

# SYMPOSIUM

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Adelphi's  
Journal of Ideas



The cover is in honor of both the exquisiteness of the human body and mind in their ability to enable expression through various forms. By expression I mean the sharing of ideas and feelings, what I see as a kind of unraveling of one's self.

# SYMPOSIUM

ADELPHI UNIVERSITY'S  
JOURNAL OF IDEAS

VOLUME 8

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Molly Mann, Dan Mazzella, Joseph DiLallo,  
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COVER ART

Karissa Muratore

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# *THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING*

Leah Ellenbogen

*Grief has no distance; grief comes in waves, paroxysms, sudden apprehensions that weaken the knees and blind the eyes and obliterate the dailiness of life.*

(Didion 27)

All of life is touched by the notion that it will eventually end, that each day can be lived but once. We attend funerals for our friends and loved ones, and cope as best we can with the concept of *other* peoples' mortality, *other* families, *other* wives and husbands. But why then does death so powerfully apprehend us when it comes too close? While it is logical and almost cathartic to recognize and accept our own mortality, there seems never to be enough time to prepare for the sudden absence of those we love the most.

Joan Didion lost her husband in the winter of 2003; in the wake of his heart attack, there began a mourning process so strange and bewildering that Didion was moved to call it “magical.” Published only two years after John passed away, Didion’s novel, *The Year of Magical Thinking*, provides two things: on the one hand it is a narrative, electric with honesty and emotion, and on the other, it is a textbook of sorts—a rich and intelligent review of the literature of grief in all of its guises. Didion takes the hurricane in her heart and turns it into literary structure; each unexpected shortness of breath, each gust of senseless emotion and illogical cycle of thought is

documented for the benefit of her readers. It focuses on the things most difficult to understand, specifically our tremulous relationship with time—what it is, how we attempt to control it, and how, in the end, it seems to know better than we do that life will go on.

During the year that *Magical Thinking* was written, Didion was overwhelmed by her thoughts which were not supernatural or paranormal as the word “magical” suggests; instead, it has more to do with the fairy-tale life that Didion lived when her husband passed away. The “magic” of her thinking is far less positive than the connotation might suggest; it refers, in the first instance, to her sense of responsibility for John’s death as well as his imagined resurrection.

The first reference to Didion’s “magical thinking” occurs on the first night of John’s death. “I needed that first night to be alone.” She says, “I needed to be alone so that he could come back. This was the beginning of my year of magical thinking” (33). Although Didion is a perfectly rational woman, after her husband’s death, she has the “magical” cognition that somehow, he will return to her from the dead, as if nothing ever happened. Didion is fully aware of her thought process; when a friend offers to call the *Los Angeles Times* to print the obituary, she finds herself “wondering, with no sense of illogic, if it had also happened in Los Angeles. (Was there time to go back? Could we have a different ending on Pacific Time)?” (31). She knows John is dead, she has informed the family and made all the necessary arrangements, but on that first night in particular, she is unable to “accept this news as final” (32).

The thought that John’s death is not final, not real, and not true occurs many times throughout the book. For instance, when Didion attempts to pack up John’s clothes and donate them to the Episcopal Church, she stops before packing his shoes. Why? Because “he would need his shoes if he were to return” (37). When the Miami-Dade hospital calls in order to claim John’s corneas for organ transplant, Didion finds herself angry at the phone call, taken aback by the young coroner’s assistant. She knows that both Quintana, her daughter, and John were organ donors; as she is on the phone with the hospital, she remembers the conversation she had with them regarding

their choice to *be* organ donors, but still, she finds herself offended and hurt by what the young man has to say. Why? Because “how could he come back if they took his organs. How could he come back if he had no shoes?” (41).

Didion assumes this sense of responsibility over her husband’s return because she has not yet accepted that there was nothing she could have done to prevent his heart attack. She is beset by the “magical” (illogical, unreasonable) belief that somehow, she neglected to predict or change his death. Didion claims that she was thinking “as small children think,” (35) believing that through the “rituals” (another magical reference) of acknowledging his death, her faith would somehow undo what happened:

*But I did the ritual. I did it all. I did St. John the Divine,  
I did the chant in Latin, I did the Catholic priest and the Episcopal priest,  
I did “for a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past”  
and I did “In paradisum deductant angeli.” And it still didn’t bring him back.*  
(43)

It is sweet and sad at once, to imagine her going through the whole process of the phone calls, the obituaries, the funeral, all the while believing that in some magical way, her dedication to the idea of his death could affect time and reality to change it. Didion is troubled in the worst way that a person can be; she is of two minds: one that knows John is dead and one that hopes to make it untrue. Neither offers comfort.

★ ★ ★

As a writer, Didion had been taught all her life that, “in time of trouble...read, learn, work it up, go to the literature,” (44) and this is precisely what she does when John passes away. She devours psychoanalytic journals by Melanie Klein and Sigmund Freud, psychiatric journals on the ancient world, the present world, and even dolphins. She cloaks herself in Merck manual definitions and in Emily Post’s book of Etiquette (chapter XXIV, “Funerals”). She “relies on” the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, E.E. Cummings, W.H. Auden, and C.S. Lewis. It seems a rational collection of information until Joan (and the reader, simultaneously) discover that this is no ordinary research.

For an intellectual, there is supposed to be comfort in the literature, a sense that

someone else somewhere else either better understands the subject or has found a clearer way to describe it. Not only is there comfort, but also there is power. This is what Didion expects when she begins poring over every piece of paper ever dedicated to grief. “I learned many things I already knew,” she says, “which at a certain point seemed to promise comfort, validation, an outside opinion that I was not imagining what appeared to be happening” (46). But herein lies the element of magic: Didion wants the literature to do the work of grief for her, and when it fails to “comfort” or “validate,” she fights back at the literature, often holding the author responsible for his inability to offer her solace. Didion directs her grieving wrath to a doctor from Charlottesville, Dr. Volkan, who was amassing information on an “established pathological mourner”:

But from where exactly did Dr. Volkan and his team derive...their special ability to “explain and interpret the relationship that had existed between the patient and the one who died”? Were you watching Tenko with me and “the lost one” in Brentwood park, did you go with us to Morton’s?... Did you catch cold with us in the rain at the Jardin du Ranelagh in Paris a month before it happened? Did you skip the Monets with us and go to lunch at Conti? Were you with us when we left Conti and bought the thermometer, were you sitting on our bed at the Bristol when neither of us could figure how to convert the thermometer’s centigrade reading into Fahrenheit?

Were you there?

No.

You might have been useful with the thermometer but you were not there.

*I don’t need to “review the circumstances of the death.” I was there.*

I catch myself, I stop.

I realize that I am directing irrational anger toward the entirely unknown Dr. Volkan in Charlottesville. (56-57)

The tragedy of Didion’s biting response to Dr. Volkan’s study is that she is not above the human grieving process. We expect that a published author, mother and seventy-year old woman will have some greater coping mechanism, a higher level of processing for such things but she doesn’t. It is one of the overwhelming feelings that one experiences while reading *The Year of Magical Thinking*. Why was she not ready if she knew John had a heart problem? Why did she lash out at all the people who were just trying to help? Why did she recede, go mad, and lose touch?



The all-encompassing answer is that this is a book by a grieving human being which addresses the single shared human experience: death. Whether you are touched by the poems, the studies, or the story itself, Didion, has created—through personal narrative—a well-researched and still heart-felt textbook on grief. And in her gracious way, Didion writes the book in the past tense, so that even while the reader experiences the depths, the “paroxysms” of grief, there is a sense that grief has been overcome. She writes from the other side of the year, when the magic has—at least somewhat—released her. “Notice the stress on ‘overcoming’ it” Didion states after quoting the psychoanalytic take on mourning:

Grief remains peculiar among derangements, “it never occurs to us to regard it as a pathological condition...we rely instead on its being overcome after a certain lapse of time.” ... “The mourner is in fact ill, but because this state of mind is common and seems so natural to us, we do not call mourning an illness...in mourning the subject goes through a modified and transitory manic-depressive state and overcomes it.” (34)

Notice the stress on “overcoming” it.

★ ★ ★

Grief comes in waves, not only waves of emotion, but also waves of time. The past ties itself to the present and with just the right push, a strong enough breeze, it flies into the moment—snapping like a kite tail—impossible to ignore. *The Year of Magical Thinking* is a compression of time and emotion, the two most powerful themes related to grief particularly in this work.

For Didion, every day of the year after her husband’s death was touched by the past. In the simplest terms, for each day that she lived after he died, there was an equal and opposite day to refer to—one during which he had been alive. January 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2004 was a day that John was no longer living; January 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2003, they had been together. In a more complicated way, everything that Didion sees, hears, touches or feels during the year after John passes away finds itself looped back into forty years of marriage. His words during the year before he died take on a new importance. She combs through them for evidence that he might have “known” he would die within the year. Almost every detail of living through the day yanks Didion into the past with hurricane force. She calls this phenomenon “the vortex effect.”

Time becomes an obsession; schedules and chronology overwhelm a large portion of the book as Didion attempts to understand events as they happened *in time*. The first instance of this is found in Didion's compulsion to understand every moment of the night that her husband passed away. In her journalistic way, she consumes the facts of the night, poring over the building log kept by the doorman to determine at exactly what time the ambulances had arrived, the time the paramedics had taken attempting to restart John's heart, the hospital log's record of time of death: minutes, hours, *time*.

If the ambulance left our building at 10:05 p.m., and death was declared at 10:18 p.m., the thirteen minutes in between were just bookkeeping, bureaucracy, making sure...the paperwork was done and the appropriate person was on hand to do the sign off, inform the cool customer.

The sign off, I later learned, was called the "pronouncement," as in "pronounced: 10:18 p.m."

I had to believe he was dead all along.

If I did not believe he was dead all along I would have thought I should have been able to save him. (22)

It is as if Didion believes that by understanding the chronology of the events of that night, she can relieve herself of any culpability. To the reader, it seems absurd that she would blame herself, but for Didion, there are no conclusions now without cold facts to prove them. She is both the prosecution and the defense; only by accumulating all the facts relating to the incident can she determine her innocence or guilt.

Time—whether stolen, passing, or simply spent—is, in fact, one of the major themes of the book. Didion painstakingly schedules her days in order to avoid getting trapped in the "vortex" of memories. She plans her route to avoid things that remind her of John; she allocates her time to specific tasks, as if she could neatly fit her grief in between lunch and picking up the laundry.

Each morning I inserted my ticket into the gate mechanism and each morning, if I inserted it right, the same woman's voice said "*wel-come to U-C-L-A.*" Each morning, if I timed it right, I got a parking space outside, on the Plaza 4 level, against the hedge. Late each afternoon I would drive back to the Beverly Wilshire, pick up my messages, and return a few of them...I would watch the local news. I would stand in the shower for twenty minutes and go out to dinner...

I plotted these evenings as carefully as I plotted the routes.

I left no time to dwell on promises I had no way of keeping. (116-117)

Didion, in her magical thinking, has the endearing naivete to believe that by controlling time, she can control life in a way she had not thought to do when organizing the events of December 30<sup>th</sup>. The magic seems to have her convinced that if she had better planned making his drink, or where they would eat, or even at what time, John might not have died if only she had thought to control it a little better.

Didion's choice to schedule her life down to the moment is not unreasonable when you consider the repercussions when she finds herself with idle time. Any time her mind wanders—as everyone's mind does, in moments of contemplative peace—she eventually comes back to John. The hospital where Quintana, her daughter, is staying reminds her of writing an article for *Vogue*, which leads her to writing for *Time*, which tumbles into the day she sent the article to the editing office—the day John drove her to the Western Union office:

At the Western Union office he wrote REGARDS, DIDION at the end of it.

That was what you always put at the end of a cable, he said. Why, I said.  
Because you do, he said.

See where that particular vortex sucked me.

From the Dorothy Draper wallpaper border at Beth Israel North to Quintana at three and I should have listened to John.

...The way you got sideswiped was by going back. (113)

Lurking behind each pool party, each fireplace, each long drive and in restaurants all over midtown are hidden vortices waiting to drag her into a spiraling cycle of grief. What is most interesting about these moments of reflection is the bittersweet sense that, although she goes out of her way—literally avoiding whole stretches of the Pacific Coast Highway, inventing reasons why she had to stay in specific hotels, avoiding intersections at Sunset and Beverly Glen, refusing to turn her head when she was forced to pass certain landmarks—the list goes on—she never seems to regret the vortex once it happens. It hurts, it racks her mind and wrings her heart dry. But

these are the secret moments with the memory of her husband. They may be sad, but they are hers, and there is a powerful sense that Didion believes in their role in her grieving process; in retrospect, she views them as a valuable part of mourning her husband. It's as if John's death reopened parts of her memory that had not been aired in many years. Since John is gone, Didion is able to re-evaluate these memories. In many ways, the vortices brought her closer to John than she might have realized at the time.

