

# SYMPOSIUM

VOL X



...the bones of the  
...erians, but their king  
...out entre  
...epesi heart: e  
...d you look p

The ... ..  
...ave-mouth, leadin  
...and he strode boldly ar  
...ter heels. Gods who rule the  
...ghosts: a  
...ilent d

...our ashr  
...prophete  
...ounsel, eyes you strou

...last  
...rot: on  
...to what I see  
...scape forever  
...fact you  
...P

cavern  
...mouths all  
...ing here again with unlose  
...cause of  
...Sibyl's  
...a bride foreign to Teu  
...Sibyl's  
...made  
...d seat  
...put away  
...the bough  
...prophets  
...savage heart  
...from the bestrid  
...tamed her by  
...God had not yet  
...of J  
...The  
...et gods  
...Juno  
...while you go destitute  
...each storm  
...haggard  
...wars, vicious  
...the cavern, trying  
...make his infl  
...ave them all again, with an Achilles, Ch  
...er  
...goddess-h  
...d nowhere  
...cause of  
...ing here again with unlose  
...Sibyl's  
...a bride foreign to Teu  
...Sibyl's  
...made  
...d seat  
...put away  
...the bough  
...prophets  
...savage heart  
...from the bestrid  
...tamed her by  
...God had not yet  
...of J  
...The  
...et gods  
...Juno  
...while you go destitute  
...each storm  
...haggard  
...wars, vicious  
...the cavern, trying  
...make his infl  
...ave them all again, with an Achilles, Ch  
...er  
...goddess-h  
...d nowhere  
...into movements  
...leaf cling and  
...those, they  
...which the Sibyl of C  
...from her shrine sang out  
...are souls of  
...ears  
...and  
...open night and day  
...There is truth  
...tree's deep  
...conceals a bough  
...whose leave  
...an  
...tell what is hear

S Y M P O S I U M

# SYMPOSIUM

THE ADELPHI HONORS COLLEGE  
JOURNAL OF IDEAS

VOLUME 10  
2010

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Svetla Marinova, Christina Illig, Elina  
Kats, Katherine Correa, Kathryn Jorge,  
Emily Citro

FACULTY ASSISTANCE

Dean Richard Garner  
Associate Dean Diane Della Croce

COVER ART\*

Jessica Kretchmer

\*This cover was inspired by the Cumaean Sibyl of Virgil's *Aeneid* whose prophecies were written on the leaves of her tree and were scattered by the wind.

# CONTENTS

The Dutch Art Market during the Golden Age:.....	6
Artistic Freedom and Innovation within the Capitalist Framework	
<b>Lozana Mehandzhiyska</b>	
Patriarchy and Power: The Parent–Child Relationship .....	19
in Shakespeare’s <i>Othello</i> , <i>King Lear</i> , and <i>Macbeth</i>	
<b>Christina Illig</b>	
Jean Jacques Rousseau and the General Will .....	29
<b>Katie Correa</b>	
Materialism in <i>Nine</i> : It’s All about the Stuff.....	36
<b>Camille Pajor</b>	
Archeology of Pain .....	46
<b>Joyce N. DeFilippo</b>	
struggling to hold on .....	47
<b>Julius Motal</b>	
Some Notes on Angelic Eroticism in the Poetry .....	48
of John Milton and Walt Whitman	
<b>Frank Capogna</b>	
Where Dreams are Born .....	54
<b>Brianne Stillman</b>	
“And now I see:” Broadening Perspective.....	68
in <i>The Book of Ephraim</i> and the Open “I”	
<b>Molly Mann</b>	
William Carlos Williams: A True Artist.....	75
<b>Emily Citro</b>	
The Use of Rhythm in <i>Achilles</i> .....	85
<b>Hari Simran Khalsa</b>	
Challenges for Australia’s Foreign Policy .....	90
<b>Svetla Marinova</b>	

Reading *Moby Dick*..... 99  
**Danny Pinkhas**

Dissecting the Western Gaze toward Chinese Medicine:.....106  
From Superstition to Science  
**Elina Kats**

Reducing Surface Roughness on .....118  
Thin Films of Lithium Niobate  
**Brian Capozzi**

Woman’s World: The Primacy of the Female Community .....126  
in Chaucer’s “Wife of Bath’s Tale”  
**Kathryn Jorge**

The Artistic Vision of the World Reflected in Film .....132  
**Tanya Velasquez**

# THE DUTCH ART MARKET DURING THE GOLDEN AGE: ARTISTIC FREEDOM AND INNOVATION WITHIN THE CAPITALIST FRAMEWORK

Lozana Mehandzhiyska

Upon visiting the yearly fair at Rotterdam in August 1641, the English traveler John Evelyn wrote: “The reason of this store of pictures and their cheapness proceeds from their want of land to employ their stock, so that it is an ordinary thing to find a common farmer lay out two or 3000 in this com’odity. Their houses are full of them, and they vend them at their faires to very great gaines...” (as qtd. in Martin 369). This frequently quoted statement presents a fairly accurate impression of the Dutch art market and the circumstances surrounding the sale of artworks during the seventeenth century. Evidence from research including inventories, documents from auctions, and the St. Luke Guild’s archives suggests that even “farmers in rural Zeeland owned on average five to ten paintings each” (Epstein 147). Overall estimates of the number of works produced by Dutch artists in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries amount to between five and ten million, and at least half of these were produced between 1600 and 1700 (Epstein 147).

Many socio-political and economic factors contributed to this staggering proliferation of Dutch art during this time. Evelyn's quote suggests that the lack of land in the Netherlands resulted in the investment of capital in art. While the English and the French could have invested more freely in land, the rising middle and upper classes in the Dutch provinces spent extravagant sums on objects of luxury, ranging from exotic objects from foreign lands to fine pieces of art. After all, since the dawn of the Italian Renaissance, visual art had established itself as one of the main symbols of high social status and refinement. However, lack of land was not the only reason people chose to invest in art over other forms of conspicuous consumption, especially since the prices of the low-end art market would have been accessible to virtually anyone. Other political and religious ideas, which transformed the traditional patronage system in 17<sup>th</sup> century Netherlands, as well as issues of taste, were also contributing factors. In addition, there was the role of the artist to be considered since the artist-market relationship was two-fold: Dutch artists were agents within market operations, at once regulating supply and stimulating demand.

These artists worked within a complex framework encompassing the reformed patronage system, the establishment of the guilds of St. Luke, art dealers and the *liefhebbers* [amateurs]. In the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the fight for sovereignty with the Spanish court and the split with Catholicism eliminated the two strongest traditional patronage systems from the Dutch art market: the court and the Church. The newly established court of Orange lacked the official recognition and financial possibilities of the rest of the European princely courts, and Protestantism rejected church art. The drastic drop in demand was coupled with a rise in supply provided by the incoming refugees who fled the southern Flemish provinces mainly on religious grounds. Especially after the 12-year truce with Spain in 1609, the influx of painters and paintings from the South, mostly from Antwerp, had to be balanced by an increase in demand from the middle- and upper-middle class Dutch citizens.

However, as Prak argues, the self-regulating mechanisms of the market alone were not enough to bring about the florescence of art production. The "strengthening of corporate structures" was a necessary component (as qtd. in Epstein 150). Emerging institutions such as the guilds of St. Luke aimed to organize, regulate, and even stimulate the art market. Compared to art market systems elsewhere, the

establishment of the painters' guilds in the Netherlands had an overall positive effect on the growth of the market. For instance, the Flemish guilds of St. Luke from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, similar to the Dutch guilds of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, were key factors in the organized production of a high-volume, high-quality artistic output for the art market. In comparison, the Spanish and English art markets, lacking such organized "corporate" structures, were far more limited, and were heavily dependent on imported art, oftentimes from the Flemish and Dutch provinces.

The most significant role of the St. Luke guilds in the Netherlands was controlling the quality and size of the local market, and protecting the interests of local artists against foreign competition. Quality control was enforced by keeping a record of all painters and apprentices practicing in the city. Everyone practicing the painters' profession in a given city had to be a legal citizen and officially registered with the guild. Painters also had to pay dues and arrange with the guild to register their apprentices who then could become master painters only after completing the guild's requirements for their training. Some guilds also had a sales room established in the guild hall, where samples of the work of the town masters would be on display and assigned a price (Epstein 162). Thus, buyers could compare prices and quality. This practice fostered higher quality works and favored the local masters. Control over the scope of the market was also enacted by strict regulations of art sales. The guilds of different cities had different requirements concerning the time, place, and yearly number of legal sales, but for the most part, one general rule was enforced: no works by foreign masters could be sold at public sales, auctions or lotteries (Montias 247).

While private clients and art dealers could travel and buy artworks for their private homes from other cities, they were not permitted to resell these works at public sales. For instance, the Hague Confrerie of artists, which was formed from a guild in 1656, specified that "all amateurs ('liefhebbers') [who are] citizens of the Hague and its jurisdiction may, without any interference of the Confrerie, order and buy from out-of-town masters any works they wish, and bring them to their house, but they may not sell them at public sales without the consent of the burgomasters" (Montias 247). This measure was extremely difficult to monitor which was why most guilds preferred to outlaw public sales in general, with the sole exception of the yearly fairs (kermis). This ruling was also highly controversial, since, while it lessened

the danger of foreign competition, it also limited the market. The open public sales were considered by many to be one of the main venues where amateur buyers could develop a taste for art, become *liefhebbers*, and later register with the guilds. The controversy surrounding the sales is exemplified by a case from the history of the Haarlem guild. Many of the well-established masters of the city, such as Frans Hals, Frans Pietersz de Grebber, and Salomon van Ruysdael, signed a document on November 6, 1642, petitioning against the request submitted by the majority of guild members to ban public sales (De Marchi 458). These masters believed that “without free sales, *liefhebbers* would not be created and the market based on existing demand would be too limited to support new artists;” the only ones to benefit from this prohibition would be art dealers, who doubled and tripled prices for their own profit (De Marchi 458).

Art dealers were another major factor of the newly developing art market, besides conventional patrons’ commissions and the guilds. Oftentimes, they served as a necessary link between the demands of a growing clientele and the large output of artworks of various styles, quality, and value. A letter from the art-dealer brothers Goetkint to their cousin in Seville on January 21, 1623 regarding their export business is revealing:

In short you are dealing in items of pleasure and must extol the product; but if the paintings [we sent] are not up to the expected quality or are priced too high, the thing to do is not push too hard; we will send fewer... In any case watch out for what is wanted there and sellable. And if you find something fall short of what is expected, sell it anyway, if necessary at a loss. One item will have to carry the other until we see what is desired and profitable. This is all just testing the market. And if it proves impossible to turn a profit on painting, we will simply put the money into another line of business. (De Marchi 461)

The commoditization of art is certainly one result of the incredible increase in the scope of the market. Dealers working in the low-end of the market treated paintings as mere commodities and oftentimes employed painters to work for them, providing them with room, board, and materials, paying them a daily or per-piece wage not much higher than that of the ordinary craftsman. These low-paid painters, whose labor was often referred to as slaving away “in the galleys” (Alpers 90),



made cheap copies of themes or works requested by the dealer, targeting a specific audience. The dealers working with upper-end clients would oftentimes buy work from some of the most esteemed masters of the day and amass impressive stock-in-trade collections or would arrange commissions. Montias argues that dealers in fact saved time and money for clients with “sharply defined tastes” by “acting as their virtual agents, and by scouring markets on their behalf” (245).

Despite the growing demand and developing outlets for these paintings, selling one’s art and making profit was oftentimes not easy. Due to “the competitive urban markets and the newly evolving structures of patronage,” numerous Dutch artists and many established masters, such as Jan Porcellis, Jan van Goyen, Frans Hals, Jan Steen, Pieter de Hooch, Johannes Vermeer, and Rembrandt van Rijn, encountered financial crises and even bankruptcy at certain points in their careers (Crenshaw 17). Production on a large scale, despite the regulatory functions of the guilds, involved expensive painting materials, while prices paid for paintings seemed to vary greatly from a few guilders to a few thousand. The variation occurred not only among works produced by different painters but also among works by a single master. For instance, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, works by the marine painter Jan Porcellis could be bought for any amount between four and 300 guilders (Epstein 149). The problems with attaching prices and understanding the dramatic fluctuations of the market require a sophisticated understanding of the supply and demand mechanism, and also involve a number of variables which need to be taken into consideration: “size, the subject, the amount of detail... who ‘authored’ [the work] and any copies that were made; the number and pretensions of those copies, and so on” (De Marchi 453).

Artists, embracing the new open market system instead of the traditional patronage system, were obliged to adapt to all these variables. Achieving success within the new parameters of the market involved a great deal of artistic creativity and innovation in the workshop practices of the master painters. As Adam Smith’s theories on the market economy profess, specialization increases proportionally to the increase of the market (Montias 245). Therefore, one of the first adaptations for the Dutch painters to the new market demands was the specialization in specific size and subject matter. The change in clientele from aristocratic nobility or the church

to the average Dutch citizen required a scaling down of the works which from now on were going to adorn small private homes rather than grand halls and ceilings. The Dutch thus invented cabinet-size paintings. The greatest change, however, was in subject matter. The gradual shift from grand religious and historical paintings to the smaller, more intimate and realistic portraits, domestic scenes, still lifes, and landscapes marks the greatest innovation of the Dutch masters which dramatically changed the subsequent development of visual art throughout the Western world.

The other important role of the guilds, in addition to regulating sales, was fostering this type of subject specialization. Every town guild enlisted its members under its particular specialty—portraiture, genre, landscape, still life—and within these more general categories there were further specifications, such as flower or food still life, and urban or rural landscape. Specialization in the visual arts was becoming almost like Adam Smith's idea of the division of labor in the capitalist system. Beside this specialization within a single St. Luke guild, specialization on a larger scale saw the emergence of the so-called town schools which were famous for a certain style or subject matter (Epstein 164–165). The Utrecht Caravaggisti, for instance, accounted for Utrecht's reputation in Italianate paintings, specifically a style inspired by Caravaggio. The School of Delft was famous for the refined urban perspectives and indoor scenes of Vermeer and de Hooch, while Leiden specialized particularly in 'beau-fini' domestic and genre scenes, as exemplified by the paintings of Dou and van Mieris.

However, specialization was not the only key to marketability. Within the individual guilds and schools, certain masters surpassed others and achieved spectacular success. The variables in the price formula were the name of the master, and the quality, originality, and rarity of the work. Therefore, it can also be argued that the creative innovation of a particular master accounted for the reputation of a particular school or town. Instead of the market system determining the type of work produced, one can also envision the reciprocal relationship between the very best of the masters taking advantage of the flexibility of the open market in order to transform the nature of art, and the broad spectrum of the clientele, which together allowed for greater artistic experimentation and creativity.

No other Dutch artist of the 17<sup>th</sup> century exemplifies this relationship

better than Rembrandt. Painting in the 1630s for the workshop of the dealer van Uylenburgh and later, after his bankruptcy in 1660, for his family business, Rembrandt seems to have been most productive when working for the market instead of having to “deal with patrons” (Alpers 91). Documented evidence proves that Rembrandt “got on badly with patrons” on a number of occasions for several reasons: his demand for unusually long hours from sitters for portraits; his delay in finishing works for years; and his delivery of work deemed unacceptable for reasons of likeness or finish (Alpers 91). He resented the limitations imposed on art by the traditional patronage system which catered to the subjective tastes and fashions of the upper classes. Rembrandt expressed his uncompromisingly critical point of view in his drawing *Satire on Art Criticism* (1644) in which he ridicules the patron/art critic who is pictured with long, donkey ears sticking out of his hat. Also pictured is the figure of the artist who is kneeling to the side and engaging in unflattering gestures. Thus, Rembrandt represented his view that the artist, rather than the client or critic, has the greatest authority to judge the work.

However, this does not imply that the artist neglected the needs and demands of the market. On the contrary, through his adept understanding of marketing mechanisms, Rembrandt managed to take full advantage of the many freedoms the system offered in order to impose his vision on that system. His successful marketing strategies were accomplished through his innovative workshop practices, which stimulated the appraisal of artistic originality and distinctive style. The management of his studio aimed to satisfy the demand for the “brand” of Rembrandt’s name. He saw the way to elevate the status of the artist precisely through the manipulation of the market and the creation of a demand for art. This approach differed from that which previously produced art exclusively for the needs and tastes of the rich and the powerful. As Alpers states in her exploration of Rembrandt’s market enterprise: “It was the commodity—the *Rembrandt*—that Rembrandt made that was new” (102).

The production of paintings in Rembrandt’s studio compared to the production of paintings in Rubens’ workshop reveals Rembrandt’s contribution to the development of art. It was a common practice in the 17<sup>th</sup> century for masters to sell the works produced in their workshop by studio assistants. Rubens, who painted

primarily for the princely courts and enjoyed great popularity, successfully sold workshop copies of his paintings as copies. He kept some works in his studio to be specifically used as templates for such copies. What mattered was the finished product, the picture. Rembrandt, on the other hand, oftentimes retouched many works, signed and sold them as his own, and also encouraged variations in the compositions of the copies. But the style was essentially Rembrandt. An example of how variants on the same theme were produced in his workshop is *The Sacrifice of Abraham* (1635). The master's original version is now in The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia, but there is an interesting workshop copy in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich, which bears the inscription: "Rembrandt changed. And over-painted. 1636" (Franken 161). The minor changes in the composition of the Munich version, mostly in the angel figure, do not take away from the distinctly Rembrandt-esque style of both pieces.

These copies seem to show Rembrandt's greater interest in the creative process itself. He encouraged his pupils to explore and experiment with the infinite possibilities of composition while retaining a consistency of style which would allow the master to sign the work and sell it as a product of his workshop. What mattered most was the signature, the name, identified with the particular brushwork, and not the finished work (Alpers 102). Rembrandt was thereby shifting the focus away from the actual work and more towards the artist himself. What is more, he succeeded in creating a great market demand for the artist's self-portrait which unified the importance of the artist with the importance of the work, and elevated the artist to something inconceivable in the pre-market era when most artists were expected to produce portraits of the patrons, not themselves.

This premise is strongly supported by Rembrandt's print production as well. The retouches and oftentimes dramatic changes in the different states of printing support the idea of the artwork as an ongoing exploration rather than a finished product. The delay in finishing certain commissions which might be considered as rather unusual and as "bad" behavior towards his patrons is "what brought Rembrandt fame and money as an etcher" (Alpers 100). Furthermore, the slight variations in the different editions spurred the interest of collectors and promised profit for the master. Arnold Houbraken commented that: "At that time the passion was so great that some

people were not considered real connoisseurs (liefhebbers) unless they had the little Juno with and without the crown, the little Joseph with the white, or the brown face and so forth” (as qtd. in Dickey 153). So in prints, as with Rembrandt’s paintings, the name of the master more than the finished product became a market commodity.

Rembrandt was also careful to control the supply of his prints available on the market since the reproductive nature of the medium could diminish the price. In the case of portrait etchings especially, the master had to give over the plate along with a limited number of impressions to the commissioner. In this way, further reprinting by the master was not possible, and the owners of the portrait were more likely to keep the edition limited to increase the value through rarity. As Dickey notes: “While Rembrandt’s portraits were clearly appreciated for their refined technique, the scarcity created by limited distribution certainly contributed to the desirability of etchings such as the *Jan Six*” (158). The example of the extremely high value of 220 livres, or 5500 francs paid in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for a particularly rare print of Rembrandt’s portrait of *Arnout Tholinx* further supports the proposition that rarity is a highly important factor in the price formula. The circumstances surrounding the impression of *Christ Healing the Sick*, otherwise known as “the hundred-guilder print,” though speculative, provide further insight into Rembrandt’s marketing tactics. According to the 18<sup>th</sup> century collector Mariette, Rembrandt himself bought the print for the excessive sum of 100 guilders at an art sale (Alpers 105). Granted that he really did buy it, the episode shows Rembrandt’s constant aspiration to raise the value of art by spending extravagant amounts of money. He himself had a rich collection of drawings, prints, various works of art, and other luxury objects, bought oftentimes at great financial risk and ultimately leading to his bankruptcy. Rembrandt seems to have neglected his financial responsibilities in order to achieve what he deemed the greater goal of elevating the status of art and the artist.

Rembrandt indeed stands out as the foremost figure in the Golden Age of Dutch Art. He took full advantage of the open market system and through adaptation, transformed it along the way. In his later self-portraits such as the self-portrait from 1658 at the Frick Collection, Rembrandt asserted his accomplishments. He used the grandeur of the pose and bearing previously reserved for kings and princes to portray the artist himself, thereby dramatically shifting the focus away from the buyer and

onto the maker and product as an extension of the artist's "brand." And essentially, that is what all great Dutch masters from this time did. Vermeer, de Hooch, Dou, van Mieris, and the rest of the painters working with genre and domestic interior subjects, brought to life not the mythological figures of the Classical past, but the ordinary Dutch housewife, and preserved the spirit of the Dutch home, tavern, and street on their canvases. Instead of painting saints and sinners, Frans Hals was painting portraits animated by lively brushwork and rich colors. Van Goyen, Cyup, van Ruysdael, and other landscape painters found new national pride in the connection of the Dutch to their land. Catering to a diverse market, 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch masters diversified, enriched, and enlivened the art of painting itself.

**Works Cited**

- Alpers, Svetlana. *Rembrandt's Enterprise: The Studio and the Market*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Crenshaw, Paul. *Rembrandt's Bankruptcy: The Artist, His Patrons, and the Art Market in Seventeenth-Century Netherlands*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- De Marchi, Neil and Van Miegroet, Hans J. "Art, Value, and Market Practices in the Netherlands in the Seventeenth Century." *The Art Bulletin*. Vol. 76, No. 3 (Sept., 1994), pp. 451-464. Published by: College Art Association. URL: [www.jstor.org/stable/3046038](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3046038).
- Dickey, Stephanie. "Thoughts on the Market for Rembrandt's Portrait Etchings." *In his Milieu: Essays on Netherlandish Art in Memory of John Michael Montias*. ed. Golahny, Mochizuki & Vergara. pp. 149-163. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006.
- Epstein, S.R. and Prak, Marten. *Guilds, Innovation, and the European Economy, 1400-1800*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Franken, Michael. "Learning by imitation: copying paintings in Rembrandt's workshop." *Rembrandt: Quest of a Genius*. Van De Wetering, E. pp.153-177. Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 2007.
- Martin, W. "The Life of a Dutch Artist. Part VI-How the Painter Sold His Work." *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol. 11, No. 54 (Sept., 1907), pp. 357-369. Published by: The Burlington Magazine Publications, Ltd. URL: [www.jstor.org/stable/857272](http://www.jstor.org/stable/857272).
- Montias, John Michael. "Art Dealers in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands." *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*. Vol. 18, No. 4 (1988), pp. 244-256.
- Published by: Stichting voor Nederlandse Kunsthistorische Publicaties. URL: [www.jstor.org/stable/3780702](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3780702).



**Rembrandt, Satire on Art Criticism, pen and brown ink, 1644  
(The Metropolitan Museum of Art)**





**Rembrandt, Arnoud Tholinx, 1656, etching and drypoint**



**Rembrandt, Portrait of Jan Six, etching, 1647**



**Rembrandt, The Sacrifice of Abraham Workshop copy, inscribed: Rembrandt Oil on canvas, 1635 changed and overpainted 1636” The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia Alte Pinakothek, Munich**

# PATRIARCHY AND POWER: THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP IN SHAKESPEARE'S *OTHELLO*, *KING LEAR*, AND *MACBETH*

Christina Illig

Shakespeare wrote *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth* during the beginning of the reign of James I, and, as a result, these three plays offer interesting insights into the societal and familial practices of the Jacobean Era. In all three of these plays, Shakespeare depicts varying degrees of parental expectations. It is important to note, however, that none of these Jacobean plays are concerned with a parent's responsibility toward children; rather, all three plays only explore the idea of how a child can serve a parent, more specifically, a father. In this respect, the plays are a reconstitution of the English patriarchy system, which reached new heights during the Jacobean Era. The patriarch emerged as the absolute ruler of the household, and a great emphasis was placed on the obligation of every family member to serve this figure by whatever means necessary.

The reassertion and reinforcement of patriarchal practices that occurred during the reign of James I are probably largely due to the well-publicized concept of patriarchal absolutism promoted by the king himself. In 1609, James announced,

“Kings are compared to fathers in families: for a king is truly *parens patriae*, the politic father of his people.”<sup>1</sup> In his *Basilicon Doron*, James asserts that while a good king is comparable to a natural father, a tyrant is a “step-father and an vncouth [sic] hireling.”<sup>2</sup> Writings such as these are important in illustrating the connection James and his contemporaries saw between patriarchy and monarchy. In fact, this type of metaphor was so deep-seated that James I often referred to his subjects as children. Su Fang Ng further explores this link between patriarchy and the absolutism of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. According to Ng, pamphlets such as *God and the King*, published in 1615, explored the analogous nature of a monarch’s responsibility toward his people and a parent’s—specifically, a father’s—responsibility toward his children. In describing kings as fathers, it logically follows that fathers are a type of king to their families.

During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the reestablishment and strengthening of patriarchy was rooted in a variety of economic, political, and social changes. As the Protestant Reformation swept through Europe, the continent saw a “breakdown of old values and a sense of order.”<sup>3</sup> The individual household, rather than the Church, became the agent for moral control. Lawrence Stone points out that most importantly, “there was the pressure of state propaganda for an authoritarian state and therefore an authoritarian family.”<sup>4</sup> However, Stone does suggest that the idea of domestic patriarchy was fostered by the states since “the subordination of the family to its head is analogous to, and also a direct contributory cause of, subordination of subjects to the sovereign.”<sup>5</sup> Historian Jonathan Goldberg agrees with Stone, “the institution of the family is indisputably a historical and cultural phenomenon.”<sup>6</sup> Goldberg describes the family as one of the “building blocks” of society, being the smallest independent unit within society. In this respect, according to Goldberg, it is fitting that the family should mimic the structure of the whole of society, in this case, in the form of domestic patriarchy serving to mimic the system of monarchy.

