mind can't hear it.
> [...]
> Words can come to ear
> Like blowing wind, and neither
> Stop nor remain, just passing,
> By, like fleeting time,
> If hearts and minds aren't awake,

Aren't ready and willing to receive them. (Chretién[1] 150-62)

What is also significant about Chrétien's presentation of the Arthurian court is that he does not portray a "truly" chivalric world where the knights are mainly motivated by noble reasons. Even though the knights help each other, it is also worth remembering that Chrétien is far more interested in the insinuated rather than the obvious. Correspondingly, Owen states that "[a]lthough [Chrétien] presents us with some delightful portraits, […] one feels that he enjoyed manipulating and toying with them" (xv). Thus, as Owen argues further, it is not always easy to understand "when he is keeping a straight face when the shadow of a smile is playing round his lips" (xvi). Hence, it is not surprising that Chrétien portrays the Arthurian court as a place in which the knights are striving against one another to be able to attain fame, which is evident in the way Yvain departs days before King Arthur and his knights are able to set out on their journey to Brocelande forest to fight the lord of the Fountain, lest any other knight other than himself may avenge Calgrenant's shame. Reaching the forest, Yvain mortally wounds the lord of the Fountain, yet he chooses to follow the wounded lord escaping to his castle because Yvain does not want to return home without the proof that will convince the other knights in the Arthurian court of his victory. Obviously, Yvain's identity codes are deeply rooted in his chivalric self at this moment; therefore, he is not able to tolerate any signs of failure. Similar to Yvain's problematic position as a knightly figure, his interpretation of love is also problematic in that he cannot fulfil the demands of a true courtly lover. Put in a desperate position due to the death of her husband, Laudine is driven by the desire to protect her land and castle, so she accepts Yvain as her suitor and lord. Yvain, on the other hand, gets the hand of Laudine with the help of Lunette, as she is the one who convinces her lady to marry Yvain. At this stage Yvain has illusions about himself, and he is untutored in the art of love which is obvious in the way he philosophises about love but cannot put his mind and heart into it completely; otherwise, he would be able to keep the promise that he gave to Laudine.

"With you, so I think of nothing
Else, so I surrender completely
To you, so I love you more
Than myself, so I'm ready to live
Or die, exactly as you choose."
"And would you dare defend
My spring, defend it for me?"
"Oh lady, against the world!"
"Then know: we have come together". (Chretién 2028-35)

Hence it is not surprising that soon enough, only a week after their marriage, Yvain is convinced by the argument of Gawain who hints that now that Yvain is married he cannot meet the demands of knightly life: "'What?' said Gawain. 'There are men/Who aren't the men they were/Once they're married. Not you!'" (2485-86). Not having a true sense of identity and self-will, Yvain follows the impulse, and he exchanges the life of a married man with that of a knight by attending tournaments. As Sklute elaborates further "[i]n both there is something lacking in terms of sincerity. [...] As a medieval knight Yvain is motivated to gain honour by pride. [...] As a medieval lover, Yvain shows a shallowness

[1] As the modern version of Chrétien's *Yvain: The Knight of the Lion* (1177), Burton Raffel's translation (1987) is used; however, for the in-text citations the credit will be given to Chrétien himself.

and an emphasis on the wrong things" (142). Yvain is not able to comprehend that knighthood and marital obligations can go hand in hand because his reason and mind are both misguided at this point. He loses himself in the illusion that is offered by Arthur's world to such an extent that he is able to realise he has already exceeded the time limit put by his wife just before the appearance of the damsel sent by Laudine. He gets humiliated at his own court since the messenger rebukes and announces to Yvain that Laudine has dismissed him from her marriage, and she wants her ring back. It is significant that Chrétien carries Yvain up to the highest position possible—since now he is able to hold court on his own account with Gawain—only to be able to cause his ultimate fall into the pit of nothingness in the end. As "a man of intellect rather than of high emotion" Chrétien knew that the codes of the chivalric and courtly ethic were too ideal to be accomplished (Owen xv). Thus, "he flaunted the rich ideal, while constantly hinting that this was but a poet's dream" (xvi). This is the reason why, Chrétien chooses to turn Yvain's ideal world upside down right at the moment in which Yvain feels himself the most resourceful. Paradoxically enough, "[i]n this extreme of self-pride Yvain comes to his senses" (Topsfield 183):

> And such a storm broke
> In his skull that he lost his senses,
> And he tore at his skin and his clothes,
> And crossed meadows and fields, and left
> His squires and his men so uncertain
> That they had no idea where he was. (Chretién 2805-9)

Just as Yvain had left the Arthurian court without any notice so that he would be able kill the lord of the Fountain before the other knights find the opportunity to do so, he leaves his court again without leaving any trace behind. Nonetheless, this time he does not intend to add up to his sense of pride and dignity, but he casts away the norms and values of the court and takes the first step into stripping himself from the dictates of "his former self, his self-interest, his lack of true feelings and moral courage" (Topsfield 186).

Cutting all his ties from social life and the ideals of the Arthurian court, Yvain starts to live like a madman or a savage deep in the forest where his only connection with the civilisation turns out to be a hermit who provides him bread and water. Reduced to the position of less than a human being, he experiences shame at its most extreme point in the woods, wandering without his clothes and losing his communication skills. Only then does he get the opportunity to regain his senses and to come back to his new self under construction. With the help of two damsels accompanied by the Lady of Noroison, and the magic ointment given by Morgan le Fay, Yvain recovers his mind and memory. In return, though it was not pushed on him, he fights Count Alier who has been ravaging the Lady of Norosion's town and starts rebuilding his reputation. Despite the fact that the Lady of Noroison asks for Yvain's hand in marriage, impelled by his quest to find his "true self" and to prove himself worthy of Laudine's love, he "rejects this society as he had rejected Arthur's world" (Topsfield 188).

Having taken the first step away from the fragmentary perception of his former self, Yvain comes across the battle between the lion and the serpent in the woods. Urged by pity, he decides to help the lion, although he is aware of the risk that it could attack him back once it is rescued. To his surprise, however, the lion surrenders himself to Yvain and starts following its redeemer wherever he goes. As the title of the romance *The Knight of the Lion*

also confirms, the lion holds a central position in Chrétien's work: "He represents the virtue which Yvain lacks and which he must possess in order to be regenerate" (Topsfield 189).

With the lion by his side, Yvain comes upon the Fountain again, and he experiences a sense of moral awareness. "He sees what he was and what he must become, and, with the stimulus of Lunette's plight motivating him, Yvain sets out upon a new phase of his life" (Sklute 175). At first, he cannot bear the burden of his guilty consciousness and faints on the spot, his sword slipping from its scabbard, cutting his skin and causing him to bleed. The lion takes his master to be dead and wants to kill himself. Recovering his consciousness just in time, Yvain hinders the lion's plan, but he finds himself in the midst of another self-despising session:

> How can I stand here and see
> These things that belong to my wife?
> Why does my soul remain
> In this body, this miserable home?
> [...]
> Why do I spare myself?
> And haven't I seen this lion,
> Who felt such grief for me
> That he was ready to set my sword
> Against his chest and thrust it
> In? Should I be afraid
> Of death, who changed joy to sadness? (Chretién 3534-53)

Unlike the image of the self-centred, immature knight who is mainly motivated by his selfish desires, here we see the transformation taking its effect on Yvain. Now he is able to reflect on his mistakes and condemn his actions; therefore, he has a more realistic perspective of his self which stands in deep contrast to the illusionary image projected by his former self that is mainly shaped within the Arthurian court. Correspondingly, Sklute argues that "[h]enceforth he will be dedicated to helping others; henceforth he will be less concerned with courtly rhetoric, with vainglory, and more concerned with justice, right, dedication to a Christian ideal of knighthood: to help his fellow man" (175). Thus, from this point onwards we see Yvain fighting for the causes of other people, rescuing them from the desperate situations without waiting for any reward in return. In this way, Chrétien implies that Yvain's former quest for glory was "too self-centred to merit public as well as domestic approval" (Owen xv); however, now that he has started to strip himself off the fragmentary perceptions, Yvain starts developing a new reputation/self under the name of the Knight of the Lion.

Despite being deeply engrossed in his own plight at the Fountain, the moment he hears the voice of a miserable woman, who turns out to be Lunette, imprisoned in the chapel and waiting for her death, Yvain quickly forgets about his own condition and sets up his mind to help her by fighting the steward and his two brothers who accuse Lunette of changing her lady's mind to marry Yvain. Making a promise to defend her, yet also bearing in mind that he cannot control everything, Yvain asks for God's help which is an important indication of his developing a humble character: "'But with God's help, and I trust / In Him, I'll dishonour the three of them'" (Chretién 3761-62). Even though it is a common medieval topos to ask of God's help, still it is intriguing to note that Chrétien decides to use it towards the middle of his romance, that is, while Yvain's transformation is still under construction. Leaving the Fountain, Yvain finds himself before a castle where people's mood constantly changes from sadness to joy and vice versa. Soon enough Yvain learns

that the people of the castle are afflicted by an evil giant called Harpin of the Mountain, who has taken all six of the lord's sons and have killed two of them before their father's eyes. Nonetheless, the giant's atrocities do not end here since now he wants the lord's daughter in exchange for the lives of the remaining four sons. Without letting the daughter and her mother throw themselves at his own feet, Yvain agrees to help them. However, at this point Yvain is well aware of the fact that he has to comply with the time limit as he is also to defend Lunette in the following day; hence, he makes his point clear: "'I've no need to ask for anything / Else, except that the giant / Come soon, so I won't break my promise'" (Chretién 3992-94). Here, we see that unlike the forgetful and careless attitude that Yvain exhibited by breaking his promise to his wife, for he did not return to her within the allotted time period, now the Knight of the Lion pays much attention to the promises he makes to people, and he is quite minute about his organization of time.

With the help of the lion Yvain defeats the giant and moves on to fight the three barons who want Lunette's death. Again, having accomplished his mission at the cost of receiving various wounds, Yvain worries less for himself than for his suffering lion. Moreover, despite the fact that he could have revealed his name and have added to his reputation, Yvain chooses to go on with his quest as he cannot rest up until the moment he is forgiven by his wife.

> Though no one knew who he was,
> Not even the lady, who already
> Had his heart without knowing it.
> And she begged him to stay there for as long
> As it took for both lion and man
> To rest and recover. And he said:
> "Lady! It's out of the question.
> I could stay here unless
> My mistress pardoned me, forgave me,
> And forgot her anger and displeasure". (Chretién 4582-91)

Despite going through immense pain, Yvain fills his shield with moss and turns it into a soft bed. He lays the lion inside and carries him till they reach a safe spot where their wounds can be healed. Upon arriving at a location called Noire Espine, Yvain learns that the lord of the house has been attacked by death, and he has left everything to the inheritance of his two daughters. Unlike the adventures that Yvain has come across so far, this time there is not any giant, or a strong physical entity that he is expected to get hold of. This time he is to fight against injustice, because the elder daughter wants everything for herself, and she disregards the rights of her younger sister. While the elder one goes to the Arthurian court and asks for Gawain's help to fight for her unjust cause, the younger sister gets Yvain's help.

While Gawain accepts to defend the so-called rights of the oppressor, Yvain's motivation is much more considerate in its nature since he wants to help the younger sister who is in a more desperate condition. In other words, Yvain does not side with the strong but with the one that is in most need. In this way—through Gawain's choice to help the elder sister—Chrétien contrasts the ideals of the Arthurian court with those of the Knight of the Lion who "will now be recognised as the symbol of prowess, courage and justice, the avenger of the weak, and especially of women" (Topsfield 199). Setting out to fight for the cause of the younger sister, Yvain passes by The Castle of Infinite Misfortune where he sees three hundred girls, all working hard in very difficult conditions: "So poor that they

wore no sash,/And their dresses were torn at the breast/And out at the elbows, and their shifts/Were dirty around neck" (Chretién 5200-3). Two tyrants born of a woman and a demon subdue all of these girls, subjecting them to hunger, poverty and harsh working atmosphere. Moved by pity and also enraged at the injustice that they are exposed to, Yvain fights and defeats the two sons of the devil with the help of his lion again. According to Topsfield all these adventures and trials are an "atonement for his earlier neglect of Laudine" (199). Despite being unable to keep his promise and protect his wife, now as a transforming figure, Yvain is capable of rescuing three hundred damsels in distress while at the same time showing his intention to secure justice for the younger sister.

Finally, in the duel between Yvain and Gawain, the Knight of the Lion encounters his former self who is represented by his enemy-friend, because he is the one who is siding with the self-interest, indifference and injustice of the elder sister—epitomising the current tendency "to see Yvain's fault as pride" (Combellack 10). Not recognizing each other, Yvain and Gawain start fighting, and the combat ends only after they reveal their names. In knightly modesty neither of them wants to accept that he has defeated the other.

> "No, I." "No, I," they kept saying,
> Both so noble and generous
> That they passed the victory and the crown
> Back and forth, neither of them
> Willing to accept it, each of them
> Trying as hard as he could
> To convince the king and the court
> That he was the one who'd been beaten. (Chretién 6357-64)

Yvain and Gawain cannot win over each other; however, it is the justice that wins at the end since the sisters can share the inheritance equally now. Furthermore, by fighting for the cause of a person in need and being able to suppress the demands of a knight who has the tendency to put his fame before anything else, which has caused Yvain to "neglect his duty to his newly married wife as her lover and servant in love, for feat of arms" (Combellack 10), Yvain gets purified from the misdeeds of his former self. Having proven himself to be selfless, humble, brave and noble Yvain is now ready to confront Laudine and to ask for her forgiveness without any further need to embellish his words. Finally, he goes to the Fountain once again and incurs the storm only to be able to enjoy the happiness that will follow, with all his devotion and sincerity.

To conclude, it can be said that through his transformation into a true friend, husband, knight and lover Yvain finally achieves a balance in his life. As Sklute also posits Yvain "has realized that a noble man can be humble, that a powerful man can be meek, and that a husband's sovereignty can arise from his submission" (187). In other words, Yvain succeeds in shattering the fragmented perception of the world that is represented by the Arthurian court, and he replaces it with a unifying perspective that does not give precedence to any single label or definition, which is signified by nature and the lion. Hence, Chrétien's intention in his work is "to show not that true knights cannot be lovers and husbands, but that selfish and immature individuals can be neither knights nor lovers, even though they may have the power to display prowess and the verbal sophistication to express sentiment" (143). In this respect, *Yvain: The Knight of the Lion* has the capacity to address the problems of the individual on a universal scale which is not bound by time and space, and it presents an in-depth analysis of human nature. The originality of Chrétien's work is, therefore, rooted in his ability to develop a comprehensive outlook that is not

overtly didactic since he is more interested in "becoming" than in "being"; in process than in the end-result; in emotions rather than the prescribed codes that dictate how those emotions should be lived. Hence, through presenting a detailed analysis of Yvain's transformation from an Arthurian knight to a madman in the forest, only to be able to show how he has achieved rehabilitating himself into the Knight of the Lion in the end, this article has attempted to show the way in which Chrétien's *Yvain: The Knight of the Lion* presents a detailed reading and questioning of the so-called ideals of the Arthurian court.

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**Enchanting Histories of the Empires in Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence*[1]**

**Kübra Kangüleç Coşkun**

**Abstract:** Salman Rushdie, famous for his post-structuralist approach to history, argues that both fiction and history are human constructs, and thus they are subjective, limited and unreliable in nature. Juxtaposing fictional and historical elements in the same storyline, the author creates a new textual space where he can undermine the authority of history texts over fiction. This textual space is dominated by story tellers as proving the power of storytelling even in the history writing process. *The Enchantress of Florence*, telling the magical stories rooted in the history of the Mughal Empire and the Florentine Republic, supplies Rushdie with the necessary space to question the concept of the real, its production process, and the power and knowledge relationship. In this context, this article will explore Rushdie's use of storytelling, juxtaposition of real and fictional worlds, and intermingling of historical documents and magical stories in the novel to understand the manipulative role of history writers in the history writing process.

**Keywords:** Salman Rushdie, *The Enchantress of Florence*, historiography, storytelling, post-structuralism, power-knowledge relationship

The British Indian novelist Salman Rushdie (1947 - ) who is renowned for his historiographic metafictions set against the backdrop of Indian history underlines the importance of alternative worldviews and spaces to resist the manipulative power of official history. Adopting a post-structuralist approach to history writing and defining history as "natural selection", Rushdie problematizes the concept of reality and points out the dominance of power-holders on the history writing process (*Shame* 124). In this respect, his 2008 novel *The Enchantress of Florence* exemplifies his approach to historiography while revealing how fiction creates reality under the leadership of history-makers. *The Enchantress* unfolds the story of Mughal Emperor Akbar who falls in love with an imaginary woman Qara Köz while listening to Qara Köz's son Mogor dell'Amore's tale. The more Akbar convinces his subjects of her corporeality, the more the text turns into a product of the manipulative power of language and the subjective interpretations of truth. To question reality in history and fantasy in a story, Rushdie weaves history texts and Mogor's magical story together and uses fact and fiction interchangeably. Analyzing Rushdie's historiography in line with postmodernist arguments on history writing, this article aims to reveal the textuality of history by referring to Rushdie's obscuration of the line between history and fiction, his use of different unreliable narrators and his subversion of the concept of reality. To that end, Rushdie's use of storytelling, juxtaposition of real and fictional characters in the same setting, intermingling of historical documents and magical stories to create a cause and effect chain, and problematization of the concept of reality based on the power and knowledge relationship will be analyzed in reference to the text.

[1] This article is produced from my master's thesis entitled "Treatment of Official History in the Context of Magical Realism: Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *The Enchantress of Florence*".

As a product of the late twentieth century Western philosophy, postmodernism is based on post-structuralist linguistic studies and deconstruction. Regarding everything as text and studying all intellectual disciplines like pieces of literature, post-structuralism problematizes the concept of truth and points out its multiplicity (Onega 12). In this context, the unquestionable accuracy of history is questioned as well. In contrast to the traditional approach to history that defines history as an objective and scientific study on the past events, postmodernist thought points out the subjective, textual and political content of history writing. As stated by Carr, "[t]he facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context" (11). Namely, a history text is the subjective account of a historian, and thus it cannot present an objective account of the past. Similarly, Hayden White calls historical texts "verbal artifacts", since they are "as much *invented* as *found* on the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature" (192). Further, he claims that historians use the technique of "emplotment" meaning "the encodation of the facts contained in the chronicle as components of specific *kinds* of plot structures" (193). In other words, historians and literary writers work in the same way. Each composes a story line to form their texts, which creates a continuous narrative and inevitably includes interpretation. Montrose also underlines the parallelism between fiction and history, putting forth the concept of "the textuality of history". He explains the concept as follows: "By the textuality of history, I mean to suggest, firstly, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past […]; and secondly that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are construed as the 'documents' upon which historians ground their own texts, called 'histories'" (20). Both White and Montrose deal with history as human constructs; as a result, it cannot be objective while recording the past events from a particular perspective. In parallel to these arguments, postmodern writers set off to highlight the fictional nature of history texts by mixing the real with fantasy, historical accounts with fictional accounts, and official history with individual histories, and they end up with "historiographic metafiction", a postmodern form of expression in fiction (Hutcheon ix). Hutcheon defines the concept as "theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs" (5). Historiographic metafiction, characterized by intertextuality, parody, self-reflexivity, pastiche and fragmented narration, deliberately juxtaposes fact and fiction, questions the concept of the real and rejects the superior position of history texts over literary texts, labelling both as the product of language.

In a 2008 interview on *The Enchantress*, Rushdie claims that the details in the novel that people will presume as magic realism are available in history books while the details people will consider truth are pure fiction (in Mustich 2). His statement refers to the textuality of history as well as the transgressive aspect of his narrative style that blurs the boundary between fact and fiction. In order to reveal the textuality in history texts, Rushdie makes use of *Baburname* (Memoirs of Baber), the sixteenth century historical autobiography penned by Emperor Babur, analyzes it like a historian and makes it the major source for *The Enchantress* (Kangüleç 81). The fragmented information, missing points and subjective accounts in *Baburname* form the necessary textual space where Rushdie questions and plays with history to subvert its authority. The Mughal characters of Rushdie's narrative are drawn from Babur's writing, and thus they are real. However, these characters including Akbar, Qara Köz, Shah Ismael stand side by side with the fictional characters like Mogor and Argalia the Janissary, which is a subversion of the real in an attempt to introduce new realities.

Rushdie continues to play with history by including magic into his narrative. He attributes magical powers and fictional events to historical characters, which is another method to fictionalize history in Rushdie's writings, for instance, Rushdie makes Abul Fazl, Akbar's vizier and the author of the *Akbarnama*—the official historical account of Akbar's rule, the writer of a spell book. When Abul Fazl encounters Mogor, his power breaks Mogor's spell stemming from his fragrance.

> The yellow-haired Mogor dell'Amore intuited that Abul Fazl was the original author of the spell-book of unguents whose formulas Mohini the Skeleton had become adept at using, so that these olfactory enchantments had no power over him, and as a result they lost their influence over everyone as well. The guards with goofy grins at the four entrances to the House of Private Audience suddenly came to their sense […]. (*Enchantress* 84)

Metaphorically, turning an official historian into a spell book writer, Rushdie points out the magic in history writing; that is, the creation of new realities. In another instance, two historical characters Qara Köz and Il Machia, namely Machiavelli, meet in Italy. As a result of this meeting in Rushdie's textual space, Qara Köz becomes the reason for Machiavelli's writing of *The Prince*. When Argalia entrusts Qara Köz to his friend Il Machia before leaving for a battle, Il Machia falls in love with her. With Qara Köz's departure, he feels a great depression and *The Prince* is the product of those depressive days.

> If he had been able to formulate any sort of idea of what to do with his life after such a desertion, perhaps he would even have gone through with it. Instead, abjectly, he poured his lifetime of thought and knowledge into the short book he was writing in the hope of regaining favour at court, his little mirror-of-princes piece, such a dark mirror that even he feared it might not be liked. (*Enchantress* 361)

Through the juxtaposition of fiction with facts, Rushdie composes a continuous story line proceeding in a cause and effect chain. Besides, this juxtaposition problematizes the concept of the real and highlights the textuality of historical accounts.

Intersecting the destinies of historical characters with fictional ones, Rushdie rewrites the sixteenth century Mughal history and fills in the gaps in Babur's historical account. As a human construct, Babur's autobiography is limited in knowledge, subjective and full of gaps. Despite its defects, it is studied as a part of history within historiography. In this respect, Rushdie's narrative is not different from Babur's; his text also includes historical knowledge, subjective accounts, as well as a story line to fill in the gaps. Like a historian, Rushdie reads the source books on the Mughal court as can be understood from the bibliography attached to the novel, collects the fragmented information, then sketches the characters, and finally transforms the available data into a continuous narrative with a story line. In the end, he ends up with a subjective account of the past into which he adds his own commentary and viewpoint, for instance, Babur states that Qara Köz, who is a minor character in his account, dies after getting married to Jani Beg Sultan. In Rushdie's version of Qara Köz's story, she becomes the central character and does not pass away (Kangüleç 82). Instead, she becomes Shah Ismael's wife before getting married to his statesman, namely to the fictional Argalia in Rushdie's narrative. Rushdie's seemingly fictional claim is not a baseless one, but recorded in history books (Peirce 37). In other words, it is rooted in history, yet it seems fictional. Rushdie's fictional character blends fact and fiction in his own story, and as a result the reader loses track of the historical fact.

Equating fact and fiction as human constructs, Rushdie deliberately confuses the reader and undermines the dominance of history texts.

In addition to filling in the gaps by combining fragmented information available in different history texts, creating a cause and effect chain is another method for Rushdie's employment. Rushdie interprets Babur's account under the guidance of his imagination and explains Qara Köz's minor role in *Baburname* with her brother Babur's anger at her

> In his fury Babar the Beaver cast his younger sibling out of history, decreeing that her name be stricken from all records and never spoken again by any man or woman in his realm. Khanzada Begum herself obeyed the order faithfully in spite of her great love for her sister, and slowly the memory of the hidden princess and her Mirror [Qara Köz's servant] faded. So they became no more than a rumour, a story half heard in a crowd, a whisper on the wind, and from that day until this one there had been no further word. (*Enchantress* 139)

In *The Enchantress*, Qara Köz's decision to stay with Shah Ismael enrages Babur who uses his power as the law-maker and removes Qara Köz from history. As can be seen, Babur's decision is highly personal and subverts the accuracy of history texts. Therefore, even an objective account of the present becomes inaccessible to the reader as the writer of the text rewrites it in line with his own discourse[2] and conditions each time he attempts to put it into words. Here, Rushdie's point is to show the human factor affecting the history writing process. Since man is born into a linguistic system and becomes a social being shaped by his environment and language, he develops a particular discourse which precludes an objective account. As argued by Rushdie, "built on prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge", the concept of the real is subjective and described by authority from the very beginning (1992, 25).

To reveal the manipulative power of authorities on the process of history writing, Rushdie uses the tales of Jodha and Qara Köz, both of which create alternative realities, rejecting the Western concept of the real. The European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century foregrounds the guidance of the Reason as "a fundamental and simple order in the world" and adopts an "empirical, experimental approach to reality" (Conkin and Roland 47, 50). In other words, the real must be tangible and explainable through science. Yet, Rushdie subverts this fundamentalist definition by including nonexistent magical characters into his narrative. These two queens "influence the masses and drag them into their fictional world through the speculations and the tales produced about their beauty, magical powers and non-physical existence" (Kangüleç 90). Despite their lack of corporeality, they are regarded and extolled as real by people and become the main characters of the alternative textual worlds created by the dominant discourse.

> She was an imaginary wife, dreamed up by Akbar in the way that lonely children dream up imaginary friends, and in spite of the presence of many living, if floating, consorts, the *emperor was of the opinion that it was the real queens who were the phantoms and the nonexistent beloved who was real*. He gave her a name, Jodha, and no man dared gainsay him. Within the privacy of the women's quarters, within the

[2] Discourse is used in the Foucauldian context throughout the text. Thus, it refers to "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about—a way of representing the knowledge about—a particular topic at a particular historical moment […]. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But […] since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do—our conduct—all practices have a discursive aspect" (Hall 291).

> silken corridors of her palace, her influence and power grew. Tansen wrote songs for her and in the studio-scriptorium her beauty was celebrated in portraiture and verse. Master Abdus Samad the Persian portrayed her himself, painted her from the memory of a dream without ever looking upon her face […]. (*Enchantress* 33-4) (emphasis mine)

The quotation once again problematizes the concept of the real and points out the existence of alternative realities within Akbar's own discourse. Jodha is Akbar's imaginary queen, so she lives in his imaginary realm. Yet, the power of Akbar's imagination inspires the court artists, establishing a dominant discourse in the court and attributing Jodha a physical appearance. In *The Archeology of Knowledge,* Foucault develops a critical view on the essence of truth, emphasizing that discourses are shaped within the scope of power-knowledge relation. In other words, power-holders create a dominant discourse which produces knowledge and defines truth. As explained by Stuart Hall, discourse "influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others […] it rules out, limits and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it" (44). In this context, Akbar, as the power-holder, imposes his own discourse on his subordinates and introduces a different reality, namely an imaginary Jodha.