Throughout the novel, Didion is attempting (whether accidentally or intentionally) to link two very different time periods: life with John and life without him. The vortices pull the past into the present with alarming power and force the reader back in time with Didion. The book is only two hundred pages long, but it is so tightly wound that the chronology never fails to move forward, even as it drifts back; the narrative successfully portrays the sense that even if your thoughts do not logically move through time, time will continue on without you.

Her absence from the dialogue (a Didion trademark) works here as a way to show how different she feels as a person who is in mourning. She has the sense that she is outside of the rest of the world, affected differently by her thoughts, the passage of time, and the lives of "normal" people in general:

People who have recently lost someone have a certain look, recognizable maybe only to those who have seen that look on their own faces. I have noticed it on my face and I notice it now on others. The look is one of extreme vulnerability, nakedness, openness... These people who have lost someone look naked because they think themselves invisible. I myself felt invisible for a period of time, incorporeal. I seemed to have crossed one of those legendary rivers that divide the living from the dead, entered a place where I could be seen only by those who were themselves recently bereaved. (75)

The overwhelming message in *The Year of Magical Thinking* is that mourning throws a person into a secret world where everything is tainted by loss, and the only guarantee is that time will move on swiftly as the mourner reconciles herself with the experience. Eventually, she will read headlines again and fail to draw those magical connections, eventually she will drive down Sunset Boulevard without losing herself

in the vortex, eventually...

In the end, this seems the greatest message, if one were to argue that Didion is attempting to proselytize to a grieving public. The book moves powerfully forward, even when she is at points of great frustration, weakness and despair—the power of the past tense is that it is proof of growth, change and reflection, as well as a slow but reassuring recognition of her magical thinking. At the close of the book, the tone is melancholy but hopeful and never cloyingly so. There is empirical evidence for the doubters in the audience and there is a deeply emotional narrative for those in need of a more personal connection. There are moments when Didion’s grief calls up tears in her readers; to be sure, there are moments when she seems almost alien in her inability to comprehend the world in a “normal” way. But Didion never handles her subject or her audience with kid gloves and it is this honesty that makes her experience both beautiful and powerful.

#### **Work Cited**

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S Y M P O S I U M

# MANET, *OLYMPIA*, AND THE BOURGEOISIE

Molly Mann

It is difficult to surmise whether Édouard Manet anticipated the reaction that his famous painting, *Olympia*, aroused when he submitted it to the 1865 Paris Salon.<sup>1</sup> Manet portrayed a woman, clad only with a ribbon around her neck, a flower in her hair, and a pair of silk slippers carelessly tumbling off her feet. She lies propped up on several fluffy pillows, above a luxuriously embroidered shawl, as a black servant woman stoops to hand her a sumptuous bouquet of flowers wrapped in newspaper. As does the black cat at her feet, *Olympia* eyes the painting's viewer with a cool, calculating gaze.

What in Manet's painting caused an uproar among the art critics and viewing-public of nineteenth-century Paris? It could not possibly be the subject's nudity, as female nudes had been considered an elevated subject for painters since the early Renaissance. Whatever the cause, the reaction was certainly a violent one:

The scoffers formed bands which even the army was unable to disperse. The terrified authorities were obliged to protect the picture with two uniformed guards. Even that wasn't enough...the authorities did become so nervous about disorders that they decided to rehang the picture high up against the ceiling, where it would be safe from flailing umbrellas and thrown objects.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Salon de Paris is the official art show of the Académie des Beaux-Arts. Exhibition at the Salon was essential for any artist to achieve success in France.

<sup>2</sup> Otto Friedrich, "Olympia" in *Olympia: Paris in the Age of Manet* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 24.

The critics were not any more respectful than the Salon public. In a letter to his friend, the poet Charles Baudelaire, Manet lamented, “Insults pour down on me like hail.”<sup>3</sup> The torments grew so intolerable that Manet was driven out of Paris, to Boulogne and then Spain.<sup>4</sup>

What indeed was so thrilling in the depiction of a reclining woman that all of Paris had, if not “laughed, screamed and threatened,”<sup>5</sup> at least formed some strong opinion regarding *Olympia*? Several art and historical critics have concluded that, to a Paris public on the cusp of *La Belle Époque*, *Olympia* represented the fate they feared would befall the emerging capitalist society. *Olympia* was widely seen as a *demi-mondaine*, a prostitute catering to an upper-class aesthetic. She, with her appraising stare, declared that capitalism had turned every aspect of life, even sex, into a commodity. Furthermore, as money became increasingly available to anyone willing to work for it, the old conservative elite felt threatened.

The social issues that culminated in the reaction to Manet’s *Olympia* have been addressed in articles by Robert W. Witkin, Otto Friedrich, Charles Bernheimer, and Manet’s contemporary and friend, the eminent Émile Zola. Witkin, of the University of Exeter, in England, explores the aspects of *Olympia* that would have represented the moral and social implications of capitalism to Manet’s audience. Friedrich focuses on *Olympia*’s direct gaze upon the viewer, interpreting it as the mark of the shrewd, mercantile world nascent throughout Europe. Bernheimer emphasizes perhaps the most threatening element of *Olympia* – the social ambiguity that arose with the escalating, amorphous, number of *demi-mondaines*, or bourgeois prostitutes. Finally, Zola provides an additional clue to the cause of scandal. He identifies Manet as a realist painter, who depicted the world through uncensored observation. The privileged society men and women who attended the Salon of 1865 had been accustomed to having the gritty Parisian realities filtered from the idealistic, aristocratic paintings they enjoyed. Manet, however, shocked them out of their complacency and brought down a furious response that is incomprehensible unless

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3 Friedrich, 25.

4 Friedrich, 26.

5 Friedrich, 24.



the social factors of nineteenth-century Paris are considered.

Robert Witkin takes an economic approach to the controversy aroused by Manet's painting. He first examines the differing social attitudes that emerged from capitalism in the nineteenth century. Witkin expresses the transformation as one from a "discourse of values," or solidary relations, to a "discourse of motives," or instrumental relations.<sup>6</sup> To distinguish these terms:

Instrumental actions and relations are means-end oriented; they are actions and relations in pursuit of goals or objectives [ie: profit], be they individual or collective goals. Instrumental relations can thus be described as "motivated." Solidary relations, by contrast, are those that are intrinsically "valued" or sustained for their own sake.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, actions motivated by profit were seen as vulgar and grasping. Those who achieved social elevation through economic means outwardly pursued solidary relations, a mark of aristocracy. They thereby hoped to escape the prevalent condescension toward *nouveaux riches*. Such an attitude extended to art appreciation:

...higher social classes...could imagine that their instrumental relations were permeated with value...that they were "significant." Such significance was deemed to be a "worthy" subject for art. The instrumental relations of the lower social orders were not seen as permeated by value in this sense, were not therefore significant or worthy as subject matter for works of art.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, a painting of a courtesan who appraises her viewer as a prospective client would certainly have galled the wealthy bourgeoisie who sought to distance themselves from the origin of wealth. The purpose of money, for them, was social advantage; once made, one ought to forget its source.

Witkin pursues an additional aspect of why this dichotomy between motives and values would have resulted in outrage over *Olympia*. Since the bourgeois

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<sup>6</sup> Robert W. Witkin, "Constructing a Sociology for an Icon of Aesthetic Modernity: Olympia Revisited," *Sociological Theory*,

15, no. 2 (1997). J-Stor, via Adelphi, <http://www.adelphi.edu>, 104.

<sup>7</sup> Witkin, 104.

<sup>8</sup> Witkin, 105.

capitalists desired to mask their instrumental lives, they designated the home as a sanctuary from such elements:

In modern societies, the world of work and organizations has predominantly been seen as instrumental and motive-driven while the domestic sphere, centered on interpersonal and family relations, has been viewed as solidary and value-governed. The dichotomy was, traditionally, a *gendered* one, with the man, as *homo economicus*, at the center of an instrumental order – a motive-structure – and the woman at the center of the socio-emotional order – a value-structure.<sup>9</sup>

In other words, the bourgeois female was meant to absolve her husband of the pecuniary motives necessary to a breadwinner and envelope him in the traditional family values of pre-capitalist society. *Olympia*, however, turned these gender roles on their head. In Manet's painting, the woman is working to accumulate wealth; she offers no respite from the monetary world. She teases him; reclining in her boudoir amid a sumptuous domestic scene, Olympia offers no transcendent morality or solidarity to any man viewing her. Indeed, he is merely a potential client. In *Olympia*, "the sensuous life was thus reduced to the same means-end rationality that characterizes the instrumental life, with the control of affect and the satisfaction of personal needs constituting the ends."<sup>10</sup> To the nineteenth-century audience, Manet's courtesan represented the fragility of their solidary veneer:

The more thoroughgoing the development of economic life and the market, the more did the demands of the instrumental life begin to permeate every corner of the institutions of modern society. It became hard to find a creative and free center from within that order from which to promise redemption.<sup>11</sup>

As capitalism expanded throughout Europe and money became a central objective, the traditional values idealized by the bourgeoisie became ever more elusive.

While I agree with Witkin's main points, I find his argument rather vague. For a sociologist, his evaluation of nineteenth-century Paris is lacking in background. He does not specifically address what aspects of bourgeois life were altered by the advent

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Witkin, 107.

<sup>11</sup> Witkin, 121.

of a capitalist economy, nor does he provide a contrast with a previous era that would provide some context for his assertions. I appreciate his comprehensible differentiation of instrumental from solidary relations and his application of these principles to the painting, but wish that he had ventured beyond these broad concepts to provide a more relative understanding of Manet's contemporary social climate.

Otto Friedrich, in his book, *Olympia: Paris in the Age of Manet*, also looks at capitalism as the root of the *Olympia* scandal. Specifically, he examines the direct gaze of the figure upon her viewer. In his description of the painting, Friedrich remarks, "Olympia gazes squarely back at every admirer with a look of casual indifference, of recognition, of sadness, of courageous defiance."<sup>12</sup> Whereas the traditional nude model "gazes demurely past the viewer,"<sup>13</sup> Olympia demonstrates no such modesty: "as you coolly appraise her, she is coolly appraising you."<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the viewer is no longer an impartial observer of the painting's figure, but a party to a business transaction. He is Olympia's client, being assessed for how much revenue he will bring her.

Visitors to the 1865 Salon would, as previously discussed in regard to Witkin's thesis, have been unsettled by this intrusion of capitalist instrumental relations into the art world, the world meant to preserve social values. Indeed, the critic, Paul Saint-Victor declared in *La Presse*, "When art descends as low as this [the level of profit motivation], it does not even deserve a note of censure."<sup>15</sup> However, another element of the tumultuous reaction, according to Friedrich, was that Manet depicted a woman who was in control of her body and negotiated her own terms. Rather than the traditional nude, who is meant as the object of male scrutiny, Olympia is the surveyor in Manet's work. She is "independent and defiant,"<sup>16</sup> conveying to the viewer/client that he is only of interest to her so far as she may profit from him; she asserts her right to reject him if he cannot meet her price. Manet's controversy lies in his depiction of the nascent significance and autonomy of women and the lower classes; the upper bourgeoisie who viewed his work were frightened by the prospect of no longer holding their "inferiors" in subservience.

<sup>12</sup> Friedrich, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Friedrich, 21.

<sup>14</sup> Friedrich, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Friedrich, 23.

Friedrich offers an apt judgment regarding public opinion of *Olympia*. I believe that the figure's direct gaze had much to do with arousing discontent with her audience. If one refers to nude females depicted in the works of Manet's predecessors, they very rarely set their visages so defiantly. Thus, Manet's *Olympia* signifies a change in the depiction of women, and indeed human beings in general. *Olympia* is not unwittingly observed as other female figures usually were; she has control over her body and her fate. She represents a woman who commands the use of her sexuality, as well as an individual who may use her strengths to gain wealth and social mobility. Her gaze is *Olympia*'s striking feature; it is her gaze which would have captured the attention of the Salon audience and aroused its displeasure.

The increasing ambiguity of classes in nineteenth-century Paris is similarly examined by Charles Bernheimer in "Manet's *Olympia*: The Figuration of Scandal," part of his book *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France*. He points to Baron Haussmann's redesign of Paris and the advent of the Bon Marché as factors contributing to the *Olympia* scandal. According to Bernheimer, Haussmann's reconfiguration banished many working class neighborhoods to the city limits. Consequently, only the larger, luxury bordellos for upper class gentlemen remained.<sup>17</sup> The *demi-monde* therefore had to resemble the *haute-monde* if it was to survive. Haussmann also introduced the wide boulevards into Paris, allowing a theatre for display among the *cafés* and *boîtes de nuit*.<sup>18</sup> The result for prostitutes, according to the police prefect, Charles LeCour in 1870 was:

They are everywhere, in the brasseries, the *cafés-concerts*, the theaters and the balls. One encounters them in public establishments, railway stations, even railway carriages. There are some of them on all the promenades in front of most of the *cafés*. Late into the night, they circulate in great numbers on the most beautiful boulevards.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, prostitutes, elements of lower Parisian society, became inseparable and, indeed, indistinguishable from proper ladies of the bourgeoisie.