The interconnection of patriarchy and monarchy is clearly illustrated in

---

1 As qtd. in Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 152.

2 As qtd. in Su Fang Ng, *Literature and the Politics of the Family in Seventeenth-Century England*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 21.

3 Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England*, 216.

4 Ibid, 216.

5 Ibid, 152.

6 Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 86.

Shakespeare's *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. All three plays contain a domineering patriarch aiming to assert his will over his children in order to achieve personal goals rather than altruistic ones. As a result, these three plays are discourses on power politics since the plots focus on the one-sided nature of the parent-child dynamic. If patriarchy is nothing else, it is a scaled down example of power politics. In these plays, the unreasonably high expectations and the varying abuses practiced by a patriarch on a child are clearly illustrated and explored in terms of a tragic end, thereby suggesting the faulty nature of patriarchy.

In both *Othello* and *King Lear*, Shakespeare presents the dynamic of the father-daughter relationship. At face value, Brabantio in *Othello* and the title character in *King Lear* appear to be suffering fathers who have lost authority over their daughters. However, both men see this loss of authority as a complete failure, as their daughters are supposed to embody ultimate obedience. The fathers appear to be demanding, absolutist patriarchs who show little regard for the well being of their daughters. Indeed, daughters were in a difficult position in Shakespeare's early 17<sup>th</sup> century England. According to the laws of primogeniture, the eldest son would inherit the bulk of a father's estate. The other children, especially daughters, were at the mercy of the father in terms of inheritance. According to Stone, daughters were "often unwanted and might be regarded as no more than a tiresome drain on the economic resources of the family."<sup>7</sup> However, both Brabantio's Desdemona and Lear's Cordelia are beloved by their fathers until their disobedience surfaces. Lynda E. Boose suggests in her article, "The Father and the Bride in Shakespeare," that "when we measure Stone's assertions against the Shakespeare canon, the plays must seem startlingly ahistorical in focusing on what would seem to have been the least valued relationship of all: that between father and daughter."<sup>8</sup> It is through this relationship, however, that the faulty nature of patriarchy emerges perhaps the most clear.

In the opening scene of *Othello*, Roderigo and Iago present the elopement of Desdemona and Othello to Desdemona's father, Brabantio, focusing on the racial incompatibility of the couple. However, the flight of Desdemona with Othello is more than just an issue of race; the elopement also echoes the issue of failed parental

7 Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England*, 112.

8 Lynda E. Boose, "The Father and the Bride in Shakespeare," *PMLA* vol. 97, no. 3 (May 1982): 325, [www.jstor.org/stable/462226](http://www.jstor.org/stable/462226).

expectations regarding Desdemona's behavior. At first, Brabantio does not believe the news that Roderigo and Iago deliver, claiming the two men must be drunk and maddened. Eventually, however, Brabantio is forced to confront reality, and his feelings toward Desdemona quickly change. Brabantio, clearly thinking Desdemona has deceived him, refers to his daughter's actions as "treason of the blood" (I, i, 169). It becomes clear that Brabantio thinks Desdemona has been devalued by her actions. He says, "Is there not charms / By which the property of youth and maidhood / May be abused?" (I, i, 171-173). When Brabantio presents his case to the Duke, Brabantio makes it clear that Desdemona was courted by many rich men of high social standing. Yet, Desdemona falls in love not with these acceptable men, but with Othello, shattering Brabantio's idealized vision of his daughter.

Through her flagrant disregard for this ideal, Desdemona rejects the notion of her father's patriarchy. As Stone states, patriarchy "survives and flourishes only so long as it is not questioned or challenged, so long as both the patriarchs and their subordinates fully accept the natural justice of the relationship." Desdemona's obedience or disobedience, therefore, serves to reflect Brabantio's true position; her obedience would establish Brabantio as a powerful patriarch, whereas her disobedience would suggest a rejection of Brabantio's role as a patriarch. Desdemona's actions suggest her rejection of Brabantio's authority and that rejection is a painful burden for Brabantio to bear. In fact, upon learning of Desdemona's death, Gratiano states, "Poor Desdemona! I am glad thy father's dead. / Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief / Shore his old thread in twain" (V, ii, 204-206).

Brabantio, once clearly interested in maintaining close familial ties with his daughter, rejects Desdemona after her disobedience becomes evident. Realizing that Desdemona has in fact run away, Brabantio admits the failure of absolute patriarchy proclaiming, "Raise all my kindred" (I, i, 167). As Boose points out in her article, "Brabantio sets off through the city streets determined to reclaim his stolen treasure before it has been 'possessed' by the claimant he has never authorized." Upon finding Desdemona and learning of her marriage, Brabantio tells the Duke that she is dead to him, and he does not desire her to return home while Othello is traveling to Cyprus. A daughter, once respected and loved at all costs, is clearly rejected after Brabantio feels his authority—and, more pointedly, his role as patriarch—is compromised.

A similar situation occurs in both *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, for these plays also explore the issues of monarchy and patriarchy. As Stone writes, the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in England featured a “fierce determination to break the will of the child, and to enforce his utter subjection to the authority of his elders and superiors, and most especially of his parents.” While this is seen in *Othello* as well as *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, in the latter two plays, the stakes are much higher, since the survival of a nation is also at stake. Lear’s and Macbeth’s decisions affect the country at large. The decision of King Lear to relinquish his title of king and pass the rule of his country into the hands of his three daughters results in the break down of natural order. This patriarchal decision affects the country at large because Lear is not only a patriarch, but also a monarch. Macbeth is driven by a desire to be both a monarch and a patriarch, for he resents not having sons to inherit the throne once he has indeed become king. Clearly, there are greater issues at stake in each of these plays, as the idea of a monarch as a patriarch shifts into focus.

Like Brabantio, Lear has certain ideals he wishes his daughters to fulfill. First and foremost, Lear wishes his daughters to proclaim their love for him openly. When Cordelia fails to do so, according to Lear’s standards, he angrily disinherits her and bans her from the kingdom saying, “Here I disclaim all my paternal care, / Propinquity and property of blood” (I, i, 113-114). Cordelia, however, does not necessarily reject Lear’s status as patriarch. She recognizes the love and care Lear has bestowed on her throughout her life. Yet, she points out that “Happily, when I shall wed, / That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry / Half my love with him, half my care and duty” (I, i, 100-102). Although Cordelia does not personally reject her father’s role as patriarch with these statements, she suggests that he does not have the absolute control he desires. For she is quick to point out that Lear is receiving only half the love and half the care he deserves from Regan and Goneril. In this respect, he does not have absolute control and, he is not, therefore, an absolute patriarch.

Lear’s discontent, however, is not necessarily rooted in this denial of his status as absolute patriarch; instead, his discontent is rooted in his specific feelings toward Cordelia. Lear admits Cordelia was his favorite daughter, saying, “I lov’d her most, and thought to set my rest / On her kind nursery” (I, i, 123-124). Lear probably had

higher expectations for Cordelia's remarks than for either Regan's or Goneril's, since he shared a special bond with Cordelia. This bond could be due to Cordelia's youth. As the youngest, she has remained at home the longest thereby sustaining Lear's fantasy of patriarchy the longest. Having failed to meet Lear's expectations, Cordelia is no longer the ideal daughter. In addition, Lear hoped to spend the rest of his life in Cordelia's care, thereby in Lear's eyes making her failure even more disheartening.

Like Brabantio, Lear is only concerned with how his children could and should serve him. Feeling as though Cordelia has undermined his power and failed to meet his expectations, Lear asserts his power by disinheriting and, ultimately, disowning Cordelia. Lear's sentiments of abandonment are only worsened when Goneril and Regan abuse their inherited rule by lording over their father. In reality, it is Lear's actions, in addition to Goneril's and Regan's, that destroy Lear. Indeed, after spending only a short time in Goneril's and Regan's deplorable "care," Lear begins to go mad and laments the loss of Cordelia. According to Boose, "It is the willful action of the king and father, the lawgiver and protector of both domain and family, that is fully responsible for this explosion of chaos." However, Lear's actions not only affect himself and his family, but also affect his country, since his actions have far-reaching consequences as the King of Britain. During the course of the play's action, French troops accompanied by none other than Cordelia land on British soil to help resolve the monarchical dispute at hand. Upon being reunited with her father, Cordelia recognizes the effect her sisters have had on Lear. Cordelia petitions the gods to "Cure this great breach in his abused nature, / Th' untun'd and jarring senses, O, wind up / Of this child-changed father!" (IV, vii, 14-16). Even in his state of madness, Lear recognizes that he has wronged Cordelia, and thereby is surprised by her ability to forgive him. Lear has failed as both a patriarch and a monarch, ultimately bringing about a tragic ending.

Unlike Brabantio, Lear has a moment of clarity in which he realizes he has wronged his child. Lear recognizes that he should have been more concerned with maintaining the welfare of his entire family—especially Cordelia—rather than asserting and maintaining his individual power. In asserting his power by rejecting Cordelia, Lear, in effect, loses his power because he places himself in subordination to Goneril and Regan. He is no longer the family's patriarch; rather, he becomes a

dependent. As a dependent, he is treated in a deplorable fashion comparable to his treatment of Cordelia. However, this realization comes too late; nothing can be done to reverse the impending tragic end of both Lear and Cordelia.

Unlike Lear, Macbeth may not have any sons or daughters, but he clearly understands the value of sons, especially the value of sons to a king. In one of his soliloquies, Macbeth, discussing the prophesies of the Weïrd Sisters, states, "Upon my hand they placed a fruitless crown, / And put a barren sceptre in my gripe, / Thence to be wrenched with an unlineal hand" (III, i, 60-62). Macbeth is tormented by the idea of lacking a son who could eventually inherit his throne. However, his distress is not rooted in kinship concerns, for Macbeth is not tormented by the possibility that his lineage will end with his death. Rather, Macbeth does not want his crime the murder of Duncan to have been committed in vain. Earlier, the Weïrd Sisters had prophecied that Banquo would father a great line of kings. Macbeth anguishes over having killed Duncan in order to make them kings the seeds of Banquo's kings! (III, i, 69). Macbeth wants to be a father not to fulfill a loving ideal, but to justify his own actions. Macbeth believes that if he had had a son, Duncan's murder would not have been in vain, for it would have preserved the lineage of the Macbeth family, not the lineage of Banquo's family. Macbeth wants a son in order to serve this particular purpose. For Macbeth, parenthood is not about the joy and responsibility to care for and protect a child; rather, parenthood is a means of creating a minion who will serve the parent and fulfill the parent's wishes.

This idea is echoed again in *Macbeth* through the relationship between Banquo and his son, Fleance. When attacked by the three murderers, Banquo instructs Fleance, "Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly! / Thou mayst revenge" (III, iii, 16-17). Banquo's dying words to his son are not the embodiment of loving ideals; rather, Fleance is told to avenge his father's death. Adhering to the theme of patriarchy, Banquo instructs his son to fulfill a particular purpose that he desires. Interestingly, Banquo instructs Fleance to do the one thing that Duncan's sons do not do. Upon Duncan's death, his sons Malcolm and Donalbain flee to England and Ireland, respectively. Malcolm and Donalbain do not seek to avenge Duncan's death, and as a result, turmoil erupts in Scotland. This suggests that a father's children must fulfill their duties to their father, for if they do not, there are serious repercussions.



Lady Macbeth, in fact, perverts the idea of parental responsibility in gruesome ways. Enraged by Macbeth's reluctance to kill Duncan, Lady Macbeth proclaims that even after nursing her own child and recognizing "how tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me," she would "have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums, / And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you / Have done to this" (I, vii, 55, 57-59). Clearly, Lady Macbeth feels absolutely no parental responsibility to guard or care for her very own child. Rather, keeping a promise—no matter how harmful said promise may be to her child—is more important to Lady Macbeth than the protection of her child. Ironically, through her condescension, Lady Macbeth emasculates her husband, making him a docile and obedient child. She is an excessively assertive and powerful individual, and therefore has the functional equivalent of a patriarch, evidenced by her desire for spirits to "unsex me here" (I, v, 41). Lady Macbeth's failure, therefore, to consider the welfare of her child is a statement of the failure of patriarchy to care for the common good, or any good beyond that of the patriarch.

It is, in fact, Macduff who proves to be the prime example of a good patriarch. Upon learning of his children's death, Malcolm tells Macduff to dispute these deaths "like a man" (IV, iii, 219). Instead, Macduff states, "I shall do so; / But I must also feel it as a man" (IV, iii, 220-221). Macduff insists upon the need to remember his children, the things that "were most precious to me" (IV, iii, 223). Macduff is the first father we see to honor and respect his children, even though he is only honoring and respecting their memory.

Each of these three plays is centered on a character who assumes a certain level of absolutist patriarchy and fails. Perhaps, the tragic ends of *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *King Lear* would have been avoidable if it were not for the disobedience of children. This is a choice the reader is faced with, a choice that determines the depth of each play's tragedy. When looked at chronologically, the plays present the gradual breakdown of patriarchal power. Considering the progression from *Othello* to *King Lear* to *Macbeth*, one sees the patriarchs' increasingly overbearing characters, which also become increasingly ineffective. In all three plays, the assertion of patriarchy ultimately brings forth tragedy, suggesting that domestic patriarchy is not necessarily a successful method of familial organization. For within the system of domestic patriarchy, the prosperity and interests of the family are subordinate to the prosperity

and interests of the patriarch. As a result, the constituent members of the family suffer, which is clearly illustrated by the tragic endings of Desdemona and Cordelia.

**Works Cited**

- Boose, Lynda E. "The Father and the Bride in Shakespeare." *PMLA*. vol. 97, no. 3. (May 1982): 325-347. [www.jstor.org/stable/462226](http://www.jstor.org/stable/462226).
- Goldberg, Jonathan. *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.
- Ng, Su Fang. *Literature and the Politics of the Family in Seventeenth-Century England*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Shakespeare, William. *King Lear*. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. G. Blakemore Evans. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997. 1297-1354.
- . *Macbeth*. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. G. Blakemore Evans. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997. 1355-1390.
- . *Othello*. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. G. Blakemore Evans. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997. 1246-1296.
- Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

# JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU AND THE GENERAL WILL

Katie Correa

Jean Jacques Rousseau is perhaps best known for his concept of the social contract. In his treatise, *The Social Contract*, Rousseau is eager to define the social contract as yielding to “the direction of the general will;” yet, he is unclear as to what exactly the “general will” is, how it should be arrived at, and how this “will” coincides with the self-interested, material, and fractioned interests of individual men. While Rousseau’s belief that a “general will” should be agreed upon seems like a plausible and desirable aim for governing bodies to achieve, his vague definition leads to troubling complications that make it nearly impossible to determine.

Rousseau reduces the concept of the social contract to the following terms: “Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole” (*Social Contract*). In other words, the social contract is an exchange conducted by way of mutual consent between the individual and the governing body. The individual, who is unable to govern himself, agrees to give up some of his personal liberties (namely, the freedom to do whatever he wants) in exchange for safety, protection, and societal order, which he receives from the

governing body. All those who enter into the social contract implicitly agree that they have one thing in common: the desire for civilization. Rousseau therefore concluded that such a desire for order, stability, and protection is enough common ground for a “general will” or consensus to be formed. However, Rousseau’s assertion that all must yield to “the supreme direction of the general will” is also problematic particularly because he does not envision a government comprised of a diverse set of people with differing opinions and interests.

As political historian Isaiah Berlin explains, the reason Rousseau believes there will be a “general will” or consensus among the people in the first place is his assumption that rationality leads to “one and only one true solution” (“Two Concepts of Liberty”). Rousseau does not conceive that rational men will arrive at different solutions to a problem, and furthermore, he never considers that rational men might argue with or violently oppose each other. Instead, he claims, “only irrationality on the part of men... leads them to wish to oppress or exploit or humiliate one another” (*Social Contract*). While his assumption that rational men would arrive easily at a single solution seems naïve or overly idealistic on Rousseau’s part, it is not entirely surprising, because the governing bodies which Rousseau observed during his lifetime were comprised of white male landowners, an elite body of individuals whose coinciding political and economic interests allowed them to form a general will. However, as political representation expanded to include females, farmers, blacks, and other minorities, the possibility of arriving at a uniform answer to any issue was, and continues to be, problematic. It is an unavoidable fact of life that there are many different people with their own agendas. And so, James Madison’s prediction that eventually there would be factions competing to allow their own interests to become the general interest is much more realistic than Rousseau’s claim that all men under one system of government can agree on one will or set of intentions.

One might initially assume that the phrase “general will” implies the will of the majority. Yet, according to Rousseau, such a definition is a misconception. In fact, Rousseau clarifies, “There is often a great deal of difference between the will of all and the general will; the latter considers only the common interest, while the former takes private interest into account, and is no more than a sum of particular wills” (*Social Contract*). Rousseau realizes that on a practical level, the “general will” is

better defined as a coincidence of personal interests. Indeed, Adam Smith might agree with this more realistic observation that each person is moved first by his own selfish motivation, and is only interested in a group decision if it will bring personal benefit (Heilbroner 55). Yet Rousseau, unlike Smith, does not claim that men are by nature selfish or self-interested, and this negligence to admit the often greedy nature of men makes his idea of a general and impartial will of the whole much less credible.

Rousseau is again shortsighted when he fails to distinguish between a majority and a plurality when describing the “general will.” A majority occurs when more than 50 percent of the people agree; a plurality is when the largest group of agreeing people adds up to less than 50 percent of all those involved. Rousseau does not suggest a way for future governing bodies to ascertain the “general will” of the people; the possibility that a plurality vote, and not a majority may be achieved shows that the public will has the potential to be much more divided than Rousseau allowed for. For example, hypothetically, if five percent of Americans are unregistered voters, 35 percent are Democrats, 10 percent are Socialists, 20 percent are Republicans, 15 percent are Independents, and 15 percent are Libertarians, the Democrats would win office but this plurality in no way represents the general will of the people. Again, it seems that Madison had greater foresight than Rousseau when he realized that factions or coalitions of factions, not the “general will,” would naturally become man’s chief governing power. Later in his writing, Rousseau suspects that factions are a possible political outcome and writes, “If there are partial societies [factions], it is best to have as many as possible” (*Social Contract*). Yet, this admission that there need be multiple factions to balance each other contradicts Rousseau’s premise that a “general will” even exists.

Rousseau also fails to address how people of different (and often competing) economic classes can arrive at a “general will.” While undoubtedly, there are many instances when opinions transcend class boundaries, Karl Marx seems to have made a more accurate observation about man when he asserts that “the history of all *hitherto* existing society is the history of class struggles” (*Communist Manifesto*). Madison, too, writes in *Federalist No. 10* that “the most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property.” Rousseau, however, is strangely silent about economic disparity and only briefly mentions it in *The Origins*

of *Inequality*. Even then he neither elaborates nor explains what can be done to see that people of different economic classes agree on what comprises the “general will.”

Rousseau dedicates a large section of *The Social Contract* to discerning “whether the general will is fallible.” Quite boldly, he declares, “The general will is always right and tends to the public advantage.” Again, while Rousseau acknowledges that men are driven first by self-interest, and motivated second, by the interests of the whole, he assumes largely that the “general will” naturally tends towards peace, order, safety, equality, freedom, and progress (though he never lists these specifically). Though Rousseau certainly did not observe Adolf Hitler’s rise to power, he most certainly would have been fascinated by this political figure, and might have been prompted to change his view that the “general will” always supports that which is higher and nobler. Even without observing a concrete example of a radical and destructive “general will,” however, U.S. founding fathers Alexander Hamilton and James Madison displayed keener insight than Rousseau by warning against what they called “tyranny of the majority,” or as Rousseau might call it, a general ill-will.

When discussing separation of governing powers and the role of the sovereign as head of state, Rousseau establishes that if the sovereign (or president) is chosen by the people, he represents, by extension, the will of the people. While logically, this makes sense in terms of practicality and governmental organization, Rousseau’s claim that “the sovereign is the sole judge of what is important” (*Social Contract*) is troubling because it shows a flawed assumption on Rousseau’s part—that the sovereign will be an educated and impartial ruler. Again, Madison’s realization that “[i]t is in vain to say that enlightened statesmen will be able to adjust these clashing interests, and render them all subservient to the public good” (*Federalist No 10*) seems much more realistic than Rousseau’s faith in the sovereign’s ability to interpret the “general will.”

Rousseau, however, was not completely blind to the potential tyranny of the ruler and quickly issued a disclaimer, saying, “the moment a master exists, there is no longer a sovereign” (*Social Contract*), meaning that the chief figurehead has no right to become oppressive. The problem with this disclaimer, however, is that Rousseau does not give examples of what constitutes “oppression” on the part of the ruler, nor does he provide any insight as to who will decide whether the sovereign is

being oppressive, and how that decision will be made. In fact, it is not until Thomas Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence* that a sovereign is charged in specific ways for going against the "general will" of a particular people, and even in that case, the "general will" was that of a minority of colonists.

Rousseau is quite unclear as to what is to be done with those whose opinions do not coincide with the "general will." While he writes that "each individual, as a man, may have a particular will contrary or dissimilar to the general will which he has as a citizen," he does not say what is to be done, except that "whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body" (*Social Contract*). In other words, Rousseau appears to suggest that a citizen must have two types of political consciousness: private and public, and those who do not agree with the "general will" must overcome their selfishness for the sake of others. The problem with this statement is that it seems unrealistic that citizens would forego their own interests in altruistic fashion. While Rousseau was correct in admitting that a universal consensus is not possible, he unfortunately does not encourage those who oppose the "general will" to criticize it in the form of healthy loyal opposition. Unlike John Stuart Mill, Rousseau is careless in ignoring the notion that individuality is important in a nation of peoples. He does not consider, like Mill, that "[t]here is always need of persons not only to discover new truths [but] also to point out when what were once truths are true no longer" (*On Liberty*). Rather than encouraging the free expression of one's ideas as a sure way of discovering new methods and achieving progress, Rousseau's "general will" seems to advocate conformity in government, something that is usually more oppressive than productive.

Today, the process the United States uses to determine the general will is complicated. A bicameral legislature of elected elites is said to represent the will of the people when a two-thirds majority consensus occurs. The president is elected by means of a democratic process, which then determines how a removed and anonymous elite, the Electoral College, will vote. Finally, the president appoints Supreme Court justices (who are not bound to any particular constituency) to serve for life, so that if public opinion changes, the judge has no obligation to submit to the general will. As the November 2008 Presidential election has shown, it is difficult to



conclude what exactly the general will is because elections are not based on a single issue. While it might be said that the general will is that Barack Obama be the United States' next commander in chief, some 57 million citizens (the general non-will) did not vote for him.

In light of the current American political system, it seems appropriate to conclude that a blend of the general will and the individual will of citizens must be established in any state. While Rousseau recognized the role of self-interest in politics, he downplayed its influence and assumed, rather falsely, that the "will of the people" could easily be determined. Although the United States has adopted a Rousseau-like resolution to have government run by "we the people" ("The Constitution of the United States," Preamble), we now know that evaluating who the people "are" is far from easy.

**Works Cited**

- Berlin, Isaiah. "Two Concepts of Liberty." *Four Essays on Liberty*. [www.nyu.edu/projects/nissenbaum/papers/twoconcepts.pdf](http://www.nyu.edu/projects/nissenbaum/papers/twoconcepts.pdf).
- "Constitution for the United States of America." *The Constitution of the United States*. 16 May 2009. The Constitution Society. 1 Jun 2009. [www.constitution.org/constit\\_.htm](http://www.constitution.org/constit_.htm).
- Heilbroner, Robert J. *The Worldly Philosophers: The Lives, Times, & Ideas of the Great Economic Thinkers*. "The Wonderful World of Adam Smith." New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992.
- Madison, James. "The Utility of the Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection." *Federalist No. 10*. [www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm](http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm).
- Marx, Karl. *The Communist Manifesto*. [www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/).
- Mill, John Stuart. "Of Individuality, as One of the Elements of Well-Being." *On Liberty*. [www.utilitarianism.com/ol/three.html](http://www.utilitarianism.com/ol/three.html).
- Rousseau, Jean Jacques. *The Social Contract*. [www.constitution.org/jjr/socon.htm](http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon.htm).
- . *Origins of Inequality*. [www.constitution.org/jjr/ineq.htm](http://www.constitution.org/jjr/ineq.htm).

# MATERIALISM IN *NINE*: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE STUFF

Camille Pajor

The focus on materialism throughout Andrzej Stasiuk's novel *Nine* suggests that many people in post-Communist Poland have wholeheartedly embraced a capitalist ideology, even though capitalism has failed to be the salvation of the very many who still live in poverty. *Nine* describes a few days in the lives of several small-time gangsters and their girlfriends living in the city of Warsaw. For them, the combination of money, sex, drugs, and alcohol has become the center of their lives. The main character, Paweł, is a struggling entrepreneur in desperate need of 200 million zlotys to pay back the loan sharks from whom he had borrowed the sum to start up an underwear store. The novel opens with Paweł waking to find his apartment in shambles—a sign from the thugs that a grimmer fate awaits him if he does not pay up soon. *Nine* goes on to tell the story of Paweł's predicament, but it is also interlaced with tales of the other troubled characters. Throughout the narrative, people are largely defined and judged by their fiscal worth and possessions. Often, the characters seem unimportant, with more value assigned to things than to people. Stasiuk consistently personifies objects, ascribes personality to rooms, and portrays the city “as a vast repository of items for sale, a city humming with legal and illicit

commerce and spewing junk and expensive goods in equal measure” (Hoffman 41). Almost as if they were inanimate objects, Stasiuk’s characters are confined in this materialistic, animated world.

