Journal of Literature and Culture
Issue 3, June 2014
The Human
Journal of Literature and Culture

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The Evolving Woman in Langston Hughes’s Poetry of the 1920s

Allene Nichols

Abstract
In a 1919 essay, W.E.B. Du Bois noted that “women have been frankly trodden under the feet of men,” but of women themselves he stated that “None have been more sweetly feminine, more unswervingly loyal, more desperately earnest, and more instinctively pure in body and in soul than the daughters of my black mothers.” The poems Langston Hughes wrote about women in the early 1920s fit well with Du Bois’ concepts of black womanhood. The poems showed women as beautiful and used mythical associations to the earth to elevate women, even when the women in the poems led tragic lives. By the end of the decade, however, the women in Hughes’s poems were more complex, more real, and less beautiful. His approach to women is a reflection of his overall approach to African American subjects. Because Hughes’s poetry violated the era’s aesthetic and political concepts of black society, it became the subject of increasingly harsh criticism. While the issue of black womanhood was not the major focus of the criticism, the changes over time in his poems about African American women are emblematic of the struggle between the Hughes and the Harlem elite over whether the purpose of art is to further a group’s political and social goals or to show the world as the artist sees it.

In this paper, I show how Hughes moved from a romantic image of women in poems like “Young Prostitute” to poems like “Beale Street Love” and “Red Silk Stockings,” which reflect the harsh realities of African American women’s lives and the limited options available to them. I contextualize these poems within the wider dialogue about the role and the goals of the African American poet that took place in books and journal articles, including Schuyler’s “The Negro Art-Hokum” and Hughes’s famous response, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain.”
The Evolving Woman in Langston Hughes’s Poetry of the 1920s

Allene Nichols

In a 1919 essay entitled “The Damnation of Women,” W.E.B. Dubois noted that “women have been frankly trodden under the feet of men,” but of women themselves he stated that “None have been more sweetly feminine, more unswervingly loyal, more desperately earnest, and more instinctively pure in body and in soul than the daughters of my black mothers.” In the 1920s, the decade after women won the right to vote and the decade of the embodiment of the liberated woman in the image of the flapper, Dubois’s concept of African American female exceptionalism was echoed by black female activists who believed that “the elevation of black women was inseparable from racial progress.” The poems Langston Hughes wrote about women in the early 1920s fit well with the aspirations of Dubois and African American female activists. The poems showed women as beautiful and used mythical associations to the earth to elevate women, even when the women in the poems led tragic lives. By the end of the decade, however, the women in Hughes’s poems were more complex, more real, and less beautiful. His approach to women is a reflection of his overall approach to African American subjects. Because Hughes’s poetry violated the era’s aesthetic and political concepts of black society, his poetry became the subject of increasingly harsh criticism. While the issue of black womanhood was not the major focus of the criticism against Hughes’s work, the changes over time in his word portraits of African American women are emblematic of the struggle between the Hughes and the Harlem elite over whether the purpose of art is to further a group’s political and social goals or to show the world as the artist sees it.

Claiming that “all art is propaganda,” Dubois insisted that “until the art of the black folk compels recognition they will not be rated as human.” To compel recognition, Dubois felt that “it is the bounden duty of black America to begin this

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2 Ibid., 210.
great work of the creation of Beauty.\textsuperscript{5} Hughes’s earliest poems create beauty by developing a mythology out of black experience and relating the feminine and women themselves to the beauty of the earth. In “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” which Hughes wrote at the age of seventeen in 1919, nature itself is a woman and her job is to sustain her people. The Mississippi is personified as a singing woman whose “muddy bosom” the narrator had seen “turn all golden in the sunset.”\textsuperscript{6} Rivers have flowed from the beginning of time and the narrator has bathed in them, lived near them, and let them lull him to sleep. Rivers are the universal mother, all-knowing, comforting, and uplifting. Hughes associates the Mississippi with the Congo and the Nile, which universalizes the feminine, flowing from the time and place of the first Africans to the present in the United States.

Stylistically, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” is a beautiful poem. Hughes uses repetition, such as “I’ve known rivers” and “I bathed…I built…I looked…I heard,” as well as assonance and alliteration to create a compelling and lulling rhythm. He uses standard American phrasing and dialect, which does not call attention to itself in the way that the black dialect of his later poems does.

For all its linguistic beauty and imagery, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” shows little beyond a schoolboy understanding of history or the contemporary situation of African American men and women. However, it brilliantly moves Carl Sandburg’s vision of America into an African American context. With the poem’s sweeping vistas and mythic narrator whose life and knowledge span recorded time, it is easy to believe Hughes’s statement in his autobiography \textit{The Big Sea} that in high school, “I began to try to write like Carl Sandburg.”\textsuperscript{7} In “Prairie,” a poem published in 1918, a year before Hughes wrote “The Negro Speaks of Rivers, Sandburg writes, “The prairie sings to me in the forenoon and I know in the night I rest easy in the prairie arms, on the prairie heart.”\textsuperscript{8} Like Hughes’s Mississippi, Sandburg’s prairie becomes the archetypal mother, singing to and comforting the narrator, who represents all those who have lived and worked on the prairie. As Hughes became more experienced and came to see black American culture as unique from that of mainstream America, his determination to find an authentic black voice would lessen the influence of white writers like Sandburg.

By 1923, twenty-one year old Langston Hughes had spent a miserable year at Columbia University, worked his way to Africa and back as a sailor, and discovered Harlem just as the Harlem Renaissance got underway.\textsuperscript{9} The more experienced

\textsuperscript{8} Carl Sandburg, \textit{Cornhuskers}. (1918), http://www.bartleby.com/134/.
\textsuperscript{9} Hughes, \textit{The Big Sea}. 

[3]
Hughes had begun to experiment with more mature and controversial themes and approaches. However, Hughes maintained an aesthetic distance and created a mythology around women in these early poems that still allowed his critics to see the subjects and poems as beautiful. The two major African American presses of the period, The Crisis and Opportunity, readily printed his poems, suggesting a de facto approval by their editors, W.E.B. DuBois and Charles S. Johnson, respectively.

“Young Prostitute,” which The Crisis published in 1923, demonstrates that Hughes was taking the first steps into a form of social commentary in which he would discuss the harsh realities of life for poor African American women. While Hughes’s portrayal of the life of poor black people would ultimately stand in opposition to DuBois’s sentiments about black art, the aesthetic distance the narrator creates maintains “Young Prostitute” and other of Hughes’s earlier poems as the type of “propaganda” DuBois advocated. For instance, in “Young Prostitute,” Hughes writes:

```
Her dark brown face
Is like a withered flower
On a broken stem.
Those kind come cheap in Harlem
So they say.
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“Young Prostitute” does not use the blues-y rhythms that Hughes was experimenting with at the time, but it uses strong imagery to compare a black female prostitute to a dead or dying flower. The metaphor suggests that Hughes is continuing to mythologize women by relating them to nature, with its connotations of fertility and life, even while he acknowledges that not all women fit the wholesome archetype.

The fact that the stem in “Young Prostitute” is broken suggests that at least some of the damage has been done to the flower by an outside force rather than that it simply dying of natural causes. We can imagine that either the girl’s johns or her pimp have caused the damage. It is harder, however, to imagine that the prostitute herself is complicit in her downfall. In fact, because she is represented as a plant, it is difficult to view her as having any agency whatsoever. This lack of agency for the woman in the poem extends into the past, when the woman was presumably

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11 The Poems: 1921-1940 contains the texts of both Weary Blues and Fine Clothes to the Jew, with the poems appearing in the order they originally appeared in these books. For all poems mentioned from The Poems: 1921-1940, the date and journal or book of original publication were found in Collected Poems.
representative of a living flower, full of life, yet still rooted to one spot, incapable of selecting or changing the course of her life. The lack of agency also extends into the space around the prostitute. Rather than being unique, she is one of a field or bouquet of dead or dying flowers. “Those kind come cheap in Harlem” suggests that the young prostitute is one among many. The last two lines of “Young Prostitute” begin to approach social commentary, yet Hughes blunts his criticism by failing to say who “they” are who are commenting on “those kind” of women. If “they” are kindly and concerned members of the black community, the poem suggests that an effort is being made to address the issue of prostitution. If “they” are johns, or white people, the term “those kind” becomes a form of bigotry and even dismissal. Yet such a dismissal can hardly dehumanize the young woman more than the poem has already done by casting her as a dead flower.

As in “A Negro Speaks of Rivers,” Hughes uses standard American English in “Young Prostitute.” The use of standard American English suggests that the narrator is of an educated class rather than of the prostitute’s own class. Both the content and the style of the language suggest that the narrator is neither a john nor a pimp, but rather a sympathetic observer. The narrator does not hold himself responsible for the condition of the prostitute, so that the narrator’s position allows the reader to avoid considering his or her responsibility and the responsibility of society as a whole.

The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance, published in 1925, continued to assert African American and African American female exceptionalism and included several poems by Hughes, who was already, in other work, beginning to question the aestheticized approach to African American art and politics that the book promotes. The volume presents an optimistic view of African American progress and the role of the black woman. In an essay entitled “The Task of Negro Womanhood,” Elise Johnson McDougald’s ideas align with Dubois’s argument for beauty in the arts, particularly as it relates to black womanhood.

[The Negro woman] is conscious that what is left of chivalry is not directed toward her. She realizes that the ideals of beauty, built up in the fine arts, have excluded her almost entirely. Instead, the grotesque Aunt Jemimas of the street-car advertisements, proclaim only an ability to serve, without grace or loveliness.12

McDougald then discusses the progress black women have made in a variety of professions, concluding that “She is measuring up to the needs of her family, community and race, and radiating a hope throughout the land.”13 Hughes’s young

13 Ibid., 382.
prostitute appears to not even exist in McDougald’s upwardly mobile world. However, McDougald’s discussion of how stereotypes exclude black women from being recognized as beautiful and graceful might suggest that, alternatively, to create African American characters who align with popular stereotypes damages the self-image as well as the public image of black women.

Not every writer in The New Negro backs away from stereotypes. Anne Spencer, a poet of the Harlem Renaissance, uses the stereotype of the black washerwoman to lead the reader to a deeper understanding of how the stereotype came to exist. She shows that the hard work expected of black women created ugliness. She describes the washerwoman’s hands as “Twisted, awry, like crumpled roots… / Wrinkled and drawn from your rub-a-dub” 14

Although none of Hughes’s poems in The New Negro use female characters, “I Too” argues for the beauty of the black race. “Besides, they’ll see how beautiful I am/and be ashamed.” 15 Yet even in this collection of poems, Hughes begins to suggest that all is not beautiful among the down and out in Harlem and the United states. His poem “Minstrel Man” contrasts the painted on laughing face of the minstrel with his “inner cry.” “Because my feet / Are gay with dancing, / you do not know / I die.” 16 Hughes’s determination to look under the laughter and the beauty of African American men and women to reveal their pain would eventually set him at odds with those who only wanted to show the beautiful parts of the African American experience. First, though, he would experience fame and acceptance thanks to his first book of poetry, Weary Blues.

Both “I Too,” retitled “Epilogue” 17 and “Young Prostitute” appear in Weary Blues, which was published in January of 1926. Most critics responded favorably to The Weary Blues. White presses like the New York Times, The New Republic, and the New York Herald Times praised the volume. The Times spoke of the troubadour-like qualities of the poems and Vachel Lindsay gave a talk about The Weary Blues. W.C. Handy asked Hughes to write lyrics for some of Handy’s blues songs. 18 Hughes reported to his friend Carl Van Vechten that the Washington elite, who “wouldn’t have looked at me before the red, yellow, and black cover of The Weary Blues hit them in the eyes” so overwhelmed him with “teas and telephone and letters” that he was relieved to leave Washington, where his mother was living, to return to school. 19

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16 Ibid. 144.
19 Ibid. 39.
Countee Cullen, writing in *Opportunity*, took exception, not to the *The Weary Blues* as a whole, but to the jazz poems, which he felt were “interlopers in the company of the truly beautiful poems in the book.”\(^{20}\) Jessie Fauset, writing under Dubois’s editorship and as a member of the older generation of Harlem Renaissance writers, wrote in *The Crisis*, “I doubt if any one will ever write more tenderly, more understandingly, more humorously of the life of Harlem shot through as it is with mirth, abandon and pain. Hughes comprehends this life, has studied it and loved it.”\(^{21}\) In spite of the fact that the jazz poems seemed to rankle Cullen, it appears that Hughes’s poems had yet to cross the threshold to character descriptions that were unacceptable to the African American elite. However, both Cullen’s response to *Weary Blues* and an article by George Schuyler entitled “The Negro Art-Hokum” that appeared in *The Nation* in May of 1926 seem to have spurred Hughes to a serious response regarding the role of the African-American artist and his art in American culture.

Schuyler argues that “Negro art there has been, is, and will be among the numerous black nations of Africa; but to suggest the possibility of any such development among the ten million colored people in this republic is self-evident foolishness.”\(^{22}\) He points out that most of the black elite had received “white” western educations, including among his examples W.E.B. Dubois, who studied at Harvard and in Germany. He concluded that “The Aframerican is merely a lamplblackened Anglo-Saxon” who is “subject to the same economic and social forces that mold the actions and thoughts of the white Americans.” Therefore racial differences did not exist and black art did not exist.\(^{23}\)

Hughes responded in the following issue of *The Nation* with “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” which reads as a sort of manifesto for his poetry. Hughes acknowledges that middle class African Americans often aspired to be seen as white, but suggests that this meant turning their backs on their own blackness. Instead, he praises the “low down folks,” poor black people, who he felt expressed a spirit and individuality that caused them to stand apart from white culture. He suggests that the black artist had a lifetime of African American themes and approaches to draw on, including “his heritage of rhythm and warmth, and his incongruous humor that so often, as in the Blues, becomes ironic laughter mixed with tears.”\(^{24}\) Hughes puts his own poetry in the context of black poetry, stating that “most of my own poems are racial in theme and treatment, derived from the life I know.”\(^{25}\) He concluded with a battle cry on behalf of the poets of his generation.

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\(^{20}\) Barksdale, 22.


\(^{23}\) Ibid., 662-3.


\(^{25}\) Ibid., 694.
We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn’t matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tomtom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn’t matter either.26

In “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” Hughes argues for the exceptionalist view of African Americans and African American art. He is clearly proud of the qualities he feels make African Americans distinct from white Americans. However, he appears to challenge Dubois’s concept of art as propaganda. What people think about him and his race and whether they are pleased with his work matter less to him than using art to reveal the true face of the African American community, regardless of whether the art or the community is beautiful.

A few months after the publication of “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” Hughes banded together with other “new school” writers like Zora Neale Hurston, Aaron Douglas, and Richard Bruce Nugent to give their aesthetics form in the journal Fire!, which only lasted for one issue.27 Hughes explained that the purpose of Fire! was “to burn up a lot of the old, dead conventional Negro-white ideas of the past.”28 Hughes’s contribution, “Elevator Boy,”29 made use of some of the methods he used in his later poems about women to reduce the aesthetic distance and make them real rather than ideal. The narrator, in this case the elevator boy, uses no metaphors to soften his language. The language is colloquial rather than formal in such lines as “I been runnin’ this/Elevator too long.” His narrator speaks in first person, another technique that Hughes used to reduce the aesthetic distance in poems like “Cora,”30 a blues poem where a woman says she’s giving up men because they treat her badly.

In this transitional period in Hughes’s writing, he seemed to become determined to show not only himself, but women, as individuals. Hughes’s early portraits of poor women and prostitutes show them as passive victims, in line with the Dubois’s passive women who had been “trodden under the feet of men,” whereas his later portraits show the same type of women as people trying to make the best choice from the few options available. Breaking with the middle class

26 Ibid., 694.
27 Langston Hughes and Carl Van Vechten, 45-6.
29 Langston Hughes, Collected Poems, 85.
30 Langston Hughes, The Poems: 1921-1940, 97.
aspirations of the black elite, Hughes focused on the poor and displaced, using grittier language, often in a black dialect, and he based some of his poems on the musical form of the blues. According to R.B. Miller in *The Art and Craft of Langston Hughes*,

> Though it was appropriate to Hughes’ largesse, as an ethical writer, to restore complex humanity to Black woman in particular and woman in general, he had to replace the great void she had once occupied as idol and type. Then he would have to look at her as the well-rounded human being she was.\(^{31}\)

Although Hughes’s new poems showed women as humans rather than archetypes, the new poetry, with sometimes ugly subjects and language, also functioned as propaganda. Through frank and often unflattering depictions of women, Hughes demonstrated that the mythical America of “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” in which “Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans” in order to free the slaves had become the America in which black women’s options were limited to selling their bodies to white men for sex or working in white people’s kitchens, and where the problems endemic to racism meant that loving a black man was also a dangerous proposition.

“Beale Street Love,” which appeared in *Palms* in November 1926, seems to demonstrate Hughes’s determination to show the “real” side of Harlem and of the black experience, without regard for whether either a black or white audience would like the depiction.

```
Love
Is a brown man’s fist
With hard knuckles
Crushing the lips,
Blackening the eyes,—
Hit me again,
Says Clorinda.\(^{32}\)
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“Beale Street Love” creates a psychologically complex woman. Hughes reduces the aesthetic distance between the woman and the audience through brutal description, eschewing his earlier tendency to view the woman through the lens of a metaphor. These straightforward descriptions let the reader become a part of Clorinda’s thoughts and experiences.

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\(^{32}\) Langston Hughes, *The Poems*, 97.
Hughes gives Clorinda an agency that that the young prostitute of his earlier poem lacks. Clorinda clearly associates love with violence and has made the decision to accept the violence in order to have love. The narrator makes no judgment regarding Clorinda’s choice. Rather, he tries to understand and express the choice from Clorinda’s perspective. Like the women in Hughes’s earlier poems, Clorinda does not move. The difference is that she chooses not to move.

Unlike in his earlier poems, Hughes speaks clearly to the sources of Clorinda’s beaten state, which is Clorinda’s association of love with violence and the “brown man” who beats her. Hughes does not mention Clorinda’s appearance at all and replaces soft language like “withered flower” with harsh-sounding words like “hard knuckles” and “crushing.” In pointing to specific causes of Clorinda’s suffering and naming the violence, Hughes begins to form an argument about the limited choices available to black women in the twenties. While the argument stays largely unspoken, Clorinda’s conflation of love and violence suggests that her experience with men has been uniformly violent, perhaps pointing to a problem endemic in places like Harlem where poor African Americans lived and worked.

“Cora,” a blues poem that appeared with “Beale Street Love” in Hughes’s next book Fine Clothes to the Jew, published in 1927, gives us a woman speaking in dialect, uses the blues form, and shows a woman who is probably lower class. “Cora” appears immediately after “Beale Street Love” and offers a woman who makes a different choice, and a better choice, than Clorinda.

I broke my heart this mornin’,
Ain’t got no heart no more.
Next time a man comes near me
Gonna shut an’ lock my door
Cause they treat me mean—
The ones I love.
They always treat me mean.33

In “Cora,” Hughes lessens aesthetic distance by speaking in first person and by using black colloquial English rather than standard American English. He gives the woman a voice by letting her speak for herself. Cora’s voice is filled with pride and self-determination.

Cora may equate love and violence, but she does not value love so highly that she is willing to be treated badly. Cora is a woman who embodies a positive and active concept of womanhood in spite of her low speech and probable life of poverty. Taken together, “Cora” and “Clorinda” demonstrate that although Hughes was determined to show the lower class in his poems, he wanted to show a variety of

33 Langston Hughes, The Poems, 97.
The Evolving Woman in Langston Hughes’s Poetry of the 1920s – Allene Nichols

complex characters who went beyond caricature. Clorinda may respond in the way white people expected black women to respond to domestic violence, but Cora refuses to respond as expected. These women are individuals, not stereotypes;

“Red Silk Stockings” also appeared in Fine Clothes to the Jew. Like “Beale Street Love” and “Cora,” “Red Silk Stockings” examines the plight of the poor black woman. The poem begins

Put on yo’ red silk stockings,  
Black gal.  
go out an’ let de white boys  
Look at yo’ legs.34

Hughes felt the poem was misunderstood by the critics. “An ironic poem like ‘Red Silk Stockings,’” Hughes wrote, “they took for literal advice.”35 Later, he wrote of “Red Silk Stockings” that it was “an ironical poem deploiring the fact that in certain southern rural communities there is little work for a beautiful colored girl to do other than selling her body,—a fact one should weep over rather than disdain to recognize.”36

“In Red Silk Stockings,” the narrator suggests prostitution in the color of the woman’s stockings and later in the poem when he implies that a baby may result from the character’s contemplated behavior: “tomorrow’s chile’ll/Be a high yaller.” The woman’s agency in this poem is implied. She can choose to prostitute herself to white men or not. However, she clearly has limited options. The narrator states “Ain’t nothin’ to do for you, nohow,/Round this town,—/You’s too pretty.”37 . The narrator’s colloquial diction lessens the aesthetic distance by suggesting that he is on the same social level with the woman in the poem and that he and the woman are both African American. He addresses her directly rather than commenting on her, which puts the reader as the narrator in a direct and immediate relationship with the poem’s character.

In a rare positive review of Fine Clothes to the Jew, Alain Locke, a longtime friend and benefactor of Hughes, wrote

The author apparently loves the plain people in every aspect of their lives, their gin-drinking carousals, their street brawls, their tenement

34 Ibid. 105
35 Langston Hughes, The Big Sea, 203.
37 Langston Hughes, The Poems, 105.
publicity, and their slum matings and partings, and reveals this segment of Negro life as it has never been shown before.\textsuperscript{38}

Generally speaking, black reviewers expressed the view that by describing the poor and disenfranchised members of the African American community, Hughes represented African Americans as a whole in a negative light. None of the reviewers denied that many black people lived in desperate circumstances and in a manner that was different from that of the white minority. Rather, they argued that Hughes should not have discussed “this sort of people” because it played into the worst stereotypes used by white people. Eustace Gay neatly summed up the argument of many of Fine Clothes to the Jews’ black critics in a review for the Philadelphia Tribune.

It does not matter to me whether every poem in the book is true to life. Why should it be paraded before the American public by a Negro author as being typical or representative of the Negro? Bad enough to have white authors holding up or imperfections to public gaze. Our aim ought to be present to the general public…our higher aims and aspirations.\textsuperscript{39}

Even The Crisis took exception to Hughes’s new poems. Allison Davis wrote that “The indubitable gift of Mr. Hughes and of one or two other poets was sacrificed to a dogma, which necessitated their being atavistic and ‘colorful’ at the expense of a full and experimental development of their imagination.”\textsuperscript{40}

Hughes responded in an unpublished essay entitled “These Bad New Negroes: A Critique on Critics,” which he wrote in 1927. “Art is a reflection of life or an individual’s comment on life…. It may be largely about humble people, but three-fourths of the Negroes are humble people.”\textsuperscript{41} After listing and answering each of the points he feels his critics have made about his new verse, he sum up his response.

If the colored newspaper critics (excepting Dewey Jones and Alice Dunbar Nelson) choose to read only the words I write and not their meaning, if they choose to see only what they call the ugliness of my verse and not the protest against ugliness which my poems contain, what can I do?\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{39}Barksdale, 25.
\textsuperscript{40}Allison Davis. "Our Negro 'Intellectuals.'" *New Crisis* (15591603) 107, no. 4 (July 2000): 41. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 26, 2014)
\textsuperscript{41}Langston Hughes, “These Bad Negroes,” 38.
\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., 40.
The above passage is a clear break with Dubois’s contention that by showing African Americans as beautiful, writers can persuade the rest of society to accept them. Rather, Hughes uses ugly images and sometimes ugly language to show the rest of society the type and extent of prejudice that African American men and women faced. Hughes’s approach is more aggressive than that of Dubois. While the young prostitute is distant and beautiful, Cora demands to sit at the reader’s table and be heard. By being psychologically complex, she demonstrates universal human qualities in an African American context. By speaking in the voice of a woman of her race, she transcends both race and womanhood.

When Langston Hughes went to Harlem, he entered an aesthetic and cultural cauldron that forced him to define and refine his ideas about art, race, and womanhood. Hughes entered the renaissance as a bright and eager apprentice, praised for his brilliant work. He left wiser and without the praise of critics, but having created poetry he felt was honest and direct, in which women tried to take control of their futures in spite of real racial and gender limitations. If he did not show black womanhood as beautiful, he did show women as having a degree of power over their own lives that others were willing to ignore. Where African American women activists and intellectuals like Dubois felt that African American women were worthy because they were exceptional, Hughes showed that African American women were worthy because they were human.
Bibliography


Facing the Whirlwind: Eastern and Western Existentialism in Richard E. Kim’s The Martyred

Stephen Joyce

Abstract
Celebrated on its publication in the 1964, Korean American author Richard E. Kim’s debut novel The Martyred represents a landmark in intellectual and aesthetic encounters between East and West. Inspired by the writings of French existentialist Albert Camus, Kim dramatized in his novel the clash between Western philosophies of the State, Christianity, pragmatism and existentialism with the Korea spirit of han, a tragic sense of living in an indifferent and malign universe which mankind can do little to alter. Set during the Korean War, the novel focuses on army intelligence officers investigating the massacre of twelve Christian ministers by Communist forces and in its insistent questioning of how truth can be established and to what ends it should be used the novel prefigures many debates in postmodern historiography. This paper examines the influence of Camus on Kim’s philosophy and aesthetics, Kim’s dramatization of the clash of Eastern and Western philosophies, and argues that The Martyred deserves greater recognition today as a seminal aesthetic achievement emerging from the growing interaction between East and West.

Keywords: Richard E. Kim, Albert Camus, existentialism, The Martyred, philosophy, aesthetics, han
Facing the Whirlwind: Eastern and Western Existentialism in Richard E. Kim’s *The Martyred*

Stephen Joyce

In 1954, a young Korean named Richard E. Kim arrived in the USA to study history and political philosophy. Only twenty-two, he had already experienced more hardship than most experience in a lifetime. He had grown up under the brutal Japanese Occupation of his homeland and then, after the false dawn of liberation, served in the Korean army as the Americans and Chinese went to war on the Korean peninsula. After three years of devastating conflict, Kim left to find answers to the question that had dogged his life: How do we continue to hope when we are surrounded by cruelty and despair, by savagery and injustice? Ten years later, he published his answer in his blockbuster debut novel, *The Martyred*, whose critical acclaim extended to a Nobel Prize nomination for Kim. Yet, intriguingly, this young man who had already lost so much dedicated his novel to someone he had never met from a land he had never visited:

To the memory of Albert Camus, whose insight into ‘a strange form of love’ overcame for me the nihilism of the trenches and bunkers of Korea.

This article looks at the influence of Camus’ thought and art on the work of Richard E. Kim, but more deeply it is concerned with how literature can bridge the gap between cultures. It is a cliché to say that technology is creating a global village, but giving two people with divergent life experiences the technology to communicate does not mean communication will happen. Something more is needed, something human that technology alone cannot give, and in the example of Richard E. Kim and Albert Camus we can begin to understand what that human element is. From different starting points, Kim and Camus found in the darkness a ‘strange form of love’ that allowed them to confront the moral dilemmas a bleak world had presented them with.

What did they have in common, these two men from opposite sides of the globe? Albert Camus was born in poor circumstances in French Algeria in 1913, an outsider to the native Algerians as a *pied noir* but also somewhat estranged from the French mainstream. His expulsion from the French Communist Party in 1937 for joining the Algerian People’s Party shows how his multiple affiliations caused problems for him in a divisive time. In *The Rebel*, published in 1951, he identified himself with *la pensée*
Facing the Whirlwind: Eastern and Western Existentialism in Richard E. Kim’s The Martyred –
Stephen Joyce

solaire, a phrase that suggests not just the Greek philosophical tradition but also the Mediterranean world ahead of the dogmatic Marxism of the colder climes of northern Europe\(^1\). Richard E. Kim similarly grew up between two worlds but in a markedly different way. If Camus was the *pied noir*, then Kim was the native watching his homeland be colonised. Born in 1932, Kim was the eldest son of a local aristocrat, but as a Korean under the Japanese Occupation he was a second-class citizen. As chronicled in his memoir, *Lost Names*, Kim struggled against attempts to make him a loyal Imperial subject but liberation was a chimera as the Korean peninsula was partitioned into North and South after an American deal with the USSR. Kim’s family fled south to avoid Communist persecution, his world collapsing around him not because he had divided loyalties but because the world had divided the things he was loyal to. Yet both Camus and Kim, for different reasons, rejected the belief systems that dominated their fellows and sought another path.

If there is one crucial experience they both shared, it was the horror of life under Occupation. For more prosaic souls, Occupation may be a matter of daily inconveniences, of resentment, of restricted opportunities; for those with a philosophical bent what freezes the blood is the knowledge of one’s essential helplessness. It does not matter if one is a freedom fighter or a collaborator; neither choice will affect the political situation. As the father in *Lost Names* says, “we put up resistance in the beginning, to no avail of course, and we kept it up until I, for one, realised that our country’s destiny was completely in the hands of all those powerful foreign countries. We couldn’t bring off our liberation and independence by ourselves”\(^2\). In such a situation, one’s personal choices are merely ethical, not consequential. Likewise Camus, though he edited the resistance magazine *Combat* in Nazi-occupied France, was far too intelligent to believe the French could liberate themselves. From such situations naturally sprang the question of how to live a moral life in a world that is indifferent to one’s efforts, a world in which the innocent die and the guilty go unpunished.

Camus’ solution to this ethical dilemma forms the wellspring of Kim’s own philosophy and aesthetics. Camus considered the relationship of man to the universe as one of Absurdity, by which he meant a fundamental disharmony between man’s desire for meaning in a universe that rejects our attempts to impose order. It is important to note that human beings are not absurd and neither is the universe; the Absurd describes the *relationship* between man and the universe, which is irreconcilable. This philosophical vision, explained in *The Myth of Sisyphus*\(^3\), was dramatized in *The

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Stranger, in which the protagonist Meursault lives “the divorce between the attempt to live honestly in accord with the indeterminate character of human existence and the attempt to interpret that human existence in general moral terms of absolute validity”.

Camus proposed three solutions to the Absurd: suicide, religious faith, and acceptance. He rejected suicide as a rejection of life, an attempt to remove the Absurd by removing one of its component terms – oneself. This is not to face the Absurd but to succumb to it, whereas Camus insists that it is still possible to make progress even when one acknowledges the Absurd. He rejected religious faith as another attempt to change one of the terms of the Absurd – in this case, to turn the universe into God. Many modern philosophers, most notably Søren Kierkegaard, have argued that the paradoxes of the Absurd refute any rational road to God, but the contradictions themselves are religious criteria for believing in an unknowable God. Camus argues that such ideas deny the Absurd by substituting the faith that there is some divine order unknowable to mortals in its place. For Camus, both suicide and religion seek to escape absurdity, not acknowledge it. But how can one accept the Absurd without collapsing into nihilism?