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<sup>17</sup> Charles Bernheimer, "Manet's *Olympia*: The Figuration of Scandal" in *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth Century France*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), 89.

<sup>18</sup> Bernheimer, 89.

<sup>19</sup> Bernheimer, 90.

The ambiguity was also due to the emergence of the capitalist, mass-market economy signified by *Le Bon Marché*, which was able to provide higher-quality goods to a middle-class budget. Such large-scale stores cast off the exclusivity of their specialty predecessors:

Whereas small Parisian boutiques had relied on local suppliers and had cultivated regular customers, the department stores purchased merchandise throughout Europe and geared its sale impersonally to any monied client.<sup>20</sup>

Consequently, a courtesan, if she only had the money milked from gentlemen, could closely resemble a high-born lady. The higher classes were appalled at such social mobility; it was no longer so easy to know who ought to be kept out of one's *salon*. A journalist for the *Gazette de France* in 1865, the year *Olympia* sent tremors through Paris, remarked:

Dress, jargon, pursuits, pleasures, cosmetics – everything brings together the *demi-monde* and the *monde entier*; everything allows one to confuse things that should not even be aware of one another's existence.<sup>21</sup>

Accordingly, a courtesan depicted as *Olympia* is, with an expensive shawl and slippers, being tended by a servant of her own, too closely resembled a lady of the *haute-monde* to render her existence comfortable to the upper bourgeoisie. They still saw the marks of the brothel on her – the “body's putrefying color,”<sup>22</sup> the “dirty hands and wrinkled feet.”<sup>23</sup> In other words, *Olympia* fused elements that Manet's viewers sought to keep separate, arousing their intense displeasure with his work.

Charles Bernheimer provides an excellent analysis of why the Parisian upper classes would have been rankled by such a portrait of a courtesan during the nineteenth century. However, he does not sufficiently address the pertinent question of why *Olympia* was overwhelmingly determined to be a prostitute. The role is not overtly portrayed in the painting itself, and Manet did not entitle his work *La Demi-Mondaine*. This is a contradiction of Bernheimer's argument: if wealthy courtesans were indeed indistinguishable among respectable women, why was *Olympia*

<sup>20</sup> Bernheimer, 93.

<sup>21</sup> Bernheimer, 90.

<sup>22</sup> Bernheimer, 102.

<sup>23</sup> Bernheimer, 104.

immediately and vastly pegged as the former? While his well-researched analysis provides historical insight, it does not satisfactorily apply this insight to Manet's work.

Émile Zola was an eminent and controversial novelist in nineteenth-century Paris.<sup>24</sup> In reviewing the work of his friend, Manet, Zola gives insight into why the *Olympia* would have been troubling to its contemporary viewers. He classifies Manet as a realist painter, an outgrowth of the emerging scientific age that fostered innovators like Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein. Including himself among the realists, Zola explains, "Our prevailing wind is scientific: we are pushed in spite of ourselves to the precise study of facts and things."<sup>25</sup> For conservatives, or anyone wishing to maintain his status within society, the threat of progress inherent in science can be quite alarming. For those content with the *status quo*, reality, as Zola describes it, is:

a good mother who gives her children ever renewed nourishment: she gives them new faces all the time; she shows herself to them, profound, infinite, full of a vitality which constantly renews itself.<sup>26</sup>

Ergo, a painting like the *Olympia*, which abandoned the idealism of its predecessors and portrayed the gritty reality of a Parisian *demi-mondaine*, would likewise be ill-received. A complacent society, which "finds its definition in a mental attitude of a certain stability,"<sup>27</sup> would undoubtedly be unsettled by an artist's perspective that depicted their current situation as anything less than ideal.

Zola's perspective is incredibly significant to an analysis of Manet's society because his is a contemporary account. Whereas the other writers featured in this study evaluate the *Olympia* scandal retrospectively, Zola is able to offer a first-hand view into his time. Furthermore, he was familiar with many of Manet's fellow artists like Pissarro, Cézanne, Degas, and Renoir. Thus, I find him a reliable judge of both the art movement during the time and society's reaction to it. Of course, proximity to a subject is a double-edged sword; although Zola's primary experience provides him with credibility, it also removes it. His friendship with Manet rendered him

<sup>24</sup> Émile Zola is well-known for his provocative novel, *Nana*, published in 1880. It is a portrait of a courtesan who maneuvers herself into respectable society but nonetheless dies a horrible, degrading death. Zola reached the height of his controversy in 1898, when his article, "J'accuse," defended the Jewish army captain, Alfred Dreyfus. As a result of the article's publication, Zola was convicted of libel and fled to England.

<sup>25</sup> Gaetan Picon, "Zola's Painters," *Yale French Studies*, no. 42 (1969). J-Stor, via Adelphi, <http://www.adelphi.edu>, 130.

<sup>26</sup> Picon, 132.

<sup>27</sup> Picon, 140.

emotionally and socially involved in the latter's defense. Consequently, his assertions must be read with some degree of skepticism in the context of a larger examination.

In all, I find Otto Friedrich's treatment of the subject most persuasive. While I value the historical background that Charles Bernheimer provides and the first-hand perspective of Émile Zola, I feel that Friedrich builds the most comprehensible judgment of nineteenth-century Parisian society in relation to Manet's painting. Putting myself in the position of contemporary viewers at the 1865 Salon, I agree that the figure's gaze is an arresting aspect of the portrait, one that is invasive and provocative. Olympia is defiant, almost threatening. Indeed her assertiveness, representing both women and the lower classes, was threatening to the status quo of the Paris *haute-monde*. Taken together, all four analyses of the *Olympia* scandal result in this conclusion: the painting was representative of all the dramatic changes taking place in nineteenth-century Paris. These changes stemmed from the advent of capitalism, which contributed to a growing middle class that challenged the rigid social structure that had existed previously. As Friedrich so deftly asserts, Manet encapsulated all of this social tension within Olympia's gaze and thereby startled his audience out of its complacency and idealism.

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S Y M P O S I U M



# THE IDEA OF THE HERO: FROM HOMER TO WALCOTT

Akhil Ketkar

In his epic poem *Omeros*, Derek Walcott challenges our preconceived notions of history, art, empire, slavery, heroism and epic itself. He narrates a tale of grand proportion, traveling three continents and three hundred years. Throughout the poem he seamlessly and deliberately invokes great western epics such as the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid*, and the ancient Greek drama *Philoctetes*. Walcott knowingly invites the reader to juxtapose his poem *Omeros* with the works of Homer, Virgil, and Sophocles to view his people alongside the great races of history, and to connect his heroes Achille, Philoctete, and the poet himself, to Achilles, Philoctetes, Odysseus and Aeneas.

Walcott's direct and indirect references to these ancient texts lend significant heft to his words, and with these references, he also assumes a great responsibility. Walcott does more than borrow names and draw parallels; he revisits the ideas behind the epic and turns the genre inside out. The idea of the hero is particularly important in this regard as heroes are the defining characters of an epic. They are archetypes of their people, the greatest of their kind, leaders to follow and examples to emulate. Walcott, like Homer, Virgil and Sophocles before him, uses many traditional conventions of classical literature but reworks them. The idea of the hero brings with it the notion of 'what is heroism', 'what is worthy of glory' and 'who is worthy of literature'. Walcott

makes the reader consider these ideas by describing how his poem and his heroes are like and at the same time unlike the classical hero. He carries forward the baton, what Elizabeth Cook calls *the relay* of the epic (94) into the twenty-first century, adapting the epic to his sensibility and ours.

Sophocles and Virgil have approached their work in a similar fashion. By rooting their stories in Homeric times, by the explicit and implicit references to heroes like Achilles and Odysseus, they immediately place their texts in context. In writing the Roman epic, Virgil has a completely different agenda from Homer's. His hero Aeneas is very different from the Greek hero Odysseus, and Sophocles' Philoctetes is almost the anti-Odysseus. Yet both Virgil and Sophocles chose to place their characters in Homer's Troy, and this grounding in epic gave them a certain footing to narrate the story. Like Walcott after them, they draw on all the literature before them and transform it into something new. Their meaning can be fully appreciated only within this context. Homer too drew on centuries of oral tradition in his epic. "Time is the metre, memory the only plot" (Walcott 129). Memory is the only source of poetry – personal memory, the memory of a people, and the memory of everything that is spoken and written. The times we live in and its circumstances determine the meter, the rhythm of the poem. Thus, it is only as part of 'one long book' – an idea borrowed from Borges – that these works can be fully appreciated.

The hero and the idea of heroism share certain qualities that have survived the centuries, but they are characteristically different. Homer's *Odyssey* begins:

Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns  
driven time and again off course, once he had plundered  
the hallowed heights of Troy. (I. 1-3)

It is very clear from the outset that this epic is about Odysseus, "the man of twists and turns." The epithet introduces the hero's central character trait, his wiliness, his ability to lie and cheat, to maneuver his way around tricky situations. A few centuries later, Sophocles will take up this very character which embodies 'wiliness' to tell the tale of the Greek hero Philoctetes, wounded from within and without, while Virgil's Aeneas hates Ulysses (the Latin for Odysseus) and curses Ithaca on his way to Italy. Some two thousand years later Walcott uses 'nostos', the idea of the return home, as

one of his central themes in *Omeros* as Achille travels to Africa to find his roots. The personification of Homer tells Walcott “a drifter / is the hero of my book”. The drifter, of course, is Odysseus, as well as Walcott, who says “so am I” (Walcott 283).

Throughout his arduous journeys, Odysseus is exalted as a glorious individual. The epic in general focuses on the individual, be it Odysseus, Telemachus, Penelope or Athena. After meeting Nausicaa, Odysseus bathes in the river and emerges revitalized:

... he walked and sat apart,  
glistening in his glory, breathtaking, yes,  
and the princess gazed in wonder... ( *Od.* VI. 261-263)

It is Odysseus’s physical beauty that characterizes him and sets him apart. Achilles, the great Homeric hero of the *Iliad*, is described as “*dios Achilleus*” or godlike Achilleus in the first few lines of the epic. Odysseus is also frequently portrayed as a divine human being: a second faster or a muscle stronger than his fellow man. These are the qualities admired by Homer: fame, honor, loyalty, courage and above all closeness to the gods. Odysseus embodies them all. And although he is very different from Achilles, he is the hero who survives. He laments not having died on the plains of Troy, for fame and legacy is as important as life itself, but he displays heroic courage in bearing all the pain and suffering after the fall of Troy. He is a great warrior and a ruthless killer. Only the people who have remained loyal to him survive. When Athena pleads for Odysseus’s life, she describes him as “...that godlike man...” (*Od.* V.13). This idea of a “godlike man” is present throughout the *Odyssey*, and it is this likeness to the gods and their favor that makes him a hero.

The idea of godliness and loyalty is also present in the *Aeneid* but it is of a different nature. Aeneas is loyal to his country to his people and to his hearth gods. He is the son of a goddess but is never spoken of as being like her. The opening lines of the *Aeneid* begin to characterize Aeneas:

I sing of warfare and a man at war.  
From the sea-coast of Troy in early days  
He came to Italy by destiny,  
To our Lavinian western shore,  
A fugitive, this captain, buffeted

Cruelly on land as on sea  
 ...  
 Till he could found a city and bring home  
 His gods to Latium, land of the Latin race,  
 The Alban lords, and the high walls of Rome. (I.1-12)

Aeneas is forever bound to his people and his hearth gods. It is his “destiny” to survive the Trojan War and establish what will become the Roman Empire. As opposed to Homer, Virgil chooses to call his hero ‘captain’ from the very outset. His hero is a leader first and an individual after. The ghost of Hector outlines Aeneas’s task as Troy is falling. He says to Aeneas:

...Give up and go child of the goddess,  
 Save yourself, out of these flames...  
 ... Her holy things, her gods  
 Of hearth and household Troy commends to you.  
 Accept them as companions for your days;  
 Go find for them the great walls that one day  
 You’ll dedicate, when you have roamed the sea. (II.387-397)

Aeneas’s mission is clear and he steers away from all potential threats to that goal.