*Nine* includes numerous flashbacks to characters’ childhoods, which enlighten the reader about their psychologies. Piecing together Paweł’s flashbacks makes it clear that his past is a history of money and things. From an early age he took on jobs such as collecting milk bottles so he could afford to buy the knickknacks he craved. He remembers buying a Chinese lighter, cigarettes, orangeade, chocolate bars, a pack of cards, a penknife—all seemingly insignificant objects—but to him they represented the satisfaction of fulfilling his desires. After such purchases, he recalls touching “the pockets in which he’d put his new things;” after buying them, “he was happy” (Stasiuk 139). One particular job described in detail in one of Paweł’s flashbacks is his work “in a fox-skinning plant, where he was seduced by the factory’s owner, a much older woman who paid him for sex, and whose elegant apartment aroused him as much as her own allure” (Hoffman 41). This passage describing his memory intertwines Paweł’s sexual encounter with his obsessive desire for the material. For him, the “bottle of Yugoslav vermouth,” “flounced red curtains,” “gold lamp brackets with colored shades,” “fabric of the armchair,” and sheepskin rug were just as enticing as the woman herself. He remembers that “the touch of the white fur [of the rug] was just as nice as her body.” Not only was this Paweł’s first sexual encounter, it was also his first time “seeing so many expensive things in such a big living room” (Stasiuk 140). In his mind, the woman and her possessions existed as a single entity.

Considering such flashbacks, it is no surprise that Paweł grew up to possess a materialistic mindset. Once, while walking down a city street, he decided to “count the stuff in the [store] windows. Sunglasses, vanity bags, shoes, belts, socks, porcelain figures, watches, sachets, suitcases. After a thousand, he lost count...” (Stasiuk 43). That Paweł cared to count that high proves how important he believes things to be. He could not afford to buy any of the aforementioned goods, but he found a way to interact with them anyway. In another passage, a homeless man asks Paweł if he believes in the devil. Paweł pushes their conversation in a different direction and does not give him a straight answer, but it is evident that he does not believe. Although Roman Catholicism is the religion of Poland, religion and metaphysical ideas are of

no concern to Paweł. He knows that God will not make 200 million zlotys appear in his hand, nor does he care if a killer-thug spends his afterlife in hell. Later on in the novel, when his friend Jacek talks about religion and claims that Judgment Day will look something like Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, Paweł listens with apathetic patience (Stasiuk 71). He does not care about his friend's opinion; he only really cares about stuff. However, the characters' materialistic attitudes in *Nine* are not limited to wanting to possess things. They observe the world through observing things; objects are valued as much and often more than people.

For example, "the blond man," a minor thug who remains unnamed, scrutinizes passengers getting off a bus who wear:

cheap clothing, knockoff shoes, fake gold, plastic briefcases, watches from Hong Kong, the girls' worn heels and the boys' imitation leather jackets, generic Popularne ['popular' in Polish] cigarettes lit with matches, dyed bangs.... (Stasiuk 193)

It is evident that the blond man does not want these things—he is content to keep to his Zippos, real leather, brand-names, and Audi—but the cheap goods are more telling to him than the passengers' expressions or feelings. He doesn't care to know about their personalities or opinions simply because their things are not as nice as his. Characters constantly judge each other in terms of material worth and possessions in *Nine*. Early in the novel, Paweł visits Bolek, a hustler whom Paweł unquestionably did business with earlier in his career. He asks Bolek if he could spot him some money. It is apparent that Paweł has not seen Bolek in a long time. Throughout the scene the men drink, and Bolek brags about his 1,300 square foot apartment as Paweł's thoughts are consumed with jealousy:

'Son of a bitch,' he thought, the white fever of rye in his mouth. The dead body of a television gleaned in the far corner and had everything needed under it, VCR, videocassettes, CD player, radio. Three remotes poked from the shelf like the tips of polished shoes. (Stasiuk 19)

Bolek's gold chain, expensive liquor, leather furniture, fancy china, trained attack-dog, and peroxide blonde girlfriend are all signs that the gangster's life had

become a good life; meanwhile Paweł's attempt at respectable business had turned out to be anything but successful. Ironically, Bolek experiences similar emotions when he visits his boss, Mr. Max, in his silver pajamas, tells Bolek about his Hugh Hefner-esque lifestyle:

'Any idea how much all this costs,' Bolus? ["us" is a suffix attached to the end of names for the purpose of endearment] A goddamn fortune. The bitches alone are half your salary, without the extras... I pay them to look nice, not talk. But you turn away for a second, and yadda yadda. They're all like that. (Stasiuk 108)

The materialism is evident. The question Mr. Max poses is "how much," and not "guess what I did to get this;" and for Bolek this is not an issue. He finds the surface of Mr. Max's situation too appealing to care about the underlying ethics of what he sees. For both Paweł and Bolek, seeing what they do not have but still desire arouses contempt. However, for Bolek, the experience is also rather inspiring. He sees what he is hopefully working towards. Paweł, on the other hand, knows he cannot go back to Bolek's line of work.

Bolek's girlfriend Syl also embodies the theme of materialism in the novel, but it is complicated by sexism, which is a pervading force in the narrative. Bolek treats her as though she were just another one of his possessions, and not as though she were particularly valuable. This is despite the fact that she cooks, cleans, and sleeps with him, and generally fulfills whatever simple request he poses, such as fetching a cigarette. Syl is not fazed by her relationship with Bolek though, largely because of her materialistic outlook. Living with him provides all of her basic necessities, and her wants are fulfilled more so than they would have been if she were not living with a thug. However, at one point she compares the apartment to a prison, but only when she becomes disgruntled. For the most part, she is content in her comfortable, well-furnished prison, just as long as she gets what she wants (shoes, clothes, make-up, and so-on) and is taken out to the movies once in a while. Syl begins to tire of Bolek when he stops buying her affection. Towards the end of the novel she tells him: "you haven't bought me anything for ages. When we first met, you said you'd buy me things" (Stasiuk 188). At this point, Bolek is becoming weary of Syl, or more accurately, getting tired of her cooking and slim figure. He tells her of his discontent, but she steers the conversation towards "these really neat shoes" that she saw on TV (Stasiuk 189). Syl is not worried about Bolek's complaints; her thoughts are completely occupied with the "really neat... really smart, all black shoes" (Stasiuk 189). Together, Bolek and Syl

personify *Nine's* materialist theme.

In addition to creating characters who are obsessed with stuff, Stasiuk explores “the tawdriness and seductiveness of the material world,” by writing about objects in a way that makes them seem human (Hoffman 42). When Paweł counts the bills from his store’s metal box (he cannot even afford a cash register) they feel “as thin as death” (Stasiuk 45). After his store clerk, Zosia, uses a payphone, “the machine with polite boredom returned her card” (Stasiuk 63). When Bolek drives his BMW, “the Beamer moved heavily, sensuously” (Stasiuk 94). Even if he is not directly using personification, Stasiuk describes people and things with other things. For example, Stasiuk explains the smell of the country as:

White pyramids of heart-shaped cheeses, eggs, pickled cucumbers, bundles of dead chickens, their pale, plucked bodies, live birds in shit-stained cages, carrots, parsnips, cream in metal cans, black rapeseed oil in vodka bottles, sacks of wheat, linseed, poppy seed, dried peas and beans, barrels of sauerkraut, pigs’ heads, cows’ udders, flies, the stink of burnt feathers, the dry smell of burlap sacks, old women’s armpits, honey in bottles, lard in jars, buckwheat, rhubarb, blueberries measured out in a half-liter mug, and the sour stench of cottages in which the air hasn’t changed for generations. (Stasiuk 90)

Although such a narrative may come across as verbose, it not only characterizes the smell of the country perfectly, but it also illustrates thoroughly the activity of the country. By naming all of these things, Stasiuk makes one think of other things that are found in the country, suggesting a more comprehensive picture of what the Polish countryside is like.

In several scenes in *Nine*, Stasiuk adds to the theme of materialism by describing a character’s room in such detail that it seems almost like a person. He creates Jacek’s girlfriend Beata’s room in this way. For two pages it seems as though every object in her room is accounted for. “Her possessions,” ranging from a grey teddy bear to philosophy books to a painted cannabis leaf on her wall are “all hers,” and make the room come alive (Stasiuk 60–61). More importantly, they help the reader understand Beata more, especially her evolution as a school girl. As a sensitive young girl, Beata medicated the teddy bear with a dropper. As a rebellious adolescent she painted a huge yellow sun on her wall, and then a cannabis leaf. However, her

philosophy books always remained unopened: “It was enough that they were there, that she could touch the spines and covers showing gods or the faces of men with half-closed eyes and orange flowers around their necks” (Stasiuk 60).

So even Beata, who as a youthful, feminist, vegetarian seems to be one of the novel’s more substantial persons—even she is concerned only with the surface of things, with appearances. Perhaps the most telling object in her room is the picture of Kurt Cobain which she hangs on her wall after his death. Tellingly, he replaces a picture of the Sacred Heart: the grunge in Beata’s heart has simply overpowered her Catholic sensibility. The picture of Cobain together with all of the other objects in her room helps the reader visualize the young woman: what she wears, how she carries herself, and even how she speaks can be imagined from her room’s description.

For Beata, as for all of the characters in *Nine*, objects are more than just symbols. One example is her fixation with buying toothbrushes for her vacation with Jacek. One day while hanging out with Jacek she realizes that she has never really left town. She persuades him to take her to Zakopane, a quaint city in the mountainous Polish south, but before they leave, Jacek, who is a heroin addict, needs to make a drug deal. His last words to her before he leaves are: “You can buy yourself a toothbrush. I’ll be back in fifteen minutes, OK?” (Stasiuk 146). Beata giddily agrees, but soon becomes heartbroken in the next scene where she witnesses the dealers, Bolek and the blond man, chase Jacek through the station until they disappear. While watching the drama unfold, she “touche[s] the toothbrushes in her pocket, and tears welled” (Stasiuk 171). The toothbrushes signify her hopes that are now crushed. Later when she tells Paweł of the vacation scheme she had with Jacek, she uses the toothbrushes she bought to warrant her story. Functioning as material justification from one materialist to another, they are ideas incarnated. While Beata walks dejectedly on the outskirts of Warsaw after the pursuit in the station, she hears a plane above and thinks: “Those people up there were happy as angels, sitting in comfortable seats, being served colorful drinks by beautiful women, the city below like a crystal palace, but the glow of her cigarette they couldn’t see” (Stasiuk 177). More than merely symbolizing what she could not have, the airplane is a physical manifestation of her poverty in comparison with the airplane passengers’ wealth.

In the world of *Nine*, people and things have equal worth: “for both male



and female characters, human beings have no more value than objects, and are just as disposable” (Hoffman 41). Disposability is introduced in the very first passage where Paweł sits in his wrecked apartment surrounded by his belongings that are now trash, engulfed in a “a mess [that] wouldn’t fit in ten buckets” (Stasiuk 3). This theme is carried through the novel to one of the last passages where Bolek disposes of his girlfriend on the grounds that she is too skinny, and he is lusting after a more voluptuous woman. He accomplishes this by having his gangster counterpart break up with her for him, although his friend does not reveal Bolek’s reasons to Syl. Syl stands in the park stunned when she realizes what is going on, but she stands in her new beloved boots that she has found in her sacred Downtown boutique district. When she first puts them on she thinks that they have made her “an entirely different woman,” but it is unclear about what she thinks of them when she is being dumped (Stasiuk 199). The materialism in the novel undoubtedly makes people and things equally disposable, but it also poses larger problems.

Throughout *Nine*, Paweł and the others struggle to find some sort of meaning in spite of their troubles, but their materialistic attitudes have them stuck in a kind of nihilism. The novel’s “bleakness and casual nihilism are so insistent as to induce a mood less of existential anxiety than of emotional numbness” (Hoffman 42). The characters appear apathetic towards their philosophical distress, and are solely focused upon things. What is interesting about Stasiuk’s *Nine* though, is that it is not entirely unique. With the end of the Communist regime in Poland came the end of censorship. Authors are now much freer to expose the uglier sides of society than they were before. There has emerged a genre of literature that has been defined as:

post-Communist noir—fiction that exposes subcultures of drugs, drunkenness, and sexual excess not easily reconciled with the sunnier images of the country as either the last defender of old-fashioned morality or a fully subscribed member of the progressive new Europe. (Hoffman 42)

Stasiuk’s *Nine* definitely fits into this genre. However, it is important to consider how accurately this “noir” attitude reflects the entire society.

Drugs, crime, and drastic class differences are inevitable negative results

of capitalist societies (Hoffman 42). It is also true that many people adopt extreme materialistic attitudes within such an economic model. This is exceedingly clear when looking at the United States where individuals are pressured by so many external sources such as advertising, media, and peers to buy things all the time in order to make themselves appear happier and smarter. It is very often the case that one is judged by what one has or doesn't have. From personal experience, I can affirm that with the introduction of capitalism, materialism has been on the rise in Poland. There is one particular example Stasiuk includes in *Nine* that I have witnessed myself when visiting the country. At one point, Bolek parks his BMW in a parking lot. When he returns, there are several men inspecting and admiring the vehicle. Many people in Poland, especially young men and boys, are obsessed with sports and luxury cars. For them, such cars are the quintessential objects that represent a perfect life. Car magazines are extremely popular. Those who read them practically memorize them, and you can always count on a few admiring young men to surround your parked Mercedes. Stasiuk often personifies the BMW as "barely purring," while Bolek expresses his blatant superiority over others because of his expensive car. He sneers at a passing Opel, not because the driver is incompetent, but because the car itself is an inferior brand, an Opel, and not a BMW.

Although such materialism seems rather disheartening, I do not think it is reflective of all the people in Poland. Poland is still a very religious country where the majority treats Catholicism and its values very seriously. And although Stasiuk exposes the gangster scene in *Nine*, it is only a subculture. Many people still live in poverty in Poland, but they are not totally dispirited by it. Religion, family, art, literature, theatre, music, and nature are things other than material objects that are highly esteemed. When I visited my family in Mazury, the northern lake region of Poland, they were far less financially well off than my family near Kraków. One of my cousins was the first person in his entire neighborhood to purchase a computer, and there was a constant stream of neighbors flowing into his house to view his new purchase. However, the neighborhood's focus is far from materialistic. Family, holidays, cooking, farming, fishing, boating, and even going for walks in the fields and forest are appreciated more than material things.

Capitalism is an economic model that undeniably comes with setbacks

like any other economic system. In the case of Poland, I think that communism was the “greater evil.” The communist regime was resented by the people, except for the select few who ran it. Now there are no more breadlines, there is no more censorship—when my father was growing up in Communist Poland it was illegal to listen to *The Beatles*—and there is much more freedom, even though wealth is not abundant among the general population, and marijuana usage has increased. Capitalism is still a *novus* in Poland, a novelty, and it is not surprising that the nation needs to iron out the kinks. The assumption that Poland would become a First World country overnight by adopting capitalism is irrational. Capitalism will certainly be different there than it is in the United States. Poland needs time to figure it out, and unlike Stasiuk, I think it can work without totally corrupting people’s values and dissolving the country’s rich culture.

**Works Cited**

Hoffman, Eva. "Warsaw Underground." *The New York Review of Books*. 11 Oct. 2007: 41-42.

Stasiuk, Andrzej. *Nine*. Trans. Bill Johnston. Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2007.

# ARCHEOLOGY OF PAIN

Joyce N. DeFilippo

When will I let myself write the history of our bodies?  
Having been violated, we are  
spitting words at men like acid,  
pressing our hipbones sharp against them, vitriolic.

Having been violated, we  
take turns digging deadly holes to bury each other.  
We press our hipbones sharp into men, vitriolic,  
but no matter how many we hurt, we are not excavated.

We take turns digging holes to bury each other,  
and sifting through sand, try to unearth memories, knowing  
no matter how many men we hurt, we are not excavated.  
You suppress the secrets under my breath, lips to my lips.

Trying to unearth memories, we sift through the sand,  
but my mind is matted under the weight, wet after rain.  
You suppress the secrets under my breath, lips to my lips,  
and your voice sculpts me as a statue, wide eyes staring blankly.

My mind is matted under the weight, wet after rain.  
Despite spitting words at men like acid for years,  
your voice still sculpts me as a statue, wide eyes staring blankly.  
When will I let myself write the history of our bodies?



**Julius Motal** *struggling to hold on*

# SOME NOTES ON ANGELIC EROTICISM IN THE POETRY OF JOHN MILTON AND WALT WHITMAN

Frank Capogna

In the proem of *Paradise Lost*, John Milton states that his poem is to be an “adventurous song, / That with no middle flight intends to soar / ...while it pursues / Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme” (13-16). This passage is an understatement, as *Paradise Lost* was undoubtedly a revolutionary piece. With *Paradise Lost*, Milton brought epic into the Christian theological sphere, and mirrored the Latin and ancient Greek languages in his native English tongue in a way that was previously unmatched, and has yet to be replicated. Superficially, *Paradise Lost* is characterized by its formality. Its poetry is Latinate and thus often dense, and its broadest message is about a strict acquiescence to the divine will. However, below the formal tempo and insistent iambics of *Paradise Lost* lies an impressive and altogether unexpected looseness and fluidity. This fluidity is apparent in several specific moments: when Raphael descends to Earth, and he speaks with Adam in a conversational manner; when God produces beautiful and eloquent speeches; and when Eve creates the very first lyric song. Yet, the most fluid and perhaps most

beautiful moments of *Paradise Lost* occur in Milton's vivid descriptions of angels and angelic life.

A little under 200 years after the death of John Milton, Walt Whitman first published his highly influential book of poetry, *Leaves of Grass*. Superficially, Whitman's writing could be no more different than Milton's. The 19<sup>th</sup> century bard, long-since considered the forefather of free verse, favored loose and flowing lines that contrast with Milton's Latinate verse, which adhered to stylistic and grammatical tenets established centuries prior. While Milton and Whitman did share some congruent preoccupations, most notably in their ideas of the interplay of fluidity and the erotic, Whitman chose not to cling to the idea of order and structure in Milton's epic. In conversation with a student in 1888, Whitman chastised Miltonic verse in *Paradise Lost*, calling the poem "a bird—soaring yet overweighed: dragged down, as if burdened—too greatly burdened... its flight not graceful, powerful, beautiful, satisfying..." (Traubel).

Naturally, Whitman saw his poetry as the antithesis of Milton's, and indeed, in many ways it is. Whitman had a pronounced allergy to hierarchy and order, and his poetry an obsession with individuality, free will, equality, and poetic freedom. Whitman's poetics are the polar opposite of Milton's Latinate, and highly structured, verse. Whitman often does not employ a set rhyme scheme or standardized line length in his pieces, and any semblance of meter is merely happenstance. However, in one aspect of his poetry, Walt Whitman may not have realized that he was walking through a door that John Milton opened. Whitman's infamous description in "Song of Myself" of the soul's ravishing of the body, plunging its tongue into the poet's "bare-stript" heart and unifying the body and the spirit, is extremely similar to John Milton's discourse on angelic sex in *Paradise Lost*. While Whitman and Milton could not be more incongruous stylistically, their ideas on incorporeal eroticism are undeniably in harmony.

As is common with most entities in the universe of *Paradise Lost*, the angels too are ordered in a hierarchy. However, within this hierarchy—and in the nuances of angelic life—one finds the greatest examples of fluidity in *Paradise Lost*. Everything surrounding angelic life is fluid and unstructured—Milton's angels are free to assume whichever gender they desire at a given time and can sprout and remove limbs at



will. Raphael explains this phenomenon to Adam telling him that “They (the angels) limb themselves, and color, shape or size / Assume, as likes them best, condense or rare” (6. 352-353). Still, the clearest testament to their fluidity can be seen in Milton’s descriptions of angelic sex. When Adam asks Raphael how the angels obtain sexual pleasure, Raphael answers as follows:

Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy’st  
 (And pure thou wert created) we enjoy  
 In eminence, and obstacle find none  
 Of membrane, joint, or limb, exclusive barrs:  
 Easier then Air with Air, if Spirits embrace,  
 Total they mix, Union of Pure with Pure  
 Desiring; nor restrain’d conveyance need  
 As Flesh to mix with Flesh, or Soul with Soul. (13. 621-629)

Thus, angelic sex is about a supreme union of souls. Divine fornication sees the angels’ bodies literally overlap one another, and in essence, become one, a complete harmony of two individuals. This concept, alongside the ability of the angels to grow limbs and change sex, makes the potential for angelic sex seemingly limitless. Much like the angels’ anatomical existence, their sexuality knows no gender bounds, and the erotic goes far beyond merely hetero- or homosexual, and instead plunges into a nebulous arena in which gender and anatomy are ultimately unnecessary. This idea is all the more interesting when looked at in contrast with the epic’s primary topic of Adam and Eve, the cardinal example of heterosexual love. Walt Whitman addressed *Paradise Lost* as if it were merely a poem about restriction and subordination to a higher order, but angelic life (and angelic eroticism especially) exist completely without boundary, in an entirely nebulous manner.

Several highly erotic moments of Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself” reflect the possibilities introduced in Milton’s discourse on angelic sex. The first of these is one of the most famous images in all of Whitman’s poetry, the soul’s ravaging of the body in Section 5 of “Song of Myself.” Whitman describes the union of body and soul in a highly graphic, lascivious manner, writing:

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,  
 How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn’d over  
 upon me,

And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to  
 my bare-stript heart  
 And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held my feet.  
 Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all  
 the argument of the earth (86-91)

In this passage, the narrator and his spirit, two separated entities, become one through sexual intercourse. This act, which was evidently a fiercely cathartic experience for the narrator, recalls the description of angelic sex from *Paradise Lost*. In "Song of Myself," the body and soul experience a metaphorical unity through copulation, an idea, which is altogether too similar to Milton's idea, in which angels simply glide into each other in order to find bliss, to ignore.

Later on in Section 11 of "Song of Myself," Whitman moves to describing 28 young bathing men, and the voyeuristic woman who watches them from afar and longs to join them. Whitman describes the young men in very exact and almost erotic detail:

The beards of the young men glisten'd with wet, it ran from their long  
 hair,  
 Little streams passed all over their bodies.  
 An unseen hand also pass'd over their bodies,  
 It descended trembling from their temples and ribs.  
 The young men float on their backs, their white bellies bulge to the sun,  
 they do not ask who seizes fast to them,  
 They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and bending  
 arch,  
 They do not think whom they souse with spray. (210-216)

As this section continues, the group is no longer made up of individuals, but instead becomes a single being. There are no individual actions that the bathers partake in, as they all act as one as well; the bathers float together in the same manner and all act in the same way (214-216). Similarly, the poet and the voyeur are also viewing the men through the same, very erotic lens. At the end of the section, the bathers are referred to solely as "they." In being objectified by the voyeur and the poet alike, the bathers become a single massive, multi-limbed organism, with extremities jetting out in every direction, an image that reflects the lusty amalgamation of the

angelic bodies in *Paradise Lost*. Much as the angels overlap and can possibly sprout various limbs in their fornication, the objectified bathers do the same.

John Milton betrayed an obsession with order in *Paradise Lost*. In his epic, everything in the world was compartmentalized and placed in a hierarchy, and characters that broke this idyllic order fell from God's grace. It seems apparent that Walt Whitman mistook Milton's obsession with order as an obsession with rigidity, and disregarded the beautiful fluidity that Milton injected at key moments in *Paradise Lost*. The most exemplary of these moments were the descriptions of angelic life, descriptions that later manifested themselves in the poetry of Walt Whitman. Though Whitman consciously ensured that the very order that Milton supported was deconstructed in his poem, "Song of Myself," his descriptions of the bathing men and the soul's ravishing of the body fall in line with examples in Milton's epic.

**Works Cited**

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005.

Traubel, Horace. "With Walt Whitman in Camden, Volume 3." *The Walt Whitman Archive*. Originally published in 1914. [www.whitmanarchive.org/criticism/disciples/traubel/disciples\\_credits\\_3.html](http://www.whitmanarchive.org/criticism/disciples/traubel/disciples_credits_3.html).

Whitman, Walt. "Song of Myself." *The Norton Anthology of American Literature. Volume B*. 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. Ed. Julia Reidhead. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd., 2007.

# WHERE DREAMS ARE BORN

Brianne Stillman

Over the years, my view of Peter Pan has changed because of the many versions of his story based on J. M. Barrie's novel *Peter Pan*. These include the televised musical *Peter Pan* starring Mary Martin (originally aired in 1960), the 1991 movie *Hook* starring Robin Williams, and the 2003 live-action movie *Peter Pan* starring Jeremy Sumpter. Each version presents its own interpretation of Barrie's characters, and these variations have allowed me to occupy diverse imaginative spaces. However, all of these versions have sparked intriguing comparisons among them about gender and sexuality, imaginative space, and the idea of freedom.

In elementary school, I was excited to audition for my fifth grade production of the musical *Peter Pan*. I really wanted to play the role of Peter since he was exciting, carefree, and most importantly, able to fly. Although I had not read Barrie's *Peter Pan*, I wanted to be Mary Martin's Peter because this Peter had a great voice and I loved to sing. However, I was cast as Wendy and nearly cried. Wendy did not sing, had few lines, and although she was often present, did not seem really important; she was not the lead, and the boys' parts seemed to be more fun. They were able to fight and play games



**Mary Martin as Peter Pan  
in 1960**

while Wendy had to take care of them, sew pockets, and tell stories. She was the mother and had a background role. Even as a child, I knew that Peter was the centerpiece of the play. The boys were special, whereas Wendy was disposable; as she grew up, she was left to wait for Peter during each spring cleaning, and eventually became too old to fly to Neverland. At this point, Peter replaced her with her daughter. Moreover, I already knew how to be Wendy who waited as I did while other kids played sports and I watched. Wendy made pretend food like I did when I played with my extensive plastic food collection. Wendy's familiarity to me was boring, and I wanted to explore Peter's position among the lost boys in Neverland as a swashbuckling hero who could fight with a sword and save the world.