This fight against nihilistic despair was one Kim recognised as it comprises one of the major themes of Korean aesthetics and culture – han. In Kim’s extensive definition:

One of the most important elements in Korean literature of the past and even the present – from the point of view of understanding Korean literature psychologically and philosophically – is the concept of han. Han is difficult to translate into other languages... Han contains a range of human emotions derived from one’s awareness of one’s doom... lamentation; a sense of loss, doom and destruction; a certain amount of anger and resentment at one’s perception of unfairness inflicted upon oneself, that is, one’s sense of being an unfair victim; a fatalistic perception of a fundamentally, inexorably unfair cruel universe; and an equally fatalistic resignation and final acceptance of one’s fate.

Like Camus, who declared in The Rebel that he had devoted his whole life to fighting nihilism, Kim declared that “What I have been trying to find in and through my writing is nothing less than the ways and means – psychological and philosophical – to destroy the Korean version of han.” Both men, though from different backgrounds and cultures, had through the weight of their similar experiences arrived at the same

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7 Ibid., 26.
questions. Camus’ writings on this subject are well known, but today Kim’s landmark novel exploring these issues is overlooked. In an age when globalisation is generating increased interest in encounters and similarities between different cultures, Kim’s dramatization of the encounter between han and Western philosophy deserves greater attention.

The Martyred:

In *The Martyred*, Kim addressed the desire to live a moral life that still acknowledges the reality of han and the Absurd through a taut, well-crafted narrative from which the novel’s profound religious and philosophical themes logically emerge. The majority of the action occurs in a single place, Pyongyang, in a short six-week period from October-November 1950, during the Allied occupation of the North Korean capital during the Korean War. The novel refrains from explicating the causes of the war, the historical context, or the background culture. Instead, the almost neo-classical observation of the unities of place, time, and action strips away superfluities and focuses the reader’s attention on the unfolding drama.

The autodiegetic narrator, Captain Lee, is an intelligence officer charged with discovering the truth behind the mass execution of twelve Christian ministers by the Communists. Two other ministers survived the execution – Mr. Shin, who refuses to talk about what happened, and Mr. Hann, who has gone insane. Lee’s superior, Colonel Chang, wishes to represent the twelve ministers as martyrs in the fight against communism, but before he can use them as propaganda he needs to know the truth so he can control it. The initial quest for the facts rapidly broadens to engage wider philosophical and moral questions: How can we know the truth about a past event? Should we conceal a harmful truth? Can we live with the truth in a world full of doubt and suffering? These questions spring naturally from the dramatic situation and are masterfully handled by Kim, who had a singular talent for constructing parallel moral dilemmas that resonate against each other.

Kim’s style, like Camus’, is an apt complement to his philosophical themes. Sentences are short and to the point; there are no superfluous adjectives or descriptions. The novel is broken into short chapters generally focussing on one key scene, which is primarily driven by dialogue between the protagonists. There is little in the way of physical description; characters are defined largely by the kinds of arguments they make. There is only scant background information regarding the setting and historical context; in many ways, the Korean War functions in the novel as the equivalent of the epidemic in Camus’ *The Plague*, as a symbol of the oppressive and meaningless universe. As in all Kim’s novels, the spare prose style places great weight on recurring motifs – in *The Martyred* these include the perpetual cold, the ruined city, and the bell endlessly tolling like the unreachable truth at the novel’s core. The pared-down style
leaves us with the stark dramatic and philosophical dilemma Kim wishes to explore – how can we experience han and still live with meaning and purpose?

Drama in The Martyred is constructed around the clash between the philosophical positions of the five major characters, who explore different answers to this urgent question. These viewpoints are interwoven in alternating chapters, with certain characters coming to the fore at particular moments, echoing dilemmas of those currently off stage. For the purposes of clear analysis, however, I will deal with each character separately to show their own solution to two central questions: what happened to the twelve ministers and how can they best use the truths they learn? Colonel Chang espouses the political theory that only a strong State can protect the people; Mr. Shin recommends religious faith as a way of surviving the evils of the world; Captain Park adopts a pragmatic approach and comes to believe in whatever has the most beneficial consequences; Chaplain Koh adopts an opportunistic strategy of switching beliefs whenever his current beliefs threaten his survival; and the narrator Captain Lee seeks to acknowledge the truth while retaining a sense of hope, eventually arriving at a humanism inspired by Albert Camus.

Colonel Chang:

The first task for Captain Lee is to discover what happened to the Christian ministers, but this leads directly to a much larger question – how can we know the truth of a past event? Akira Kurosawa’s landmark film Rashomon exemplifies the difficulty of establishing truth from the testimony of witnesses for each person not only subtly alters facts to suit their purposes but may also have fundamentally perceived events differently. This difficulty is compounded by the postmodern argument of thinkers like Hayden White and Michel Foucault that narrative imposes meaning on essentially random events. “Narrative… serves to impose coherence, continuity, and closure on the messiness of life and of the historian’s sources; the historian then smoothes over the gaps and absences to create an ‘effect of the real’.” There are thus two primary obstacles to understanding a past event: the subjective nature of eyewitness reports and the desire to impose narrative coherence on random and chaotic occurrences. Lee runs into both difficulties during his investigation; those who witnessed the event cannot be trusted to tell the truth and those who want to control the truth wish to place it in the service of a larger narrative that will distort its meaning.

The difficulty of establishing the truth is made obvious right from the beginning. Colonel Chang explains that two prisoners have ‘volunteered’ information. “However, one source of information claims that there were fourteen [ministers], the other says twelve. Unfortunately, both sources of information are no longer available. We seem to

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8 Rashomon, directed by Akira Kurosawa (1950; Tokyo, Daiei: Criterion Collection, 2002), DVD.
have an impetuous CIC”\textsuperscript{10}. The understated manner in which Chang hints the prisoners have been tortured and killed indicates how he represents truth so it is favourable to the army. Lee, however, a former university instructor in the History of Human Civilisation, rejects Chang’s politically motivated assumptions. Based on the limited and contradictory evidence available, “We can’t say they were murdered, or how many. We can only say that an undetermined number of ministers disappeared”\textsuperscript{11}. Lee states with clarity and precision only what is certain, even if this highlights how little is known! The novel does not reject the idea of historical truth, however; instead it emphasises that what we can know is limited.

For Colonel Chang, this is a source of joy. If only partial truths are possible, why not construct the most satisfactory ‘complete’ truth imaginable? Lee quickly perceives that Chang is suggesting the case “may be good material for propaganda... a grave case of religious persecution by the Communists. Of international significance, if I may add, sir, particularly in America”\textsuperscript{12}. Chang believes the two surviving ministers made a deal with the Communists, who needed informers to provide ‘evidence’. “When you don’t have charges, you manufacture them... So they manufactured charges against the ministers, then they needed someone to confess – that’s right – confess and bear witness to the charges”\textsuperscript{13}. From this point of view, truth can be manufactured to suit one’s ends and if you need eyewitness testimony you can always persuade someone. His ease and familiarity with such methods suggest that Chang is no stranger to providing false evidence for state purposes.

However, it would be a mistake to see Chang as a villain. Later in the novel, when he hands command of the intelligence division to Lee, he explains exactly what Lee’s duties are – to shield people from the truth by telling lies that will relieve them of some of their terrible burden:

Would you rather tell them this war is just like any other bloody war in the stinking history of idiotic mankind... that thousands of people have died and more will die in this stupid war, for nothing, for absolutely nothing, because they are just innocent victims, helpless pawns in the arena of cold-blooded, calculating international power politics?... The important thing, as far as I am concerned and as far as this job goes, is to tell them what is necessary for them to know, and what is demanded of them by the state... when you say something in that uniform of yours to the people, heaven help you if you go around making those miserable

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 23.
people more miserable by going against the stand taken by your country, telling them what they already know but don’t want to think they know.¹⁴

Chang moves the issue from establishing the truth to questioning what Lee would do with the truth, a moral issue the main characters struggle with throughout the novel. Importantly, he implies the propaganda he creates is an illusion the people willingly believe in; they are aware of the horrible reality, but one must believe something in order to keep going. The state may not be perfect, but it offers temporal salvation to the shivering masses hovering on the fringes of the action.

Chang’s worldview puts him squarely in the tradition of Thomas Hobbes, who argued in Leviathan for the necessity of a strong central government. The citizen owes his allegiance to the State, for it is in his self-interest to escape the state of nature, “nasty, brutish, and short,”¹⁵ the very life the struggling people are living during the Korean War. For civilians, torn between a recently divided North and South just five short years after the brutal Japanese Occupation, with American and Chinese troops plunging into Korea to do battle, it does indeed seem like Hobbes’ famous bellum omnium contra omnes and, in Chang’s opinion, the solution is the same – to form a strong central government which commands the people’s loyalty and obedience. The State’s highest duty is to preserve itself, for without the State the lives of the people would be immeasurably worse, each individual just an atomised particle before the whirlwind of history. Only by aggregating together in common purpose can they hope to survive.

Chang’s argument is powerful, but his speech contains the seeds of its own rejection. The State has not managed to prevent the war of all against all; Korea is rent by a civil war that has become a conflict between the USA and China. Individuals may need to gather into a State to escape the state of nature, but what about the States themselves? What is the point of gathering into a set of individual states that merely enact the bellum omnium contra omnes against each other in “the arena of cold-blooded, calculating international power politics”?¹⁶ One of the primary objections to Chang’s argument (and Hobbes’) is thus that it doesn’t obey its own logic; the only way to prevent chaos and war is through a world state, not by tribal allegiance to a particular nation-state. “So long as there is international anarchy, it is by no means clear that increase of efficiency in the separate States is in the interest of mankind, since it increases the ferocity and destructiveness of war”¹⁷. The hard-headed realism of Chang’s argument is merely superficial; anyone who truly held such beliefs should

¹⁴ Ibid., 122-123.
¹⁶ Kim, The Martyred, 122.
instead work for the establishment of a global government. Chang’s solution merely leads to a continuation and intensification of the war.

A belief in the Hobbes/Chang worldview requires one to accept their account of the state of nature. For Chang, the life of the masses is miserable and the only way to alleviate it is through comforting illusions. Lee can only cause harm by “telling them what they already know but don’t want to think they know”\(^\text{18}\). This implies that everyone already knows the ministers were not heroic martyrs but ordinary men, many of whom broke in captivity. However, what comfort does such knowledge provide? It would be far better to have a glowing illusion that provides a little warmth, if not much light. Lee, on the other hand, believes such warmth is of little use in a coldly indifferent universe; what is needed is light to see and understand by, however dim and flickering. He is not afraid of the state of nature, nor does he believe it is hopeless. His response to Chang’s speech, “I will hang onto my truth and will not compromise it”\(^\text{19}\), suggests a belief in human dignity and a hope that a commitment to truth can lay the basis for a better world.

**Mr. Shin:**

Both Camus and Kim had fought for their respective countries, yet both were sceptical of nationalism. This may have been partly situational: as a pied noir, Camus had seen French imperialism in Algeria and as a colonial subject Kim had fought narratives of Japanese nationalism throughout his childhood. Yet both men also had a philosophical cast of mind that sought the universal in the human and thus their writings tried to defend the people they cared about without giving in to tribal impulses. The same spirit of scepticism surrounded their engagement with Christianity. As Claire Messud has written of Camus, “he was an atheist in reaction to, and in the shadow of, a Catholicism osmotically imbued in the culture (of the French certainly, but of the pieds noir in particular). The inescapable result is that his atheism is in constant dialogue with religion”\(^\text{20}\). Thus, Camus could famously declare that “Meursault is the only Christ that we deserve,”\(^\text{21}\) a link made clear in the final line of *The Stranger*, which begins: “Pour que tout soit consommé,” echoing Jesus’ cry of “Tout est consommé” on the cross. Likewise, Kim had grown up in a strongly Christian family; his grandfather, a leading pastor in Pyongyang, was executed by the Communists in 1951, an act that inspired the plot of *The Martyred*. Perhaps for these reasons the novel is more sympathetic to the Church than the State, but like Camus, Kim still rejects religion as a panacea for the Absurd.

\(^{18}\) Kim, *The Martyred*, 123.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 123.


\(^{21}\) Ibid.

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Captain Lee’s hopes for establishing the truth rest on Chang’s nemesis, the pastor Mr. Shin. As the only sane eyewitness, Shin alone can upset Chang’s plans by telling the truth. However, Shin is reluctant to speak frankly. He clearly harbours a terrible secret, one he wishes to divulge to Lee but dares not. In their first meeting, he lies and says he does not know what happened to the other ministers. Lee’s questioning reveals a clear difference between what the two regard as truth – Lee wants to know the facts, while Shin speaks of personal and religious conviction:

He stirred in his chair. “I have told you all that I can tell you.”
“You are innocent, aren’t you?” I repeated.
“Yes.”
“Then you told me the truth.”
“I speak the truth of my conscience, Captain.”
“Am I not capable of judging the truth?”
“Don’t you realize,” he said gravely, “that you are speaking of the fact of man, and I of the truth of my faith?”
“Then you believe you are innocent in the eyes of your god.”

He seemed startled by my words and he gazed at me intensely for some time; then he lowered his eyes and said quietly, “It is for Him to judge me.”

The thrust and parry of the dialogue exemplify how philosophical distinctions are drawn in the text through dramatic action. The Christian minister perceives truth differently to the intelligence officer – he is more concerned with ethical right than legal facts. Shin is lying, but he does so with a clear conscience, which suggests he is serving a higher truth. He believes his actions were and are morally correct, and to preserve this truth he is forced to lie. Chang is afraid he will betray the State for this higher purpose, but Lee characteristically is interested in the truth because despite being painful and limited it is still the basis of all we can know.

As the novel progresses, the different perspectives begin to bewilder Lee:

The colonel was getting out beyond my depth.
“So you tell me Shin is innocent,” he said. “Are you sure, absolutely sure about that?”
“He is, sir,” I insisted, but I had to add, “from our point of view.”
“Are you including mine?”
“Yes.”
“Don’t, because he is not from my point of view.”

22 Kim, The Martyred, 33.
I reminded him that he himself had just declared a moment ago that Mr. Shin was innocent.

“Ah, I didn’t say he was innocent from my point of view.”

Perplexed, I burst out, “But you say you are not accusing him and yet you don’t think he is innocent.”

As more perspectives emerge, it becomes impossible for Shin to remain silent. Part of the novel’s brilliance is that it never gives a direct account of the massacre. We learn different versions incrementally, from oblique points of view. After a captured prisoner, Major Jung, gives contradictory evidence under torture, he then spits out a savage version of the ‘truth’ as revenge to the Christian leaders of Pyongyang, “It gives me great pleasure to tell you that your great heroes and martyrs died like dogs. Like dogs, whimpering, whining, wailing. It pleased me to hear them beg for mercy, to hear them denounce their god and one another.” Jung says he let Hann and Shin live because one went crazy and the other spat in Jung’s face. “I admire anyone who can spit in my face.” However, Jung’s statements cannot be trusted, making the truth murkier than ever.

It now becomes imperative that Shin speak out, but whose truth will he tell? Chang hopes he will do his duty to his country and indict the Communists for killing the martyrs, but Shin operates to a different standard. He is not concerned with the survival of the State; he is concerned with his Church and his own conscience. He has lied about his presence at the massacre out of a sense of duty to the Christians in Pyongyang who derive hope from the martyrs’ sacrifice; now he has been unmasked as a liar and must speak out. Chang is afraid he will attempt to clear himself by telling the truth, when he wants Shin to extol the martyrs’ virtues for propaganda purposes. However, Chang’s propaganda is crudely designed to make the people hate the Communists. Shin, as a Christian minister, is aware of a deeper psychological truth. It is not enough to have twelve martyrs – there must be a Judas, too. This is the role he adopts when he tells the assembled ministers, “Gentlemen, I am guilty. It was I who betrayed our martyrs.”

Shin’s acceptance of the cup of sorrows goes directly to the heart of the scapegoat mechanism that Christianity both embraces and overturns, as explained by René Girard. In Girard’s view, every society accumulates frustrations that threaten to destroy it, so the periodically recurring solution is to transfer blame for negative emotions onto a scapegoat that is then killed or driven into exile. For the ritual to be successful, people

23 Ibid., 75.
24 Ibid., 97.
25 Ibid., 98.
26 Ibid., 127.
must be unaware of their motivations and this is exactly what happens prior to Shin’s confession. The knowledge that he has lied about his presence during the massacre makes him the communal scapegoat. A mob descends on his house:

Those good Christians searched the whole house. Then they got mad and began to smash the furniture, windows, everything they could lay hands on... It was uncanny. There they were, imagine, in the blizzard, chanting crazily and screaming, ‘Judas,’ beating their bodies – pouring out all their sorrows, all that had been simmering in their darkened souls during the years of persecution.28

However, as Girard points out, Christian mythology marks a turning point in that the scapegoat, Jesus, is proven to be innocent, thus exposing the injustice of the scapegoat mechanism and laying the foundation of a new order. Shin’s action is an interesting variation. He realises his people are full of anger and contempt for themselves, that they feel guilty for being helpless in the face of war and persecution; by declaring himself guilty, Shin takes onto his own shoulders the frailties of his flock and by forgiving him his moment of weakness they find a way to forgive themselves. His actions confound the military officers, but Shin has shown his greater understanding of Christian psychology:

I might have spoken out to contradict Mr. Shin, to defend him in spite of what he had decided to do and to declare the ugly truth, had I not been too astonished by what took place immediately after... all the remaining ministers hurried over to Mr. Shin, embracing him, touching him, begging him to speak no more for he had said enough; they prayed then and there; they blessed him; they confessed and repented their past complacency and meek submissions to the enemies of their god; and they took him into their hearts as one of them, as their sacrifice.29

Far from being outcast, Shin quickly becomes the leader of the Christians in Pyongyang, a pillar of moral authority and spiritual grace. Through accepting his role as Judas, Shin becomes a Christ-like figure, prepared to sacrifice himself for the well-being of the people.

However, while the novel clearly respects Shin’s Christian dilemma, he still lies to his people and thus duplicates the errors of Colonel Chang. Chang, realising he has underestimated Shin, says to him, “I wanted to tell you before I go that it is an honour

28 Kim, The Martyred, 81.
29 Ibid., 128.
to know you.”

It seems at this point both sides have achieved their aims – the State has its martyrs to inspire the fight against the Communists, the Church has its martyrs and its sinner to restore people’s faith, and the people have new hope to go on with their daily lives. Only Lee is bitterly disappointed for he knows it is all based on lies. “I had been tricked into a sort of nice little game, in which both the pursuer and the pursued skilfully staged a clever play of intrigues, of plots and counterplots, all this only to reveal that they were fellow conspirators, after all.”

Captain Park:

A key element of the impulse towards philosophy on the part of both Camus and Kim was the post-war feeling that the traditional answers of politics and religion had decisively failed. The answer could not simply be another kind of politics or a renewal of spirituality; instead, the root of humanity’s problems had to be tackled directly through a sustained philosophical inquiry into the Absurd and han. Whereas Camus wrestled against the Marxist tradition, Kim avoided dealing with socialist philosophies – given the tensions with the Communist North, any public engagement with Marxist philosophies could have involved significant personal risk. Instead, the American-educated Kim focused his philosophical analysis on the most distinctively American philosophical school – the pragmatism of William James and John Dewey – and sought to demonstrate its inadequacy for dealing with a world dominated by han.

The pragmatic dilemma is dramatized through the character of Captain Park, whose similarities to Lee are clearly expressed by their military rank and previous occupations as lecturers in the History of Human Civilisation. Both men are atheists but Park’s situation is complicated by the fact that he is the prodigal son of one of the executed ministers. Rather than the truth about the whole event, Park is primarily interested in knowing if his father’s devout faith in God ever wavered:

I am not interested in the ordinary, mundane sort of father-and-son relationship. I am not even interested in the fact that I am his disowned son. I am concerned with him as a fanatic, a God-drunk man. He never stopped to examine himself dispassionately, not even when he felt he had to disown me. He thought he was always right. He never doubted his faith in his god and never, for one moment, suspected that he and his god might not be in as harmonious a state as he always believed.

Park expresses contempt for opting out of the Absurd by choosing religion and his quest for the truth thus parallels Lee’s. However, they do not reach the same

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30 Ibid., 143.
31 Ibid., 145.
32 Ibid., 64.
destination. Whereas Lee continues to search for truth, Park adopts a pragmatic position.

Pragmatism, as explained in the works of William James, sought to ascertain truth by assessing the consequences of a given idea. “The pragmatic method... is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective consequences. What difference would it practically make to anyone if this notion rather than that notion were true?”33 James’ emphasis on consequences led him to an interesting assessment of unprovable beliefs like religious faith. He argued that although one cannot prove the existence of God, believing in God has practical benefits for many and thus belief helps create truth because belief creates the same beneficial consequences as if God really existed. “That which produces effects within another reality must be termed a reality itself, so I feel as if we had no philosophic excuse for calling the unseen or mystical world unreal”34. Park, the committed atheist, adopts a similar attitude after his experiences in Pyongyang – although he does not believe in God, he becomes a believer in the positive effects of religious faith.

Even though he asks a more limited question than Lee, Park finds the truth difficult to come by. Major Jung’s eyewitness testimony denounces all the ministers except Hann and Shin, but his account must be considered unreliable. Colonel Chang reveals he knew all along that “among the twelve there were some who betrayed their fellows”35, but he reassures Park that “you can be proud, as we all are, that your father was the bravest man of them all. He was magnificent, Captain. Even Major Jung admitted that your father could inspire a certain kind of awe and respect among the Red torturers. Rest assured, Captain, he is a great martyr”36. This news, delivered with comforting phrases of condolence and more indirect testimony from the unreliable Jung, prepares us for the revelation that it is not entirely true. To be precise, it is true, but only from Colonel Chang’s point of view. Mr. Park did not confess to the Communists so he is a hero as defined by the State. However, in a letter to Park, Shin describes his father’s final moments. “We were given one minute to say whatever we wished: to pray. ‘I cannot pray!’ These were your father’s last words, and now I pass them on to you in his name, in his memory. Your father did not pray; he died in utter solitude”37. His silence, which the State interprets as heroism, is the despair of apostasy. Thus, even though Chang speaks his truth, he does not have the truth Captain Park seeks.

However, can Shin’s tale be trusted? The novel presents the crucial letter as an embedded narrative with a letter for Park inside a letter to Lee. The letter from Shin to

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35 Kim, *The Martyred*, 100.
36 Ibid., 102.
37 Ibid., 119.
Lee subtly casts doubt on the veracity of the enclosed letter to Park. Shin writes, “I beg you to read what I wrote to Park and if you believe that he is prepared to read it, then give it to him, but if not, then please destroy it”\(^{38}\). Shin must know that Lee would never withhold truth regardless of the consequences, but the sentence does emphasise the contingent utility of truth. The letter to Park belies Shin’s assertion to Lee that “I do not know the young Park too well”\(^{39}\). Shin was, in fact, the person Park came to see after splitting from his father. “I remember your angry face, your harsh voice, and your defiance. You accused your father, saying that he was a self-righteous fanatic”\(^{40}\). Shin also knows exactly what Park hopes to discover. “I confess that I was surprised to learn of your particular wish. How did he die? I can give you what you wish to know”\(^{41}\). Is it not possible, then, that Shin’s letter to Park is a lie? He knows what Park wants to hear, he is an old family friend who would not wish to see father and son permanently divided, and no one can contradict his version of events.

Unlike Lee, Park is content to accept the truth Shin offers because of its beneficial consequences. He accepts a role in the memorial service because he knows the return of an inspirational minister’s prodigal son will inspire the people. He reads to them from the book of Job even as he resists its message:

> I resist it consciously. Then why did I read Job’s words? As I stood there facing the people, looking into those thousands of human eyes that have seen horror and injustice, hunger and sickness, and sudden, meaningless death, all waiting for me to utter the next word, I felt Mr. Shin’s hand on my shoulder as if to say ‘Go on, go on. They are waiting for your words. Don’t stop here. Go on, and say it!’ The next thing I knew – I was giving in to God. No! I wasn’t. It was Job!\(^{42}\)

Shin’s silent appeal is not to a higher spiritual value but to a concern for the miserable people looking to Park for hope. Park cannot be a minister like his father for he does not believe in God, but he does believe in Job – that is, he believes suffering and misery exist and people need to find a way to deal with it. This is when he arrives at a pragmatic solution to han:

> Do you understand that a fairy tale can be an integral part of our lives? Then it ceases to be a fairy tale. It becomes real… What those Christians wanted and needed was not merely a nice little story that would give

\(^{38}\) Ibid., 116.
\(^{39}\) Ibid., 116.
\(^{40}\) Ibid., 117.
\(^{41}\) Ibid., 119.
\(^{42}\) Ibid., 163.
them comfort and confidence but something that would make their lives meaningful, something that would make their sufferings worthwhile... those Christians have something that sustains their lives in a world that is in a meaningless state. But we don’t. Why should we call what they have a fairy tale?43

Park’s acceptance of Shin’s account helps change his attitude to the lies being perpetrated. A lie with beneficial consequences has worth even if it doesn’t have truth.

However, the pragmatic approach offers no standard by which an act can be evaluated except by its consequences, which can’t be known in advance. When Park reads the passage from Job, he does so out of an immediate conviction that this will help the people, but will it really help them to believe lies? There is no way Park can answer this because the long-term consequences remain hidden. Park’s actions thus become dominated by an estimate of short-term consequences with no overarching framework by which to evaluate his own behaviour. He thus wavers between positions, supporting Shin but not rejoining the church, disgusted with the war but still willing to do his duty as an officer. The pragmatic approach can lead to its own kind of despair because consequences may always turn bad, particularly in a world of han, leaving one’s beliefs permanently on the edge of the abyss. Perhaps this is the meaning of Park’s cryptic final note to Lee: “I have been clinging onto the precipice of History, but I give up. I am prepared to take leave of it”44. For Park, pragmatism offers no solace, only a form of suicide, which negates one term of the Absurd.

Chaplain Koh:

The approaches of the first three characters, however well-intentioned, do not save them. Only two of the five major characters survive the war – Captain Lee and Chaplain Koh. Koh survives, however, not because he has found a principle that helps him cope but through the absence of such a principle. As an army chaplain, Koh’s allegiance is to both Church and State, but he is an opportunist who switches allegiance whenever his belief in a certain ideal threatens his safety. Throughout the novel, Koh is represented as an ambiguous and somewhat untrustworthy figure, given to making statements that contradict established facts. When Lee first sees him, he describes how Koh’s helmet “blurred his profile with an uneven shadow, save for his dented chin”45, imagery which emphasises irregularity and ambiguity. Koh describes himself as an old friend of Shin, but he does not recognise him and Shin receives him with the words, “I do not wish to see you... I bid you leave my house. You know as well as I do why I do

43 Ibid., 164.
44 Ibid., 222.
45 Ibid., 35.
not wish to see you”\textsuperscript{46}. The sense of duplicity is compounded when Lee meets Koh in Colonel Chang’s office and Koh in self-righteous fashion says, “after all, my dear military friends... we clergymen share a stronger spiritual bond than yours”\textsuperscript{47}, a comment utterly at odds with the hostile reception he received from his ‘old friend’ Shin and the warm welcome he receives from Colonel Chang.

Part of the novel’s strategy of constructing analogous moral dilemmas becomes clear when we discover Koh, like Shin, is concealing a secret. Chang reveals that Koh was one of his spies before the war and Lee soon discovers that many Christians in Pyongyang think Koh betrayed his vocation by working as a spy. Koh, however, feels only contempt for those who stayed and did nothing. “I am not in sympathy with the notion of nonviolent resistance. I have no intention of turning the other cheek to be slapped twice”\textsuperscript{48}. This aggressive approach creates a dilemma for him because the truth of his sudden departure from Pyongyang is that the son of a Church elder was a communist informer. Only Koh knows this, as the son is considered a martyr killed by the communists when they arrested the spy network. Angered by the Christians’ rejection of him, Koh is eager to tell the truth, “not because I wanted to clear myself but because I couldn’t take any more of the idiotic notion of meek suffering and false pride of these North Korean Christians, who call me a coward, a renegade, and what not. They are sick, Captain, they are still paralysed by the spiritual disease they caught from submitting obediently to persecution”\textsuperscript{49}.

Koh rejects the affirmation of Job; his comments reveal him to be unsympathetic to Christian ideals, despite being a chaplain. Tellingly, he is the only character to refer to “North Korean Christians,” thus blurring their state and religious affiliations. Koh is torn between the practical world and the spiritual world. Throughout the novel, he wavers between being spiritually inspired by Mr. Shin and his desire to do something of practical benefit in the army and he survives because he does not believe in either path enough to fight for it. When the Chinese counter-attack and threaten to retake the city, Koh leaves the army to rejoin the church, but his resolve to stay with his congregation melts away and he reappears at the end as a minister in the southern city of Pusan. Koh lives by no principle; he merely adapts to whatever happens and though this flexibility allows him to survive it does satisfy Lee’s incessant quest for the truth and a way to live when surrounded by horror.

\textbf{Captain Lee:}

The other four major characters have thus shown Captain Lee four ways of living he rejects. What, then, does Lee want? At this point, it is fair to ask how much we know

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 45.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 54.
for certain about the central but unseen massacre. We cannot trust Shin’s account, for we know he is willing to lie for the greater good. Major Jung’s account of the murder is contradictory, with the first version extracted during torture and the second spat out as a type of revenge. Did Shin really spit in his face? This seems out of character and there is no corroborating evidence. It turns out that we can say little we didn’t already know at the beginning – twelve ministers were murdered in unclear circumstances and some tried to betray the others, although not Mr. Shin or Mr. Park, who refused for motives that cannot be definitely ascertained. Beyond these facts, which may be considered true as they are independently corroborated, we can say nothing for certain. Given that state of affairs, why not adopt a position like Park’s and simply accept that which has the most beneficial consequences? In a passionate speech, his longest of the novel, Lee explains what drives him:

You say you are trying to give them what they want, what they need. But why deceive them? Why deceive the people who have been cheated countless times already? Why add more lies to their miserable lives? You say you give them what they want? How do you know that a pack of lies is what they want? They need truth. It may be painful but truth is what they need and what you must give them. You say you do all this for them, for their happiness. But no! You do it because you want your propaganda. You do it because you want to save your church from being scandalized. You do it because you want to deceive the people into believing that everything is all right, that a god in heaven takes good care of them, that a state sincerely worries about their lot, and all this in the name of the people.50

Lee’s question echoes that of Albert Camus: is there a way we can acknowledge our limited understanding of a meaningless world and still make progress?

Lee’s insistence that truth be told expresses a profound need to believe we can acknowledge the human condition without taking the road followed by Mr. Hann – insanity and suicide. His hopes thus rest with Shin, who went through the same horrifying experiences but has retained his sanity and sense of purpose. Lee’s first bitter disappointment comes when Shin lies to the people; he expects nothing better from Chang and Koh, but from Shin he had hoped for more, a way of living with the Absurd. Lee angrily approaches Shin and asks the same question he asked on their first meeting: “Mr. Shin, is your god truly aware of their sufferings?”51 The repetition of this question, after so much has been revealed, emphasises that nothing has been learned or achieved;

50 Ibid., 151.
51 Ibid., 143.
everyone is back where they started with nothing to show for all that has been suffered, not even the truth.