Unlike the Greek hero, the Roman hero is not a man of passion. Instead, he is a man of the country, a statesman. Epithets like “duty-bound Aeneas”, “the public man Aeneas”, or the “great commander Aeneas” are scattered throughout this epic. In Virgil, Ulysses is often spoken of as a cunning man without any semblance of greatness. He is always set as a contrast against Aeneas even though they face many similar situations. It is not the circumstances that define the hero; rather, the hero is defined by the values of his culture and the intention of the author. Both Aeneas and Odysseus suffer throughout their respective narratives. “Sorrow too deep to tell...” (*Aen.* II. 3) begins Aeneas while narrating the fall of Troy, and Odysseus is often called “man of sorrow” or “he who has borne so much.” Yet they remain very different heroes. It is essential to know the character of Odysseus to understand Aeneas. Virgil uses Ulysses as a tool to explain his hero.

Achilles is mentioned in the *Aeneid* to a similar effect. His valor and skill are praised, while his passion and rage are held contemptible. “Why let such suffering goad

you on to fury past control...” (*Aen.* II. 780–783) Venus says to her son. There is no “fury past control” for the Roman hero. He sacrifices his person for his country and his gods. Not even excessive love is held in good stead. Speaking of Dido maddened by lust Virgil says:

What good are shrines and vows to maddened lovers?  
The inward fire eats the soft marrow away,  
And the internal wound bleeds on in silence. (IV.93–96)

As opposed to this, it is the rage of Achilles that is central to the *Iliad*. Hence, simply by mentioning Odysseus or Achilles, Virgil achieves much more than meets the eye. It is only by studying these works as a sequence that one can achieve a nuanced reading.

Walcott’s love for his people is like Aeneas’s; however, his hero is very different even though Walcott names his characters for heroes in classical epic. These borrowed names result in a direct comparison of the two in the reader’s mind which is precisely Walcott’s purpose. He wants to show that the common fisherman Achille is both like and unlike the Greek Achilles in more ways than one might think. But more importantly he wants to show that Achille is *a hero*. “Why waste lines on Achille, a shade on the sea-floor?” (Walcott 296). Because:

... History has simplified  
him. Its elegies had blinded me with the temporal  
lament for a smoky Troy.... (Walcott 297)

It is because the people of St. Lucia have been ignored by Literature and History. History, Walcott claims, has simplified or over-simplified the island and its people. He thinks that in History there is an excessive focus on fact at the expense of real life:

The factual fiction  
of textbooks, pamphlets...  
...had the affliction  
of impartiality; skirting emotion  
as a ship avoids a reef ... (Walcott 95)

According to Walcott, History cannot simply be a string of events; that would be too narrow, too flat. It must incorporate all the elements of time and space, all the players must be accounted for, everything must be dealt with in totality. He feels that

the present view of History has blinded him to the beauty and glory of his people, that he is blinded by “a lament for smoky Troy.”

Unlike Walcott, Virgil often uses his text to narrate the history of Rome from its founding to his time, recounting many great battles, counsels and generals. Roman history presented as a parade, glimpses of the future to Aeneas in the underworld. ‘This is why you must establish Rome’ is the message. All this must come to pass, but all these great deeds are contingent on Aeneas’s victory. By alluding to Virgil, Walcott refutes this ‘great man’ theory of history. For example, in the history of the Battle of Saints recounted by Walcott, Afolabe, the slave is as important as Rodney the great British naval officer:

It was then that the small admiral with a cloud  
on his head renamed Afolabe “Achilles.” (Walcott 83)

So much is said in these two lines. The slave Afolabe, is renamed “Achilles,” the name of a great hero, for indeed he has performed a heroic task by pushing a war cannon uphill – an almost superhuman feat. This Achilles, this raging Achilles, who wins wars, is not acknowledged in any history book; his name is a fiction, *he* is a fiction. All his African roots are chopped off like the roots of Philoctete’s yams.

Hence Walcott sings of these people, his people. “O open this day with the conch’s moan, Omeros” (Walcott 12). The “O” is the actual call to the muse we see in all epics. Omeros, the French name for Homer, contains this O, as well as *mer*, both the sea and mother, and *os* meaning bone. The sea is central to *Omeros*: it is the recorder and repository of History, a connection between the past, present and future, and an intimate connection to the soul of the fisherman. It is also important to note the conch’s moan. It is firstly a *moan*, a sound of pain, of a deep-seated anguish escaping the mouth. The long “O” of the invocation enacts the moan enabling the reader to hear this cry of pain. Walcott tells the reader that such is the nature of his epic; it is suffused with the pain and suffering of these fishermen who have lost their connections to the past and are apprehensively facing an unknown future.

Walcott thus gives a voice to the voiceless. He reconstitutes the reader's ideas about the hero. His hero is not a godlike individual but a common fisherman:

And I heard a hollow moan exhaled from a vase,  
not for kings floundering in lances of rain; the prose  
of abrupt fisherman cursing over canoes. (Walcott 15)

Yet one is called Hector and one Achille. They live in tin roofed huts, take showers without running water and work hard for their money. They lose the women they love, fight for what they want, are happy in the simple early morning light heading out to sea. Walcott often conflates the image of a fisherman with that of a warrior and that is the *heroic* element in these people. They are strong, proud individuals who are fighting for a place in the world. They love their island and the sea. They are loyal and brave, sons and daughters of Afolabe and his fellow slaves, wounded at their very core. They are heroes.

But these heroes are without a history. They have lost their African language and customs while Walcott personally has the privilege of education and a foreign perspective. These advantages gave him his craft while disconnecting him from his people, or so he thinks. The poem *Omeros* is in many ways autobiographical. Frequently Walcott speaks about himself through other characters who are more often than not composite characters. One such character is Achille, the main protagonist. Oftentimes one gets the feeling that Achille is Walcott; that he goes to the places Walcott cannot, and has the experiences of the common St. Lucian, experiences that Walcott's education and status disallow him. It would not be an overstatement to claim that Achille is the St. Lucian in Walcott, and that Walcott is himself a composite of two identities: a native son of the island and a western scholar and poet.

This autobiographical nature of the epic suggests that Walcott himself is the hero of this poem throughout which his voice can be heard frequently. Although we can on occasion sense that Virgil or Homer or Sophocles interpose themselves in their texts, they are never as explicitly present as Walcott is in *Omeros*. This lends the author an extra voice: that of a character. It gives him an opportunity to experience the events he is writing about. It also facilitates an explanation of the text within itself: "I shared my

wound with Philoctete”Walcott says (295), the wound of having no history, of trying to find a home, of feeling segregated, indeed, ostracized. Philoctete’s external wound is a reflection of his internal wound. Walcott says about him:

... the swelling came from the chained ankles  
of his grandfathers. Or else why was there no cure?  
That the cross he carried was not only the anchor’s  
but that of his race....(19)

Like the classical hero, Walcott’s Philoctete is in many ways a representative of all his people.

His namesake, the classical Philoctetes, makes for an interesting comparison. Again the association is a natural one because of Walcott’s choice of name. Philoctetes too is gravely wounded and is left to rot on Lemnos by Odysseus. He is in constant pain as is Walcott’s Philoctete. He is, in a way, also representative of the people; he represents the wound of everyone involved in the Trojan War, the war that ravaged victor and victim alike. The literal wound, on the other hand, is very different. Philoctetes is mortally wounded by a dangerous viper when he inadvertently steps over the shrine of a goddess. When he thinks (although mistakenly) that Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, does not know who he is, Philoctetes is enraged:

Surely I must be vile! God must have hated me  
that never a word of me, of how I live here,  
should have come home through all the land of Greece.

(Sophocles, *Philoctetes* vv.254-56)

The Greek sense of the importance of fame is evident in these lines. Of all the things Philoctetes suffers, he chooses this lack of recognition as his most grave suffering. He is consumed by self-pity and a sense of victimization.

In contrast, Walcott’s Philoctete does not blame a rusty anchor and the manacles of the past. He is very much a member of society as opposed to Sophocles’ Philoctetes. At the same time, he is frequently subjected to laughter and ridicule. Walcott’s name choice brings with it all the connotations of alienation, of victimization and a sense of hopelessness, of having no cure for a wound. Philoctete does not go fishing with



his fellow men. The scene depicting him looking on as they go out onto the ocean is very telling and sorrowful. Like his forefathers before him, he too is a victim of empire and its crimes. The entire island is in some sense a Philoctete. The pain and suffering is just as intense as in Sophocles' drama. Philoctete's wound puckers and breathes as he writhes in pain. "I will show you how it feels to live without roots" he says to his yams. In this way he transforms the classical character Philoctetes. The son of slaves wants his past back, and for that there is no cure. Thus a knowledge of Sophocles enhances the reader's understanding of Walcott's Philoctete.

Walcott, like his characters, also seeks his true past, to find his roots by reaching across time revisiting all the places relevant to his history. His journey is like Aeneas's quest for a new home, or Odysseus returning home after the war. Regarding this personal journey through the epic, *Seven Seas*, one of Walcott's narrators says:

Mark you, *he* does not go; he sends his narrator;  
 he plays tricks with time because there are two journeys  
 in every odyssey, one on worried water,  
 the other crouched motionless, without noise .  
 For both, the 'I' is a mast; ... (Walcott 291)

This self-referential nature of the poem is unique to *Omeros*. Again the word "odyssey" is used poignantly, a word in the English language but also Odysseus's epic journey. Walcott's craft is the other silent, "motionless" odyssey seen through his own eyes. And it is only through writing that the poet can find his cure. Language and poetry are his cure. It is only through writing that he realizes that his 'privileges' have only made him closer to his people. They have given him the knowledge of the great western epic and the tools of language to write for his people. The personification of Homer speaks to Walcott:

...this is what the island has meant to you,  
 why my bust spoke, why the sea-swift was sent to you:  
 to circle yourself and your island with this art. (Walcott 291)

Walcott's odyssey as a writer ends with the creation of this very epic. He again cites Homer for it is Homer who sang the greatest epics. Walcott often uses the image of the sea-swift in varying forms, like a companion, like a muse, like an observer and

here like a herald. The images of Rumor, Iris, Hermes, the seven Muses immediately flash in one's mind. This is how Walcott wants us to read, to notice that no other epic talks back to the author. Like an Escher painting he writes about writing.

Derek Walcott the character ultimately comes back to St. Lucia and sees her in her own light without a shadow; as a singular entity without the burden of any past. As T. S. Eliot says in his Fourth Quartet "Little Gidding":

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

At the end of his odyssey Walcott sees his home and his people differently. The frequent comparison between the white Helen and black Helen ends. He sees that they are different beings that cannot be compared. The island is also a Helen, traded between the British and the French. Much like the black Helen, it too cannot be compared to anything. Walcott says that "These Helens are different creatures"

one marble, one ebony. One unknots a belt  
of yellow cotton slowly from her shelving waist,  
one cord of purple wool. (313)

Thus he emerges from the "smoky lament for Troy" and sees a new light. His Achille and Philoctete also try to find a new home, a place less spoiled by commercialism, but they return home with the same feeling we sense in Eliot: the idea of "seeing something for the first time." Walcott reworks the idea of home and its perception in classical epic. Although the place itself has not altered drastically, the author's vision has. It is Walcott's understanding of the island and its people that allows him to see it anew. The knowledge of the classical epic similarly augments our understanding of the poem and fine-tunes our sensibilities to match the author's.

At the end of the poem Walcott summarizes much of what he says in the last book:

I sang of quiet Achille, Afolabe's son,

who never ascended in an elevator,  
 who had no passport, since the horizon needs none,  
 never begged nor borrowed, was nobody's waiter,  
 whose end, when it comes, will be a death by water  
 (which is not for this book, which will remain unknown  
 and unread by him). (320)

These lines pull together all the threads in Walcott's poem. Such is my hero, he says; he is a son of the soil, a proud humble fisherman, who sadly will never read this poem. But that is alright. He is heroic in his own right. He loves Helen – both of them. He is a good man. At Hector's funeral he pays his respects to his "brother." He is loyal to his craft and knows its importance. He respects the sea and fishes for only as much as he needs. He is not a profit monger; he hates the westernization of his island. Walcott's Achille is the fisherman Achilles. But he is also the son of a slave. He is black, without his African roots. At the same time he relentlessly tries to find and preserve them. History will not remember him as the greatest warrior that ever lived, or the greatest fisherman. Walcott chooses to remember Achille as a good man.

Walcott's heroes can thus be seen both as parodies of the classical and their transformations. In either case, these heroes must be seen as a continuation of a theme. Walcott and his classical counterparts use their memory, history and language in their work. Invoking the name of Achilles and Hector, Walcott calls for the intermingling of the classical and the modern. He also does something exceptional: he gives the reader *a new reading* of classic literature. Because of Walcott's analysis, his treatment of Homer, Virgil, Sophocles and others, the reader gets a fuller understanding of not just *Omeros* but of *all the texts* he uses. Walcott says to Homer:

I have always heard  
 your voice in that sea, master, ...  
 "I was the freshest of your readers". (283)

Walcott revisits the ancient and *rediscovers* it. That is his brilliance. The poet gives us a different and in some sense fuller understanding of the classical hero caught in the human condition – a new reading of the story written on the "parchment of the sea":

The ocean had no memory... It never altered its metre  
 to suit the age, a wide page without metaphors.  
 Our last resort as much as yours, *Omeros*. (Walcott 296)

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# MANEUVER POLITICS AND WARFARE: CHURCHILL'S TRIUMPH IN MAY 1940

Dan Mazzella

**Sir Humphrey:** “There is the excuse we used for the Munich Agreement: It occurred before certain important facts were known, and couldn’t happen again.”