Interpreting Akbar's imaginary realm as the space of his "self-imposed, personal exile" where he can disregard dogmas and traditions, Sasser argues that Akbar's absolute ruling power also liberates him from the sanctions of the law (122-23). Thus, he makes use of his freedom and enables the production of a new reality. The works of art about Jodha are produced, for instance, which give her a physical existence under his patronage. In the end, she even gets a place in history (Kangüleç 83). Jodha'a case exemplifies how fiction is recorded as the real or vice versa in history. The irony is that while Qara Köz loses her place in history upon Babur's decree, Jodha is included into history by Akbar, which undermines the reliability of history texts. In parallel to Akbar's decision, his minister says "for in the end none of the queens will exist anymore than she [Jodha] does, while she will have enjoyed a lifetime of your love, and her fame will echo down the ages. Thus, in reality, while it is true that she does not exist, it is also true to say that she is the one who lives" (*Enchantress* 56). Aware of the power of history, the minister claims that history will immortalize her and she will be regarded as a part of reality ages later. The story of Jodha is an example of White's "verbal artefact" as it blurs the boundary between fact and fiction.

In the same way with Jodha who comes into existence through texts, Qara Köz is revived in Mogor's tale later on. The European traveller Mogor's real name is Niccolo Vespucci and he claims that he is the son of the lost Mughal princess Qara Köz. When Mogor comes into Akbar's court and starts to tell her mother's magical tale, Akbar falls in love with this lost princess. Here, it is important to note that Mogor is not an omnipresent narrator; he does not know dates and places, and there are many missing and misleading information in his historical tale. Therefore, the Emperor and other audience question the truth of Mogor's account as the eldest lady of the Mughal court, Gulbadan, interrupts his tale to correct the mistakes (*Enchantress* 138). Still, the gripping plot of Mogor's tale persuades its audience to stay with him. In the end, Mogor's tale takes the whole Mughal court under its influence and even Dashwanth starts to paint Qara Köz portraits. Once again, Rushdie emphasizes the narrative power of histories and transgresses the boundary between fact and fiction while entrusting a historical character like Dashwanth with Qara Köz paintings. Creating an alternative history on his canvases, Dashwanth merges fantastic details with historical characters and events. Important historical events like the fall of

Umar Sheikh Mirza, the battles of Babur, and Khanzada Begum's fall into the hands of Wormwood Khan are depicted by Dashwanth (Kangüleç 85). His paintings do not deal with the victories of history but with individual histories. In this respect, they equate official history with individual histories.

> Dashwanth painted the five-, six- and seven-year-old Qara Köz as a supernatural being cocooned in a little egg of light while all around her the battle raged. Babar captured Samarkand but lost Andizhan, then lost Samarkand, then recaptured it, and then lost it again, and his sisters with it. […] Wormwood Khan had heard the legend of the beauty of Babar's elder sister Khanzada Begum and sent a message saying that if Khanzada was surrendered to him then Babar and his family could leave in peace. (*Enchantress* 154)

It is evident that Dashwanth edits the historical information that he received from Mogor's tale and creates another continuous story line. As can be seen in the quotation, his story is more like a mythical story composed out of historical details and his version forms another form of reality within the framework of Rushdie's narrative that equalizes fact and fiction. Dashwanth's mythical version of Qara Köz's story becomes so real that he eventually transgresses the boundary between fact and fiction, and vanishes into his own narrative.

> A week and a day after Dashwanth's disappearance the wisest of Akbar's courtiers, who had been scrutinizing the surface of the last remaining picture of the hidden princess in the hope of finding a clue, noticed a strange technical detail which had thus far gone undetected. It seemed as if the painting did not stop at the patterned borders in which Dashwanth had set it but, at least in the bottom left-hand corner, continued for some distance beneath that ornate two-inch-wide frame. […] and under the supervision of the two Persian masters the painted border was carefully separated from the main body of the work. When the hidden section of the painting was revealed the onlookers burst into cries of amazement, for there, crouching down like a little toad, with a great bundle of paper scrolls under his arm, was Dashwanth the great painter […], Dashwanth released into the only world in which he now believed, the world of the hidden princess, whom he had created and who had then uncreated him. (*Enchantress* 158-59)

O'Gorman argues that "the bringing of unreality into realty through textual representation has a consuming power that may be dangerous if left unacknowledged" (36). In this respect, Dashwanth case proves the influence of storytelling on people as well as its ability to produce new realities. His alternative visual space that depicts his own account of history is very similar to the textual space of Rushdie's narrative. Indeed, Dashwanth's paintings mirror Rushdie's writing style, because its intertwined narrative types lure people to a magical world where historical accounts are hidden under the mask of magic. In this way, the hierarchical order of the texts, which favours history texts over literature, is shattered as well and all texts are equalized in the eyes of the reader. Like Babur and Mogor who rewrite the Mughal history, Dashwanth creates another reality as the master of his canvases.

As can be understood from his other novels like *Midnight's Children*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* or *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie believes that history is the product of a cumulative process and is always subject to change. In other words, it is palimpsestic in nature. As each writer compiles and edits the historical information learnt from other texts,

the past changes in line with the historian's discourse and reappears in new forms. When Rushdie creates alternative narrators and narrative spaces for the hidden princess Qara Köz, he projects the multiplicity of truth in history writing. As Akbar's court learns of Qara Köz's story from Mogor, Rushdie complicates the storyline and adds a preceding narrator whose nickname is the Memory Palace. She turns out to be the lost French princess whose path is crossed with Qara Köz's lover Argalia the Janissary in Istanbul.

The name Memory Palace is a direct reference to Cicero's *De Oratore* and an unknown Greek writer's *The Rhetorica*. In these works, the memory palace is explained as the building in man's head where the memories are stored (*Enchantress* 205). Rushdie's views on the concept of memory and the symbolic function of the Memory Palace for the rest of *The Enchantress* must be detailed at this juncture. Rushdie emphasizes the failure of memory in an interview, saying: "I was only remembering certain things very vividly, sometimes accurately and sometimes not, that, because they were fragments of the past, they became somehow much more powerful, as though they were bits of archaeological remains one had discovered and from which one was trying to reconstruct what the vanished civilization was like" (in Durix 12). Rushdie implies that memory is the archive of an individual's past moments which is used to reconstruct the past in the present, but it is an unreliable and misleading source. As argued by Ender, memory is also "a site of continuous activity" (5). In other words, the images of the past are constantly reproduced in line with the subject, his/her mood during the remembrance process and the context of his/her narrative. The memory keeps fragmented information, and while the information is recalled in the present, it is re-interpreted and edited within a new discourse and the missing points are restored through fictionalization. Therefore, memory works like a historian and may contain both facts and fiction together. In this context, Rushdie's character, the Memory Palace, symbolizes the subjective and linguistic nature of memory and draws attention to the main subversion in the Qara Köz tale.

Starting with the story of Argalia's childhood, the Memory Palace can be regarded as an allegorical character that stands for Argalia's memory. As a result, Argalia's story including his relationship with Qara Köz is a subjective account of the real from the very beginning. Once again, the Memory Palace's tale mixes fact and fiction by referring to the real historical events like the Ottoman siege of Treibzond, the Ottoman battle against Vlad Dracula of Romania as well as the education of the Janissaries (Kangüleç 87). Like other individual histories in *The Enchantress*, her narrative is based on the historical facts in spite of its fictionalized texture. This time, Argalia's version of history that is complementary to the story of Qara Köz is presented. Another important point to note is that Mogor does not listen to Qara Köz's story from herself, but from Argalia's Memory Palace. Not an omnipotent narrator, Argalia is a mere observer of Qara Köz's life and feelings, and thus his memory does not include a continuous, objective and complete information about her, which makes one of the first narratives about Qara Köz a subjective account full of missing and subverted information. Since Mogor's tale is the rewriting of Argalia's memories, Qara Köz's tale is once again reproduced through Mogor's retelling of the story. In this way, Rushdie undermines the claims of objective history writing and repeats his support for the multiplicity of the real. Only after reading the different versions of the same past told by Babur, Mogor, Dashwanth and the Memory Palace, the story of Qara Köz gets completed. Still, the end product is not an accurate source of history.

To conclude, Rushdie uses different narrators and different textual spaces, all of which are interrelated to each other although they offer a different and fragmented version of the same past. Each version of the past is the product of a certain discourse, and thus

they are subjective, manipulative and unreliable. Through the tales of Akbar and Babur, Rushdie questions the concept of the real and reveals the manipulation in history writing under the oppression of the power-holders. Mogor's tale focusing on Qara Köz exemplifies the power of story-telling over people, restores Qara Köz's place in history and proves that history can be rewritten as power changes hands. The Memory Palace's tale completes the missing parts of the Qara Köz tale and questions the reliability of memory. Together, these tales present a panorama of the sixteenth century Mughal court, revealing the textuality of history and introducing individual histories instead of the history.

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# A Utopian Decay: Oscar Wilde, Art and Utopia[1]

**Ansı Sev Ateş**

**Abstract:** The *fin de siècle*, the heyday of aestheticism, was a period of uncertainty and rapid change. It was also a period of clash of various ideological stances and world views, and this atmosphere of crisis gave emergence to various, usually conflicting literary and sociological developments. It should be noted, however, that while the distinctive mood of the *fin de siècle* was a feeling of failure and doom, this crisis was also capable of producing hope from within. Although the representative figures of aestheticism and the decadent movement laid no claim to any ideological stance, their works were subversive and utopian. This paper proposes to discuss the movements as expressions of this hope that provided an implicit commentary on that crisis, and it explores this utopian element focusing on Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as well as some of his well-known essays.

**Keywords:** Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, utopia, aestheticism, decadence, art, literature

In his preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* published in 1891, Wilde stated, "[d]iversity of opinion about a work of art shows that the work is new, complex, and vital" (4). Immediately after its initial publication, the novel received a huge amount of reactionary comments, which forced him to make this defence. Wilde's preoccupation with pure art, after the example set by Walter Pater, was seemingly new, and in a sense it was a pose adopted to criticize the mainstream set of values and way of life. For an artist who regarded art as the supreme form of creation, the taste of "the Philistines" was vulgar, their values were base, yet their judgment was the guiding one. Accordingly, throughout his life and in his work, Wilde sought negativity and attributed art a utopian function. Even in his final work, "De Profundis", he was preoccupied with this oppressive outlook, and kept defending the autonomy of art and of the individual, arguing, "[h]e is the Philistine who upholds and aids the heavy, cumbrous, blind, mechanical forces of society, and who does not recognize dynamic force when he meets it either in a man or a movement" (882). In his work, by following the principle of art for art's sake, Wilde strove to give an independent existence to the work of art while positing it in opposition to the value judgements imposed by these "mechanical forces" of society. This attitude made him an exponent of the reformative and utopian potential inherent in art.

The utopian potential is inherent in the works of most of the aesthetes and decadent authors of the period. The *fin de siècle*, the heyday of aestheticism and literary decadence, was a period of uncertainty and, in Lyn Pykett's words, "a crisis in civilisation" (2). It was a period of clash of various ideologies and world views, and it is not surprising that such a crisis gave emergence to various, usually conflicting literary and sociological developments. It should be noted, however, that while the distinctive mood of the *fin de siècle* was a feeling of failure and doom, this condition of crisis was also capable of producing hope from within. Aestheticism and the decadent movement were the expressions of this hope; the literature of the period embodied implicit commentaries on

[1] This paper is based on my doctoral dissertation submitted to the Department of English Language and Literature at Ege University.

that crisis. Although the aesthetes and decadents laid no claim to any ideological stance, their works were both subversive and utopian. This study aims to explore this subversive and utopian element focusing specifically on Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as well as some of his essays.

Wilde has continued to be a controversial figure since his lifetime, and his position both as a participant and an opponent of the cultural milieu of nineteenth-century England has been highlighted by various critics. These critics pointed out the paradoxical nature of his stance, arguing that Wilde as a writer and a public figure partook of this cultural atmosphere he ostensibly stood against. Recently Josephine M. Guy and Ian Small argued, for example, that "in his attitude towards his career as a writer, Wilde was (to adapt Norbert Kohl's terms) more the conformist than the rebel, much more complicit with, than critical of the commercial interests of late nineteenth century British literary and theatrical culture" (12). From a perspective, this argument has validity; he gained popularity and became an iconic figure in the 1880s. Although he constantly wrote against the poor taste of the masses, he was very popular for his time. Moreover, he assumed the self-conscious pose of the dandy, both partaking of and criticizing the consumerism and comfort of this milieu. The fact that aestheticism was both the product of and existed in opposition to the bourgeois culture has also been extensively discussed by various critics such as Regenia Gagnier and Jonathan Freedman. As Gagnier puts it, "the 1890's dandies Wilde and Whistler accepted the commercialism that artists were forced to adopt if they wanted to participate in life. In an age of debased production, their commercial products were nothing less than themselves" (83). Similarly, Freedman states that "Wilde learned (at first giddily, thereafter tragically) that within [the mass market economy], one's very being could be transformed into a marketable good – a piece of information, an object of publicity, gossip, and revilement, all in the interests of selling more papers" (1998, 5). The aesthetes, then, were acutely aware of the commercialization of the artist, and they were in a sense impelled to take it as a given. This awareness on the part of the artist brought about a paradoxical reciprocity; the artist had to participate in the mechanics of commercialism while criticizing it. Such negative reciprocity implies, however, that it is not possible to consider Wilde merely as a figure seeking popularity or affirmation either by means of participation or disapproval. As Marcuse argues in *The Aesthetic Dimension*, "[t]he fact that the artist belongs to a privileged group negates neither the truth nor the aesthetic quality of his work" (18). For Wilde, too, art is and aspires to be autonomous. This autonomy turns a work of art into a complex, multi-dimensional entity and also constitutes its utopian aspect. However controversial Wilde's stance may be, his ideas about art imply his recognition of art's utopian potential which functions both at ontological and epistemological levels.

On the other hand, Fritz states that it is necessary to "avoid the temptation to cast Wilde as either rebellious or complicit, triumphant or vanquished" (307), which reveals the polarities Wildean criticism has so far created. He was a controversial figure during his lifetime and he has continued to be an intriguing figure, because his work allowed for various, even contradictory perspectives. It is therefore necessary to recognize the complexity of drives and diversity of stances. Having admitted the impossibility of drawing out a uniform portrait of his, I nevertheless believe that Wilde's popularity during his lifetime may accurately be attributed to the fact that, however aloof they may seem, his works reflected the complex truth about the Victorians. He was a disturbingly appealing figure. He occupied the insecure space linking reality to art, in some respects even turned himself into a work of art, which appealed to his audience, albeit out of differing reasons. Some saw their own reflection in Wilde's work, while some others saw what they wanted

to evade. As is well known, Wilde's ambivalent public appeal continued until he was charged with "gross indecency" and sentenced to two years' hard labour, which was shortly followed by his death in exile.

His catastrophic fall may be taken as proof of the ambiguous and insecure position he occupied within this culture, which informed his writings. As already implied, from this perspective, his aestheticism gains a political dimension, and must be taken as a commentary on the society that he wrote about and against. Although ideology is all-encompassing, art is capable of developing an alternative outlook from within. As Pierre Macherey states, "[a] work is established against an ideology as much as it is from an ideology" (133). A work of art and the social conditions that produce it are in direct relationship to one another, and any attempt to evaluate a work of art independently of its roots would be reductionism. Yet art also aspires to be beyond these conditions. That is why Wilde's emphasis on art for art's sake, when considered with relation to the concept of utopia, can yield a more holistic view of his position in the literary circles and cultural life of late nineteenth-century England. The aim of this paper, accordingly, is to consider his notion of art and its relation to utopia as integral to, but also transcendent of, the reality of the period; and his ideas regarding the nature of art are studied with a focus on their capacity to indicate transcendence.

John Gross observes that aestheticism has various political implications varying from a reactionary outlook to political quietism. He adds that in Wilde's case, aestheticism meant a sort of socialism (171-72). Although I do borrow from Marxist terminology and make use of the ideas of Marxist critics, I believe that Wilde's definition of utopia goes beyond the definitions and formulations provided by those critics. I also believe that Wilde took the concept of utopia out of its Marxist context and turned it into an ever-changing concept which refuses to draw a definitive picture of the future, yet points towards a state of being which constantly evolves and is potentially real; in Wilde's use of the term it becomes a concept which negates its identification with "nowhere". This may be read as an anticipation of Bloch's concept of concrete utopia he discussed in *The Principle of Hope*; it may be argued that by means of his detached aestheticism, Wilde defines his "homeland". It indeed sounds identical to Bloch's formulation of concrete utopia; yet in the sense Wilde employs the concept, it has a wider signification devoid of an alignment to the Marxist outlook. Wilde did not explicitly advocate class struggle, in fact, this is partly why he has been blamed to be a wishful thinker. My argument, however, is that the wishful thinking he exhibits in his work does not annul his connection to the reality of his time; his utopianism directly addresses this reality although he does not offer an explicit depiction of his utopia. With an awareness of the fact that Wilde's stance cannot be read unanimously, I aim to consider art both as the embodiment and the conveyor of Wilde's own idiosyncratic utopia, and read *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as well as some of his well-known essays as expressions of his utopian outlook.

As is well known, utopia and ideology are significant concepts for Marxist criticism, and the interdependence between ideology, utopia and art has been highlighted by various critics within this tradition. Herbert Marcuse, for instance, extensively discussed the subversive potential of art and its utopian function, and highlighted its emancipatory nature. In his view,

> [t]he political potential of art lies only in its own aesthetic dimension. Its relation to praxis is inexorably indirect, mediated, and frustrating. The more immediately political the work of art, the more it reduces the power of estrangement and the radical, transcendent goals of change. In this sense, there may be more subversive

> potential in the poetry of Baudelaire and Rimbaud than in the didactic plays of Brecht. (xii-xiii)

Marcuse thus put emphasis on the inner dynamics of the work of art rather than its direct relationship to the ideological forces creating it. From his perspective, art has the capacity to create a feeling of estrangement, which indicates its potential to go beyond the limits of the ideological framework that produced it and to show this framework from without. And paradoxically, this potential is most obvious in works which lay no claim to an ideological commitment.

Fredric Jameson also emphasised the emancipatory nature of art. Nonetheless, he was more cautious while evaluating this emancipatory potential. He argued that each cultural product carries the traces of freedom along with oppression within itself. According to Jameson, "within the symbolic power of art and culture the will to domination perseveres intact" (277), which highlights the omnipresent nature of ideology. Yet, he also maintained that "all class consciousness—or in other words, all ideology in the strongest sense, including the most exclusive forms of ruling-class consciousness just as much as that of oppositional or oppressed classes—is in its very nature Utopian" (267). He thus underscored the variable nature of utopia, and maintained that there are multiple utopias which are in a dialectical relationship with each other. He also emphasised that the difference among them lies in the different forms of consciousness they embody as well as in their potential. While the class consciousness of the oppressed is more universal and emancipatory, that of the ruling class is repressive and violent (268-69).

Wilde's works embody this emancipatory utopian potential. While in some of his works he expressly manifested his interest in the idea of utopia, he explored the concept implicitly in some others. His extensive emphasis on the autonomy of the individual and of art is at odds with the dominant perspective of his time, and shows his preoccupation with transcendence. This utopian perspective was initially made manifest in some of his essays. When he, in the persona of Gilbert, famously argued in "The Critic as Artist" that "England will never be civilised till she has added Utopia to her dominions" (982), he openly expressed this preoccupation.

> There is more than one of her colonies that she might with advantage surrender for so fair a land. What we want are unpractical people who see beyond the moment, and think beyond the day. Those who try to lead the people can only do so by following the mob. It is through the voice of one crying in the wilderness that the ways of the gods must be prepared. (982)

To Wilde, living in the moment was not as significant and vital as envisioning utopia. He developed his argument by implying that the agency of the individual was what was needed to bring about a transcendence of the reality of the time. Indeed, autonomy and the individual takes up a huge space within his discussion of utopia, and for Wilde, art is the unique manifestation of the autonomy of the individual, and the sole means of achieving utopia.

Throughout his writing, Wilde either implies or openly states that the recognition of the autonomous individual is a must for development. In "The Soul of Man Under Socialism", he argues that giving primacy to individualism is what is needed for "the full development of life" (1019). In this essay, he brings together two concepts which are regarded to be mutually exclusive: individualism and socialism. Critics have long been intrigued by Wilde's reconciliation of these concepts. Jarlath Killeen, for instance,

maintains that the essay has a deeply ironic tone. Some others think on the contrary, and state that the two concepts are not exclusive of one another and that his paradoxical language is intentional. Hilary Fraser argues, for instance, that "[i]n *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, Socialism is defined in moral rather than political terms" (198). In the same vein, Dollimore observes that these concepts are adopted by Wilde to transgress the readily accepted notions imposed by the dominant outlook: "Individualism joins with socialism to abolish other kinds of conformity, including, says Wilde, family life and marriage, each being unacceptable because rooted in and perpetuating the ideology of property" (41); he maintains that Wilde uses these concepts as a strategy to subvert the unquestioned authority of the institutions so much prized by nineteenth-century consumerism. Still another critic, Matthew Beaumont, discusses the meaning of the concept of individualism in the sense Wilde uses, and states, "Wilde does not mean the kind of individualism that is 'now more or less dependent on the existence of private property for its development' (296), an ethic of the marketplace that is indissociable from the idea of competition. On the contrary, he is here referring to the individual creativity that, if it is ultimately an inalienable part of human identity, is stifled or repressed in a capitalist society" (16). To Beaumont, individualism takes on a different sense within the context Wilde creates, pointing towards the autonomy of the artist. Despite their differing interpretations, all these critics make manifest the fact that Wilde criticises capitalism and its institutions, and tries to give primacy to individualism, which conveyed freedom from the consumerist mechanisms of the period. To Wilde, "[a]rt is the most intense mood of Individualism that the world has known. I am inclined to say that it is the only real mode of Individualism that the world has known" (1938c, 1029). He considers art in close proximity to the concept of individualism as it is the sole means of expression, and adds that the oppressive power of the masses on art is "as immoral as it is ridiculous, and as corrupting as it is contemptible" (1029); the control exercised over art and the artist is immoral because it deters development and change. Wilde highlights the discrepancy between the nature of the work of art and the evaluative standards set by the masses, because the judgement of morality so emphasised by the masses functions as a control mechanism used to censure art.

Wilde, then, seeks an intact space for the work of art and the artist. He grants art a position above any form of authority, whether it be governmental, religious or public. "The work of art is to dominate the spectator: the spectator is not to dominate the work of art" (1035), he states, emphasising the importance of art's autonomy. He thus ascribes art a reformative function. As already stated, art is the clearest manifestation of individual expression for Wilde, and it is laden with a certain power: "Art is Individualism, and Individualism is a disturbing and disintegrating force" (1030). It is important to note that this power does not imply an overtly political mission. Wilde does not argue for committed art; rather, art can fulfil its function only when it is autonomous. He therefore advocates art the subversive power of which emerges from its being above any ideological stance.

Wilde's utopian outlook reveals itself most clearly at this point; "the past is of no importance. The present is of no importance. It is with the future that we have to deal. For the past is what man should not have been. The present is what man ought not to be. The future is what artists are" (1039). The past and the present are inconsequential because they have been what utopia is not. Nevertheless, the future still carries the potential of change; it is where, to use Bloch's designation, "hope" is invested in. Art and the artist are the guides to this future. Jody Price, discussing the utopian aspect of Wilde's works, develops a similar argument about Wilde's perspective of the nature of art, and states that "Wilde's theory of aestheticism is what he believes will 'save' everyone from the oppression of

capitalism" (2). She also argues "Oscar Wilde is an essentialist who believes in a human nature which can be realized once thousands of years of oppressive socialization are scraped away" (7). Although she maintains that such concepts as multiplicity and diversity are also within the range of his philosophy, her claim about Wilde's essentialism implies that Wilde had a definitive utopian vision which only existed with reference to its opposite rather than suggesting a plurality of possibilities. I think, however, that by investing art with a utopian potential, Wilde tries to go beyond any essentialist thinking. Although he takes the mainstream Victorian culture as a point of reference, he refrains from giving a concrete depiction of the utopian future, which cannot be unintentional. He avoids such a depiction as all systematic descriptions of utopia have been dismissed as unrealistic and unrealizable; rather, he relies on the dynamic potential of the concept. Avoiding such a definition, Wilde equates utopia with art, which is the individual's only output not subject to decay, and has the largest potential to embody and communicate truth.

The most extensive manifestation of Wilde's utopian perspective is probably given in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The novel focuses on art and carries the indications of Wilde's subversive use of the concept. Admittedly, the text does not offer a clear-cut argument. On the contrary, as is the case with Wilde's aphorisms, it constantly deconstructs itself and refuses to present a definitive statement, which enables Wilde to explore the potential of art in all directions. About this potential Richard Ellmann writes,

> by its creation of beauty art reproaches the world, calling attention to the world's faults through their very omission; so the sterility of art is an affront or a parable. Art may also outrage the world by flouting its laws or by picturing indulgently their violation. Or art may seduce the world by making it follow an example which seems bad but is discovered to be better than it seems. (1998, 34)

Ellmann observes that within the context Wilde creates, art projects different states of existence; it is represented above reality and provides alternative ways of perceiving and reacting to this reality. It either judges, reflects, or sets an example.

The paradoxes Wilde employs extensively are an aspect of the subversive nature of the text. He privileges paradoxes in his writing, which is one of his strategies of revealing and undermining the complex nature of the prevailing social structures. These epigrammatic statements must have had considerable effect in creating an image of Wilde as the detached, corrupt artist. Moreover, as Thain suggests, a paradox may be employed in order to reassemble a world that is falling apart and at the same time to recognize a newly emerging one (226). This is the case with Wilde's epigrams; by means of them he reveals and reinforces the reformative potential inherent in art. Still another aspect may be added to these points. As a means of communicating truth, he uses paradoxes to imply various dimensions of reality in a society that passes and imposes one-dimensional, clear-cut judgments: "The way of paradoxes is the way of truth" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 40). Accordingly, Brown states that, for Wilde, "*truth itself is contradictoriness*, or perhaps twofoldness" (93) (emphasis original), and his paradoxes enable him to communicate this contradictoriness, which highlights the complexity of truth.