However, after the memorial service, when Chang, Park, and Koh exit the stage, the narrative focuses on the terrible truth Shin desperately wishes Lee to discover but which he cannot reveal. When the two men finally confront each other, Lee explodes and denounces the Christian god:

Your twelve ministers – they were butchered for no good reason. They didn’t die for the glory of your god. They were murdered by men and your god couldn’t care less. Tell me, then, why glorify your god! Why glorify him while men are murdered by men… why deceive your people, when our sufferings here and now have no justice to seek for beyond this life?52

Lee is astonished, however, to discover that Shin agrees with him. Shin’s terrible secret is that he does not believe in God. “All my life I have searched for God, Captain… but I found only man with all his sufferings… and death, inexorable death”53. Such knowledge exacts a high price, however. Twice he revealed his doubts to disastrous effect. He told his “unhappy wife, my terrified wife – she could not bear the thought, she was not strong enough to live with my terrible truth”54. The second time was when he confessed the same truth to Mr. Hann, and the despair that fell upon that young man’s soul tore his sanity to shreds. Shin’s answer is thus similar to Park’s – religion is necessary to shield the weak. The strong, like Shin and Lee, must bear the cross of truth alone. He must lie, for “men cannot endure their sufferings without hope, without the promise of justice, if not here and now – and there is none – then somewhere else, in heaven”55. Lee does not object to the palpable humanity in Shin’s vision, but he continues to ask how one can live without illusions.

His answer shows the influence of Camus – a return to humanism, an insistence that people can recognise their common need to create meaning in an Absurd universe. Any answer must acknowledge that the universe is alien and unknowable, but this is not a cause for despair. “The feeling of the absurdity of the universe is possible only if we as human beings possess some standard or need which contradicts what we find in the universe. The experience of an absurd universe does not mean the total absurdity of human existence… here in the heart of the absurdist experiment Camus founds the position that there is a human nature”56. The universe remains inscrutable and

52 Ibid., 184.
53 Ibid., 184.
54 Ibid., 191.
55 Ibid., 197.
56 Hanna, Thought and Art, 68.
indifferent, but humans are a part of the universe, too, a part we can understand and that can have meaning. In his “Letter to a German Friend”, Camus states, “I continue to believe that this world has no supernatural meaning... but I know that something in the world has meaning – man – because he is the only being who demands truth for himself. This world at least contains the truth of man, and our task is to justify him in the face of destiny itself”\(^{57}\). Camus’ concept is best summed up in his image Sisyphus smiling even though he must perpetually push the boulder uphill. Here, in Camus’ rejection of the panaceas of religion and the assertion of a common dignity in the face of the Absurd, Kim found the primary inspiration for a solution to han.

The humanistic creed is expressed in Shin’s final words to Lee – “Love man, Captain! Help him! Bear your cross with courage, courage to fight despair, to love man, to have pity on mortal man”\(^{58}\) – and the example of a minor character, Major Minn, an army doctor who refuses to abandon his dying patients during the retreat. Minn needs no religious or national illusions but acts out of recognition of a common humanity. The message is hammered home by the manner in which Chang and Park meet their deaths. Chang dies during a raid when he volunteers to remain behind and cover those evacuating. Park dies executing a heroic rearguard action that ensures the safety of his men. Chang, Park, and Shin die not for national or religious ideals but for other people. In this insistence that life is worth saving, that one can find a reason for living by recognising a common need to create meaning in a hostile universe, Lee finds the same hope in the face of the Absurd that Camus found. In the novel’s final image, Lee turns his back on the mass being said by Chaplain Koh, symbolically rejecting the visions of Church and State. “How long, I wondered, how long will the people listen to the voices whispering to them, one from within history, the other from far beyond history, each promising them salvation and justice, each asking them to pledge themselves to its promise?”\(^{59}\) There is a third path once we understand that everyone shares the same struggle, one we cannot hope to win but we may still smile when confronted with the Sisyphean task. “There a group of refugees, gathered under the starry dome of the night sky, were humming in unison a song of homage to their homeland. And with a wondrous lightness of heart hitherto unknown to me, I joined them”\(^{60}\).

**Conclusion:**

*The Martyred* is an important novel in world literature not just because of its superb narrative and limpid prose but because it brings major strands of Western philosophy into contact with the Korean spirit of han, testing them to see what answers politics, religion, and philosophy can offer when confronted by a cruelly indifferent


\(^{58}\) Kim, *The Martyred*, 208.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 228.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 228.
world. In its dramatization of the difficulty of establishing accurate knowledge of a past event it prefigures many ideas in postmodernist historiography, but more importantly, in connecting han with French existentialism, with the Book of Job, with the stoicism of Marcus Aurelius’ Meditations (which we see Lee reading in the final chapter), Kim constructed a sense of unity out of diversity and showed how people from different times and cultures may yet face the same dilemmas. The novel’s final espousal of a ‘strange kind of love’ demonstrates the power of literature and art to build these human connections, to write songs that sings to unnamed others. Albert Camus didn’t have Korea in mind when he wrote The Myth of Sisyphus and The Plague, yet his writings helped save Richard E. Kim from the horrors he had lived through; perhaps The Martyred has similarly helped others whose names have yet to be written into history. From such unlikely encounters does the idea of ‘the human’ grow.

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The *Postcolonial* Humanism of Samuel Johnson

Prakash Kona

Abstract

The paper examines the relationship between strains of English Humanism and Postcolonialism, two seemingly unrelated discourses caught in an unlikely marriage, in the life and work of Dr. Samuel Johnson. Johnson’s anti-colonialism is rooted in his ‘modernity’ which can be observed in the statement, “Human experience, which is constantly contradicting theory, is the great test of truth.”¹ That which is ‘modern’ is always already present in “human experience;” it is the voice of “experience” that will prevent theory from turning into a stagnant body of rhetorical statements. The experience of oppression falls in this category because it is constantly contradicting mainstream assumptions about reality. This paper takes into consideration Johnson’s statements made on more than one occasion on what he felt about slavery and colonialism. Most importantly the context in which Johnson made these statements must be borne in mind especially when you note that Boswell his friend and biographer who admired Johnson had serious disagreements with him. While Shakespeare and Aphra Behn anticipate some of the anti-colonial arguments that Johnson makes, in the case of the latter what is evident is a clear articulation of a politics of resistance. What Johnson takes from the pool of English Humanism is a certain attitude that recognizes the humanity of the dispossessed and their right to a decent existence. If Gandhi and Malcolm X were to make similar arguments against colonialism in the 20th century there is no doubt that Johnson through his *anti-colonial* rendering of humanism contributed in his inimitable manner to a strain in the postcolonial argument.

Key Words: Humanism, Postcolonialism, Politics of Resistance, The Bible, Englishness, Renaissance

The Postcolonial Humanism of Samuel Johnson

Prakash Kona

The superior man tolerates no imprecision in his speech.²
Confucius (551 BCE - 459 BCE)

He was so impressed with the suffering around him that he would take nothing for himself.³
The Last Days with John Reed: A Letter from Louise Bryant (1920)

I. Introduction: Anti-colonial or Postcolonial

Does it mean the same thing to regard Samuel Johnson as anti-colonial instead of using the term postcolonial! Having lived at a point in time when English colonialism spread out into the known and the unknown world, from a strictly historical perspective, Johnson could only be considered anti-colonial and not postcolonial. If anti-colonial politics is the politics of resistance, postcolonial politics is the politics of perpetual resistance to colonial structures that continue to don new guises in the transitional worlds of the ex-colonies. Anti-colonial politics is limited to the historical phase of colonialism, while postcolonial politics that continues to the present and moves into the uncertain future cannot be imagined without the anti-colonial element in it. Johnson says, for instance: “Political institutions are formed upon the consideration of what will frequently tend to the good of the whole, although now and then exceptions may occur. Thus it is better in general that a nation should have a supreme legislative power, although it may at times be abused. And then, Sir, there is this consideration, that if the abuse be numerous, Nature will rise up, and claiming her original rights, overturn a corrupt political system.”⁴ Boswell cannot help but be impressed when Johnson utters these lines and notes: “I mark this animated sentence with peculiar pleasure, as a noble instance of that truly dignified spirit of freedom which ever glowed in his heart… This generous sentiment, which he uttered with great fervour, struck me

³ The Last Days with John Reed: A Letter from Louise Bryant (1920), http://www.marxists.org/archive/bryant/works/1920/john-reed.htm
⁴ Boswell, 225.
exceedingly, and stirred my blood to that pitch of fancied resistance."\(^5\) Johnson’s politics are without doubt not the same as those of Boswell. They are on different platforms when it comes to significant political opinions. Boswell is not indifferent either to the fact that Johnson’s politics are that of a liberator. Owing to his “submission both to temporal and spiritual authority,” Freud claims that “Dostoevsky threw away the chance of becoming a teacher and liberator of humanity and made himself one with their gaolers. The future of human civilization will have little to thank him for.”\(^6\) While Johnson epitomizes Augustanism - “the classic balancing mean between extremes,”\(^7\) he is not entirely alien to the “neurosis” that Freud saw in Dostoevsky. As Philip Davis notes: “One of the most intelligent men ever to commit himself to the sanity of sheer common sense, all his life Johnson had an irrational and uncommon fear of madness.”\(^8\) What however makes Johnson’s politics that of a teacher and a liberator, perhaps more than Dostoevsky, is that he is neither a blind worshipper of authority-figures nor a narrow nationalist; and religion comes to him not “instinctively” but as Pierce Jr. points out “Johnson had a much more difficult time trying to sustain his faith than has been generally acknowledged. Only after we have grasped the tensions inherent in his religious thought and have witnessed the struggle he endured to sustain his faith can we realize the degree to which his character—and indeed all that he undertook—was fired in the crucible of faith.”\(^9\) When Johnson told Boswell “Everything which Hume has advanced against Christianity had passed through my mind long before he wrote,”\(^10\) it was to make the point that his faith came following a period of careful reasoning and not by habit. Johnson the liberator is rooted in the reality of emotional and spiritual growth along with an uncanny ability to theorize experience.

Suvir Kaul in his discussion of Johnson’s *Rasselas* from an Orientalist perspective finds that a “contradictory complexity of characterization and conversation both marks Johnson’s contribution to eighteenth-century vocabularies of anti-imperialism and suggests the conceptual boundaries of his Christian humanism.”\(^11\) The contradictions in Johnson are at the existential level and as much to do with his personality as much as with the age in which he lived. However, if there is one thing that can be safely asserted it is that Johnson does not have any problems in identifying himself with the weak and the powerless which he does so spontaneously. Jeffrey Myers substantiates the point in *Samuel Johnson: The Struggle*: “The miserable, the victimized and the oppressed always

\(^5\) Ibid, 225.  
\(^8\) Ibid, 6.  
\(^10\) Boswell, 234.  
had a claim on his compassion. His social ideas were progressive and humane. He strongly opposed vivisection and foxhunting, debtors’ prisons, Negro slavery and the exploitation of native people from India to America. He gave generously to beggars and homeless children, rescued prostitutes, secured clothing for French prisoners of war and defended criminals who had been condemned to hang.”

To theoretically discover “Oriental” elements in a corner of Johnson’s works uttered by characters that may not be thinking in the same ways as their creator, says nothing about the peculiar life and thoughts of Johnson who made conscious choices that reflect a person dedicated to the moral and political liberation of humanity. It is in a broad sense that the “postcolonial” Johnson is humanity’s liberator; his politics are practical and this-worldly both in terms of means and the ends they seek to achieve; they’ve little to do with subscribing to the dominant worldviews of the powerful. Going by Suvir Kaul’s argument everything ever written in a colonial time-frame naturally acquires an ‘oriental’ color to it. Orientalism ends up becoming an ontological fact of colonialism that can be uniformly applied to anybody and everybody – the slave-owners that Johnson abhorred and Johnson himself - and not an analytical reading tool meant to discover through a close reading of the text an ideological base that served as a prop to colonialism.

In Johnson’s anti-colonialism “Nature will rise up” in order to claim “her original rights” in order to “overturn a corrupt political system.” Only a person with a deep knowledge of revolutions and resistance movements could make this sharp observation that no individual or group would tolerate oppression forever. The fact that Johnson attributes such resistance to the “nature” of the human person and not to God or other metaphysical source, says everything about Johnson’s insight into the material dimension of social and political economies. Societies like individuals are guided by notions of interest and self-preservation – hence the appeal to “nature” to make the difference. When the barber in The Great Dictator confidently states that “dictators die; and the power they took from the people will return to the people and so long as men die, liberty will never perish,” he is echoing a thought from Johnson’s outlook. I placed the anti-colonial imagination of Johnson within a “postcolonial” argument to make the point that it is in the nature of the colonized to rise up and claim their “original rights.” The context to this argument is of course humanism from an English perspective and that is the question that needs to be examined in order to appreciate what I call Johnson’s “postcoloniality,” which is a reference to some of the arguments made by postcolonial writers to historicize the resistance that happened under colonialism.

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II. The question of humanism

Humanism is a question for more reasons than one: the most important being an attempt to locate its “origins”. To determine the location of a set of ideas and practices that constitute a discourse is an exercise in metaphysics of a futile kind. It is hard to say with confidence that the power of humanism does not permeate social networking sites of 21st century especially when it comes to discussions related to humanity or the human being – as in what makes one human as much as what makes for a human being or if there is a humanity outside political and cultural categories or the idea of an universal humanity. There is no escaping the legacy of humanism even if it means a series of endless questions that at best offer clues without giving a final solution to the enigma of what it means to be a humanist. Kate Soper in Humanism and Anti-humanism writes: “Indeed, the main question to which they tend – who (if anyone) makes history? - can be reformulated: in what sense, if any, is it valid for persons to conceive of themselves as conscious political agents whose decisions and actions have decisive effect on the course of history?” Humanism’s given premise rests on the validity of the human person as a political agent with a “decisive effect on the course of history.”

Humanism however is as plural as the ideas that constitute it and there are as many discourses of humanism as there are arguments that counter the claims that each of these discourses makes for itself.

The paradox of humanism is that though it does not ask questions about itself, it cannot go beyond the realm of being a question. The questions that humanism asks are within a domain of “implicit, ontological and epistemological presuppositions,” and subject to those presuppositions. Yoran discusses in detail the “attitude” surrounding humanism as a discourse with regard to “the understanding and the representation of human reality.”

Humanist discourse can, however, be defined as a set of distinct, though usually implicit, ontological and epistemological presuppositions, from which emerged a characteristic attitude regarding the understanding and the representation of human reality...Humanist discourse consequently denied that the meaning of human reality—human history, social institutions, political events—was contingent upon its subordination to a transcendent realm. Instead the humanists presupposed that the human world was a world made by men...Humanism rejected the assumption

14 Kate Soper, Humanism and Anti-humanism (London: Hutchinson, 1986), 146.
16 Ibid, 3.
that the understanding of human reality could be reduced to a set of universal categories arrived at by abstract reasoning.\textsuperscript{17}

Behind the presupposition that humanism rejects the “transcendent realm” in favor of a “world made by men” is the “metaphysical assumption” that privileges an abstract notion of man and mankind. This privileging of “men” marches straight into the heart of the twentieth century and when Faulkner says in his Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, “I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail,”\textsuperscript{18} he is echoing one of the assumptions on which humanism is constructed. When George Bush Jr. ends his “Operation Iraqi Freedom Address to the Nation” with the line “We will bring freedom to others and we will prevail,”\textsuperscript{19} he is appealing to a notion of humanism. The “man” who will prevail in Faulkner and the “we” who will prevail in the speech of George Bush Jr., are at one level two strikingly similar entities. Both function as abstractions with “implicit, ontological and epistemological presuppositions.” The Biblical dimension of “prevail” is something that both Faulkner and George Bush Jr., are only too well aware of especially the line from Isaiah: “The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies” (King James Version: Isaiah 42: 13). The “humanism” of George Bush Jr. which is deeply colonial in character is an anti-relativist, essential way of looking at the world and its best expression is the American foreign policy in the non-western world. This embodiment of a virulent form of humanism can be seen in “Bush’s religious language” which “reinforces the basic moral convictions of many evangelicals, for whom the root of all evil is moral relativism, the belief that there is no absolute good or evil. When in the wake of 9/11 Bush spoke of the “axis of evil,” it resonated among evangelicals beyond its immediate application to matters of foreign policy.”\textsuperscript{20} On a different level, the “man” who will prevail in Faulkner is not the same “we” that George Bush Jr. is talking about. The “we” in Bush’s speech is an absolute we standing for the corporate-owning classes whose interests are intertwined with that of the Bush family. Yet both of them are humanisms in an umbrella-like fashion whose statements are directed outward and not towards the framework which makes these questions possible. Hence, humanism persists in being a question. The question of humanism brings out the historical relationship between humanism as an ideological term and the assumptions it makes about reality. A humanism that does not exist within the purview of the question is a metaphysical

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, 3-4.
humanism with both philosophy and life moving at the level of generalities and never descending into particulars.

When Dr. Johnson observes that “Human experience, which is constantly contradicting theory, is the great test of truth,”\(^{21}\) it is because he is aware that humanism cannot transcend the discourse of a question. The politics of experience will continue to challenge any assumption made about reality in a definitive, defining and determining sense. Johnson’s humanism is a question because it consciously rejects the universal “man” or the “we” that will prevail. Universal humanism is theory that refuses to be contradicted. Johnson in his emphasis on part particularity is not irreligious either; his piety is rooted in his humanist vision of the world and he acknowledges the presence of a “transcendent realm” behind “human reality.” Upon the completion of the dictionary there is a telling instance between Johnson and the messenger who took the sheets to Andrew Millar, in charge of the publication of the Dictionary. “When the messenger who carried the last sheet to Millar returned, Johnson asked him, ‘Well, what did he say?’ ‘Sir, (answered the messenger) he said, thank GOD I have done with him.’ ‘I am glad (replied Johnson, with a smile) that he thanks GOD for anything.’”\(^{22}\) Johnson deliberately overlooks the irony in Millar thanking God for having done with him. In another equally telling instance, Johnson’s piety shows when he says of Christopher Smart, the poet who went mad and would stop to pray on the streets: “it is greater madness not to pray at all, than to pray as Smart did.”\(^{23}\) A little later, while defending the notion that “The morality of an action depends on the motive from which we act,” Johnson says, “religious exercises, if not performed with an intention to please GOD, avail us nothing.”\(^{24}\)

The paradox in Johnson’s humanism is that despite he being deeply religious it is social in character because it relies on human experience more than theory. The “transcendent realm” is what human beings aspire to as a universal goal. That a city of God will not come into being any time soon Johnson’s rational mind is aware of, though that is the only goal ultimately worth aspiring for. Such a thought however cannot be a basis to disturb the order that humanity created through years of struggle and evolution. A society cannot be forced to submit to a “transcendent realm” owing to whims and fancies of one or few believers. The rational order cannot be pushed to conform to an idea. People are social before they’re other things and one must respect the rational achievements made possible through a liberal order that gives men and women rights with an understanding of responsibilities. Johnson’s response to the six Methodist students expelled from Oxford for “publicly praying and exhorting” is a defense of such an order:

\(^{21}\) Boswell, 238.
\(^{22}\) Ibid, 157.
\(^{23}\) Ibid, 211.
\(^{24}\) Ibid, 211.
Johnson. 'Sir, that expulsion was extremely just and proper. What have they to do at an University who are not willing to be taught, but will presume to teach? Where is religion to be learnt but at an University? Sir, they were examined, and found to be mighty ignorant fellows.' Boswell. 'But, was it not hard, Sir, to expel them, for I am told they were good beings?' Johnson. 'Sir, I believe they might be good beings; but they were not fit to be in the University of Oxford. A cow is a very good animal in the field; but we turn her out of a garden.'

Johnson knows that social institutions are not meant to be sacrificed at the altar of private beliefs. They’re collective achievements with an all-inclusive character that ought to be respected and preserved for its own sake. Like the “cow” in the example Johnson gives, something can be good in a certain space but that “goodness” cannot be treated as universal. Religion occupies the institutional space that society has given it and it is not among the rights of the religious to transgress the boundaries that society has placed on them.

For Johnson it is not “man” who will prevail but the social order whose goals are larger than that of the individual. His faith is not an assertion of his individuality. At the end of his life, the existential humanist in Johnson writes: “I, SAMUEL JOHNSON, being in full possession of my faculties, but fearing this night may put an end to my life, do ordain this my last Will and Testament. I bequeath to GOD, a soul polluted with many sins, but I hope purified by JESUS CHRIST.”

Johnson does not have the kinds of spiritual arguments with himself that we see in Kierkegaard leading to despair and faith acting as an antidote to the despair; in fact his worldview is a fairly resolved one. Johnson is neither Saint Augustine nor Wittgenstein plagued by a need for certainty and driven by an inner compulsion to analyze the infinite nuances of faith before he could actually believe. Johnson’s faith is practical and personal at many levels. In his fear of death and what is to come hereafter he is at his most human. For Johnson, the question of humanism would include faith as well. It’s a faith that demands being translated into action at many levels. In Being and Nothingness Sartre makes a distinction between “pure knowledge” and “engaged knowledge.”

A pure knowledge in fact would be a knowledge without a point of view; therefore a knowledge of the world but on principle located outside the world. But this makes no sense; the knowing being would be only knowledge since he would be defined by his object and since his object would disappear in the total indistinction of reciprocal relations. Thus

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25 Ibid, 359-360
26 Ibid, 989.
knowledge can be only an engaged upsurge in a determined point of view which one is.  

The argument that Sartre makes against “pure knowledge” not having a point of view is an argument that can be made against a notion of pure faith. Faith as a form of knowledge – to believe is to know in a way that one could not know when one does not believe – cannot exist in a pure state. It can only exist in an “engaged” state. Johnson’s humanism engages with the world and his faith is a serious component of the humanism that makes such an engagement possible. Yoran says that humanism rejects the view that “human reality could be reduced to a set of universal categories arrived at by abstract reasoning” and instead views human beings as “principally the producers and interpreters of meanings.” Johnsonian hermeneutics is illustrative in character constantly relying upon a possible situation to make a point. When Johnson refutes “Bishop Berkeley’s ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter, and that everything in the universe is merely ideal” by “striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it,” thus proving that objects are not mere ideas, it is the same logic he applies to ethical and political issues. An idea has to be concretely demonstrated through example taken from life before it is accepted. “Pure knowledge” is indeed knowledge without a point of view because a point of view comes from experience or an engagement with life and not from “abstract reasoning.”

The engaged knowledge of Johnson rejects “universal categories” while at the same time it does not view individuals as “producers and interpreters of meanings” outside the cultural milieu they are born into. There is nothing that Johnson would not find more unreasonable than the argument Richard Dawkins makes in The Selfish Gene where he writes: “Our genes may instruct us to be selfish, but we are not necessarily compelled to obey them all our lives.” A statement such as this one essentially says nothing because it is a purely theoretical statement and thus is an example of “pure knowledge.” Dawkins defensively asserts, “I am not advocating a morality based on evolution. I am saying how things have evolved. I am not saying how we humans morally ought to behave. I stress this, because I know I am in danger of being misunderstood by those people, all too numerous, who cannot distinguish a statement of belief in what is the case from an advocacy of what ought to be the case.” In claiming that it is not trying to prove anything the statement is trying to establish its validity as an argument. How could you be descriptive without being interpretive or

28 Ibid, 308.
29 Yoran, 4.
30 Yoran, 4.
31 Boswell, 248.
32 Ibid, 248.
34 Ibid, 56-57.
how can you speak of “what is the case” without a reference to “what ought to be the case” is something Dawkins cannot satisfactorily answer! A history of ideas is meaningless if there is no space for moral reflection. Moral reflections are built into a discussion of ideas. Johnson’s engagement with knowledge and the world is a moral and a philosophical one driven by piety. Unless we understand the latter it would be impossible to put Johnson the literary artist and moral philosopher in perspective.

Yet it is from the well-spring of humanism that Johnson draws his moral philosophy articulated through his experience of life. Johnson’s contribution as a humanist is that he keeps the “question” alive; the question that refuses to reduce human experience to a bunch of theories; the question that refuses to make conclusive statements on any subject; the question that delves into the area of motives and does not limit itself to descriptions; the question that challenges the parameters on which humanism is constructed; the question within which are seeds of an anti-humanist discourse; the question that extends the definition of “human reality” outside its historical colonial present towards a postcolonial world of others, the others who constitute humanity but whose humanness is yet to be incorporated into humanism – therefore, the question makes it indispensable to acknowledge the presence of speaking others whose personal worlds are political and whose worldviews are about resisting any definition that unjustly excludes them or reduces their humanity to a set of assumptions.

III. The humanism in postcoloniality

Historians do not invent history: a historian invents a label for a set of events carefully chosen among many others. In the act of inventing a label, the historian situates the events in specific frameworks along with possible causes and probable consequences. Humanism is one such label that attributes definite features to a particular age, some of which could be uncovered in the label itself. The invention of humanism is in no way different in how we use the terms “modern” or “postmodern” to refer to time-periods in the 20th century. There is always a wide range of disagreement when it comes to the use of these terms. What can cut across multiple definitions of humanism is the centrality of “man” as a source of interest and Hamlet is parodying the Renaissance obsession with man when he says “And yet, to me, / what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not / me: no, nor woman neither.”


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perhaps the members of non-European cultures – who are excluded by the favoured model?”

The sudden interest in man or the world of men is a defining trait of Western humanism. The attempt to turn the gaze lost in the interstellar spaces of the universe towards man has an almost narcissistic overtone to it. Da Vinci in the *Notebooks* makes this curious observation connecting the body of a man with the body of the earth. This attempt to bring together “human” and “nature” is a typically Renaissance thing to do.

Man has been called by the ancients a lesser world and indeed the term is well applied. Seeing that if a man is composed of earth, water, air, and fire, this body of earth is similar. While man has within himself bones as a stay and framework for the flesh, the world has stones which are the supports of earth. While man has within him a pool of blood wherein the lungs as he breathes expand and contract, so the body of the earth has its ocean, which also rises and falls every six hours with the breathing of the world; as from the said pool of blood proceed the veins which spread their branches through the human body, so the ocean fills the body of the earth with an infinite number of veins of water. . . . In this body of the earth is lacking, however, the nerves, and these are absent because nerves are made for the purpose of movement; and as the world is perpetually stable, and no movement takes place here, nerves are not necessary. But in all other things man and the earth are very much alike.

While the body of “man” is central to humanism, Christianity battles paganism on the Renaissance landscape for the soul (read body) of the man it longs to possess. While defining secular humanism as “the rejection of religious belief,” Richard Norman in *On Humanism* bases his argument on the version of humanism that is about the “assertion of human dignity and the celebration of what is finest in human thought and creativity.” Norman further adds: “Secular humanism is the version of humanism I shall state and defend in this book – humanism as an alternative to religious belief.”

Interestingly it is in Christian humanism that we locate traces of “postcoloniality” and not in Secular humanism. The philosopher David Hume who is a contemporary of Johnson, though in principle opposed to slavery actually subscribed to the “natural inferiority” of the Negro race in comparison to the Whites. Says Hume in the essay “Of National Characters”: “You may obtain anything of the NEGROES by offering them strong drink; and may easily prevail with them to sell, not only their children, but their

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39 Ibid, 14.
40 Ibid, 14.
wives and mistresses, for a cask of brandy.”41 The deeply colonial and racist intent of the statement can hardly be ignored.

However as Tony Davies makes the point rather well in Humanism it’s almost impossible to arrive at a definition of humanism that would comprehensively include every school of thought associated with the label.

The seven distinct sub-definitions of humanism rather conservatively offered by the Oxford English Dictionary in truth represent only a fraction of the senses and contexts in which the word has been used, and a drastic simplification of those. It is one of those words, like ‘realism’ or ‘socialism’, whose range of possible uses runs from the pedantically exact to the cosmically vague. Like them, too, it carries, even in the most neutrally descriptive contexts, powerful connotations, positive or negative, of ideological allegiance, its very imprecision making it all the more serviceable as a shibboleth of approval or deprecation.42

The debate on Secular versus Christian humanism does not end with the impossibility of arriving at a comprehensive definition of humanism that would include both strands of thought. Aphra Behn in her novel Oroonoko makes the distinction between Secular humanism and the religious hypocrisy of believers. At a point in the story when the main character promises to “engage his honor to behave himself in all friendly order and manner”43 the captain of the ship doubts Oroonoko’s word as he “could not resolve to trust a heathen, he said, upon his parole, a man that had no sense or notion of the God that he worshiped.”44 Oroonoko in turn protests against such a mistrust to make the classic secular humanist argument:

Let him know, I swear by my honor; which to violate would not only render me contemptible and despised by all brave and honest men, and so give myself perpetual pain, but it would be eternally offending and displeasing all mankind; harming, betraying, circumventing, and outraging all men. But punishments hereafter are suffered by one's self; and the world takes no cognizance whether this God have revenged 'em, or not, 'tis done so secretly, and deferred so long: while the man of no honor suffers every moment the scorn and contempt of the honester world, and dies every day ignominiously in his fame, which is more valuable than life. I speak not this to move belief, but to show you how

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43 Aphra Behn, Oroonoko: or, the Royal Slave. eBooks@Adelaide. 2010, http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/b/behn/aphra/b42o/
44 Ibid.
you mistake, when you imagine that he who will violate his honor will keep his word with his gods.\textsuperscript{45}

Whether God will punish the man in the next life is less important to doing a dishonorable thing for Oroonoko. Therefore to keep one’s honor is also to keep one’s word with the gods. The two things are inseparable even for the sake of argument. The fact implicitly emphasized is that Oroonoko is much more of a believer despite being a heathen because he honors his word while the so-called believer does not. While secular humanism is no doubt the author’s intent in the case of Oroonoko’s declaration of his own humanity, it is not completely atheistic in character. It is a secular humanist argument without being unchristian. Bertrand Russell in his \textit{Autobiography} offers a similar instance of how he was misunderstood on the use of the phrase “Christian love:”

I got into trouble with a passage at the tail end of my last Columbia lecture. In this passage, I said that what the world needs is ‘love, Christian love, or compassion’…when I spoke of \textit{Christian} love, I put in the adjective ‘Christian’ to distinguish it from sexual love, and I should certainly have supposed that the context made this completely clear…It seems to me totally inexplicable that anybody should think the above words a description of Christianity, especially in view, as some Christians will remember, of how very rarely Christians have shown Christian love.\textsuperscript{46}

The secular humanist element in Russell’s use of “Christian love” is fairly obvious. In a different context, no other revolutionary in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century rooted himself more deeply in Christian humanism while using it as an ideological basis to challenge colonialism than Gandhi. The conversation in the movie \textit{Gandhi} when the Mahatma wishes to protest against being thrown out of a train makes the point quite well: To the statement: “the vast majority of Indians, mostly Hindus, like yourself were brought here to work mines and harvest crops. Most Europeans don't want them doing anything else,” Gandhi responds: “\textit{But that is very unchristian.}”\textsuperscript{47} [My italics] And to the line, “Mr. Gandhi, in this country Indians are not allowed to walk along the pavement with a Christian,” Gandhi once again responds with conviction: “Well, then it must be fought. We are children of God like everyone else. Our position is -- We are members of the Empire. And we come from an ancient civilization. Why should we not walk on the pavements like other men?”\textsuperscript{48} At the end of the day Gandhi takes recourse to Christian humanism and not to Secular humanism though in another argument he rejects the idea

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Bertrand Russell, \textit{Autobiography} (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 501.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
of himself ever converting to Christianity for reasons that might appeal to both Oroonoko and Bertrand Russell: “But today I rebel against orthodox Christianity, as I am convinced that it has distorted the message of Jesus. He was an Asiatic whose message was delivered through many media and when it had the backing of a Roman emperor, it became an imperialist faith as it remains to this day. Of course, there are noble but rare exceptions, but the general trend is as I have indicated.”  