**Jim Hacker:** “What important facts?”

**Sir Humphrey:** “Well, that Hitler wanted to conquer Europe.”

**Jim Hacker:** “I thought that everybody knew that.”

**Sir Humphrey:** “Not the Foreign Office.”

Quote from BBC show *Yes, Minister*

Winston Churchill became Prime Minister [PM] of England on 10 May 1940, the same day Germany launched its invasion of France and the Low Countries. Over the next two months, nearly everything that could have gone wrong did: Belgium, France and the Netherlands capitulated; Italy joined the war on Germany’s side; and the British Expeditionary force was shorn of everything save its men in a hurried evacuation. In such a bleak environment, the Dunkirk evacuation seemed a colossal victory, though, in truth, it was a Pyrrhic victory at best. For, as Churchill soberly said, “wars are not won by evacuations.”

Domestically, Churchill needed to deal with more immediately dangerous trouble prompted by the disasters in France. His hold on power was tenuous at best

in May of 1940 – his apotheosis into the epitome of all that was good and British had not yet occurred – and the possibility of him being deposed was all too real. He had no real political base upon which to rest his premiership. The Conservative party, which held an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons, distrusted Churchill and still preferred their party leader and had recently deposed Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain. Within the all-important five-man War Cabinet, he could count only on his two Labourite colleagues, Clement Atlee and Arthur Greenwood, and not his two fellow Conservatives, Lord Halifax and Neville Chamberlain – both of whom were immensely powerful and whose dissent or resignation could have fatally wounded his premiership, the first as Foreign Minister and Conservative party pillar, and the second as the former PM and head of the Conservative Party.

In this environment Churchill fought, and won, two duels: the first against Lord Halifax and the defeatists who sought some accommodation with Hitler; the second against Hitler and the full force of the seemingly invincible Nazi war machine. Had he failed in either duel, Britain and the whole of Western resistance would have been lost, the Soviet position made utterly untenable in the long-term, and the world would have been cast into a new Nazi dark age. Winston Churchill played the part of a tightrope walker with no safety net, with Hitler on one arm and Lord Halifax on the other working to destabilize him.

How then did Churchill manage this fantastic double feat? By being an absolute genius, abandoning all impulsiveness and rashness that heretofore characterized his political behavior; by being blessed with an enemy in Halifax that was self-limiting; by understanding his enemy in Hitler better than anyone else; by being unassailably honest and optimistic in public and, in so doing inspiring his people; by understanding the full breadth of consequences for his actions; and by simply being lucky.

The likelihood of France falling to the Germans was apparent to Churchill by Friday 24 May 1940. The great preponderance of the British Expeditionary Forces

[BEF] was by now corralled in a small and ever shrinking pocket on the channel coast between Boulogne, Calais and Dunkirk. The possibility of evacuating Dunkirk as it happened historically was viewed to be nearly impossible. Churchill himself believed that perhaps only 50,000 of the more than 350,000 British and French soldiers could be saved. With this backdrop, the marathon of War cabinet meetings began.

Most of these cabinet meetings, particularly the later ones on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> focused on the Churchill-Halifax division. As they progressed, the conflict went from shadow boxing to open conflict. Halifax's position simply stated was to, via the Italian Ambassador Bastianini, attempt to persuade Benito Mussolini, the fascist dictator of Italy, to organize and mediate a general European settlement. This settlement would essentially cede to Hitler control of continental Europe while maintaining British independence, even at the cost of some territory in one of the far-flung corners of the Empire. In essence, his chosen path was one of surrender.

Churchill's position, even more simply stated, was to fight to the death, and not to seek terms at all with the Germans - via the Italians or any other intermediary. In agreement with Churchill were the two Labourites, Atlee and Greenwood, but at the time they were not the best of allies as they were new to the government and more inclined to listen than to argue actively for any position. The key player that sat on the fence, or even leaned toward the Halifax position initially, was Neville Chamberlain, and the outcome of this critical debate (and the war for Britain) depended upon whose position he ultimately came to support.

Halifax's position was predicated on the belief that Britain could not win, or fight to any effect, alone. The key problem for Churchill was that this idea was not at all unreasonable. If the worst-case scenario, with France falling and the BEF being destroyed in Dunkirk (a very real possibility during those key days), came to pass, Britain could not realistically hope to win the war alone. To quote Halifax's biographer, Andrew Roberts, "there was nothing particularly patriotic in adopting a 'death or glory' attitude if the odds were on the former, anymore than there was anything treacherous about attempting honourably to shorten a war Britain was

clearly losing.” (Roberts 226) Again, this view was entirely reasonable. Halifax was by no means a fringe kook; he was a serious minded and intelligent man who prided himself on logical thinking and frequently criticized Churchill for possessing what he perceived as a “turbulent” mind.

Churchill’s mind was not at all turbulent during these days however. It was clearly focused on countering in every way the foundation of Halifax’s argument. Anticipating some form of Halifax-esque defeatism, Churchill had requested that the British joint chiefs review the ability of Britain to continue the war in the event that France and Belgium capitulated, most of the BEF was lost, and Italy joined against Britain. Their 25 May report entitled “Britain Strategy in a Certain Eventuality” was a Godsend for Churchill’s position: “even in [the above] conditions Britain could hold out, *if* the United States would support Britain increasingly, and *if* the Royal Air Force, together with the navy, would remain in control over Britain and thus ‘prevent Germany from carrying out a serious sea-borne invasion of this country’” (Lukacs 107).

This paper was soon circulated throughout the war cabinet on 26 May, but was not fully digested until later. Halifax himself initially misunderstood the report and believed that Britain’s “ability to carry on the war single-handed against Germany would depend on the main on our being able to establish and maintain air superiority over the Germans” (Lukacs 110). The chief of air staff present at the meeting immediately corrected Halifax stating that he had the matter backwards, and that Britain must prevent the Germans from acquiring superiority, not the other way around. In his erroneous statement there is the implicit assumption that the Germans *already* possessed air superiority over Britain. Halifax’s misunderstanding here was indicative of his belief that the British position was hopeless. When the document was fully understood by the cabinet, it certainly helped to counter one of the basic tenets of Halifax’s position.

Even with this document in support of his position, Churchill realized that he still did not possess the power to shut down Halifax’s suggestions completely.



Realizing this, Churchill offered some concessions to Halifax, allowing him to draw up his “Suggested Approach to Signor Mussolini”, stating that he would be willing to entertain terms if they preserved “the essentials and the elements of our vital strength, even at the cost of some territory.” He then added the caveat that he did not believe such terms would be offered. This was, as Lukacs says, an extraordinary statement on the part of Churchill, but it was not a reflection of what he truly believed. It was all a ploy to buy time to shore up his position. Also at this meeting, he won approval to allow Archibald Sinclair, the secretary of state for air, head of the Liberal party, and a reliable Churchillian, to be present at the next war cabinet meeting. He was, essentially packing the cabinet with his supporters.

By now, late in the day of Sunday 26 May, Chamberlain was on the fence between the Halifax and Churchill positions. He was slowly moving away from Halifax and towards Churchill as evidenced by his diary entries from that night:

The PM disliked any move toward Musso. It was incredible that Hitler would consent to any terms that we could accept – though if we could get out of this jam by giving up Malta & Gibraltar & some African colonies he would jump at it... I supported this view, Atlee said hardly anything but seemed to be with Winston... We hear that Hitler had told Mussolini that he does not want him in as he can manage France by himself. If so, he evidently cannot be bought off. (Lukacs 120)

Clearly, Chamberlain was beginning to understand, as Churchill did, that a suitable negotiated peace with Hitler was nearly impossible. Aside from this, Chamberlain and Churchill were moving closer personally. Since the beginning of his premiership Churchill had been treating Chamberlain with an astounding degree of deference in allowing him to continue living at No. 10 Downing Street, allowing him to run the government in Winston’s absence, and clearing decisions with him (e.g. asking Lloyd George to join the war cabinet). I do not believe this kindness and respect from Churchill was forgotten by Chamberlain, and did, in part, assist in Chamberlain coming around to support Churchill. Again, during these days, Winston was focused and incredibly careful. He realized Chamberlain’s importance and worked to secure his support in every way available to him.

At the next war cabinet meeting on 27 May Churchill began to disassemble another tenet of Halifax's position: that an approach via Italy or any other intermediary would not cause any harm. The minutes state: "he [Churchill] was convinced of the futility of an approach to Italy at this time. Being in a tight corner, any weakness on our part would encourage the Germans and the Italians, and it would *tend to undermine the morale* [italics mine] both in this country and in the dominions" (Lukacs 147). Churchill was not only thinking of the British people and the dominions when he said this. It was also essential that nothing be done to undermine Roosevelt's perception of the British will to fight. If word were to get out that the British were indeed seeking terms, their position would be fatally compromised, and the defeatists proven right. They would no longer be able to say convincingly that they were committed to victory whatever the cost. He was backed by Sinclair, Greenwood and Atlee in this statement. When pressed by Halifax further, Churchill continued:

At the moment our prestige in Europe was very low. The only way we could get it back was by showing the world that Germany had not beaten us. If, after two or three months, we could show that we were still unbeaten, our prestige would return. Even if we were beaten, we should be no worse off than we should be if we were now to abandon the struggle. Let us therefore avoid being dragged down the slippery slope with France. The whole of this manouvre was intended to get so deeply involved in negotiations that we should be unable to turn back... The approach proposed was not only futile, but involved us in deadly danger. (Lukacs 149)

A, by now, slightly exasperated Halifax then more directly asked if Churchill would entertain *any* terms. Winston did not answer with a simple no, but stated that he would not seek terms, but if offered he would consider them. He answered in this way because he was not yet entirely sure of Chamberlain's support, and wished, for the time being, to sound moderate, again, to buy time. At this point Halifax appears to have reached his limit and asked Churchill to take a walk with him in the garden.

What transpired during this garden walk is unknown. I believe Halifax, being exasperated, threatened to resign. This, then, was perhaps the most critical time for Churchill during these days. If Halifax were to resign it could still cause irreparable

harm to the government, and perhaps even topple Churchill. In any event, Halifax's resignation would have shaken confidence in the British government and made the business of remaining in the war appreciably more difficult.

I am tempted to believe that Churchill may have said something akin to what Lloyd George said to the leaders of the 1926 General strike: "For, if a force arises in the state which is stronger than the state itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the state, or withdraw and accept the authority of the state. Gentlemen – have you considered, and if you have, are you ready?" (Arnstein 306) If Halifax did resign, and thereby toppled the Churchill government, he would likely be forced into becoming Prime Minister himself. Halifax, unlike Churchill, had a solid base of support within the Conservative party and was a favorite of the king. He was, in fact, the preferred candidate on 10 May to replace Chamberlain. He had the opportunity offered to him on a silver platter, and he declined it on the technical reason of his being a Lord.

The question then arises: would Halifax have accepted being Prime Minister under any circumstances? I believe the answer to this is no. Halifax was, in the end, self-limiting and not willing to go all the way. He was a deeply religious man to whom the very idea of being a wartime Prime Minister, presiding over the death and destruction of his country and fellow subjects, was abhorrent. It was frequently commented that he would have preferred being a bishop than anything else. It is important to note what Halifax's motivations were throughout this ordeal. He was motivated not by ambition, but out of patriotism and a desire to see the Britain he loved preserved intact. Jenkins offers an interesting insight in his biography of Churchill:

He [Halifax] had a resigned desire to preserve as much as he could of the England that he knew and loved. There is a story, maybe only *ben trovato*, that he went to Garrowby, the lesser of his two Yorkshire houses, on one of the perfect spring weekends of the year. On the Saturday evening he sat on the terrace looking out over the smiling Vale of York and decided that his primary duty was to preserve as much of that as was humanly possible: the landscape, the ordered hierarchal society, the freedom from oppression or vulgar ostentation.

All these various factors attracted him to the possibility of a negotiated peace. It would mean Nazi dominance in Europe and acceptance by the British that their attempt to check Hitler had been a failure. *But the Vale of York would be left alone* [my italics]. (Jenkins 599-601)

Indeed, he did do all that was possible within his limits to persuade the war cabinet to accept and enact his position. He did all that he did out of a belief that a prolongation of the war would destroy Britain. Was he wrong on this last point? Perhaps not considering the heavy cost Britain paid during the five years of German bombing. Coventry was leveled as was London and countless other towns and cities in Britain. The Britain he knew and loved was severely damaged and changed, but his belief, that through a settlement with Hitler his Britain would have been preserved, was wishful thinking at best.