Although I was unable to be the invincible Pan spirit, the boy who never grows up, I accepted the part, came to terms with being Wendy, and tried to find the aspects of her character that I could adjust. I also found ways to infiltrate the play: I wanted to share in Peter's exciting scenes, so I asked the director if I would be able to sing "I Won't Grow Up" with the boys and be involved in the important battle between the boys and the pirates. My favorite thing about playing Wendy was being the "Wendy bird" that the lost boys shot down. I glided out from backstage, holding an arrow to my chest, and collapsed dramatically on stage. For the next 10 minutes, I was the center of attention because Peter and the boys perform the song "Wendy" and build a house around me. Peter's lyrics make Wendy important: "She'll be waiting at the door / We won't be lonely anymore / Since Wendy / Lovely Wendy's here to stay." Even though the scene was fun, I still wanted to play Peter. I still wanted to be the brave and creative leader, and, even though the musical gave girls the chance to delve into the imaginative spaces of boys, I was denied this opportunity—Peter was still unreachable to me.

My view of Peter also came from the movie *Hook*, in which Robin Williams starred as an adult named Peter Banning who does not remember that, as a child, he was Peter Pan. This is a different Peter, not only because he grows up and marries Moira, Wendy's granddaughter, but also because he is



**Robin Williams as Peter and Julia Roberts as Tink after the transformation**

played by a man. Traditionally, on stage, Peter is played by a female, as was the case in my fifth-grade production. Even some of the lost boys were played by females; however, in *Hook*, all of the lost boys are boys, and there is always a clear distinction between boys and girls. Boy actors play boy characters, and girl actors play girl characters; unlike the musical, there is no cross-dressing or gender bending. This is true for Banning's children, Jack and Maggie, and their hobbies reflect what society dictates as acceptable for boys and girls. Jack likes baseball, and Maggie likes to sing. The sexual dimorphism, or the gender typecasting, also includes the issues of maturity. Maggie, like Wendy, is the more mature character who remembers home, while Jack, and even Peter, begin to forget. Also, Maggie fully believes in the importance of mothers and knows that it is her place to become a mother when she grows up. She suggests this throughout the movie, especially when she says to Hook: "You need a mother really badly."

Indeed, the movie is very concerned with sexual difference and heterosexuality: Robin Williams' Peter is kissed by three beautiful, barely-clothed mermaids underwater—a scene which always upset me as a child—and a temporarily transformed Tinker Bell (Tink, played by Julia Roberts) who changes from a boyishly dressed, short-haired fairy to a life-size, long-haired woman. Steven Spielberg invites the eroticism of Tink by highlighting her desire for Peter and inventing her ability to become life-size with one wish. In contrast, by making Tinker Bell tiny, Barrie had miniaturized an erotic figure and taken away her threat of womanhood. Peter and Tink's kiss is a catalyst for an increasingly heterosexualized plot. When Peter Banning becomes Peter Pan, he forgets the years that he spent away from Neverland and all his memories as Pan become the present time. He forgets his family until Tink kisses him. Even the flashback to Peter's meeting Moira has a sensuality that does not exist in the musical and the novel. Peter falls in love with Moira and gives her a real kiss. It is as if Peter Banning has to wake up into his real life, which is the erotic and sexually differentiated life of Moira, Jack, and Maggie.

Unlike Peter Banning, who profits both from his memory and amnesia of Neverland, *Hook's* Wendy, played by Maggie Smith, is a sad figure because she seems unable to fully recover from losing the unattainable Peter and Neverland. She is able to remember but seems unable to break free from the position of caretaker of the

memories. She will never experience the freedom of forgetfulness and pure play as Peter can—without the burden of memory. When Wendy sees Peter after 10 years, she looks at him lovingly and a bit longingly, and Peter looks back at her admiringly. As a child, I could identify with this Wendy since I knew what it felt like to be left out, but I did not want to be her; I feared Wendy's loneliness and inability to take part in the merriment inspired by Peter. I did not want to be in mourning like Maggie Smith's Wendy or become the caretaker of those who were having fun in Neverland. I believed that the real fun and action would be happening there without me, and this disheartened me. *Hook* made me realize that Wendy was not the site of good memory but the outsider suffering from her memory, a reality that I did not notice in my fifth-grade Wendy or in the musical's Wendy.

Was there ever a Wendy that I wanted to be? After watching the 2003 movie *Peter Pan* when I was 16 years old, I became comfortable with the thought of being Wendy, but only if it were to the Peter played by

Jeremy Sumpter. This movie, like the musical version and *Hook*, has a division between Peter and Wendy that makes the audience members choose between identifying with one or the other. But this time I did not mind choosing Wendy. Yes, there was a binary distinction between males and females, as distinct as there was in *Hook*, but as a boy-focused, female teenager who was only a year older than Jeremy, I seemed happier with the difference. I thought that this Wendy, played by Rachel Hurd-Wood, was a more intriguing character than the musical's



**Jeremy Sumpter as  
Peter Pan**

Wendy. Although the movie emphasizes girls telling stories and becoming mothers as in Barrie's novel, Rachel's Wendy is more confident as a girl and the leader of her brothers. This Wendy is also strong-willed and prefers to be brave and tell stories to the pirates. Another interesting detail is that the movie's narrator is an unnamed woman, voiced by Saffron Burrows. At the end, she reveals that she is Wendy passing on the story of Peter: "But I was not to see Peter Pan again. Now, I tell his story to my children, and they will tell it to their children, and so it will go on. For all children



grow up except one.” Like Barrie who is a narrator in his novel, she is creating a story and a legacy that is not disposable. But she is also more important than Barrie’s subsequently disposable Wendys because she is the original Wendy and the only girl to travel with Peter to Neverland. Peter does not return for Wendy or her line of daughters as in the other *Peter Pans*. Like the narrator Wendy, the narrator in Barrie’s novel is motherly; he occupies a space that seems to be male, female, mother, child, boy, and man.

If Wendy is a unique Wendy in the Sumpter version, Peter seems to be on the brink of becoming a historical, individualized, eroticized young man. Jeremy Sumpter was already 14 years old, an adolescent, when he played Peter, a character that, according to Barrie, “had all his first teeth” and was between the ages of six and 12 (Barrie 10). Still, nothing can hide the movie’s interest in the pubescent love affair between Peter and Wendy. The movie creates endearing moments between them that highlight their gender difference and potential courtship, such as one scene in which Wendy is about to give Peter “a thimble” or a kiss, and their puckered lips almost meet, but Tink pulls Wendy away by the hair. In the novel, Wendy does kiss Peter, and Peter “thimble” her back, which causes Tink to pull Wendy’s hair (27). Tink “hated [Wendy] with the fierce hatred of a very woman” (44) yet is not a woman but “something [that] gave Peter a loving pinch” (42). The comedy defuses the sexuality primarily because the reader is free to imagine a boy with his baby teeth, and no adolescent actor will interfere with that image. Yet, in Sumpter’s *Peter Pan*, sexuality is the point. Toward the end of the movie, Peter and Wendy dance an elegant fairy dance in the forest. It is a form of pretending that they are fairies, but, for Wendy, it is clearly a romantic moment because Peter’s left hand is holding hers, his right hand is on her waist, and they gaze into each other’s eyes in the moonlight. Also, after they dance, Wendy confronts Peter and asks, “What are your real feelings?...Happiness? Sadness? Jealousy?... Anger?... Love?” When she mentions love, Peter replies, “I have never heard of it” and never felt it for something or someone. Wendy reaches out to touch him, he backs away, and the following conversation occurs:

Peter: Why do you spoil everything? We have fun, don’t we? I taught you to fight and to fly. What more could there be?  
 Wendy: There is so much more.

Peter: What? What else is there?

Wendy: I don't know. I think it becomes clearer when you grow up.

Peter: Well, I will not grow up! You cannot make me! I will banish you like Tinker Bell!

Wendy: I will not be banished!

Although this scene may appear to be demonstrating the stereotypical Peter Pan syndrome, where a sexualized Peter refuses commitment, it actually shows that Wendy can and does speak up and hold her own. This confidence can be empowering to anyone choosing Wendy's position—boy or girl—unlike other versions of Wendy. It is not that she is mooning over an unattainable Peter and will have to forever mourn the loss like *Hook's* older Wendy; this Wendy seems to be more modern and her own person. She can have the moment with Peter but does not structure her life around it. In fact, even though Peter does not admit it, he feels jealous that Wendy may go back to Mrs. Darling. Peter shows this when he whispers outside Mrs. Darling's window regarding Wendy: "We can't both have her, lady." Therefore, Wendy is not the only one who is endlessly reacting to Peter's initiative. Here, Peter has to respond. If this is a Peter of sexual difference, at least it provides a space for Wendy to construct herself in a way that has a potential for independence.

Later, Wendy is upset that Peter wants to return to Neverland. Peter exclaims, "I want always to be a boy and have fun," a line that is also in the musical and Barrie's novel. Wendy replies: "You say so, but I think it is your biggest pretend." This was a memorable line for me because it made me wonder if I ever wanted to be Peter again. Now, Peter seemed lonely, stubborn, and afraid of growing up. Peter even becomes teary-eyed when Wendy decides that she and her brothers must leave Neverland. He also sobs for Tink not to leave him. This is a moment when I do not want to be Peter. In Mary Martin's version, I do not remember Tink's dying making Peter as sad and pitiful as this; maybe this is because Tink is just a light and not a miniature woman. For Sumpter's Pan, forgetfulness is not a reflex; being a boy depends on whether he will have the capacity to forget at all. For Barrie, Peter's eternal boyhood is constructed out of an overwhelming inability to remember or distinguish one person from another. Sumpter's movie, however, dramatizes the threat of Peter's uniqueness and sudden realization that Wendy is not just a mother but a

particular, genuine person who threatens to lodge in his memory as a painful mark of what could have been. Indeed, if Barrie's Pan is unable to remember, Sumpter's Pan runs the risk of being unable to forget. Thus, when Peter invites Wendy to touch him during the fairy dance, he not only risks breaking her heart, but also risks breaking his own heart. It is sad that he comes so close to doing and feeling what Barrie's Peter cannot. When Jeremy's Peter leaves Wendy at the end of the movie, he seems heartbroken and very alone.

The topic of aloneness is intriguing and makes me wonder: Is Peter left alone in Neverland when the lost boys are adopted, or do more lost boys come? This movie leaves me with the impression that Peter is left alone with Tink and puts on a playful, happy face to disguise his heartache when they fly away from Wendy's window. Nothing could seem further from Barrie's novel; in fact, the roles of Peter and Wendy have been utterly changed because of the romantic, sexualized treatment. Peter's endless amnesia has transformed into something that he can either remember or repress, while Wendy's disposability and her endless mourning create the space in which she can become a complete person. For the first time, I had found a Wendy who was finally more attractive to play than the role of Peter himself. In fact, strangely, Peter seemed to be a role that he consciously had to play himself.

Last year, I read Barrie's *Peter Pan* and finally explored the original. I was surprised to find that, within the imaginative space of the novel, the reader can identify with and embody almost any character, and not just Peter or Wendy. As I read, I was delighted to imaginatively inhabit any number of Barrie's characters, including the narrator and Hook. As a storyteller, the novel's narrator rivals any present or future Wendy. It is the narrator, after all, who tells the story of Peter Pan. This mother/father/man/boy opens every door to the playful indeterminacy of gender that characterizes the novel as a whole. The narrator is all-knowing especially about the equally indeterminate world of Neverland. Like the perfect mother, he can recount stories about mermaids, features of the island, and Peter's adventures. I also enjoyed a new, less rigid relationship between Wendy and Hook. The narrator explains:

With ironical politeness Hook raised his hat to her, and, offering her his arm, escorted her to the spot where the others were being gagged. He did it with such an air, he was so frightfully *distingué*, that she was too fascinated to cry out. She was only a little girl. (Barrie 111)

Hook is a gentleman to the lady Wendy, and this is a moment that is attractive to inhabit from either character's perspective. This is especially true when "Hook entranced" Wendy since it would be interesting to see, from Wendy's perspective, if she were "fascinated" because she was captivated by Hook's confidence and strength or just too frightened to speak. And, it would be exciting to be Hook in the way that Peter plays "Captain Pan" (139) and be such a strong character with a "dark nature" yet with "a touch of the feminine, as in all the greatest pirates" (80). Seen in this way, Barrie's novel opened up a new character with whom I could experiment, especially since Hook is both masculine and feminine.<sup>1</sup> Also, Barrie's novel does not have casting agents as the other versions have which determine who or which gender will play each role, including the narrator; the reader makes these decisions. The novel allows the reader to create his or her own image of each character, whether boy or girl, male or female. Each character becomes an indeterminate, amorphous agent, and much of the richness of the novel derives from the way the prose allows each character to be negotiable and open to the reader's imagination. For example, the lost boy Nibs is described as "gay and debonair," and Slightly "cuts whistles out of the trees and dances ecstatically to his own tunes" (46). These qualities can apply to girls too, and do not indicate how Nibs and Slightly look. Even Mr. Darling is oddly created: he is calculated and stern, yet "at once forgot his rage, and in another moment was dancing round the room with Michael on his back" (14). He could be the mother or father figure and has a mixture of traits, creating an intriguing, not fully classified persona. As I read the novel, the freedom to imagine these indefinite, fluid characters allowed me to include my childhood memories, and experience the novel through Peter and Wendy and the other characters as well—unlike the other versions. Moreover, because I was free to cast the tale as I desired, I was able to explore the amorphousness of the characters. I was even able to recapture my feelings toward Mary Martin's *Peter Pan*, in which a forty-seven-year-old woman played the boy with his baby teeth, and toward the actors in animal costumes who danced on the colorful

---

1 Hook is also a fascinating space to occupy in Spielberg's *Hook*. Played by Dustin Hoffman, he is funny and cunning, especially with his plan to make Jack want to be his son. Hook's evilness is entertaining, as it is in the musical version. Hook gets to have sword fights and be a leader of pirates, a desirable position in a game of make-believe. Also, since Hook's obsession in *Hook* is to "make time stand still," he is a good role to utilize for escapism. In Sumpter's *Peter Pan*, Jason Isaacs' Hook even gets to fly! Moreover, Hook gives Wendy the opportunity to be a pirate and to enjoy the attention and awe from the pirates as she tells them a story. He is also very interesting because he is manipulative and good looking (the movie makes a point to show him without his shirt on, again bringing sexuality into the story) but feels trapped by his obsession with Peter. To Tink, he says, "With Pan dead, we'll both be free." Here, the captive Hook is an especially sad figure and provides another imaginative space to occupy.

stage. In other words, I was able to revisit that wonderful, free-floating world in which roles were not particularly assigned, and I could develop a richer experience of the novel. The movie versions had created restrictions, but these were suddenly lifted by Barrie's novel. I could imaginatively occupy Peter's space or the space of any other character.

Indeed, unlike Mary Martin's Peter, Barrie's Peter seems less restricted, less literal. He often seems impossibly young, since he still has baby teeth and nightmares, causing him to "cr[y] in his sleep for a long time, [as] Wendy held him tight" (138). At the same time, he was a swashbuckling pirate-boy who could fly, yet was deceptively sweet-looking. Barrie describes him as "very like Mrs. Darling's kiss... a lovely boy, clad in skeleton leaves and the juices that ooze out of trees, but the most entrancing thing about him was that he had all his first teeth. When he saw that she was a grown-up, he gnashed the little pearls at her" (10). How strange this is, this combination of wildness and sweetness that also shows both aggression and an eerie, fairylike beauty. Barrie allows the reader to form his or her own mental picture of this untamed, freewheeling boy with a short temper and pearls for teeth. Other times, Peter appears to be closer to 12 or 13 years old as he acts with confidence and maturity and fights in battles.

Although this is a wonderful, mystifying space to occupy while reading, it creates an impossible dynamic when it is attempted on stage by actors who create physical representations with limited accuracy and who can only attempt to reach Barrie's creations. Adding to the difficulty of such performances, Peter has an ambiguity about him because the novel works against sexuality, unlike the movie versions. Once an actual, embodied actor is cast, the impossible boy becomes possible, and the audience must either recognize or potentially ignore the weight of sexuality that any actor must bear. Only in Barrie's writing can the reader defuse the sensuality that a performer unavoidably brings on stage. Barrie's more amorphous Peter can harbor feelings toward Wendy that are those "of a devoted son" (94) which are very different from Peter's feelings in Sumpter's *Peter Pan*. Furthermore, Barrie's Peter is androgynous and not attracted to Wendy, forming an uncategorized space not because he is a proto-sexual boy being played by a proto-sexual actor, but because Barrie's "impossible boy" resists any materialization. Peter's representation

is very different from those in *Hook* and Sumpter's *Peter Pan* because these movies make Peter a heterosexual male, and genders are discrete. In the latter movie, when Peter experiences Wendy's hidden kiss, he receives Wendy's version of what Barrie describes as the "one kiss... that Wendy could never get, though there it was, perfectly conspicuous in the right-hand corner" of Mrs. Darlings' mouth (3). In the movie, Wendy's aunt says that this kiss is "for the greatest adventure of all. They that find it have slipped in and out of heaven" (because the greatest adventure is to find the "one the kiss belongs to"). Indeed, this more-than-implied sexuality is uncharacteristic of any of Barrie's indeterminate, amorphous agents.

It is that indeterminate, amorphous quality that becomes the most enjoyable aspect of the novel, especially Peter's nonsexual, specific liveliness: "I'm youth, I'm joy" (136), which is his essence.<sup>2</sup> Peter expresses what most people feel at some point in life: a desire for the uncatchable and untouchable child within all of us. Yet to become Peter would be refreshing and satisfying only for a while. He has the freedom and ability to play Hook and all other characters in the novel *except Wendy*. Truly, she is just a replaceable object to him, and a mother—which to Peter is the same thing. The one role that Peter cannot be is his own mother.

I realized that always being Peter would cause me to fight this restriction, because I, like Barrie's Wendy, will grow up to be a mother who will love and care for her children and tell them stories about her adventures. As a young woman, I look forward to this as an important aspect of my future. In contrast, as a child, I found Wendy's mothering side to be uninteresting, and I wanted to be Peter instead. Now, I was surprised to discover that Barrie's Peter is indeed cocky and heartless and does not have a good memory. These elements form Peter's character, but I would not want to inhabit them—at least not permanently. In Barrie's novel and the musical, Peter crows: "'Oh, the cleverness of me!'" (23). I like his confidence and proudness; however, I would not want to be heartless like Barrie's Peter. I would hate to be unable to love, a characteristic essential to Peter's being. Now I see that Peter's amnesia and his view of Wendy are the price that he pays for freedom and everlasting play. I also notice a darkness about Peter. In fact, Peter may not remember the

<sup>2</sup> Peter is also described by Barrie as follows: "No one could ever look quite so merry as Peter, and the loveliest of gurgles was his laugh. He had his first laugh still" (25). Truly, I would delight in this purity of joy and hearing Peter's impossible-to-imitate, youthful laugh.

Darlings at all in Barrie's novel; he may fly away and abandon them, and he may not catch them as they begin to fall. As the narrator explains: "Eventually Peter would dive through the air, and catch Michael just before he could strike the sea, and it was lovely the way he did it" (35).

It may have been lovely, but it was also frightening. Barrie's Peter has a ruthlessness to him for he is "gay and innocent and heartless" (159) like all children. But these elements combine to create a fun space to occupy, a place of escape where a person can be care-less, selfish, and absent-minded. Nevertheless, it may not be a space that a person would want to inhabit forever, and perhaps that is why Barrie says: "all children, except one, grow up" (3). Despite his freedom, I would not want to be Peter at the end of the novel because he is separated from the Darlings as well as the lost boys who become part of that family:

There could not have been a lovelier sight; but there was none to see it except a little boy who was staring in at the window. He had ecstasies innumerable that other children can never know; but he was looking through the window at the one joy from which he must be forever barred (147).

Peter will not receive the familial joy and love, which Peter Banning in *Hook* attains. Nor will he experience even the brief adolescent rush that Jeremy's Peter attains. Since Barrie's Peter explains, " 'I want always to be a little boy and to have fun,' " he will never feel the joy and excitement of adolescence through adulthood (24). Although he will not feel the sadness and stress of life (a reason that he is a great space to occupy, if only for a while), he will never experience romance and parenthood,<sup>3</sup> two important contributors to my hopes, dreams, and my understanding of life and happiness. My current family is crucial to the development of who I am today and is essential, along with my future family, to my path in life. Since Peter does not have a family, his persona is unchanging and impervious to love. To Peter, mothers are strangers, and strangers are mothers. I could not inhabit this space for my entire life as Peter does; it would create a deep sadness within me and, possibly, like Tink's famous swoon, extinguish the light within me as well.

This prompts the question: Is it good to be Peter? I find that the answer is: Not all the time. A way of counteracting this dilemma is for the reader to be Peter and then other

---

<sup>3</sup> In *Hook*, fatherhood is essential to Peter Banning's "happy thought," which is his son Jack, but this is not characteristic of Barrie's Peter Pan. However, Robin Williams' fun Peter at the end of *Hook* is more like a boy, and his playful quality does seem fitting for Barrie's Peter. When I was a child, my cousins and I pretended to be Peter Banning—but only his character at the end of the movie. We took turns reciting, "What did I tell you about this window? Always keep it open!" while spinning each other around.

characters, which the novel allows. I also wonder: Is there any situation for men that is favorable in Barrie's novel? The answer seems to be no. The lost boys grow up to have monotonous jobs compared to their activities during childhood: "You may see the twins and Nibs and Curly any day going to an office, each carrying a little bag and an umbrella" (153). This illustrates the fact that it is not good for boys to grow up into men in the novel's world, and it is no longer enjoyable to inhabit these males. Indeed, the worst position to occupy in the novel is a grown man; fathers get put into doghouses, and Tootles grows up to be a "judge in a wig coming out at the iron door" (153).<sup>4</sup> In *Hook*, the answer is that it is good to be Peter at the end of the movie and Jack. Yet, unlike *Hook*, it is favorable to be amorphous and not sexually differentiated in Barrie's world. It is good to be able to play any of his characters, as long as they are not grown men (who are not pirates). But, it is important to note once again that Peter gets to be all of the characters—even a father—excluding Wendy.

On the other hand, it is not good to always be Wendy in the novel either. Her role is serial and disposable as I noticed as a child. Notably, it seems that her image of Peter is no longer as perfect as it was when she first met him. She says to her daughter Jane: "It is only the gay and innocent and heartless who can fly" (154). Thus, Peter can fly because he is not tied down, there are no consequences for him, and he has no memory. These reasons are presented when Peter returns and is shocked by Wendy's growing up. His tears turn quickly into a bow as soon as Jane wakes up, and this scene becomes a replicated performance of Peter's meeting Wendy in the beginning of the novel. Therefore, Peter will always have more Wendys with no difference between them. The narrator explains, "When Margaret [Jane's daughter] grows up she will have a daughter, who is to be Peter's mother in turn; and so it will go on, so long as children are gay and innocent and heartless" (159). I feel that this is an empty, endless ending—at least in the way that it makes mothers disposable objects. Wendy and her line of daughters will be Peter's mothers and are replaceable and interchangeable. This aspect of Wendy continues to remind me that I would feel frustrated to be limited to her fate just as I would with Peter's. Although I have a new appreciation for how flexible Barrie's novel is, it only applies to boys, however amorphous they may be.

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps, the worst adult fate belongs to John. He is a sad figure because, despite his adventures in Neverland, he does not have any stories to tell his children; he has completely lost his imagination and creativity: "The bearded man who doesn't know any story to tell his children was once John" (153). Although he was an enjoyable figure to experience in Neverland, he is not anymore.



Maybe I was right in yearning to be Peter in elementary school, because I knew instinctively that Peter has that freedom. But now I realize the cost of that freedom. I could only perceive this after my own long history of occupying or not occupying any number of Wendys.

Thinking about all of this makes me realize that Barrie's *Peter Pan* allows me to return to childhood and use my imagination fully, and that it places me at the center of the book in the same space as Peter occupies. I used to feel that only children had the freedom of make-believe play and an active fantasy life, but Barrie's *Peter Pan* shows that adults can do the same through literature, film, and theater. No matter the reader's age or gender, he or she can agree with the sentiment of a little boy in *Hook* regarding the best part of becoming any of Barrie's characters: "That was a great game."

**Works Cited**

Barrie, J. M. *Peter Pan*. New York: The Modern Library, 2004. Print.

*Hook*. Dir. Steven Spielberg. Perf. Dustin Hoffman, Robin Williams, Julia Roberts, Bob Hoskins, Maggie Smith. Sony Pictures, 1991. DVD.

*Peter Pan*. Dir. P.J. Hogan. Perf. Jeremy Sumpter, Jason Isaacs, Olivia Williams, Lynn Redgrave, Rachel Hurd-Wood. Universal Studios, 2003. DVD.

*Peter Pan*. National Broadcasting Company. WNBC, New York City. 8 Dec. 1960. Television.

## “AND NOW I SEE:” BROADENING PERSPECTIVE IN *THE BOOK OF EPHRAIM* AND THE OPEN “I”

Molly Mann

Each section of James Merrill’s *The Book of Ephraim* represents one letter of the Ouija board that Merrill and his partner, David Jackson, used to channel Ephraim, their messenger from the spirit world. Through Ephraim, Merrill and Jackson (or JM and DJ as they refer to themselves in the poem) explore their lives together and apart. Since both are writers, the letters on the Ouija board assume multiple meetings. Merrill plays with each letter visually and phonetically, requiring the reader to use his senses to extract meaning from the poem. Merrill struggles with the task of fully conveying to his readers his self and love within the limitations of language. The first lines of *Ephraim* are, “Admittedly I err by undertaking / This in its present form” (A. 1-2). Just as *Ephraim* teaches him and Jackson to “USE USE USE / YR BODIES & YR MINDS” (E. 5-6), Merrill learns, by the end of the poem to find meaning in the sensory journey toward that meaning.