In the novel, Wilde makes extensive use of paradoxical statements, yet this is only one aspect of the text's utopian nature. Throughout the work Wilde explores the various dimensions and possibilities of art; in this sense it is a work that reflects on its own nature. There are various layers of meaning, and as stated by Ellmann above, the text at once reproaches, outrages and seduces. Wilde makes each character express an aspect of the

experience of art, and the text is the sum of all these perspectives. Thus it becomes an expression of that which is too complex to be readily communicable.

Each of the main characters of the novel may be read as representing an aspect of Wilde's stance. Lord Henry is one of these characters through whom Wilde expresses negativity and comments on the transgressive nature of art. He is decadent, art-loving, and constantly preaches immorality. As Philip K. Cohen jokingly states, "Harry is immoral even according to his own standards" (141). Nonetheless, his immorality does not find its counterpart in his actions. Basil points this out, and says, "[y]ou never say a moral thing, and you never do a wrong thing. Your cynicism is simply a pose" (8). Jody Price highlights that "Lord Henry, like Basil, is fragmented from whom he would like to be and what he is because of cowardice. He is too weak to challenge social convention, and too frightened of exclusion from society's dinner tables" (92). Yet, Lord Henry's pose may also be considered to be a means of subversion, enabling Wilde to turn the expectations of the reader upside down. After all, he is the only character who most frequently and openly addresses the issues of morality and immorality; while he speaks approvingly of the immoral, he essentially questions the nature of these received ideas and destabilizes them.

Nevertheless, his influence on Dorian is problematic, and the novel presents it as a form of immorality. The idea of influence assumes a variety of forms throughout the novel, as underlined by Mighall (236). Since the character of Dorian Gray is shaped under his influence, he is responsible for Dorian's doom. He first claims that "[a]ll influence is immoral [...]. Because to influence a person is to give him one's own soul. [...] He becomes an echo of some one else's music, an actor of a part that has not been written for him" (20), but later on he reflects: "There was something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence. [...] [T]here was a real joy in that – perhaps the most satisfying joy left to us in an age so limited and vulgar as our own, an age grossly carnal in its pleasures, and grossly common in its aims" (37). His influence on Dorian is very strong; in fact, he turns Dorian into an echo of his ideas. Dorian, a tabula rasa before meeting Lord Henry, parrots his aphorisms. This is significant because, as Freedman notes, "[s]ubjectivity so constituted, [...] is never free from the forces of power, domination, and control" (1990, 43). To Wilde, all influence is immoral as it effaces individuality, and is equated with mediocrity and vulgarity. The only immoral act attributable to Lord Henry, therefore, may be his influence on Dorian.

Yet, Lord Henry is first and foremost the playful spokesperson of the decadents, and to a certain extent, of Wilde himself. He speaks in paradoxes, constantly disturbing the notions about morality. "Sin is the only real colour-element left in modern life" (30), he comments in his usual playful tone. However, he argues just the opposite towards the end of the novel, and to Dorian he says, "[a]ll crime is vulgar, just as all vulgarity is crime. [...] Crime belongs exclusively to the lower orders" (203). To him, vulgarity is a crime simply because it diverts from the cult of beauty. Here, Wilde is again preoccupied with the ideas about morality, immorality, sin and guilt, and the novel is full of such aphorisms by Lord Henry which partly reflect Wilde's own stance. While Lord Henry is speaking to Basil, he says that "[m]odern morality consists in accepting the standard of one's age. I consider that for any man of culture to accept the standard of his age is a form of the grossest immorality" (76), which reminds one of Wilde at the court, defending himself against charges of immorality. Wilde grants him negativity by making him play with the expectations of the reader, and adopt the stance of the outsider. Lord Henry thus becomes the character through which Wilde reflects his decadent outlook; he is the immoral dandy who constantly speaks in paradoxes and deconstructs the bourgeois morality.

Although Wilde uses a character from the nobility to communicate his critique of society and social convention, Lord Henry's stance is not shaped exclusively by his social status, and behind his aloofness is the aim of drawing attention to the necessity of transcendence of these conventions. As Dowling remarks, Lord Henry is

> meant to translate into an older language of rank and status Wilde's conviction that aesthetic consciousness represents, especially amid the bleakness of a modern mass or industrial society, a superior mode of existence, a way of being in the world that is in some genuine sense higher, richer, and more complete than is available to those who choose to remain ignorant of art, literature, and music. (95)

The primary source of Lord Henry's negativity, then, is his aesthetic consciousness. His interest in the world centres on beauty and art, even his class-consciousness is shaped by and focused on the notion of beauty and individualism. At one point he says, for instance, that "the real tragedy of the poor is that they can afford nothing but self-denial. Beautiful sins, like beautiful things, are the privilege of the rich" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 76). What is central to his perspective is not his social status, but what his status enables him to do.

Basil Hallward, too, comments on the nature of art, albeit from a different viewpoint. In his case, art becomes a means of expression; it is his means of expression of his desire for Dorian. He gradually develops an attachment to Dorian's portrait: "I grew afraid that others would know of my idolatry" (111), he says, regretful of this admiration, which transgresses the limits of social convention. As Jody Price argues, "Basil represents anyone who is forced to hide one's 'soul' from society" (87). Again as Price remarks, "Basil rejects human contact and passion, for it would expose him to social condemnation. [...] Basil is the antithesis of the artist who is transgressively reinscribed into the culture as a subversive element to challenge hegemony" (87). From this perspective, rather than challenging the notion of morality and propriety imposed by the social norms, Basil concedes to suppress his identity and desires. Yet, he includes the subversive element in his art. By means of Dorian's portrait, Basil defines art as the ultimate means of expression. "I really can't exhibit it. I have put too much of myself into it" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 6), he protests, when Lord Henry suggests him to send the portrait to an exhibition. Indeed, the portrait is not a proper work of art by his standards. He observes that "[a]n artist should create beautiful things, but should put nothing of his own life into them. We live in an age when men treat art as if it were meant to be a form of autobiography. We have lost the abstract sense of beauty" (14). Paradoxically, therefore, his admiration for Dorian is not only what his art feeds on but also that which impairs his existence as an artist.

Dorian's overarching influence over Basil becomes evident immediately after his initial encounter with Dorian: "A curious sensation of terror came over me. I knew that I had come face to face with someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself" (9-10). Later on, he confesses that Dorian's presence did affect him profoundly. "Dorian, from the moment I met you, your personality had the most extraordinary influence over me. I was dominated, soul, brain, and power by you" he tells Dorian shortly before being killed by him (110). Just as Dorian loses his individuality because of Lord Henry's influence, Basil sacrifices his being to Dorian.

The relationship between Basil and Dorian also indicates Wilde's struggle for survival in society; the parallel between Wilde and Basil has been noted by various critics and Wilde himself. As he remarks in an interview, "Basil Hallward is what I think I am:

Lord Henry what the world thinks me: Dorian what I would like to be—in other ages perhaps" (in Sturgis 124). Matthew Sturgis draws attention to this autobiographical element distributed among the characters of the novel, and writes, "Wilde's self-identification with the upright Hallward suggests that his regard for convention, even conventional morality, was much greater that his outward – Henry Wooton-ish – pose would allow" (124). This note signifies Wilde's feeling of entrapment in a society the conventional morality of which is a constraining force both for himself and for his art. Moe Meyer draws attention to this autobiographical parallel, and carrying the implication further, highlights the symbolic emancipation presented in the novel. Meyer points out that "[t]he apparent murder of Basil by Dorian actually marks the conceptual birth of Wilde's homosexual social identity by freeing the artist from self-definitional dependence upon the posed model" (88). Symbolically, then, Basil's death may be read as his emancipation. He detaches himself from Dorian's influence, and his art survives in Dorian's body. Meyer remarks that "[a]s Dorian commits crime after crime, his interiority is reflected by the mutating monster on the canvas, but his body surfaces, because they now signify only Basil's desire purified under the ideal of art, remain unchanging and immortal" (87). Thus, Basil's art continues to exist in Dorian free from his interior corruption; on a symbolic level art is purified of corruption and decay, and the canvas becomes the mirror of Dorian's conscience. At the end the ugly image in the canvas resumes its original form; Dorian's death marks the moment when the canvas retains the original form created by Basil. Consequently, art reasserts its autonomy.

The main character, Dorian, is perhaps the most ambiguous one. He is at once the idealized subject of a work of art and the embodiment of evil. Wilde's novel is a tale laden with a moral obvious to modern readers despite Wilde's attempts to conceal it as much as possible, and this moral is most clear in the case of Dorian since he demonstrates the consequences of mere hedonism. As Ellmann suggests, "*Dorian Gray* is the aesthetic novel *par excellence*, not in espousing the doctrine, but in exhibiting its dangers" (1988, 297). Nonetheless, it would be an oversimplification to evaluate his position solely from a moralistic point of view. He is the embodiment of the tension between the surface and reality, between the caricature and the individual. The work of art, reflecting the subjectivity of the artist along with that of the model, represents a multidimensional existence whereas Dorian, despite being the subject of art, exists in opposition to it, representing surface without depth.

The idea of corruption is explored most overtly through this character. The initial traces of corruption in Dorian's character as well as the split between Dorian and the portrait emerge when he abandons Sybil, a lower-class actress, and subsequently causes her suicide. At first Dorian is impressed by her because he has "seen her in every age and in every costume" (51) and also because "she is all the great heroines of the world in one. She is more than an individual" (54). What appeals to him is not Sybil as an individual, but her art. She seems to be an agent for the fulfilment of Dorian's wish to experience all sensations. It is not surprising that Dorian's refusal to acknowledge the ethical dimension of his actions manifests itself in Sybil's case first, and her death accentuates Dorian's alienation to his conscience. When Sybil decides to quit acting, she says: "You taught me what reality really is. [...] I have grown sick of shadows. You are more to me than all art can ever be" (84). "You have killed my love" (84) replies Dorian, with a sudden change of feeling towards Sybil. As Ellmann observes, "Sibyl is no mere performer; her fatal weakness in his eyes is that she values life above art. She loses her capacity to act because, instead of preferring shadows to reality as she once did, she is drawn by love to prefer

reality" (1988, 298). If the novel is an account of Dorian's eventual fall, Sybil's death is the first indication of his doom, pointing towards the outcome of his reluctance to recognize existence fully in all its dimensions. By reducing life to individual moments of experience, ignoring the relationship between life and art, and subordinating one to the other, Dorian takes the decisive step towards this fall. It is important that the first change on the portrait emerges after Sybil's death. Paradoxically, as Dorian subordinates life to art, the work of art mirrors his moral corruption. Obviously he fails to recognize the interdependence of the two.

As discussed above, Dorian is the outcome of Lord Henry's influence; his identity is a reflection of Lord Henry's ideas. His portrait drawn by Basil, on the other hand, functions as his mirror; this mirror is important in that it negates Dorian. As Jackson maintains, "[b]y presenting images of the self in another space (both familiar and unfamiliar), the mirror provides versions of self transformed into another, become something or someone else. It employs distance and difference to suggest the instability of the 'real' on this side of the looking-glass and it offers unpredictable (apparently impossible) metamorphoses of self into other" (87-8). Dorian's portrait, accordingly, functions as a mirror that creates an image of the other, and highlights the difference between the original and the self. Throughout the novel, the difference between Dorian and his image gets deeper, indicating his corruption; he eventually grows horrified of "the terrible portrait whose changing features showed him the real degradation of his life" (135). While Dorian does not change but turns into a stable image, the portrait undergoes constant metamorphosis; as it gets uglier, the contrast between Dorian and the living portrait gets deeper.

Dorian's lack of individuality entails lack of emotional depth. As Nicolas Daly observes "Dorian becomes increasingly a 'thing', an unchanging automaton whose defining trait is an appetite for sensation, as his portrait becomes increasingly lifelike" (101). The fact that Dorian is a passive receptor of sensations indicates this degradation; the portrait, on the contrary, is endowed with an independent existence. The only change that he experiences is his deepening corruption, and while the mirror gets more powerful as Dorian's corruption increases, Dorian is enfeebled by it. As Mighall observes, "'[c]onscience' (whether one reads that in sacred or secular terms) is strongly delineated in the novel. Dorian believes that he has destroyed conscience, but in truth it destroys him" (xxviii). Similarly Philip K. Cohen argues, "[t]he portrait will mock Dorian, and he will kill himself, but inward corruption rather than the loss of beauty will drive him to self-destruction" (134). While the portrait mirrors this decay, the parallel between the original and the mirror gets weaker, and the portrait constantly accentuates his corruption. The fixity of the subject is thus contrasted with the multi-dimensional nature of the work of art.

The link between Dorian and his portrait is significant also because it reveals the discrepancy between appearance and reality. As Christopher Craft argues, "[i]nstead of transposing surfaces laterally as everyday mirrors do, the portrait reverses the usual relation between surface and depth, core and facia. It turns Dorian inside out so his eyes may witness what, by definition, they cannot see at all – the legible condition of his inner being" (114-15). This reminds the reader of the double lives maintained at the time. The notorious cult of respectability that was promoted during the period has been highlighted by various critics. Peter Ackroyd, for instance, drawing attention to the multiple layers of meaning invested in the novel, depicts the novel as "one of the best narrations of the 'double life' of a Victorian gentleman, so it is also one of the best accounts of the divisions within London itself" (229). The novel indeed is a commentary on many aspects of the age; it reflects the split personalities of the Victorians as well as the sharp division between the different

segments of society. Just as the painting is the conscience of Dorian, works of art are represented as the conscience of the age and society. Lord Henry once tells Dorian, "[a]rt has no influence upon action" (208). Yet, this statement is ultimately undermined when Dorian attempts to destroy the painting and kills himself instead. Symbolically, this end points towards art's utopian function as it is represented both as a point of reference and a judicial power. Similarly, when Lord Henry states that "[t]he books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame", the text equates those "immoral books" with the portrait (208). As one of the most straightforward statements by Lord Henry, this sentence may be read as a self-reflexive commentary on art's status with relation to the milieu that it mirrors. It once again emphasises the fact that art is directly connected to "the world" it is born into, but it is also beyond this reality.

In "The Critic as Artist" Wilde writes, "[i]t is through Art, and through Art only, that we can realise our perfection" (977). Both in his work and his life he granted art a privileged status above reality and singled it out as the one initiator of change and 'perfection'. This perfection was not clearly defined, however, because Wilde's perspective of utopia did not point towards a static point. Even though utopias are visions and descriptions of a better world, they are of evanescent nature. Besides, once depicted, they embody the risk of stagnation and corruption. Wilde was aware of this ambivalence inherent in the concept, and he chose to replace it with the dialogic nature of art; he thus evaded committing himself to an ideological stance. Adorno remarked that the artist "denounces the narrow untruth of the practical world" (241); and he maintained that a work of art is meaningful and functional to the extent that it cherishes the idea of utopia: "At the center of contemporary antinomies is that art must be and wants to be utopia, and the more utopia is blocked by the real functional order, the more this is true" (32). Wilde, too, by aligning utopia with art and defining art as the ultimate form of individual expression, aimed to go beyond various forms of—to use the once popular formula used to denote ideology--"false consciousness" prevalent during the nineteenth century in England. He was aware of the transcendent power of art, a power which is at once the product of but also beyond any ideological or political bias. Despite all his contradictions, he was a proponent of the autonomy of art and of the individual because for Wilde this autonomy was the prerequisite of change. He was obviously aware of his position as a wishful thinker and he embraced it, trying to use this form of thinking as an outlet from the stifling reality he was a part of. As Rosemary Jackson comments on fantasy, she writes, "fantasy has tried to erode the pillars of society by un-doing categorical structures" (176). I believe this statement is valid for Wilde's stance and work as a whole. To most Victorians, his writings were fantasy, and they did a good deal in eroding the pillars of Victorianism, pointing towards a rather unstable, vague, yet still concrete utopia.

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**Toward the Mastery of Submission:**
**Robert Cohn's Problem with Masochism in *The Sun Also Rises***

**Ng Lay Sion**

**Abstract:** Critics have widely explored the issue of masochism and Jake Barnes in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. However, the connection between masochism and Robert Cohn (who is Jewish) remains unexplored, which becomes the central theme of this article. The first section analyses the formation of Cohn's masochism based on his encounter with dominant women, the practice of boxing, and the anti-Semitic society he is surrounded by. Focusing on the climax of the plot, which includes the fight between Cohn and the Spanish bullfighter Pedro Romero in Pamplona, the second section indicates that through this fight, Cohn comes to embrace his inherent Jewish self and masculinity. The article continues to suggest that Cohn's act of hand-shaking symbolizes a process of self-forgiveness. Taking Jake Barnes' unreliable narration into consideration, the last part of the article proposes a rather optimistic interpretation of Cohn's life after the book ends, that his leaving of Pamplona represents a sign of his mastery of submission.

**Keywords:** Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*, masochism, anti-Semitism, the dominant women, boxing, inherent (Jewish) masculinity, self-realization, otherness

## Introduction

The issue of male heterosexual masochism represented by Jake Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises* has been raised and discussed in Richard Fantina's representative work, *Ernest Hemingway: Machismo and Masochism.* As Fantina suggests, Jake's masochistic desire and behaviour are represented through his wish to imbue Brett with a "phallic sexual agency" (54), his willingness to be positioned in a "state of suspended" throughout the novel (59), his acceptance of humiliation by assisting Brett in connecting with Pedro Romero (57) and so forth. From my viewpoint, these significant instances of masochism performed by Jake take precedence over Robert Cohn's problem with masochism. Instead of focusing on Jake, in this article, I demonstrate Robert Cohn's ambivalent relationship with masochism, suggesting that the essentials of Cohn's masochistic desire and behaviour, which can be found in the practice of boxing and his submission to dominant women, are derived from the increase of anti-Semitism after the First World War. Furthermore, I postulate the climax of the whole plot—the part where Cohn knocks down other characters and his apologetic hand-shaking—as Cohn's version of self-realization, which enables the reader to interpret a rather positive ending regarding Cohn. That is, his leaving Pamplona symbolizes a new starting point for his life—his mastery of submission.

Before going into detailed analysis, the associations between Ernest Hemingway and masochism should be provided. These include: Havelock Ellis, The First War, and Hemingway's upbringing. Firstly, drawing on Michael Reynolds's description that Hemingway is fond of Havelock Ellis, "whom he would continue to read as late as 1939" (124), one comes to believe that other than *Erotic Symbolism*—a book he found so fascinating that he recommended it to Bill Smith later in a letter (120)—Hemingway might have also read *Sexual Inversion* and/or "Love and Pain", which provides a variety of case studies on masochism. In *Erotic Symbolism*, Hemingway found clear descriptions of case histories and classical references of the Krafft-Ebing fetishes, which include the symbolism of self-inflicted pain, shoe-fetishism in relation to masochism, the erotic nature of hair and

so forth. From this aspect, it is possible to affirm that Hemingway's interest in the notion of masochism was inspired by Ellis's works. Indeed, the effect of *Erotic Symbolism* is so clear that Hemingway's way of describing Brett Ashley's hypersexual behaviour in *The Sun Also Rises* is adopted from Ellis's, in which he concentrates on the "what" instead of the "why" of the behaviour (Reynolds 122). Secondly, since masochism serves as a medium to highlight the "historical trauma" originating from The First World War, "Hemingway, who saw action in Italy during the war, arguably has more at stake, risks more, in embracing masochism" (Fantina 26). Like the tortured men in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* and the scenes in "Night town" in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, writers at this particular time often employed the idea of masochism in their works as a way to highlight the loss-of-faith phenomenon in the postwar world (Fantina 26). Thirdly, Hemingway's conflicted attitude towards masculinity can be traced back to the relationship between his dominant mother and his submissive father, which encouraged him to build "a persona of ultra-masculinity" in order to not to become like his father (Fantina 85). Nevertheless, Hemingway was trapped by his own myth of machismo because he was "enslave[d]" by the "androgynous powers" of liberated women (Fantina 157). This leads to a perception that Hemingway himself might be constantly struggling between his macho self and his masochist self.

It is necessary to foreground the definition of masochism as the term adopts new definitions in different periods throughout history. Based on the personal case of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, masochism was first coined by Richard von Krafft-Ebing as a kind of sexual perversion, in which the masochist "in sexual feeling and thought is controlled by the idea of being completely and unconditionally subjected to the will of a person of the opposite sex; of being treated by this person as by a master, humiliated and abused" (28). The term was then popularized by Sigmund Freud, whereby he suggested that the origin of masochism was derived from the male child's castration anxiety caused by a dominant father and that masochism and sadism are symbiotic because "[E]very active perversion is […] accompanied by its passive counterpart" (45). While Freud's understanding of masochism is based on his own psychoanalytical case studies, the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's notion of masochism goes beyond the clinical realm by reviewing the Marquis de Sade's and Sacher-Masoch's literary works. To Deleuze, masochism is different from sadism in terms of sexual practices and narrative structures and furthermore, it is the male child's fear of being abandoned by the mother that serves as the cause of masochism (Thanem and Wallenberg). Following this analysis, by the early twentieth century, masochism had become a problem of the self. As Anita Katz claims, "any behavioral act, verbalization, or fantasy that—by unconscious design—is physically or psychically injurious to oneself, self-defeating, humiliating, or unduly self-sacrificing" can be referred to as masochism (226). In regard to this, Roy F. Baumeister sees masochism not only as "a product of the desire to escape from self" but also a product of socialization. He argues, "the more a society is based on dominance and authority, the more masochistic activity there should be" (39). In this respect, the portrayal of Robert Cohn as a dominant/mature boxer while at the same time a submissive/immature man comes to signify his masochistic self, leading the reader to uncover the social conditions and cultural politics that existed in the 1920s.

## The Formation and Representation of Robert Cohn's Masochism

### The Practice of Boxing

The opening paragraph of the novel gives the reader a sense that there is something "strange" about this character named Robert Cohn.

> Robert Cohn was once middleweight boxing champion of Princeton. [...] He cared nothing for boxing, in fact he disliked it, but he learned it painfully and thoroughly to counteract the feeling of inferiority and shyness he had felt on being treated as a Jew at Princeton. There was a certain inner comfort in knowing he could knock down anybody who was snooty to him, although being very shy and a thoroughly nice boy, he never fought except in the gym. He was Spider Kelly's star pupil. [...] He was so good that Spider promptly overmatched him and got his nose permanently flattened. This increased Cohn distaste for boxing, but it gave him a certain satisfaction of some strange sort, and it certainly improved his nose. In his last year at Princeton he read too much and took to wearing spectacles. I never met any one of his class who remembered him. They did not even remember that he was middleweight boxing champion. (*SAR* 11)

Drawing on the description above, the strangeness of Robert Cohn lies in his conflicted feelings toward the practice of boxing. Despite disliking and caring nothing about boxing, he learns it "painfully and thoroughly"—so painful that he not only feels "a certain inner comfort" when he knocks down his enemy, but there is "a certain satisfaction of some strange sort" that Cohn feels when he is being hit and his nose becomes "permanently flattened". In this respect, Cohn's experience of taking pleasure in pain and humiliation resembles the essential element of masochism.

Following Jake's description, one gets to discover that Cohn is from one of the richest and oldest families in New York (*SAR* 12). Also, Cohn was a boxing champion at Princeton. However, he is not remembered by anyone from his class, not only because he is shy and feels inferior but also because he is a Jew: "No one had ever made him feel he was a Jew, and hence any different from anybody else, until he went to Princeton" (*SAR* 12). Suffering from this lack of self-awareness and possessing low self-esteem, Cohn begins to practice boxing in order to decrease the feeling of inferiority that is derived from his Jewish consciousness. Moreover, Cohn attempts to "undo" his Jewishness by practicing boxing. This explains why Cohn feels a certain pleasure after his nose gets flattened, as this will differentiate him from the Jewish community and help him fit into the white American community.[1] This subversive feeling toward his flattened nose represents his masochistic tendency that is derived from his "painful self-consciousness" (*SAR* 12).

Cohn's painful self-consciousness is deeply rooted in the social oppression directed toward Jews during the 1920s in America. As Kayla Brodkin points out, the period between the 1920s and 1930s was the "peak of anti-Semitism in America", where universities started to restrict Jewish admissions in order to prevent Jewish domination of "white" American culture (26, 30). At that time, Jews were viewed as "unwashed, uncouth, unrefined, loud, and pushy" (Brodkin 30). This wave of anti-Semitism can be further traced back to the First World War, where conflicts between Jews and non-Jews unleashed a wave of anti-Semitism, which resulted in the spreading of anti-Semitic propaganda such as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and the establishment of laws that isolated Jews from entering America (Isaacs). This history of anti-Semitism comes to explain why Cohn's self-consciousness can be so "painful". As Ron Berman claims, "Cohn enjoys or practices suffering because that is a form of passive aggressiveness" (41). The "passive

[1] Regarding the relation between the Jewish nose and Jewish identity, one can refer to Mary Dearborn's description in *Ernest Hemingway: A Biography* that Hemingway once said to a movie producer named Herb Klein that "I'd like to flatten your big Jewish nose", emphasizing the link between Jewish nose and Jewish identity (388).

aggressiveness" Berman notes can be linked to masochism, which is used by Cohn as a way to escape from his inherent self.

In *Masochism and the Self*, Baumeister introduces the theory of "*action identification*", suggesting that the multiple ways of describing actions can also be applied to the theory of the self (27). In other words, human thinking and awareness can be divided into high-levels that carry more abstract and symbolic meaning, and also low-levels that imply less emotional attachment or more mechanical details. Baumeister continues to note, low-level thinking serves as an essential step in the transition from one high-level interpretation to another (28). That is to say, high-level thinking is accomplished by low-level thinking. Regarding masochism, it occurs in low-level consciousness, whereby the self is stripped off the ability to make decisions and to use metaphors, leaving "the original, minimal basis of self": The body (Baumeister 30). In Cohn's case, his practice of boxing can be described as "moving his fists" (low-level) as well as "building his career" (high-level). It is his concentration on the low-level thinking during boxing that enables him to temporarily isolate himself from all the unpleasant feelings—inferiority, anxiety, race-consciousness, guilt—that he has to bear throughout his college life at Princeton. In other words, when Cohn feels pleasure out of the humiliation and pain he receives, he is actually "unmaking the world" he sees, converting his inherent self into a false but pleasant self: a non-Jew (Baumeister 71). In this sense, the practice of boxing is both pain and pleasure as it involves both destruction and reconstruction of the self, pushing Cohn toward the path of masochism.