The finale to this marathon of war cabinet meetings came on 28 May. At this meeting Churchill finally, fully, and completely rejected the Halifax position point-by-point:

If we once got to the table, we should find that the terms offered us touched our independence and integrity. When, at that point, we got up to leave the Conference-table, we should find that all force of resolution, which were not at our disposal would have disappeared... It was impossible to imagine that Herr Hitler would be so foolish as to let us continue our rearmament. In effect, his terms would put us completely at his mercy. We should get no worse terms if we went on fighting, even if we were beaten, than were upon to us now. If, however, we continued the war and Germany attacked us, no doubt we would suffer some damage, but they would also suffer severe losses. (Lukacs 181-182)

Shortly thereafter, Neville Chamberlain echoed a statement that Churchill had made the previous day: "on a dispassionate survey, it was right to remember the alternative to fighting on nevertheless involved a considerable gamble" (Lukacs 182). When Churchill heard this he surely knew that he had finally triumphed. The subsequent outer cabinet meeting during which his position was unanimously and enthusiastically accepted was icing on the cake.

At the same time that Churchill was dueling with Halifax, he was also fighting

a related duel with Hitler. If Churchill had lost the first duel with Halifax, he would have also lost the second duel with Hitler by consequence. Victory for Churchill in this second duel depended upon him not flinching (i.e. seeking peace) in the face of whatever Hitler threw at him. With an ostensibly united war cabinet backing him, British survival was predicated on two key points as stated in the 25 May joint chiefs report: first, that the Royal Air Force [RAF] and Royal Navy maintain control of the skies above and the seas around Britain to prevent a sea-borne German invasion; second, that the United States would support Britain increasingly. The fulfillment of the second point necessitated that the first one be accomplished beyond any doubt, that Britain maintain a united front committed to remaining in the war, and that the BEF would be extricated from France as completely as possible.

The extrication of the BEF was accomplished, in part, thanks to a stroke of luck. On 24 May Hitler issued a halt order to his armies around the Dunkirk pocket. This order was handed down for largely military reasons, namely, to allow the logistical support columns to catch up and to allow the men and machines to recoup lest they be worn out. The order was lifted on 26 May, but these two days, coupled with blessedly calm seas, gave the British and French enough time to organize a defense around the embarkation points and to begin evacuating in earnest. By the end of the evacuation, Operation Dynamo, on 4 June upwards of 335,000 British and French soldiers had been rescued. Over the following months these men were rearmed, and formed the core of a new British defense force prepared to meet a German invasion of England should it come, and later to fight the Germans on the continent once more.

Meanwhile, in the skies above Dunkirk the RAF received its first major test versus the Luftwaffe. As per Hermann Goering's orders, the Luftwaffe flew countless sorties to obliterate the trapped soldiers on the beaches, and prevent the evacuation from occurring. In this the RAF thwarted them. Despite being outnumbered by a factor of three to one, the RAF managed to maintain air superiority over Dunkirk and exact heavy losses upon the Germans. Over the entire Dunkirk episode the RAF destroyed 394 German aircraft at a cost of 114 of their own (Gilbert 655). As an indicator of what could be expected when the air war came to Britain itself, this was

extremely heartening to the British. Churchill made much of it in his 18 June speech, and offered an optimistic and reasonable prediction of the future:

In the defense of this Island the advantages to the defenders will be much greater than they were in the fighting around Dunkirk. We hope to improve on the rate of three or four to one which was realized at Dunkirk; and in addition all our injured machines and their crews which get down safely – and, surprisingly, a very great many injured machines and men do get down safely in modern air fighting – all of these will fall, in an attack upon these Islands, on friendly soil and live to fight another day; whereas all the injured enemy machines and their complements will be total losses as far as the war is concerned. (Cannadine 173)

His assessment of what would come to be known as the Battle of Britain was spot on. All German losses over Britain were irrevocable whereas a British loss was not. British pilots could be saved to fight another day, and coupled with an ever-increasing number of pilots and available aircraft, the British position became steadily stronger while the German Luftwaffe was bled white. These speeches filled with good sense and honest optimism, first heard in the House of Commons and then heard throughout Britain and the occupied territories via the BBC, helped to steel British morale in the face of the German onslaught.

Additional contributing factors that would lead to a British air victory that Churchill could not divulge at the time included early radar and the German code decrypts coming out of Bletchley Park. These two secret advantages usually allowed the RAF to have advanced warning of any German attack, and already be airborne and waiting for the German aircraft. Consequently, the RAF was not destroyed on the tarmac as the Soviet air force was in the early days of Operation Barbarossa. With these advantages Britain was able to maintain air superiority over the British Isles, thereby dashing any hopes Hitler had of being able to launch a successful invasion. Without air superiority the Germans could not reasonably hope to defeat the Royal Navy or transport men and materiel across the channel reliably, as a proper invasion would require.

British survival was not a lost cause. Surviving and resisting the Germans indefinitely was not victory, however. For victory, Churchill understood that the

support of the United States was essential. His speech of 4 June stated this fact plainly:

We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old. (Cannadine 165)

And then on 18 June he stated the vital importance of this survival, and specifically and publicly said that not even the United States would be safe in the event of a Nazi victory:

Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age, made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will say, "This was their finest hour." (Cannadine 177-178)

These public statements concerning the United States served as a complement to what was being said privately between Roosevelt and Churchill. Churchill had been corresponding directly with Roosevelt since he had returned to office as First Lord of the Admiralty in September of 1939. The overall theme of this communication was that Britain would indeed fight to the death, but that if Britain should fail in this endeavor, the Germans would be unstoppable. Churchill played a brilliant trump card in a Friday 24 May message to Roosevelt:

If members of the present administration were finished and others came to parley amid the ruins, you must not be blind to the fact that the sole remaining bargaining counter with Germany would be the fleet, and if this country was left by the United States to its fate no one would have the right to blame those responsible if they made the best terms they could for the surviving inhabitants. Excuse me, Mr. President for putting this nightmare bluntly. Evidently I could not answer for my successors

who in utter despair and helplessness might well have to accommodate themselves to the German will. (Lukacs 73)

Essentially, if Britain were defeated due to lack of American support, the Royal Navy, presently acting as a sort of stopper on German expansionism overseas, would be lost. Should this occur, the security of the United States would be severely compromised. In his 18 June speech (quoted above) Churchill stated this fact publicly. Both, the 4 June and 18 June speeches were directed not only at the British people, but also at the American government. Once more Churchill had honed in on precisely who and what was important and was using every means at his disposal to win.

Over the next few months the defeat of Halifax, the presentation of a united front within the British government, the continued successful struggle against Germany in the air, and the miracle of Dunkirk all worked to confound the predictions of the defeatists. The private correspondence between Roosevelt and Churchill, coupled with the above, eventually brought about the first concrete sign of what the 25 May report said was essential to survival and ultimate victory: that “the United States would support Britain increasingly.” On 2 September 1940 Britain and the US concluded the “Destroyers for Bases Agreement,” a boon to the British cause. From this first agreement American support of Britain steadily grew with Lend-Lease beginning in March 1941, and America joining forces with Britain in December 1941. With this beginning of American support Churchill won the critical early phase of his duel with Hitler.

Churchill’s victories against Halifax (and defeatism in general) and Hitler saved Western civilization as we know it. Had he not been present, or had he faltered at any point, the war would have been lost. Like a set of dominos, the remainder of the world would have fallen. First Britain in 1940, then Russia in 1941, and so on until none remained to offer resistance. As John Lukacs correctly pointed out, Hitler would never again be so near to a complete victory. His next and final opportunity to snatch victory would come in November-December of 1941 before the gates of Moscow,



but here too he failed precisely because Churchill had the audacity to stand up to Hitler despite the odds, and refused to back down regardless of the cost during those five critical months from May to September 1940.

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S Y M P O S I U M

# THE DELIBERATELY ANONYMOUS ESSAY

Pranay Sinha

That civilisation may not sink,  
Its great battle lost,  
Quiet the dog, tether the pony  
To a distant post;  
Our master Caesar is in the tent  
Where the maps are spread,  
His eyes fixed upon nothing,  
A hand under his head.

*Like a long-legged fly upon the stream  
His mind moves upon silence.*

from “Long-legged Fly” by W.B. Yeats

Don't you think people spend too much time worrying about things that don't affect them? Worse, they spend the rest of their time worrying and speculating on where they will be a few years from now. All they achieve in the process is being mentally absent from their own lives since they live in the past or the future, not in the present! Additionally, I feel these speculative endeavours are profoundly unproductive. I'll specify why in a bit. You're about to read some musings inspired by the muse that

inspired “the fuzzy logic washing machines”: weather.

Sounds as boring as interviewing a sloth? It isn't! I speak of the butterfly effect—a notorious derivative of Chaos theory that can be described as the sensitivity of a non-linear dynamical system to its initial conditions. You must have heard that a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can initiate atmospheric changes that can potentially culminate in a tornado in Texas a month after the first flap. Since human life is about as dynamic and non-linear, after a fashion, as it gets, Chaos theory is an interesting frame of reference for these musings.

It was a distractingly boring evening in 1961 when Edward Lorenz – a meteorologist with the heart of a mathematician – decided to review some singularly unexciting weather patterns. Instead of beginning at the beginning, he decided to take a short cut and begin at the middle. He punched in the relevant parameter (0.506) and trotted off for a short snack. When he returned, he was shocked to find that the computer-generated pattern bore no resemblance to the one he was interested in. After despairing over the temperamental nature of his computer, he realized that this difference was due to his abbreviated use of the full value (0.506127) because he considered the 0.000127 difference insignificant. This incident illustrated the influence and the sensitivity of the initial conditions in non-linear dynamical systems and put Lorenz on a trail that led to Chaos theory, and also to the fuzzy logic washing machines that give you cleaner, less tangled laundry by regulating the bubbles and the wobble in the machine. In addition, he also concluded something that I'll talk about at the end of the essay.

Now let's play god for an instant and create a non-linear dynamical, chaotic system of a student applying for a transfer admission.

The student sits leaning over a paper. Indeed, you can almost hear the brain buzzing as it considers one topic after another. I'll desist from naming the student, specifying gender and describing physical characteristics since that may influence your reading of this essay. After all, this is the beginning, and initial conditions matter

according to Chaos theory. For instance, if you share the random name I would have assigned the student you would have identified with him and perhaps even sympathized with his application. Alternatively, if you happen to loathe a person by that name, you might be less sympathetic. These are only two of the innumerable possibilities (read initial conditions) that could have been set in motion by the simple assigning of a name to the student. For a similar reason, I have been deliberately unspecific regarding the student's sex and physical attributes. Conversely, utilizing this unorthodox approach with respect to the protagonist may also influence your perception of the student. For instance, it may just alienate the character and prevent you from being empathetic. However, returning to the point, this anonymous person is applying to a college and is presently attempting to write an application essay. Like the student's name, the colleges will also be left unnamed. Let's just say the person is at X university and wants to apply to an ivy league college Y.

Let's consider his/her application. The topic itself would have a considerable influence on the initial conditions. In extreme conditions, it could either deeply impress or clinically depress the admissions officers. It probably lies somewhere in between these two extremes and thus could leave the officer, mildly bemused, moderately amused, slightly intrigued or plagued with a headache. In addition to this decidedly strong determinant of the initial conditions, there exist other factors such as the quality of the grammar, typographical errors, and the tone and length of the essay. For instance, a misspelling of 'is' as 'si' could potentially provoke an unfavourable reaction from the admissions officer and influence his decision regarding the student's admission.

Essentially, numerous seemingly insignificant and unnoticed factors can influence the fate of this application and indeed the direction of the student's life. An important aspect of Chaos theory that deserves mention here is that no factor is too small to produce a drastic change within the system. This is exemplified by the seemingly negligible butterfly whose innocent shenanigans could theoretically cause devastating losses worth millions of dollars in another continent. In my opinion, this is applicable to our lives as well. Countless unnoticed and apparently insignificant and negligible

factors end up molding our lives and, indeed, the fates of populations, ecosystems, biospheres, nations, galaxies and the universe.

Returning to the saga of the student's application to college Y, if we keep things simple, there are basically two decisions that the student can receive: yes or no. Let's consider the ramifications of these decisions.