One sense that Merrill requires us to use in determining *his* meaning is that of visual perception. Throughout *Ephraim*, JM realizes that to look outward is not to lose sight of oneself, but rather to improve one’s view of self. The “I” in *Ephraim*

also becomes the “eye,” the orb that encircles one’s experience. This paper will focus itself on the “I” and “O” sections of *The Book of Ephraim* to show that the former actually becomes the latter as Merrill realizes he is not a solitary figure leading a life in isolation, but rather one that is connected to others. There is simultaneity here: Merrill’s own narrative retains its uniqueness at the same time that it is part of the greater story of human existence. It is a necessary paradox as well. Merrill’s “I” must broaden itself in order to be an “eye” with which he can properly see himself and move forward from the introspective blindness he suffers at the start of *Ephraim*. Visually, the “I” represents the closed slit of an eye that cannot see beyond its own interior, while the “O” is the rounded orb that can look both outward and down at the self.

There are enough references to perception in “I” to justify an alternative reading of the title as “Eye.” The first is Merrill’s parenthetical description of Wendell’s “serene blue eyes” (I. 14). Merrill will meet the 18-year-old Wendell later, in “W,” as the two spend an evening together in Venice. In doing so, Merrill is able to see the world, and himself, through Wendell’s eyes. At this pivotal point in *Ephraim*, Wendell is the window through which Merrill can see his life more clearly in both its past and present states. Over a sumptuous dinner, Wendell shows his grotesque sketches of the human face to his uncle: “I guess that’s sort of how I see mankind” (W. 61). Merrill recognizes Wendell’s pessimistic perspective as similar to his own young self; the young nephew sees men as rats with “long tooth” and “beady eye” (W. 57), just as Merrill could only see the dirty, polluted parts of Venice. By understanding this, however, Merrill is able to steer Wendell, and himself, toward “where a highest, thinnest mist / Englobes woolgathering in naphthalene” (W. 77-78), toward a more inclusive and optimistic view of the human character. As they leave the restaurant, Merrill and Wendell both laugh over the “four sharp little [rat] eyes” (W. 81) that suddenly stare back at them. It is impossible to see man as a rat in the midst of Venice, where one is surrounded by his sensibility for beauty and ability to create art. The pair find themselves, as the “I” section begins, “I’d” (I. 1)/“eyed.” All of this is compounded when the reader learns that Wendell is a fictional character. Merrill has created him with the express purpose of embodying a different perspective. Wendell exists for his eyes, and fades from the poem once Merrill has used this character’s

perspective to illuminate his own. Wendell becomes the “site” of perception, for within Merrill’s endless puns is that of “sight,” “site,” and “cite.”

Another form of perception in “I” is Tom (named later in “Y”), Merrill’s former psychoanalyst, who is “Exuding insight” (I. 32). In the analysis session that Merrill reports, the pair refers to JM’s and DJ’s episodes with Ephraim and their botched efforts to transplant a human soul. Hovering over all of this is the Freudian context that Merrill first struggles with, then struggles against, and finally dismisses in favor of his own narrative. The “insight” that

Merrill achieves is this: “Somewhere a Father Figure shakes his rod / At sons who have not sired a child?” (I. 46–47). Among many other possible interpretations in light of Merrill’s complete work, one can read these lines as Merrill’s acknowledgement that he carries with him his father’s disapproval of homosexuality. More important to this section though, are the preceding lines.

Tom refers to a quote by Oscar Wilde: “Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth” (89). The mask here is one Merrill looks *through*, more than what others look *at* when they see him. When he is “his own person,” Merrill is the closed “I.” Once he has assumed the guise of figures like Wendell, however, he broadens his perception to the “O” eye, the only one that can discern the truth.

Finally in this section, Merrill explores the metaphor of looking through a “smoked glass” (I. 72) at an eclipse to represent DJ’s and his relationship with Ephraim. Ephraim is a spectacle through which JM and DJ can examine their lives together and apart:

...his lights and darks were a projection  
Of what already burned, at some obscure  
Level or another, in our skulls. (I. 75–77)

DJ and JM must view themselves from a distance, through Ephraim’s eyes, to see themselves clearly. The shade, therefore, is another mask for the lovers, who “instinctively avoided / Facing the eclipse with naked eye” (I. 66–67). To do so would be to blind oneself, the “I.” In order to preserve one’s correct sight, one must view the eclipse of self through sm“O”ked glass.

For, in the “O” section of *Ephraim*, the reader is greeted with “O’s of mildest light” that “glance through the years” of one’s life (O. 1). It is a soft “Moonglow [that] starts from scratches [in the] oval / Cheval-glass” (O. 3-4). This halo of reflected light (never direct, for that would blind the “I”) creates a “brilliant zero” within which “Strato squats” (O.7). Strato is, like Wendell, another mask that Merrill will don, another younger version of himself through which the poet can examine his present life. For Merrill’s argument is that all of these versions are part of a whole; all of our past and present selves are bound up in one and must be considered together if one’s life is to be illuminated. The “zero” also refers to the “Z” section of the poem, the concluding section in which Merrill finally settles himself in this realization. In “Z,” “A blind [is] raised here and there” (19) as Merrill incorporates all narratives into his, and all his narratives into one. His transformation from the “I” to the “O,” the vessel that he can then fill, is complete in “Z.” This vessel is “The ancient, ageless woman of the world. / She’s seen us. She is not particular” (Z. 77-78). She is the primordial mother, nurturing and accepting, through whose eyes Merrill can finally see himself, and David, clearly. Yet, this “site” is also imbued with other “I”s, one of which is the fictional Mrs. Smith (Mrs. Myth) who is both another mother figure for Merrill and another step toward his own narrative.

The image of the “ancient, ageless [all-encompassing] woman” is also foreshadowed in “O” through the characters of Maisie and Maya, who are really bound in one character through their feline connection. They are, indeed, so connected in Merrill’s mind that the death of the former reminds him of the latter, now dead. Maisie, before dying, “read[s] the blankness” in Merrill (O. 59), the lack of sexual drive that makes him no longer the fiery young Strato, but an older man in a more smoldering kind of romantic relationship with DJ. She offers him an “Endangered insight that at best would crown / Another hopeless reading of Lorenz” (O. 62-63).

Since “Lorenz” refers to Konrad Lorenz, who argued in his book, *On Aggression*, that animal behavior forms the root of human behavior, these lines suggest that Merrill is looking at himself again through another’s eyes; this time, those eyes are Maisie’s “instinctive pupils” (O. 73). As do all feline eyes, her pupils expand from slits that form “I”s to wider “O”s. When Merrill looks through these two different sets

of eyes, Strato's and Maisie's, he sets the lusty young man's against the "half mad old virgin[s]" (O. 55) to find himself in the mean.

Merrill moves seamlessly from his description of Maisie into that of Maya, revealing how deeply connected the two figures are to him. And Maya is another perspective that Merrill assumes in finding his own. In one sense, he learns to look at Maya's life as a whole, rather than in fragments, before he can take the same attitude toward his own life. However, as with all things Merrillian, the metaphor is not so easily decoded. The "whole" is also a "hole," which makes room as the open "O" does. It therefore simultaneously represents absence, accommodation, and entirety. In "M," the section devoted to her, Merrill refers to Maya's "not yet / Printed self" (M. 16-17). This image serves many purposes: it evokes film negatives to remind one of Maya's career; it refers to her refusal to appear before company without a thick coat of makeup; and it conveys Merrill's point that Maya's life story is not yet finished. Our life stories are continuously being written as we live them. Merrill must understand this about Maya, looking through her heavily made-up eyes, before he can apply it to himself.

Maya's mask connects to another image in "O:" the "hardwood mask" (O. 100) that reminds Merrill of Isak Dinesen, whom he refers to as "Tania" (O. 94). The mask returns Merrill to the animal instincts he has previously remarked in Maisie. This mask hangs on the wall:

Making clear (to anyone with eyes)  
 ...  
 That serves in animal disguise  
 Light the way to Tania's goal:  
 Stories whose glow we see your lives bathed in—  
 The mere word "animal" a skin  
 Through which its old sense glimmers, *of the soul*. (O. 105, 107-112)

Merrill is assuming yet another mask, another story, through which to see himself. He looks outward, as "anyone with [O-pen] eyes" can, breaking through the blindness that an anthropocentric view engenders. He argues that by understanding animals, we can understand part of ourselves, since we are all on the same continuum, characters in the same narrative. It is a narrative that is itself multiple and peppered with (w)holes.

Because Merrill experiments with perspective in *The Book of Ephraim*, he is finally able, at the end of section “Y,” to write, “And now I see” (Y. 82). He sees, after looking through different masks, after examining others and examining himself from the viewpoint of others, that all of these perspectives are important. One cannot live as an “I,” I-solated in his experience of the world. This kind of introspection, paradoxically, only leads to blindness. Rather, one must expand that “I” to an “O,” into the ring that can encompass all of human experience, into the vessel of the “ancient, ageless woman of the world” (Z. 77) that continues to be filled but remains a (w)hole. Only then can one view oneself through the “O”culus, the open “I.”



**Works Cited**

Merrill, James. *The Book of Ephraim. Changing Light at Sandover*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.

Wilde, Oscar. *Intentions*. Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2004.

# WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS: A TRUE ARTIST

Emily Citro

When we take in a fine painting, many aspects of its complex makeup contribute to our enjoyment of the piece. Color, composition, and subject are part of what allows us to take an elevated pleasure in the calculated brush strokes we see on a stretched piece of canvas. While looking at a painting, our minds dissect these elements as we pay close attention to the details used to portray a specific aspect of the scene, and discern how these details relate to what the overall image captures or means. In this same way, poetry is a succinct, dense little story, rich with all the details the poet needs to tell it completely. Like a painting, a poem must be carefully analyzed and scrutinized to gain any sense of greater meaning, no matter how straightforward it may seem. This is absolutely true of the poetry of William Carlos Williams. His language is stark, simple, and seemingly common or conversational. But in his loosely punctuated lines are the same broad brush strokes and complete snapshots of scenery that make a great painting memorable or beautiful to all who see it. Williams' "The Widow's Lament in Springtime," "Spring and All," and "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus" are as pleasing to the mind as a classic painting with their vivid sense of color, landscape or scenery, and ability to capture the moment.

“The Widow’s Lament in Springtime” [see index for complete poems] features all the parts of a classically crafted painting. It uses vivid colors and a sense of natural landscape to relate its theme in 28 short, dense, yet fluid lines, similar to the way a painting conveys to us its sense of meaning in a mere searching glance. The only use of color in this poem occurs in a span of six lines, but it’s enough to set the scene for us to convey the saturated and lively colors of late spring:

The plumbtree is white today  
 with masses of flowers.  
 Masses of flowers  
 load the cherry branches  
 and color some bushes  
 yellow and some red

Immediately, this colorful image begins to draw associations in the recesses of our minds. The plumbtree changes, its blooms no longer emerging little buds. But from afar it becomes a massive block of color—“white,” “red,” and “yellow”—against the bright blue and white of a sunny but still cloudy spring sky. Springtime in literature and painting usually relates to the theme of maturing youth, the time in our lives when we slowly gain the physical strength and qualities of an adult; it is the time when we collect the real world experiences that begin to shape our identity. Just as we can relate to a snapshot of emotion captured in a painting, so also we can relate to the specific, emotionally charged moment in time captured by this poem. We all know how a sense of loss can color and underline the trials and triumphs of human experience. This same passage which describes color gives us a feel for the landscape, and I imagine this woman, a widow, broken in stature, staring out on her lush spring backyard, seeing all these fabulous colors and sights of the renewed world coming into its own with no sign of winter left to deter it. In that moment, we recognize the image of a painting is the story that drives it. Our feeling of connection with and sympathy for the widow who cannot be too young, being married 35 years, is what gives power to the overarching sorrowful message in the last few lines of the poem:

I feel that I would like  
 to go there  
 and fall into those flowers

and sink into the marsh near them.

Seeing all this life in its fullness reminds her of the time she spent with her beloved husband; she would rather sink into the memories of her springtime with him and give up on the life which surrounds her. She would let the marsh overwhelm her if it meant she could have the memories of her springtime in front of her, foremost in her mind. In this way, the image Williams paints with his words sets up an entire scenario, a story with a theme.

In “Spring and All,” Williams creates for the reader a virtual smorgasbord of description reminiscent of the subtle composition of a painting:

By the road to the contagious hospital  
 under the surge of blue  
 mottled clouds driven from the  
 northeast—a cold wind. Beyond, the  
 waste of broad, muddy fields  
 brown with dried weeds, standing and fallen

All along the road the reddish  
 purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy  
 stuff of bushes and small trees  
 with dead, brown leaves under them  
 leafless vines—

The imagery in this poem also focuses on spring, but instead of a full, richly colored resurgence of nature, it relies on the shift from winter to spring, the stuff of March rather than late April-May, to pull on our feelings. Here the colors are drab and muddied earth tones which convey the dreary sense of the dead of winter. Reddish, purplish, brown colors against a mottled blue cloud sky set a bleak mood. They help to convey the greater theme of the poem that when life begins to emerge in every sense, and knowledge comes with it, this is not yet springtime with its blaring, vivid colors. The landscape of the poem, like a painting, is highly detailed, so we get all the specific details of the scene setting the work. The dried brown weeds, twiggy bushy remnants, patches of standing water—all these images are of life that has died out or gone into remission compared to the pure, greener images like grass or wild carrot leaf offered in the end of the poem, where life and knowledge has colored

this new thing or person. This imagery, rivaling any of the beautiful, serene American landscapes picturing the change of the seasons, conveys a greater message:

But now the stark dignity of  
entrance—Still, the profound change  
has come upon them: rooted, they  
grip down and begin to awaken.

Just as the viewer must observe the smaller details, the nuances of brushstrokes or subtle shading in a painting to understand the mood the artist intends to portray, or what story is being told with the image, so also the reader of Williams' poetry must question whether his words can be taken at face value. "Spring and All" can be seen as simply an eloquent description of the slow arrival of spring, but it is really so much more than that. Its imagery describes the fragility of life and the bleak world it enters nearly alone. It captures the way we slowly but surely become intimately acquainted with the world around us even when things we are so certain of are only certain because we define them arbitrarily. Williams' images, together with his seemingly simple words, picture so much about the human condition by displaying how we interact with the world around us, and paint for the reader a rich and complex canvas.

This brings me directly to Williams' famous poem "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus" modeled after Peter Brueghel's 16<sup>th</sup> century painting with the same name (*Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*: see Appendix). Williams accurately communicates the message and imagery of the renaissance painting in a mere seven three-line stanzas. The poem relates the same message: how an event as definitive as a person's death can and will be unnoticed so long as those left in its wake have no personal relationship to the one who died. The scene Brueghel depicts is a closely scrutinized image of a town sowing its crops to harvest later in the year as they begin to feel the warmth of a hopefully prosperous growing season. Williams' words translate it seamlessly:

a farmer was ploughing  
his field  
the whole pageantry  
  
of the year was  
awake tingling  
near

the edge of the sea  
concerned  
with itself

The poem progresses to the mythic story of Icarus's fall. Like the world around him, Icarus is young, in the springtime of his life; yet, his tragic fall goes unremarked by this world. He, like many other intellectuals or mythical figures, overreached, and in doing so, tainted the worth of his great feat and ingenuity with pride and arrogance. William's poetic rendition of the painting sets the scene in the same way; the poet portrays a bustling world where each element, even the sea, is concerned only with itself and the industry of its own actions. Williams accomplishes the mastery of Brueghel's brushstroke with his words and images, and brings to life the mythical tale. Again, the "tingling" of springtime is an image in art which brings to mind the youthfulness of productivity, and the beauty of new or renewed life. Both Brueghel and Williams use this image of life to contrast with the death of Icarus whose image in both works is diminutive. Here is Williams:

unsignificantly  
off the coast  
there was

a splash quite unnoticed  
this was  
Icarus drowning

The ending is short and concise. Both the painting and the poem ingeniously center on what is arguably one of the smallest details of each work. And much like any artist or poet who hopes that his or her best work will be recognized, Icarus hoped that the world would know of his great flight, even though the world in both works continued its everyday business as if he had never existed. A boy who could fly died silently in this world, a mere flash of white legs in the water, in a moment when the world around him was busy living, Icarus was dying "quite unnoticed."

William Carlos Williams' loosely structured but dense poetry contains a high degree of visual detail (even if it is detail that must be created in the reader's mind) which plays upon our notions and associations with specific images or themes which also occur in painting. He takes three different artistic approaches to springtime in "The Widow's Lament

in Springtime,” “Spring and All,” and “Landscape with the Fall of Icarus,” focusing on both the positive life which it infuses into all who experience it, and the sadness that can accompany any loss of that sense of life, whether literal or spiritual. Williams accomplishes this by using different colors to create mood and a specific landscape, scene, or composition in which the reader is situated to create the meaning of each poem. The fact that his poems are short and dense makes his technique powerful like that of perhaps an impressionist painter. As one flash of color or wide brush stroke carries great significance in a great painting, so one word or line transforms and carries profound meaning in Williams’ poems—how a complex, layered landscape like Brueghel’s keeps all of its meaning when translated into simple, painterly images.

# APPENDIX

## The Widow's Lament in Springtime

Sorrow is my own yard  
 where the new grass  
 flames as it has flamed  
 often before but not  
 with the cold fire  
 that closes round me this year.  
 Thirtyfive years  
 I lived with my husband.  
 The plumtree is white today  
 with masses of flowers.  
 Masses of flowers  
 load the cherry branches  
 and color some bushes  
 yellow and some red  
 but the grief in my heart  
 is stronger than they  
 for though they were my joy  
 formerly, today I notice them  
 and turned away forgetting.  
 Today my son told me  
 that in the meadows,  
 at the edge of the heavy woods  
 in the distance, he saw  
 trees of white flowers.  
 I feel that I would like  
 to go there  
 and fall into those flowers  
 and sink into the marsh near them.



**Spring and All**

By the road to the contagious hospital  
 under the surge of the blue  
 mottled clouds driven from the  
 northeast—a cold wind. Beyond, the  
 waste of broad, muddy fields  
 brown with dried weeds, standing and fallen

patches of standing water  
 the scattering of tall trees

All along the road the reddish  
 purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy  
 stuff of bushes and small trees  
 with dead, brown leaves under them  
 leafless vines—

Lifeless in appearance, sluggish  
 dazed spring approaches—

They enter the new world naked,  
 cold, uncertain of all  
 save that they enter. All about them  
 the cold, familiar wind—

Now the grass, tomorrow  
 the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf

One by one objects are defined—  
 It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf

But now the stark dignity of  
entrance—Still, the profound change  
has come upon them: rooted they  
grip down and begin to awaken

---

**Landscape with the Fall of Icarus**

According to Brueghel  
when Icarus fell  
it was spring

a farmer was ploughing  
his field  
the whole pageantry

of the year was  
awake tingling  
near

the edge of the sea  
concerned  
with itself

sweating in the sun  
that melted  
the wings' wax

unsignificantly  
off the coast  
there was

a splash quite unnoticed  
this was  
Icarus drowning



**Peter Bruegel**, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* c. 1558

# THE USE OF RHYTHM IN *ACHILLES*

Hari Simran Khalsa

The story of Achilles is timeless. It resonated with the school children of Ancient Greece as well as with Virgil, Dante, and Keats. Even now it inspires and entralls, as essential human issues are what bring the story home. Love and war are so central to life that art most often treats one or the other—or both. However, the power of these themes is not in the abstract; it is the action associated with love and war that inspire such passion. Sex and violence hold their power over us even when they are experienced vicariously through song, dance, music, prose, or poetry because of the incessant rhythm that dominates them: the thrusts and parries of two warriors or the breathless gasps of two lovers. Their retellings draw us in so our heartbeats march in time and our breath synchronizes with the scene unfolding in our minds, until the release—the conception or destruction of a life.

Rhythm is one of the most powerful elements of any performative art that we experience over time. It is the magic that great poets, actors, dancers, or musicians may use to captivate us. Though *Achilles* is technically written in prose, Elizabeth Cook's language and the "meter" of her writing betray her poetic soul. In a book that is just over one hundred pages long, she manages to cover the epic sweep of

Achilles' life which spans countless legends by employing words combined with the space(s) between them. A single, well-placed imperative which introduces the chapter "Cut Off" adds a whole new element to the story: "Listen. Achilles never wanted to die" (Cook 50). The first word stops you in your tracks; it is clearly a command. The sentence that follows embraces the vast themes of fate and mortality without trivializing them, simply because of where she places it on the page and the space she gives before and after it. This is the nature of rhythm: there is an upbeat and a downbeat and either one can be filled with silence or sound which are separated yet interdependent in their power.

Cook uses rhythm not only in how she writes, but also as an implicit (and occasionally explicit) motif in the novel. While Achilles is hidden as a girl during his youth, his fighting nature forces him to escape at times to stretch "his under-used limbs." He does this by shadowboxing: "He jabs the air, mapping its emptiness into a thousand precise locations. *Forward—over a little—now yield to the right. Cover. Cover. Now punch and get out*" (26). Cook chooses this example of his boyhood—the most essential element of hand-to-hand combat is timing, and Achilles is fated to be the paragon of a warrior.

The defining moment of his life and his battle with the Trojans—the monumental obstacle in his destiny's path—is his battle with Hector. Though Achilles is the greater warrior (indeed the greatest), he is fighting on the land where Hector grew up. Just as the captain of a barge knows the twists and turns of his river, so Hector knows the crags and ridges of the land surrounding Troy. Thus, he runs, and Achilles follows. Here, Cook makes the theme explicit: "The rhythm of their steps goes on forever" (38). As Achilles matches each of Hector's strides, as he finally engages him after three turns around the city, first with spears and then with swords, he is not frantic nor does he tire. He is "inexhaustible" because it is rhythm rather than speed or brute strength that will yield victory. Cook compares Achilles' patience with "a lover taking in every inch of his beloved" (40). When he finally takes Hector's life, it is the timely climax of a symphony.

This however, is only the attitude of posterity. How can the rhythm go on forever if the battle ends with Hector's death? It is eternal because it is poetry. The cadence of their skillful combat is implicitly glorified in the structure of verse.

Although poetry steals its power from the rhythm of such human actions, those ephemeral acts—whether they be crude or graceful—are immortalized in words. Thus, the fight ends, but the rhythm of it will carry on as long as there are words that describe it.

It is often said that the only subject of poetry is poetry itself. This is almost true. Poets choose their subjects (or their subjects are chosen by the Muse) according to that which is poetic. The performance of poetry is foremost followed by those things in which the rhythm is palpable, such as acts of love or war. Their rhythm—or one could say their poetic nature—is measured, isolated, and translated into verse by the poet who beholds them. The subjects of poetry must already contain the element of poetry, although that element can be realized in anything—at the most basic level, matter is vibration and vibration has a frequency. Thus, the aphorism is almost true: poetry *is* only about itself, but the raw source of it is more primal and more ubiquitous than the performance of lettered verse, as is the beat of the heart.

We can accurately call Cook's work "poetic prose." The theme of rhythm and the nature of her writing are subtle tributes to the sources of her story. It can be argued that Homer's epics survived the millennia mainly because of their imagery and rhythm; meter provides an effective structure for memorizing and passing on an oral tradition. The bards who hold such esteem in the epics are represented by the music and dance of the funeral: "Armed Myrmidons dance with slow and warlike steps to the grave plucked note of the lyre" (67). Achilles was also a superior musician. War, love, dance, music, song, and poetry are inseparable.

In the final section of Cook's novel, the poet John Keats speaks of a relay. This relay is not the face value of words passed from generation to generation—meanings can change drastically from one listener to the next. The relay is much closer in form to the DNA that Keats may share with Achilles than to a legacy of lifeless letters on a page. It is when those letters are spoken, out loud or silently, that the connection is made. Though the idea of Achilles may be interesting to the intellect, his actions—his flesh-and-blood feats, the movements of his vibrating cells—are what inspire passion in an audience. The cadence of a poet's words is our physical connection to the eternal steps of Achilles and Hector, to the love-throes of Peleus and Thetis, to the grave dance of the Myrmidons. It is the relay to us from the

poems of Keats as they were transcribed in his diary, from the raised voices of students reciting the epics in the original academies, from the songs that bards would sing to mesmerized kings. Just as Achilles must have let out his breath after Paris' arrow found his heel, so I come one step closer to death as I give life to each exhaled word.

**Work Cited**

Cook, Elizabeth. *Achilles*. New York: Picador, 2001.



# CHALLENGES FOR AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Svetla Marinova

Australia's foreign policy is marked by the clash between its role as a state dependent on the U.K. and, later, the U.S., and its ambition to emerge as a global citizen. Thus, the main challenge for Australia is to find a balance between being an example for the rest of the world in terms of its commitment to mitigating climate change and protecting human rights, and serving its national interest, which requires cooperation with the countries it depends on in the areas of trade and security. Since it is a difficult task to bring together so many competing goals into a cohesive foreign policy, Australia's leaders' consideration for risk-taking is crucial when it comes to promoting a winning international image.

Australia's colonial past ties its politics to Britain; even after Australia became an independent country in 1901 it was "still not a sovereign state" because it did not have the freedom to make its own foreign policy decisions in areas other than immigration and economics (Firth 4). Even though the two countries were no longer part of the same entity geographically or politically, Australians still had a strong sense of loyalty to England's Queen. This still existing connection became apparent during WWI when Australia pledged to support the Motherland and sacrificed 60,000 lives

to prove its commitment. Australia did not have its own diplomatic representatives in other countries at that time and still trusted London to take care of its relations with the rest of the world, especially in terms of foreign trade.

However, this strong bond began to weaken after Australia's involvement in the battle of Gallipoli, which became a symbol of the former colony's capacity to act independently. Furthermore, fears of "a direct threat from the north" in the 1930s caused Australia to seek another stronger security partner to count on, as the U.K. did not seem to be able to protect its former colony (Firth 6-8).