**The Dominant Women**

Another instance of masochism that is presented by Cohn is his submissive behaviour toward the women he encounters, especially his first wife and his girlfriend Frances Clynes. As Jake emphasizes, "[e]xternally he had been formed at Princeton. Internally he had been molded by the two women who had trained him" (*SAR* 52). Right after leaving Princeton, Cohn is "married by the first girl who was nice to him" (*SAR* 12). Under the contract, Cohn forces himself to live "under domestic unhappiness with [his] rich wife" for five years (*SAR* 12). While suffering from his unhappiness, Cohn is incapable of breaking the contract because he thinks that "it would be too cruel to deprive her of himself" (*SAR* 12). Here, phrases such as "is married by" and "deprive [somebody] of [something]" highlight the unequal power relationship between his wife and Cohn. However, it seems that there is something that thrills Cohn in putting himself into this position, the feeling of suffering for the sake of love. This masochistic idea, as Baumeister reasserts, represents a part of Western culture, in which "modern individuals are well acquainted with the idea that making sacrifices or enduring suffering are acceptable ways of expressing one's love for another" (66). In this sense, Cohn's victimization of himself for the purpose of reinforcing his self-value and masculinity could be part of the influence of romantic culture.

Cohn's perception toward romantic love as masochistic in nature can be linked to the practice of reading, for instance, Jake claims that Cohn "had read and reread 'The Purple Land'", a novel that relates the "splendid imaginary amorous adventures of a perfect English gentleman in an intensely romantic land" (*SAR* 17). When fantasy is substituted for reality, one might see reality as merely an episode in one's fantasy, losing the balance between the two. Indulging in his romantic fantasy inspired by *The Purple Land*, Cohn believes that by traveling to South America, the land of fantasy, the feeling of self-insignificance and emptiness that he has felt in Paris, the land of reality, will disappear.

Cohn had had high hopes that something pleasurable would have happened to him, but Paris disappointed him: "Nothing happened to me. I walked all alone one night and nothing happened, except a bicycle cop stopped me and asked to see my papers" (*SAR* 20). In Paris, Cohn cannot help but feel that something is missing in his life, within his innermost being. As he laments, "[m]y life is going so fast and I'm not really living it" (*SAR* 18). Cohn's strong sense of helplessness is related to the collective mood represented by the Lost Generation, even though he never experienced the war firsthand. However, due to his lack of experience with the war, Cohn does not understand the limitations of his fantasy like Jake does: "You can't get away from yourself by moving from one place to another. There's nothing to that" (*SAR* 19).

Cohn's fantasy continues to lead him toward masochism. Soon after his wife divorces him, he is once again "taken in hand by" Frances Clynes, who is "very forceful": she could not care less if her words offended Cohn (*SAR* 13). Nevertheless, Cohn assumes that this is "love", that during the two-and-a-half year together with Frances he does not even look at another woman (*SAR* 13). As Jake claims, "she led him quite a life" (*SAR* 15). Indeed, the scene that confirms Frances's role as the dominant woman while Cohn the submissive man is shown in Chapter Six, where Frances publicly humiliates Cohn in front of Jake, an important audience to their drama. As Jake claims, "[s]he turned to me with that terribly bright smile. It was very satisfactory to her to have an audience for this" (*SAR* 56). Despite being accused of having an affair with his ex-secretary and being humiliated publicly about his career as a writer, Cohn does not say a thing but is resigned to "taking it all" (*SAR* 47). This submissive behaviour that Cohn demonstrates recalls his proclamation, "I have certain obligations to her" (*SAR* 46). The word "obligation" means "a binding agreement committing a person to a payment or other action" (*OED*). Thus, this could mean that at least to Cohn, there is a "verbal agreement" that he takes up with Frances. As Fantina notes, "the contract, or at least a verbal agreement, forms an important part of many masochistic relationships according to some of its adherents" (61). Cohn's attempt to make Frances sign up to this "agreement" instead of the proper marriage agreement is for the purpose of reversing the power relation between enslavement and law. As Deleuze notes, "[i]n the contractual relation the woman typically figures as an object in the patriarchal system. The contract in masochism reverses this state of affairs by making the woman into the party with whom the contract is entered into" (92). By making Frances the master, the mother, the Cruel Woman, Cohn forefronts an alternative master-slave relationship that is different from the traditional relationship style.

Paradoxically, it is the victim himself, Cohn, who confers the power to his master for the purpose of reaffirming power over himself. As Suzanne R. Stewart states, the "masochist himself created this Cruel Woman as an aesthetic object and in that move attempted to reassert control, both over the means of cultural production and over the woman's body" (13). In Cohn's case, his intention in making Frances his ideal Cruel Woman can be understood through Frances' complaint: "Robert's always wanted to have a mistress, and if he doesn't marry me, why, then he's had one. She was his mistress for over two years" (*SAR* 58). Cohn prefers Frances to be his mistress because the power structure of a traditional marriage does not match his ideal power relationship. As Frances claims, "if he marries me, like he's always promised he would, that would be the end of all the romance" (*SAR* 58). That is to say, by marrying Frances, the image of the Cruel Woman constructed inside Cohn will vanish and hence there will be no more romance. Here, "romance" does not mean the sensation of pain but the meaning of pain that is derived from suspension and self-victimization. Therefore, the harder Frances forces Cohn to get

married, the stronger he ought to refuse for the purpose of enhancing the quality of romance between them.

Brett Ashley represents another potential candidate whom Cohn would like to make his mistress. When Cohn first meets Brett, he looks as though he has just found his "promised land" (*SAR* 29). To Cohn, this "promised land" is linked to Brett's upper-class quality, as Cohn later reveals that he is attracted by her "breeding" (*SAR* 46). As Daniel S. Traber notes, the identity Cohn desires is the "access to all the privileges and abuses the upper class enjoy with their closed version of whiteness" through the likes of Brett, "the holder of 'true' Anglo-Saxon 'blood'" (244). That is to say, if Cohn was with Brett, Brett's quality would enhance him in the sense that it would make invisible his Jewish identity so that he could stand unopposed by mainstream society. This explains why Cohn becomes so obsessed with Brett—so obsessed that he cannot allow himself to stop looking at this "promised land" for even one second, which disgusts Mike: "He hung around Brett and just *looked* at her. It made me damned well sick" (*SAR* 147) (emphasis original). Due to his blind obsession toward Brett, Cohn is called "a poor bloody steer" whose destiny is nothing but death (*SAR* 146). As Delueze notes, for the masochists, the love contract "is made deliberately to promote slavery and even death at the service of the woman and the mother" (94-5). Even though Brett has not made any solid commitment with Cohn, but to Cohn, their secret affair implies this meaning: Brett's taking Cohn with her to San Sebastian leads Cohn to think that they have started a "relationship" (a sexual connection serves as an essential element of the masochist's love-contract). This statement is confirmed through Jake's description: "He could not stop looking at Brett. It seemed to make him happy. It must have been pleasant for him to see her looking so lovely, and know he had been away with her and that everyone knew it. They could not take that away from him"; "[i]t was his affair with a lady of title" (*SAR* 150, 182). This is then followed by Brett's suspension and dismissal of Cohn in Pamplona, which encourages Cohn to come up with the idea that if Brett is a "sadist"—she could also be his mistress (*SAR* 170).

Being suspended in Pamplona, Cohn then calls Brett the Greek goddess "Circe" who can "turn men into swine" (*SAR* 148). In *Greek Magic: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, Circe is described as "the magical image of the naked goddess and Mistress of Animals who combines sexuality and danger" (Petropoulos 12). This leads to the assumption that Cohn must have fantasized himself as a heroic victim of Brett's dangerous and yet pleasant seduction. Here, Cohn's imagining of Brett recalls Delueze's theory of masochism, in which "[t]he masochistic contract generates a type of law which leads straight into ritual. The masochist is obsessed; ritualistic activity is essential to him, since it epitomizes the world of fantasy" (94). Just like the *riau-riau* dancer who needs Brett to perform "as an image to dance around" (*SAR* 159), Cohn needs Brett to be his ritual image in order to carry out "the rites of regeneration and rebirth" (Deleuze 94)—to be reborn as a new "Anglo-Saxon" gentleman. In fact, the San Fermín festival itself also implies a sense of ritual masochism originated from the martyr experience of Saint Fermín.[2] Metaphorically, this comes to explain why Cohn is not so much into the festival as the others: because all his energy is devoted into his own version of ritual masochism. This may serve as a reason

[2] According to the official website of San Fermín named "San Fermín History", Fermín was believed to be the son of Senator Firmo, who was converted to Christianity by Saint Honestus. Fermín decided to be a priest when he was seventeen years old and was confirmed as a bishop by Honorato, the prelate of Toulouse, when he was twenty-four years old. However, after preaching in many places, the great achievement at Armens resulted in Fermín being tortured and imprisoned. Fermín is now recognized as a martyr by the Catholic Church.

why Cohn passes out while the others are awake throughout the time of the *riau-riau* ritual performance. While Jake's description of Cohn's sleeping quietly with "a big wreath of twisted garlics" on his neck and chest symbolizes Cohn's engagement with the ritual activity, Bill's describing Cohn as "dead" could be seen as the metaphor of his ritual death (*SAR* 162, 163).

The representation of the witch Circe is further associated with "the atmosphere of motherhood" or "the concept of 'surrogate mother'" (Shamas 83). This mother figure of Brett is emphasized by William Adair's calling of Brett the "Mother Brett", suggesting that Brett can be viewed as "a personification of the wounded 'orphan' Jake's unconscious longing for mother-love" (190). In Cohn's case, Brett can be regarded as an ambivalent figure who serves as both the love object and the determinant "mother". As Torkid Thanem and Louise Wallenberg citing Deleuze's theory explain, "[b]oth love object and controlling agent for the helpless child, the mother is an ambivalent figure during the child's oral phase. Breast-feeding the child she also has the power to punish him by withholding breast-feeding and abandoning him. [...] The adult male masochist re-enacts this mother-child relationship". (n.p.). This leads to an assumption that Cohn's fear of being abandoned by the "Mother Brett" constitutes the primary source of Brett's authority and magical power, which explains why Cohn is so afraid of losing sight of Brett during the whole Pamplona trip.

**Toward the Mastery of Submission: Confronting the Self**

Unable to understand Cohn's problem with masochism, all the other characters exclude Cohn from their expatriate community. While Jake criticizes Cohn as having "a hard, Jewish, stubborn streak" (*SAR* 18), Mike condemns Cohn's "manners" (147) and Bill criticizes him for having "Jewish superiority" (166)—all of them want Cohn to "behave or get out" of their group (148). Here, Cohn's Jewish superiority becomes a primary issue to be discussed. Drawing on Alfred Alder's psychological theory, in which he claims, "[t]he superiority complex is one of the ways which a person with an inferiority complex may use as a method of escape from his difficulties", one understands that Cohn's Jewish superiority serves as a false compensation for his unbearable Jewish inferiority (in Mosak and Maniacci 82).[3] Nevertheless, paradoxically, the more Cohn tries to make himself not behave like an outsider, the more he is seen by the others as superior, and hence, an outsider who behaves badly.

As to Jewish behaviour in public places in the 1920s, Walter Lippmann commends,

> Jewish "behavior in public places" was itself a cause of anti-Semitism. It was incumbent on the Jew, as it is for Cohn in *The Sun Also Rises*, to behave well and not to be 'conspicuous' in polite society. Specifically, the assimilated Jew needed to learn "moderation" and "taste." That would lead to "sympathetic understanding" by others. (in Berman 2001, 91)

For Jews in the 1920s, the key to be sympathetically understood by others is to go through the process of cultural and social assimilation. In Cohn's case, one of the reasons that stops him from being understood by others is that he assimilates to the wrong role models. As Ronald Berman suggests, Cohn's "romantic-medieval readiness 'to do battle for

[3] Drawing on Alder's description, one understands that there is no contradiction between feeling both superior and inferior as they feed into each other; superiority is a false representation of inferiority while inferiority is the essential element that forms superiority.

his lady love'" is nothing but a "false chivalry" that is derived from the late Victorian era (44, 43). In other words, Cohn's failure to adapt the post-war values through assimilation remains an obstacle to achieving what Lippmann calls "sympathetic understanding".

The primary obstacle that blocks Cohn from truly being understood by others is his masochism. Drawing on Adler's idea, Robert W. Ludin claims, "masochists are discouraged people with inferiority complexes" and they produce "fear-excitement" by allowing the other to hurt them. From this they can feel superior through confronting the pain (45). Cohn's fear-excitement not only comes from the practice of boxing as well as his submission to dominant women, but also from his anti-Semitic friends. While being "insulted" by them, Cohn seems awkward but "somehow he seemed to be enjoying it" (*SAR* 182). In this case he may appear as if he has a superiority complex but it is simply his masochistic side expressing itself. This dichotomy between appearance and actual can lead Cohn to be rejected by others. In this sense, masochism becomes Cohn's main obstacle to achieving cultural assimilation or to being understood and accepted by others. Therefore, in order to stop himself from depending on masochism, Cohn first has to confront his inherent (Jewish) self.

It is not until the disappearance of Brett, followed by his knocking down of the young Spanish bullfighter, Pedro Romero, that Cohn is lead to confront his masochistic self. More specifically, Romero's representation of his inherent (Spanish) masculine spirit serves as the spark for Cohn to embrace his inherent (Jewish) self.

> He'd been knocked down about fifteen times, and he wanted to fight some more. Brett held him and wouldn't let him get up. He was weak, but Brett couldn't hold him, and he got up. Then Cohn said he wouldn't hit him again. Said he couldn't do it. Said it would be wicked. So the bull-fighter chap sort of rather staggered over him. Cohn went back against the wall.
> "So you won't hit me?"
> "No," said Cohn. "I'd be ashamed to". (*SAR* 206)

The description above shows that even though Romero has been knocked down fifteen times, he continues to get up to fight for his dignity. This masculine spirit enlightens Cohn in a sense that Romero keeps holding on to his inherent Spanish masculinity and never feels ashamed by it. Realizing this, Cohn stops his attack as he is ashamed by not only his incapability to knock down his enemy but also at himself for not being able to hold on to or reject his inherent (Jewish) masculine spirit.[4] Too ashamed of himself, Cohn begs for revenge and forgiveness; he offers to allow Romero to hit him back and asks him to shake hands. Here, Cohn's apologetic behaviour can be seen as a way to reconstruct his masculine identity, as asking for forgiveness from the other is an essential step towards forgiving oneself. Through the act of shaking hands, Cohn comes to accept that his own self is not perfect and that he can never be the perfect English gentleman epitomized in W. H. Hudson's fiction. The truth is that what he sees as Other, his Jewishness, is nothing but his authentic self. In this respect, the act of shaking hands releases Cohn from the circle of shame, guilt, and the fear of being a Jew.

Readers might assume, due to Jake's description, that Cohn is going back to the dominant Frances and that he will continue to be manipulated by her. However, one should

[4] The description that "[t]he fight with Cohn had not touched his [Romero] spirit but his face had been smashed and his body hurt" leads one to postulate the idea that the fight with Romero had touched Cohn's spirit even though his face had not been smashed and his body had not been hurt (*SAR* 223).

not forget that Jake's description of Cohn is somehow biased due to his jealousy toward Cohn and his inferiority toward himself. A brief look at the conversation below will support his argument.

> "I feel sorry about Cohn," Bill said. "He had an awful time."
> "Oh, to hell with Cohn," I said.
> "Where do you suppose he went?"
> "Up to Paris."
> "What do you suppose he'll do?"
> "Oh, to hell with him."
> "What do you suppose he'll do?"
> "Pick up with his old girl, probably."
> "Who was his old girl?"
> "Somebody named Frances". (*SAR* 226)

As one can see, every question asked by Bill includes the word "suppose", which means that all the answers are based on Jake's prediction. This allows the reader to assume a rather positive outcome regarding Cohn's future: his higher self allows him to see that he is in fact imperfect and now he no longer feels a need to hide his otherness because it is who he is. This possible assumption is supported by the fact that there is no solid description concerning Cohn's ending, as Cohn claims, "I'm going away in the morning" (*SAR* 199). Prior to that, the realization that "[n]ow everything's gone. Everything" provided Cohn a chance to let go and start a new life (*SAR* 198). Thus, in the end, one can assume that by submitting to his otherness, Cohn accomplishes self-mastery and for the first time he starts taking charge of his life.

**Conclusion**

When one perceives something as Other, one stops understanding it and one becomes afraid of it, resulting in an urge to escape from it. However, it turns out that what one is running from is what one is running to, because one can never transcend the Other until one truly understands it, and one cannot understand it until one embraces it. Throughout the novel, Robert Cohn struggles to fit into mainstream society and in order to do this he tries to "forget" his own Jewish identity through engaging in the practice of boxing. Moreover, Cohn reconstructs a temporal image of himself, a non-Jew, through inflicting pain on his body. In this sense, the practice of boxing serves as a masochistic activity for Cohn to stabilize his unbalanced social self and individual self.

Another method used by Cohn to deepen his sense of existence is to submit to dominant women such as his mother, his first wife, his current girlfriend, Frances Clynes, and his idol, Lady Brett Ashley. Through identifying those women as the Cruel Women, Cohn is able to victimize and sympathize with himself and thus strengthen his own existence. For Cohn, the dominant women are ambivalent in the sense that they serve as both his love object and his "mother", for instance, Brett is imagined by Cohn as the Greek goddess "Circe" who can be both the mother and the mistress of men. Cohn's obsession with Brett can be regarded as his longing for mother-love. Unable to understand Cohn's fear of being abandoned by the "Mother Brett", Mike, Jake Barnes and Bill criticize his following-Brett-like-a-steer behaviour as a kind of Jewish superiority. However, no one realizes the fact that Cohn's Jewish superiority functions as a false compensation for his unbearable Jewish inferiority. This Jewish inferiority is a product of social and cultural discrimination, which results in the increase of his dependency on masochism. While

masochism on the one hand does help Cohn to feel powerful through reconstructing a temporal pleasant self within himself, on other hand it becomes the main obstacle for the other to truly understand Cohn as it converts inferiority to superiority, leading the other to see Cohn as an outsider. Also, Cohn's failure to assimilate himself to the right role models explains why he cannot be "sympathetically understood" by others. In both cases, masochism remains as the main obstacle for Cohn to achieve assimilation and to be understood by others. Therefore, it is only through confronting his inherent (Jewish) self that Cohn can stop relying on masochism, and hence, be accepted by others.

It is not until his encounter with Pedro Romero that Cohn comes to realize this issue. It is Romero's demonstration of his inherent (Spanish) masculinity that Cohn finally comes to realize that there should be no shame in being open to one's own inherent identity—there will be shame only if one attempts to hide it. This leads to an assumption that Cohn is defeated by the rejection of his own nature, his fear of being himself and of being imperfect. Acknowledging this, Cohn then carries out the process of begging forgiveness from Jake, Brett and the others in order to allow him to accept the fact that he is imperfect, that he is no one but the Jewish Robert Cohn. Alternatively, this mastery of submission can be interpreted by the reader as an engine for Cohn to start his second life.

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# Walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death[1]: Pip's Comfortless Progress through a Decaying World in *Great Expectations*

**Margaret J-M Sönmez**

**Abstract:** Exposing six aspects of the protagonist-narrator's encounters with old people, places, and objects in *Great Expectations*, this paper explores how Dickens presents the self-identity of Pip as moulded through conflicting interactions with his surroundings. Oldness in this novel is shown to be the main testing-ground and formative environment for the individualised and continuously self-fashioning sense of self that den Hartog has proposed as characteristic of modern self-identity. Not relinquishing a Romantic yearning for an originary and non-contingent, originary core, Pip's attempts to gain a sense of rooted and authenticating selfhood in his past are always rebuffed, the past constantly returning him to a recognition of the subject's loneliness within a world redolent of death and decay. The result of the survey and analysis leads the article to claim that Pip's quest for the self is a largely unaided progress through an enveloping, complex and inescapable world of *memento mori*.

**Keywords:** Dickens, *Great Expectations*, identity formation, oldness, Romantic and Modern psychology, mortality, *memento mori*

*Great Expectations* presents a protagonist-narrator's explorations of his self-identity in the different "stages" (as Dickens labels them) of his progress from childhood to adulthood. The novel shows Pip's sense of selfhood moving through different, contingent versions that are both formed and challenged by his social and physical surroundings, and one of the ways in which the narrator insistently presents the contrast between these changing identities and their testing grounds is through memories of encounters between his youthful selves and their older surroundings. To put it simply, throughout the novel, Pip presents his self-identity developing against a backdrop of decaying, old elements. Exploring the narrator's descriptions of various historical, old or degenerating elements that physically and experientially surround his younger self as he moves towards maturity, this article presents evidence of Pip being oppressed by oldness, showing the conflicted and contradictory views of the past and of things belonging to the past that he reveals in his narrative. It will indicate the enormous range and number of entities described as old in the novel, resulting in the past being silently present on every page. All these old things combine to form powerful discourses of authority, normativity, and of the ubiquity of decay and mortality. These combined discourses envelop young Pip, who strives to find success within their world while, as his retrospect shows, he will only be able to achieve full selfhood by escaping from them. The article will conclude that, on balance, the novel's stance towards the past is part of a deep and oppressive awareness of the presence of death in the midst of life.

*Great Expectations* describes and, as a first person narrative, reenacts the gradual formation of a mature self-identity wherein are reconciled the passivity of a Blakean "Romantic Imaginative and spiritually sensitive child" (Coveney 39) with its allegiances to

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[1] "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (*King James Bible*. Psalm 23, v.4).

positive elements of the "personal past" (den Hartog 77), notably "fidelity to childhood bonds" (79), and a consuming and "equally positive drive away from that allegiance" (77). Within the story, Pip has to work out his personal, social and ethical positions largely for himself, as his immaturity and modern will to self-definition lead him to reject both the abusive instructions he receives from certain figures associated with his childhood and the subtle guidance of those who love him. In the constructed spaces of his memories, a subject characterized by youth and innocent naivety shows both himself and his sense of selfhood progressing in and through various places, most of which are characterized by age and deterioration. Through Pip's impressions of his surroundings, Dickens shows a keen awareness that "identities form in relation to environments", and that "place functions to provide a sense of belonging, construct meaning, foster attachments, and mediate change" (Gieseking, Mangold et al. n.p.).

Pip's identity is presented as a commodity "subject [...] to dangerous rules of ownership, exchange, and power" (Grass 617) that is both formed and threatened by different encounters with old entities (including people and various institutionalized discourses) in ancient environments. People and places are equally shown to have imposed upon him concepts of what he is, for he is a child in the Romantic mould (Peters xiii). This means that he is innocent and pure, but not a *tabula rasa*, and somehow aware that there is something born with him that has been denied its flourishing: There is an unspoken yearning for his lost Wordsworthian "clouds of glory" (Peters xiii)[2] that, perhaps, he seeks to regain while his developing identity unveils to himself his "original nature" (Rousseau, *Emile*, in Coveney 32). All the while he is shown to be almost unbearably vulnerable to the oppressive and sullying influences of his circumstances. Whenever he has the opportunity, as he grows, he sees himself rejecting the old in an attempt to protect and enable the flourishing of this autonomous self—the core, seed or pip of himself—only to find his progress increasingly impeded and entrapped by oldness in various forms. It is only after the deaths of three older people who had tried to form him according to their own desires (Mrs Joe, Miss Havisham and Magwitch), and the effective removal of responsibilities tying him to the past (the marriage of Joe and Biddy) that he frees himself from the oppressive and old environment and can "begin the world" afresh (in the words of the dying Richard Carstone of *Bleak House* (904), without himself having to die. Through awkward attempts to present to the world identities that conform with his physical and social environments but not with his unacknowledged inner self, after a long separation from his earlier environment he ultimately returns to his originary settings, to display the implied maturity of an integrated self whose identity is founded upon self-knowledge obtained through the accumulation of remembered experiences. This "consciousness of the self as a living continuity in time" that is the "product [...] of our formative years [...] a matter of the past living on into the present" is what den Hartog (47) sees as a typically modern take on psychology and identity, that Dickens explores to different effect in different novels, and with most balance in the character of Pip in *Great Expectations*.

The world that Pip encounters is everywhere described as old, and this agedness appears in various forms. Echoing the conflict between innocence and experience, or the urge to be passively guided by the past that contradicts the urge to actively forge one's own way in life, old things in this novel have complicated meanings for Pip. On the negative side, the side that drives Pip forward and away from his first environment, old things,

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[2] "Not in entire forgetfulness/And not in utter nakedness,/But trailing clouds of glory do we come" from "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (ll.63-65).

people, places and institutions frequently prove to be decaying, unpleasant or oppressive, associated with horrible practices from the past and corruption that continues in the present, while mostly they act as unwelcome reminders of mortality. More positively, however, Pip seeks authority, truth, and a sense of familiarity in old environments, and they can cause him to respond with nostalgia and affection. The novel's presentation of Pip's different encounters and responses with this old world may thus be shown to fall into several different categories. The rest of this paper presents and analyses six faces of oldness that Pip encounters and remembers in his narrative. It is based on a complete corpus of all old things, people and places that are mentioned in the novel.

**Historically old things in Pip's remembered environment**

From the viewpoint of the retrospective first person narrator the production is necessarily "obituary", a "look[ing] back at the narrated *I*" (Brooks 114).[3] A corollary of this is that the earlier environments presented in the narrator's nostalgic, sometimes sentimental, memories are, at the time of narration, old and already of some quaint, antiquarian interest. Readers are reminded of this through the mention of specific and outdated things: Pip's parents lived, we are told, "long before the days of photographs" (*GE* 3) (all photographs being, anyway, as Sontag points out, *memento mori*) (11); when Pip was a child, striking matches had not been invented (*GE* 14); Joe's education "like steam, was yet in its infancy" (42), an older schooling system (run by a very old woman using a very old and worn-out book) was still in place (39) and there were prison ships or "hulks" (13) in Kent (the last hulk was destroyed in 1857 (*Victorian Crime and Punishment* n.p.). In these descriptions, as in the opening graveyard scene, the remembered times when present things did not exist, and the remembered presence of things that no longer exist at the time of narrating, develop the obituary nature of Pip's descriptions into parts of a diffused, novel-long *memento mori* message, that is all the more oppressive for its reappearance in so many different forms.

Dickens' narrator anyway presents most of the novel's settings as being already old at the time of the action: Joe's house is of the old wooden type "as many of the dwellings in our country were—most of them, at that time" (8), and the local landmarks include "old marsh churches" (53), and the Old Battery (frequently mentioned throughout the novel), which supports an "old gun" (16). In town there is Satis House which is regularly described as old and grim (87) or dull and old (113); its very bricks, even its garden and garden wall are old (58), and the ivy that grows up the walls of the house is described as "sinewy old arms" (212). Out beyond the marshes lie the dreadful hulks, defunct, rotting prison ships, famed for their inhumane conditions aboard.