Jesus was an “Asiatic” and not a “European” as the anti-colonial imagination of Gandhi rightly perceived. The Christians of Europe who rarely “have shown Christian love” were the representatives of the “imperialist faith as it remains today.” In Dostoevsky’s novel The Brothers Karamazov the Grand Inquisitor makes a similar point when he tells Jesus: “Had you accepted the world and Caesar's purple, you would have founded a universal kingdom and granted universal peace. For who shall possess mankind if not those who possess their conscience and give them their bread? And so we took Caesar's sword, and in taking it, of course, we rejected you and followed him.” In taking “Caesar’s sword” Christianity from the religion of an “Asiatic” ended up becoming an “imperialist faith” on the European landscape.

That there are elements in Christian humanism that could serve the purpose of anti-colonialism Gandhi understood only too well. Left with a book to read on a train journey by a friend, this is what Gandhi says about John Ruskin’s Unto this Last: “The book was impossible to lay aside, once I had begun it. It gripped me. Johannesburg to Durban was a twenty-four hours' journey. The train reached there in the evening. I could not get any sleep that night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book.” He goes on then to summarize the essence of “postcolonial humanism”:

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.

Ruskin opines in Unto this Last: “It being the privilege of the fishes, as it is of rats and wolves, to live by the laws of demand and supply; but the distinction of humanity, to live by those of right.” Even the Secular humanism that Richard Norman claims he

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49 Krishna Kripalani (ed), All Men are Brothers: Life and Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi as told in his own words (Paris: UNESCO, 1969), 46.
52 Ibid.
53 John Ruskin, Unto this last: four essays on the first principles of political economy,
would defend in his book as an alternative to “religious belief” is religious in character because it does not go beyond the conceptual boundaries of a political discourse functioning in an everyday context rather than a transcendent realm. Gandhi changed his life reading Ruskin’s book though the argument Ruskin makes is a broadly secular one. The Christian sense of equality that one person is no different from another is the rationale behind Gandhi’s reading of Ruskin’s text. To the translation of the Bible in the Renaissance that we owe a certain version of humanism in the English context is an argument central to discovering the postcolonial element in humanism. In one of his interviews with David Barsamian, the Pakistani writer and journalist Eqbal Ahmad (1933/34 – 1999) makes note of a simple incident related to learning English when he spoke to Mahatma Gandhi as a 13-year old boy:

My brothers had said to me as I was going: Since you are going with Gandhiji, might as well ask him to teach you to write English. They said Gandhiji writes superb English, and later on I would realise they were absolutely right. He wrote superbly. So I said: Gandhiji, my brothers have told me that you write superb English. Oh, that’s very kind of those boys. So I said: They have told me to learn from you the principle of learning good English. Oh, he said, my boy, there is only one principle. Read the Bible over and over again, the King James Version. I always think of that, because if you read his writings and speeches, there is a biblical quality to his English prose, very typical. Simple, short sentences, simple narrative, homilies, very interesting.34 [My italics]

There is a defining subtext to Gandhi’s advice to the young Eqbal Ahmad. Learning a language is also about living a life for Gandhi. In connecting how to write good English with reading the Bible, Gandhi makes the point of achieving two aims: one is the ability to influence others in a religious way and another is being religiously ethical oneself. The idea of integrating the Bible with humanism is not something Gandhi intuited but rather goes back to the English Renaissance. However Gandhi was able to use Christian humanism effectively to make his principal anti-colonial argument: that it is “unchristian” for the British to remain in India as colonial masters.

34 David Barsamian, Confronting Empire: interviews with Eqbal Ahmad (Massachusetts: South End Press, 2000), 118.
IV. The Bible and the English Renaissance Humanism

The English Renaissance Humanism like any historical time-period does not have a pin-point location. While the Renaissance enters the vocabulary of historians as the age of the rebirth of the “classical,” notions of humanism or the human person is an open field for different nations to assert their uniqueness to suit the interests of their language, literature and polity. Since there are as many renaissances as there are nations it is important to pinpoint what is special to the English Renaissance that makes it different from the Italian, French or other versions. It is a discourse of “Englishness” against the background of humanism that defines the Renaissance as much as if not more than the renaissance defining the English.

Sir Thomas More or Saint Thomas More (1478 – 1535) – this strange combination of sainthood and knighthood – through his classic work Utopia gives us an impression of the spirit of the English Renaissance Humanism. The utopia far from merely being an ideal place is a humanist point of view that is deeply critical of the existing society of the Renaissance. Through the use of fiction More creates a mirror for a deeply flawed world to recognize where it actually stood in terms of the lives of the poor and the downtrodden:

There are dreadful punishments enacted against thieves, but it were much better to make such good provisions by which every man might be put in a method how to live, and so be preserved from the fatal necessity of stealing and of dying for it’…There is a great number of noblemen among you that are themselves as idle as drones, that subsist on other men’s labour, on the labour of their tenants, whom, to raise their revenues, they pare to the quick. This, indeed, is the only instance of their frugality, for in all other things they are prodigal, even to the beggaring of themselves; but, besides this, they carry about with them a great number of idle fellows, who never learned any art by which they may gain their living; and these, as soon as either their lord dies, or they themselves fall sick, are turned out of doors; for your lords are readier to feed idle people than to take care of the sick; and often the heir is not able to keep together so great a family as his predecessor did. Now, when the stomachs of those that are thus turned out of doors grow keen, they rob no less keenly; and what else can they do?55

These are arguments that we see in as severe a form in the novels of Charles Dickens in the 19th century that show the plight of the working classes with little or no means. Orwell claims at the end of his book *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) that, “The English are a conscience-ridden race, with a strong sense of the sinfulness of poverty. One cannot imagine the average Englishman deliberately turning parasite, and this national character does not necessarily change because a man is thrown out of work.”\(^{56}\) In the quote Orwell somehow touches on the humanism of the “average Englishman” as “national character” that is directly derived from the Renaissance. In making a tramp the protagonist of his films and in being deeply critical of global capitalism where “business” is a form of “murder”\(^ {57}\) as we see in movies like *Monsieur Verdoux*, Charlie Chaplin in fact is embodying the best of the English Renaissance humanist spirit that recognizes the innate dignity of the individual. Short of a revolution, the politics of humanism on the English social landscape is a virulent and angry denunciation of a social order that reduces the human being to the level of an animal. The humanist sentiment of every man being equally important has a basis in the religious aspect of Renaissance history which is connected to the lives of the common people.

The popular aspect of the English Renaissance needs to be borne in mind especially with respect to the translation of the Bible, the most important being that of William Tyndale who paid for the translation with his life. He was strangled to death and his dead body burnt at the stake for heresy in the year 1536. The translation of the Bible brought the word of God from the control of the Catholic Church to the doorstep of the common person thus playing a paramount role in heralding the Reformation across Europe. Prior to the translation is of course the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg in 1455 that is a revolution in itself comparable to what the Internet is today.

Not only Shakespeare, but probably every literate Elizabethan owned and read the Geneva Bible, making it perhaps the single most influential English book ever published. First printed in 1560, soon after Elizabeth’s accession, it ran through multiple editions right into the 1640s.\(^1\) Reliable estimates calculate that over half a million copies were sold in the sixteenth century, a figure high enough in proportion to the total population to put into question our assumptions about Elizabethan literacy levels. It was cheaply printed, generally affordable and read by the highest and lowest in the kingdom. Its copious annotation helped fulfil the demands of the early sixteenth-century Reformers, that Scripture alone should sit at the centre of the national culture, to be accessible to

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\(^{57}\) *Monsieur Verdoux*, Dir. Charlie Chaplin, United Artists, 1947. Film.
everyone without the mediation of priest and bishop. It was the first English Bible to be divided into chapters and verses thereby encouraging its readers to become their own interpreters, to play with the text by matching verse with verse from one end of the Bible to the other. In essence, its text and notes gave them control over their own reading.58

The role of the translation in shaping the English language must be understood especially when we look at the Tyndale version which is profound in its scholarly use of the language thus displaying a distinct high learning which came from his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew and at the same time very poetic almost with a certain rhythm and music which makes it easy for believers to remember and reflect upon the message. The vernacular Bible brought together nationalism and humanism while giving divine status to Englishness or what it means to be English. Tyndale’s translation of the Bible is a declaration of its Englishness. The profound role of the English Bible in shaping both the language and the nation must be understood. But this translation of the Bible was not without resistance:

Erasmus, the pioneer of a modern textual scholarship of the New Testament, would never approve a vernacular translation: it was far safer to keep God’s word in Latin. More also set his face against an English version, taking time off from his state duties to write attacks upon Tyndale and his associates. He argued that Tyndale’s English New Testament had been designed to destroy the power of the church, citing its use of ‘congregation’ and ‘senior’ in preference to ‘church’ and ‘priest’. But behind this specific charge lay a deeper concern about the cheapening effects of translation exemplified in Tyndale’s preference for ‘love’ rather than ‘charity’ to translate the Greek word agape, as in the passage from 1 Corinthians…The argument goes right to the heart of possession of the biblical text. ‘Charity’, Tyndale argues, is a technical term removed from common speech, so that even an English version which uses it still requires a gloss. ‘Love’, More fears, throws the Bible open to all and reduces its mysteries to the level of common worldly experience.59

Tyndale’s use of “love” instead of “charity” to bring the Bible to the “level of common worldly experience” is indicative of what a genuine believer through the power of the word is capable of achieving. Tyndale, not unlike Gandhi much later on, aims to influence the readers in a certain direction. Therefore the language of the Bible

59 Ibid, 170.
cannot afford to be static. For a dynamism that would awaken the masses to believe in the word of God, there is no greater means than the vernacular and the use of words that the populace is most familiar with. The Bible must have “simple, short sentences, simple narrative, homilies” in order to possess a broad appeal. Tyndale’s translation is a step forward in social democracy because it reinforces the power and universality of the written word. Through the vernacular it aims to show that humanism is a universal discourse emerging from how we read and interpret the Bible. Alan Stewart in “The Trouble with English Humanism: Tyndale, More and Darling Erasmus,” notes that: “More charges Tyndale with mistranslation, and therefore with radical misinterpretation of key words. Most notorious is Tyndale’s englising of the Greek word ecclesia, by rendering it as ‘congregation’ rather than ‘church’, and thereby transferring authority from the institution (church) to the faithful gathered (congregation).” This does not mean that Christian humanism had no place for the revival of the classical or that classical humanism never occurred. Quite contrarily as J. W. Binns in “The Humanist Latin Tradition Reassessed” points out: “the interest in the ancient world takes place in a definitely Christian context.” The Christian context is not an abstract universal one but as Alan Stewart mentions: “the vernacular English Bible provides a way forward for the true faith and a new Protestant Englishness.” Stewart Mottram makes reference to John Bale’s King Johan which “makes Bible-reading the basis of English national identity. With Bibles about to become available in every parish church, the play looks forward to the establishment in England of a truly national community of Bible-readers, obedient both to God and the King.” That Tyndale’s translation of the Bible into the vernacular is meant to include the working classes is where one could trace elements of the anti-colonial discourse within humanism. Ironically though as Dick France observes in “The Bible in English: An Overview”: “The colloquial language employed by Tyndale so that the Scriptures would be accessible to the ploughboy has thus become, with the passing of time, the esoteric language of religion, and the more remote it becomes from ordinary speech the more special and holy it seems.” However, Walter W. Wessel is more than willing to notice the complex threat that this translation posed to the powers that be – a phrase from Tyndale himself:

As much as ninety percent of the KJV reads like Tyndale. Its two remarkable successes were (1) that it was a first-rate translation and (2)

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61 Ibid, 191-192
62 Ibid, 78.
63 Stewart Mottram, Empire and Nation in Early English Renaissance Literature (D. S. Brewer: Cambridge, 2008), 32.
64 Glen G. Scorgie, Mark L. Strauss and Steven M. Voth (eds.), The Challenge of Bible Translation (Zondervan: Michigan, 2003), 193.
that it forced the hand of the English church and state to produce an officially sanctioned Bible. Such a Bible did not appear quickly. Instead, both church and state suppressed it. Tyndale himself was forced to leave England. He finished his translation and had it published in Germany. The story of how copies were brought back into England is well-known. After producing a revision of his translation in 1534, Tyndale, who was living in the free city of Antwerp, was kidnapped, strangled, and burned at the stake in the Belgium town of Vilvalde in 1536.65

If English humanism through its nationalist rhetoric laid the foundations of colonialism, the seeds of the anti-colonial discourse can be located in the resistance politics of the Reformation that made it possible for the “ploughboy” to “read” in a discourse that he or she is most familiar with. In the Italian-European context, Gramsci did not view humanism in a positive vein. On the contrary, Gramsci observes that “culture, which remained a function of the Church, was precisely anti-economic in character (i.e. against the nascent capitalist economy); it was not directed towards giving hegemony to the new class, but rather to preventing the latter from acquiring it. Hence Humanism and the Renaissance were reactionary, because they signalled the defeat of the new class, the negation of the economic world which was proper to it, etc.”66 English Humanism had a unique character because it took away the role of the Church in the preservation of culture and was economic because it gave hegemony to the “new class.” After all, the idea of a writer who has to invent an audience for him or herself is an outcome of the humanist discourse. When Johnson was answered by one of the executors of his will that he would be buried in Westminster-Abbey, he “seemed to feel a satisfaction, very natural to a Poet.”67 Johnson couldn’t have been ignorant of his canonical status as being one among the greatest poets of English language and literature. The book The 100 Most Influential Writers of All Time published in 2010 includes in its list Samuel Johnson, “an English critic, biographer, essayist, poet, and lexicographer, regarded as one of the greatest figures of 18th-century life and letters.”68

As a product of the English humanist discourse Johnson no doubt played the part for which he was predestined – that of a great teacher and writer, something of an Erasmian humanist in the 18th century. Yoran says that the Erasmian humanist “did not produce knowledge and instruct society from a transcendent sphere. The Erasmian humanist was therefore a modern universal intellectual, perhaps the first universal

65 Ibid, 204.
67 Boswell, 999.
68 J. E. Luebering (ed), The 100 Most Influential Writers of All Time (New York: Britannia Educational Publishing, 2010), 116.
intellectual.” As its teacher, Johnson is rooted in the 18th century and therefore is a man of his times. Yet no writer worked harder to reconstruct the 18th century within a certain worldview than Johnson. He could disagree because disagreement was one way to prove to his opponent that there is more to an argument than meets the eye. A natural-born dissenter Johnson strove to define his age in his own powerful image – hence the strange and ironic epithet, Age of Johnson. Johnsonian humanism cannot be forcibly equated with humanism in itself. Humanism is neither innocent of power or of power relations. Yoran makes mention of the fact that,

Humanism actually produced the first modern intellectuals. The difference, as we have noted throughout this study, between most humanists and Erasmian humanists is broadly representative of two different types of modern intellectuals. The former subscribed to the dominant social values and served to promote them. Whenever a significant center of humanism emerged, it was related to a powerful establishment and advanced the dominant social and political values. This was an entirely conscious mode of action, and humanist discourse justified it, most notably by defining knowledge as socially embedded and as practical, and by affirming the value of public activity.

The intellectuals played the role of ideologues in justifying the social order. Gramsci famously says: “Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields.” The humanist intellectuals were no exception in this regard. The point however is that they served a dominant position and not an alternate one. However, Yoran views Erasmian humanism differently:

Erasmian humanism was the exception. We have studied the strategies employed by Erasmian humanists in creating the universal intellectual, an identity that was unattached to the powers that be. The intellectual production of Erasmus and More did not serve the specific interests of any political establishment or social estate but, rather, the well-being of society as a whole, as they understood it. In their role as universal intellectuals, Erasmus and More censured the powerful and condemned prevailing customs and institutions.

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69 Yoran, 2.
70 Ibid, 189.
71 Forgacs, 301.
More importantly, they rejected the aristocratic worldview, which was the ideological foundation of the contemporary social order in northern Europe. They also offered—Erasmus in his numerous writings and More in Utopia—a comprehensive program of reform of Christendom. Their activity and their literary products constituted a great accomplishment and pointed to the social significance of the figure of the modern universal intellectual. At the same time, a close reading of their works reveals the fundamental ambiguity and instability of this identity, one that proved to be problematic from the point of view of the humanist discourse itself. The identity of the universal intellectual no less than separated the Erasmian humanist from concrete social and political forces and, in so doing, infringed on the humanist commitment to the vita activa, that is, to the production of practical knowledge for the melioration of society. Ultimately, the identity of the universal intellectual threatened to lock the Erasmian humanist in a disembodied intellectual sphere, a literally utopian location, which could not be legitimized in humanist terms.\textsuperscript{72}

This is the social and political context to Johnson the dissenter. With Johnson, the “universal intellectual” can only emerge from “concrete social and political forces.” The Erasmian universal intellectual is problematic because you can only locate him in utopian terms. Johnson is ethical, dialectical and historical in the fact of his “Englishness” and his humanism.

V. The “Englishness” in Johnson’s humanism

Just as it is futile to imagine a non-English Shakespeare it is equally futile to imagine a non-English Johnson. While both are eminently translatable and could be enjoyed in a different language and cultural medium, the influence of local history and landscape in shaping their imagination or their Englishness must be borne in mind. The universal elements in Johnson’s humanism emerge from his Englishness and not the other way round. Humanism was never meant to be a universal discourse even while it made claims to universality. In its “universal” aspect humanism is the face of colonialism and imperial conquest. At the heart of the colonial project is the conviction of being a “chosen” people whose destiny is to conquer the world. James Baldwin makes the following observation about the English:

The English can be said to exemplify the power of nostalgia to an uncanny degree. Nothing the world holds, from Australia to Africa, to America,

\textsuperscript{72} Yoran, 189.
India, to China, to Egypt, appears to have made the faintest impression on the English soul: wherever the English are is – or will resist, out of perversity, or at its peril, becoming – England. (Not, on the other hand, of course, that it can ever truly be England: but it can try.) This is a powerful assumption, but why, then, the ruder recipient cannot but demand, do not the English stay in England? It would appear that this island people need endless corroboration of their worth: and the tragedy of their history has been their compulsion to make the world their mirror, and this to a degree not to be equaled in the history of any other people – and with a success, if that is the word, not to be equaled in the history of any other people.73

In its localness or particularity, we see the nobler side of English humanism with no pretences to being universal. When Dr. Adams points out that “the French Academy, which consists of forty members, took forty years to compile their Dictionary” Johnson responds by saying “Sir, thus it is. This is the proportion. Let me see; forty times forty is sixteen hundred. As three to sixteen hundred, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman.” Johnson’s authority over the English language and its literature gives him the confidence to assert his nationalist credentials. Yet, the compiling of the English language dictionary is “universal” in scope and achievement. In “Literature or Metaliterature?: Thoughts on Traditional Literary Study” Greene notes that “The original purpose of the great Dictionnaire (1st ed., 1694) of the Académie Française was to establish norms of usage and meaning to which speakers and writers of French were supposed to conform. Samuel Johnson, on the contrary, in the midst of a century when Great Britain and its English-speaking colonies were beginning to expand into a worldwide Anglophone community, pooh-poohed any such attempt at "fixing" a language and invoked "the spirit of English liberty" against French academicism and authoritarianism.” Johnson can see that the destiny of English language and literature is greater than the place of its birth; more significantly the “Englishness” in Johnson’s humanism is the sense in which Orwell uses it in the 20th century when he says that the English “are a conscience-ridden race, with a strong sense of the sinfulness of poverty.” The liberty that Johnson espouses is the liberty of conscience and if it is articulated in the spirit of Englishness or being English, Johnson would prefer that any day to Englishness in its colonial manifestations.

If English humanism did not invent postcolonialism, it certainly laid the grounds for the possibility of looking at the world differently. This is where Johnson comes into the picture. Donald Greene’s The Politics of Samuel Johnson creates a picture where the

74 Boswell, 106
political Johnson and the personal Johnson are interchangeable entities. Greene insightfully remarks:

More important, however, than his commitment or lack of commitment to specific political theories is his whole cast of mind – curious, empirical, skeptical, emotionally sensitive. The frustration, the poverty and disease, of his boyhood and youth left him with profound and genuine insight into human misery, and with a contempt for benevolent liberal theorizers who, from their ivory towers, set out to rearrange the world with no real knowledge of the sources of the common man’s happiness and unhappiness.\(^{76}\)

There is nothing simple about Johnson’s politics because there is nothing simple about the person either. The cruel memory of frightening poverty and tormented lifelong with a sense of the “duty” of genius – something that Wittgenstein’s biographer noted in the 20\(^{th}\) century philosopher of language – a duty that Johnson felt he had never completely fulfilled, torn between a desperate need of emotional love and a simultaneous desire for moral restraint, the teacher in Johnson who created ideals far above his capacity to attain them and yet obsessively truthful in articulating his inability, these peculiar traits in Johnson give his politics a slant that is impossible to ignore. This attitude of Johnson to simultaneously find, play with and exorcise the devil in the details is not something that makes him distrustful of human nature. Greene believes that Johnson’s “skepticism was not of a kind to cause him to lapse into cynical inaction: he had the empiricist’s faith that by careful observation and analysis, improvement can be brought about-slowly, perhaps, but certainly; and he had the rationalist’s conviction that absurdity and ignorance and obscurantism are absolute evils, to be combated at all times.”\(^{77}\) If in Johnson’s conception of humanism we find distinct elements of postcoloniality it is because he has no hesitation in extending the parameters of humanism that brought the human person at the center of the discourse of knowledge to the weak, the powerless and the colonized. There is no doubt that if he lived in the 19\(^{th}\) or 20\(^{th}\) centuries he would be proactively involved with movements that resisted racism, slavery and colonialism. Quite a few observations from the Life of Johnson are an indication of Johnson’s “postcoloniality”. For instance his insight into the poverty of France when compared to England makes sense when we realize that the French Revolution occurred only a few years after his death. He observed, “The great in France live very magnificently, but the rest very miserably. There is no happy middle state as in England. The shops of Paris are mean; the meat in the markets is such as


\(^{77}\) Ibid, 235.
would be sent to a gaol in England.”78 Such a view of how the poor ought to be treated goes well with what Johnson feels defines a “civilization” and a “nation.”

Where a great proportion of the people (said he,) are suffered to languish in helpless misery, that country must be ill policed, and wretchedly governed: a decent provision for the poor is the true test of civilization. Gentlemen of education, he observed, were pretty much the same in all countries; the condition of the lower orders, the poor especially, was the true mark of national discrimination.79

Johnson’s politics is about the “happy middle state” but it has radical elements in it. Civilizations and nations are not built keeping “gentlemen” in mind but rather the working poor. Poverty in itself may not be a terrible thing but where people are so poor that it makes them violent and dishonest such poverty is a crime and an evil. Gandhi makes a similar observation about the poverty of India as a colony under the British: “The grinding poverty and starvation with which our country is afflicted is such that it drives more and more men every year into the ranks of the beggars, whose desperate struggle for bread renders them insensible to all feelings of decency and self-respect.”80 Decency and self-respect are possible where people don’t live in a situation of perpetual want. It does not mean that the poor are naturally dishonest owing to their condition. It just means that the expectation of higher virtues from those desperate to barely survive is an unfair if not an unethical expectation. Hence, a “civilization,” which means an order where decency and self-respect are possible, can only exist where there is a “decent provision for the poor.”81 The injustice of it is not the end of the argument for Johnson. Foucault argues in The History of Sexuality Volume 1 that “Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.”82 Surely Johnson knew that much when he said: “I consider that in no government power can be abused long. Mankind will not bear it. If a sovereign oppresses his people to a great degree, they will rise and cut off his head. There is a remedy in human nature against tyranny that will keep us safe under every form of government.”83 This statement is prophetically true of the French, Russian and most other revolutions that have happened since then where tyrants have been overthrown. Both Gandhi and Johnson would agree that the existence of a civilization or a nation depends on how it treats the poor. Johnson’s “postcoloniality”

78 Boswell, 478.
79 Boswell, 329.
80 Ibid.
81 Boswell, 446.
83 Boswell, 351.
comes from his radical interpretation of the discourse of English Humanism. The “remedy” is in “human nature” as he notes. When he says contemptuously of Americans fighting a war of independence against the English, “how is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?,” it is a sign of his refusal to accept slavery as a normal state of affairs as much as it is a profound disgust with slave-owners fighting for “freedom.” A similar anger and contempt towards the “planters of America” we see in his discussion on Christianity.

Christianity is the highest perfection of humanity; and as no man is good but as he wishes the good of others, no man can be good in the highest degree who wishes not to others the largest measures of the greatest good. To omit for a year, or for a day, the most efficacious method of advancing Christianity, in compliance with any purposes that terminate on this side of the grave, is a crime of which I know not that the world has yet had an example, except in the practice of the planters of America, a race of mortals whom, I suppose, no other man wishes to resemble.

His views on race and slavery are far ahead of his times and easily could’ve been uttered by the black revolutionary Malcolm X or the postcolonial writer Franz Fanon in the 20th century. Boswell speaks of Johnson’s argument defending a “negro who was then claiming his liberty, in an action in the Court of Session in Scotland. He had always been very zealous against slavery in every form.” Johnson says:

'It must be agreed that in most ages many countries have had part of their inhabitants in a state of slavery; yet it may be doubted whether slavery can ever be supposed the natural condition of man. It is impossible not to conceive that men in their original state were equal; and very difficult to imagine how one would be subjected to another but by violent compulsion. An individual may, indeed, forfeit his liberty by a crime; but he cannot by that crime forfeit the liberty of his children. What is true of a criminal seems true likewise of a captive. A man may accept life from a conquering enemy on condition of perpetual servitude; but it is very doubtful whether he can entail that servitude on his descendants; for no man can stipulate without commission for another...The laws of Jamaica afford a Negro no redress. His colour is considered as a sufficient

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84 Ibid, 632.
85 Ibid, 277.
86 Ibid, 632.
testimony against him. It is to be lamented that moral right should ever give way to political convenience.\textsuperscript{87}

Johnson’s “postcoloniality” is not limited to the theory but can be seen in his personal life as well especially in the exemplary affection and kindness towards his Negro servant Francis Barber. Following his death, when Johnson’s Will was finally published, the biographer David Nokes says that, it “caused great consternation...for the large amount bequeathed to the manservant Frank Barber, a black man who had been a slave...That Johnson had favoured this Negro, had paid for his education and treated him as a friend was widely known.”\textsuperscript{88} To put the anti-colonial Johnson in a “postcolonial” perspective, it is important to understand the age in which he lived in order to realize what makes him a contemporary to the 21\textsuperscript{st} century radical writers and philosophers. Greene notes: “The far-sightedness and humanity of Johnson’s ideal of a colonizing population conciliating and assimilating the aborigines instead of destroying and exploiting them are easier for the modern student to appreciate than for the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century settlers.”\textsuperscript{89}

The Age of Johnson almost coincides with the Battle of Plassey in 1757 when the British East India Company effectively began the military and economic colonization of South Asia. The French Revolution began in 1789 which is five years after Johnson’s death. The American War of Independence came to an end in 1783 a year before Johnson’s death. Wordsworth and Coleridge published the \textit{Lyrical Ballads} in 1798 about fourteen years after Johnson passing away, thus heralding the English Romantic Movement. It was indeed an interesting, strange and fascinating age. If the Age itself is identified with the personality of a great writer it is because Johnson responded to the diverse cross-currents that made the particular time-frame what it is.

Nothing defines the Age of Johnson better than Boswell’s \textit{Life of Johnson} which meticulously goes into the complex life and thoughts of his friend, and comes up with a transitional figure living between different worlds in more ways than one. He had an almost medieval sense of the sacred while at the same time was endowed with common sense and rare empathy for the dispossessed; he relished his role as poet, moralist, critic and man of letters of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century dictating the norms of critical reading with the authority of the magician Harry Houdini. His claim to be a contemporary of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century writer lies in his sharp insights into the nature of social reality and what the role of an individual should be in a social order. Almost at the very end of the book \textit{The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature}, the author mentions that “More than a hundred years of misery were to elapse between the date of Mrs Behn's novel \textit{Oroonoko} and the time when the House of Commons set up a select committee to look into the

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\textsuperscript{87} Ibid, 632-33.
\textsuperscript{89} Greene, 167.
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slave trade... Dr Johnson, whose servant Francis Barber was born in Jamaica — and addressed by him in a letter ending "your affectionate Sam. Johnson" — once proposed a toast at Oxford “to the next insurrection of the Negroes in the West Indies”. Further down the author of the History notes that, “There will be time in the future for a critical Lives of the Poets...where Africa confronts the West as formerly the West had confronted Africa...we will enjoy it in the same spirit of “common wealth” as Africans and West Indians enjoy Shakespeare and Dr. Johnson.” The spirit that Shakespeare and Johnson infused into the age in which they lived is now a legacy of the once colonized nations of Asia and Africa. Upon reading Shakespeare and Johnson we’re “delighted” and “instructed” - to quote Dryden - in the same manner, as if we - in the non-western world - shared in the “English” past that responds to whatever is great and humane in our own literary and cultural traditions.