Britain's declaration of war on Germany meant that Australia was at war as well, but while this event showed Australia's dependence on Britain, it was also an incentive for the two countries to cut their security ties. The invasion of British Singapore by the Japanese created a symbolic break of Australia's allegiance to the Empire: PM Curtin chose to have the Australian troops fight for their homeland rather than to protect Britain. Australia now acted independently of Britain in its foreign relations. World War II brought new fears to Australia, a country that saw it unable to protect itself from foreign invasion. Therefore, the most logical thing to do was to seek another powerful ally to protect it. In terms of trade though, Australia was still firmly connected to Britain and its "sterling area" (Firth 10-12).

The Australian, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty of 1951 [ANZUS] determined Australia's new defense relationship with the U.S., one that persists even today (Firth 13). Even though the treaty's promise that the U.S. would protect Australia in case of a "common danger" has never been tested since there has been no such threat in the past half a century, this treaty is important because it was the beginning of Australia's alignment with American foreign policy. An example of this loyalty was Australia's participation in the Vietnam War, which clearly showed Australia's need to get recognition from the U.S. This type of commitment to America had its most recent expression post-9/11 when PM Howard invoked the ANZUS Treaty to help the U.S. in its war on terror.

Considering Australia's mindset that it cannot defend itself, one of the main challenges for its foreign policy appears to be the assumed future decline of U.S. power coupled with the rise of new global powers. Australia has started to prepare itself to be more independent by building up its military, according to the 2009

Defense White Paper. However, it is questionable whether this endeavor is the result of feeling threatened by China, India, or Indonesia.

Even though Australia is strengthening its military potential, it will try to seek the protection of the next emerging power to ensure that its coasts will be safe from attack in the future. This concern has become evident, as Australia has been trying to warm up its relations with competing states and do the impossible by being friends with everybody without choosing a favorite. The fact that Australia has been in dialogue with China, Japan, and India while maintaining its close relations with the U.S., became evident in 2006 when China and Australia exchanged diplomatic visits and signed agreements in the areas of technical cooperation, legal assistance, education, and peaceful uses of nuclear power. Australia has also been pursuing closer ties with Japan by supporting its bid for obtaining a permanent seat in the UN Security Council—a move highly criticized by China. The trilateral ministerial dialogue between Japan, the U.S., and Australia in 2006 put even more emphasis on the differing perspectives of the three participants concerning the significance of the rise of China's international profile: in terms of trade, all three countries feel positive about this potential development because they all maintain strong economic ties with China; however, Japan and the U.S. see the increasing military capability of China as a potential threat (Frost 406).

Thus, in 2006, Australia was in the delicate situation of having to “distance itself from ganging up on China” while also maintaining a spirit of unity with Japan and its long-term ally, the U.S. (Malik 589). India's recent rapid economic growth has turned it into another favorable ally for Australia. Even though India's economic ties with China have also been expanding, Australia will have to be careful in its approach toward both countries as they are also competing with each other for power. Therefore, attaining a balance between winning a new potential protector and pleasing its current ally, the U.S., will dominate the future of Australia's foreign policy. One of the greatest challenges in the next few years will be choosing an ally as the competition between the leading world powers increases or if a conflict between them makes it impossible for Australia to continue flirting with all of them.

Meanwhile, some regard Australia's dependence on powerful states overseas as a disadvantage that causes it to be subjected to the foreign interests of others (Firth

22). “Reconciling the regional interests of a regional power like Australia with U.S. global interests and strategy” seems to be one of the greatest challenges for foreign policy as the Howard government was charged with “turning Australia into an American satellite, while neglecting relations with Asia” (Malik 588). Similarly, the Howard government received sharp criticism for Australia’s involvement with Iraq, internationally regarded as an illegal action, because the UN did not approve it. However, the majority of Australians feel that the alliance with the U.S. is still “very important” or at least “fairly important” (Malik 588). Since withdrawing Australian troops from Iraq last year, Kevin Rudd, PM since 2007, struck a new type of relationship with the U.S.: “Mr. Rudd says he will listen to any request from America for more troops [in Afghanistan] after Mr. Obama’s review of the Afghanistan strategy, ‘but listening...does not necessarily mean agreeing’” (*The Economist*). Thus, one can also infer that Australia has taken on a new role of being America’s partner, rather than its sheriff.

Security is not the only reason why Australia is in search of new allies; its trade relations with the world have also undergone a shift. Two-way trade with the U.S. has almost reached a plateau since 1990, while trade with China, Japan, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN] has soared (Malik 589). Australia has been the biggest benefactor of China’s growth as China is its biggest trading partner and importer of coal and iron to fuel its economy. Trade liberalization has been key for Australia’s economic growth. However, a challenge of the future might be the possibility of China’s economic slowdown due to the global recession. Even though there are few industries that would be affected by such a situation, counting too much on trade for economic growth always holds potential risks.

Another foreign policy issue of significant importance is Australia’s role in global efforts to mitigate climate change. In the past, Australia was following in the footsteps of the U.S. when it came to its lack of involvement in international cooperation to battle climate change. The Howard government signed the Kyoto Protocol but refused to ratify it, a behavior modeled after the Bush administration’s actions, quoting as reasons, the unfavorable economic effects of ratification for Australia and the ineffectiveness of the document because it does not give an emissions-cutting responsibility to developing nations (Watson). However, the change

in attitude became apparent after the Rudd government signed the protocol in 2007 and committed Australia to a new goal—to serve as an example for the world. The government has committed to reducing emissions by five percent below 2000 levels by 2020, but raising this target to 25 percent pending strong action by the rest of the world (Australian Government Department of Climate Change).

It is unlikely that cuts of this magnitude can be made without addressing the emissions produced by every sector. Australia's international diplomacy in the climate change arena is arguably reliant on its efforts to restrain emissions across the economy. Even though Australia contributes only one percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, it is among the countries that will be the most negatively affected if climate change remains unabated. Therefore, Australia is facing the challenge of having to slow down its economic growth by cutting emissions in order to prompt the rest of the world to take action against climate change.

One of the most significant policy decisions taken by the Rudd government has been the introduction of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, along with the Renewable Energy Target: “investment in renewable energy technologies and in the demonstration of carbon capture and storage;” and “action on energy efficiency” (Australian Government: CPRS White Paper 8). The current debate whether agriculture should be included in the CPRS is an example of the controversy surrounding the huge economic sacrifices that Australia is willing to make in order to satisfy its Kyoto commitments and beyond. The government is also investing millions in an Australia-China Joint Coordination Group on Clean Coal Technology. One of the major challenges of the future will be minimizing the cost that Australian taxpayers and businesses will have to bear resulting from Australia's strong commitment to becoming a GHG-free economy.

Australia is also concerned with protecting human rights. One of the founding members of the United Nations and a candidate for a non-permanent Security Council seat, Australia has been very involved in upholding universal human rights, and it prides itself on being a ‘good international citizen.’ It is a party to all major human rights treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW], the Indigenous Rights Declaration, and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination [CERD]. However,

while internationally promoting peace and acceptance for diversity, Australia has had a record of human rights abuses within its territory: the mistreatment of aborigines, asylum-seekers, and Muslims. Despite PM Kevin Rudd's apology in 2008 to the Stolen Generation for the past wrongs caused by successive governments on the indigenous Aboriginal population, cases of human rights abuses such as the insufficient legal protection of indigenous people's rights and their lack of participation in politics are still reported by the UN CERD.

Furthermore, Australia has a very unfavorable record of human rights abuses when it comes to asylum seekers. Despite the relatively small number of boat people trying to enter the country (a couple of hundred people per year versus one person entering the U.S. every 18 seconds), Australia has been known often to refuse asylum to refugees, as has been argued by international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International. The UN CERD has also been concerned with the biased representation of asylum seekers in the media and the legal barriers against proving refugee status. Such records put Australia in a position similar to the one it is in when it comes to climate change mitigation; in order to prompt the rest of the world to be good citizens, Australia needs first to make a national commitment to resolving the issue internally. Therefore, one of the main challenges for Australia's human rights international policy is to integrate more fully its indigenous people and ensure that their rights are being protected. It will also need to change its immigration laws so that asylum seekers can receive more humane treatment when requesting the right to enter into the country. Regionally, the government is seeking to develop a new relationship with Asia and the Pacific, including actively considering Australia's role in promoting and protecting human rights in the region. This ambition cannot become a reality unless Australia rids itself of human rights abuses such as those reported by the Committee.

Australia's human rights foreign policy is further complicated by its increasing trade relations with China who is viewed by many as a violator of human rights. Therefore, comments similar to those of PM Rudd when he voiced his concern over human rights abuses in Tibet in 2008 can become increasingly problematic in the future.

International security, trade, climate change, and human rights are just a few of

the foreign policy issues challenging Australia. However, these are the areas of greatest uncertainty due to Australia's past role as a British colony unable to defend itself; its record as an abuser of indigenous people's rights; its status as a country susceptible to the negative impacts of climate change; and its desire to be a good global citizen. Having so many competing goals on its agenda, Australia faces the difficulty of finding suitable partners, while it "must operate in a very unpredictable world" (Downer). Some questions, such as whether Australia's relationship with the U.S. will continue to be viable and whether China will be the next global leader, contribute to the guesswork of Australia's foreign policy leaders. Australia must continue its search for an international stance where it can maximize its strengths while upholding its values. In the meantime, Australia will have to maintain the most logical, but also the most precarious, strategy—to keep its friends close, but its potential enemies closer.

**Works Cited**

- Australian Government. Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme: Australia's Low Pollution Future *White Paper*. December 2008.
- Australian Government Department of Climate Change. *Strengthening Australia's Carbon Pollution Target Factsheet*. July 9, 2009. [www.climatechange.gov.au/emissionstrading/pubs/carbon\\_pollution\\_target.pdf](http://www.climatechange.gov.au/emissionstrading/pubs/carbon_pollution_target.pdf).
- Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 9 of the Convention: Australia*. Sixty-sixth Session. February 21–March 11, 2005. July 9, 2009. [www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/0/fff3368ff665eaf93c125701400444342/\\$FILE/G0541073.pdf](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/0/fff3368ff665eaf93c125701400444342/$FILE/G0541073.pdf).
- Downer, Alexander. *Australia—Meeting Our International Challenges*. 2002. July 9, 2009. [www.australianpolitics.com/foreign/elements/01-03-01downer-speech.shtml](http://www.australianpolitics.com/foreign/elements/01-03-01downer-speech.shtml).
- . "Rudd floats an Asian balloon." *The Economist*. March 26, 2009. July 9, 2009. [www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?story\\_id=13382051](http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?story_id=13382051).
- Firth, Stewart. *Australia in International Politics: An Introduction to Australian Foreign Policy*. Allen & Unwin, 1999.
- Frost, Frank. "Perspectives on Australian Foreign Policy 2006." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* Vol. 61, No. 3. 403–426, September 2007.
- Malik, Mohan. "Australia, America and Asia." *Pacific Affairs*: Volume 79, No. 4. Winter 2006–2007.
- Watson, John. "Australia is not a climate change leader." *The Age*. November 2, 2007. July 9, 2009. [www.theage.com.au/news/opinion/australia-is-not-a-climate-change-leader/2007/11/01/1193619060642.html](http://www.theage.com.au/news/opinion/australia-is-not-a-climate-change-leader/2007/11/01/1193619060642.html).





**Between East and West. The view of Sydney’s version of the ‘London Eye,’ the Skyview Observation Wheel, from the Chinese Garden of Friendship in Darling Harbour, is an illustration of the tough foreign policy choices that Australia will be facing in a future of uncertainty. Its colonial past of dependence on the West for security is challenged by its desire to take advantage of the potential trade opportunities presented by China’s economic growth. Photo by Svetla Marinova**

## READING *MOBY DICK*

Danny Pinkhas

Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* leaves the reader with many questions regarding complex concepts such as good and evil, free will and fate, and absolute knowledge. Melville accomplishes this sense of uncertainty with the ambiguous nature of Ahab's character and that of the White Whale. At the end of the novel, it is unclear whether Ahab is a pitiful victim of fate or a man who is overtaken by his irrational vengeance against Moby Dick. Is Ahab justified in his pursuit of the White Whale, and is his continued defiance of fate in some sense heroic? Is Moby Dick the principle of evil, the agent of evil, or merely, as Starbuck says, a "dumb brute?" Melville purposely does not fully answer these questions.

In the chapter titled "The Doubloon," the good-natured second mate Stubb has an unexpected insight into the nature of reading: "Book! You lie there; the fact is, you books must know your places. You'll do to give us the bare words and facts, but we come in to supply the thoughts" (473). To some extent, this chapter serves as a microcosm of the fundamental idea Melville is attempting to convey. Interpretation and how we as humans read situations and texts is directly connected to Ahab's internal struggle and his enmity for Moby Dick. Just as we as readers must interpret Melville's text and discover our own, individual answers to the numerous questions

he presents, so Ahab has interpreted and read *Moby Dick* as the embodiment of evil necessary to hunt down and destroy.

This idea of interpretation in “The Doubloon” is developed by demonstrating how interpretations of any text can vary based on the reader’s experience. For instance, Ahab sees the coin as a reflection of himself as he views every aspect of the coin as being somehow related to his journey: “The firm tower, that is Ahab; the volcano, that is Ahab; the courageous, the undaunted, and victorious fowl, that, too, is Ahab; all are Ahab; and this round gold is but the image of the rounder globe, which, like a magician’s glass, to each and every man in turn but mirrors back his own mysterious self” (471). Ahab’s interpretation of images on the coin is particularly interesting in how it relates to his hatred of *Moby Dick*. Based on his egotistical view of the coin, it can be extrapolated that he felt that *Moby Dick*’s motive for attacking him was to make him suffer excruciating pain and never be whole again. Ahab reads this attack as a purely evil act performed by a destructive force of nature. The idea that *Moby Dick* simply acted out of pure instinct does not occur to him. Instead, Ahab obstinately holds on to his interpretation of the attack and will not consider any other possibility. Others of the crew also “read” the doubloon to include a literal, contextual and symbolic interpretation—all sorts of meanings in one text—but it is Ahab’s self-referential reading that dominates the action of the narrative.

However, *Moby Dick* is a creature whom Ahab cannot definitively interpret. Melville goes to great lengths to convey the White Whale’s ambiguous nature. For instance, he attempts to describe whales scientifically in the chapter “Cetology” by comparing the size of whales to the size of books, but instead concludes that this is an impossible task. Reading the whale like reading the book remains “unfinished” (157). In a subsequent chapter titled “The Whiteness of the Whale,” Melville tries a different approach by defining the whale by its color. Ishmael points to numerous examples in which the color white is associated with beauty and purity but then offers this contrasting representation: “Yet for all these accumulated associations, with whatever is sweet, and honorable, and sublime, there yet lurks an elusive something in the innermost idea of this hue, which strikes more of panic to the soul than that redness which affrights in blood” (205).

This, of course, is done purposely by Melville as a way to introduce doubt

about whether there is one strict definition for the White Whale. The ambiguity of the whale combined with the fact that science and logic cannot completely define Moby Dick creates further frustration within Ahab. He cannot fathom the idea of such a mysterious figure without a clear face creating so much destruction in the world. This frustration and anger likely causes him to view Moby Dick as an agent of evil. Melville's imagery concentrates Ahab's deep hatred for Moby Dick: "all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby Dick. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it" (200). Ahab's hatred for Moby Dick is rooted in his view of Moby Dick as the embodiment of all that is evil in the world for all time. Ahab is mad with anger because he cannot wrap his mind around the idea that this mysterious, ambiguous creature has caused him such irreparable physical and emotion damage. Ahab thus resorts to interpreting Moby Dick's actions in a very literal sense in that he simply tells himself he must kill Moby Dick in order to eliminate all that is evil in the world.

This literal and irrational interpretation of Moby Dick is easy to criticize, but it is important to consider why Ahab has such a strong belief that Moby Dick is either the agent or principle of evil. Ahab is constantly reminded of Moby Dick by his artificial leg which is made of ivory from a whale's jaw bone. So in some way, the whale is always with him as is the pain both physical and emotional. Ahab may be read as insane or delusional, but his interpretation of what the whale represents is neither right nor wrong. Just as Stubb recognizes the importance of experience to the reader of a book, so Melville insists that Ahab's interpretation of evil is a result of his past experience. It is tragic that Ahab has become such a dark, vengeful man who is convinced he is acting in direct opposition to the forces of evil, a kind of heroic stance.

Ironically, even though Ahab's interpretation of the whale may be misconstrued, his intentions are at some level pure in that his goal is centered on a pure ideal. In Ahab's mind, it is his responsibility to rid the world of the evil White Whale. Melville describes this convoluted dynamic of Ahab's mind: "But as the mind does not exist unless leagued with the soul, therefore it must have been that,

in Ahab's case, yielding up all his thoughts and fancies to his one supreme purpose; that purpose, by its own sheer inveteracy of will, forced itself against gods and devils into a kind of self-assumed, independent being of its own" (219). Ahab's obsession with Moby Dick has begun to infiltrate and poison his soul to the point where his obsession has a life of its own, capable of becoming an agent of evil. Melville continues: "God help thee, old man, thy thoughts have created a creature in thee; and he whose intense thinking thus makes him a Prometheus; a vulture feeds upon that heart for ever; that vulture the very creature he creates" (220). Ahab's poisoned thoughts have created an internal beast which in essence mimics the evil he is trying to destroy.

This raises the question of what evil truly is, and whether it can be strictly defined. Perhaps Ahab is truly a villain because of his internal darkness and undying sense of revenge against a "dumb brute." Ahab's vengeance ultimately creates an extremely powerful mechanism of evil within himself which he cannot control. His unwavering attitude towards achieving his goal without any regard for his crew members or any omens which predict failure is astounding. How Ahab reads the idea of fate's role in his journey to kill Moby Dick is one of the key factors in the text.

Ahab's defiance of the gods and the forces of fate is most clearly seen in his soliloquy in the chapter "Sunset:" "Come, Ahab's compliments to ye; come and see if ye can swerve me. Swerve me? ye cannot swerve me, else ye swerve yourselves! man has ye there. Swerve me? The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run" (183). Although Ahab is clearly defiant of fate in these lines, he does concede that he is in fact being governed by a greater force particularly in the last line of the quote. Melville's diction in this quote is also significant in that he craftily uses the word "swerve" thus creating a strong parallel between Ahab and Milton's Satan. The nature of the word strongly insinuates the idea that Ahab's soul has become in many ways demonic and full of darkness as a result of his defiance of fate and unyielding determination to achieve his goal. The metaphor of the "iron rails" Melville uses is a powerful one because we see that Ahab has to some extent detached himself from his actions and behavior. He is simultaneously defiant towards fate and accepting of its existence, once again presenting an ambiguity in the text. Melville forces the reader to consider whether we, as the audience, can

place complete blame on Ahab for becoming such a villainous character as the story progresses, or if his transformation was inevitable from the beginning.

Ahab's self-reflective narrative towards the end of the novel reveals that Ahab, too, wonders whether he has complete control over his obsession and actions. He ponders, "What is it, what nameless, inscrutable, unearthly thing is it; what cozening, hidden lord and master, and cruel, remorseless emperor commands me; that against all natural lovings and longings, I so keep pushing, and crowding, and jamming myself on all the time; recklessly making me ready to do what in my own proper, natural heart, I durst not so much as dare? Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm?" (592). This is tragic in many ways. His "natural heart" has been forever tarnished by an obsession, which may not have been of his doing. Ahab's idea that perhaps fate has created the miserable, obsessive man that he is further detaches him from his actions. But it is up to the individual reader to interpret the role of fate in Ahab's plight, thus tying in the central theme of interpretation most vividly seen in "The Doubloon."

When Ahab questions his identity asking, "Is Ahab, Ahab?" we are once again presented with an uncertainty. We, as readers, must interpret Melville's lines for ourselves and come to our own, individual assessment about the meaning of Ahab's predicament. The question of Ahab's identity is parallel to the question of Moby Dick's identity: both cannot be answered definitively. Just as Ahab cannot entirely understand Moby Dick, and in essence was chasing a ghost throughout most of the text, so Ahab cannot fully understand what he has become as a consequence of his obsession. He is aware of his deterioration at the end of the text, but cannot determine whether this is his own true character or whether fate has infected him with this internal chaos. Melville does not provide a clear, direct answer. Instead, he relies on the reader to interpret Ahab's self-reflection to determine whether he is a tragic hero or a villain. Though a direct answer is not provided, the governing theme of the novel about interpretation and reading strongly suggests that Ahab is neither a great hero nor an absolute villain. The numerous examples of ambiguity throughout the text suggest that he likely possesses the qualities of both.

Ahab continuously forgoes any opportunity to abandon his pursuit and avoid unnecessary death despite many ill omens. His complete disregard of the human cost of his obsession greatly diminishes his level of heroism. Ahab is primarily

responsible for the death of everyone in the Pequod's crew except Ishmael. His Machiavellian approach throughout the hunt exemplifies his disconnect from the human condition, and to some extent, he, like his reading of *Moby Dick*, becomes an evil, destructive force. This is especially true when Ahab refuses to help the captain of the *Rachael* find his son. Ahab's human soul has been damaged to such a great extent, that his vengeful obsession trumps human compassion. Ahab's maniacal quest to vanquish the injustices and evil in the world ultimately causes him to act in a manner more reminiscent of a villain rather than a hero, yet his memories of his own wife and child remain poignant and heart wrenching.

Melville makes it difficult for the reader to decide on any absolute interpretation of the major themes in the text; he leaves space for the reader to "come in to supply the thoughts" to his "bare words." It is up to us, as readers, to interpret these "bare words" in the context of the narrative. Stubb's insight in "The Doubloon" is on some level a microcosm of the text as a whole. It can be argued that the central idea in *Moby Dick* is about reading. How one reads the words of a novel or the images on a coin are in essence directly related to Ahab's struggle, which began with his interpretation of what the White Whale represented to his soul.

**Work Cited**

Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick*. New York: Penguin Books, 2001.



# DISSECTING THE WESTERN GAZE TOWARD CHINESE MEDICINE: FROM SUPERSTITION TO SCIENCE

Elina Kats

While walking along Fifth Avenue in present-day New York City, one can find a variety of little shops proudly offering “all natural healing herbs” for “life’s everyday messes and problems.” Scattered among these shops are spas promoting acupuncture, Qi Gong, and other so-called alternative medicines. Yet, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when Americans were beginning to discover these Chinese forms of healing, a very different scene existed. Here, medicine had slowly become professionalized, with men dominating the field. At the same time, news from China, the strange, yet oddly fascinating culture of the Far East, began to appear in journal articles and newspapers. How did the West, and more specifically the United States, perceive acupuncture and herbology at this time? Historians have used different methods of analysis to answer this question, to understand the phenomenon that occurred when the West focused its piercing gaze onto eastern medicine.

In *Needles, Herbs, Gods and Ghosts: China, Healing and the West to 1848*, Linda Barnes, an eminent medical anthropologist and current associate professor of family medicine and pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine, takes a historical perspective on the Western perception of Chinese medicine, but does not extensively theorize the reasons behind her observations. In fact, in her introduction, Barnes

proclaims that she does not” conceptualize religions, medicines, or forms of healing as single, coherent systems.”<sup>1</sup> She also demonstrates how Western understanding of Chinese healing occurred in an environment that constantly shifted, allowing the influence of Western medicine on China and vice versa. In fact, the vacillation between approval and disapproval of the methods of Western and Eastern medicine continue to the present.

On the other hand, Ted Kaptchuk, an Oriental Doctor of Medicine and current researcher of the placebo effect at Harvard Medical School, views the matter in terms of foundation and the inherent differences in Western and Eastern thought that affected, and continue to influence Western understanding of Chinese medicine. Essentially, he places Chinese medicine in a Western context. In *The Web that has no Weaver: Understanding Chinese Medicine*, Kaptchuk emphasizes the West’s focus on the cause of illness in contrast to the East’s focus on balance and harmony. He identifies two major barriers the West had in attempting to fully understand Chinese medicine: the assumption that Western medical and scientific knowledge and understanding is superior to all other cultures’ understanding of the same; and the assumption that the ancientness of the Chinese system decreases its veracity, thereby degrading the system from a system based in reason to a “religious faith system.”<sup>2</sup> He also credits the West’s misunderstanding to differences in terminology. Some terms, such as ‘dampness’ or illness caused by too much ‘fire’ that exists in the Chinese repertoire do not have a Western equivalent. As such, the West had difficulties understanding Chinese diagnoses, even though many Western treatments could cure such diseases.

In “Negotiating Modern Medicine in 20<sup>th</sup> Century China: Cooperation and Competition,” a forthcoming article for the journal, *Social History of Medicine*, Cristina Zaccarini, an associate professor of history at Adelphi University and scholar of Asian and gender studies, uses a medical anthropological approach to explain the emerging Chinese acceptance of Western medical practices explained in various missionary publications. She examines “missionary attitudes toward the nature of Chinese acceptance and rejection of Western medicine in China,”<sup>3</sup> as well as the Nationalist

---

1 Linda Barnes, *Needles, Herbs, Gods and Ghosts: China, Healing, and the West to 1848* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005) 7.

2 Ted Kaptchuk. *The Web That Has No Weaver: Understanding Chinese Medicine* (Chicago: McGraw-Hill Companies, January 2000) 2.

3 Cristina Zaccarini. “Negotiating Modern Medicine in 20<sup>th</sup> Century China: Cooperation and Competition.” *Social History of Medicine*, 3.

government's promotion of Western medicine in its state-building efforts. She focuses on the experience of Ailie Gale, a female missionary doctor stationed in China during the 1920s.