**Acceptance:** Acceptance at Y is the product of the series of events initiated by the student's application. Once the student arrives at Y, events may unfold along several disparate trajectories. Numerous factors will shape the student's college experience at Y and his life's direction after graduation. Some of these factors are academic rigor, interaction with professors, student debt accrued, circle of friends, and unfortunate happenings like losing room keys. For lack of space and to avoid unnecessary complexity, I'll create a secondary stage of the system using only two possible outcomes of the student's admission to Y. Let's select the factor of academic rigor and consider the various possibilities of this factor. Here's the hypothetical situation: The student goes to Y and the academic rigor is greater than expected. Consequently, the student gets an undesirable grade on the first examination. Again the specific grade that the student earns also matters according to Chaos theory, since it is part of the initial conditions of the secondary stage of this chaotic system.

In one scenario, the student could get discouraged and the despair could result in the formation of a positive feedback mechanism. In other words, failure could result in a vicious cycle of unsatisfactory performances. This has the potential to spawn more possibilities. For instance, the student could get discouraged and drop out of Y. Alternatively, the student could change his/her major and find success or failure in that new subject. Again, numerous factors like personality strength, peer support, the support of a boyfriend or girlfriend, instructor support, quality of tutoring, familial pressures and expectations could mold the system and result in disparate outcomes.

Conversely, in the second scenario, the initial success could potentially impassion the student to persevere and perform better. This could result in graduation summa

cum laude. Alternatively, after the initial success, the student could get carried away by the success and get lax with academic work once again. The previously mentioned factors and additional unmentioned ones could also influence this scenario and bring an astounding variability in the result.

**Rejection:** Now let's investigate the second possible fate of the application: rejection. If we keep the secondary system variable, academic rigor, the same, we will probably have vastly different outcomes.

In the first scenario, the rejection weighs heavily on the student who loses self esteem, and despite the fact that the academics are not too demanding, lack of self esteem results in grades plummeting like Galileo's cannonballs. This could either result in a vicious cycle or inspire the student to regroup and produce a stellar academic performance. As seen above in the acceptance scenario, academic success could also result in a variety of outcomes as influenced by the multitude of factors mentioned and not mentioned above.

In another scenario, the rejection leaves the student unfazed due to upbringing, personality, friend support, faculty support, and girlfriend/boyfriend support. The student goes on to perform brilliantly and is widely considered the smartest thing since Einstein. Consequently, the student gets brilliant recommendations, lands a coveted job and achieves the American dream...or not. Factors like, immigration Visa status, poor interpersonal skills, death, accident while returning from a party to celebrate the last 4.0 semester could foil the student's plans.

I find it astounding to look back at this point and think about the numerous possibilities spawned by the variation of a single factor. And this astonishment, like *Escherichia coli* in a cosy, well-stocked Petri-dish, grows exponentially when I realize that I had not even considered the possible variations produced by the numerous factors that I had listed and left undiscussed in each scenario. Indeed, comprehending the sheer multitude, scale and the range of all possible variables is sadly beyond my comprehension. Indeed, omniscience is prerequisite to understanding and to being

unfazed by the underlying chaos of life that is parented by all sorts of invisible factors.

The incomprehensibility of these variables reminds me of the non-linearity and the dynamic nature of the physical world around us. It is frequently ignored and neglected in human calculations in order to make life, predictions and calculations easier. We see this in such constants as the ideal gas law, friction equations, and the kinetic theory of gases. However, this ease comes at the cost of accuracy and precision. Indubitably you have been at the edge of your seat to read Lorenz's conclusions. Here it is: long term weather predictions are usually wildly inaccurate because very minor influences in the atmosphere can culminate in very dramatic and unexpected changes that ring the death knell for distant-future weather forecasts.

I believe that a twin death knell has also been rung for the human tendency to make accurate guesstimates about the future based on only a handful of factors. One such example is, "I'll be happy and satisfied if I get a million dollars." Numerous examples to the contrary testify that this is not an enduring axiom. One may argue that we can predict the final state of one's life: death. In response, I'd like to compare a human life to a cup containing hot cappuccino cooling down to room temperature. In this system, the cooling occurs mainly due to chaotic convection currents within the cup. While we know that the system will come to rest at room temperature, we won't be able to predict the temperature of the cup fifty-six seconds from now. This lack of predictability applies to human life as well. I am certain that Aeschylus had no inkling that a bird of prey would drop a turtle on his head and kill him.

Speaking of Aeschylus, let us consider his image of the net of life in which all actions, big or small, are related and produce an equal and opposite force and influence upon each other. For instance, Iphigenia's sacrifice led to events that led to Cassandra's death. Even though she could see her death coming, Cassandra couldn't do much to escape the tangled net of occurrences that entraps all mankind.

Lastly, sensitivity to initial conditions is also seen in Yeats' poem, "Long-legged Fly." To take one of the cited examples, if the dog had barked, Caesar could have



made a mistake in his military decisions and it's not hard to imagine how that would have altered the history of the world. Thus, in conclusion, I want to urge you to enjoy the moment and to avoid pinning your hopes, desires and happiness on one single object since nothing can single-handedly change your destiny. A chaotic symphony of factors influences your life, will influence it in the future and is influencing you right now even as you finish reading this essay.

S Y M P O S I U M

SHAKESPEARE'S OVIDIAN  
*TITUS ANDRONICUS*:  
 ROMAN MASCULINITY AS  
 CONSTRUCTED BY LAVINIA

Jillian Ryan

In *Titus Andronicus*, his first revenge tragedy, Shakespeare constructs what appears to be a masculine plot about Roman values, war, blood and honor. This, however, is merely the foreground, which shields the complexity of the play. A more focused examination of the text reveals the Ovidian nature of the work which demonstrates that behind the centrality of a male dominated patriarchy of Rome, one can find the hidden idea that silently lies in the female entity of Lavinia, Titus's daughter, around whom the entire play operates. The men of *Titus Andronicus* fight for control of Lavinia because it is through her womb that the future of Rome can remain in their power and can thus be perpetuated. Her womb, a vast hole of dark empty space, must remain pure if it is to be of any value to the men who wish to utilize it or destroy it to further their own purpose. Lavinia, therefore, despite the fact that she is silenced through her rape and used as a pawn for males in this tragedy, is the central figure quietly dominating the background of *Titus Andronicus*. Consequently, with Ovidian influence, Shakespeare tells the story of the used woman – an aspect of the action which is seldom revealed or mentioned in a world constructed and dominated by men.

In his *Metamorphoses*, Ovid is very concerned with pointing to that which is not spoken of. His epic poem contains myth after myth of women being used and raped by more powerful men. In each of these stories, Ovid hints that behind the surface of male domination, there is the perspective of the silenced female that must be told. Although the surface of the *Metamorphoses* presents tales of male centrality, Ovid points to the story that has not been told, the women who have been silenced and not given the chance to speak. Ovid's epic presents a plurality in which the reader must see that what is *not* visible is what is truly the most important. What has been hidden by male patriarchy is empty space and this emptiness is woman, a gender that has been dismissed as inferior. And so, much as Ovid illustrates through his *Metamorphoses*, Shakespeare conveys through *Titus Andronicus* that negative space and emptiness speak volumes. Yet no one listens. It is assumed that males have the right to interpret the blanks and fill them in. Those silenced can only be heard once it is understood that this negative background matter is a necessary condition for the foreground to exist.

In the male dominated forefront, Titus is the central unit and protagonist of *Titus Andronicus*, and he is very much concerned with his honor, patriarchal order and the purity of his family name. However, his entire role in the play is not dependent on himself, but is instead constructed around Lavinia. She is the source of all conflict within the play. For example, to see Lavinia's centrality that is masked by Titus's stage presence one must examine the connection between Titus's family tomb, the five hundred year old vestibule of past Andronici nobility, and Lavinia's womb, the nurturing environment that will create the future Andronici. Both tomb and womb are Ovidian and are of utmost importance to *Titus Andronicus* as a whole, and yet internally they consist of empty, hollow spaces. Still, they mean so much more than their negative insides, for Titus is obsessed with controlling and keeping them both pure, no matter what the cost. Shakespeare stresses Titus's maniacal need to regulate them. Treating them as though they were an extension of his own body, Titus is unconcerned with what the impact of his actions will be for his other family members. To him these spaces represent all that is honorable and Roman in the Andronici family name: in their emptiness they contain the past, present and future of his lineage.

An illustration of Titus's obsession is his disposal of his daughter Lavinia. Once Saturninus is named Roman Emperor, Titus announces that he will grant him Lavinia's hand in marriage because it is the noble thing to do. Here, Titus is using his daughter as a bartering tool and commodity that will give him and his name longevity and respect in the Roman world. Lavinia's womb will not only belong to Titus, but upon intercourse with Saturninus, it will belong to Rome and will give rise to future generations of Andronici and Roman male greatness. Uncaring about the wants of his daughter, Titus passes her along to the man who will render him the most honor. He exploits Lavinia to gain imperial favor (Kahn 51). The empty female womb serves merely to create more men. This fact is also illustrated by the absence of Lavinia's mother: this unnamed and unseen woman who gave birth to all twenty five of the Andronici sons and the one daughter was apparently only needed for her womb. Once she produced Lavinia, another female with another womb, she had served her purpose.

Titus's son Martius disagrees with his father's actions; he speaks for Lavinia who is happily betrothed to Saturninus's brother Bassianus and drags her away from the scene: "Brothers, help to convey her hence away, / And with my sword I'll keep this door safe" (I.i, 291-292). Although Lavinia does not assert her unwillingness to marry Saturninus, Martius does and hence stands up to his father and threatens to cause damage to what Titus obsesses about the most: his treasure of the preserved sanctity of the Andronici. After Titus slays his son, he refuses to grant his dead body entrance into the hollow and empty depths of the tomb, declaring that only those worthy will be buried there: "Here none but soldiers and Rome servitors/ Repose in fame; none basely slain in brawls" (I.i, 357-358). The tomb must therefore be kept pure and dignified because to Titus it indicates more than a burial ground. Coppelia Kahn, a Shakespearean scholar who holds that the masculine world of Roman Shakespeare is constructed around the women of the plays, writes: "The tomb thus represents not simply the continuity of the family so much as the subordination of the family to the military needs of the state" (Kahn 52). Service to Rome and the military protection of the empire are Titus's main concerns.

Titus's obsession with the purity of his tomb is directly connected with the

purity of Lavinia's womb. When Titus first enters the tomb, he remarks on the concealed femininity it stores:

O sacred receptacle of my joys,  
Sweet cell of virtue and nobility,  
How many sons of mine hast thou in store,  
That thou wilt never render to me more!

I.i, 95-98

Therefore, to Titus, the tomb is the holder of his progeny as is the female womb. Kahn remarks on this connection: "Like the daughter's sweet virginal womb, [the tomb] is a receptacle, an enclosed cell, that stores up the joy and sweetness of successive generations, specifically through commemorating for posterity the fame gained by male ancestors through death in battle. The daughter's womb is intended to produce sons for the state; the father's tomb keeps them 'in store'" (Kahn 52).

Kahn further explains that the female womb is not merely the center of female sexuality, but also responsible for familial descent: the person who controls the hollow womb controls the future. Therefore under Titus's patriarchal guidance the womb will dictate what he deems as success. Further, the father claims title to the fruits of his daughter's womb because her blood is his blood, and thus her child's blood is his as well (Kahn 55). The Goths in *Titus Andronicus* realize this, and so the idea to rape Lavinia emerges as a ploy to take the control of Lavinia's womb away from Titus. For even Aaron, Tamora's Moor lover, realizes how pivotally important Lavinia's womb is to her father when he instructs Chiron and Demetrius to rape her:

There speak, and strike, brave boys, and take your turns;  
There serve your lusts, shadow'd from heaven's eye,  
And revel in Lavinia's treasury

II.i, 130-132

The word "treasury" expresses how valuable Lavinia's womb is to her father. Once ravished and raped, the womb of a destroyed virgin is no longer pure and therefore "pollutes patrilineal descent, and destroys civil order" (Kahn 55).

Enormous worth is placed on female chastity. However, one must consider the

fact that before Lavinia is raped, she was married to Bassianus and therefore, most probably is *not* a virgin. However, she is still a chaste wife as there is no indication given that she was unfaithful to Bassianus and her womb's purity is thus still intact. Yet as soon as her husband is murdered, her purity is restored to her father Titus which illustrates that it never actually belongs to her in the first place (Kahn 54). Her womb is in effect casually tossed around between various men in the play. And at the scene of her rape, Chiron and Demetrius deface Lavinia's womb.

The rape of Lavinia is parallel to the Ovidian rape of Philomela. In the *Metamorphoses*, Philomela is raped by Tereus and in order to conceal his crime, he cuts his victim's tongue out leaving her silenced and unable to communicate the horrendous acts that have violated her once pure body. Ovid writes:

He  
with a pair of pincers, takes her tongue instead,  
which calls (as though protesting this offense)  
her father's name out in a garbled voice,  
before the tyrant's sword had severed it.