VI. Postcolonial humanist

If Johnson embraced the spiritual and literary traditions of the English Renaissance Humanism there is no doubt he also contributed to it. Johnson’s modernity as a writer stems from the fact that it is impossible to separate the worldview and criticism from the life of the man. Like Plato and Aristotle the neoclassical Johnson could comment on multiple aspects of human existence ranging from education to religion, politics, morality and day-to-day life. Yet, the ethical life transcends every other concern for Johnson. Says Johnson: “There is more thought in the moralist than in the historian. There is but a shallow stream of thought in history.” From 1750-1752, Johnson wrote the twice-weekly essay paper, The Rambler in a time when he was poor and relatively unknown. The classical learning, the insightful prose that might at times seem heavy to the modern reader and the experience of life come together to give a rare quality to the writing. Talking of poverty in the No. 53, Tuesday, September 18, 1750 issue, Johnson passionately writes:

There is scarcely among the evils of human life any so generally dreaded as poverty. Every other species of misery, those, who are not much accustomed to disturb the present moment with reflection, can easily forget, because it is not always forced upon their regard; but it is impossible to pass a day or an hour in the confluxes of men, without seeing how much indigence is exposed to contumely, neglect, and insult; and, in its lowest state, to hunger and nakedness; to injuries against which every passion is in arms, and to wants which nature cannot sustain...in

91 Ibid, 938.
92 Boswell, 363.
the prospect of poverty, there is nothing but gloom and melancholy; the mind and body suffer together; its miseries bring no alleviations; it is a state in which every virtue is obscured, and in which no conduct can avoid reproach: a state in which cheerfulness is insensibility, and dejection sullenness, of which the hardships are without honour, and the labours without reward.\textsuperscript{93}

Johnson’s boundless compassion for the dispossessed of the world comes from experience and insight into the “neglect,” “insult” and “injuries” that the “mind and body suffer together” with the poor and the downtrodden. Boswell touches on this aspect of Johnson’s character in the biography:

His generous humanity to the miserable was almost beyond example. The following instance is well attested:—Coming home late one night, he found a poor woman lying in the street, so much exhausted that she could not walk; he took her upon his back, and carried her to his house, where he discovered that she was one of those wretched females who had fallen into the lowest state of vice, poverty, and disease. Instead of harshly upbraiding her, he had her taken care of with all tenderness for a long time, at considerable expence, till she was restored to health, and endeavoured to put her into a virtuous way of living.\textsuperscript{94}

If Johnson’s humanity was “beyond example,” his essays strongly reflect his incredible generosity. The same moral sense that applies to his life permeates his criticism as well. In a memorandum previous to the completion of \textit{The Lives of the Poets} Johnson says, “Written, I hope, in such a manner as may tend to the promotion of piety.”\textsuperscript{95} The piety is promoted in taking those positions that are not viewed as falling within the purview of a mainstream worldview. Johnson’s tendency to disagree with the world arises from his sense of marginality; any position that is not mainstream or fashionable is a marginal one for Johnson and worth the defense. The “postcolonial humanist” in Johnson is a marginal one. Johnson’s politics are those of the marginalized and the deprived. He is not their self-appointed spokesperson; he is simply one of them. Truth emerges from a condition of marginality in dissenting with the authority of established opinion. Greene observes:

Johnson is a defender of the Stuarts because an unthinking contempt for the Stuarts is fashionable, and because all his life he has fought against the

\textsuperscript{93} Samuel Johnson, \textit{The Rambler}, \url{http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/Joh4Ram.html}
\textsuperscript{94} Boswell, 941.
\textsuperscript{95} Boswell, 781.
abdication of human reason and observation to the power of intellectual fashion, as to authoritarianism in any other guise. What is intellectually fashionable must always be challenged: the particular point at issue is not so important as the fact that it has been accepted in blind obedience to authority. Truth, in the long run, can be attained, right can be established, only by individual human beings thinking and investigating for themselves.96

This anti-authoritarian streak is fundamental to arrive at a configuration of Johnson’s character. An innate tendency to resent being patronized along with the pride of poverty gave Johnson the rough demeanor and the readiness to throw sharp verbal punches in the faces of those least expecting them. If at one level everything that Johnson said and did was meant to conceal his vulnerability, at another level he embodies the English sense of manhood in refusing to show signs of weakness or submissiveness to what vaguely looks like authority. The anti-authoritarianism singularly permeates his personality and his writings. Take the discussion on “Marriage and the unhappy state of women in society” (Rambler no. 39, July 31, 1750):

The miseries, indeed, which many ladies suffer under conjugal vexations, are to be considered with great pity, because their husbands are often not taken by them as objects of affection, but forced upon them by authority and violence, or by persuasion and importunity, equally resistless when urged by those whom they have been always accustomed to reverence and obey; and it very seldom appears that those who are thus despotic in the disposal of their children, pay any regard to their domestic and personal felicity, or think it so much to be enquired whether they will be happy, as whether they will be rich.97

Not without bitterness, Johnson continues, “It may be urged, in extenuation of this crime, which parents, not in any other respect to be numbered with robbers and assassins, frequently commit, that, in their estimation, riches and happiness are equivalent terms.”98 If Shakespeare sacrifices virtue to convenience and is guilty of pleasing rather than instructing, it is a moral failure to Johnson99 - a similar moral failure that makes parents “to be numbered with robbers and assassins” for estimating riches and happiness on equivalent terms. Anything that is “convenient” comes dangerously close to being anti-virtue and Johnson finds that unbearable. Greene

96 Greene, 183.
98 Martin, 87
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remarks: “An instinctive hostility to any solution to a problem that seems to savor of escapism is one of the most consistent traits in Johnson’s psychology.” 100

When Boswell says about his Life of Johnson, “I infuse every drop of genuine sweetness into my biographical cup,” 101 much of it has to do with the inimitable life of Johnson himself. Johnson famously said: “They only who live with a man can write his life with any genuine exactness and discrimination; and few people who have lived with a man know what to remark about him.” 102 That is the paradox of being a writer of lives; to live with the person is a source of “exactness” and “discrimination” and ironically not everyone who lives with another person can write a life. If living with a person is a criterion for writing an account of the person’s life, most mothers, wives or husbands would be ideal biographers. If they’re not, it’s because biography is an art form that demands a unique imagination when it comes to selecting those details that best describe a person. If Johnson was a brilliant biographer, there is nothing to say that he would have been as good an autobiographer. If the other is a reflection of the self and the personal is the political, Johnson, through the Lives of the Poets examines his complex feelings over his rise from anonymity to fame and what it means in retrospect. For example, he says of Richard Savage: “His mind was in an uncommon degree vigorous and active...He had the peculiar felicity, that his attention never deserted him; he was present to every object, and regardful of the most trifling occurrences. He had the art of escaping from his own reflections, and accommodating himself to every new scene.” 103 But, this observation is as true of Johnson himself as it is of Savage. This is however not to say that Johnson’s Lives is a composition of his own thoughts, but, rather to see how Johnson takes a certain perspective and uses it as a basis to examine the lives of the poets. The moral Johnson is inseparable from the political Johnson. Just as Gandhi could not imagine politics without religion or religion without morality, Johnson cannot see the meaning of a life in an amoral manner. A person’s sociality is defined through his or her morality. The moral being cannot be extricated from the social animal. Johnson’s admiration of Pope for reasons personal as much as ethical makes the point rather well.

The filial piety of Pope was in the highest degree amiable and exemplary; his parents had the happiness of living till he was at the summit of poetical reputation, till he was at ease in his fortune, and without a rival in his fame, and found no diminution of his respect or tenderness. Whatever was his pride, to them he was obedient; and whatever was his irritability,

100 Greene, 136.
101 Boswell, 734.

[68]
to them he was gentle. Life has, among its soothing and quiet comforts, few things better to give than such a son.104

Pope is a great poet because he wrote great poetry. Period. Ideally Pope’s greatness as a poet has nothing to do with his “filial piety.” But, as a biographer, it is of interest to Johnson to relate a detail that gives us an insight into Pope’s moral constitution. The critic is an artist who takes an interest in life. What makes Johnson’s book different is for reasons that Clingham notes in “Life and literature in Johnson’s Lives of the Poets,” “While critics have tended to see Johnson’s idea of poetic character as governed by rules that privilege the sublime and the heroic, the Lives actually trace different ways in which poets give shape and value to their experience.”105 Johnson’s “postcoloniality” emerges from the fact that as a poet he could give shape and value to his experience of being an outsider. The “postcolonial” Johnson is an existential outsider and it is from the realm of the outside that he can successfully feel one with those who do not fit in a social order. Undoubtedly it is Johnson’s voice speaking through Imlac when he says: “Wearied at last with solicitation and repulses, I resolved to hide myself for ever from the world, and depend no longer on the opinion or caprice of others.”106 This is exactly how Johnson lived: without ever depending on the opinions or caprices of others but in a singular pursuit of the truth as he saw and felt it.

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104 Ibid, 387.
105 Clingham, 175


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From Narcissistic Melancholia to Loving Mourning in Mary Wroth’s Pamphilia

Elham Shayegh

Abstract

The Renaissance study of female writers is an area of study in which the body of scholarship is slim. The hidden voice of female writers whose works were not as popular and as public as their male counterparts makes it difficult for the current scholarship to deepen investigations of the works and lives of those authors. However, it seems that in addition to difficulties concerning the recognition and positioning the texts written by women, the absence of textual analysis in the current scholarship (which could lead to recognition of individual feminine styles) plays a significant role in the condition of this body of research. The massive amount of research done in cultural and historical positioning of the texts, though productive in their own account, marginalize the importance of individual texts in relation to the characteristic and singular methods of their authors. In a process, which I will call castration, the scholarship’s immense emphasis on historical and cultural studies represses the possibility of recognition of individuality and distinctiveness of writers and their styles. In this case, the Renaissance female authors and their individual text both have been castrated. This paper is a study of Lady Mary Wroth’s Pamphilia to Amphilanthus from a psychoanalytical point of view. My aim here is to show how different elements of Wroth’s poetry reveals the individual mental and emotional history of the speaker and how through their function they provide opportunities for understanding the subject’s condition in the society and culture of time and in relation to her loved object. The sad tone of the poem creates a thematic tendency, which calls for a psychoanalytical study based on theories of mourning and melancholia.

Keywords: renaissance studies, early female writers, feminism, lady Mary Wroth, Pamphilia to Amphilanthus, psychoanalysis, Freud, Abraham and Torok, mourning, melancholia, introjection, incorporation, historicism
From Narcissistic Melancholia to Loving Mourning in Mary Wroth’s Pamphilia

Elham Shayegh

My thoughts are sad…
My pains are long…
My grief is great.

He [traveler] tired with his pains, I, with my mind.

The Renaissance study of female writers is an area of literary studies in which the body of scholarship is slim. The hidden voices of female writers whose works were not as popular and as public as their male counterparts makes it difficult for the current scholarship to deepen its investigations into the relationship between the works and life of those figures. However, it seems that in addition to the difficulties of recognition and positioning of texts, the scholarship’s apparent ignorance of textual analysis which could lead to the recognition of individual feminine voices and styles, plays a significant role in causing stagnancy in this body of research. The massive amount of research done in cultural and historical positioning of Renaissance women, although productive in its own account, marginalizes the importance of individual texts in relationship to the characteristics and singular methods of each feminine writer. In this process, which I call “castration,” the scholarship’s immense emphasis on history and cultural studies represses the possibility of recognition of individuality and the distinctiveness of writers and their supposed feminine styles. In this case the Renaissance female authors and their individual texts have been silenced within the larger phallocentric historical and political frameworks. The young scholarship in this case is in its Oedipal phase, meaning as a child it does not have mastery over history (the paternal figure) and has been castrated by it. By picturing the works of female writers as parts of vaster social movements, the language of the current scholarship pushes toward silencing individual female voices and presenting them not only

2 Ibid., p.11
3 Although this paper does not directly explain the definitions and functions of the term “scholarship,” its ending result might be able to address these issues.
through lack of identity but also through lack of personal voice/lack of words/lack of tongue/speechlessness and the Freudian pre-verbalism.

What has been relatively ignored by the scholarship is a responsibility toward texts. It is true that their writings could give those women a place in society/history/culture (and in the general masculine establishment), but it is also true that writing per se needs to be observed as a function that involves writers and their existence regardless of the publicity or privacy of their expressions. One of the early modern texts, which through the treatment of scholarship came under the threat of textual and psychological castration, is Mary Wroth’s poem “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus.” Although the present scholarship generally discusses the poem in connection to its social and cultural context, pointing out the public roles of Wroth as a female writer, the scholarship seldom digs into the poem to show how such historical interpretations are plausible in regard to the character and mentality of the writer. A closer reading of Wroth’s poems, however, clarifies those unique moments that presents Wroth’s persona not only as a Renaissance female writer and part of a social movement of the early modern writers, but also as a woman with everyday ambitions, individual desires and a private writing style. To start this poetical investigation we will first look at the current scholarship reading “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus” through a cultural and historical lens.

**Review of Scholarship**

Daniel Gil in “The Currency of the Beloved and the Authority of Lady Mary Wroth” (1999) discusses that “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus” presents Wroth’s engagement in negotiating the dangerous course between female passivity and agency. He calls the poem an attempt for reversing gender roles in the Petrarchan traditions of the male sonneteers. The poem through the voice of a female lover, opposes the tradition of the male sonneteers in which the women were pictured as “objects of exchange” between male subjects/male speakers. Presenting a female speaker who has agency and who is unattainable, Wroth was breaking down the “erotic circulation” of male sonneteers. Gil suggests that Wroth’s attempt for agency was in fact an attempt for female publicity and social activism. For Gil, “the social and political factors” of the time were in intense relationship and the separation of private and public values was not imagined. However, looking closely we can see that the whole poem (in the absence of her beloved) is a dialogue between the speaker and her public readers. The conversational nature of Wroth’s poem creates the possibility of dialogue between her individuality and the public. Gil, however, looking through the bigger historical lens, does not enter into this textual dialogue. His arguments about Wroth’s desire for playing an active gender role are yet to be proved in a thorough analysis of the poem.

Likewise, Nona Fienberg’s interpretation in “Mary Wroth’s Poetics of the Self” (2002) is developing the same historical concerns as well as adding some political
reflection. Fienberg pictures Wroth as a public figure who establishes her agency through her musical performance, dancing and writing. She believes that although some critics are claiming a silent role for the Renaissance women, these writers found their voices beside other art forms through writing in the Petrarchan tradition. King James was the creator of a misogynistic ideology, which these women challenged. It seems that in trying to connect Wroth’s text to its historical context, the criticism collapses into generalization about the writer and her role based on knowledge of history and culture. Some of the facts, which the criticism emphasizes, can be true not only about Wroth but also about any Renaissance female writer, and probably with some modification about female writers of all time. Lack of individuality is evident in Fienberg’s criticism.

Another analysis that heavily trusts historical evidences is Josephine Roberts’s “The Biographical Problem of Pamphilia to Amphilanthus” (1982). According to Roberts the poem pictures love not as a doctrine or philosophy but as a personal female voice. Pamphilia becomes the reflection of feminine passions and feminine mental struggles between “rebellion and submission to love.” Wroth’s poem, as Roberts suggests, portrays the horror of death, physical pain, and separation from the loved ones. She has probably read and was influenced by Faerie Queen as it is evident in her borrowings. Unlike the male sonneteers that praise feminine physical attributes, Wroth creates a new tradition of sonnets in which the role of Petrarchan loved-objects has been altered; the rhetoric of courtship is absent from her poetry. What does this absence mean besides challenging the poetical tradition? Roberts does not clarify.

Another piece is Mary Moore’s “The Labyrinth as Style in Pamphilia to Amphilanthus” (1998). Concerning the self of the author, Moore talks about the labyrinthine style of Petrarchan tradition, which gives the sonneteers opportunities to create complex “thought webs.” In addition to the complexities, which the tradition of male sonneteers has created, Moore suggests that Wroth addresses the complexities and enclosure of gender roles in her writings. Corona style of Wroth turns each poem to a “closed poetic crown” through which Wroth depicts the complexities of her feminine self. Through this image Wroth creates a picture of self, which is “isolated, enclosed, difficult, and complex” (110). Wroth’s labyrinth derives from three sources familiar to English Renaissance readers—classical descriptions, Petrarchan poetry, and Protestant theology. In all of these three ways, the poem symbolizes difficulties of self-knowledge and the necessity of self-analysis. The poet in this sense plays an ethical role and her labyrinth represents spiritual knots. While in male tradition, love was the representation of vision and light, in Wroth’s poem it becomes the sign of blindness and darkness. The absent beloved encloses the speaker in her complexity. The spiritual

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element of the labyrinth comes to work when the speaker spiritualizes erotic desires by transcending love to a spiritual level that passes logical categories and gender structures. Poetry in this sense becomes a site for female freedom from gender definitions.

Moore brilliantly argues for what, but not for how. Reading Moore’s interpretation we learn that Wroth’s labyrinth signifies her complex enclosure within gender roles, yet we do not see examples from the poem where she embraces such enclosure. Moore’s reading also represents a general judgment about female roles. Wroth’s role as a female writer is exaggerated through idolization of her as an “ethical” figure. A closer look at the poem indicates that such a role is not significant. Moreover, Moore calls the love labyrinth blinding, which our later textual analysis proves erroneous. Lastly, unlike Moore’s argument in which the poem symbolizes difficulties of self-knowledge and self-analysis, the poem itself indicates evidences of both self-knowledge and self-analysis. What Moore calls a woman’s “freedom” from gender structure is a more complex operation of the persona’s mental functions, which might not be easily titled as “freedom.”

**Analysis**

According to Mihoko Suzuki in “Gender, Class, and the Social Order in Late Elizabethan Drama” (1992), history is a patriarchal canon. My emphasis on the marginalized female individuality in the scholarship acknowledges Suzuki’s project that declines the dominant ideology of the early “modern historiography” regarding the role of women. The historiography sees woman not as an active actor in forming history but as either “chaste transmitters of genealogical successions or unruly obstacles to the unfolding male-centered history.”6 Perhaps, considering history as a father figure is due to the dominant roles played by men in the formation of major historical event. However, the difference between history and a paternal figure is that history in and by itself cannot be castrating. It is the treatments and approaches toward history that make it castrating. If texts have been treated as unprivileged and secondary to history, history can well deprive them of their vivid inherent features. In giving voices to the individuality of writers, however, history is no more a castrating figure. My aim here is to show how different elements of Wroth’s poetry reveal the individual mentality and emotional patterns of the speaker while simultaneously disclose her social and cultural status. The sad tone of the poem creates a thematic tendency, which calls for a psychoanalytical study based on the theories of mourning and melancholia. I briefly introduce the two concepts (and their partial synonyms: introjection and incorporation)

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Based on Abraham and Torok’s “Mourning or Melancholia: Introjection versus Incorporation.”

The sudden absence of a love-object through death or abandonment makes the subject (who lost the object) move in one of the two directions: mourning or melancholia. According to Sigmund Freud, mourning and melancholia are distinguishable by the fact that mourning is the release of the sadness while melancholia is an internalization of sadness to the point that the subject identifies with the lost object. These two mental states correspond to what Abraham and Torok call “introjection” and “incorporation.” In the process of introjection the patient finds his way out of despondency into the replacement of loss, but in incorporation he internalizes sorrow in the form of identification with the lost object through fantasy. In this sense, while introjection acknowledges loss, incorporation escapes from it. The sense of loss, which has an intense connection with the subject’s past memories, if suppressed can lead to the establishment of a new identity, which is a combination of subject and object. Incorporation is a burial place for the lost object. The internal substitute acts like a tomb and buries the subject’s past. The origin of the introjections, according to Abraham and Torok, is in childhood when the emptiness of child’s mouth is filled with maternal breast, and later with language. If the metaphor of the lost breast and its replacement with words functions as a pattern for all experiences of loss in the future life, introjection is successful. The failure in adopting such pattern will lead to the incorporation of fantasy instead of accepting reality. As the origin of both introjections and incorporation is childhood’s empty mouth, “every incorporation has introjection as its nostalgic vocation.”

The desire to fantasize a lost object is a wish for passing such state and replacing it with alternative loved-objects that are present and actual. Judith Butler in *Precarious Life* emphasizes that grief is a facilitator in releasing sadness and it can help coming out of melancholia (i.e. introjection of loss). Greif in Butler is a sign of human vulnerability, the understanding of which prevents us from collapsing into sadness, anger and violence toward the others. Abraham and Torok, likewise, believe that “inexpressible mourning erects a secret tomb inside the subject” which could have severe outcomes.

Furthermore, the incorporation of fantasies is narcissistic. “Incorporation is nothing more than a reassuring fantasy for the ego... the unspeakable words and sentences, linked as they are to memories of great libidinal and narcissistic value cannot accept their exclusion.” By internalizing the lost object, the subject tries to reduce loss by overvaluing his own ego. His fantasy in reserving the lost object becomes more valuable than the reality of loss. While mourning is the last chance for self-restoration,

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8 Ibid., 130
9 Ibid., 132
From Narcissistic Melancholia to Loving Mourning in Mary Wroth’s Pamphilia – Elham Shayegh

suicide can be the possible final stage of incorporation. Internalizing all the characteristics of the lost object, melancholic personality fantasizes that the object’s death/disappearance was an absolute act of sacrifice and care toward the subject. Here, the main concern of identification is not the lost object but the subject’s self concern. The subject’s melancholic state is a performance of his desire for picturing the object’s disappearance as martyrdom for the sake of subject. The incorporation or inclusion of the lost object in melancholia happens through transformation of object into an image, which is totally “pure and devoid of aggression.”  

The incorporated object takes the form of an internal phantom shadowing the life of the subject. This phantom will be established only when it refers to a secret melancholic event in the past and when it is idyllic enough to sit in the place of subject’s ego-ideal. While in worst cases this endocryptic identification will end in madness, it seems that narcissism and mourning can play significant roles in directing the subject toward the perceptive pathways in which the repressed melancholic tension finds its way out (i.e. introjection).

It seems that a proper place to start discussing Wroth’s poem based on these theories is the following line:

[I] rather find my loss with loss alone.  

The speaker in this line perceives the absent nature of loss only through loss. The second “loss” could both refer to a new “loss” and to loss as incorporation. If the second “loss” refers to losing the loved-object for a second time, it signifies a stage of mourning in which the letting go of the object (through replacement and reconstruction of memory) is happening through time. However, if the second “loss” refers to the constant loss of self through identification with the lost object, it is an instance of melancholia and incorporation. Loss thus can be the absence that the subject introjects or the one that she incorporates, both of which include restoration of the lost object. Melancholia is an “unconscious loss of a love-object, in contradistinction to mourning, in which there is nothing unconscious about the loss.” In “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus,” as far as the subject is capable of articulating her loss, the loss is not unconscious; however, the total absence of the lost object in the poem suggests that loss at least primarily is not consciously recognized. And yet it seems that in granting her lover a name and denying him a presence, Pamphilia reinforces the significance of his name as if his name is enough to fill his absence. Amphilanthus means “the lover of two” - the unfaithful, the untrue. The absence of the lover throughout the poem thus stands for his absent love, which he did not have or could not show. The total presence

10 Ibid., 136
of the loving subject, however, signifies the inclusive nature of her love, as her name Pamphilia indicates—“all-loving.”

In a simple model we can classify the first phase of the poem as melancholic phase, the second one as transitional phase, and the third one as mourning phase. However, a closer inquiry into the nature of mourning and melancholia may complicate this classification. While it seems impossible to draw a clear line between the clinical symptoms of mourning and early melancholia, there are numbers of textual evidences in “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus” which help establish such boundaries between the two. According to Abraham and Torok, the first loss appears in childhood when after a certain age the pleasure of breast is denied from the child. The first introjection happens in filling the emptiness of mouth with language in which “…transition from a mouth filled with the breast to a mouth filled with words” happens. Linguistic expression (speech or writing) therefore is an introjection of loss into words. Unlike incorporation, which is an abrupt fantasy, introjection develops as a gradual process. The passage of time is needed for a memory to be cathexed: “The task is carried through bit by bit… this period of time is necessary for detailed carrying out of the behest imposed by the testing of reality, and that by accomplishing this labor the ego succeeds in freeing its libido from the lost object.”

This is what happens throughout the poem; the speaker goes back and cathects her memories “bit by bit” through linguistic expression.

The poem as it progresses presents the modification or metamorphosis of a number of concepts including love and grief. The conceptual modification of love occurs through the subject’s conversation with Venus and her son Cupid. The first phase starts with the speaker condemning Cupid for beguiling her into a failed relationship. The second phase ends with the speaker apologizing to Cupid for her first accusation. Finally, the third phase ends with eliminating the task of defining the nature of love through mythology. The last phase is where the idealization of love occurs. Idealization according to Freud is “a process that concerns the object; in which the object, without any alteration in its nature, is aggrandized and exalted in the mind.”

In the poem, love is elevated and purified to mirror the virtuous nature of the subject’s feeling. “Love is the shinning starr of blessings light…/ Image of fayth… true vertu, and his ends delight…/ Noe staine is ther butt pure, as purest white…/ noe cloud can apeere to dim his light.” Through such conceptual idealization, the subject seeks resolution of her lost love by creating a new loved-object that is love itself—a love that is divine, pure and ideal. True “love,” the “painter” who “make you… drawe your only...
deere/ More lively, perfett, lasting, and more true”\textsuperscript{17} helps her to imagine her lover many times and in many different ways through images which are more perfect, more lasting, and truer than the actual person that she loved; as if she is blaming Amphilanthus for the defectiveness, instability and falseness of his version of love.

The love before idealization has a double face: Metaphysical and corporeal. The former at this stage welcomes and incorporates the latter, and since the image of the physical object is still alive, corporeality is temporarily a normal feature of love. However, in the process of adjustment to loss through idealization, the subject drops the corporeal notion of love and treats love as an absolute metaphysical entity. Idealization, in this sense, becomes a way out of melancholia and incorporation.

In the first phase the speaker still recognizing the corporeal nature for love, pathetically condemns Cupid as the main cause of her failure in her past romance. The second phase, however, pregnant with the tone of reason, takes the blame away from love and directs it toward the lovers’ own mistake and ignorance. Love, in this stage, is in the process of becoming a coherent entity in which physical and metaphysical are interwoven: A characteristic which is no more visible in the third phase when, divorcing from Venus and Cupid, love is pictured as non-mythical, non-sensual, as totally metaphysical and totally “true.” “Hee [Cupid] her [Venus] obey’d, and martir’d my poore heart.”\textsuperscript{18} The unification of mother and son, mind and body, spiritual and sensual love, and the acceptance of the corporeal nature of love, presented in the first phase, creates a sense of ambivalence; uncertainty and double-mindedness encloses the subject. At this point love still operates as a means to the lost object, and not as the lost object itself. In the stage before idealization the subject’s uncertain treatment of love spreads through a melancholic shadows of obscurity, and a desire for incorporation.

In coldest hopes I freeze, yet burne Ay mee;  
From flames I strive to fly, yet turn Ay mee;  
From contraries I seeke to run,  
Butt contraries I can nott shun Ay mee;\textsuperscript{19}

Burn and yet to freeze.\textsuperscript{20}

Day and night, spring and winter intermingle. In the sonnet p.20, in which the speaker talks about the darkness of her days, incorporation of day into night happens, and in the sonnet p.7, where spring has been characterized as cold, incorporation of spring into winter. The connection which the poem establishes between darkness, coldness, and death already reflects the speaker’s desire for incorporating her loss in

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 83  
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 12  
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 14  
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 19
form of complete loss of her own existence through death. However, rather than a sacrificial gesture toward the lost object, the desire for death represents incorporation of the loved-object into the point that the subject’s suicidal desires implies the wish for death and disappearance of the loved-object. Since the lost object has already been internalized, death becomes a vehicle for revenge and self-pity rather than the classical image of unification with the loved one. In “I butt Camaelion-like would live, and love,” the speaker imagines herself as a chameleon—the creature capable of incorporating colors, environments, spaces. The incorporation of her surrounding occurs through identification with the lost object and further through desire for death and internalization of space as a burial place.

In sonnet p.29 love has been sentenced as the blind and blinding figure, which leads one to the disaster of loss: love that pure “blindness… to kill all sights.” However, later as the poem proceeds and as introjection happens, love is acquitted and the subject and her lost object are introduced as the main causes of confusion and blindness: “Love…. some say thou are blind…/ While we both blind, and bold oft dare/ Accuse thee of the harms… / Thy sacred powre, doe with a childs compare.” In the second phase, love, the treacherous agent of the first phase, itself becomes an object of love. Love becomes that loved-object, which through idealization in the third phase, is transformed into a safe eternal object that on no account will abandon the subject. Love, in the third phase, is not only metaphysical but also theological and divine. Even the subject’s faith confirms the authority of love “…faith still cries/ Love will nott falsefy.”

In addition to the modification of love, the speaker’s concept of grief changes throughout the poem. In the first phase incorporating her lost object through grief the distinction between the speaker’s words and her emotions is blurred, but in the second phase we see the emergence of a rational voice, which willingly seeks clarifications. Grief, which was the voice of the first phase, becomes secondary in the second phase and its articulation is possible only under mental supervision and policing “O stay mine eyes, shed nott thes fruitless tears.” While desire, the Freudian id, is the speaker of the first phase, reason, the superego, is the speaker of the second and the third phases. “True sorrow” thus is not the one that seeks its relief in mournful outburst but rather in being “ruled” by reason: “True sorrow, never outward wayling beares;/ Bee ruled by mee, kept all the rest in store/ Till no room is that may containe one more/ Then in that sea of tears drowne hapless mee.”

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21 Ibid., p. 15
22 Ibid., p. 38
23 Ibid., p. 68
24 Ibid., p. 54.
25 Ibid.
26 Another example of the appearance of the voice of reason in the poem is in the following lines: “Spare mee then till I am my self, and blest” (p.52). Why does she say this? Does “till I am my self” mean that she is not herself? Does she refer to rational life as a self and passionate life as a none-self?
The exploration of the causes of the absence of loved-object will help provide a better understanding of incorporation and introjection processes in the poem. While Amphilanthus’s absence throughout the poem makes him a good addressee for Pamphilia (for he is the lost object that deserves attention and admiration through imaginary conversations), it is obvious that Pamphilia does not address him. Her speech addresses abstract entities like love, pain, hope, time; material entities like spring, winter; and herself; but not Amphilanthus. The identification and unification of the speaker with abstract entities of love, loss, and grief, instead of her unification with the lost object presents another tendency toward cathexis of her melancholic feelings rather than their incorporation.

“Silence, and grief, with thee I best doe love…
…let us live companions without strife.”

The subject’s inclinations toward unification with loss and grief present their privileged position compared to the lost object. It seems that mourning and its attributes deserve better attentions from the subject to the point that they would substitute the lost object, and provide the subject with what the loved-object could not give her: “might,” “rest,” “peace,” “ease.”

“Let me all pains, and lasting torment prove/ Soe I miss these, lay all thy waits on mee.”

Her narcissistic grief, which occurs throughout the first phase of the poem, is the breaking ground for termination of melancholic desires. For “melancholic mourning is often the subject’s last chance at narcissistic restoration.”

When the feeling of loss in melancholia ends, Abraham and Torok note, it is worthwhile to “wonder whether melancholics really love their phantom object.”

The common notion of love tells us that we love the mental image, which we created of the loved-object rather than the actual person. However, what Abraham and Torok suggest is that although melancholic personalities incorporate the lost object, they do not desire it. “The phantom” is “the incorporated object” which is no more loved.

When last I saw thee, I did nott thee see,

What does she consider as “self” which is no more available after her failure in being loved? Is self her personality out of mental and emotional agitations of loss?

27 Ibid., p. 43
28 Ibid. p. 18, 32, 45
29 Ibid., p. 32
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
It was thine Image, which in my thoughts lay.\textsuperscript{33}

According to Abraham and Torok “…fantasy is essentially narcissistic.”\textsuperscript{34} So, which lost object does the speaker here talk about? Is it an actual lost object or an imaginary one? Is Amphilanthus a fictional lost object, a phantom exiting in the mind of the speaker from the beginning? Or does the absent Amphilanthus signify his union with Pamphilia in her thoughts, character and her monologue? Do we simply face a case of narcissism in which Amphilanthus has been incorporated into Pamphilia’s ego and “the narcissistic identification with the object becomes a substitute for the erotic cathexis”?\textsuperscript{35} Or is there a different story?