Like Zaccarini, Judith Farquhar, a leading expert on traditional Chinese medicine and current Max Palevsky professor of anthropology and social sciences at the University of Chicago, in her article, "Market Magic: Getting Rich and Getting Personal in Medicine After Mao," takes an anthropological approach. She focuses on illuminating post-modern Chinese medical practices, including the selling of pharmaceuticals rather than services, and centers her analysis on the re-emergence of traditional healing techniques in the 1990s. Essentially, her work provides a glimpse of post-modern China and the effect that Western medical missionaries, like Dr. Ailie Gale, had on Chinese medicine.<sup>4</sup>

In all these approaches, the authors do not specifically discuss the United States' perception of Chinese medicine during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, the years 1854 to 1932 were very interesting. During this period, most Americans did not fully understand Chinese medical practices and, as Barnes notes, tended to categorize acupuncture and herbal treatments for medical purposes as superstition.<sup>5</sup> However, as evident in a variety of newspaper articles and the autobiography of Doctor Edward Hume, Americans felt an overall sense of ambivalence even when it came to these practices. Many distrusted or misunderstood acupuncture, and many more were skeptical about particularly unusual herbs.

One of the mainstays of Chinese medicine introduced to the West was acupuncture. Acupuncture is an ancient Chinese medical procedure in which needles are inserted into the skin at various points along the body. It is based on the meridian physiological system. Meridians are "channels that carry Qi and blood through the body."<sup>6</sup> They are invisible and link "all fundamental textures and organs."<sup>7</sup> A disorder within a Meridian system disturbs the flow of Qi and blood and creates disharmony along the pathway. Disharmony in the organ itself may also disrupt the flow within the corresponding Meridian.<sup>8</sup> By working with points on the exterior of the body,

---

4 Judith Farquhar. "Market Magic: Getting Rich and Getting Personal in Medicine After Mao." *American Ethnologist* 23, no.2 (1996): 239-257. [jstpr.org.alicat.adelphi.edu](http://jstpr.org.alicat.adelphi.edu).

5 Barnes, 220.

6 Kaptchuk, 105.

7 Kaptchuk, 105.

8 Kaptchuk, 106.

an acupuncturist can influence internal processes and restore balance to the body by redirecting the source of the blockage causing the illness. As each disharmony is unique to the individual, the treatment is personalized as opposed to the “one pill fits all” mentality of Western medicine.

The West was originally interested in acupuncture as an anesthetic. Two modern theories about acupuncture’s ability to act as a pain reliever emerged in the 1960s and late 1970s: the gate theory which states that “stimulation from the needle jams the lower nerve bundles in the central nervous system so that other pain signals cannot reach the brain;” and the theory that the insertion of needles may stimulate the release of endorphins which are effective pain killers.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, the focus on pain reduction actually ignores other prospective medical functions of acupuncture.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Americans were just beginning to discover the potential uses of acupuncture. However, many Americans became skeptical, and often outright derisive, about acupuncture for a variety of reasons. In the July 12, 1854 issue of the liberal newspaper, *The New York Daily Times*, the journalist mocked acupuncture claiming that the doctors who performed the treatment were not “professionals” but rather charlatans who practiced their trade in the street: “Others [Chinese doctors], practicing acupuncture, establish themselves at the crossing, blow in their instruments, arrange their *stalls*, and when a crowd collects they announce that they are from such a province...and have at last discovered that spot on the human body where bleeding can be practiced to the most advantage for the cure of all manner of disease.”<sup>10</sup> The emphasis on “stalls” shows the journalist’s disgust for acupuncture because of the lack of an organized building such as a hospital. Moreover, the fact that the term “stall” is one reserved for horses adds to the derisive tone. In fact, it was the missionaries who introduced the concept of a hospital to the Chinese as a sanitary building devoted solely to taking in and treating the sick.

This view correlates to the professionalization of medicine in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and exemplifies a common sentiment that existed at the time, one that would reappear in articles about herbology. Medicine in the United States had changed with the establishment of the American Medical Association

---

<sup>9</sup> Kaptchuk, 109.

<sup>10</sup> Anonymous. “The Practice of Medicine in China.” *New York Daily Times*. July 12, 1854: [www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu:80](http://www.proquest.com/alicat.adelphi.edu:80).

in 1847. In turn, the AMA established standards for medical education and began analyzing and warning people against “quack remedies.” In the early 1900s, the AMA slowly professionalized and specialized different medical fields, overriding the former understanding of healing as an informal procedure that could be done by informally trained women.<sup>11</sup>

For a man who prided himself on his acceptance of Chinese medical practices, Doctor Edward Hume was, at first, surprisingly distrustful of acupuncture. Hume was an American physician originally stationed in Bombay, India. In 1905, Hume agreed to travel to China with the Yale University Mission intending to set up a hospital in the province of Changsha. He recognized the need to incorporate Chinese traditions into his own understanding and practice of medicine so as to mitigate much of the hesitance and distrust that the Chinese people had towards what they considered unusual western practices. Eventually, he managed to learn the language and applied many traditional Chinese treatments, such as interpreting the pulse, to his practice, garnering the support of the people. However, in his autobiography, *Doctors East, Doctors West*, Hume indirectly expressed his displeasure with the doctors who performed acupuncture on some of his patients. In “Advertising Pays,” Hume described his gratitude for the surgical experience he gained in India because in China, he encountered patients with inoperable eye diseases, many of whom “had been needled already by men with *dirty hands* (emphasis added).”<sup>12</sup> The lack of cleanliness was an issue that many Americans, including Hume, had with Chinese medicine. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, hygiene became a fundamental part of modern medicine. With Louis Pasteur’s revolutionary breakthrough in realizing that germs were the cause of disease, doctors had a culprit to blame for disease and a way not only to minimize deaths from unsanitary conditions in hospital, but also to prevent disease through the development of vaccines.<sup>13</sup> Since Hume understood this germ theory of disease, the dirty, germ-ridden hands of men who performed the “needling” delegitimized the treatment itself.

Another issue many people had with acupuncture in particular and Chinese

---

11 American Medical Association Archives. “Illustrated Highlights of AMA History.” American Medical Association. [www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/1915.html](http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/1915.html) (accessed December 8, 2008).

12 Edward Hume. *Doctors East, Doctors West: An American Physician's Life in China*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1946) 81.

13 “Infectious Diseases,” from *AS Science for Public Understanding*. (The Nuffield Foundation, 2003). [www.scpub.org/data/files/revinfdischron-9694.pdf](http://www.scpub.org/data/files/revinfdischron-9694.pdf) (Accessed December 7, 2008) 3.

medicine in general, was its apparent antiqueness. In 1846, American linguist and missionary Samuel Wells Williams condemned Chinese medicine and culture stating, “In medicine...the Chinese appear to have remained for centuries...in a state of ‘petrified fixedness.’”<sup>14</sup> This is a point that echoed in the United States a decade later. In an editorial in *The Atlanta Constitution*, also a liberal paper,<sup>15</sup> Margherita Arlina Hamm expressed her displeasure with how there was an apparent lack of innovation in the Chinese medical system:

The doctor of today blisters and burns, pinches and stabs with needles... just the same and just as well as did his forbears forty centuries ago. He has apparently made no improvements in his art and no addition to his science...No new school comes into being. No discoverer upsets preconceived notion and no inventor adds to the principles of practice.<sup>16</sup>

In the case of acupuncture, Hamm continued to state that needling is “as old as the hills.”<sup>17</sup> In a post-Civil War era, the United States was finally able to participate adequately in international affairs. Moving away from traditional views about foreign policy, America also considered the apparent stagnation of Chinese medicine (and society for that matter) as a conflict with its adamant belief in innovation and change.

But at the same time, as people decried that acupuncture was an ancient, superstitious technique practiced by fraudulent and unlicensed doctors, American missionary doctors and scholars were slowly researching and experimenting with acupuncture. According to Barnes, two such researchers were Robly Dunglison, a professor of medicine at the University of Virginia, and Franklin Bache, the great-grandson of Benjamin Franklin.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, some Western doctors attempted to use needles in treating toothaches, sore throats, and asthma, going beyond even what the Chinese used it for.<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately, despite the research, most doctors did not understand enough to provide a definitive description of acupuncture partly because of its foundation on

<sup>14</sup> Barnes, 239.

<sup>15</sup> Historically, the *Constitution* has had a liberal slant, supporting Democrats, as well as the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Its competitor, the *Atlantic Journal*, was of a more conservative mindset, though both merged under one banner in 2001. *The New Georgia Encyclopedia*. s.v. “Atlanta Journal-Constitution.” [www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-1807](http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-1807) (Accessed December 7, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> *The Atlanta Constitution*. “A Chinese Doctor As He Really Is.” December 30, 1894: [www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu:80](http://www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu:80).

<sup>17</sup> “A Chinese Doctor As He Really Is.”

<sup>18</sup> Barnes, 220.

<sup>19</sup> Barnes, 323.

seemingly unscientific ideas about movement of energy.<sup>20</sup> Common among all the different explanations was the consensus that acupuncture was a form of surgery and could be used as a pain reliever.<sup>21</sup> This misconception, reducing acupuncture to mere surgery, continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1915, the *New York Times* printed an article by R.C. Davis, a former assistant surgeon in the United States Navy, in which Davis equated acupuncture to Chinese surgery, saying, “native surgery is quite limited. The long, thin acupuncture needle is the favorite instrument. . . . minor surgery is attempted, but only a few cases of any extensive procedure are noted.”<sup>22</sup> His conclusion that in a land like China, “where there is no knowledge of modern therapeutics, there is an unparalleled field for the medical man,” underlined the assumption that as surgery, acupuncture is inferior to Western medicine and that the Chinese require tutelage and Western assistance.<sup>23</sup>

The play between outright disregard and partial understanding and curiosity reveals the overall ambivalence that Americans had towards acupuncture. In fact, Hamm, in the very same article in which she declared acupuncture an archaic practice, stated that “there is some common sense underlying the system despite its grotesqueness.”<sup>24</sup> In that single sentence, Hamm both praised acupuncture and debased it. Furthermore, she stated that in some cases, acupuncture actually worked, especially when used to drain diseased tissues. However, she then concluded that these cases were exceptions, and 95 percent of the time “needless pain is inflicted and little or no benefit secured.”<sup>25</sup> Her vacillation between rejecting acupuncture and supporting it reflects the general tone of U.S. perception during this era. American doctors and laymen could not reach a consensus about its definition or its effectiveness despite research efforts. In fact, the American Medical Association *still* does not accept acupuncture as an accredited medical procedure.<sup>26</sup>

The same ambivalence that categorized Americans’ stance on acupuncture was even more apparent in its view of Chinese herbs. Herbology is central to Chinese medicine; it functions based on the Meridian system, and supplements acupuncture.

---

20 Barnes, 308.

21 Barnes, 324.

22 R. C. Davis. “Extraordinary Medical Conditions Prevail in China.” *New York Times*, November 7, 1915: [www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu](http://www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu):80.

23 Davis.

24 “A Chinese Doctor As He Really Is.”

25 “A Chinese Doctor As He Really Is.”

26 *Reader’s Guide to Alternative Health Methods*, (American Medical Association, 1993) 39.

Chinese doctors design each prescription, often containing five to 16 substances, to enter or travel through meridian pathways as required by the diagnosis. Like acupuncture, herbology is a treatment with roots all the way back to the Han Dynasty in the first century CE with the creation of pharmacopoeias, or “vast catalogues of medical substances with therapeutic value.”<sup>27</sup> Similar critiques of herbology emerged as a result of all these factors.

The alternation between repulsion and fascination that Barnes attributed to the West in the early 1800s continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, partly because of the more unusual “concoctions” that were part of Chinese pharmacology and partly because, as Kaptchuk explains, Chinese herbs produce better healing results when applied within the Chinese context of how the body works, especially within the traditional patterns of meridians.<sup>28</sup> The article, “When a Chinaman is Ill,” appearing in a 1913 issue of the *Washington Post*, exemplifies the rejection of herbology on the basis of physiological belief. First and foremost, the article categorized herbology as “hocus pocus and superstition.”<sup>29</sup> It did not deny that some Chinese herbs have medicinal value, but criticized the choosing of herbs based on resemblance to the human form:

Some of the Chinese remedies are undoubtedly of value, but in most cases they are employed without much reference to their actual medicinal effect...the roots [of ginger] that are most highly prized and that are supposed to be the most efficacious are those that happen to grow with two prongs to the roots so as to resemble more or less the human form.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, people questioned the effectiveness of the herb based on what they believed was superstitious reasoning: how can the resemblance of plant roots to the human form have any effect on the efficiency of medicine? Such reasoning did not seem to be scientifically sound.

The use of many different herbs in one prescription, sometimes in unrecognizable forms, also contributed to the pervasive skepticism in 19<sup>th</sup> century America. For example, though the term “herb” is usually analogous with plants and

---

27 Kaptchuk, 110.

28 Kaptchuk, 24.

29 Anonymous, “When a Chinaman Is Ill: He Must Submit to Odd Treatment From the Native Doctor.” *The Washington Post* March 23, 1913: <http://0-www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu:80>.

30 “When a China Man Is Ill!”



all their corresponding parts, in China herbal remedies were not exclusive to plants but often included unfamiliar ingredients such as guano, pulverized bones, tiger's teeth, elephant teeth, and toad skins.<sup>31</sup> This so called "witches-brew" incited many feelings of disgust and skepticism even in an open-minded man like Dr. Hume. In fact, when describing village efforts to cure a man who collapsed, Hume decried their attempts as "folk remedies."<sup>32</sup> Though not explicitly negative, the categorization of the villagers' medical attempts as such implies that the methods were unscientific and, therefore, inferior.

Unlike Hume, the anonymous author of "The Practice of Medicine in China" proves to be very callous, and demonstrates the mocking tone some Americans used when describing herbology. The article states, "These fellows [herbalists] sell all sorts of secret remedies, plasters, pills, powders...and endeavor by fine speeches to exhort money from passers by."<sup>33</sup> Not only did the journalist call the doctors who prescribe these herbs inventors, meaning that their wares do not work, but actually declared that they only did it for money. In 1908, an article in the *Washington Post* reiterated these sentiments: "The healing art, as practiced by native doctors in China at the present day, is a strange mixture of superstition, charlatanism, and quackery."<sup>34</sup> Additionally, like Hamm, the journalist cited the antiquity of many of the practices as a reason for ridicule, stating, "medical knowledge among the Chinese has been at a standstill for many centuries."<sup>35</sup>

Amid the insidious disbelief and criticism arose a sense of curiosity and incredulity that certain herbs actually worked. As with acupuncture, doctors researched and experimented with common Chinese plants. Dr. David Hosack, for example, established a botanical garden in New York and used it to instruct medical students.<sup>36</sup> In 1932, research revealed that tigers' teeth and toad skins, previously categorized as bizarre ingredients, are actually medically useful in curing dropsy (edema). The *Los Angeles Times* published an article about Professor Maas, a renowned American pharmacist and chemist at that time, who discovered that toad skins actually contain substances that are not only useful in minimizing dropsy, but also

31 Barnes, 285-286.

32 Hume, 112.

33 "The Practice of Medicine in China."

34 Anonymous. "Medical Art in China: Native Physicians Are for the Most Part Superstitious Charlatans." *The Washington Post*. May 9, 1908: [www.proquest.com/alicat.adelphi.edu](http://www.proquest.com/alicat.adelphi.edu):80.

35 "Medical Art In China."

36 Barnes, 265.

release ephedrine which acts in a manner similar to adrenaline.<sup>37</sup> The author, Peter Mondell, reported that:

The Westerner may look askance on such a treatment, as he has in the past, but Professor Maas has analyzed this item of the Chinese *materia medica* and has discovered that calcium phosphate, used by all western doctors in treating debilitation cases, is the principal ingredient of these prepared tiger teeth.<sup>38</sup>

Essentially, Mondell praised the Chinese for their discovery of many profound medical principles, even if the implementation of these principles were crude in manner. Furthermore, and more importantly, he emphasized that the Chinese have been administering such cures for “thousands of years.”<sup>39</sup> These researchers showed that the ‘ancient’ techniques that so many Americans believed were simply superstitious and outdated had some foundation in science and actually worked.

Professor Maas was not the first to discover that many components of the “witches brew” actually had merit. Dr. Hume also encountered an ancient Chinese technique used to treat typhoid fever, one that corresponded to a procedure he believed was completely modern. One day, after treating a typhoid patient via cooling baths to reduce fever, the patient’s mother showed him *A Treatise on Typhoid Fever*, an ancient Chinese medical text published in 196 CE. The book not only contained “an accurate description of the onset of the fever,”<sup>40</sup> but also contained instructions to use “enemas of pig’s bile, mixed with a little vinegar, inserted with a slender bamboo tube.” If the fever was too high, the author, Chang Chungching suggested using cooling baths to “reduce the delirium.”<sup>41</sup> Like Mondell, Hume was astounded to learn that a contemporary remedy was actually practiced by the Chinese since the Roman Empire.

As with acupuncture, the mixed thoughts about herbology demonstrate the overall ambivalent tone that pervaded the American perception of Chinese medicine in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Mondell, for example, after praising Professor Maas,

---

37 Petrie Mondell. “Tigers’ Teeth and Toad Skins Are Really Medicines!” *Los Angeles Times*. November 13, 1932: www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu:80.

38 Mondell.

39 Mondell.

40 Hume, 91.

41 Hume, 91.

continued to defame Chinese ancestor worship and blame the veneration of the dead for the apparent lack of surgical development. In describing Chinese discovery of alternative ways to cure diseases, he used the terms “crude” and “revolting,” showing again the vacillation between approval and disapproval of certain aspects of Chinese therapies. Hamm also demonstrated this same sense when she applauded the Chinese doctor for using peppermint to successfully cure her headache but rejected his use of some unknown paste to heal a boil, calling him a hypocrite who “either cut or broke the boil, so that it discharged its contents, and out of it pretended to bring out a worm one inch long and a quarter of an inch wide.”<sup>42</sup>

Originally, even Hume was unsure about the efficacy of herbs. When on an inspection trip to an apothecary shop, Hume noted the little herb shops that littered Changsha with their poetic and alluring signs. However, he described the patrons of the shops as “simple villagers, bringing for sale baskets of fresh herbs and roots, whose *value was either real or fancied*.”<sup>43</sup> Even he, who immersed himself in Chinese culture and learned the language as well as other traditional medical practices, was irresolute about the efficacy of herbs.

Despite evidence of the relative acceptance of acupuncture and herbology present in New York City today, from the 1890s to the 1930s, Americans truly did not know how to react to Chinese medical practices. Thus, there emerged a general vacillation between acceptance and rejection. Some Americans, like Margherita Arlina Hamm, rejected parts of acupuncture and herbology based on the ancientness of the systems. Others’ rejections were due to differences in Western and Eastern physiological foundations. Amid the derision, research and interest continued; doctors like Edward Hume grappled with these practices and attempted (with various degrees of success) to understand and accept acupuncture and herbology as viable medical treatments. Ironically, the Western gaze turned upon the Chinese and saw much more than it could have expected.

---

42 “A Chinese Doctor As He Really Is.”

43 Hume, 114.

**Work Cited**

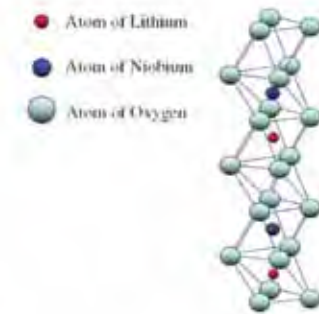
- American Medical Association Archives. "Illustrated Highlights of AMA History."  
American Medical Association. [www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/1915.html](http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/1915.html).
- Anonymous. "A Chinese Doctor As He Really Is." *The Atlanta Constitution*,  
December 30, 1894: [www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu](http://www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu): 80.
- Anonymous, "Medical Art in China: Native Physicians Are for the Most Part  
Superstitious Charlatans." *The Washington Post*, May 9, 1908: [www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu](http://www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu): 80.
- Anonymous, "The Practice of Medicine in China." *New York Daily Times*,  
July 12, 1854, [www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu](http://www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu): 80.
- Anonymous, "When a Chinaman Is Ill: He Must Submit to Odd Treatment from the  
Native Doctor." *The Washington Post*, March 23, 1913: [www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu](http://www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu): 80.
- Barnes, Linda. *Needles, Herbs, God, and Ghosts: China, Healing and the West to 1848*.  
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Davis, R. C., Past Assistant Surgeon, U.S. Navy. [From the United States Naval Medical  
Bulletin.] "Extraordinary Medical Conditions Prevail in China." *New York Times*,  
November 7, 1915: [www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu](http://www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu): 80.
- Farquhar, Judith. "Market Magic: Getting Rich and Getting Personal in Medicine  
After Mao." *American Ethnologist*. 23, no.2 (1996): 239-257. [www.jstpr.org.alicat.adelphi.edu](http://www.jstpr.org.alicat.adelphi.edu).
- Hall, A., and A. Melamed, eds. "Infectious Diseases." *AS Science for Public Understanding*,  
The Nuffield Foundation, 2003. [www.scpub.org/data//files/revinfdischron-9694.pdf](http://www.scpub.org/data//files/revinfdischron-9694.pdf).
- Hume, Edward. *Doctors East, Doctors West: An American Physician's Life in China*. New York:  
W.W. Norton, 1946.
- Kaptchuck, Ted. *The Web That Has No Weaver: Understanding Chinese Medicine*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.  
Chicago: McGraw-Hill Companies, January 2000.
- Mondell, Pietre. "Tigers' Teeth and Toad Skins Are Really Medicines!" *Los Angeles  
Times*. November 13, 1932: [www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu](http://www.proquest.com.alicat.adelphi.edu): 80.
- The New Georgia Encyclopedia. [www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-1807](http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-1807).
- Zaccarini, Cristina. "Negotiating Modern Medicine in 20<sup>th</sup> Century China:  
Cooperation and Competition." *Social History of Medicine*. Forthcoming.

# REDUCING SURFACE ROUGHNESS ON THIN FILMS OF LITHIUM NIOBATE

Brian Capozzi

## Introduction

Lithium niobate's ( $\text{LiNbO}_3$ ) useful electrical and optical properties have led to its heavy usage in electro-optic and acousto-optic devices.<sup>1</sup> Figure 1 shows a model of the molecular structure of  $\text{LiNbO}_3$ . Due to its popularity,  $\text{LiNbO}_3$  production has been perfected using the Czochralski method which results in low strain, single crystal wafers.<sup>2</sup> What makes it so practical is that it is a ferroelectric, piezoelectric, pyroelectric, electro-optic, acousto-optic, birefringent, and nonlinear optical material.<sup>3</sup> These properties lend  $\text{LiNbO}_3$  to a variety of useful applications such as holographic memory, surface-acoustic wave (SAW) devices, modulators, and second harmonic generators. However, in order to import these useful properties into micro- and



nano-scale devices, it is necessary to work with single-crystal thin films of  $\text{LiNbO}_3$ .

Recently, a new technique has been developed for the fabrication of these single-crystal thin films: Crystal Ion Slicing (CIS). This process involves treating a  $\text{LiNbO}_3$  wafer with a dosage of  $\text{He}^+$  ions in order to create a “sacrificial layer.” The energy with which the  $\text{He}^+$  ions are imparted determines the depth at which they are imbedded (i.e. the depth of the “sacrificial layer”) and thus also determines the thickness of the resultant films. In order to exfoliate these films after the implantation process, there are two methods, which can be used: wet etching and rapid thermal annealing (RTA). Wet etching requires the use of hydrofluoric acid (HF) to consume the sacrificial layer; this separates the thin film from the parent crystal. Rapid thermal annealing, the other method for obtaining a film after implantation, quickly ramps the temperature of the embedded sample up to around  $800^\circ\text{C}$ , snapping off the film from the parent crystal.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, this very practical technique has an inherent problem: it leaves the films with a network of shallow trenches on the side in direct contact with the sacrificial layer, which can be seen in detail in Figure 2. While the top layer of the film is still workable, the bottom layer is not useful for optical purposes. The films are intended to be used for wave-guiding purposes, and fissures would scatter light waves rather than allow them to pass through without defraction. It is not yet known what exactly causes the rough fissure patterning, though it is theorized that the ion implantation itself is the source of the problem.<sup>5</sup> Regardless of the cause, this condition is highly problematic for optical uses since it results in loss for optical devices; therefore, my team developed a method for removing the patterning in order to make these films viable in electro-optic devices. This process involves hand polishing the films with diamond particle compounds in order to mechanically grind the surfaces of the films flat.

## **Experiment**

We worked with undoped wafers of  $\text{LiNbO}_3$ , which were one millimeter thick in order to fabricate our thin film samples. The wafer was initially cut into smaller, approximately one inch, squares using a low-speed diamond wheel saw. Since the orientation of  $\text{LiNbO}_3$  is so important, a tiny marking was scribed on the Z-face

of each piece to aid in maintaining the proper orientation. Pieces were then polished to optical quality on all four facets using a lapping wheel (we only polished a select few pieces because of time constraints). Four pads of decreasing coarseness were used for this polishing process: the first having a grain size of 60 microns, the second having a grain size of 30 microns, the third having a grain size of one micron, and the final having a grain size of .1 microns. For each facet, the 60 micron pad was used for approximately two minutes (depending upon how jagged the facet was), the 30 micron pad for five minutes, the one micron pad for 15 minutes, and the .1 micron pad for 15–20 minutes. Essentially, this pad was used until the facet was as smooth as possible.

With this process complete, the samples were then prepared for  $\text{He}^+$  implantation. The samples were adhered to an aluminum backing using a conductive silver paste and cleaned very thoroughly. They were then taken to the Linear Accelerator [LINAC] at SUNY Albany where the implantation was carried out; the  $Z^+$  side of the  $\text{LiNbO}_3$  was the side, which received the dosage of  $\text{He}^+$ . For this particular experiment, our samples received a dosage of  $5 \times 10^{16}$  ions/cm at an energy level of 3.8 MeV. Based on this energy, the sacrificial layer began approximately 10 microns deep in the bulk crystal.<sup>6</sup> Once the samples were successfully implanted, the aluminum backing was removed and the samples were cleaned using sonicated baths of acetone, methanol, and de-ionized water (DI).