Pip's first journey in London is in an ancient coach with an equally superannuated driver: "His getting on his box, which I remember to have been decorated with an old weather-stained pea-green hammercloth moth-eaten into rags, was quite a work of time" (149). His recollections of central London are full of old and dusty or even decaying structures, with mentions of such old institutions as the Inns of Court, Newgate prison, the Tower of London, and buildings unambiguously proclaiming their antiquity: the Old Bailey, the Old London Bridge, Old Green Copper Rope-Walk. In Jaggers' chambers Pip finds himself so "oppressed" by "by the dust and grit that lay thick on everything" that he has to go out (151). He is accommodated in rooms in Bernard's Inn, described as "the

[3] Brooks adopts Sartre's use of the term "obituary": Of narrating his own life to himself Sartre noted "I become my own obituary" (in Brooks 95).

dingiest collection of shabby buildings ever squeezed together in a rank corner as a club for Tom-cats", with "windows […] in every stage of dilapidated blind and curtain, crippled flower-pot, cracked glass, dusty decay, and miserable makeshift" (158). Even the Wemmicks' relatively new abode is built in the form of an ancient castle, complete with drawbridge (and is another building of incarceration to add to the list of prisons and imprisonment in the novel, albeit a benign one). The house in suburban Richmond where Estella stays is described entirely in terms of antiquity, and this passage is an excellent example of how in this novel Dickens piles up images of age and the past, even in details that are not strictly necessary to the plot (note also how the final adverb "gravely" chimes with the indirect reference to graves in the last sentence of the first paragraph).

> We came to Richmond all too soon, and our destination there, was a house by the Green; a staid old house, where hoops and powder and patches, embroidered coats rolled stockings ruffles and swords, had had their court days many a time. Some ancient trees before the house were still cut into fashions as formal and unnatural as the hoops and wigs and stiff skirts; but their own allotted places in the great procession of the dead were not far off, and they would soon drop into them and go the silent way of the rest.
>
> A bell with an old voice—which I dare say in its time had often said to the house, Here is the green farthingale, Here is the diamond-hilted sword, Here are the shoes with red heels and the blue solitaire,—sounded gravely in the moonlight [...]. (247)

No less than in the preceding volumes are the significant buildings and structures around Pip in Volume Three described as old. Magwitch is lodged in Old Green Copper Rope-Walk, and the building in which he is hidden is still decorated in the style of a long-past age: "[T]he coloured engravings on the wall, representing the death of Captain Cook, a ship-launch, and his Majesty King George the Third in a state-coachman's wig, leather-breeches, and top-boots, on the terrace at Windsor" (342). Indeed, it is so antiquated that its beams tremble with the reverberations from Old Barley's roars (344) and the heavy rappings of Old Barley's stick on the floor above, and Herbert "do[es]n't know how long the rafters may hold" (230). The district is run-down and old, and in travelling to and from it Pip passes structures again notable for their antiquity and decrepitude: he sees "Old London Bridge", "old Billingsgate market" [...] and "the White Tower and Traitor's Gate" (397), then "an old landing-stage and an old roofless building slipped into the mud" (401). Here we find also the mud motif, which is always associated with criminals[4] in Pip's narrative. On another journey to Magwitch's lodgings Pip once more paints a picture of decrepit structures.

> It matters not what stranded ships repairing in dry docks I lost myself among, what old hulls of ships in the course of being knocked to pieces,[...] rusty anchors [...] the

[4] Chthonic mud is associated with Magwitch in the following chapters: 3, 5, 28 (the convict who had given Pip money from Magwitch), 39, 40, 44, and (with an almost symphonic crescendo of muddy references) 54. The only other two mentions of mud in the novel are associated with Orlick (108, 386). The culminating mud passage occurs when Magwitch has been rowed to Gravesend, just before they interrupt their journey for the night: there have already been two mentions of the mud, and then this happens "[...] some ballast lighters [...] lay low in the mud; a little squat shoal-lighthouse [...] stood crippled in the mud on stilts and crutches; and slimy stakes stuck out of the mud, and slimy stones stuck out of the mud, and red landmarks [...] stuck out of the mud, and all about us was stagnation and mud" (401).

> stump of a ruined windmill [...] a series of wooden frames set in the ground, that looked like superannuated haymaking-rakes which had grown old and lost most of their teeth. (*GE* 342)

As a final example of this type of oldness, in Chapter 53 we find Pip noticing that the sluice in the marches "was abandoned and broken, and how the house—of wood with a tiled roof—would not be proof against the weather much longer, if it were so even now, and how the mud and ooze were coated with lime, and how the choking vapour of the kiln crept in a ghostly way towards me" (386).

**Seeking authority and truth in the past**

Within the first volume the child's perspective portrays the things and adults around him as old, even when they need not be particularly ancient. The very places and objects around him seem to be more experienced than Pip, who is made to feel an interloper in an established world, and who tries to learn from them. "Pip when we first see him is in search of the 'authority' [...] that would define and justify—authorize—the plot of the rest of his ensuing life" (Brooks 115), and for this authority he turns to the past and to old things: the tombstones in the graveyard. He reanimates and rejuvenates the dead through his imaginative associative faculty, creating for himself a sturdy father, a freckled and silly (youthful looking) mother, and five unthreateningly inert brothers. Pip will continue to see the old, dead and dying as instructive but also as oppressive. He seeks his origins or authorship among the graves, just as he tries to learn to read from a ragged book, an old seed catalogue and an old letter form resembling a buckle (*GE* 67). In all these cases he finds that the decaying shells of structures, the aging and dying posturing of things, people and places have been long emptied of authoritative or fertile substance.

As Brooks and others have noted, "what the novel chooses to present at its outset is precisely the search for a beginning" (115), and Pip's search for his own beginnings in a way never ceases, or at least we can say that he feels the need to reassure himself of his origins at regular intervals of return (both mental and physical) throughout his maturation. These returns, like the whole of Pip's narrative, are part of a process through which "a reminiscent sense of the self's unity through time" is built up, an approach to self-identity that den Hertog identifies as characteristic of modern man, with Wordsworth being its most powerful early exponent (48). A search for origins in general, and for the origins of the self in particular, is one way of explaining the almost fatalistic attraction and repulsion that the past holds for him. It is felt to hold the secret to the core of himself and perhaps even to the truth of things: when Pip returns to Joe and the forge, hoping to marry Biddy and settle into the old life there, he feels "a sense of increasing relief as [he] drew nearer to them, and a sense of leaving arrogance and untruthfulness further and further behind" (*GE* 435), but that relief does not bring happiness, for the marriage of Biddy to Joe shows him that he no longer belongs there.

The life-long importance that Joe places on his own origins are presented as being just as important to him as are Pip's struggles to find, reject and then synthesize his origins in his mature life. Instead of reading them, Joe creates words for his father's tombstone, which he recalls vividly although he cannot see them on the stone since they are never engraved. With these unwritten lines he recreates a more acceptable memory of his violent father ("Whatsume'er the failings on his part, Remember reader he were that good in his hart") (43), an act of willed rewriting of personal history that is of such importance to him that it haunts his discourse for the rest of his life (as McMaster has discussed, he regularly reverts to gnomic sayings that rhyme in "hart"). Pointedly, and apparently unaware of the

irony of his statement, when in London to see a performance of *Hamlet*, Joe says to Pip "if the ghost of a man's own father cannot be allowed to claim his attention, what can, Sir?" (201). Joe is tied to his past far more inflexibly than Pip, for having been unable to escape from the forge in his childhood, he has so firmly interiorised his earlier status as the labourer in the family (as related in Chapter 7) that he cannot now feel comfortable in any other place or job, since the forge and blacksmithing have become his identity, as he himself realises.

> I'm wrong in these clothes. I'm wrong out of the forge, the kitchen, or off th' meshes. You won't find half so much fault in me if you think of me in my forge dress, with my hammer in my hand, or even my pipe. You won't find half so much fault in me if, supposing as you should ever wish to see me, you come and put your head in at the forge window and see Joe the blacksmith, there, at the old anvil, in the old burnt apron, sticking to the old work. (205)

Thus it is that both Joe and Pip, while striving in their different ways to improve their lives, find themselves ineradicably tied to their pasts. Neither can completely leave the place of their youths behind them, and both are unconsciously affected by the graves of their fathers. They recreate their dead fathers to suit their living needs to identify with acceptable origins; and these creations reflect or foreshadow the outstanding characteristics of the living sons: Joe's kindness of heart, and Pip's yearnings to go "above" his present station in life.

Some of old objects from which Pip tries to learn in his childhood have already been mentioned; this section will be completed with a list of the few remaining other old elements associated with his learning or from which he tries to learn. First in the list must be the Old Battery, scene of many an educational discussion; then we recall that Pip's first homework from Biddy is to copy out a "large old English D" (67); the "grim old" Satis House and its inhabitants teach Pip some bitter lessons, and, although he claims to learn nothing from her, his first schoolmistress is "that miserable old bundle of incompetence" (1157), Mr Wopsle's great aunt. Biddy, who performs her grandmother's role to far greater effect, is referred to by Pip as "such an old acquaintance" (119). During one of his returns Pip learns the local gossip about himself from "a dirty old copy of the local newspaper" (211), and when he is lured back again by Orlick's forged note he learns more local gossip from "an old landlord" of an inn that is very ancient, having "once been part of an ecclesiastical house" (383); it is then on what Orlick calls the "old marshes" (382), in what narrating Pip calls the "old sluice house" (385) that he learns from self-named "Old Orlick"'s (388) lips the truth of his sister's death and his own (apparent) fate. Orlick himself is able to make the connection between "Provis" and Pip's past by the old leg-iron that he found and used to hit—and ultimately to kill—Pip's sister, all those years before.

**Romantic, sentimental and nostalgic perspectives on things of the past**

Connected to personal myths of origins is the Victorian idea of truth adhering to old, simple, and unspoiled rural ways of life, an idea directly inherited from Rousseauian and then Wordsworthian Romanticism. It is alluded to by the narrating Pip in the later chapters of the novel, in his descriptions of his old home ("the old kitchen" (426, 439) and "my own old little room" (260, 438); "the dear old forge" (431) and "the old place" (439), "the old deal table" (437), the "old kitchen door" (439) and "the old place by the kitchen firelight" (439); he even sentimentalises that site of so much suffering and fear, Satis House, as "the old spot" (440), exclaiming over the faint outlines of the razed house "[p]oor, poor old place!" (441).

Any tendency to elevate such sentiments to a genuine Romantic admiration of a more innocent past are very notably negated by the novel's association of such old days with violence, abuse, misery and the urgent desire to escape, and the frequent reminders of these miseries that Pip's reported thoughts, memories and guilty conscience present to the readers. Nevertheless, in spite of great unhappiness in the days of their youth, Joe and Pip in their different ways cling to old places and routines with the desperation of souls adrift in an unknowable world. Joe's adherence to the familiar is overt, physical and explicit, while Pip's is covert, mental and implied by his inability to stop comparing himself and all around him to his earliest memories (his narration of the story of *Great Expectations* being the latest record of such preoccupations). For all Pip's willed rejection of the forge and its way of life, he constantly returns to it in his mind from the first moments of leaving it until the final physical return in the last Chapter. His mental returns are at first involuntary and disturbing, and they later develop into guilt-ridden recriminations, and finally into the earlier-quoted few attempts at fond, sentimental and nostalgic indications of how far he has removed himself from all of that; however much he struggles to distance himself from his childhood environment he remains in thrall to the idea of a lost innocence (though in truth his years of innocence were tortured by a hyperactive conscience) and to the mostly unacknowledged belief that it contained dimly perceived truths which he needs to understand. The adult narrator constantly implies that Pip is actually searching his memory for a primal state of peace of mind—something that he is clearly shown never to have had.

There are other ways in which the Romantic prizing of the old, rural and unspoiled is raised only to be undermined in this novel. Joe is a good example of the rural dialect speaker/informant that Victorian dialectologists sought samples of speech from.[5] The belief at the time was that the dialects of remote regions recorded the most unchanged or uncorrupted forms of English but that modern influences such as education (even literacy), travel and visitors could easily spoil these dialects, causing them to lose their postulated purity and antiquity. Joe's unchanging dialect that includes many features of Kentish speech marks him as an ideal subject for this sort of national anthropology. Further, his occupation is one of the most ancient of rural crafts (the characteristic iron age skill) and it connects him with both the land/ground and traditional life. The novel, however, shows that Joe's Romantic rootedness is a handicap: he becomes inarticulate when confronted with speakers of the higher prestige dialect (the so-called "standard" speech of Miss Havisham) and his dialect is a limitation rather than a strength, because he cannot express himself easily or fluently (his repeated and sometimes desperate attempts are flagged by the frequent interjection "I meantersay"). Further, his illiteracy and lack of education are the results of abuse rather than of quaint rural ways, and his traditional occupation is scarcely a simple matter of pride and strength, it having been inherited from a violent alcoholic, and, for Joe, it being a trade not of choice but of involuntary servitude; furthermore, it was likely (until his great expectations were announced) to be continued by a miserably unwilling apprentice. So much for the Romantic view of traditional rural dialects and occupations!

**Habituation, familiarity and affection**

The word "old" has many meanings, all associated with each other. In using the word very frequently, even when it refers to a meaning that is not directly to do with age, the ubiquity of the past is indirectly emphasized. The colloquial use of "old" as an epithet

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[5] These have subsequently been given the telling acronym NORMs: Non-mobile, Old Rural Men (although Joe is not as old as young Pip presents him from his child's perspective).

of familiarity or affection is a characteristic of some dialects of England, and in the nineteenth century it was noted as being particularly frequently used in Kent. As Parish and Shaw (111) note, it was so frequently used as to be almost completely bleached of its age-related meaning, and even sometimes to mean almost nothing at all:[6] The "Old Clem" of the blacksmith's song is "old" for reasons of historicity, affection, familiarity and tradition, a much as, or perhaps more than, for reasons of the patron saint's age when alive; at the age of seven, Pip is already—poignantly—an "old chap" (*GE* 8 *et passim*) to Joe, and is addressed by him in this way throughout the novel, often three or more times in one paragraph.

Other characters use the word in the same way, though less repetitiously. Wemmick's affectionate use of this address form is notable: he apostrophizes the casts in Jaggers' chambers as "old Rascal" and "old Artful" (183), and greets a poultry seller and a prison guard as "old Briton" and "old fox, respectively (187, 240). Famously, he refers to his father as "[t]he Aged" (266 *et passim*) or "[t]he Aged P" (parent) (337), and both the narrator and Wemmick always refer to him as an "old" man or gentleman, never omitting the adjective—even when using a simile to describe him: "[S]ome clean old chief of a savage tribe" (271). Herbert also occasionally uses the term in a friendly fashion, calling Pip "dear old boy" (315) when Pip's distress and difficulties with Magwitch reach a peak, and trying to mollify the unmollifiable Drummle with the phrase "old boy" (198) in an earlier scene that displays that unpleasant character's bullishness. It is perhaps out of a form of respect for his fiancée, that is to say an attempt to excuse and almost normalize her father's unacceptable behaviour that Herbert refers to his future father in law as "Old Gruffandgrim" (343), "Old Barley" (344 *et passim*), although admitting to Pip that the man is and an "unconscionable old shark" (344). Without affection, but pretending fondness for the boy, Pumblechook tries to insinuate himself into Pip's regard, or rather simply (and hypocritically) claims a place in Pip's affections, by calling on their "old" friendship (142). The narrator refers to Pumblechook, once, as "that bullying old Pumblechook" (60), which denotes familiarity but definitely not affection. Most unpleasant of all, Orlick insists on calling himself "Old Orlick" (103 *et passim*), perhaps to pass himself off as harmless, perhaps to insist upon his seniority to Pip, and perhaps—or more likely perhaps not—entirely conscious of the ironical distance between the implications of the term and both the way he is treated and the treatment he metes out to others. His use of this phrase is sardonically and often repeated by the narrator, starting with his indirect reporting of Orlick's speech and action after the first use of the phrase by Orlick (103 *et passim*), while Orlick's self-naming in this way is most frequently repeated and marked when he is talking to Pip before (as they both believe) killing him. Of the people addressing him or talking about him, only the narrator (ironically and comically) and Joe (dialectally and perhaps naively, only once) ever call him "Old Orlick"[7]. The sinister use of this conventionally familiar and friendly epithet for characters for whom no affection at all is felt shows how the word itself, even in a restricted area of its usage, is given self-contradictory meanings.

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[6] They give the amusing example of 'this old baby' to show how the word could be (and can be) used in even the most unlikely of conjunctions.

[7] In Book Three Joe reports to the recovering Pip that "Old Orlick" has been arrested for burglary (425).

**The oppression of the old**

The longevity of the places and objects in Pip's life is not always a positive or reassuring recognition. Old places (as we have seen) and older people pervade the novel, as they do in so many of Dickens's novels, and in *Great Expectations* they are frequently shown as oppressors of the protagonist.

Young Pip's maltreatment by so many people older than him (and sometimes their age is emphasized, as with Mr Hubble in Chapter 4) forms a large part of the novel. Even when oppressive characters are not particularly aged, their relative seniority, established and seemingly ageless routines and their physical signs of ageing are lingered upon enough to present them as older than they in all likelihood could be. Mrs Joe and Miss Havisham are not very elderly people, Pip's sister being, presumably, not much more than 20 years older than him (which makes her 27; according to Dickens' calculations Joe is 29 at the opening of the story (Dickens 446)), and Miss Havisham at the end of the novel is 56 years old, according to Dickens' notes (446.) and yet in them are invested all the weight of years of bitter disappointment and dreary routine life. Miss Havisham especially, with her physical decrepitude (she needs to be "walked" and later wheeled around the place), is presented as a very old woman.

Although other main characters have been subject to the oppression of older people, Joe being of particular relevance here, as he is the first person narrator we are most keenly made aware Pip's exceptional sensitivity to the looming presence of old objects and places. To name most, but not all, there are: the graveyard, the marshes, Satis House and Miss Havisham, the deserted brewery; The Old Battery, Joe's old file, old paper money given to Pip in the Three Jolly Bargemen, old shoes that Joe and Biddy throw after him when he leaves home, the old coach, the glowering casts of dead (old) criminals in Jaggers' office and his old clerk, the old parts of London named in so many places throughout volumes two and three, and, finally, the "old marshes" that Old Orlick lures Pip to.

Even though this study concentrates on Pip's ambivalent relationship with the old, Joe's oppression by his father has been mentioned, and for the sake of a balanced representation it should be mentioned that Dickens represents the women in the novel as being just as susceptible to oppression from the old as the men. Miss Haversham's is the most startling case, for all that her imprisonment was self-imposed. Her attempt to stop time has resulted in trapping her in a living tomb, where, in spite of the stopping of clocks, the passing of time is only too evident, for everything she sees is a reminder of its destructive capacities. She it was who ordered Satis House to be laid waste (366) but only time has been able to render her dress, table cloth and ivory note tablets yellow (81, 363). As a woman whose appearance and surroundings present her as almost frighteningly old, Miss Haversham (who is 40 years old at the start of the novel (Dickens 446)) is an extraordinary example of the old oppressing the young—Pip, but most particularly Estella, whose development is completely warped by her adopted mother's twisted mind. Estella moves out of the decaying Satis House and, after a sojourn in Paris, into the antique house in Richmond house, from which she meets and marries a brute with an old face, whose main attractions are wealth and his belonging to an old, that is aristocratic, family. Another female contemporary of Pip, Biddy, has been abused and oppressed by her grandmother, who takes on the role of schoolmistress and is described as a "ridiculous old woman of limited means and unlimited infirmity" (*GE* 40), and even the unsympathetic and usually oppressing Mrs Joe expresses her sense of oppression by established class and marital positions through her old/routine habit of wearing an apron. (Joe's apron, as we have seen, which is a far more convincing symbol of his labour, is taken by him as a welcome attribute of self-empowering knowledge of his place in his society). Mrs Joe is killed, eventually, by

a blow from an old leg iron, administered by so-called Old Orlick. Herbert's mother, happily engrossed in the study of old families, is in fact enthralled to an illusory ancestry to the extent of not being a functioning social unit; finally, Herbert's fiancée Clara is at the beck and call of her old and bedridden father, Old Barley (and they live in Old Green Copper Rope-Way).

**Reminders of mortality**

Very many examples of different uses of the word and concepts related to "old" have already been found and shown to be open to different analytic categories. Mostly, though, in *Great Expectations* the ghosts and the old things, people and places, together with the plentiful signs of decay that accompany these images of oldness, are constant reminders of the final "stage" of Everyman's life: they function as *memento mori*.

The novel is, well populated with ghost-like appearances. Pip's first reference to Magwitch is that he has "start[ed] up from among the graves" (4) and Pip's last thought on running back home that evening is that the convict was a hanged "pirate come to life, and come down, and going back to hook himself up again" (7). Later that night he dreams of "a ghostly pirate calling out to me through a speaking-trumpet, as I passed the gibbet-station, that I had better come ashore and be hanged there at once, and not put it off" (14); and had he desired a light he would have had to "[strike] it out of flint and steel, and [would] have made a noise like the very pirate himself rattling his chains" (14). Miss Havisham, in addition to having the long white-ish robes and corpse-like attributes of a gothic ghost, lives a death in life that renders her, effectively, a phantom. She reminds Pip of "a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress" that he had once been taken to see (52-3); and he thinks he sees her ghost hanging from a beam in the old brewery at Satis House (58). In later parts of the novel he regularly refers to her or her image as ghostly. When Estella fleetingly reminds Pip of someone (Molly) but he cannot remember who, he calls the fugitive, unspecified and unrecognized image in his mind a ghost (218); on a comic note, both Pip's (Ch. 31) and Joe's (Ch. 27) descriptions of Wopsle's rendition of *Hamlet* concentrate on the ghost scene, and Pip lingers over the graveyard scene. Wopsle's dresser also chooses to talk about the ghost scene while bringing Pip and Herbert to Wopsle's dressing room.

On reaching Bernard's Inn, Pip realizes that Bernard is not the jolly landlord of a tavern, but "a disembodied spirit, or a fiction" (158), and ghosts or spirits are used metaphorically elsewhere in the novel, too. Joe's earlier description of *Hamlet* had been interrupted by Pip noticing "[a] ghost-seeing effect in Joe's own countenance [that] informed me that Herbert had entered the room" (202). Herbert is among the least ghost-like of characters in this novel, but his sudden or unexpected appearance is as fear-inducing to Joe as that of a ghost, Joe's sense of alienation in London being brought back to him by the sight of this unknown young gentleman, just as Magwitch's unexpected emergence from among the graves, and Miss Havisham's uncanny appearance had appeared as ghostly to Pip years before. This association of unexpected encounter with a "ghost-seeing" response also happens with Pip as the ghost, when he takes his leave of Miss Havisham at the end of volume one and is accompanied to the door by the startled Miss Sarah Pocket, who "conducted me down, as if I were a ghost who must be seen out" (144). The quotation about the old house in Richmond given earlier coupled images of the past with images of death and the grave. Five chapters later, the narrator remarks of the same place that "if that staid old house [...] should ever come to be haunted when I am dead, it will be haunted, surely, by my ghost [...] the unquiet spirit within me haunted that house" (273). He has shifted from contemplation of the deaths of past generations to contemplation of his own

death, and from imaging ghosts of others to seeing himself as the ghost haunting old places. In Chapter Thirty-Nine he sees himself in a dream "hanged at the Old Bailey door" (295), and when later contemplating his imminent death at the hands of Orlick he imagines himself "changed into a part of the vapour that had crept towards me ["in a ghostly way"] but a little while before, like my own warning ghost" (390).

Other than being seen as ghosts or resembling ghosts in some way, in *Great Expectations* several living people act directly as uncanny reminders of death. Reporting the death of Mr Wopsle's great aunt, the narrator indicates (albeit largely for the sake of humour) that death is the normal, or default existence when he says that she had at last "conquered a confirmed habit of living into which she had fallen" (111). Miss Havisham is again the most striking example, but there are other, most subtle instances, too. Bentley Drummle and the Richmond house owner's daughter look old in spite of being fairly young (and the house-owner, a widow, has a young face in spite of being old, an equally uncanny appearance); old Mr Hubble smells "sawdusty" (23), Miss Sarah Pocket is "a little dry brown corrugated old woman" (79), Camilla's face is so featureless as to be liked to a "blank and high [...] dead wall " (73), Mrs Joe, earlier a "matter of Bone", in Joe's words (43), is rendered a "wreck of [a] wife" (111), and Pip's lodgings at the time of Magwitch's reappearance are serviced by "an inflammatory old female, assisted by an animated rag-bag whom she called her niece" (299), the latter having "a head not easily distinguished from her dusty broom" (301). Magwitch himself, with his visible injuries and ageing, and all his references to the earth, mud, and hunger (images brought together in the dialect word "grubber": "I'm a heavy grubber [...] But I always was") (302), remains throughout the novel much the same as Pip had, in more innocent days, perceived him: an escapee from the grave.[8] By far the most unusual of human *memento mori* in this novel is Wemmick, however, with his collection of "portable property" (184 *et passim*), all reminders of executed prisoners, many of them worn about his person: "[H]e appeared to have sustained a good many bereavements; for, he wore at least four mourning rings, besides a brooch representing a lady and a weeping willow at a tomb with an urn on it. I noticed, too, that several rings and seals hung at his watch chain, as if he were quite laden with remembrances of departed friends" (157).

The passing of time and generations is powerfully evoked in many descriptions of old buildings, and especially in the ruined structures mentioned occasionally in the novel. It will have been noticed that among the old (and usually delapidated) structures (buildings, ships, bridges, gallows, the Old Battery), most are places closely associated with incarceration or death. Things (let alone people) within buildings add to the effect: there are old-fashioned, decaying, tattered, or semi-fossilized things in Satis House, and even pleasant things like the "choice old port" they drink (221); its garden is filled with old objects, too: the old melon- and cucumber-frames "seemed in their decline to have produced a spontaneous growth of weak attempts at pieces of old hats and boots, with now and then a weedy offshoot into the likeness of a battered saucepan" (82); in Jaggers' chambers Pip finds casts of executed criminals and an "old rusty pistol" (150). In fact the list of damaged and decaying objects in this novel could be extended to fill several more paragraphs.

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[8] Dickens gave him such an exceptionally peaceful and saint-like death perhaps for that reason: for Abel Magwitch (whose first name is that of the first murder victim), death would be a home-coming.

> In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. (*Gen*. 3:19)
>
> [W]e therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. (*Book of Common Prayer*, Order for the Burial of the Dead)[9]

Referring to the two quotations above, I'd like to finish this section with a last set of images associated with death, and more specifically with burial: dust, ashes, and earth. Soil, especially in the form of mud, is exaggeratedly prevalent in powerful scenes connected with Magwitch, and these have been discussed elsewhere, where it is concluded that Magwitch is an uprooted figure, "always on the verge of being sucked back down into the bowels of the earth" (Sònmez 647). Dust is simply everywhere in *Great Expectations*, sometimes alternating with the less pervasive, but ultimately more threatening, ash.