The absence of the loved-object in the poem indicates the possibility of melancholia in which the lost object is replaced with the object’s ego. Amphilanthus’s presence in the title, and his absence throughout the poem make one wonder why his name was mentioned at all. Is this a sign of dedication of the poem to a specific male reader as Roberts suggests, or is it an obedience of the tradition of sonnet writers as other critics discuss? The absence of the loved-object in the poem suggests the incorporation of Amphilanthus into Pamphilia. However, his presence in the title suggests the possibility of another type of incorporation, a mid-way incorporation, or even an introjection. Amphilanthus’s name signifies some kind of presence even if only in name. Although Amphilanthus has not been directly characterized by the poem, the language and the tone of the poem characterize him for the readers. Abraham and Torok believe that, “Inclusion [in form of incorporation] does not occur unless the subject is convinced of the object’s total innocence.”\textsuperscript{36} Although the poem moves from slight forms of melancholia to mourning, it never presents a total melancholic state – one that ends in subject’s absolute identification with the lost object in form of madness or suicide. Incorporation –the “refusal to mourn… and an absolute denial of loss”\textsuperscript{37}– has never happened in the poem. Such absolute incorporation, which only occurs in case of object’s total “innocent,” signifies Pamphilia’s lack of belief in Amphilanthus as an innocent object.

In the second phase of the poem, which I named transitional stage, in a rational gesture, the melancholic tone of the first phase is replaced by the voice of reason. Although such classification is based on the inconsistency of emotion/reason binary, it


\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 130.
seems that for Freud this binary operation is the only way out of the emotional shock of loss. “The testing of reality, having shown that the loved-object no longer exists, requires forthwith that all the libido shall be withdrawn from its attachment to the object.”

Introjection is after all a psychic process involved in reconstruction of the memories of the lost object through time. As the gradual rationalization of loss occurs through the poem, the tone of the later sonnets is more lively and realistic than the earlier ones. The “songs” appearing in the second phase through their rapid rhythmic tone, designate the balance in the speaker’s mind and emotions. Abandoning grief, Pamphilia is now observing it from a higher level: “Nor suffer me with grief…/ Lett mee bee ignorant of mine owne ill.”

The final phase starts with the poem picturing love as a labyrinth: “In this strange labourinth how shall I turne?/ Wayes are on all sides while the way I miss…/ Thus lett mee take the right, or left hand way;/ Goe forward, or stand still, or back retire… to leave all, and take the thread of love.”

Moore believes that the poet following the tradition of Petrarchan sonneteers presents her confusion in love as a labyrinth. However, calling love a “thread,” in the last line, it seems that the speaker takes refuge in the guidance of love from the confusion of loss. Here love is definitely different from love of the first stage. This final love detached from physical desires of the first phase symbolizes a divine metaphysical direction. Although this love might be as confusing and as labyrinthal as the love of the first phase, it does not cause pain and rather becomes a cure:

...thread of love  
Which line straute leads unto the soules content  
Wher choice delights with pleasures wings doe move,  
And idle phant’sie never roome had lent.

Finally, “In grief the world becomes poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself.” Although Pamphilia’s world looks empty, Pamphilia herself does not. The target of her complaints is the external world rather than her ego. In this case she is experiencing mourning rather than melancholia for “in melancholia the subject describes himself as “petty, egoistic, dishonest, lacking in independence, one whose sole aim was to hide the weakness of his own nature.” Pamphilia’s ego, though agitated, is
not condemned, it restores its integrity in the linguistic expression of her loss through writing: in the “discourse, I with my spirit tauke.” Writing functions as a process of broadening ego; thus her writings is a means for her introjection.

**Conclusion**

Overemphasizing historical and cultural contexts in literary analysis creates ignorance toward literary text and its psychological and aesthetic demands. It is common to admit history and culture as superstructures that shape people and their various literary/artistic expressions- an understanding that is based on old historicist approaches rather than new ones. Discussing the concept of “culture as text,” the new historicist approach scrutinizes textuality as it operates everywhere, and where (unlike old historicism) the “relative positions of text and context” constantly shift. Historical interpretive practices according to Stephen Greenblatt should “keep a paradoxical relationship” toward literary texts, “reading with” and “reading against” them. Greenblatt calls such a blend *counterhistory*: a narrative that moves between the voices of excluded individuals and the voice of excluding power without polarizing and victimizing them. In new historicist readings there is no history and politics in isolation from people and their languages and literatures. In this reading, Wroth’s poem is no more a passive product of historical context as most of the current scholarship suggests, but an active element and a producer of history. In this sense, the Renaissance history is a miscellaneous mixture of single individual expressions, interrupting the conventional and linear understanding of history. The revival of the individuality of authors through attentive readings of their texts is a means to challenging the absolutism of structures (hear the Renaissance history), and presenting the power of individuals and their expressions in contributing and changing the authority of the established structures.

**Work Cited**


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46 Ibid., p. 16.
47 Ibid., p. 81.

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Abstract

While some readers may disregard Edmund Spenser as an insignificant figure whose poetry has been lost throughout the years in the vast sea of canonized works, his influence remains prevalent throughout virtually all literary periods. Although the Victorian era is typically described as a rapidly paced time of innovative intellect and bold originality, much of their literary styles, characteristics, and techniques manifest from Spenser’s own literature and the creativity within it, predominantly Spenser’s masterpiece, *The Faerie Queene*. Like the Victorians, Spenser recognized that literature plays a prominent role in not only reflecting, but also in shaping the norms, traditions, and values that characterize cultures of different societies. While Spenser influences the Victorians in their literary intentions of revolutionizing the conditions under which they live in addition to the social morale, he plays a significant role in the methods, content, and styles that Victorian writers employ, including the incorporation and manipulation of elements of fantasy, the literary portrayal and treatment of females, and the use of allegory, in fulfilling their intended purposes for the literature of their time. Much like the inherent function of social activism that prevails within the literature that epitomizes Victorian sensibilities and philosophical dispositions, Spenser makes use of literature to reflect reality, in hopes of inspiring new perspectives and more refined attitudes and conduct. By encouraging his readers to evaluate their own beliefs, morals, and behaviors, Spenser attempts to improve and refine the overall moral demeanor within British societies following the sixteenth century.
Transformative Powers of Past Perspectives: Edmund Spenser’s Influence on Victorian Sensibility and Implications for Modern Society throughout *The Faerie Queene*

Brittany N. Krantz

While many individuals easily recognize the names of William Shakespeare and Geoffrey Chaucer, the reputation of Edmund Spenser has not maintained such a high degree of popularity throughout the ages. In fact, many people cannot truthfully admit that they have ever heard of him, much less accurately recall the titles of any of his literature. Graham Hough classifies Spenser and his works, predominantly his masterpiece, *The Faerie Queene*, as a “forgotten kind… in England for about a century.”¹ Hough continues to note that Spenser’s “disappearance from the English reader’s memory coincides with the beginning of the silent decay of Spenser’s fame.”² At first glance, Spenser may appear as an insignificant figure whose poetry has been lost throughout the years in the vast literary sea of canonized works; his influence, however, remains prevalent throughout virtually all eras.

Known to many individuals as the “poet’s poet,”³ Spenser, as William Buckler describes, embodies “a poetic inventor…[who] made a high festivity of lyric language…[that created] a sense of heightened imaginative reality while avoiding the caprice of euphuistic falseness and the dullness of verbal neutrality.”⁴ Because of Spenser’s poetic ingenuity, the “Victorians…worked their linguistic and structural variations on the examples of Spenser.”⁵ Although the Victorian era is typically described as a rapidly paced time of innovative intellect and bold originality, many of the Victorians’ literary styles, characteristics, and techniques manifest from Spenser’s own literature and creativity. Despite the undeniable presence of imagination in the Victorians’ work, their lives and the realities through which these citizens struggled on a daily basis proved anything but a fabrication of the mind.

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² Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid., 101.
The Victorian era begins with the reign of Queen Victoria in 1837 and ends with her death in 1901. The Victorians faced the increasingly difficult challenges of the radically changing social atmosphere, along with “all the harsh...realities of the developing Industrial Revolution” during the early nineteenth century. The literature of this period “is...utterly redeemed from cliché, by being, in its true reality, much more serious, much more important, [and] much more complex and specific than [they] had ever supposed such ordinary things could be.” Despite the Victorians’ bleak living conditions and austere realities that often provoked negative outlooks and bitter demeanors, the key figures associated with the earliest roots of Victorian literature, specifically Thomas Carlyle and Alfred, Lord Tennyson, embarked on literary experiments involving the “salvation of imaginative letters” fueled by the “urgency of a desperate hope.”

While the Romantics often utilize literature, including poetry, as a means to escape reality and create a “model of individualistic lyric feeling in a world of nature,” the succeeding Victorians employed literature as more of a coping mechanism, not using it to hide from reality completely, but incorporating it into their lives in order to alter their perspectives and help them view reality in different ways. Moreover, Donald D. Stone asserts that the Romantics, who often view literature and poetry as a means of celebrating and venerating the self, “often posed a threat to the Victorian poets by allowing them to view themselves in an inflated manner—exalted above or alienated from their fellow men.” As a result of this transformed literary purpose and usage, readers throughout the Victorian period discovered that these new methods often helped them realize the “revelation of a ‘truth’ that is inferior to the truth that is actually there.” Correspondingly, Stone identifies the intention of Victorian fiction as one which “direct[s] the individual away from egoistic or false heroic aims and toward communal and domestic goals.”

Ironically, despite the fact that Victorian literature sought to move away from the focus of the inner self that characterized the Romantics, by utilizing literature to cope with hardships, rather than simply creating a temporary mental escape into a fictitious world, readers do indeed began to discover more about themselves, particularly in how they think, how they derive meaning from their experiences, how they establish their

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7 Ibid., 2.
9 Ibid.
individual points of view, how they develop their personas and sense of identity, and how they can begin to transform these perspectives by altering perceptions of cultural, moral, and social norms and expectations. In the same way, Russell J. Meyer acknowledges that Spenser “presents [readers] with a route to [their] own salvation, to better knowledge of [themselves] and a more thorough understanding of others.” In addition to this seemingly paradoxical relationship between utilizing the self to gain an understanding of an individual’s public surroundings, this contrast between the focus of the self as a unique individual and the self that exists as a member of a collective society is prevalent in the shift from Romantic to Victorian literature. Additionally, Michael O’Connell identifies this distinction as “the central irony of the historical dimension of The Faerie Queene, [because] Spenser begins by insisting upon the public dimension of the essentially private virtue of holiness, and...ends in his last completed book with a vision of the inwardness of the social virtue of courtesy.”

Spenser’s masterpiece indeed “encapsulates the change from the outward-looking, socially-engaged aesthetic of the humanists to the introverted and private aesthetic of the poets in the first half of the seventeenth century.” Despite this transgression from public to private spheres within the poem, Spenser maintains his poetic “conviction of...moral duty” while “enter[ing] gardens of private experience” in Spenser’s own declaration of his intentions to “fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous (sic) and gentle discipline,” as Spenser proclaims in his “Letter to Raleigh.” Although Spenser maintains a great concern with his work’s widespread societal influence, Colin Manlove explains that Spenser seeks to conversely execute a widespread impact through “his Renaissance and Protestant interest in psychology and inner mental working.” By encouraging his readers to evaluate their own beliefs, ethics, and behaviors, Spenser attempts to refine the overall moral demeanor within British society during the sixteenth century and in following eras.

In Wayne Erickson’s recognition of The Faerie Queene “as a mirror of waking existence,” he declares that that readers “assent to a journey within’” because “Faeryland depicts states of the mind or soul by recording cognitive and psychological processes.” Much like the Victorians, Spenser recognized that literature plays a

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16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
prominent role in not only reflecting, but also in shaping the norms, traditions, and values that characterize cultures of different eras. While Spenser influences the Victorians in their literary intentions of revolutionizing the current conditions of morale within society, he plays a significant role in the methods, content, and styles that Victorian writers employ, including the incorporation of fantasy, the treatment and portrayal of females, and the use of allegory, in fulfilling their intended purposes for the literature of their time.

Although *The Faerie Queene* has been dismissed by some readers as a senseless fairy tale or as an elaborate expression of an overactive imagination, Spenser utilizes elements of fantasy within his masterpiece to not only develop the allegory underlying his work, but to expose readers to what J. W. Saunders refers to as the “transforming power of his imagination,” as well. Speaking in terms of this peculiar skill, A. C. Hamilton declares that Spenser’s prominent reputation and legitimacy as a poet lies within his “rendering the realities of human psychology and...[depictions of] what happens in the soul [and] in man’s mind and feelings.” As Sean Kane declares that “fantasy is necessary [to represent reality] because the mind thinks in images,” Spenser depicts Faery Land as a place that contains “A Gentle Knight” and “a Dragon horrible and stearne.” Despite these fantastic images and supernatural elements, Sverre Arestad declares the classification of *The Faerie Queene* as an example of a complex fairytale or intricate work of folklore completely inaccurate, because “the fairy lore [within the poem] is not closely related to...the purpose of the *Faerie Queene.*” Instead of portraying reality as a literal reflection of mortal experience or to embellish his writing with whimsicality, Spenser establishes the fictitious setting of Faery Land and includes elements of fantasy in order to execute the poem’s allegorical functions. While Spenser does incorporate fantasy in the poem’s fabricated setting, characters with supernatural powers, and acts of enchantment, these fanciful aspects “contribute important though subordinated parts which bear no organic relation” to Spenser’s underlying intentions for the work.

While many scholars often ponder Spenser’s justification of his use of fantasy within a work characterized by moral implications and otherwise serious intentions, Stephen Prickett claims that fantasy helps individuals “evolve new languages for new

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28 Ibid., bk. I, canto i, st. 3.
30 Ibid., 41.
kinds of human experience; it has pointed the way towards new kinds of thinking and feeling.” Likewise, Erickson pinpoints this juxtaposition of fantasy and serious demeanor in Spenser’s work by explaining that, while “Faeryland is (emphasis added) distanced from everyday experience,...it and the larger world that Spenser builds around it are, as Spenser would say, mirrors reflecting reality from a number of perspectives.” Expanding upon the reasons and significance behind these various outlooks, Isabel G. MacCaffrey explains more specifically that “fictions invent lives, or versions of lives that enable us to observe psychic reality in a way that we cannot normally do with respect to ourselves.” Moreover, “this knowledge can work reflexively to make us aware of a penumbra of unapprehended reality that invisibly surrounds and controls our own lives.” These notions regarding the effects of fantasy remain consistent with Spenser’s intentions to alter common outlooks and attitudes prevalent during his day, thus, inspiring greater social morality during the sixteenth century.

Whereas Spenser incorporates fantasy to convey important messages and portray serious themes, such as social conduct, deportment, and morality, his portrayal of England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth within the plot of The Faerie Queene, as Michael Patrick Hearne confirms, embodies a parallel structure similar to Victorian “works of fancy... [that] reflect Victoria’s England better than most of the earnest novels and social tracts of that era.” In response, Buckler likewise asserts that “Victorian literature has assumed an imaginative presence analogous to that occupied by the literature of the period from Spenser to Milton.” Joan Grundy explains that perhaps the reason behind this seemingly paradoxical concept of utilizing the fantastic to accurately depict present states of reality lies within the fact that these elements of fantasy and the supernatural “are not to be brushed aside as mere excrescences or escapist realities,” but instead viewed as “indispensable aids to the achievement of [the literary works’] own special and unique high seriousness.” While Spenser seeks to alter the social mindset prevalent within the sixteenth century, Victorian writers also sought to change the depressed and disheartening points of view resulting from the

34 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
Industrial Revolution to more hopeful and optimistic outlooks for a brighter and more prosperous future.

While all of the themes represented within *The Faerie Queene*, including honor, virtue, integrity, and friendship, maintain a level of “high seriousness” because of their significance to the moral conduct and nobility of society, the portrayal of women represents an implied crucial theme that reoccurs throughout the poem. The treatment of women is important to fulfilling Spenser’s purpose of producing gentlemen, because true gentlemen regarded women much differently than males not of noble statuses within Spenser’s day. Dating back from the epic literature of Dante, Vergil, and Homer, women’s roles, as Harry Berger, Jr. explains, are “determined by the male mind… and soured by centuries of hate.” Because of this widespread negative disposition regarding females, women were commonly portrayed in three stereotypical aspects that reflect the oppressive perspectives of male-dominated societies: they are depicted as weak and ineffective leaders dominated by their hysterical emotions, such as Dido and Amata from Vergil’s *The Aeneid*, as passive and submissive individuals confined to the domestic sphere, like Penelope from Homer’s *The Odyssey*, or as monstrous individuals that represent wickedness and vicious, animalistic instincts, like Homer’s Sirens within *The Odyssey* and Vergil’s woman warrior in *The Aeneid*, Camilla.

Despite these generic patterns and common stereotypes that frequently permeated literature both prior to and during Spenser’s time, in contrast, Gail E. Cohee observes that *The Faerie Queene* “is filled with such a rich variety of female types” that potentially function “as role models for their own female contemporaries… ranging from strong, independent women to admirable wives” a technique and literary quality that remained downright atypical even during Spenser’s time. In response to these varied depictions, Anne Paolucci recognizes that, while Spenser incorporates women that “symbolize the lowest depth of viciousness and bestiality” he also conveys them “as the highest expression of selflessness and goodness,” a flattering and propitious portrayal especially marked with oddity in comparison to the works that comprised the current literary landscape, as reiterated with Frank D. Grande’s affirmation that “Spenser’s delineation of women is the very opposite of…[the] historical manner of depiction.” Spenser executes this uncommon exposé of women by praising, as

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39 Ibid.
42 Ibid., 101.
43 Paolucci, Anne, *The Women in Dante’s Divine Comedy and Spenser’s Faerie Queene*, (Dover: Griffon, 2005), 12.
44 Ibid.
45 Grande, Frank D, preface to *The Women in Dante’s Divine Comedy and Spenser’s Faerie Queene*, by Anne Paolucci (Dover: Griffon, 2005), vii.
opposed to attacking, their strengths, such as in his depictions of Britomart, and exalting, as opposed to insulting and criticizing, their competency and potential as great leaders, as in his descriptions of Gloriana, Amoret, and Florimell, for instance. Spenser’s literary renderings of females allegorically venerate Queen Elizabeth, a (female) leader and icon widely recognized as the epitome of knowledge, wisdom, elegance, and sovereignty to sixteenth-century English citizens. With these reveries, Spenser aims to transform preconceived social assumptions of women, revolutionize their social statuses, and improve the general male treatment toward the female gender.

Spenser’s heroine Britomart, identified as “the beautie and the shining ray”46 and further described as “faire”47 and of “constant mind,”48 appears to represent Spenser’s notion of the ideal woman: beautiful and feminine, yet brave and independent. While most literary portrayals of women throughout previous eras highlight their flaws and concentrate on the weaknesses that ultimately yield their demises, Spenser attempts to foster compassion for women, as apparent in Redcross’s address to Britomart that “Here haue I cause, in men iust blame to find, / That in their proper praise too partiall bee, / And not indifferent to woman kind.”49 This benevolence is further implied in Redcross’s admission that “envious Men fearing [women’s] rules decay,”50 and in the description of this particular category of individuals as “foolish men.”51 By encouraging males to focus on their own faults and blameworthy downfalls, Spenser garners empathy for the female gender. Additionally, when Spenser discloses that Britomart “turned her head aside, as nothing glad, / To haue beheld a spectacle so bad,”52 he reiterates this empathy, as opposed to perpetuating the usual dismal lack of regard for women’s emotional pain and suffering. Consequently, Spenser characterizes females as more human than their portrayals in previous literary works and provides a contrast to the “crueltie of womenkynd”53 that he reveals in previous stanzas.

Interestingly, with this contrast, Spenser inadvertently exposes the struggle of “how to redress the balance in a culture whose images of women and love, [and] institutions affecting women and love, were products of the male imagination.”54 Although Spenser seeks to glorify women in order to cultivate a deeper awareness and appreciation of them among men and dispel male’s desires to control and possess the female gender, Spenser “does not simply idealize women or the feminine viewpoint, for this would amount to the kind of withdrawal from reality [not to mention, perpetuate

48 Ibid., bk. III, canto i, st. 3.
49 Ibid., bk. III, canto ii, st. 1.
50 Ibid., bk. III, canto ii, st. 2.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid., bk. V, canto vii, st. 38.
53 Ibid., bk. V, canto v, st. 25.
the gender bias and injustice] that he frequently criticizes. Rather, he recognizes that feminine nature has its own inherent limits and tensions.”\textsuperscript{55} In keeping with the moral implications of The Faerie Queene, Lillian S. Robinson affirms that Spenser’s concern “is not simply to demonstrate that some women do hold power legitimately, but also to show that legitimate female power means virtuous government.”\textsuperscript{56} Spenser’s unique depictions of women demonstrate his transforming of customary perceptions regarding the concept of femininity from those points of view that render it a detrimental human defect, as prevalent in earlier epics, to more refined outlooks that accept the ideologies of femininity as producers of appreciated and celebrated differences that manifest socially and morally enriching diversity throughout society and among humanity.

Despite these advantageous aspects and beneficial effects of the depictions and implications of The Faerie Queene’s leading ladies, it must be understood and acknowledged that the poem does place “a somewhat false emphasis on the place of women in British history,”\textsuperscript{57} despite its classification as an allegory, by exaggerating and aggrandizing several women’s governing abilities, political achievements, and actions, many of which remained strongly discouraged, politically impossible, or downright unlawful within sixteenth century—and Victorian—societies. However, Spenser’s positive perspective upon the female experience not only demonstrates, as previously mentioned, the “transforming power of his imagination,”\textsuperscript{58} but exemplifies the concept of “poetic transcendence,”\textsuperscript{59} as well.

By converting the primary functions of poetry from forms of entertainment or personal expression into methods of social activism that promote fair treatment of females and create reasonable opportunities for them to fulfill more substantial roles and attain more significant social statuses, Spenser reveals “psychological sympathies and insights that humanize (sic)”\textsuperscript{60} his poetry. As Regina Buccola observes, this psychological insight and compassionate concern represents yet more features of Spenser’s work that prove “uncharacteristic of early modern gender [and literary] norms.”\textsuperscript{61} Although The Faerie Queene obviously exists as a work of fiction, by providing women with more independent personas that shatter the stereotypical portrayals of pervious literary eras, Spenser transforms women’s previous literary roles as “totally

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., 300.
\textsuperscript{60}Ibid., 215.
controllable machines”62 into proficient and independent individuals capable of fulfilling important leadership roles and making significant contributions, not only to literature, but to society and humanity, as well. This shift in females’ literary roles and purposes suggest Spenser’s desire for the present and future societies to make comparable changes and improve women’s repute in England during these times.

Sheila T. Cavanagh strongly argues Spenser’s female portrayals as positive and progressive in her claims that “The Faerie Queene has traditionally been read without much overt recognition of the poem’s repeated displacement, subversion, and abuse of female characters.”63 Following her acknowledgement that The Faerie Queene’s female characters are frequently recognized only for their appearance and physicality, she asserts that “the poem often suggests that women’s external presentation hides internal reality”64 and alleges that implications regarding female’s deceptive, unreliable, and inherently wicked natures pervade the poem.

Despite Cavanagh’s focus on the wholly negative aspects of Spenser’s treatment of women throughout The Faerie Queene, Robinson argues that, in regard to the natures, characteristics, and decisions of the women characters, “Spenser does not seem to consider [them…] improper course[s] of action.”65 In other words, while some writers portray females as what Cavanagh identifies as “the complex representation of women as illusory, fleeting, dangerous, deceptively beautiful, [and] treacherous,”66 Spenser, on the other hand, does not utilize female characters within The Faerie Queene to fit these descriptions nor to fulfill menacing roles in maintaining consistency with more traditional literary depictions of the female mentality. This difference becomes verified in Robinson’s assertion that Spenser denies and refuses to view the female characters’ actions as unusual, aberrant, and/or deviant, as is the case with most other literary female characters who demonstrate insolent tendencies, malicious desires, and wicked dispositions, as not all (if any) of Spenser’s female characters in The Faerie Queene do.

Quite the contrary, in fact, because Spenser’s portrayal of female characters with favorable attributes that imply complimentary praise is demonstrated repeatedly in various instances throughout The Faerie Queene. While many readers undoubtedly recognize this concept demonstrated with the main characters of Gloriana and Britomart, rarely do they acknowledge the demonstration of this concept with less-frequently encountered and even lesser-known characters, such as Belpheobe and

64 Ibid., 28.
Mercilla, both of whom represent “allegorical statements about chastity, justice, and mercy,” as well as Queen Guendolene, Mertia, and Bonduca.

Spenser reveals Queen Guendolene’s inherent nature through her reaction to her husband’s infidelity, in which she slays his mistress because of the mistress’s lack of guilt or feelings of remorse for these actions:

The noble daughter of Corineus
Would not endure to bee so vile disdained,
But gathering force, and corage valorous,
Encountered him in bateill well ordained,
In which him vanquisht she to fly constrained:
But she so fast pursuwd, that him she tooke,
And threw in bands, where he till death remaind;
Als his faire Leman, flying through a brooke,
She ouerhent, nought moured with her piteous looke.

Here, by incorporating adjectives with honorable connotations in his descriptions, Spenser “does not define [Queen Guendolene] as an irrational or hysterical creature,” which remains in sharp contrast to the diction and connotations used to depict females’ actions in the poetry of earlier epic poets, including Vergil and Homer. While the latter poets’ descriptions of females’ actions portray them as irrational, unrestrained, and incontrollable, Spenser, instead, conveys Queen Guendolene as a character who “demonstrates a fine, balanced sense of justice” and maintains her honor as a noble, operative, and righteous leader, “During which time her powre she did display / Through all this realme, the glory of her sex, / And first taught men a woman to obay.”

Spenser bestows similar graciousness and dignity in the descriptions of the woman who marries Donwallo’s great-grandson, “Dame Mertia the fayre,” by illustrating her as:

A woman worthy of immortall praise,

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69 Ibid., 296-297.
70 Ibid., 297.
72 Ibid., bk. II, canto x, st. 42.
Which for this Realme found many goodly layes,
And wholesome Statutes to her husband brought:
Her many deemed to haue beene of the Fayes,
As was Aegerie, that Numa tought:
Those yet of her be Mertian laws both nam’d and thought.\textsuperscript{73}

While it is suggested that Mertia derives from supernatural origins in Spenser’s statement that “many deemed [her] to haue beene of the Fayes.”\textsuperscript{74} Spenser’s ambiguity and lack of detail following his mentioning of the “goodly layes”\textsuperscript{75} and “wholesome Statutes,”\textsuperscript{76} indicates that “he considers them sound and appropriate,”\textsuperscript{77} further emphasizing Mertia’s leadership abilities, human decency, and ultimately, sincere normalcy.

One additional example deserving of recognition because of its demonstration of Spenser’s portrayal of females in a worthy, rather than atrocious, light is the scene in which the queen and warrior called Bonduca courageously faces her country’s enemies with valor, when “Whereof great trouble in the kingdome grew, / That did her selfe in sondry parts diuide, / And with her powre her owne selwe ouerthrew…/ taking arms, the Britons to her drew, / With whom she marched streight against her foes, / And them vnwares besides the Severne did enclose.”\textsuperscript{78} After declaring battle against foreign tyranny, she fights, front and center, with her army, but ultimately loses the battle. Not willing to surrender or accept defeat, Bonduca, “Rather than fly, or be captiu’d, her selwe she slew.”\textsuperscript{79} Recognizing that killing herself is more noble than allowing herself to be killed or captured by the enemy, Bonduca falls to her untimely death by suicide. In previous works of literature, such as Vergil’s \textit{The Aeneid}, suicide executed by women, such as Dido’s killing of herself, is seemingly disregarded as nothing more than the unfortunate result of “a woman’s rage”\textsuperscript{80} caused by her “troubled soul”\textsuperscript{81} and “mad passion.”\textsuperscript{82} Spencer conveys Bonduca’s suicide, on the other hand, as an extoled act of honor. Despite the differences in the two characters’ motives and justifications, both Dido and Bonduca commit the same action; the perceptions of the two suicides, however, differ greatly, as evidenced in the two poets’ descriptions of the deceased.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Spenser, Edmund, \textit{The Faerie Queene}, rev. 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., ed. A. C. Hamilton, et al. (Harlow: Pearson, 2007), bk. II, canto x, st. 54.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., bk. II, canto x, st. 55.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 4.6.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 4.121.
characters and the insinuations that these descriptions entail. While Vergil deems Dido’s suicide as a “cruel death,”\textsuperscript{83} Spenser considers Bonduca’s suicide as “triumphed on death”\textsuperscript{84} and representative of a noble victory for the Britons, despite this army’s loss in battle, because of their privilege of having been headed by such a gallant and virtuous leader and warrior as Bonduca.

Moreover, Bonduca’s fighting skills and swift actions in her declaration of war earn her the accolade of “O famous moniment of womens prayse, / Matchable either to Semiramis, / Whom antique history so high doth rayse…” / And yet though overcome in hapless fight, / Shee triumphed on death, in enemies despight.” \textsuperscript{85} Bonduca is comparable to Vergil’s own female Volscian warrior, Camilla. But unlike Vergil, who depicts Camilla as a vicious and inhumane “Dread maiden,”\textsuperscript{86} Spenser exaults Bonduca for her efforts in the “cruell batteill tryde.”\textsuperscript{87} Additionally, Spenser declares Bonduca as “Matchable…to Semiramis,”\textsuperscript{88} an allusion which text editors Hiroshi Yamashita and Toshiyuki Suzuki explain as a reference to “the famous queen who…performed ‘many noble enterprices and valiaunt actes (sic).’”\textsuperscript{89} While Camilla’s fighting skills, war kills, and participation in battle contribute to Vergil’s portrayal of her as a rancorous, merciless, and overtly cruel being, Spenser actually uses these elements of war to convey Bonduca in a positive and admirable light because of the defense that she willfully displays for her homeland and for the courage, valor, and heroism that she represents as “she marched streight against her foes”\textsuperscript{90} to fight those threatening the safety and tranquility of her country, as a strong, effective, and competent leader indeed should.

Although Cavanagh’s assertion that “women in the epic tend to be judged by their beauty,…while male behavior and attitudes consistently undermine female efforts toward virtue”\textsuperscript{91} entails some truth, Spenser’s depictions of females in \textit{The Faerie Queene} exemplify the possibility that beauty, strength, leadership, courage, and morality can exist simultaneously. Furthermore, this idea also demonstrates that these merits are valued and utilized differently by each character, rendering the females as unique individuals deserving of men’s approval and respect, two of the most commonly

\begin{footnotes}
\item[83] Ibid., 4.400.
\item[84] Spenser, Edmund, \textit{The Faerie Queene}, rev. 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., ed. A. C. Hamilton, et al. (Harlow: Pearson, 2007), bk. II canto x, st. 56.
\item[85] Ibid.
\item[88] Ibid., bk. II, canto x, st. 56.
\end{footnotes}
desired reciprocations shared among sixteenth century and Victorian women who existed in the midst of patriarchal societies.