We then used both wet etching and RTA techniques to exfoliate the thin films from our implanted samples. Using the wet etching technique, an HF bath is used to “eat away” at the sacrificial layer. The HF bath contained one part 49% HF and nine parts DI water, resulting in an HF solution with a concentration of five percent. Before being placed in the acid bath, the samples were first annealed; they sat on a hot plate at 150°C for five minutes, then at 200°C for two minutes, and finally at 250°C for 30 minutes, before being allowed to cool to room temperature. The samples were then left in the acid bath overnight, with the typical etching rate being approximately one to three microns per minute.

To fabricate films using the other method, RTA, samples of  $\text{LiNbO}_3$  were first heated, implanted side face-down, on a piece of silicon wafer at 100°C for 10 minutes, and then allowed to cool to room temperature. They were then placed in

a Heatpulse oven. We found that ramping the temperature to 800°C at a rate of 100°C/second yielded the most intact films.

After exfoliating the films using either method, the films were then post-annealed: they were placed in a tube furnace for six hours, where the temperature was ramped slowly to 600°C at a rate of 10°C/min. The temperature was held constant at 600°C for six hours, and then the chamber was slowly cooled down. This process reduces residual strain in the films, and in doing so, flattens them.

The fabricated films were manipulated using a vacuum suction tool and were mounted on either glass slides or silicon wafers (patterned side face up) with a thin layer of optical wax to prepare them for the polishing process. It is essential that the mount is as flat as possible. The polishing process consisted of placing a small amount of diamond compound onto a smooth polishing pad. Slides with thin films mounted on them were then inverted, so that the patterned side was face down on the polishing pad, and moderate pressure was carefully applied by hand as tiny circles were made with the slide. The diamond paste contains diamond micro-particles which act to mechanically grind the surface of the films.

In order to perform an optical loss test, a tunable laser with a wavelength of 1550nm was passed through a tapered fiber-optic cable and then through a sample. The film acted as a planar waveguide, and the emitted light was then focused through an objective lens on the exiting side where it was then directed into a power meter.

## **Discussion**

After initial failed attempts, we were able to generate a recipe, which resulted in the best quality of polished films. We first tried using a six  $\mu\text{m}$  diamond compound which resulted in either shattered films or films with extremely marred surfaces. Subsequently, we moved down to a one  $\mu\text{m}$  compound. At first, we believed that too much pressure would shatter the films; however, we determined that a moderate amount of pressure is actually required to obtain results. Ultimately, the formula we developed utilized a one  $\mu\text{m}$  diamond paste for 20 minutes followed by a 0.25 $\mu\text{m}$  diamond paste for another 20-30 minutes. The bar graph in figure 3 shows a time dependent relationship in the polishing process.

We were able to obtain conclusive results proving that our method of hand



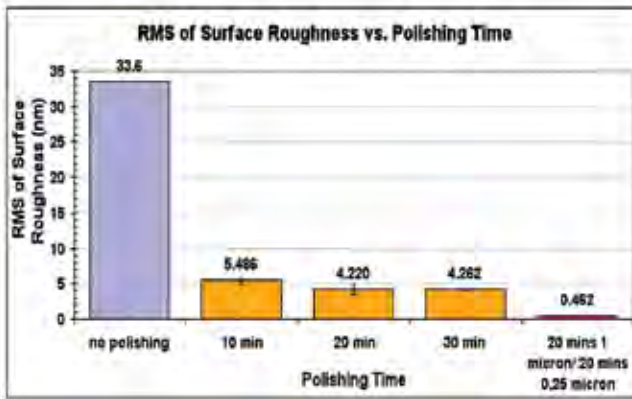


Fig. 3: This is a bar graph demonstrating surface roughness for several different film treatments

polishing is highly successful. Using optical microscopy and a Scanning Electron Microscope [SEM], it can be observed qualitatively that the hand polishing process works. Figure 4 shows a side-by-side comparison, obtained using an optical microscope, of a thin film before and after it was polished. Figure 5 shows a similar comparison, using SEM, of an unpolished film and of a polished film. The difference in quality before and after the polishing process is apparent.

Using Atomic Force Microscope [AFM] scans, we observed in most cases, that the fissure pattern had been eliminated. AFM scans also showed, both qualitatively and quantitatively, a marked decrease in average surface roughness. The images of the two samples shown in Figure 6 were obtained using AFM, and we were also able to use AFM to determine that the average surface roughness of the unpolished sample was 33.6nm while that of the polished sample was 0.46nm. This is a drastic decrease in roughness.

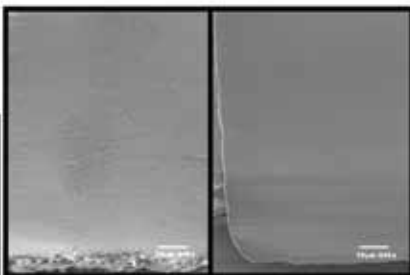


Fig. 4: SEM images of an unpolished film and a polished film. Note that the pattern has completely vanished.

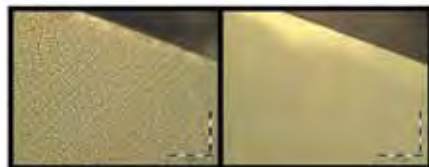
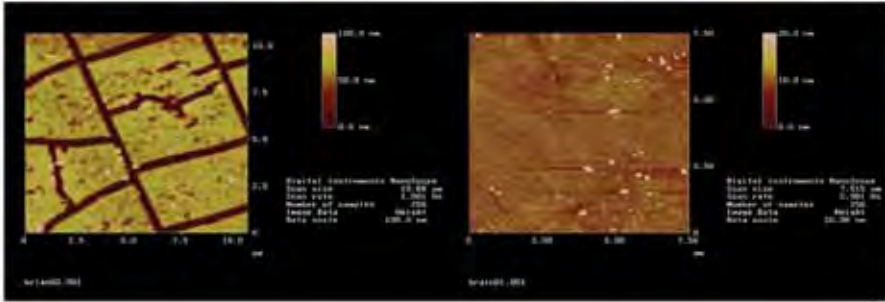


Fig 5: Optical micrographs demonstrating a reduction in surface roughness. They are magnified 50x.



**Fig 6: Atomic Force Microscopy (AFM) images of both an unpolished (left) and polished (right). The average surface roughness on the unpolished film is approximately 35nm, while the average surface roughness on the polished film is approximately .5nm. The high points (pink specks) on the polished film are most likely dirt. Also, note the difference in scale size: the scale for the unpolished film caps at 100nm, while the scale for the polished film caps at 20nm.**

We were also able to perform one optical loss measurement test, where we treated the  $\text{LiNbO}_3$  films as planar waveguides and passed a laser of known power through both a polished film and an unpolished film. There was a detector on the exiting side to measure the power of the laser as it emerged from the sample. The polished film resulted in an output power which exceeded that of the unpolished film by almost 200 percent. However, there were many other sources of loss (and error) in this experiment: the sides of the films were not polished very finely; there was some loss before and after the laser entered/exited the  $\text{LiNbO}_3$  film, and one film had a slightly longer path length than the other. Unfortunately, we were only able to perform one trial due to time constraints.

However, while the hand polishing method described is highly successful in removing the fissure patterning, the process needs to be further refined. One of the major problems is that the rate at which a film is polished, and subsequently the degree to which the film is polished, is highly dependent upon the mounting of the  $\text{LiNbO}_3$  film. Optical wax generally works for smaller films, but as the size of the film increases, it becomes more and more difficult to obtain a flat mount so as to optimize polishing conditions. Without having a flat mount, the chances of breaking the film increase, as does the time it takes to actually polish the entire film. In some cases, it is impossible to polish portions of the film. Furthermore, the process is time consuming and in its current state is not viable for working with large volumes of  $\text{LiNbO}_3$ .

films. Also, due to time constraints, we were only able to perform one optical loss measurement test, making the results qualitative. More runs will be needed to gather more quantitative characterization of the loss.

### **Conclusions**

Although there is still room for improvement on the polishing technique attempted here, we were successfully able to remove the surface roughness present on the bottom surfaces of the CIS  $\text{LiNbO}_3$  films. The process that proved the most successful was the use of the  $1\mu\text{m}$  diamond polishing compound along with the  $0.25\mu\text{m}$  diamond polishing compound: this resulted in a reduction in surface roughness from  $33.6\text{nm}$  to  $0.46\text{nm}$ . It can be clearly seen from the optical micrographs, AFM scans, SEM scans, and the optical loss test that our process works. Thus, CIS is a practical technique for generating workable single-crystal thin films of  $\text{LiNbO}_3$ .

**References**

- [1] Radojevic, Antonije M. "Crystal Ion Sliced Films of  $\text{LiNbO}_3$  for Integrated Optics Applications." Doctoral Thesis, Columbia University, pg. 55 (2002).
- [2] Pons, Guiem J. Cerda. "Periodically Poled Lithium Niobate for Optics Applications." Doctoral Thesis, Columbia University, pg. 30 (2005).
- [3] Radojevic, Antonije M. "Crystal Ion Sliced Films of  $\text{LiNbO}_3$  for Integrated Optics Applications." Doctoral Thesis, Columbia University, pgs. 28-37 (2002).
- [4] Izuhara, Tomoyuki, Ryan Roth, Djordje Djukic, Antonije M. Radojevic, Richard M. Osgood, Jr. "Ion-sliced Single-crystal  $\text{LiNbO}_3$  Thin Films and Their Applications." IEEE LEOS, (2004). Accessed online.
- [5] Djukic, Djordje. "Active Integrated Optics Devices in Thin Films of Lithium Niobate by Crystal Ion Slicing." Doctoral Thesis, Columbia University, pgs. 11-15 (2007).
- [6] Radojevic, Antonije M. "Crystal Ion Sliced Films of  $\text{LiNbO}_3$  for Integrated Optics Applications." Doctoral Thesis, Columbia University, pgs. 60-66 (2002).

This paper is the product of Brian Capozzi's internship with Ophir Gaathon, Department of Applied Physics, Columbia University [Graduate Student Adviser] and Professor Richard M. Osgood, Jr., Department Applied Physics and Electrical Engineering, Columbia University [the team] at Columbia University's Research Experience for Undergraduates.

# WOMAN'S WORLD: THE PRIMACY OF THE FEMALE COMMUNITY IN CHAUCER'S "WIFE OF BATH'S TALE"

Kathryn Jorge

In Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, it takes a long time for the Wife of Bath to begin her tale. Her story has the elements of a romance: a distant time, nobility, undeveloped characters, and a focus on love and marriage. But unlike the "Knight's Tale," the focus is not on men and their love for a woman. What the "Wife of Bath's Tale" describes is a community of women who dominate men in personal relationships and the larger society. In her world, men must be controlled and guided by women or else disorder would erupt. So decisions of the household and the state lie in the hands of these women. This female community, with its own standards of virtue and nobility, is so powerful that Chaucer's fictional setting truly becomes a "woman's world."

In the narrative that takes place in the time of King Arthur, a knight is scheduled to be put to death for raping a young virgin. Yet Queen Guinevere halts the execution and offers him one last chance to save his neck by challenging him to tell her the one thing that women desire most of all. However, whereas before he was punished "by cours of law," this time he would face the judgment of the community

(v.892). The Wife of Bath's community is strikingly unusual: it consists entirely of women—the knight is the only male character in the entire story. In his travels, the knight essentially interacts with *only* women and consults no other source, such as the clergy or textual authorities, to complete his task. The knight never truly speaks to another man. Also, in his final judgment, he does not face the king or other knights. The group that gathers to hear his answer is composed of:

Ful many a noble wyf, and many a mayde,  
 And many a wydwe, for that they been wise,  
 The queene hirsself sittynge as a justise,  
 Assembled been, his answeere for to here. (vv.1026-1029)

The knight is on his own. This exclusively female community is portrayed from the tale's beginning to hold enormous influence: it has enough power that the king of the land—the legendary Arthur, no less—bends to its demands.

Yet this community of women has a very different view of social hierarchy, and what defines an individual's place within its limits as differentiated from its male counterpart. There is no emphasis on social rank and birth as there is in the "Knight's Tale" and other stories told by the male participants on the pilgrimage to Canterbury. The "Wife of Bath's Tale" directly opposes this stance. Though Queen Guinevere is presented as the leader of this female-dominated community, the knight's wife argues against the belief that social class and ancestry define true nobility. In response to the rejection of her new husband, the wife chides:

But, for ye speken of swich gentillesse  
 As is descended out of old richesse,  
 That therefore sholden ye be gentil men,  
 Swich arrogance is nat worth a hen.  
 Looke who that is moost virtuous always,  
 Pryvee and apert, and moost entendeth ay  
 To do the gentil dedes that he kan;  
 Taak hym for the grettest gentil man. (vv.1109-1116)

In the "Wife of Bath's Tale," the woman the knight marries as a reward for saving his life is (in appearance) poor and old. But she is not afraid to speak to her husband on equal terms. More accurately, she accuses *him*—for all his wealth and

lineage—of not truly being a “gentil man.” She not only rebukes him for claiming his nobility on the grounds of ancestry, but also strongly implies that his previous conduct shows him lacking a great deal of virtue. The knight is now confronted with a different community belief altogether, one in which public and private conduct matter much more than one’s social position in terms of money and family.

Moreover, the knight’s wife takes care to annihilate the knight’s preconceptions of poverty. The knight faults the woman who saved his life for being poor. He argues that she is not only unworthy of him in terms of social class, but also loathsome because of this personal flaw. The wife, however, is quick and cutting with her reply:

And ther as ye of poverte me repreeve,  
The hye God, on whom that we bileeve,  
In wilful proverte chees to lyve his lyf.  
And certes every man, mayden, or wyf  
May understonde that Jheseus, hevne kyng,  
Ne wolde nat chese a vicious lyvving. (vv.1177-1182)

She reminds the knight, yet again, that the female community defines its precepts differently. In this society, poverty and wealth—like lineage and social status—do not characterize virtue. The wife eloquently provides an example in Jesus, stating that the knight cannot deny that the righteous Christian God chose to live in poverty when on earth and not as a rich nobleman. This view opposes yet again the portrayals of the nobility and the third estate in the other pilgrims’ tales. In the Wife of Bath’s fictional community, she does not attribute nobility solely to the rich, and she promotes a sympathetic picture of the poor as more than bawdy, conniving, or just plain stupid.

Both the Wife of Bath and the Knight’s Wife are undoubtedly clear that the female community is the more noble and powerful in all aspects in this portrayal of Arthurian Britain. Men, in their few depictions within the “Wife of Bath’s Tale,” are consistently represented as lustful, violent, and unwise. The first example is of the “lymytour” who walks the land (v.874). The clergyman who drives the *female* fairies out of the land is, in fact, the real “incubus” that women must be wary of (v.880). The knight is also introduced in a scene of violence and rape, for which he must be

judged. Even the vaunted Arthur is unfavorably illustrated: his “cours of law” calls for the knight to be brutally beheaded (v.892). However, it is the female community that restrains the violence of the men. Guinevere shows her power over Arthur when the knight’s punishment is given over to her:

But that the queene and other ladyes mo  
 So longe preyeden the kyng of grace  
 Til he his lyf hym graunted in the place,  
 And yaf hym to the queene, al at hir wille,  
 To chese wheither she wolde hym save or spille. (vv.894-898)

Arthur does not consider saving the knight, but Guinevere offers a chance to settle the matter without violence through the knight’s own efforts. Inherent in her task is her intention that the knight learn the lesson he is searching for: namely, that a woman is needed to keep him in line.

All men, even the king, are subject to the female community’s authority. Whether it be issues of marriage or the royal court, women are the ones who make the decisions. Guinevere—not a male official who knows the law of the land—judges the knight’s response. This submission to female wisdom is also seen in the resolution of the knight’s reluctance to fulfill his promise. The knight does not wish to marry the “old” woman. He actually wants to renege on his pledge to her. It is the “old” woman—later, his wife—who forces him to keep his word. The men whom they govern acknowledge the women as being wiser, and they consent to their will. The obstinate knight, who insulted the woman to whom he owes his life, eventually gives in as well:

My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,  
 I put me in youre wise governance;  
 Cheseth yourself which may be moost plesance  
 And moost honour to you and me also.” (vv.1230-1233)

In the “Wife of Bath’s Tale,” this is precisely as it should be. The knight is duly rewarded for submitting to the power of this female community. And the narrative concludes with a fairy tale ending: “...thus they lyve unto hir lyves ende / In parfit



joye” (vv.1257-1258).

However, the tale’s dominating female community does not exist in reality, but is the Wife of Bath’s vision of what ought to be. Her long-winded prologue details her techniques in bringing all of her husbands under her control, and her subsequent tale is the culmination of the efforts of all women toward this endeavor. Both the state and the common marriage are blissfully harmonious with no arguments or violence. The women are at the center of society, ensuring that order and peace are maintained. The tale shows men to be essentially unnecessary; indeed there are hardly any of them in the narrative at all. If they are present, they exist to answer to their wives’ pleasures. The “Wife of Bath’s Tale” argues for the primacy of the female community and demonstrates the benefits of female authority.

Nevertheless, the Wife of Bath cannot ignore the fact that not every man would willingly surrender his own individual will to his wife’s. And her reaction to this unavoidable truth is given in a prayer to Jesus:

...and Jhesu Crist us sende  
 Housbondes meeke, yonge, and fresh abedde,  
 And grace t’overbyde hem that we wedde;  
 And eek I praye Jhesu shorte hir lyves  
 That noght wol be governed by hir wyves;  
 And olde and angry nygardes of dispence,  
 God sende hem soone verray pestilence! (vv.1258-1264)

The Wife of Bath shows a different side to this female community. While the community is happy with husbands who will yield to them, it is very angry and unforgiving towards those men who do not. There is no call for overt violence, but the community will petition Jesus to strike down those men who obstinately hold out. Yet, the Wife of Bath has little other recourse to combat stubborn men who wish to retain their power. She also does not realize that this dream is just as implausible as her story’s fairy tale ending. In reality, any community needs cooperation to function successfully. Dominance by either gender is not the answer for nuptial contentment or societal order.

**Work Cited**

Chaucer, Geoffrey. ““The Wife of Bath’s Tale.” *The Canterbury Tales*. Complete.”  
Ed. Larry D. Benson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000 98-104.

# THE ARTISTIC VISION OF THE WORLD REFLECTED IN FILM

Tanya Velasquez

You can examine a painting and learn a great deal about the artist who created it. You can look at the use of color, texture, and light. You can question the choice of subject and the placement of each brushstroke. These observations tell you about the world of the artist, the world he or she physically lives in and envisions. The same can be said about film, but instead of brushstrokes, each frame can be looked at as reflective of the filmmaker's world. Frank Capra's film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and Jean Renoir's film *La Règle du Jeu*, translated as, *The Rules of the Game*, though very different in style and content, can be examined in this way. Each filmmaker reflects upon his own society, view of people, and approach to the world through film.

Both films explore social relationships that reflect the culture in which the films were created. In *The Rules of the Game*, the characters are open and affectionate, embracing and kissing one another in greeting. Christine de la Chesnaye and her long time friend, Octave, lie together in bed as she gives him a friendly kiss on the cheek. Everyone loves openly, having spouses and taking lovers, and these affairs are public knowledge. Jealousy does exist, but even then, spouse and lover can maintain

an amiable relationship, to my confusion. Robert de la Chesnaye and the man in love with Robert's wife, André Jurieux, engage in a violent fist fight, only to share some cigarettes a few minutes later.

*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* doesn't necessarily depict people as particularly warm or cold; the level of intimacy and affection apparent in Renoir's film does not exist in Capra's. In contrast to the scene between Christine and Octave, the only bed scene in Capra's film features an older, married couple. The closest this film gets to the idea of a lover is the character Jefferson Smith who has two potential love interests: the alluring Susan Paine and the pragmatic Clarissa Saunders. Smith doesn't explore either relationship very much, though he would probably end up with Saunders after she places a love note in one of his books. It seems Smith's only loves are America, its ideals, and its history.

These films depict interpersonal relationships as well as the relationship among social classes. Renoir's film depicts the upper class as playful, frivolous, and decadent in an almost Rococo fashion. Christine could even be loosely compared to Marie Antoinette in that both are born in Austria but move to France. The household servants, on the other hand, may eat at a separate table than the aristocrats, but no one talks down to them. The servants associate freely with the aristocrats, and participate in the merriment and chaos of the masquerade as Renoir explores their lives and their relationships. This is particularly true of the triangle between Lisette Schumacher, her husband Edouard, and Marceau, a new servant. However, it becomes clear that Lisette is more devoted to Christine than to either of the men.

In *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, Capra clearly glorifies the hard-working middle class, depicts the politicians' class as corrupt, but mostly ignores the "serving" class. When Smith first arrives in Washington, there are three African American men handling the men's luggage and one of them speaks a single line. But they are not mentioned again. Instead, Capra's focus is on a laudable, middle class man trying to survive with his morals intact in an immoral world of lying, backstabbing politicians.

Capra weaves a clear story with a well-defined protagonist, goals for that protagonist, obstacles for those goals, rising conflicts that almost defeat the protagonist, and the happy ending expected of any American movie. *Mr. Smith* is clear cut, direct, with fast-paced action that is reflected in its editing style and techniques. There are

many scenes with a montage-like quality such as the handwriting analysis scene. Cuts are fast and frequent, at times even chaotic. Within the film's first 20 minutes, Mr. Smith not only goes to Washington, he's already there, separated from his group, playing tourist on a bus. Even during a simple conversation between Joe Paine and Jim Taylor, the camera shifts from showing the two from the waist up, to a little closer (but not a close-up), then back again, then closer again (but still no close-up). It's a technique that has me puzzled and I can't say I care much for it.

*The Rules of the Game* is nowhere near as fast-paced. Rather, Renoir uses relatively few cuts. His shots are long and continuous, following characters in their surroundings with the camera. I particularly like the scene where Octave visits the Chesnays. You see Octave, Christine, and Robert enter a room, then the camera moves to another doorway, where you see Lisette opening the curtains, and the camera enters the room. The shots have a fluid quality that give you a feeling of being part of the film as one of the characters as you follow the others with your eyes. Renoir depicts life as it is, flowing and unfolding before your eyes. He has a humanistic approach to this film, focusing on the characters and their interactions, more so than on a specific story.

Renoir also chooses to make no distinction between good and evil. In *The Rules of the Game*, no character is particularly good or bad; they just are—they exist. Even in the murder scene, Schumacher is not portrayed as evil. Yes, he intended to harm the person he shot, but he is shown more as a victim of his jealous impulses. We could even sympathize with him; before this scene, he is shown crying after losing his job and his wife.

Capra, however, makes it clear who is good and who is bad. Smith, the all-American, nature and child-loving patriot, is compared to Jesus, complete with a metaphor of the crucifixion. Jim Taylor is the devil character, tempting Smith with offers of position and power. To make him more evil, his minions even attack children. Joseph Paine, as the backstabbing friend, plays Judas; however, the metaphor is subverted when Paine fails to kill himself and instead, runs to the Senate to condemn himself and pronounce Smith innocent of the charges he originally placed against him.

All these differences lead up to the idea that Capra and Renoir have very

different views of the world. It becomes especially evident in their treatment of specific characters: André Jurieux and Jefferson Smith. Jurieux and Smith are passionate, a bit innocent, noble in their own ways, and naïve. I view each as a sort of adult male Ingénue-type character. Jurieux is in love with a married woman, childish in the way he throws dramatic tantrums, but when his chance comes to run away with her, his noble qualities come out. He believes he must tell her husband about their departure before doing so, to the frustration of Christine. The other characters gently poke fun at him for his naiveté. In the end, due to a major misunderstanding, he is shot and killed.

Jefferson Smith is wholesome and caring. He is the leader of the Boy Rangers and he loves his country. He is dedicated to building a boys' camp for their own benefit. His optimism is even infectious; he brings hope to the otherwise cynical yet practical Clarissa. Smith is, to put it bluntly, a bit slow and knows nothing about the government or how it is run. But by chance, because children like him and coins easily fall on their sides, he ends up a senator. Despite all odds, despite humiliation and public disapproval, he defends himself in front of the entire senate for hours, overcomes all obstacles, and is pronounced innocent of the false charges against him.

Capra saves Smith, while Renoir kills Jurieux. Capra creates a character who defies all odds and succeeds. Though this is possible, it's a bit idealistic, but that's the American way. We're optimistic and we love our happy endings. I'll admit, even though Smith got on my nerves, I wouldn't want to see him fail. I can't escape that expectation. Renoir presents a more realistic view of life: innocent people can get killed, and though it's tragic, these things do happen. Jurieux is not a victim of evil, but rather the victim of unfortunate circumstance.

Examining these two films begs you to question your own world view: Are you an idealist or a realist? Would you rather watch films that are hopeful, sometimes farfetched and unrealistic, but that will always end on a happy note? Or would you rather watch films that stare back at you like a mirror, showing you life as it is, harsh and beautiful at the same time? For myself, it would be easy to assume that I'd choose the idealist films; after all, I can't stop watching all my classic Disney movies. Yet, between Capra and Renoir's films I preferred *The Rules of the Game*. After some deliberation, I've decided that I am an idealist in the end, but I would prefer a hopeful

ending after a somewhat realistic story and maybe a good cry, too.

Reflecting on American culture today, I would say that Americans and our view of our country has changed a bit over the years: we're a bit more realistic and some of us are cynical. That becomes obvious if you look at film today. We have our scathing documentaries, our hopelessly depressing dramas standing next to our feel good love stories and comedies. But maybe those films reflect what we need nowadays: a good look at ourselves and our culture, a good look at an often harsh reality, followed by an escape to a place where we'll always have the satisfaction of knowing that lovers will be united, families brought together, and the slightly dim boy scout leader turned senator will be proven innocent in the end.