Even if we ignore the many dusty and ashy things in Satis House, because they are too numerous to detail,[10] the novel displays many cases of Dickens singling out dust or ashes as representatives of feelings, or of dirt or age, and always, somehow, of death. Here, for example, is narrating Pip, starting to describe the depression that fell upon him with his apprenticeship: "I only felt that I was dusty with the dust of small coal, and that I had a weight upon my daily remembrance to which the anvil was a feather" (*GE* 97), and here he is praising the honesty and relief of tears, in contrast to the corruption of mortal existence: "[W]e need never be ashamed of our tears, for they are rain upon the blinding dust of earth, overlying our hard hearts" (145). Jaggers' casts of dead criminals, horridly like real human heads, are "stuck [...] on [a] dusty perch for the blacks and flies to settle on" (151), and Pip finds his spirits greatly "oppressed by the hot exhausted air, and by the dust and grit that lay thick on everything" (151). Pip's first impressions of Bernard's Inn are described in terms so redolent of dust and ash, decay and death as to be worth quoting at greater length:

> [It was] a melancholy little square that looked to me like a flat burying-ground. I thought it had the most dismal trees in it, and the most dismal sparrows, and the most dismal cats, and the most dismal houses (in number half a dozen or so), that I had ever seen. I thought the windows of the sets of chambers into which those houses were divided, were in every stage of dilapidated blind and curtain, crippled flower-pot, cracked glass, dusty decay, and miserable makeshift; while To Let To Let To Let, glared at me from empty rooms, as if no new wretches ever came there, and the vengeance of the soul of Barnard were being slowly appeased by the gradual suicide of the present occupants and their unholy interment under the gravel. A frouzy mourning of soot and smoke attired this forlorn creation of Barnard, and it had strewn ashes on its head, and was undergoing penance and humiliation as a mere dust-hole. Thus far my sense of sight; while dry rot and wet rot and all the silent rots that rot in neglected roof and cellar - rot of rat and mouse and bug and coaching-stables near at hand besides - addressed themselves faintly to my sense of smell, and moaned, "Try Barnard's Mixture". (158)

Pip's terrifying ordeal in the sluice-house is perhaps rendered all the more deathly by the thrice-repeated image of his own demise as being a transformation into something even less

[9] The words of this part of the Anglican burial service have not changed since the first version of 1662.

[10] The repeated associations made between Miss Havisham and ash, foreshadowing her burning, would merit a paragraph in themselves. Note, for instance, how in Ch. 49 she has been contemplating an "ashy fir" when Pip finds her in his last visit.

substantial than dust or ash: vapour, ghostly white vapour is all that would have been left of him "the vapour that had crept towards me but a little while before, like my own warning ghost" (390). If Orlick had his way, there wouldn't have been, as he put it, a rag or a bone of him left: No memento of Pip's own death. He survives, though, to make of this novel a narrative memorial more enduring than rags, bones, dust and ashes. As he explains in that sluice-house scene, while he felt on the brink of his own grave, "far more terrible than death was the dread of being misremembered after death" (389.).

**Concluding remarks**

This paper has reported the results of reading *Great Expectations* as a narrated memory of how self-identity is formed in relation to the subject's environment. The outstanding feature of all the environments that narrating Pip remembers was found to be oldness, and a corpus of every mention of old things, people or places in the novel was thus the starting point for the analysis that underlies this article; the corpus presented such a wealth of material that preliminary analysis could do little more than categorize and list its contents, and this paper comments on selected examples from those lists. In many places the material cried out for deeper consideration and more theorized analysis, but such a work deserves a separate and differently focused study. This survey has nevertheless revealed certain significant tendencies in Dickens's treatment of old people, places, objects and images in *Great Expectations*, reflected in the six sections of this paper. In the full corpus two of these categories exhibited by far the largest number of examples and repeated expressions within the novel. These categories are the last two to be described above: the oppression of the old, and old elements acting as *memento mori*, which accounts for the novel's overall and lasting impression of old elements being unattractive, bad or (at best) engendering various degrees of sadness. The *memento mori* category, especially, could have been greatly expanded. In addition to this finding, the relatively weak support of any sentimental or nostalgic use of images of the past came as a surprise, for it was found that in this novel all such images are subverted, rendered ineffective or even ironic by the contents and contexts of their appearances (examples mentioned above include Joe's violent and abusive past, the desires of both young Joe and Pip to escape from their pasts, the fact that Pip's memories haunt and disturb him rather than offering solace or a sense of home; and the overall tendency of memories as well as old objects to oppress); in this reading of the novel, the background to or contexts of the narrator's lapses into sentiment completely deconstruct any Romantic version of the past that they might otherwise claim to evoke.

Counter-movements in the novel were revealed or emphasized in the analysis of the novel from the perspective of the old. The greatest of these is the observation that the further away in time Pip moves from his village the more powerful is the hold of his imagined past on him: by the time that he has taken on the writing of his own story the narrator seems to believe that it is only through internalizing the lessons of Joe's steadfastness, work ethic and dignity based upon integrity that he has become a mature gentleman. Here we find the protagonist as explained by den Hartog, who concludes his study with a statement that *Great Expectations* is the only one of Dickens' novels to have "a hero who embodies, in *himself*, the full range of Dickens' and the age's contradictions [...] the paradoxical necessity of at once having one's psychic origins whilst growing beyond them" (79) (emphasis original). Nevertheless, the ending of the novel remains ambiguous, and somehow elegiac, with its "confused equivocation" (79) set amid the ruins of the gardens of Old Satis House, with a meeting between people from each other's painful

pasts, expressed in terms of a shadow of parting that may or may not be imminent, but that is anyway inevitable at the end of their lives. Here, as everywhere in the novel, the text conceals, or rather reveals to the attentive reader, an almost fatalistic submission to the oppression of passing time and to the abusive authority of the old, and an omniscient, great fear of death.

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**Picturing an Aesthetic and Homoerotic Space:**
**Harold Acton's Travel Writing of China in the 1930s**

**Kun Xi**

**Abstract**: Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, escaping to the Orient for some British intellectuals became a coping strategy in a highly industrialized civilization as well as an act of rebellion against the stifling social protocols synonymous with British middle-class culture. Even if numerous travel narratives came along with those adventures, many of them by now have not received due critical attention. In this article, I scrutinize Sir Harold Acton's writings as one of those British intellectuals who lived in Republican China. I explore how the interplay of Acton's multi-identifications, as an aesthete, a homosexual as well as a westerner has influenced the way he engaged with, and represented China in his published work. Instead of conceiving the spatial relations between different parties as homogenous and total, the article explores how Acton's travel narratives *Peonies and Ponies* and *Memoirs of an Aesthete* avoid treating the East as an inferior or degraded space and therefore problematize the colonizer/colonized dichotomy of Sino-Western relations in the 1900s.

**Keywords:** Harold Acton, *Peonies and Ponies*, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, travel writing, aesthetes, homoerotic space, China

By the early twentieth century when the western culture was no longer as source for artistic imagination and inspiration, the Orient British aesthetes found a route to confirm their cultural identification as who privileged the experience of artistic beauty. Unlike some British travellers whose travel writing of the oriental spaces applied a pure imperialist gesture, there are aesthetic travellers who provided another way of writing with a focus on the Orient's aesthetic value. As one of those aesthetes, Harold Acton arrived in China in the 1930s and wrote extensively on his life in Peking both in fictional and non-fictional literary forms. His personal contact with China was primarily undertaken out of an urge to unearth its artistic value, as well as his quest for sexual freedom so stifled in the British society of his time.

As a modernist whose aesthetic appetite has been fed at an earlier stage when he was a member of aesthete society at Oxford, Acton's negotiation with the spatiality of China in essence reflects his request to make up for the deficiency of beauty increasingly engendered by capital industrialization. According to what is manifested through Acton's travel writing, this aesthetic compensation mainly comes from his embracing of Chinese architectural, sartorial, musical as well as religious tradition; or we may define it as a request for historic and sensual-romantic beauty. As how he notes in his *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, in contrast with the modern cities in Republican China such as Shanghai and Canton, Peking, as the Chinese city he lived in for around nine years, due to its comparatively intact preservation of the classic Eastern architectural style, namely Chinese gardens, temples and the imperial palace, specifically caters to an aesthete's craving for historic and visual beauty. In fact, Chinese or chinoiserie gardens had been given an aesthetic value by the British since the late seventeenth century. Classified by Claire O'Mahony as one kind of "aesthetic

gardens"[1], the Chinese garden's aesthetic value not only lies in its provision of a general exotic ambiance, but also manifests through the picturesque features it exhibits an echo of an earlier aesthetic ideal of Romanticism as a domestic intellectual movement. When referring to the photographs describing Peking interspersed throughout the *Memoirs* taken by Acton himself, we see him as purposely scanning Peking in a picturesque, or aesthetic, lens. If we examine the two photographs Acton offered which feature the gardens in Kung Wang Fu and Kung Hsien Hutung respectively with care[2], it can be seen that the snaps of the Chinese garden compound are analogous to the typical Romantic landscape rich in images of architectural ruins of ancient civilizations, overgrown plants, rough hills and cliffs, stone walls, and meandering waterways. By representing the picturesque Chinese gardens, for his home readership, Acton may have hoped that these images could, possibly, once again stir up their aesthetic awareness eroded by urbanization and the ashes of the wars. In addition, an aesthete's vision here resonates with the agenda of Romanticism in terms of their sympathy with the experience of beauty. Acton's nostalgia for Romantic aesthetic sensibilities seems to be an attempt to look for support from his intellectual predecessors to fortify his aesthetic quest as one of historic as well as immediate significance. Apart from the visual presentations, Acton in his memoir has more than once directly expressed his appreciation of the Chinese garden interspersed with rockery and pavilions, which, to him, reflected a harmony between architecture and nature: "These rambling buildings, courtyards, stone terraces and fishponds, each compact as a separate village, produced a total effect more overpowering than many a finer, more ambitious structure: they exhaled the peace that passeth all understanding" (*Memoirs* 280). It can be noticed here that Acton quotes from the Bible in the above passages the reference for Acton's quotation: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" [3]. Although Acton intends to embrace the Eastern architectural traditions enthusiastically, in this instance, the unconscious application of Biblical quotation indicates how difficult it is for him to reject entirely the influence of a Western upper-class education.

In Acton's travel fiction *Peonies and Ponies* which was published after he left Peking and draws its materials from his own life there, Chinese architecture becomes the spatial setting for most episodes of the story. As Elisabeth Chang notes, British aesthetes tend to draw upon Chinese gardens "as a displaced location for internal critique" (100). In other words, according to Chang, Chinese gardens act as a literary trope that may deliver a satirical allusion. Acton in the *Memoirs* just indicates that how his travel narratives set within some Chinese surroundings written in "Roman à clef" style should be read as a satire.

> I was writing a novel to illustrate the effect of Peking on a typical group of foreigners and the effect of these foreigners on a few Chinese. […] My characters were amalgams of actual people; whose characters are not? Had I drawn them straight from

[1] See O'Mahony's "Fin-de- siècle Fantasy to the Western Front: The Aesthetic Gardens of Nancy" (253-72).

[2] See photographs entitled "The Secluded Studio in Spring, West Side Wing of 2 in Kung Hsien Hutung", "'Foreign Style' Gateway of 18th Century Jesuit Design at Entrance to Prince P'u Ju's Garden, Kung Wang Fu" in *Memoir of an Aesthete*. (London: Methuen, 1948).

[3] See *Philippians* (4:6-7).

> life, not only would be the book have been libellous, it would have been dismissed as pure, or impure, grotesquerie. (*Memoirs* 379)

In this instance, apart from being able to treat the Western readership with the picturesque beauty as a site of exoticism, Chinese gardens along with other types of classic architecture in Acton's travel writing are expected to accommodate the critique of some Westerners. Referring to Acton's narratives, the target of critique is those who failed to appreciate the historic beauty of Peking as he himself did. Acton specifically shows disapproval of the European residents of the expatriate community in Peking who tailored randomly the existing Chinese architectural legacies according to Western tastes.

> A newcomer might have been puzzled to hear spinsters and matrons prattling about "my temple" in the Western Hills. Did they preside over some religious community? Did they ponder the nature of Buddhahood and study the sutras? No, these temples merely provided an occasional change of décor. It was pleasant to pretend, as if one were in London, that one had to escape from the wear and tear of City life. The Trumpers rented one in which they had patiently tried to produce an illusion of their Surrey nest, for the walls were covered with Ceil Aldins and the furniture with a chintz of flouncing cabbage roses; one felt sure that lamb and mint sauce were on the sideboard. Monsieur Lefort had banished the Eighteen Lohan to install a cocktail bar in his temple, with modish appurtenances in surgical steel. He called it Le Boeuf sur le Toit. It only lacked Jean Cocteau [...]. (*Peonies and Ponies* 14)

The expatriates' alterations of those traditional Mandarin mansions in fact represent an intention to occupy and take advantage of the Chinese indigenous culture, which indicates a hidden imperial arrogance as well as the desire to sustain the privilege of those in charge. The Chinese architectural elements are not appreciated for its own sake; rather they are reorganized at random and disassociated from their original cultural context. In other words, they exist to feed those expatriates sensual excitements. In contrast to how Acton himself respect the cultural authenticity of China, the fictional figures in *Peonies and Ponies* thus in a way deprive the cultural significance of those Chinese mansions.

In addition to insinuating that most foreigners in Peking have mishandled the city's cultural legacy, Acton does not forget to provide a counterexample in the character of Philip Flower, his literary double, whose interactions with the indigenous cultural traditions are seen in more positive light. By actively pursuing knowledge in fields of study such as architecture, religion, the arts and anything that is authentic Chinese as Acton did, Philip Flower embodies a reciprocal relationship with the West that challenges the unidirectional cultural flow Said has alluded to through his Orientalist framework[4]. Rather than misusing the Chinese culture as a way to exercise imperial powers, Philip Flower envisages the indigenous objects from a reversed perspective, namely to recover the cultural authenticity of the Orient. In a scene that occurs in the chapter "A Solitary Flower" in *Peonies and Ponies*, Acton describes Philip Flower's positive interactions with the Peking Opera as the representative of Chinese musical traditions. However, what should be notified is that, in addition to praising Philip for his attempt to integrate with Chinese culture, Acton seems to suggest that this kind of attempt cannot be always that successful. Referring to the experience of Philip Flower, regardless of whether he is deeply attracted by the Peking Opera staged at the Opera House in Tung An market and tries his best to follow the tempo of the music, he is still unable to connect with this Chinese art in a profound way.

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[4] See Edward W. Said's *Orientalism.*

> Again, with a shock of surprise, he realized what a completely different world the Chinese inhabited. He scrutinized the tense expressions of the audience: yonder he recognized his tailor, transfigured by his absorption in the play, his commonplace features sensitized by strains which, even though Philip had heard them repeatedly, failed to convey more than a strident noise to his own dull tympanum. […] Evidently it had one, but there was nothing, as in an English ballad, to catch hold of. A mysterious rhythm of their own these people possessed, a magic circle into which he could not enter. Sometimes he fancied he had caught the 'hang' of it; then, just as he was beginning to enjoy and possibly to understand, the song would stop, clipped for no reason his ear could discover and he returned to his bafflement. (*Peonies and Ponies* 83)

Different from other European residents who might play down the oriental musical presentation as defiant or inferior, Philip, or Acton, belongs to the category of residents who strives to understand the nuances of Chinese culture. His attempt to forge a dialogue with China ruffles the imperialist arrogance and displays a rapport between the East and the West. However, the Chinese musical tradition here presents a type of uncertainty that has been the source of Philip's frustration and anxiety. Apart from showing the hero's attempt to fit in Chinese culture, Acton indicates that the rooted incompatibility between Chinese and Western cultures might at times sadly shattered a confidence in gaining access to the alternative culture.

In addition to Chinese architecture and music, Chinese sartorial tradition acts as another cultural element that entrenches Acton's aesthetic agenda. A photograph in the *Memoirs* features Acton and one of his friends Amy May Wong offers a glimpse of how obsessed Acton was with the revival of China's earlier modes of clothing[5]. In the picture, Acton wears a Chinese long gown with a pigtail as the typical hairstyle of the male population of the Ch'ing Dynasty. Seated with Amy May Wong, the first Chinese American Hollywood movie star, Acton has successfully modelled himself after a Manchurian nobleman. Besides, Acton has deliberately created an atmosphere full of retrospective elements by situating himself inside a "moon gate" carved in wood, with the background of a Chinese screen on which a traditional Chinese painting with mythological aura is displayed. The type of Chinese long gown he wears in the picture, appears as loose and airy, with its refined cutting, shared the similar qualities of the Aesthetic dress of the *fin de siècle*. As a fresh sartorial style developed from Artistic Dress, the *fin de siècle aesthetic* clothing of the time rejects the structured and cumbersome dress code, and appeared as loosely fitted with plain colour as the Chinese long gowns do. Apart from that, the Chinese screen with those typical Oriental motifs as the artistic prototype that inspired Japanese panel screens as an ideal decorative forms assimilated by the Aesthetic Movement of the late nineteenth century, also suggests Acton's preference as a manifesto of the identification of an aesthete. Acton's archaeological reconstruction in his artistic creation, which looks purely as a result of his desire to embrace the East, is after all the manifestation of a certain Western ideology.

Acton's this self-presentation in the photograph with Amy May Wong evokes Viktor Shklovsky's theory of the art technique of "defamiliarization" (4). Shklovsky coined the term "defamiliarization" to refer to a means to create a work artistically to "remove the

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[5] See the photograph entitled "Moon Gate on 2, Kung Hsien Hutung" in *Memoir of an Aesthete* (London: Methuen, 1948).

automatism of perception" (7). According to Shklovsky, "[t]he purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged" (4). By the early twentieth century, although the Chinese or chinoiserie artistic style is not as thoroughly new and fresh to the Europeans, quite a few artists are still keen to apply Chinese elements into their artistic creation to arouse an instant sensory refreshment. The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century authors including Oscar Wilde, Ezra Pound, Robert Byron and Harold Acton himself all coincidentally borrowed ancient elements of the Orient in their literary works to offer a compensation for the "atomization of perception" (7) engendered by mundane everyday life**.** By presenting a picture with an exotic lure and a bizarre combination of the East and the West, the photograph of Acton and the Hollywood actress provides the readership with the "defamiliarized" and thus prolonged aesthetic experience.

Besides offering a compensation for the perception of beauty for Acton as an aesthete, Peking also afforded him an opportunity to achieve a measure of spiritual transcendence. Acton's method to achieve this transcendence was principally through the perceived spiritual solace of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. During one of his visits to the monasteries and temples on the Western Hills in Peking, as recounted in the *Memoirs*, Acton recalls how inner peace could be obtained through the mystical power of Eastern religions.

> I had seldom, if ever, found such peace in Christian places of worship: Crucifix alone recalls scenes of agony, and death and tears are always present. But here the smiling Buddhas and Lohans tranquillized the mind, and their smiles pervaded each temple. Impatience, the most marked characteristic of all modern modes of thought and the curse of all our lives, was banished by the light of Buddha's smile. The ascendancy of inward culture and of love to others—Buddha's meditation under the Bo-tree—was reflected, with subtle variations, in each haven of peace, and there seemed no doubt that Buddha had grasped the solution of the great mystery of sorrow and had learnt its causes and its cure. (*Memoirs* 280)

Acton even affords the hero Philip Flower in *Peonies and Ponies* a similar experience as himself in terms of the devotion to Chinese philosophy and religious traditions. Acton characterizes Philip Flower as "a middle-aged foreigner in old-world Chinese garb of vividest hue solemnly burning gilt paper money, lightening candles and incense and prostrating himself three times before the shrine of Confucius" (*Peonies and Ponies* 200) as a double of himself. In the final chapter of the novel, "To The Nirvana", according to Acton's narrative, Philip Flower realizes his innate tranquillity through reciting Buddhist doctrines in meditation. If we refer to the portrait of Acton attached to the Preface of the *Memoirs*, with the caption "Portrait of Acton as a Lohan" drawn by K'ang T'ung-Pai, describing Acton in cassock, sitting cross-legged, and surrounded by a picturesque backdrop, it seems what Acton seeks to achieve through his Peking adventure is displayed clearly: the picturesque beauty, the revival of cultural traditions as well as self-perfection. For this, he truly obtained redemption from China and its culture.

In addition to playing the role of the source of picturesque beauty, according to Acton's depiction, Republican China provided a homoerotic parallel through which he has successfully accommodated his identity as a homosexual. Joseph Allen Boone has argued in his monograph *The Homoerotic of Orientalism,* it is through "forms of sexuality and

eroticism" that the East and the West find a certain sort of symbiotic nodules (xxv). Though Boone principally investigated how homoerotic representations has traversed across in-between European and Islamicate cultures, his theories are still applicable in our analysis here. As how Wenqing Kang has argued, "western sexological concept of homosexuality was accepted and incorporated in early-twentieth century China because it was similar to the local understanding of male same-sex relations" (490). It is due to Republican China's acceptance of homosexuality as a western sexological concept and its relatively tolerant attitude of homosexual behaviour, Acton formed further attachment to Chinese culture. When taking a close reading of *Peonies and Ponies*, we can detect how Peking at the 1930s acted as a space that permits homosexual behaviours, or at least the production of homoerotic discourses. Elizabeth Chang has affirmed how writers have been able to treat the oriental spaces such as China as where some identifications and discourses recognized by the West as non-normative are allowed. According to Chang, "[w]riters had long found China's landscape an accommodating and exotic refuge for ideas too critical, challenging or scandalous to be located domestically" (100). In *Peonies and Ponies,* Acton depicts Peking as just such a space Chang has recognized as where the "sexual transgression" can be achieved through the characterization of the figure Yang Pao-chin and the ambiguity of the relationship between the Yang and Philip Flower**.**

In the fiction, Acton at first recognizes China representing a culture as inherently allows a sort of ambivalence in sexual preferences, and this kind of sexual ambivalence is exhibited through the profession of a fictional character he portrayed in *Peonies and Ponies* called Yang Pao-chin. As a Peking Opera singer, Yang's proficiency is in playing female roles. This form of performance of Peking Opera transforms a male actor into an androgynous figure in feminized appearances and manners with his original male physiological characteristics concealed. This ambiguity as prompted by theatrical requirements and convenience has not only created "transgendered" individuals, albeit only on stage by means of art, but helped destabilize the gender binary recognized as the sole standard by the West long before the early twentieth century. Meanwhile, Acton gave a hint of the homosexuality of his literary double, Philip Flower, by giving this figure a feminine surname, "Flower", which was mocked by Captain Gully, another European resident in the expatriate community, as the family name merely for a "frost-bitten pansy" (*Peonies and Ponies* 138). Based on Acton's insinuation, we may need to reconsider the relationship Philip Flower attempts to achieve with the young male character Yang Pao-chin. Although Philip Flower claims to foster Yang as his son, if we take a closer look at Philip's interaction with Yang, it seems that his affection towards this young man is blatantly ambiguous. Take the scene in which Philip meets Yang Pao-chin for the first time in an opera house as an example**,** Acton treats it like a love-at-first-sight story.

> The air is very dense, as in some catacomb lighted by acetylene. Was a thunderstorm brewing? The drums on the stage were ominously rumbling. Philip felt shaky about the knees; his lungs were oppressed nigh to suffocation. The figure briskly fanning himself by a narrow wooden staircase he recognized as Yang. (*Peonies and Ponies* 85)

After the short first sight, Philip in a later scene even boldly confesses how he "take[s] a special interest": "I was drawn to Yang the moment I set eyes on him. He appealed to my imagination. I'd do anything for him. Don't ask me why: I hardly know myself!" (*Peonies and Ponies* 121). In this case, although Acton is still not able to openly support homosexuality, we can detect between the lines his intention to create an ideological confusion concerning sexual orientation among his readership, albeit in a very careful and

inconspicuous way. Although Republican China, like its predecessors, never officially sanctioned "queerness" of sexuality, with gender ambiguity freely demonstrated on stage in the Peking Opera, an art form with a profound cultural legacy, Acton seems well equipped to show his western peers that tolerance of sexual deviance is alive and well here in Republican China, as well as in its culture. For Western artists, Peking therefore possesses a distinctive aura that opens up the potential for tabooed relationships; it symbolizes temptation and transgressive pleasures in contrast with the mundane interpersonal relationships back home.

In conclusion, by mapping out China as an aesthetic and homoerotic space, Acton presents a disorderly encounter between the Orient and the Occident, which exhibits the complex intercultural negotiations between the two sides. For Harold Acton, China's spatial significance at first lies in how it was able to become a focus of his aestheticism. In addition to this, the space allows him to perceive it with a homoerotic lens, which renders the spatiality of Peking much aligned with his cultural identity as a queer or homosexual aesthete. As Oscar Wilde notes the modern idea tends to be "under an antique form" (137), Acton's pursuit of various Chinese cultural traditions is consistent with the overall agenda of aesthetic movement as a modern artistic movement. The sexual freedom embraced by him is also a manifesto of the Bohemian lifestyle aspired by the *fin de siècle* aesthetes. Representing the aesthetic agenda as well as the rebellious impulse of some of British intellectuals of the day, Harold Acton's personal stance along with the array of discourses devised by the fictional figures in his travel writing provide an alternative way in thinking and representing the Sino-West spatial relations.

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# Bakhtin's Notion of Decrowning in Virginia Woolf's *Flush*

**Victoria Bilge Yılmaz**

**Abstract:** Virginia Woolf has been accepted as one of the leading feminist authors of the last century. *Flush* (1933), written as a biography of a dog, is one of her novels in which Woolf voices her concerns about women's conditions. In this novel, Woolf depicts how a woman, Elizabeth Barrett, becomes entrapped at home and how she escapes from this domestic imprisonment. Elizabeth's father, Mr Barrett, who imposes imprisonment on Elizabeth, loses his authority over his daughter when she leaves his home. This process of going through imprisonment and escape is observed by Flush, Elizabeth's dog. In this study, Woolf's *Flush* will be analysed in terms of Bakhtin's notion of decrowning which suggests an idea of inevitable change and instability of any authority. Elizabeth and Flush's escape from Mr Barrett's strict domestic regulations suggests their act of decrowning of Mr Barrett, a powerful father figure. Moreover, an element of an animal helps to see that an act of decrowning can be performed by anybody. This study will conclude that *Flush* tries to solve women's problems with a slight touch of amusement.