Despite these reoccurring examples of Spenser’s upright regards and decent treatment of female characters throughout *The Faerie Queene*, some critics, such as Cavanagh, limit the significance of these characters to nothing more than that of “demonic females’ dominant presence”⁹² and deny that these representations bode well for females, speaking in terms of the text and in reality. This very refute, however, poses a contradiction within itself. As many scholars, including Caroline McManus, have stated, Spenser “explicitly acknowledges the presence of women, royal and nonroyal (sic), within the literary and political culture [that] the poem reflects and sought to transform.”⁹³ Even if Spenser’s portrayal of females throughout the poem was indeed inherently unfavorable or uncomplimentary, this hypothetical depiction still does not pose so-called ‘threats’ to the integrity of the readership or to the reputation of women in reality because of the poem’s underlying intention to cultivate change and improve the society’s morale of the present time and of future eras. Hamilton reaffirms this notion by proclaiming that “as with any literary work, the words of *The Faerie Queene* first turn inward to establish the poem’s own identity,”⁹⁴ which requires readers “to stand back to see [the episodes, cantos, and books] as parts of a whole, a single literary universe…as a consequence, the first and essential context for understanding any stanza of the poem is the rest of the poem. To read it otherwise is to read it out of context.”⁹⁵ When read to derive basic, surface-level comprehension, some of the depictions of females throughout the poem may be perceived as questionable and problematic, regarding their morality, ethical judgment, intelligence, and their roles alongside the poem’s male counterparts, but when read by keeping the poem’s allegorical nature and underlying objectives in mind, these depictions only further promote Spenser’s intentions of cultivating change by encouraging more noble dispositions in order to improve social integrity.

Whether opposing critics avow that *The Faerie Queene*’s representation of females presents contradictory messages or provokes false expectations and fantasized points of view, many advantageous and beneficial aspects to these portrayals remain prevalent, which most of these critics fail to acknowledge in their refutations and denunciations. Ironically, while Cavanagh recognizes that the poem discusses Queen Elizabeth’s reign on the throne, she contradictorily proclaims that “the text implicitly supports the culture’s systematic denial of women.”⁹⁶ Nonetheless, this notion reaffirms one of the

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⁹² Ibid., 12.
⁹⁵ Ibid.
primary values of the allegory and the poem itself within Victorian society: by acknowledging Spenser’s various portrayal of females throughout *The Faerie Queene*, Victorians heed just as much value and wisdom from the implied consequences of maintaining their preexisting gender roles, expectations, and mindsets as they do from Spenser’s didactic messages of how to properly conduct oneself in order to establish a respectable and decorous society.

Spenser incorporates various sketches of females within *The Faerie Queene* to not only encourage a greater respect and acknowledgement for this particular gender, but to attempt to disintegrate steadfast stereotypical perceptions. Similar to these revolutionary intentions with the poem, predominantly-female Victorian writers, such as Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Mary Anne Evans (more commonly known as George Eliot), and Margaret Oliphant, likewise utilized their fiction as a means of public expression in their attempts to not only revolutionize the current disheartening realities of the economic state, but also to provide their input regarding current issues and articulate the demoralizing restrictions inflicted upon women during this time period.

According to Nina Auerbach and U. C. Knoepflmacher, rather than depend on preexisting material and derive much of their inspiration from nature, as was common practice for writers during the Romantic era, Victorian writers turned instead to “the idiosyncrasies of fantasy”\(^97\) in executing their primary objectives to “subvert all generic ties [and] exult in imaginative freedom.”\(^98\) While Spenser’s opinions, personal beliefs, and attitudes are inherently masked in *The Faerie Queene* behind his use of fictional allegory and dark conceit, he also maintained a great advantage by being a male. Because women Victorian writers feared the possibilities of public humiliation and risked formal punishment for provoking newfound ideas in literature, they, too, often exploited fiction as a metaphorical mask to freely express their ideas, opinions, and points of view regarding their current social statuses, desires, and intentions to enact plans of action to transform these desires into realities.

As women during the Victorian era were strongly discouraged from reading literature, they were certainly forbidden from legitimately producing it. Since British laws denied women independent legal representation during this period, they “made the link between women and child care”\(^\text{100}\) indelible, hence, assigning “the primary object of child care”\(^\text{100}\) to women’s lives. This pervading gender expectation not only severely limited, if not diminished altogether, women’s opportunities to demonstrate their capabilities and foster intellect, but also implied that their societal roles and abilities


\(^{98}\) Ibid.

\(^{99}\) Ibid., 1.

\(^{100}\) Ibid.
were no more sophisticated or significant than those of the young children for which they were wholly responsible.

As a result of this subordination, many female writers during this time, including Mary Anne Evans, assumed male aliases, such as Evans’s own, George Eliot. Joy Williams identifies the underlying motivation spurring Victorian women writers’ eagerness to write as their desire to achieve “the emancipation of words from their worn and dreary meanings,”¹⁰¹ much akin to their own longings to escape the oppressive subjugation of the male-dominated society in which they lived. Like Spenser, credited by many Victorian female writers “with a special insight into the female psyche,”¹⁰² these writers, too, utilized literature, as both readers and writers, as a means of transforming present perceptions and social norms regarding the treatment and expectations of women during their time.

As many earlier works of literature were written for an audience of wealthy and educated males and were never intended for female readers in the first place, women were discouraged, and in many cases, completely prohibited, from reading or engaging in virtually any type of intellectually-stimulating activity throughout the duration of Spenser’s own era and subsequent ones hereafter. Though many authors felt as though they could exclude women from readership by not producing literature that appealed to them or acknowledged them in any way, on the other hand, McManus notes that Spenser’s “electing to write his national epic in the mode of chivalric romance may have been an intentional strategy on Spenser’s part to invite a female readership.”¹⁰³ Jacqueline Pearson contributes to this claim by stating that Spenser “seems to have specialized in dedications to female patrons/readers,”¹⁰⁴ as detected in his “dedicatory sonnets to more than one woman, direct address[es] to women within the text, discussion of women’s duties and roles, and his stories of famous women.”¹⁰⁵ These clues within the content of Spenser’s work reiterate his intention to reap female readership. What’s more, they reaffirm his reputation as a revolutionary writer who sought for his poetry to serve the dual purpose of functioning as a means of social activism to promote change in addition to establishing justice and harmony between both genders within societies of his own—and in subsequent—eras.

Despite Williams’s identification of Victorian women’s literary depictions as individuals who were “farouche—they’re outsiders, they’re troubled, they lack polish, 

[and] they dream too big,” Pearson, conversely, acknowledges that, while “narrative poems of [this] period display less ambivalence, [they]...allow their female readers powerful roles.” This contradictory juxtaposition of literary content, which, interestingly, mirrors the social juxtaposition of the two genders during this time, “appealed to a female audience with ‘a version of themselves as...independent, powerful, and significant,’ but then worked to deny the female reader these qualities and indeed to reinforce ‘patriarchal prescriptions.’” This type of literature often subjected women to ridicule because it was widely assumed to provide women with unrealistic expectations, unnatural perceptions of reality, and elevated/exaggerated notions of importance and magnitude that was not encouraged, promoted, nor instilled in women during these eras. As a result of this mockery and scorn, Julie A. Eckerle acknowledges that the extent to which women writers shared their work publically was usually limited to “a diary intended for future generations, [or] a manuscript intended for friends and family.”

While female authorship maintains its roots in oral storytelling, much of the work produced by women writers, especially during the Victorian period, “collectively imagined alternatives for shared problems, speaking to a widening circle of female readers and offering the words and rhetorical strategies necessary to begin vocalizing the desire for change.” In order to execute their intended purposes of moving away from the common, traditional perceptions of deeply-rooted gender roles and fixed expectations, female Victorian writers often utilized fantasy and fiction in order to execute these intended purposes, analogous to the literary technique that Spenser employs within The Faerie Queene.

In his General Introduction, Hamilton cites C. S. Lewis’s explanation of Spenser’s ability to accuracy depict realities of life throughout the poem as “‘the things we read about in [The Faerie Queene] are not like life, but the experience of reading it is like living.’” Bruno Bettelheim observes a similar notion in his studies regarding the psychological effects of fantasy and magic in literature and asserts that stories such as Spenser’s The Faerie Queene “reveal ‘human life as seen, or felt, or divined from the inside.’” Bettelheim identifies literature that employs elements of fantasy as “the

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108 Ibid., 91.
110 Ibid.
purveyors of deep insights”\(^{113}\) because of the means by which these works “personify and illustrate inner conflicts,...suggest[ing] ever so subtly how these conflicts may be solved, and what the next steps in the development toward a higher humanity might be.”\(^{114}\) Although the literal content in fictitious and fantasy literature does not provide exact replications of individuals’ daily lives or common experiences, the essential themes, ideas, and concerns within the content, much like Spenser’s allegorical form of *The Faerie Queene*, represent variations of shared experiences, intricate dilemmas, and common realities that virtually everyone encounters and must withstand at some point or another. As a result, exposure to these elements in literature provides individuals with clearer understandings of themselves, of others, and of their surroundings to equip them with sophisticated psychological insight and intellectual capacity when the time comes for them to face these experiences in reality.

Spenser’s use of fantasy and his tendency to extoll females undoubtedly remain prevalent throughout the literature of more contemporary eras, such as in the Victorian period; when stylistic traits of these literary works are examined more closely, they reveal backgrounds similar to that of an allegory, which represents the foundational rhetorical structure upon which Spenser establishes *The Faerie Queene*. Just as the Victorian writers incorporate fantasy and fiction to ironically portray the realities, hardships, and double-standards of social norms and gender expectations within this time period, they must simultaneously accommodate audience members of both genders and from all socioeconomic classes. Comparatively, Spenser’s use of allegory enables him to “convey several levels of meaning for different audiences.”\(^{115}\) Spenser’s proficiency in successfully executing this function derives from his ability to “render the realities of human psychology.”\(^{116}\) In maintaining the integrity, value, and influence of Spenser’s psychological appeal, Williams observes that Victorian “writers create the myth of their age’s concerns, finding forms in which the concerns can be felt if not understood.”\(^{117}\) Much like the inherent function of social activism that prevails within the literature that epitomizes Victorian sensibilities and philosophical dispositions, Spenser makes use of literature to reflect reality, in hopes of inspiring new perspectives and more refined attitudes and conduct.

While MacCaffrey claims that “allegory exists to elucidate”\(^{118}\) readers and illustrate invisible aspects of the human experience, Gareth Roberts confirms that this type of fiction “taught virtue with a greater persuasive power than any

\[\text{References}\]

113 Ibid., 26.
114 Ibid.


discipline…because it ‘delighted’ through the pleasure it gave.”\textsuperscript{119} In contrast to this so-called pleasure and delight, some scholars believe that Spenser achieves his didactic intentions of the allegory by fostering a sense of nostalgia among his readers. Because the images and ideas presented in \textit{The Faerie Queene} are drawn from bygone eras, they evoke “images of concord that [that] look back to the past, then turn hortatively toward the present.”\textsuperscript{120} Rather than cause the historical world to “impinge constantly upon the allegory,”\textsuperscript{121} instead, Spenser assures that it remains as “an impending presence [that maintains] a kind of pervasive relevance.”\textsuperscript{122} This intricate manipulation of time periods allows Spenser’s readers to look ahead to a prosperous future while maintaining what Andrew King refers to as “their collective experience of the past…explaining whence they have come.”\textsuperscript{123} As Spenser’s allegory implies, individuals cannot progress into the future without a comprehensive understanding of their origins, backgrounds, and historical roots from which they derive.

Correspondingly, Meyer discerns that:

The value of \textit{The Faerie Queene} rests not just in the beauties and intricacies of Spenser’s poetry, not just in the historical allegory, or even its superb moral coloration. Rather…its value rests on Spenser’s ability to draw [readers] into his work, not just to appreciate and understand it, but to learn from it and to grow to a better understanding of the human condition.\textsuperscript{124}

Additionally, Spenser’s masterpiece “speaks directly to [reader’s] deepest convictions and helps [them] better understand not just what it means to be human, but what it means to exist in society.”\textsuperscript{125} Consequently, Hamilton proclaims that “the whole poem is deeply rooted in the human condition [because] it treats our life in this world…more comprehensively than any other poem in English.”\textsuperscript{126} Perhaps the most critical aspect of determining literature’s impact, significance, and effectiveness upon readers within a collective society is not the readers’ subjective reception of the work as it suits their personal interests and literary tastes, but in how it provokes readers to

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{120}O’Connell, Michael, \textit{Mirror and Veil: The Historical Dimension of Spenser’s Faerie Queene}, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 89.
\bibitem{121}Ibid., 12.
\bibitem{122}Ibid.
\bibitem{123}King, Andrew, \textit{The Faerie Queene and Middle English Romance: The Matter of Just Memory}, (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 144.
\bibitem{125}Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
assess their individual places within their respective societies and compels them to strive to their utmost potential to improve the morale within the social atmosphere and achieve greatness as a result of their efforts.

While Spenser’s allegorical poetry demonstrates the cultural importance and social significance of historic knowledge, it remains highly ironic and unfortunate that his poetry, especially *The Faerie Queene*, has experienced such as drastic decline in recognition and prestige throughout subsequent eras. When considering Spenser’s elaborate portrayals of complex themes, advanced poetic style, and the intricate rhetorical strategy of allegory, readers can only assume that the steady decline of Spenser’s prestige can be attributed to the gradually less emphasized importance and accessibility of education, which diminished the population of an erudite and literate public. While the Industrial Revolution produced great economic hardships and strains on everyone within this particular society, the general focus shifted from that of education to one that emphasized work and employment just to acquire and maintain the basic needs of survival (namely, food, clothing, and shelter) on a daily basis.

As the hardships of the Industrial Revolution gradually alleviated over time, individuals transformed their focus from nostalgia and longings for the past to more materialistic and often greedy desires for bigger things, better qualities of life, and more grandiose opportunities for socioeconomic, professional, and financial advancement. In losing sight of the past, societies within the Progressive and contemporary eras also lost sight of the importance of morality, dignity, and philosophical virtues. Writers (and readers, for that matter) must maintain realistic expectations for literature by understanding that it is not a medium by which miracles occur, nor does it have the ability to foster an instant heir of nobility within society; however, texts that reflect similarities and influences of the past, such as that of Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* upon the literature representative of the Victorian state of mind, prove vital to the continuation and preservation of individuals’ appreciation of heritage, cultural awareness, and moral virtue, all of which substantiate critical components to the effective functioning of past and present societies. Although Spenser’s fame and authorial presence within the English literary canon has become greatly diminished throughout the years, his significant influence upon the styles and content of succeeding contemporary literary eras still prominently resonates, and will undoubtedly maintain this impact for many years to follow.
Transformative Powers of Past Perspectives – Brittany N. Krantz

Works Cited


Öykü Üzerine...

Atiye Gülfer Kaymak

Hikâye Tanımı
E.A.Poe, sallanan sandalyesine yaslanarak okuduğu hikâye kitabında yer alan “bir hikâye olabilmem için lütfen beni bir oturuşta bitir” cümlesini henüz “lütfen”e gelmeden yarıda bırakarak kuzgun desenli porselen fincanındaki soğumuş çayı tazelemek için yerinden kalktı.

Öykünün Kökeni

“Öykü Ölüyor mu?”
Günlerdir tüm hummasıyla öyküleri üzerinde çalışırken, cep telefonunu açtığı kısaca araya denk düşen o lüzumsuz aramadaki edebiyat editörü’nün, daha önce hiç sorulmamış bir soru edası ve ciddiyeti taşıyan “efendim, dergimizin gelecek dosyasında şöyle bir soruşturma yapmayı düşünüyoruz, sizce öykü ölüyor mu?” sesiyle ikrilen yazar, “affedersiniz ama şu anda sesiniz almakta güçlük çekiyorum” dedikten kısa bir süre sonra “alo alo, alooo...” diyerek telefonun kırmızı tuşuna uzunca bastı ve ekledi “gerçek olan şu ki, öykü, siz sorulmamış sorular ve orijinal konular üretmediğiniz sürece iki üç ayda bir ölmeye mahkûm olacak.”
Running Orders
by
Lena Khalaf Tuffaha

They call us now.
Before they drop the bombs.
The phone rings
and someone who knows my first name
calls and says in perfect Arabic
“This is David.”
And in my stupor of sonic booms and glass shattering symphonies
still smashing around in my head
I think “Do I know any Davids in Gaza?”
They call us now to say
Run.
You have 58 seconds from the end of this message.
Your house is next.
They think of it as some kind of war time courtesy.
It doesn’t matter that
there is nowhere to run to.
It means nothing that the borders are closed
and your papers are worthless
and mark you only for a life sentence
in this prison by the sea
and the alleyways are narrow
and there are more human lives
packed one against the other
more than any other place on earth
Just run.
We aren’t trying to kill you.
It doesn’t matter that
you can’t call us back to tell us
the people we claim to want aren’t in your house
that there’s no one here
except you and your children
who were cheering for Argentina
sharing the last loaf of bread for this week
counting candles left in case the power goes out.
It doesn’t matter that you have children.
You live in the wrong place
and now is your chance to run
to nowhere.
It doesn’t matter
that 58 seconds isn’t long enough
to find your wedding album
or your son’s favorite blanket
or your daughter’s almost completed college application
or your shoes
or to gather everyone in the house.
It doesn’t matter what you had planned.
It doesn’t matter who you are
Prove you’re human.
Prove you stand on two legs.
Run.
My mother returns to her childhood home

by

Lena Khalaf Tuffaha

No one lives here anymore but
it is alive in all our hearts so
it still stands.
the bookshelves lined with yellowing volumes,
the photographs framed for no one to see,
the crystal tea glasses, gathered
like elegant ladies, atop the silver tray,
all dressed up and no one to sip
in the shade of the afternoon.

A museum of our childhoods stands
in the glare of sunlight,
our eyes blinking furiously as we step
into the world outside.

All of us have houses elsewhere
but here is home;
we are all refugees,
unmoored and searching for the cobblestone
path and the rosemary hedges.

My mother waters the plants,
her spine beginning to curve ever so slightly,
an heirloom shared by the women of this house.
She dances more slowly now
the favorite steps of her childhood,
sweeping the tiles clean
spilling precious water on parched earth.

No one will pick the pomegranates when they ripen.
No one will rest in the lacy shadows
the branches cast on the stone wall.
No one has any laundry left to hang on the clothes-line.

We are not from here anymore,
We, too, will die on foreign shores.
The Missing Link
by
Geraldine Mills

The head-hunters came to the wildness of Mayo, eighteen nineties, with callipers and camera, to prove our nigrescence, our blackness.

They lined up full face and side view: measured to a fraction of an inch – forehead to crown, temple to temple the jut of the bone from ear to ear:

Seán ‘the common noun’ Daly,
The schoolmaster at Ballycroy, The King of North Iniskea

or my great-grandmother milling grain in the quern the purse of her full bottom lip, the protruding lower jaw.

If it wasn’t for the white of her skin, she’d be the living proof.

Note: Mayo is a county in the north west of Ireland
Time for Meds

From a photo by Isabel Muñoz

by

Geraldine Mills

The young Lesotho boy stands
beside his grandmother who has folded
and tidied in neat piles all their clothes
on top of a suitcase in this tiny shack.

They share the same lineage,
proud bearing, the same virus
that took his father, his mother
his aunt, his uncle, his neighbour.

Nothing else in the room
but a clock as tall as his knees
that ticks and tocks
on the floor in front of him.

He learned to read its hands early,
has learned to keep an eye on the time
that tells him when to take his meds
so he can live beyond his seven years.
Teslimiyet

by
Servet Gündoğdu

I

Taşlarına atılıyorum. Günahsız, mümin taşlarına
Kanlarını yolu düzlenmiş rüzgârların mülküne saçıyorum
İşitıyorum akrısun ve sürüklenişin inleyiğini
Göçüp karanlığın sırlı göğüne, unutup kehanetlerimi,
Anıyorum, şiirim de benim, onun okuyanı da...

Ama okudumsa, söleyebilmeliyim hiç söylenmemiş gibi
Dile gelmemişin kavrınızı diye adlandırduğum Ateşin Kitabı'yla,
Kalbimi yumusatran sayfalarında gezinirken gözlerim,
Okurum orada hemen her zaman yalnızca yoklüğumu,
Uçar gider anımsayışlarım, bir tek o kafr benle...

Bir dua anlatılır Ateşin Kitabı'nda, şairlerin duası,
Derin ve soğuk ruhlarımızı koyulan bir eski dua
Anımsayabilecek miyim şimdi şairlerin anımsadığı gibi:
Kelimelerimi arındır ve daalım, yalınlığın suyuna
Yürüt sözlerimi henüz yörünmemiş toprağında şiirin

Önümüzden yürüslün bu söz, bu ses, bu teslimiyet,
Çobanım olursun ki izleyebileyim onu, adımla çağırısun beni
Görebileyim ne yana çar kapısı şiirlerimin, umuda mı,
Zamana ve Tanrı’ya mı... Bizi aldatan ve hep yanımızda olan
Tanrıım, Vaktidir sun ışığım, kelimelerim giderek karanlığa doğru...

Yıkmak istiyorum seni ve o teslimiyeti, yeniden yapmak elligimle
Diline şekil vermek istiyorum genç ölmüş dillere öykünerek
Özenle hecelemek kulağımı işitesin diye henüz yok olmadan bilgisi
Nasil ölmüşlerin dili kurtlanırısa öyle dolsun kulağın dağınıp erimeden
Nerede o karanlığın bilgisi, nerede küllümü göçe savuran

Bana yoklüğunu bağışla...
II

Bilinmeyenin ve solgun zamanın ağrısını duyumsuyorum böyle sorularla
Bu sorularla dilsizliğim gizleniyor
Ahrazım ve fırlatıyorum kendimi yitişin mecazlara
Hiç görmedim onu
Ne rüyamdı onu gösteren ne de daldiğım hayaller gösterir bana
Zamana ne zaman şiirin, yeri neresi
Kimdir bu soruların görünmez efendisi,
Âh kimdir, nedir o?
Gövden soğur ve dilim sarılır yoklüğuna
Toplamak güç şimdi her yana saçılmış kelimelerimi
Lakin geri çekilmeliyiz görebilmek için
Geri çekilmeli yığın yığın öbek öbek kelimelerim
Henüz tanımlanmamış bir kararlığın içinde sözüm
İşitsin işitecek kulağı olan
Kim işitir onu?

Lakin dalgınlığıma öyle bağlıyım ve tutuğum ki ona
Odur beni dileyen tanırlarından ve şekil veren bilinmezlerle
Beklerim onu beni alsın diye görüntülerimden,
Şimdilerimden ve onun hisslerinden
Aslında neyi beklerim?

Sunak yaparım tesellilerimi, serperim denizin ortağına
Aksın ulaşın teslimiyetimin yash gecelerine
Bağışlanın bana yokluğu, hiç fark etmeyeyim nasıl değişim
Tarlalardan yalnız hayal etme yığın bitmeyen rüyalarımı dinsin, yetişir
Suya değsin ayaklarını çıkçe değsin
Çiçekin suya değdiği yere değsin
Toplasın beni uykusuz kalabilenler gümüş kâseleriyle
Serpsinler denize yine,
Külümü görmeye geldiğinde şairler
Ben de onlara bakayım parıltılı gözlerimle

III

Hep baka kaldım, kararsız kaldım,
Böyle yazısılar beni ateşin kitabına...
Yazısı adımı yerlizi şairlerinin yanına başıma
 Sağdım toprağın memesinden kelimenin siyah sütünü
İçtim bakır tastaş unutulmuş şairlerin çökeleşmiş kanını
Ve karıştırdım ‘söyle, zamanıdır!’ dendiğinde dile gelmeyenin adını
Aşinanın oğlum ben, bilinmezin babası
Desem ki şu kelimelerin arında bir şiir var okunmaya hazırlanan
Desem ki âh, dilimin dünyaya dokunduğu yerdeyim

IV

Şairler böyle anlattı bize
Good Company

after a painting by Nicola Slattery

by

Kim Fahner

This boat is worn, has carried many,
but now holds only a girl and her sheep
in true ark-like fashion.

The sea storms, blue-green and white caps,
waves mounting and then crashing
against some unseen shore.

Blue dress with red collar, she peers at the sheep,
cradling its head in her hands, comforting it.
The sheep, ignoring her, peers out at the world.

On a hill in Castletownbeare,
in someone’s back garden,
*The Mary Rose* leans, achingly, towards water;
the boat knows there will be no reunion.

Your ship has long since gone--
same continent, different countries.
And yet I wonder, when the moon rises
and the sea shifts without us even knowing,
if you will ever miss me as much as I do you.
Araf

by

Serkan Ozan Özağaç

VIII.

*ahiretin rüzgârıyla
cadırımıza kaldıracağız.*

animula küçük ruh, dünyaya arzudan bir biçim verdin

kurdun cadırını gölgelerin sahrasına, sanki
göç etmek bir mesken değilmiş gibi; girdin
ve çkmadın insan yarasından yapılmış rüyaya.

şimdi etimizden olmayan çöllen hırgasını giyin
ısıtan ve çıplak bırakarak başlangıçın adıyla.
How French Toast Changed the World

by

Brian Minalga

1 guinea fowl egg.
Haggle in the market
where smells like onions,
rotting tomatoes, mint, and manure cross-breed.
The merchant will brush off some feathers,
place it gently in your hand.
Shake it. Any rattling?
Hold it to the sun. All clear?
Plunk it in a bowl of water. Does it sink?
Fresh.

1/2 a stale baguette.
Trade a single worn coin.
The bread man will slice it twice,
shake your hand,
call you mon ami.

Tuberculosis?
Not in this milk.
It’s fresher to buy from Fulani women
with coins and cowries in their hair,
selling unpasteurized gulps from calabash bowls.
But Argentina’s comes powdered and boxed
with purity guaranteed.

Sugar to taste.
Plum-colored cane
springs from the swamps in rainy season.
Marvel at cubes refined in China,
arranged like dominoes in a cardboard box.
Drop at least three in a mahogany mortar.
Savor the crush of the pestle.

1 pinch of salt.
A looming whale sucked it in, blew it out,
sneezed from sea to Sahel.
Later it will trickle between your shoulder blades,
soaking to the surface of your damp shirt,
a white image appearing in a dark-room photo.

1/2 a teaspoon cinnamon.
This one you must import
to feel closer to an old-country grandfather
who smokes cherry tobacco from a pipe,
a great aunt who keeps peppermints in a crystal jar,
an estranged lover.

Sing your national anthem as it fries in the pan.

When your teeth meet the crust, you should hear a spoon cracking crème brûlée.

But French Toast isn’t always French.

Sometimes it’s African. Sometimes it’s Chinese.

Sometimes you can taste the whole world in one bite.

And sometimes, the whole world tastes just like home.

*Republic of Niger*
Life Expectancy was Fifty-Three in 2009

by

Brian Minalga

The final trills of call to prayer
    echo through the darkening village
    and vanish like owls into the far acacias.
Men like angels gather in gowns,
    swinging lanterns in twilight on the way to the mosque.
Again they pass the anasara who does not pray.

You emerge from their midst
    and call me Ibrahim--
    never anasara.
You face Mecca and pray beside me
    so I won’t be alone.
Then you rise and invite me to dinner.

Your seven children grab tiny handfuls of millet
    and squeal as they play
    among moonlit termite mounds.
You pour me a shot glass of intensely sweet tea
    and tell me the stars are the children of the moon.
I believe you.

I believe you when you say you speak Hausa,
    Zarma, Fulfulde, and Tamasheq,
    having never stepped foot in a school.
I believe you when you say that water spirits
    haunt my house in the baobabs.
I believe you when you call me your child.

You rest your handsome overbite on your lower lip--
    the way you do when you smile--
    and starlight gleams off your teeth.
You tell me you’ve lived
    ten years, five times.
This I cannot believe.
So you light a lamp to retrieve your identity booklet,
laminated with scotch tape,
hidden under empty egg cartons.
You ask me to find the page
with your birth year
and to read it for you:

H. Amadou,
Sixty-five kilograms,
Republic of Niger,
nineteen sixty-nine.

Nineteen sixty-nine . . .

How I'll remember the love you shared
in eggs and prayers,
proverbs and tea.
How I'll remember your friendship--
your family--
when I am seventy-eight.

How I'll remember the silence
in the gaping night sky,
your countenance dimming with the kerosene lamp,
and realizing you’d made peace
with fifty years’ worth of pain
before I gave you back ten years of your life.
Leaving St. Catherine’s

by

Pippa Little

Lowestoft trains, hourly, splash through the fens, steel hooves through shallows. *One winter*

*we skated all the way to Ely. Crooked spire,*
*bruised knees, our ice-spiked breathing.*

Sister Maximilian knows, the top-heavy cross bundled in tea towels between her knees.

My suitcase on wheels. The book in my hands begins to tremble. The three-thirty’s

departing seawards, a boom absorbed by gull bones at altitude.

Aslant over wall and floor, over laced shoes and folds of linen, ride sleepers of light

travelling their hours.

Hushed and low, a tidal rub of prayer

washes the skirting board, *all shall be well*
*and all shall be well,* cisterns’ imaginary language,

pall of beet soup and bread unsalted
steams through the fabric from my skin, cobwebs

form with every breath. There’s no mending this cold through my body, burning out.
Türklere İsyan: Kara Yorgi Baladı

Çeviri: Mustafa Bal


(Semadan alametler isyanı haber veriyordu.)