**Keywords:** Virginia Woolf, *Flush*, Bakhtin, decrowning, patriarchy

## Introduction

One of the ways in which Woolf reconfigures the "female domain"—a woman's place appointed by the patriarchal system—in her novels is by emasculating the source that holds a woman entrapped. In other words, she draws portrayals of father figures who lose their power. Thus, it can be claimed that her fiction suggests the destabilization of the blatant patriarchal order. It is destabilized by the entrapped women as her female characters are portrayed as enthusiastic figures to assert their values against patriarchal precepts. *Flush* (1933) is one of the novels in Woolf's oeuvre that can be discussed in these terms. This article will analyse *Flush* in terms of the dethronement of patriarchal authority and specify the similarities between this dethronement and the concept of decrowning in Bakhtin's thought.

Bakhtin sees the act of crowning/decrowning as one of the significant aspects of carnival, a specific period in which people forget about their everyday lives and indulge in freedom from social regulations. During the carnival, decrowning is an act when the king loses his crown, is beaten and thrashed by the crowd, which at the same time appoints another king chosen from the people around. For Bakhtin, "[c]rowning/decrowning is a dualistic ambivalent ritual, expressing the inevitability and at the same time the creative power of the shift-and-renewal, the *joyful relativity* of all structure and order, of all authority and all (hierarchical) position" (1984a, 124) (emphasis original). To be more precise, by focusing on the act of crowning/decrowning, Bakhtin underlines the idea of constant change, renewal and the inevitable end of all authority. The link that binds Woolf's novels, *Flush* in particular, and Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalistic acts of crowning/decrowning is the eagerness to mock and ridicule the figures of power in ways that often include humour. Although these figures of power are not physically beaten in Woolf's works, as it happens with the mock kings during the carnival, the ways female characters disregard the fathers' authority suggest the act of decrowing. Woolf's father figures lose their power over the female characters and withdraw themselves from the

battleground. So it means that Bakhtin's concept of decrowning and, of course, the concept of carnival, have undergone some changes. As Clair Wills claims, carnival reveals some distortions as it travels through time and space: "Shifted from public sphere [medieval carnival square] to the bourgeois home [Woolf's setting], carnival ceases to be a site of actual struggle [physical thrashing of a mock king], but the conflicts of the modern private sphere may have generated a social force on to which the bodily energies of carnival have been displaced" (96). Thus, although Woolf's novels do not explicitly manifest the crowning/decrowning of a king, they display the emasculation of authority. The major female character in *Flush*, Elizabeth Barrett, for example, challenges her father's authority through her actual escape from him.

**Elizabeth's imprisonment and Mr Barrett's authority**

*Flush* is based on the life of a real dog, Flush, that belonged to a famous British poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. *Flush* is a fictional biography; it begins with an account of Flush's background and ends with his death. The owner of the dog is Elizabeth whose life in the novel is divided into two main periods: bedroom life in Wimpole Street and life in Italy. Between the two periods in Elizabeth's life, Flush is dognapped and then rescued by Elizabeth. When Elizabeth lives in Wimpole Street, she experiences imprisonment because she is treated like an invalid and is not usually allowed to go out of her room. However, eventually, Elizabeth secretly marries Mr Browning and leaves her room, and even England, for Italy.

*Flush,* as Flint claims, is "simultaneously entertaining and serious" (xv). The entertainment lies in the dog's focalization. Observing everything from a dog's perspective brings to the fore the notion of relativity in a joyful manner. For Bakhtin, the notion of relativity is an important element of a carnival sense of the world because it "*relativiz*[es] all that was externally stable, set and ready-made" (1984a, 166) (emphasis original). Thus, Flush's focalization creates a sense of viewing the world from a new perspective, and makes Woolf satirise people who disintegrate themselves from the world of animals. In this way, the boundary between the worlds of human beings and animals is erased, which is similar to the suspension of the barriers between the classes and between human beings and nature in Bakhtin's carnival. Ryan thinks that this novel is one of "Woolf's most forward-looking texts" because it unsettles the conventional notions of the division of the human and animal worlds. Ryan contends that in this novel Woolf's humour is directed towards those who take their "human position too certainly" (138). In addition to Ryan's ideas it can be stated that Flush's focalization, in fact, underlines the limits of human beings' understanding of their environment. Perhaps, what Woolf tries to do in her novel is to show that the "pomposity" of human beings can be easily deflated (*Flush* 89). In this vein, it is possible to read the novel as a manifestation of the idea that animals are much more sensitive than human beings with reference to what happens in life. They possess the ability to feel the tiny change that happens in a person's life, but human beings, despite their intellect, lack this ability. By situating Flush in an environment where human beings live, Woolf explores an animal's perception of this environment which leads her to redefine its nature. Ryan states that Woolf provides a "reconceptualization of the complex spaces shared by human and nonhuman animals" (134) and "reimagining of the earthly space shared by humans and animals, where hierarchies are flattened and species categories blurred" (155). Combining human and animal characteristics bears a similarity to Bakhtin's carnival square where there is no hierarchical order. Hence, Flush's focalization depicts a different version of seeing the environment where human beings live. It underlines the

effect of human beings' spiritual condition on the atmosphere of this environment. Flush makes it evident that the characters' spiritual condition can be evident in their physical environment; their rooms and houses signify their mood. It can also be stated that the perspective of a dog helps see the woman's condition from a different perspective. Flush's point of view helps the author to present the woman's situation by a voice which is not the voice of a dominant ideology. According to Flint, Woolf shows the reader that "the overlooked and underrated perspective of a dog may be uncannily close to the underrated perspective of the thinking Victorian woman" (xliii). However, Flint's idea of associating a woman and a dog can be extended. Woolf, who has always demanded that women should express themselves, transcends her own demand and makes a woman's condition be visible in a much clearer and objective way through the eyes of a dog because a dog is not subject to the dominant domestic ideology.

As is seen in Bakhtin's works, crownings and decrownings are "sudden and quick changes of fate," "instantaneous rises and falls" of the characters (1984a, 171). *Flush* also depicts the sudden shifts as the power Mr Barrett holds at home decreases. The analysis of *Flush* in the light of Bakhtin's notion of the act of decrowning reveals the fact that the figure of authority in the novel is not as visible as it is in Dostoevsky's or Rabelais' works. Although Mr Barrett physically exists in the novel and controls his daughter, the act of decrowning is mainly performed in relation to an abstract idea of patriarchy. The relationship between Miss Barrett and her father is mainly seen through the lens of the dog. This, in turn, makes the criticism of the patriarchal system milder because it adds a sense of humour to the narration.

Mr Barrett's authority in the novel is established through his control of his daughter's life in her backside bedroom. He controls her obedience by visiting her every evening and spending some time by her bedside: "Signifying his approval of his daughter's obedience, Mr Barrett lowered himself heavily into the chair by her side" (*Flush* 31). Flush's perception of Mr Barrett depicts the father's dominance and his desire to frighten to make Elizabeth submit to his authority.

> His eye at once sought the tray. Had the meal been eaten? Had his commands been obeyed? [...] As that dark body approached him, shivers of terror and horror ran down Flush's spine. So a savage couched in flowers shudders when the thunder growls and he hears the voice of God. [...] A force had entered the bedroom which he dreaded; a force that he was powerless to withstand. (*Flush* 31)

When seen from Flush's perspective, Mr Barrett loses the features of a father and just appears as a dark body devoid of the feelings of sympathy or affection. What is more, although Mr Barrett seems to visit his daughter to check whether she has eaten her dinner or not, Flush's focalization suggests that Mr Barrett's figure exudes the desire to terrorize and frighten. That is why, Mr Barrett is associated with God, who is not visible but can frighten. Although Mr Barrett does not mind Flush, the dog fears his force. Such a sense is described in *To the Lighthouse*, too, when James' feelings towards his father are presented. James always wanted to kill "the thing that descended on" Mr Ramsay, "tyranny, despotism", "that fierce sudden black-winged harpy, with its talons and its beak all cold and hard, that struck and struck at you" (*To the Lighthouse* 198-99). Therefore, it can be held that the novels present a struggle against these concepts of tyranny and despotism rather than against the individuals themselves.

Flush's fear of Mr Barrett is just a small reflection of Miss Barrett's desperate condition in the hands of a patriarch. It is through Flush's feelings toward the father that

Miss Barrett's condition is expressed and made visible, though not in a complete manner. Elizabeth can neither move nor escape her father's authority. In that sense, Miss Barrett's positioning as an invalid and her use of a bath chair symbolise her spiritual imprisonment. Elizabeth's constant presence in her bedroom is marked by her father's wish to keep her there rather than by her own choice as it is more efficient to control someone in a limited space. The father figure, thus, is portrayed "as choking the individuality" of a woman (Mohammad and Farooq 288). Mr Barrett tries to establish and sustain stability at his home and this makes him imprison his daughter, fix her to a particular place and define her as an invalid.

Elizabeth is "a prisoner of his [Mr Barrett's] authority" (Drobot 69). She lives in a bedroom that is remote from the other rooms. Although the other members of the family visit her sometimes, she is usually alone. Moreover, her family members treat her as if she is an invalid, which intensifies her immobility and justifies her imprisonment. "Hers was the pale worn face of an invalid, cut off from air, light, freedom" (*Flush* 18). When Flush enters Miss Barrett's bedroom for the first time, he feels isolation and decay.

> Only a scholar who has descended step by step into a mausoleum and there finds himself in a crypt, crusted with fungus, slimy with mould, exuding sour smells of decay and antiquity, while half-obliterated marble busts gleam in mid-air and all is dimly seen by the light of the small swinging lamp which he holds, and dips and turns, glancing now here, now there – only the sensations of such an explorer into the buried vaults of a ruined city can compare with the riot of emotions that flooded Flush's nerves as he stood for the first time in an invalid's bedroom, in Wimpole Street, and smelt eau-de-Cologne. (*Flush* 16)

The dog's perception helps the reader penetrate into the depth of Miss Barrett's situation with the smells and the colours of her room. Her room is likened to a mausoleum, a room for the dead, which suggests decay and antiquity. Lack of sufficient light intensifies the feeling of death and burial. Anna Feuerstein states that although Miss Barrett's bedroom may seem luxurious for a person, for a dog it smells of crypt and fungus. In this way, "the reader's perception of Elizabeth's bedroom is completely subverted into its near opposite: mold, decay, and old age" (Feuerstein 32). Feuerstein states that the reader "realizes the extent of Elizabeth's oppressed life" (32). She adds that "Flush's epistemology challenges an empirical engagement with gender oppression: Elizabeth's life may not look problematic, living as she does in a rich house on Wimpole Street, yet she is in actuality stifled in the dark" (32). Indeed, even the street where the Barretts' house is situated is described as an isolated space, untouched by change:

> Even now perhaps nobody rings the bell of a house in Wimpole Street without trepidation. It is the most august of London streets, the most impersonal. Indeed, when the world seems tumbling to ruin, and civilization rocks on its foundations, one has only to go to Wimpole Street; [...] for as long as Wimpole Street remains, civilization is secure. (*Flush* 13-4)

The street is the symbol of stability and respect. It symbolises Mr Barrett, his power to stabilize everything and deserve respect because of his abilities. The street is impersonal and suggests loneliness.

During his first hours in Miss Barrett's room Flush realises lack of light, nature, freedom, and love. The doors at home symbolize this lack: "Door after door shut in his face as Miss Mitford [his previous owner] went downstairs; they shut on freedom; on fields; on

hares; on grass; on his adored, his venerated mistress" (*Flush* 17). As time goes by, every now and then, Flush feels that he is in a cage in his new room. The maid's closing the windows prevents the penetration of the outside into the room. "now at the sound of the ivy tapping on the pane Miss Barrett asked Wilson to see to the fastenings of the window" (*Flush* 24). The window, which is an important element in Bakhtin's notion of the carnival because it links the interior space to the outside world, is closed. The windows in Elizabeth's room do not perform the function of helping the characters escape the domestic suffocating atmosphere. Indeed, Elizabeth disintegrates herself from nature and is made to believe that she is secure in her room. It is evident that Miss Barrett internalized the sense of isolation and seclusion that is imposed on her by her father. "Flush felt that he and Miss Barrett lived alone together in a cushioned and firelit cave" (24) where there are no windows. Elizabeth's life is the life of "a bird in its cage" (33). She possesses her cage but it imprisons her. Her room provides her with everything but freedom. Even if she goes out, it is quite limited: "She sometimes kept the house for weeks at a time, and when she left it, it was only for an hour or two, to drive to a shop in a carriage, or to be wheeled to Regent's Park in a bath-chair" (33-4). Miss Barrett's life is absolutely limited if looked at from a dog's perspective. For Flush, having such a life is the same as being in prison.

Thus, it seems deliberate that a dog is juxtaposed with a woman in such a condition. Flush is depicted as Elizabeth's hidden desires, her inner self that wants to run in fields and indulge in absolute freedom and freshness of nature and life. Flush misses the outdoors and the freedom to be in nature. Every opening of the room's door seems to be promising and tempting: "sometimes the step on the stair did not pass the door; it stopped outside. The handle was seen to spin round; the door actually opened; somebody came in. Then how strangely the furniture changed its look!" (*Flush* 28) The atmosphere of the bedroom changes even when the door is opened to let somebody in. The outside world and the freedom that it might provide gradually become condensed into mere symbols for Flush, "with all her poet's imagination Miss Barrett could not divine what Wilson's wet umbrella meant to Flush; what memories it recalled, of forests and parrots and wild trumpeting elephants" (26). It becomes possible for him to grasp all his memories and feelings related to the outside world in an image of a wet umbrella. Flush acquires an ability to associate the outside world with the objects at home to sprinkle moments of freedom into the sense of seclusion.

However, leaving the bedroom and going out with Elizabeth does not solve the problem of Flush's yearning for his freedom. Flush's perceptions of the freedom of the outside world and being outside with Miss Barrett do not coincide. He understands it when they go out together and "a heavy weight jerked at his throat; he was thrown back on his haunches. [...] Why was he a prisoner here?" (22) His actions are controlled and limited even when he is outside. It seems to suggest that women are under control even when they are away from the source of authority and in Elizabeth's case this source is her father. Flush experiences the process of internalization of domestic imprisonment and now he is at the beginning of this process. He has to learn that even if he is outside, he has to behave as if he is in his bedroom. Being outside does not mean that the rules of the indoors are suspended. He has to learn to remember and follow those rules everywhere. Eventually, Flush learns to submit, "[t]o resign, to control, to suppress the most violent instincts of his nature – that was the prime lesson of the bedroom school, and it was one of such portentous difficulty that many scholars have learnt Greek with less – many battles have been won that cost their generals not half such pain" (25). Although it is very difficult to accomplish, Flush suppresses his instincts and acknowledges the power of authority and its values. Flush's

condition parallels women's condition in a patriarchal world. A dog stands for a woman: "Thus the country dog finds himself needing to learn submission, [...] a parallel to women's internalization of the obligation to subjugate themselves to the confining social laws of patriarchy" (Flint xx-xxi). Similar to Flush, women have to get rid of the idea that their values are of importance. They have to exist according to the values of the patriarchal system.

As time goes by, Flush gets accustomed to being in the room and he even starts to fear the outside. His fear becomes obvious in his attitude towards Mr Browning, who begins to visit Miss Barrett frequently. Mr Browning's presence in Elizabeth's bedroom awakes in Flush a sense of alarm and intuition that something vital is going to happen, and which he is afraid of. Elizabeth's reading of Mr Browning's letters makes Flush alarmed. "And as she read he heard, as when we are half asleep we hear through the clamour of the street some bell ringing and know that it is addressed to us, alarmingly yet faintly, as if someone far away were trying to rouse us with the warning of fire, or burglary, or some menace against our peace and we start in alarm before we wake" (*Flush* 34-5). Furthermore, Flush's dognapping proves that the outside is dangerous. The Whitechapel, the place where he is taken, makes him suffer physically and spiritually. When he is dognapped he feels what Miss Barrett feels in her "imprisonment" in Wimpole Street (Flint xxi). Flush's short presence in Whitechapel symbolises a middle-class woman's household responsibilities: "Children crawled out from dark corners and pinched his ears" (*Flush* 55). The image is similar to an image of a woman with children. Flush's being disturbed by the children symbolises a woman's responsibilities towards her children: "He whined, and a heavy hand beat him over the head" (55). His desire to complain about his situation or his tendency to demand a better condition can be associated with women's lack of opportunity to express themselves. It also can stand for the patriarchal system's aggressiveness and violence as effective weapons to dominate and subjugate. "[Y]et all of them, Flush could see, were dogs of the highest breeding, chained dogs, footmen's dogs, like himself" (55). The valuable dogs Flush meets in Whitechapel symbolise middle- or upper-middle class women, suffering at the hands of patriarchy.

**Decrowning of the father figure**

Nevertheless, patriarchal norms are challenged in the novel. First, Mr Browning's entrance into Elizabeth's life is an initiation of the process of the fragmentation of her imprisonment. The change in Elizabeth's life after Mr Browning's appearance becomes evident through Flush's observations. Flush feels the change even in her tiny gestures and redefines Miss Barrett's aim of existence. He becomes cognizant of the fact that Elizabeth gets rid of the psychological walls that have surrounded her hitherto; Miss Barrett, whom he used to imagine in a cave, goes out: "Miss Barrett was outside. [...] Flush had never heard that sound in Miss Barrett's voice before – that vigour, that excitement" (*Flush* 38). Flush feels the authority and freedom in her voice. "Miss Barrett's voice, that had been pleading and afraid, lost its faltering note. It rang out with a determination and a boldness that Flush had never heard in it before" (42). Miss Barrett challenges her physical condition, too: "Then she did what she had not done for many a long day—she actually walked on her own feet as far as the gate at Devonshire Place with her sister" (39). It is palpable that Mr Browning is the impulse that draws Miss Barrett to think about her ability to go out of her confinement by unsettling the order that her father establishes. Miss Barrett starts to eat everything that is brought to her: "At that night she ate her chicken to the bone. Not a scrap of potato or of skin was thrown to Flush" (39).

Flush feels the change in Miss Barrett, but Mr Barrett does not. Flush wants to make Mr Barrett feel it and this, in fact, stresses Mr Barrett's deficiency. Despite his infinite power to control his daughter, he is powerless to feel what happens in her room. In this way, Flush's focalization undermines his power because Flush is depicted as more sensitive and alert than Mr Barrett. The dog seems to possess more power than Mr Barrett because he can feel the change beforehand: "When Mr Barrett came as usual, Flush marvelled at his obtuseness. [...] 'Don't you know,' Flush marvelled, 'who's been sitting in that chair? Can't you smell him?' [...] aghast at his obtuseness, Flush slipped past him out of the room" (*Flush* 39). Flush feels Mr Browning's power to change Miss Barrett while Mr Barrett remains blind to this situation. Flush regards Mr Barrett obtuse because he cannot feel such an obvious change in Elizabeth. Such a perception of Mr Barrett by Flush adds a sense of humour to the novel because Mr Barrett's seriousness and authority are deflated by a dog. Mr Barrett is rendered as a stupid and incompetent creature. This humorous focalization of Mr Barrett decrowns his figure of authority.

Flush's being dognapped also contributes to the destabilization of the preordained conceptions of patriarchal authority in the Barretts household. When Miss Barrett goes to Whitechapel to rescue Flush, she comes to comprehend more fully the reality of the outside world: "She had seen more while she sat in the cab at the public-house than she had seen during the five years that she had lain in the back bedroom at Wimpole Street" (*Flush* 64). She understands that the authority that she subordinates herself to is not invincible; it is fragile. She recognizes the strength of the outside world to challenge the authority of the inside, of her domestic space. Moreover, Miss Barrett manages to go against the men who tell her what to do. All the men around her tell her that she should not pay the ransom for the kidnapped dog.

> Wimpole Street was determined to make a stand against Whitechapel. Blind Mr Boyd sent word that in his opinion it would be 'an awful sin' to pay the ransom. Her father and her brother were in league against her and were capable of any treachery in the interests of their class. But worst of all – far worse—Mr Browning himself threw all his weight, all his eloquence, all his learning, all his logic, on the side of Wimpole Street and against Flush. (*Flush* 60)

She disregards all men's decision to leave Flush in the hands of the dognappers and goes to Whitechapel all by herself. As Flint argues, "the actions to which she committed herself added up to an assertion of her own values. In these terms, rescuing Flush was as significant as eloping with Robert Browning" (xxii). Miss Barrett's action is a huge step in gaining her independence from the men around her.

> How easy it would have been to yield – how easy it would have been to say, 'Your good opinion is worth more to me than a hundred cocker spaniels'. How easy it would have been to sink back on her pillows and sigh, 'I am a weak woman; I know nothing of law and justice; decide for me'. She had only to refuse to pay the ransom; [...] And if Flush were killed, [...] there was Robert Browning by her side to assure her that she had done right and earned his respect. But Miss Barrett was not to be intimidated. Miss Barrett took up her pen and refuted Robert Browning. (*Flush* 61)

She even goes against Mr Browning, the man for the sake of whom she disregards her father. If Flush is taken as a symbolic figure of Miss Barrett's freedom, it means she struggles to obtain her freedom despite all men's authority.

Finally, Miss Barrett's escape with Mr Browning is the chief factor that makes Miss Barrett and Flush participate in a great change of life despite the norms of the patriarchal father confining her in her room. By her escape Miss Barrett interposes a veil between herself and her father; she asserts her subjectivity and establishes her own values. Flush feels that their escape is their journey to their freedom: "they were leaving tyrants and dog-stealers behind them. [...] He heard birds singing and the sigh of trees in the wind" (*Flush* 72). Their escape promises them a new perception of their existence: "The light, infinitely sharp and clear, dazzled his eyes. [...] Instead of the solid and soporific hum of London there was a rattling and a crying, a jingling and a shouting, a cracking of whips and a jangling of bells. [...] He felt younger, spryer than he had done these many years" (*Flush* 73-4). Their destination, Italy, presents to them all the jazzy atmosphere of freedom which sharply contrasts with that of London "dominated by hierarchization, categorization, by regularization, by claustrophobia" (Flint xxiii). Italy is full of life and vigour: "Here in Italy was freedom and life and the joy that the sun breeds" (*Flush* 76). Flush and Miss Barrett acquire a new sensation related to the outside: "In all of this, Woolf imagines what it may be like to apprehend the world from a different alignment of the senses" (Flint xix). The general atmosphere of the environment changes: "The noise of the street was deafening. Everybody seemed to be shouting shrilly at the same moment" (*Flush* 73). Elizabeth and Flush feel life outside, a life that is full and strong, that does not oppress silently. Flush leaves behind the decorated and cushioned rooms which symbolise imprisonment. "For at Casa Guidi the rooms were bare. All those draped objects of his cloistered and secluded days had vanished. The bed was a bed; the wash-stand was a wash-stand" (79). Flush feels the freedom when he sees the bare rooms in Italy. Miss Barrett metamorphoses into a lively and healthy woman: "She was a different person altogether. [...] instead of driving in a barouche landau to Regent's Park she pulled on her thick boots and scrambled over rocks" (75). Instead of a woman who was sitting in her back bedroom and closing all the windows, there appears Mrs Browning who "loved to sit there looking, listening, watching the people in the street" (79).

Elizabeth even has a baby and Flush perceives it in a defamiliarised way, in the form of a grotesque image. "Independently of them all, without the street door being opened, out of herself in the room, alone, Mrs Browning had become two people" (*Flush* 83). Here there is an image of "becoming", where a character embraces a transforming image, an image that gives birth to another image. In Bakhtin's words, "[t]he grotesque image reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming" (1984b, 24). Bakhtin mentions the "figurines of senile pregnant hags" (25) when he discusses the grotesque. He states that these figures are "typical and very strongly expressed grotesque. It is ambivalent. It is pregnant death, a death that gives birth" (25). Although Elizabeth is not old, nor dying, it can be stated that her previous condition dies at giving birth to a new life. Such an idea finds its embodiment in Elizabeth's image of a mother with her newly born baby. This grotesque image symbolizes her challenge of the patriarchal order that imposes on her the sense of isolation. Elizabeth's becoming "two people" is an embodiment of her shattering her sense of loneliness. In other words, Elizabeth "escapes her confinement, which is both physical and psychological" (Drobot 71).

Everything they experience in Italy is the opposite of their life in England. The bright dazzling light of Italy contrasts with Miss Barrett's dark bedroom. Miss Barrett acquires freedom and joy of life instead of the invalid bath chair. Flush and Miss Barrett hear the noise of the streets instead of the secluded august appearance of Wimpole Street.

The bare rooms of their Italian home suggest freedom while the fully furnished room in England imprisons them. Invalid Miss Barrett, who rarely walked and used her bath chair, starts to mount the rocks. The loneliness of Miss Barrett is shattered by her giving birth to a baby. All these events constitute to the act of decrowning; however, the decrowned body is absent in its concrete form. Instead, there is an abstract idea or ideology that is being undermined. Their life in Italy resembles the reversed carnivalistic life. Everything that was ordinary in London is suspended during their stay in Italy and Elizabeth and Flush become the participants of carnival. "All the windows were full of faces; all the balconies were full of figures. The people in the windows were tossing flowers and laurel leaves on to the people in the street; and the people in the street—grave men, gay young women—were kissing each other and raising their babies to the people in the balconies" (*Flush* 80). As is observed above, there is a carnival atmosphere. The windows are open to the outside world and there is a stress on balconies which bring to mind the "threshold" spaces in Bakhtinian theory. They are spaces that bring together opposites and open one world into another; these are the places where people feel the carnival sense of the world. There is a gay and intense interaction between the people at home and the people outside so that the difference between the two spaces disappears. The whole scene is infused with bliss, familiar contact and freedom. Flush witnesses this carnival atmosphere during his wanderings in the streets:

> He went in and out, up and down, where they beat brass, where they bake bread, where the women sit combing their hair, where the bird-cages are piled high on the causeway, where the wine spills itself in dark red stains on the pavement, where leather smells and harness and garlic, where cloth is beaten, where vine leaves tremble, where men sit and drink and spit and dice. (*Flush* 87)

Flush and Elizabeth leave behind all the categories stemming from the patriarchal world order. Their new life is characterized by the absence of hierarchical divisions between people, between people and animals, and between animals. Flush learns that all the dogs are equal here; "here in Pisa, though dogs abounded, there were no ranks; all—could it be possible?—were mongrels. As far as he could see, they were dogs merely" (*Flush* 74). As a result, Flush has an opportunity to merge with the rest of the dogs rather than being punctilious in choosing a partner. He meets the world and embraces everybody: "He was the friend of all the world now. All dogs were his brothers" (77). He is happy to feel the equality of the dogs. He does not feel the necessity to behave as a valuable dog anymore. He even gets fleas as all the other dogs do: "With a cruel irony the sun that ripened the grapes brought also the fleas" (88). Flush does not sense any sharp division between people. All the social classes merge one into the other. In one part of the day, they are workers and in the next, they are glamorous people. "In the streets of Pisa pretty women could walk alone; great ladies first emptied their own slots and then went to Court 'in a blaze of undeniable glory'" (76). Even Miss Barrett's maid, Wilson, abandons her strict values and starts to feel herself at home. She falls in love with a bodyguard: "Her fancy was fired; her judgement reeled; her standards toppled" (77). Nobody is afraid of anybody. "Fear was unknown in Florence; there were no dog-stealers here and, she [Elizabeth] may have sighed, there were no fathers" (78).