Belgrad Türklerinin
Ve hisardaki yedi Dayının dikkatlerini çeken buydu.
Ağanlya ve Küçük Aliya
Ve karşısındaları, Foça’nın iki oğlu,
Mehmet Ağa ve yanında Musa Ağa
Ve Büyük Dayı Molla Yusuf,
Hisar tayıncısı Derviş Ağa,
Yüz yazın yaşlısı eski toprak Foça,

1 Yrd. Doç. Dr. Mustafa Bal, TOBB Ekonomi ve Teknoloji Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü öğretim üyesidir.
Yedi Dayının hepsi toplandı,
Belgrad’ın İstanbul kapısında bir araya geldi,
Mor kaftanlarını sıkıca üzerlerine çektiler,
Acıyla gözyaşı döküp alametlere baktılar:
“Vallahi karındaşım, şu acayip işaretlere bak hele!
Karındaşım, bunlar bizi götürür şerre!”.
Bunun üstüne kederli yedi Dayı
Çarçabuk camdan bir kap yapıp,
İçine Tuna’dan su doldurdular,
Neboysa Kulesi’nin üzerine çıkartıp
Kulenin tepesine kabı koydular,
Semadaki alametleri okumak
Ve akbetlerini bilmek için
Yıldızların ışığını suya kondurdular.
Kabın etrafında toplandı tüm Dayılar,
İçinde çileli yüzlerini gördüler,
Dayılar çileli yüzlerini görince,
Dayılar apaçık görince kendi gözleriyle,
Doğrumadı başları omuzlarının üstünde,
Yedi Dayı buna şahitlik edince,
Aceleyle bir tokmak bulup
Kabı tuzla buz ettiler,
Ufak parçası bile kalmayana dek
Kırkları kuleden aşağı attılar.
 Ardından kederli yedi Dayı,
Gam ve endişe içinde
Yakıç’in yaptığı Neboysa Kulesi’nden indiler aşağı,
Ve girdiler bir büyük kahvehaneye,
Burada aldıklar yerlerini,
Her biri yerlești bir diğerinin yanına,
Sakah ak ve kuşağına kadar uzanın
Yaşlı Foça’yı aldıklar ortalara.
Sonra yedi Dayı başlıyorlar naraalar:
“Hocalar! Vaizler! Tez gelin buraya,
Gelirken İslam’ın muakadder kitaplarını da getirin,
Bakın bakalım neler yazıyor Kur’an’dan
Başımıza gelecekler hakkında.”
Hocalar ve vaizler geldiler telaşla,
Getirdiler İslam’ın muakadder kitaplarını,
Dikkatlice okudular, döktüler idrâp gözyaşları
Dayılarla söylediler şunları:
“Türkler ve karındaşlar ve siz yedi Dayı!
Duyun! Şunları haber veriyor muakadder kitaplar:
Sırıstan’ın üzerinde bulutsuz bir gecede
Yaşlılar bu alametleri gördüklerinde,
Dünya beş yüz sene daha gençken,
Sırp İmparatorluğu yok olmuştu,
Ve Türk, İmparatorluğu fethetmişti,
Ve iki Hıristiyan imparatorun boyunları vurulmuştu;
Mağrur Konstantinopol’de
Saraç’ın, o soğuk derenin kenarında Konstantin’in,
Kosova ovasında Kral Lazar’ın başı gitmişti.
Sonrasında Miloş, Sırbistan kralının öcünü almıştı,
Sultanı hançerlemiş, ancak kusurlu vurmuştu,
Ve biz Sırp İmparatorluğu’nu aldığımızda
Sultanımız Murat hala yaşıyordu.
Ölüm doşeğine vezirlerini çağırılmıştı:
‘Türkler ve karıncalar, lalalarım ve vezirlerim!
Ölüyorum ve bu toprağı size bırakıyorum,
Sözlerime iyice kulak verin
Ki bu toprak uzun seneler size il olsun:
Reayaya asla amansız davranmayınız,
Bilakis, şefkatli ebeveyn gibi olun onlara,
Cizye on beş dinardan olsun,
En fazla otuz dinari bulsun,
Onları cezalar ve vergilerle ezmeyin,
Hayatlarını üzerinde yükü döndürmeyin,
Ne Hıristiyan kiliselerine, ne de kaidelerine karşın,
Onurlarını da kırmayın.
Reayadan intikam almaya kalkmayın;
Varsın bir Sırp eliyle yarımış olsun bedenim,
Nihai kaderdir bu bir askerin,
Zira yattığın yerde nargile içerek
Fethedilmir bir imparatorluk.
Davranışlarınızla reayaya korku salıp
Ormanlara sığınmalarına sebep olmayın,
Bilakis, çocuklarınız belleyin onları
Ki bu topraklar uzun süre sizi de kalsın.
Lakin kulak vermezseniz öğütlerime,
Ezerseniz reayayı,
Muhakkak yitireceksiniz bir gün bu toprağı’.

Murat öldü, yasını tuttuk,
Gel gör ki tutmadık öğütlerini,
Reayaya eziyete başladık,
Ayaklarınız altına aldık haysiyetlerini,
Kötüülük ettik ülkenin her yerinde,
Reayaya ağır vergiler yükledik,
Ve Tanrının nazara göre günahkâr olduk.
Artık semadan alametler belirdiğine göre,
Alnızca yazılmış bu toprağı yitirmek.
Krallar ve prensler korkutmasın sizdi,
Ne Kral, Sultan’a nişan alır,
Ne de Devlet saldırır krallığı,
Zira bu dengeyi Tanrı böyle kurmuştur,
Lakin başsız reyadan korkanız,
Gencyile yaşılı bir ayaklanırsa,
Türkler soluğu Mekke’de alacak,
Anaları ağlayacak Şam diyarında,
Reaya karalar bağlatinca onlara.
Türkler ve kardeşi ve siz yedi Dayı!
Şunları haber veriyor mukaddes kitaplardı:
“Evleriniz küle dönecek,
Ve siz Dayılın hepsinin kellesi gidecek;
Yosun tutacak terk edilmiş oacakların,
Minarelerinizi örümcek ağılar saracak,
Ezan sesi kesilecek,
Yolaklarınızın uzandığı yerlerde ve geniş yollarında,
Atlarının toynaklarıyla dövülen,
Türk süvarilerinin at koştuğunu yerlerde,
Nal izlerinin üzerinde bitek otlar çıkacak,
Yollar Türkçe hasret kalacak,
Amma Türk orduları tarihe karışmış olacak.
İslam kitabının dedikleri bunlardır.”

Duyar duymaz bunları yedi Dayı,
Yedisi birden acıyla büktü boynunu,
Ve yere baktılar,
Mukaddes kitapla tartışamaz hiç kimse,
Hikmetinden sual olunmaz.
Foça yolup parmaklarıyla ak sakaldan,
İzdrap içinde tutamı çignedi,
Kitaba karşı gelemezdi,
Lakin olan bitenden nefretle doldu.
Tek Mehmet Ağa sarsılmadı,
Sarsılmadı amma haykırdı kahraman:
“Hocalar ve vaizler! Düşün yollara,
Tanrıya dua edin ve müminleri ibadete çağırın,
Her gün birçok vakit namaza çağırın,
Dayılar için boş yere tasalanmayın;
Sağlık ve akıl nimetlerimiz bizde oldukça,
Belgrad kalesi bizde oldukça,
Başsız reayayı çevreleyen
Her şehri idare edebiliriz.
Şayet krallar bize savaş açmazsa,
Nasil olur da reaya bize bela olur?
Biz dört Belgrad Dayısı, dört kardeş,
Ağanlıya ve Küçük Aliya,
Ben ve baş Dayı Molla Yusuf,
Hepimizin yeğün, dillere destino zenginliği var;
İki cephanelik dolusu öylece duruyor,
Şimdi yerimizden kalksak, biz dört Dayı,
Kapılarını dayasak hazine mahzenlerimizin,
Saçsak altınları taşlı yollara,
Altınımızla bir ordu peyda ederiz,
Bir Belgrad’ın dört kuvvetli Dayısı,
Karisımda olduğumuzdan, böleriz orduyu,
Eşit parçalara böleriz orduuzu,
Belgrad istihkâmından hücüm eder,
On yedi nahiymize sefer eder,
Bize tehdit olan tüm Sırp Beylerini
Ve de toprak ağalarını,
Tüm ruhbani ve Sırp hocalarını kılıçtan geçiriz,
Yalnız aciz çocuklara,
Yedi yaş ve altında olanlarla dokunmayız.
Ancak o zaman Sırp hakikaten reaya olmayı belleyecek,
Sadakatle Türk efendisine hizmet edeceğ...

Mağrur Topola köyünden
Kara Yorgi’yi haklayana kadar devam edeceğiz.
O ki Avusturya İmparatorluğu ile fısıldıyor,
Beyaz duvarlı Varadin’den
Epeyce cephane satın alabiliyor,
Ve ihtiyac duyulacak tüm teçhizatı da elde ediyor,
Ve bizle cemc edebilir,
O İmparator, ben sadece subaşı...
Sırp başrahipleri Hacı Dyera’yı ve ihtiyar Hacı Ruvim’i
Haklayıcaya kadar devam edeceğiz.
Onlar ki altın kapağını eritip,
Erimiş altınla Sultan’a
Bir Dayıların ihbar eden mektuplar yazabilirler,
Ve etraflarındaki tüm reayaya akl verebilirler,
Onlar paşa, ben sadece subaşı.
Tüm Medyendik’in gururunu Derebe yi
İliya Birçanın kılmımkı tadınıcaya kadar devam edeceğiz.
Son üç senede epeyce kuvvetlendi;

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Tüm seyahatlerinde Arap atına biner,
Bir diğerinin de yularından tutarmış,
Eyer kaşında bir topuz taşırmış,
Başlığa kadar uzunmuş biyakları,
Türk almazmış hudutlarının içine,
Rast gelirse bir Türkçe toprakları içinde
Sopasyyla kırılmadık kaburgasını bırakmazmış,
Yerde can çekişirken Türk,
Seslenmiş İliya haydutlarına:
‘Buraya bakın, uşaklarım! Atın şu ölü iti,
Kuzgunların başına üşüşmeyecedi bir yere!’
Cizyeyi teslime geldiğinde,
Divana zırhlı ve silahlı varır,
Yatağanını tutup sağ eliyle,
Sol eliyle uzatırmış vergiyi:
‘Mehmet Ağa, al, getirdim vergiyi,
Başsız tüm reaya selamını yolladı,
Senden saklayacak beş kuruşları kalmadı!’
Ve parayı saymaya kalktığımda,
Gözlerini şimşek gibi üzerine çakar:
‘Mehmet Ağa, parayı sayacak musun?
Bir kere saymadım mı zaten ben?’
Derken parayı saymaya cesaretim kalmaz,
Amma mecburen yanıma koymam ıcam eder tomarı,
Tehlike geçene kadar zar zor beklerim,
Yüzüne bakmaktan imtina ederim----
O paşa, ben sadece subaşı.
Güzeller güzeli Brankovina köyünden
Aleksa Beyi gönderene kadar bu dünyadan,
Ve öldürene kadar karındaşı Yakov’u devam edeceğiz----
Sultan’la İmparator bozustuğunda,
İmparatorun hizmetinde miralaydı bunlar,
Altın mığfer taşırlardı başlarında,
Yakıp, yağmalayıp birçok Türk köyünü,
Köle ettiler Türk köylülerini,
Ve İmparator sulh edince Sultan’la,
Sultan’a gittiler bu ikisi,
Topraklarında Bey oldular,
Birçok Türkçe iftira edip,
Yedi paşa ya camur attılar,
Yalan sözleriyle mahvettiler onları----
Onlar paşa, bizler sadece subaşı...
Raça’yi Drina’nın kenarında yakıp kül edene,
Ve Hacı Melentiye’yi katledene kadar devam edeceğiz.
O Hacı ki gemiyle yola çıkıp,
Hıristiyan Kâbe’sini ziyaret etti,
Dönerken İstanbul’a ugrayıp,
Hileleriyle ferman aldı Sultan’dan,
Hıristiyanlar için ibadethane yaptırdın diye
Yüz altın sayıldı eline,
Yedi sene zaman verildi inşası için,
Bir sene dolmadan bitti kilise,
Müteakip altı sene boyunca,
İçlerini cephane ile doldurttuğü,
Karanlıkta top arabası koydurduğu,
Kuleler ekletti kiliseye,
Anıyor musun, karındaşım, bir dolap çevriyorum.
Hülasa, tüm nahiyelerimize sefer edip,
Her köyün ağasını yere sereceğiz.
Böyle olunca, reaya bize nasıl bela olabilir?”

Fırlayıp yerlerinden, Dayıların yedisi birden,
Eğdiler başlarını Mehmet Ağa’ya doğru;
“Ağzına sağlık, karındaşım, Foçalı Mehmet Ağa,
Bunun gibi akıl yakışır bir paşaya:
Seni ordumuza paşa yapalım,
Ve nereye dersen emrine uyalım.”
Derken söze başladı ihtiyar Foça:
Yiğidi gör işinde, kulak ver düşünüre!
Ne vaatlerle paşalığı o alıyor!
Al eline, Foçalı Mehmet Ağa oğlum,
Al o ak parmaklarının arasına bir tutam samanı,
Serp ötesine berisine bir ateşin,
De bakalım, alevleri böyle sönürebilir misin,
Yoksa ola ki daha mı çok parlar ateş?
Kurabilirsin bir ordu (Tanrı gerekenleri bahşetmiş)
Etrafinda muazzam birlikler kurabilirsin,
Nahiyelere, oğlum, sefer edebilirsin,
Bir beyi kapana kistrabilirsin,
Bir vaatle kandırıp, canını alabilirsin,
Amma sözüne güven azalır.
Birinin vurursun başını, ikisi kaçar senden,
İki başı keserisin, dördü sağ kalır.
Ocaklarınız kundaklarlar,
Siz Dayıları elliyle öldürürlər.
Et Meyin, bırakın bu abes işi,
Kulak verin bir ihtiyarın ihtırarına.
Mukaddes kitapta okuduğuma göre
Buralar elimizde kalmayacak daha fazla,
Efendileri değişecek bu toprağın.
Oğlum, haydi artık reayaya güvenin,
Cizye yükünü hafifletin,
Mura’tın buyurdıguna kadar olsun.
Cezaları ve vergileri feshedin artık,
Sırp Beylerine karşıdağı gibi davranın,
Arap atları verin Beylere hediye,
Köy ağalarına atlar verin,
Ruhbana dostça davranın.
Buralar elimizden çıkacağından yakında
İttifak içinde yaşayalım onlarla.
Yoksa neye fayda eder yığınla servetiniz?
Arifeyi gördu, bayrama çıkmazsınız.”

Yüksek sesle cevap verdi Foçalı Mehmet Ağa:
"Baba, ihtiyar titrek sesini kendine sakla!"
Ok gibi fişladı yerinden bunları derken,
Öbür Dayılar onu izledi:
Hisarlara sürdüler topları,
Altınlarla bir ordu kurdular,
Dört büyük Dayı kol kola,
Ağanlıya ve Küçük Aliya,
Molla Yusuf, Foçalı Mehmet Ağa,
Dört bölüğü böldüler orduyu,
Dört karşıdağı için dört bölüğü,
Askerleriyle başladılar keşfe,
On yedi nahiyeyi dolandılar.
İlkin Palaliya Beyi alt ettiler.
Mülayim sözlerle kandırdıp kucaklarına çektiler,
Ve Groçka’da gaddarca vurdular başını...
Sonra Beylerbeyi Aleksa
Ve İliya Birçanın düştü avucuna Ağanın.
İkisinin de yakasına yazıştı Foçalı Mehmet Ağa,
İkisi de ak elli arkalarında bağlı
Götürüldü Kolubara üstünde uzanan köprüye.
Beylerbeyi Aleksa kavrayınca
Türklerin başlarını vuracağını,
Seslendi Foçalı Mehmet Ağa’ya:
"Sahip ve Efendim, Foçalı Mehmet Ağa!
Cenk meydani hatırına bağışla canımı,
Almış kese altın veririm size.”
Cevap verdi Foçalı Mehmet Ağa:
“Yüz kese altın bile versen,
Gayrı salmam seni Aleksa!”

Ardından İliya Birçanın şöyle dedi:
“Sahip ve Efendim, Foçalı Mehmet Ağa,
Ben yüz kese altın vereceğim.”

Foçalı Mehmet Ağa şöyle cevap verdi:
“Ahmaklığı bırak, İlija Birçanın!
Kim kaçırmak ister yakaladığı kurdu?”

Mehmet cellâda verdi emrini,
Çıkarıp yeleğinden bir kılıcı cellât,
Kesti İliya’nın kellesini.
Köprüde oturan Aleksa,
Avaz verdi: “Türk’ün ipiyle kuyuya inen
Her Hristiyanın canını alsın Tanrı!
Duy beni Yakov, öz karndaşım!
Türkün sözüne asla güveme,
Nerede görürsen, saldıry gayrı zalime!”

Aleksa arzuladı söze devam etmeyi,
Amma cellât buna razı değildi,
Savurdu kılıcını ve Aleksa’nın başını kesti.

Kolubara üstünde uzanan köprüde,
Kesilirken başları, Sır dönemden
Aleksa Bey’in ve İliya Birçanın’ın,
Belgrad’ın göbeğinde, Hacı Ruvim de
Katledildi aynı gün ve saatte,
Gökyüzünde parlayan güneş kararverdi.
Diğer Sırpları aldatmayı,
İnfaza başka başlar bulmayı umarak
Acele ile konuına vardı Mehmet Ağa.
İdrak edince Sırplar güneşin tutulma ile tuttuğu yası,
Derhal uzaklaştırırlar karşidan,
Mehmet Ağa’nın ağına daha düşen olmadığı.
Foçalı Mehmet Ağa görüşe durumu,
Yanlış hesap yaptığını anladı,
Aniden derin pişmanlık duydu,
Lakin pişmanlık için süre çoktan dolmuştu.

Neden sonra çağırdı yirmi iki fedaisini,
Ve Uzun adlı kahvecisini:
“Yanaşın şahinlerim ve itinayla dinleyin:
Eylerlerini takin süratli atlarmıza,
İvediyle varın Topola köyüne,
Hele bakın Kara Yorg’yi zapt edebilir misiniz?
Şayet kaçarsa şimdi elimizden Kara Yorgi,
Bilesiniz sonumuz hayır değil.”

Çabucak taktlar eylerleri hızlı atlara,

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Pazarın arifesı Cumartesi günü
Dörtlala sürdüler Topola’ya.
Ve pazar dönüşken gün doğudan,
Henüz şafak söküp, gün doğmadan,
Sardılar Kara Yorgi’nin evini dört yandan,
Seslendiler Yorgi’ye sağdan soldan:
“Teslim ol, Petrović Dyoka!”
Öfkeli bir canavarı kim alt edebile?
Kim yanaşabile ona uyrken?
Çoktandır, Kahraman Yorgi,
Şafak sökmeden yataktan kalkar,
Yikanıp, fezaya dua salar,
Ve bir iki kadeh de rakı atardı.
Onlar varmadan epey önce Yorgi kalkmış
Mahzene inmişti.
Türkleri görünce evinin etrafında
Saklanmaya itibar etti,
Ve bu cihetle akıncılara genç karısı cevap verdi:
“Tanrı sizinle olsun Belgrad kalesinin Türkleri!
Sabah sabah buralarda ne arasınız?
Yorgi şimdi buradaydı, beş dakika önce,
Derken ayrılmış,
Nereye gitmiş bilmem, size diyemem.”
Bu arada Yorgi dinliyor ve izliyordu,
Saydıktan sonra Türk çetesini,
Rakisını yudumlayıp, tüfeğini doldurdu,
Kâfi kurşun ve barut alıp yanına,
Hzla geçti domuz ahırına,
On iki fedakâr domuz çobanının karşısında aranız.
Uyandırp uykularından çobanlarını
Söyledi sadık çobanlarına şunları:
“Ey yoldaşlarım, on iki sadık çobanım!
Uyanın ve ardına kadar açın kapıyı,
Sürün domuzları ahırdan dışarıya,
Nereye dilerlerse oraya gitsinler.
Şimdi diyeceklerime dikkat kesin, yoldaşlarımız,
Boyalı tüfeklerinize barut doldurun
Eğer Tanrı müsaade eder de muvaffak olursam
Peşine düştüğüm bu işte,
Gönülden murat ettiklerinizi size vereceğim,
Sizi altına, güümüse boğacağım,
Nadide ipek ve kadifeden urbalar giyecsiniz.”
Çobanların hepsi emredilenleri yaptılar,
Domuzları sürdüler ahırdan dışarıya,
Doldurdular barutu boyalı tüfeklerine, 
Ve hemen düştüler ardında Kara Yorgi’nin 
Kara Yorgi doğruca çıktı evine. 
Neferleriyle bakıp baskınlara, 
Kara Yorgi şöyle buyurdu çobanlarına: 
“Kulak verin bana, on iki çoban fedaim, 
Her biriniz nişan alsun bir baskıncıya, 
Ben tetiği çekene kadar başlamayı ateşe. 
Tüfeğim Uzun Mehmed’i hedef alacak, 
Görün bakan Uzun’a neler olacak!”
Dedi bunları Petroviç Yorgi, 
Arı sıra uzanıp yere, bastı tetiğe; 
Fişek gibi ve tam yerine gönderdi mermiyi: 
Eyerinden yere cansız düştü Uzun Mehmet. 
Ve Dyoka’nın çobanlarını görüşe bunu, 
Hızla ateşlediler boyalı tüfeklerini, 
Oracıkta yere serildi altı Türk cesedi, 
Altı sağ Türk kaçtı atlarıyla. 
Topolo’dan haber saldı Dyordye, 
Ve bir sürü yoldaş etrafında toplandı, 
Öfkeyle düşüp peşine Türk baskınların, 
Sibnitsa köyüne dek kovaladılar. 
Köye meyhaneye sıındı Türkler. 
Yoldaşlarıyla etraflarını sarıp Yorgi, 
Köye haber saldı, 
Köylülerin hepsi süratle yanna vardı, 
En az yüz yiğit oracıkta toplandı. 
Derken Sırplar meyhaneyi yaktı, 
Türklerin üçü tutuştu, kile döndü, 
Öbürleri dışarıya fırladı, 
Ve bir anda Sırplar aldı canlarını. 
On yedi nahiye hepsine, 
Sırp toprak ağalarına, köy muhtarlarına, 
Her yana mektuplar saldı Dyordye: 
“Her bir muhtar subaşısını öldürsün, 
Çocukları ve kadınları emin sığınaklara saklasın.”
Duyunca bunları Sırp muhtarlar, 
Çabucak yerine gelen Dyordye’nin emirleri. 
Fırtlayıp ayağa hepsi muhtarların, 
Kuşandılar ışıldayan kılıçlarını, 
Her biri serdi yere kendi subaşısını, 
Sakladı çocuklar ve kadınları emin bir oluna. 
Ve Sırpları ayaklandırınca Kara Yorgi,
Türk kumandanlarıyla kavgaya tutuşmuş oldu,
Derken Yorgi dolanıp nahiye lerini
Ateşe verdi tüm Türk kulelerini
Yerle yeksan etti tüm Türk konaklarını
Saldırdı tüm Türk köylerine
Küle çevirdi her köyü
Kadın erkek herkesi küçştan geçirdi
Ciddi mücadeleye girdi Sırlarla Türkler.

Reayayla acımasızca oynayan Türkler olmuştu,
Şehrin reayası şimdi efendi olmuştu.
Sayısayız reaya ayaklandığı dik başaklar gibi,
Hisarların zindanlarına kapattılar Türkleri.
Şehirden şehire dolanıp Kara Yorgi,
Çağırdı ayağına her şehrin sakınıni:
“Duyun beni, ey kale içindeki Türkler!
Hisarların kapıları dayayın ardına,
Sulh içinde yaşamak isterseniz bundan böyle,
Ele verin aranızdaki zorbaları
Ki viran etmeyelim Sultanın hisarlarını.
İradenizle vermek istemesiniz onları,
Dokuz yılındır onca zahmetle
Reayanın inşa ettiği bu şehirleri
Bir günde yıktıp yok olacak
Ve Sultanla mücadele başlatacak.
Sultanla tutuşursak kavgaya
Yedi kral bir araya gelse
Durduramazlar bizi,
Son nefesimize kadar savunuruz kendimizi.”
Bunun üstüne şehrin sakınıleri elemle ağladılar
Ve Kara Yorgi’ye şunları dediler:
“Ey Sırların başbuğu Dyordye Bey!
Bizden ne isterse reaya, yapacağız,
Ne Sultanın şehirlerini yıktıp yok edin,
Ne de Sultanla kavgaya tutuşun.
Teslim edeceğiz size Türk zorbaları.”
Devi düdüğü Türkler indi aşağıya,
Dayadılar ardına kapılarını hisarlarını,
Çabucas teslim ettiler tüm zorbaları,
O haris, ac gözli zorbaları,
Sırların eline verdiler.
Ulu Tanrı ve Meryem Ana aşkına!
Sırlar ele geçirince Türk zorbaları
Ak elleriyle sıkça tuttular onları,
Esvaplarını, yeleklerni, kürklerini çıkartıp,
Ufak feslerindeki türbanları da alıp,
Çarıksız, çizmesiz,
Çınlçiplak, yalnayak,
Sırtlarına kamçıyla
Sürdüler dağlara:
“De hele paşa, bizim vergiler ne âlemde?”
Dağların koynunda Yorgi çekti kılıçım
Aydı boyunlarından zorbaların başlarını.
Alınca başlarını zorbaların Yorgi
Yol aldı öteki kaledere,
Beyaz surların ardından, ölmeye müstahak
Tüm Türklerin vurdu kellesini,
Sultan’dan kaçanlar Sultana verildi,
Hıristiyan edilecekler vaftiz edildi,
Yorgi galip gelince tüm Sırbistan’da,
Ve tüm Sırbistan’ı Haçla kutsayınca,
Garbda Vidin’den Drina nehrine,
Kosova’dan Belgrad’a kadar kuzeyde
Tüm memleketi kanatları altında himayesine alınca,
Drina nehrine şunları söyledi:
“Drina nehr, ey heybetli set,
Sen ki Bosna’yı Sırbistan’dan bölersin!
Pek yakında bir gün gelecek
Ve seni geçip soylu Bosna’ya gireceğim.”
Contributors
(in alphabetical order)

Allene Nichols

Allene Nichols is a doctoral candidate in the humanities program at the University of Texas at Dallas (UT Dallas). Her research interests include American poetry and poetics, drama, and cultural studies, particularly as they relate to the representation of gender and sexuality in literature and popular culture. Her poems have appeared in a variety of journals and anthologies, including *Naugatuck River Review*, *New Plains Review*, *Southwestern Haiga and Haiku* and *Dance the Guns to Silence: One Hundred Poems for Ken Saro-Wiwa*.

Atiye Gülfer Kaymak

Born in Adapazarı in 1986, Atiye Gülfer Kaymak graduated from the Turkish language and literature department of 19 Mayı̈s University with an undergrad thesis titled “Sait Faik Abasıyanık Anlatıcılarından Yaratıcı Yazarlık Dersleri.” In 2012, she received her Master degree in Modern Turkish Literature from the same university with the thesis called “Geciktirilmiş Öykü Tekniği Üzerine bir karşılaştırma Tristram Shandy Beyefendi’nin Hayatı ve Görüşleri/ Karı Koca Masalı.” Her reviews, critiques and fictional works have been published *Hece*, *Hece Öykü*, *Türk Edebiyatı*, *Ayraç*, *Temrin* and *Granada Edebiyat Dergisi*. She is currently a research assistant and working on her PhD dissertation on “Edebi Metnin Teşekküründe Okurun Rolü.” She is also a co-editor of *Granada Literary Magazine*.

Brian Minalga

Brian Minalga is a poet and activist who lives in Seattle and works for the Peace Corps. He studied English literature, French, and entomology at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Brian served for over four years with the Peace Corps in Niger, West Africa and Namibia, Southern Africa. He is a Masters of Social Work candidate at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor which has selected him for a Paul D. Coverdell Fellowship involving community work in Detroit.

Geraldine Mills

Geraldine Mills is a poet, short story writer, and organic gardener who lives on the west coast of Ireland. She has published three collections of short stories and four collections of poetry. She has been awarded many prizes and bursaries including the Hennessy/Tribune New Irish Writer Award, an Arts Council Bursary and a Patrick and Katherine Kavanagh Fellowship. Her fiction and poetry have been taught in universities in Connecticut, U.S.A.
For ten years she worked as editor of *Happiness is Vital*, a magazine published by AIDS West, a non-government organisation which supports those who are affected by HIV/AIDS. She also ghost-wrote with Liz Martin, *Still Standing: An Irishwoman’s story of HIV and Hope*. She teaches the Advanced Short Story course online with Creative Writing Ink and has worked with students from England, Spain, India and South Korea. She currently works as project support with the Western Region Drugs Task Force which is a co-ordinating body that develops regionally appropriate responses to drug use in the west of Ireland.

**Katharine Whitcomb**


**Kim Fahner**

Kim Fahner lives and writes in Ontario, Canada. She teaches English at Marymount Academy in Sudbury and has published three books of poetry: *You Must Imagine The Cold Here* (Your Scrivener Press, 1997), *braille on water* (Penumbra Press, 2001) and *The Narcoleptic Madonna* (Penumbra Press, 2012). In 2013, Kim took part in The Battle of the Bards at Harbourfront in Toronto. She is a member of the League of Canadian Poets, the Writers’ Union of Canada, and PEN Canada. The poem, “Good Company,” was written during a stay at Anam Cara Writers’ Retreat in Ireland, a country that speaks to her creative and poetic sensibility.

**Lena Khalaf Tuffaha**

Lena Khalaf Tuffaha was born in the United States and raised in the Arab world. She has lived the experiences of a native, immigrant and expatriate and she has spent most of her life travelling between cultures and languages. Lena writes poetry and literary translations. In 2011 she translated the screenplay for the independent film "When I Saw You", written and directed by Annemarie Jacir. The film premiered at the Toronto Film Festival and was Palestine’s official submission for Best Foreign Language Film at the 2012 Academy Awards. Lena has been published in Magnolia: A Journal of Socially Engaged Women’s Literature, Exit 37 Magazine, Al-Ahram Weekly, and the Seattle Times. One of her poems will be published
in *Being Palestinian* a forthcoming anthology published by University of Oxford Press. When she’s not crossing borders and photographing native plants, Lena enjoys cooking and gardening with her family in Redmond, Washington.

**Mustafa Bal**

Holding BA, MA, and PhD degrees in English language and literature, Mustafa Bal is currently an assistant professor and the (founding) chairman of the department of English language and literature at the TOBB University of Economics and Technology. He specializes in drama, theatre theory as well as in comparative literary and cultural studies that cover subjects on British and Turkish literatures and cultures. He is the editor-in-chief of *The Human* journal and the co-editor of *Granada Edebiyat Dergisi*. Apart from his poems, translations, papers, and essays that appeared both in national and international journals, Dr. Bal is also the Turkish translator of James Joyce’s “The Dead” (as Ölüler), N. Gogol’s “The Overcoat” (as Palto), and D. Sacerdoti’s *Dreams* (as Rüyalar).

**Pippa Little**

Pippa Little is Scots but was born and grew up in Tanzania. She has published four collections: *The Spar Box*, *Foray*, *The Snow Globe* and *Overwintering*, which was shortlisted for The Seamus Heaney Prize in 2013. Her work has also appeared all over the world in print, online, film, radio and in anthologies and has won awards and prizes. She is a Hawthornden Fellow and runs creative writing workshops, reviews and edits. Travel is a big part of her life. She has close connections with Hungary and has translated poetry by contemporary Hungarian poets. Now living in north east England she has a long term fascination with islands: one of her favourite islands is Corsica, the other, Mull. She has visited Mexico and Mexico City several times, taking writing workshops there and reading her poetry: she hopes to undertake a long sequence of poems set in Mexico next year.

**Prakash Kona**

Serkan Ozan Özağaç

Born in İskenderun in 1981, Serkan Ozan Özağaç studied at Lyon Lumiere 2 and Sorbonne. Ağrilar Kitabı, Marie Sophie and Gül Ayetleri are the titles of his three poetry collections. He lives in İstanbul.

Servet Gündoğdu

A PhD candidate in Turkish Language and Literature, Servet Gündoğdu is a poet whose early poems appeared in Varlık, Türk Edebiyatı, and Temrin. His poetry collection, Sürgündeki Şiir/Poetry in Exile (Granada Yayınları), won the 2012 Homeros Jury Special Award. Gündoğdu also edited Çağdaş Türkiye’de Muhafazakâr Sanat Sorunu: Perspektifler ve Diyaloglar that was published by Granada Yayınları in January, 2013. His poems, articles, book reviews, and interviews regularly appear in Granada Edebiyat Dergisi, Varlık, Türk Edebiyatı, Hece, Hece Öykü, and Ayraç. Servet Gündoğdu is also the co-editor of Granada Edebiyat Dergisi.