However, it should also be pinpointed that Elizabeth's escape from patriarchal confinement at home is realized with the help of another man, Mr Browning. Although he provides her with the freedom of Italian atmosphere, he makes it quite obvious that he is a part of the patriarchal authority when he sides with other men in the case of the dognapped Flush. What is more, marriage through which Elizabeth is able to get rid of her domestic

imprisonment is another patriarchal construction. In short, what Woolf wants to stress is the fact that, as it is in *The Voyage Out*, a woman cannot obtain a complete sense of independence; she cannot be completely free in a world governed by patriarchal precepts.

To conclude, the female character in *Flush* reveals her potential to undermine the patriarchal figures that constrict her at home. Such images of emasculated patriarchs seem to express the author's yearning for a change in the world's social norms, particularly with reference to gender issues. Nonetheless, Woolf makes it clear that what she desires—women's absolute freedom—cannot be totally achieved yet and she depicts this impossibility in her novels. Elizabeth has to submit to a man who can provide her with a freer life than her previous one. Thus, Woolf's *Flush* does not present a picture of a changed world; it presents the ways through which it is possible to change it.

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**_Star Trek: Into Darkness_, A Remake with Contemporary Concerns (and Faults)**

**Antonio Sanna**

*Star Trek: Into Darkness* is the fourth film by producer and director J.J. Abrams (b. 1966), the (co)creator of TV series such as *Alias* (2001-06), *Lost* (2004-10) and *Fringe* (2008-13), whose cinematic works include *Mission: Impossible III* (2006), *Super 8* (2011), *Star Wars VII: The Force Awakens* (2015) and the forthcoming *Star Wars IX*. *Into Darkness* is a 127-minute science fiction film based on the characters created by Gene Roddenberry for *Star Trek* (1966-69), the cult popular TV program that revolutionized science fiction television by being "a continuing science-fiction series with the audience appeal and story latitude of the anthology series" (Johnson 83, 75)[1], and was also "the fount and origin of all things cult (at least in the United States)" (Pearson 9).[2] *Star Trek* was indeed "the mother of all television franchises" and "has successfully crossed over into other related media and popular culture forms including novels, comics, computer games, toys and merchandise, conventions, collectibles and memorabilia" (Geraghty 131). At the same time, *Into Darkness* is also the sequel of Abrams's *Star Trek* (2009), the first film of the reboot saga that re-launched the franchise after the failure of *Enterprise* (2001-05)—the prequel TV series abruptly cancelled after its fourth season. The film earned over 460 million dollars worldwide and was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Visual Effects. In 2016, the third episode of the reboot saga, *Star Trek Beyond*, directed by Justin Lin, was released.

*Into Darkness* utilizes many narrative elements from the second cinematic instalment of the franchise, Nicholas Meyer's *Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan* (1982), whose story involves the attempt at revenge by the titular character (Ricardo Montalbán), a genetically-enhanced superior human being obsessed with avenging against Admiral Kirk (William Shatner), who stranded him on a desert planet. *Wrath of Khan* could be considered as one of the best instalments in the thirteen-film saga (along with *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, *Star Trek: Generations* and *Star Trek: First Contact*, released respectively in 1991, 1994 and 1998) that has conquered entire generations of fans throughout the world for decades. The 1982 film is laudable for the special effects, the soundtrack (composed by James Horner) and the convincing story, which presents the rigid Vulcanian Saavik (Kirstie Alley), Kirk's ex lover Dr. Carol Marcus (Bibi Besch) and their (unknown to him) son David (Merritt Butrick), along with the exceptional cast of the original TV series. One of the greatest merits of the 1982 film is also due to the professional performances of its actors and actresses, especially those of Shatner and Montalbán. The former performs Admiral Kirk in all the nuances of the character, from palpable competence and extreme self-confidence to affability, melancholy for his own

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[1] As Johnson argues, *Star Trek* can be categorized as "telefantasy" along with programs such as *The X-Files* (1993-2002, 2016-) and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003). Telefantasy, according to Johnson, offers new perspectives on society "by both evoking and disturbing socio-cultural verisimilitude" (8).

[2] According to Sara Gwenllian-Jones and Roberta Pearson, "in the media, in common usage, and sometimes even in academia, 'cult' is often loosely applied to any television program that is considered offbeat or edgy, that draws a niche audience, that has a nostalgic appeal, that is considered emblematic of a particular subculture, or that is considered hip" (in Pearson 7). Corresponding to such a definition are series as different as *Lost*, *Twin Peaks* (1990-91, 2017) and *The Sopranos* (1999-2007).

aging and desperation for the death of a dear friend. Montalbán presents on the screen a portrayal of an unforgettable Khan, a calculating and ruthless figure who also blends majestically elegance and nobility with scorn and wildness, and finally quotes *Moby Dick*'s Ahab in his last breath ("from hell's heart, I stab at thee; for hate's sake, I spit my last breath at thee").

*Into Darkness* begins with the mission of the starship *USS Enterprise* on a planet inhabited by a primitive population (a scene characterized by the brilliant exclusivity of the colours red, yellow and white). The captain of the *Enterprise* is James T. Kirk (Chris Pine), a talented but rebellious human young man, who often disagrees with his first mate Mr. Spock (Zachary Quinto), the half-human/half-Vulcan (the first alien species who allied with the humans, according to the fictional history of the Star Trek universe, and who prioritizes a uniquely scientific and logical approach to life over feelings and emotions). The rest of the crew includes Doctor Leonard 'Bones' McCoy (Karl Urban), Communications Officer Nyota Uhura (Zoë Saldana), Chief Engineer Montgomery "Scotty" Scott (Simon Pegg), helmsman Hikaru Sulu (John Cho) and navigator Pavel Chekov (Anton Yelchin). The crew prevents the local volcano from exploding, thus saving the entire planet from destruction, but they are later reprimanded by their superiors in Starfleet for having violated the "Prime Directive" (which forbids any first contact with primitive populations and, therefore, any interference with local cultures). Kirk is provisionally demoted to the rank of first officer and blames Spock for having filed a truthful report of the events on the alien planet.

In the meantime, the genetically-altered superhuman Khan (Benedict Cumberbatch) organizes the bombing of a facility of Starfleet. He then waits for the major commanders to reunite in a conference room at Starfleet headquarters and personally attacks them there, murdering many of them. After discovering that Khan has teletransported to the homeworld of the Klingons, a hostile and warrior race, Kirk convinces Admiral Marcus (Peter Weller) to assign him the mission to avenge the death of their fellow officers by bombarding with special torpedoes the unpopulated area where Khan is hiding. Following a furious battle against the uncompromising Klingons on the ground, Khan surrenders spontaneously to Kirk and then tells the captain that they are going to be betrayed by someone in Starfleet. With the help of Admiral Marcus' daughter, Carol (Alice Eve)—who infiltrated the crew of the Enterprise to unveil the mystery of the special torpedoes—Kirk discovers that the weapons actually hide the seventy-two bodies of Khan's superhuman companions, who had been frozen into cryogenic sleep 300 years earlier. Admiral Marcus had awakened Khan and blackmailed him into using his enhanced intelligence to construct advanced weapons and warships, thus violating the principles of peace that found the Federation of Planets. However, once the admiral realizes that his plan has been discovered by Kirk, he attacks the *Enterprise*, crippling the ship orbiting the planet Earth. Only a momentary alliance between Kirk and Khan aboard the admiral's vessel results in the victory of the protagonist. However, in order to avoid collision on Earth, Kirk exposes himself to the radiations of the ship's core and dies—a fate that occurs to Spock in the 1982 film (this is one of the major re-interpretations of the original story). Khan reaches Earth where he is defeated by Spock, who uses his rival's blood to resurrect Kirk. The film ends with Kahn's imprisonment in a secured cryogenic compartment and with the departure of the Enterprise for its five-year mission in deep space—the mission that was the subject of the original TV series.

Abrams' film therefore reinvents and re-elaborates the 1982 story with a typically post-modern approach that continually upsets the (positive or negative) expectations of the viewers who are familiar with the entire cinematic saga and its TV series. *Into Darkness* does not merely imitate exploitatively its primary source (*The Wrath of Khan*), but

distances itself from it by addressing contemporary ideological preoccupations such as corruption and terrorism. It is by dealing with these issues that the film solves "the remake's problematic and potentially contradictory rhetoric of originality within the framework of an avowed repetition" (Koos 204), which is characteristic of all remakes and their relationship with their precursor texts. The film can be indeed considered as a remake, because it bases its story on narrative elements present in the older franchise but simultaneously adds a great variety of new and surprising thematic, visual and narrative elements. In this respect, it can be defined as what Michael B. Druxman calls "the direct remake", which occurs when "a property may undergo some alterations or even adopt a new title, but the new film and its narrative image do not hide the fact that it is based upon an earlier production" (in Verevis 7). *Into Darkness* can also be considered as what Harvey R. Greenberg defines as "the acknowledged, transformed remake", which applies "transformations of character, plot, time, and setting" (126) to the originary film[3]. The final effect results in a mixture of novelty and tradition that certainly pleases the taste and expectations of the fans of both the old and the new productions of the franchise. In this way, Abrams' film fulfils the very function of the remake, which, according to Constantine Verevis, is "to satisfy the requirement that Hollywood deliver reliability (repetition) and novelty (innovation) in the same production package" (4).

The darkness referred to in the title is the ruthless single-mindedness dictated by wrath into which some of the characters tend to fall and that leads them to avenge themselves of their enemies: Khan, deprived of his hibernated companions avenges on Admiral Marcus; Kirk forgets his mandate and the principles of the Federation of Planets and accepts an illegal mission to capture Khan because the latter is responsible for the death of the father-like figure of Admiral Christopher Pike (Bruce Greenwood). In this sense, and contrary to *The Wrath of Khan*, Abrams' film involves two falls into darkness, from which only Kirk manages to re-surface (by opposing the corruption lurking inside the Federation Kirk restores the pacifist and democratic ethos and faith in justice of the original saga). Such metaphorical falls are further reinforced by the literal falls of the starships into the Earth's atmosphere as well as by characters' numerous falls during the various fights (not to mention Kirk's "fall" into death and resurrection near the end of the film).

When confronted with its 1982 predecessor, the most innovative visual elements of *Into Darkness* are the spectacular and extremely realistic special effects, which contribute significantly to the fast-paced action sequences scattered throughout the film as well as to the creation of alien landscapes and terrestrial skylines, such as the San Francisco and London of the future. The latter cities are undoubtedly fascinating and depict a clean and pleasant world unlike the dystopic future of films such as the Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), Michael Radford's *1984* (1984) and James Cameron's *The Terminator* (1984). *Into Darkness* thus reflects the predisposition to visual sensationalism that is characteristic of Abrams's works and here manifests particularly in those scenes that represent the exciting flights of the vessels (whether the starships or the shuttlecrafts) or the gun fights and hand-to-hand combats of the characters. Exemplary, in this sense, are the chase sequence set on the Klingon homeworld among the abandoned metallic buildings, and the fight between the two Starfleet vessels orbiting the Earth. [**IMAGE #1**] What is most astonishing is the attention to details, especially in the dissemination in space of the debris resulting from the armed conflicts among the space vessels. Such an attention to details is realized also in the

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[3] The alternative forms of remake, according to Greenberg, are the "acknowledged, close remake" (evident in the Biblical epics) and the "unacknowledged, disguised remake" (126).

depiction of the ships' exteriors. As Owen Gleiberman notices, in fact, "the *Enterprise* […] never looked quite so massive or looming" (n.p.). As it occurs in Abrams' *Star Wars VII: The Force Awakens* (2015) too, the director reveals the realistic proportions of the starships by measuring the minuteness of human beings (and aliens) against them (Sanna 93).

Image #1: the USS Enterprise being attacked by another Starfleet vessel in the Earth's orbit (*Star Trek: Into Darkness*, copyright Paramount, 2013)

The richness of details throughout the film also benefits from the frequent changes of frames during the single scenes. In the case of the "duel" between Spock and Khan near the end of the film, for example, the fast-paced sequence is further quickened by the continuous changes of frames (each of them from a different position and angle) that allow spectators to have multiple perspectives on the two characters fighting. Such a technique contrasts markedly with the general use of medium and close shots during many of the dialogue scenes, which do not use multiple frames or angles in order to focus on the interaction between the characters and their reactions.

In spite of its evident merits, the film has received mixed reviews. On one hand, Robbie Collin criticizes its reworking of a previous episode in the saga, which, he believes, reduces the enjoyment of the film to the recognition of the references by the fans. Collin also argues that the pioneering spirit of the original saga has been lost, whereas A.O. Scott thinks that the film has sacrificed the "large-spirited humanism that sustained" the franchise. According to Matt Zoller Seitz as well the film is disappointing because of its too frequent references to the past films and episodes of the TV series. Lou Lumenick instead defines it as "mind-dumbing" because of its "murky plot, which is as silly as it is arbitrary", and because of the presence of a "boring" main villain. On the other hand, Scott Foundas considers *Into Darkness* as superior to its 2009 predecessor and Claudia Puig praises it for the "spectacular special effects, superbly crafted action sequences, plenty of humor and terrific performances". Finally, Andrew Pulver argues that the relationships among the characters are thicker than in the 2009 film, although, as A.O. Scott recognizes, the romance between Spock and Uhura (a considerable, interesting departure from the original franchise) is at times overshadowed by the romance between Kirk and Spock. Generally, the familiar characters (especially to Trekkers/fans of the series) are injected with new life,

especially through the depiction of the difference between the passion and impetuousness of the humans and the cold Vulcan logic of the first officer.

Nevertheless, not all of the characters actually receive the deserved focus. Indeed, the major fault of the film is its sexism: this is evident in the fact that the female characters have only marginal roles in the story, for example, although being one of the bridge officers and major characters of the story, Lieutenant Uhura is confined to small appearances throughout the film and her only contribution to the mission's success is offered by her ability to translate an alien language and face momentarily a group of adversaries when the away team is on the Klingon homeworld. For the rest of the film she is mainly considered as Spock's girlfriend and Kirk demonstrates too much interest in her personal complaints about the first officer rather than in her actual feelings, her motivations and her background. This contrasts markedly with the depiction of the Uhura character in the original series, who was (by admission also of Martin Luther King himself, as actress Nichelle Nichols revealed publicly on several occasions) one of the first black actresses to be fully integrated in the cast of a TV program on equal terms.

Similarly, the character of Carol Marcus is considered mainly through her relationship with her father and her contribution to the success of the mission is limited to the disarmament of one of the torpedoes. The character has been at the centre of a scandal regarding the scene in which she undresses near Captain Kirk. Indeed, in such a sequence the two characters are visiting a shuttlecraft while discussing the doctor's imminent mission on a planetoid. Carol then asks the captain to turn around while she undresses. Her need to change outfit before the mission, and in front of the camera, is actually unmotivated, except by the necessity to reveal her almost naked body (to the male gaze). The sequence has been severely criticized for its sexism (Adams; Iacovino) and co-writer Damon Lindelof replied to the accusations on May 2013 by acknowledging on Twitter its gratuitousness. Lindelof then apologized for it by stating: "I take responsibility and will be more mindful in the future" (in Child).

*Star Trek Into Darkness* can be definitely considered as an elaborate and entertaining film due to the plot twists and the special effects (which convey a sense of greatness to the reality of the future and to space travel). The film will certainly conquer those viewers who appreciated the 2009 reboot launch of the saga directed by Abrams and will be evaluated as a coherent sequel to it. On the other hand, some of the most faithful fans of the original saga and the democratic spirit of its fictional universe might consider *Into Darkness* as a less rich re-enactment of the original character relationships that has lost the depth of Gene Roddenberry's humanitarian vision. Certainly, as is the case of the majority of remakes, the spectators of *Into Darkness* could benefit from prior knowledge of the 1982 predecessor, although this story sustains itself well on its own. On the other hand, the exploration of contemporary issues and anxieties (such as terrorism) demonstrates that the film is grounded in the present times, both with its positive aspects (the fight against corruption) and its defects (the sexist representation of the female characters). In spite of its narrative link with *Wrath of Khan*, therefore, the 2013 film is enjoyable on its own, and will provide a memorable experience for all fans of science-fiction films.

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**Gillian M. E. Alban. *The Medusa Gaze in Contemporary Women's Fiction: Petrifying, Maternal and Redemptive*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017. 299 pp. ISBN-13:978-1-4438-9148-6**

**Salwa Tariq Fizee**

> Turning her forceful gaze against aggressors, [the Medusa gaze] protects the innocent against attack through her forceful, talismanic evil eye (262), reclaim[ing] the gaze for women as active agents in their own right. (6)

> The mirror as a paradigm represents the physically reflected sight of the subject returning to them […] demonstrat[ing] how we create our personality in the light of the perceptions we receive through our eyes, as well as our hearing and other senses" (19); The mirror [also] presents the inexorable reality of time that stalks every attractive women. (67)

> This book evaluates women in literature, seeing how they shape themselves within competing passions and struggles […] through the writings of nine significant contemporary women novelists of the second half of the twentieth century, seek[ing] to recover the force of women's Medusa gaze. (8)

However little the reader knows about Gillian Alban, a scholar in the field of women's writing, through the pages of this book, they may touch the passion she draws out from mythology and literature as a force for women, as she reconstructs traditional myths. In her book, *Melusine the Serpent Goddess in A.S. Byatt's Possession and in Mythology* (2003), this same writer examines the figure of Melusine in French medieval folklore, enlarging her grasp to contain pre-patriarchal goddess myth, comparing Melusine to mythic figures such as Medusa. In this her present book, *The Medusa Gaze in Contemporary Women's Fiction*, Alban examines female characters through various genres, as both bearers and receivers of the Medusa gaze. Through many texts of Angela Carter, Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood, Sylvia Plath, A.S. Byatt, Jean Rhys, Jeanette Winterson, Michèle Roberts and Iris Murdoch, she presents her characters not merely as "objects but as objectifying others, both men and women, and destroying them through the force of their own gaze" (6). She thus assigns Medusa a multidirectional and redemptive power to use her gaze both to protect and to objectify.

The Medusa figure has been presented by writers and scholars as the symbol of the victimized woman, a figure of both power and anger. Alban offers a wide perspective in her arguments regarding the Medusa gaze, offering the reader multiple insights through an array of literary texts. This book presents the interactions of female characters from different cultures who employ a similar gaze, demonstrating the commonalities of women of various societies. The book's cover symbolizes the multiple cultures and colours represented here. Indicating the dual nature of Medusa's serpent hair as venom as well as its antidote, Medusa as queen and monster of doubles (2), Alban shares Susan R. Bowers' belief expressed in "Medusa and the Female Gaze", that woman who was once cast "as a dreadfully gorgeous victim […] is now reconstructed as an 'electrifying force representing the dynamic power of the female gaze'" (2). She concretizes Bowers' insights into Medusa as representing female empowerment and freedom, personifying women's fearless look turned back against patriarchal authority (217). Alban demonstrates the transformations women undergo in order to "empower themselves against the men who oppress them"

(243), dwelling less on patriarchal oppressions and objectifications of women, but more on the power of the female gaze, encouraging women to appreciate the power of their own gaze and how to turn it back forcefully, rather than remaining as terrified victim; she demonstrates "the ongoing determination of women to claim their rights and assert their will against considerable obstacles, refusing to abjectly submit to hostile forces that threaten to overwhelm them" (263).

Differing from others who have seen Medusa as a victim, the writer utilizes the Medusa myth to manifest woman's power as she wields her own gaze, even to castrate others. Alban uses the "mirrors" of both Freud and Lacan in order to mirror back their own theories presenting women as castrated by the gaze of others. She rather shows how women turn back their gaze on their objectifiers. The introduction and conclusion clearly present the summation of her arguments and perspective. Through analysis of the chosen texts, Alban enables the reader to live alongside the characters, imagining their plight and returning to the amazing texts under scrutiny in order to experience them more deeply. Through the combined symbols of mirror and the Medusa gaze, four aspects of Medusa are illustrated. Each chapter offers a condensed title for her readers, such as "The Apotropaic, Petrifying Medusa Gaze" or "Medusa's Redemptive Evil Eye", provoking readers' curiosity and passion to read.

The writer offers a solid theoretical backbone in the early chapters of this book through analysis of the concepts of Jacques Lacan, Sigmund Freud, Jean-Paul Sartre, Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Simone de Beauvoir. "The Self in the Petrifying Gaze of the Other" presents Lacan's mirror stage, Sartre's "Medusa Look", Freud's "Medusa's Head" and Cixous' "The Laugh of the Medusa". Alban critiques Laura Mulvey's "Gaze Theory" based on the work of Freud and Lacan, which merely shows women as "the erotic Object of the male gaze" (22-3), rather asserting how women claim and return their own gaze on their viewers. Alban encourages women to love and assert themselves in order to gain their rightful place in society. Against Freud and Lacan, she believes that while woman may be object of the gaze, yet she may also wield the gaze as "the power of women to return their own look onto men" (23). She thus skilfully returns Freud's and Lacan's theory of women's castration and lack back onto them. She demonstrates in the polemic of Cixous how "women are not bound within a single idol with clay balls […] having power and laughter on her own side" (23). First, she shows woman's struggle from childhood to challenge the Other's gaze towards her, under derogative comments like those Virginia Woolf reports in *To the Lighthouse*, saying

> women can't write, women can't paint". Then she demonstrates how woman builds up her own gaze through experience, learning to look at herself and her own body, through the internal power of the Medusa gaze, freeing herself from the male gaze on her, as well as the socially approved physical standards of beauty that capture women, encouraging women to follow Cixous' advice to "show them our sexts! (24)

Chapter two, "The Gaze of the Double in the Mirror—My Sister!" is a response to "the mirror [which is] generally assumed a facet of women's lives" (62), showing how the dominant male gaze leads women to seek assurance and acceptability in physical beauty. Alban here uses texts that "present both men and women as objects of a Medusa gaze that destroys through its powerful female agency", "examin[ing] how girls are debilitated under the gaze of their predatory Other into madness or suicide, becoming objectified dolls when the Other consumes them through her mirroring force" (58). These literary examples present sisters and doubles showing "the individual reflected back through the mirror of the

Other. This may enable them to develop self-knowledge between narcissism, a positive sense of self returned through the image of the alter ego or ideal I [or] objectification through alienation by the Other" (109), thus she suggests how "the gaze may trap both subject and object in a reflective, destructive cycle" (6).

In chapters three and four, Alban explores the mother-daughter relationship; mothers as monstrous Medusa, according to Freud, daughters blaming their mother, and the Electra syndrome, showing the key nature of the mother-daughter relationship in building a girl's identity. Chapter three, "Devouring Clytemnestra and Electra", opens with a question that summarises the chapter: "Is the mother indeed the monstrous Medusa she has been shown to be, or has opprobrium been heaped on her head along with the heavy burdens of mothering?" (116); here she discusses 'penis envy' and 'the vagina dentata' together with the ideas of Cixous, Irigaray and Susan Bordo. Chapter four demonstrates the efforts of the mother to protect her daughter, the mother "represented by the elemental mother earth force of Gaia as mother goddess" (123). Mothers' care, even at times through their daughters' destruction, trauma or death is shown here; sometimes mothers personify the monstrous role of Medusa, "present[ing] the traumas and tribulations of mothers and daughters as experienced on both sides, as well as grandmothering and surrogacy as supplementing mothering roles" (201). In chapter five "The Female Divine as Talisman", Alban traverses diverse gender and goddess myths (237), including the Virgin Mary, Kali, Cybele, Artemis, Ishtar, Astarte, Demeter, Mother Nature and Medusa as protective eye, suggesting many ways in which "the female divine [may be] an inspirational force for women" (237) and evaluating the redemptive capacity of the divine aspect of women.

In chapter six, "Rivals and Monstrous Femmes Fatales", Alban addresses "the common view of woman seen as a predatory, monstrous Medusa" (239), showing the power of women's anger, "in savage rivalry [and] pure Medusa fury" (239). Here she shows that "the aggression and savagery of [woman's] desperate fury against her opponents turns back onto her, and destroys her in the end" (260), discussing protagonists' anger, as "Medusa embod[ies] female monstrosity and rage" (263). She shows how women may release the anger and fury which have been forbidden her, causing her to be classified as a madwoman, or dangerous monster.

In conclusion, Alban presents a powerful feminist perspective in this book; against the perspective of writers under the banner of feminism who have seen women as a victim of patriarchal authority, this writer asserts that woman everywhere can and must use her look as a force for power, turning back her assertive gaze without fear, drawing strength even from their agony, empowering themselves and refusing to be a victim. This book offers powerful insights for anyone concerned with the plight of women, in fascinating reflections regarding the powerful Medusa gaze in the writing of our female contemporaries.

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## ARTICLES


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Züleyha Çetiner-Öktem | 1 | Chaucer's Mythic Men in *The Legend of Good Women* |
| Rachel Edford | 13 | Testimony, Objectivism, and Poetic Form in Charles Reznikoff's *Holocaust* |
| Seçil Erkoç | 27 | Transformation from Madness to Rehabilitation in Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain: The Knight of the Lion* |
| Kübra Kangüleç Coşkun | 37 | Enchanting Histories of the Empires in Rushdie's *The Enchantress of Florence* |
| Ansı Sev Ateş | 47 | A Utopian Decay: Oscar Wilde, Art and Utopia |
| Ng Lay Sion | 61 | Toward the Mastery of Submission: Robert Cohn's Problem with Masochism in *The Sun Also Rises* |
| Margaret J-M Sönmez | 73 | Walking through the Valley of the Shadow of Death: Pip's Comfortless Progress through a Decaying World in *Great Expectations* |
| Kun Xi | 87 | Picturing an Aesthetic and Homoerotic Space: Harold Acton's Travel Writing of China in the 1930s |
| Victoria Bilge Yılmaz | 95 | Bakhtin's Notion of Decrowning in Virginia Woolf's *Flush* |


## REVIEWS


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|---|---|---|
| Antonio Sanna | 105 | *Star Trek: Into Darkness*, A Remake with Contemporary Concerns (and Faults) |
| Salwa Tariq Fizee | 113 | Gillian M. E. Alban<br>*The Medusa Gaze in Contemporary Women's Fiction: Petrifying, Maternal and Redemptive* |
| | 117 | **CONTRIBUTORS** |

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