Book VI, 798- 802

Chiron and Demetrius, however, having obviously read their Ovid, know that even without her tongue, Philomela is able to express to her sister Procne the identity of her perpetrator with her hands, as she weaves a tapestry depicting the crime. Therefore, after raping Lavinia, her assailants cut off her tongue and hands in order to silence her in her ruined chastity. Chiron and Demetrius then mock Lavinia's powerlessness:

DEMETRIUS      So, now go tell, and if thy tongue can speak,  
                         Who t'was that cut thy tongue and ravished thee.

CHIRON            Write down thy mind, bewray thy meaning so,  
                         And if thy stumps will let thee, play the scribe.

DEMETRIUS      See how with signs and tokens she can scrawl.

II.iv, 1-5

With Lavinia's mouth filled with blood and silenced, it is Demetrius and Chiron who get to name this rape. Higgins and Silver write, "Who gets to tell the story and whose story counts as 'truth' determine the definition of what rape is" (as cited in Kahn, 58). And so, the truth of Lavinia's rape is concealed; she has been silenced, and the only way the male characters of the *Andronici* can determine what has happened to her is to try to derive meaning from her actions.

In his *Metamorphoses*, Ovid highlights the fact that victimized women are not able to speak by asserting that men frequently interpret their muted signals and body language to mean something completely different from the hidden truth. Just as Chiron and Demetrius name Lavinia's rape, Ovidian males name their female counterparts to suit their own wants and needs. Ovid's Daphne flees from Apollo's advances. When escape from Apollo seems impossible, Daphne calls to her father, the god of the rivers, and asks for a release from Apollo's lust. Although she does gain liberation in one way, she is turned into a tree and becomes trapped within its confines for all eternity. Silenced inside the barkly limits of a tree's trunk, Daphne cannot express the fact that she does not want Apollo's attention. And so the sun god names her Laurel as his "own tree" that will stand for the greatness of Roman generals (Ovid, Book I, 769). However, as a tree, the only signifier that she gives is the wind blowing through her leafy branches. Ovid writes: "Phoebus concluded. Laurel shook her branches / and seemed to nod her summit in assent" (Ovid, Book I, 782-783). Notice the word "seemed." Apollo observes only the tree form of Daphne moving her branches, yet he concludes that this means that she must agree with her fate. Yet the reader does not know what Daphne thinks. Her imprisonment leaves the foreground empty. By concealing and silencing Daphne, Ovid almost makes her present and vocal. And just as he reveals Daphne by implication, he brings into the foreground his own hidden concerns for who gets to name something and how signals can be misconstrued by those with self-assumed power.

Shakespeare does the same with the now silenced and degraded Lavinia, as all the men in her life attempt to interpret her "martry'd signs" (III.ii, 36). Collin Burrow, an Ovidian and Renaissance scholar, writes, "Lacking the release provided by words, and lacking the potential for revenge provided by Philomela's weaving, Lavinia can only rely on others to speak for her" (Burrow 307). The first effort to read Lavinia is made by her uncle, Marcus, who discovers her in the woods right after she has been mutilated. Before Marcus asks whether or not he must speak for her, he refers to the Ovidian myth:

But, sure, some Tereus hath deflowered thee,  
And, lest thou shouldst detect him, cut thy tongue...



A craftier Tereus, cousin, hast thou met,  
 And he hath cut those pretty fingers off...  
 II.iv, 26-27, 41-42

Her uncle, therefore, accurately predicts Lavinia's circumstance; however, according to Kahn, Marcus's language strikingly misdescribes her mangled body. So Marcus calls her handleless arms "sweet ornaments, / Whose circling shadows kings have sought to sleep in" (II.iv, 18-19). Marcus's failure to describe Lavinia's physical wounds correctly highlights the fact that she no longer exists in the realm of linguistics and language (Kahn 58-59). She is officially silenced and is subject to whatever the men around her want.

Lavinia is silenced and maimed because if she had the ability to speak she could tell of numerous truths that would be detrimental to the power of men. Douglas E. Green, a scholar who discusses how Lavinia's silent acts are interpreted, mentions that Lavinia's silence not only prevents her from initially revealing the identity of the rapists, but also keeps quiet the cruelty she has suffered from her father. Green asserts, "Indeed, Lavinia's speech... could expose to the public (and to the audience) her subjection to the arbitrary wills of men, to the contradictory desires of father, husband, rival fiancé, brothers, and rapists" (Green 323). Lavinia could, therefore, also condemn Titus's actions as well. However, her silence is necessary, for if she did speak out against the patriarchal order of Roman society and the Andronici house, the design of Shakespeare's play would be weakened. According to Green, however, the play does this to make the reader aware that there is a price to retaining what Titus believes to be the so called order of society: the injury of women points to "their pain, and all their experience [which] are consigned to silence and illegibility" (Green 323).

Although Lavinia's silence is better for Titus, her damaged womb inflicts harm to his plan to preserve the Andronici name through the womb and tomb. Therefore, just as Marcus has tried to read Lavinia and name her thoughts, Titus also attempts to interpret her wounds. For example, Titus states, "I understand her signs" (III.i, 344). That Lavinia has no tongue does not matter: he can predict what she wants to say. However, when Titus actually does examine Lavinia's pain, he ignores her suffering

and is more focused on how the mutilation of his daughter relates to him. For example, as Kahn points out, Titus's egocentric rhetoric during his first attempt to understand Lavinia's maimed body refers to his pain and suffering, more so than to that of Lavinia (Kahn 60). Although one could argue that by attempting to understand Lavinia, Titus is acknowledging her otherness and suffering, his attempt is not for Lavinia's sake. It is his way of imposing (Green 323).

With no success thus far, the muted Lavinia, in order to help the Andronici men better understand her signs, uses the stage prop of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* itself. Flipping through the pages of the book with her disfigured arms, Lavinia finds the story of Philomela, trying to reveal the hidden truth of her rape with the text itself. At first it appears as though it works, as Titus and his male kin get the message: "Stuprum – Chiron – Demetrius" (IV.i, 78). "Stuprum" is Latin for rape and Lavinia writes her message into the sand using a stick which she places in her mouth.

Yet for various reasons, using Ovid's text does not help Lavinia. Firstly, Lavinia is only able to write the names of her perpetrators in the sand after watching a demonstration from Marcus. Thus, she is using the staff straight from his mouth; she is only able to communicate through the language of her male kin, "the cultural dominators" of society (Fawcett, as cited in Kahn, 62). Secondly, the "sandy plot" (IV.i, 69) is the only field Lavinia is granted in which to express herself. And writing in sand can easily disappear with the blowing of the wind or any other natural force. Finally, even though Lavinia is naming the crime against her and the criminals responsible, the revenge that is to be taken against Chiron and Demetrius quickly turns into Titus's revenge plot, as he and the other male members of the family decide what the revenge will be and how it will be carried out (Green 325). Hence, Titus construes the rape of Lavinia as an injury against himself and therefore, he is transformed into the offended party (Kahn 65).

After Lavinia reveals the identity of Chiron and Demetrius, she disappears for four consecutive scenes even though she should be the central concern and cause for retribution. As Titus begins to carry out his revenge plot against Tamora and her

two sons, Lavinia's only role will be to assist her father in whatever course of action he chooses to take. Titus initially gains vengeance through murdering Chiron and Demetrius and then feeding them to Tamora. Just as in the Ovidian myth of Philomela where she and her sister kill Tereus' son, Itys, and serve his flesh and blood to his father, the victimized party cooks up the offspring of the assailant's family. Titus, wearing a chef's hat, serves Tamora her own flesh and blood:

Why, there they are, both baked in this pie,  
Whereof their mother daintily hath fed,  
Eating the flesh that she herself hath bred.  
V.iii. 59-61

Therefore Chiron and Demetrius, who originated in her womb, now find their tomb back inside the hollow confines of her body. Kahn observes that Titus goes further in his revenge: Tamora supervised her sons' attack on his treasury, now he will assault her own. "Now he insults her womb, the site of her own power, by making her "swallow her own increase' (V.ii.191)" (Kahn 70). Further in Ovid, Philomela uses the same logic as Titus when she serves Itys to Tereus, for upon his consumption he calls himself "his own son's tomb" (Book VI 965). But whereas Philomela's actions are justified inasmuch as she is avenging her own chastity and honor, Titus does not care about Lavinia's life or feelings; he is only concerned with keeping an Andronici womb pure in order to reproduce Roman honor.

Titus's lack of concern is demonstrated most strongly when he takes revenge on Lavinia's body itself, killing his silenced and acquiescent daughter. Utterly accepting her silence and her fate, Lavinia enters this final scene with a veil over her head, as she sacrifices herself and allows her father to murder her. Titus asks if an impure daughter should be killed because she has been "stain'd and deflower'd (V.iii, 38). Saturninus replies that such a female should not be allowed to survive this shame and then he mentions that her presence would cause sorrow to her father. Sharon Hamilton, a scholar of Shakespearean women, claims that this scene is one which displays the height of masculine superciliousness, and makes evident the defeat and invisibility of females and femininity (Hamilton 74).

Titus kills Lavinia not to rid his daughter of her own personal shame and suffering. Instead, he kills her to erase his shame and the damage done to his sacred womb and tomb. Thus his words as he takes her life:

For me, most wretched, to perform the like.  
 Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee;  
 [*He kills her.*]  
 And, with thy shame, thy father's sorrow die!

Viii, 45-48

For Titus the life of his daughter is worthless if she cannot be pure and chaste. And once Lavinia has been killed, Titus has, in his own way, restored the honor that his family lost in her rape. Despite the fact, therefore, that Lavinia is a passive participant in her rape, meaning that she was stained not by her own actions (Hamilton 74), but by the actions that were done to her by men, she is, to Titus, still to be blamed for the disgrace done to her body.

On the surface of *Titus Andronicus*, the action revolves around its title character. However, when analyzing this revenge tragedy from an Ovidian perspective, one can see that the centrality lies in the background of the play, focused on the silenced and maimed woman, Lavinia. She is a pawn who, as so many females in Ovidian myth, has been used for her sexuality and her empty, hollow womb. Ovid tries to turn the reader's attention to the fact that male dominated stories tend to cover the concealed voice of women, which if released and not interpreted and named by masculine desires, would speak volumes. Shakespeare uses Lavinia's maimed body and silence to convey these Ovidian constructs of women by developing Titus's manic obsession with the longevity and honor of his lineage that can only be perpetuated by the empty confines of the womb and the tomb. Therefore, Lavinia, who at first glance is just a minor piece of negative space in the background, is indeed the essential structure behind Titus's façade.

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S Y M P O S I U M

# CONSTRUCTING MEANING FROM MISSING PIECES

Valerie Falzon

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are as minor as characters with speaking roles can get. It is unclear if they are actually friends of Hamlet, if they are meant to be spying on him, or both. Additionally, the two often share lines, complete each other's sentences, and therefore blend quite often into a single entity; there is no Rosencrantz, no Guildenstern, only the collective Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. In Tom Stoppard's play, *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead*, the whole of *Hamlet's* plot, even that which is left ambiguous by Shakespeare, is materialized through the gaps in space, time, and dialogue surrounding these two minor characters. Most notably, the question of whether Hamlet's madness is a pretense or true melancholy is answered. Through a re-examination of the limited role of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in Shakespeare's play, Stoppard reveals Hamlet to be the great manipulator that he only sometimes appears to be. Just as the questions left unanswered in *Hamlet* can be answered by delving into the blank, and often silent space created by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, so is Franz Kafka's final novel, *The Castle*, illuminated by that which we never see or hear.

The very first lines of *The Castle* set the foundation for the significance of the negative space and silences that turn up throughout the rest of the novel:

The village lay under deep snow. There was no sign of the Castle hill, fog and darkness surrounded it, not even the faintest gleam of light suggested the large Castle. K. stood a long time on the wooden bridge that leads from the main road to the village, gazing upward into the seeming emptiness. (Kafka 1)

In the night sky, the Castle literally lies within the “seeming emptiness;” yet, the very essence of the Castle is also hidden by what is seemingly empty, or incomplete, namely, in the characters that appear to be so. K.’s claim to the position of surveyor is a sign that he will never be successful in reaching the Castle. If a surveyor is one who measures and draws boundaries, it is no surprise that K. never gets to the Castle – he ignores the empty space that is actually rich with meaning in favor of trying to measure that which cannot be measured.

The most obvious empty space through which the Castle can be discovered is Klamm’s invisibility. Klamm is at once inescapable and unreachable; he is everywhere and nowhere. In this way, Klamm is a living and breathing metaphor for the Castle – while he does not allow himself to be seen, his presence is embedded in every aspect of life for the people who live in the town, just as the Castle looms overhead, perpetually just out of reach. In an argument with K., Frieda says of Klamm, “[T]here’s surely is an abundance of Klamm here, too much Klamm; it’s so as to escape from him that I want to get away. It isn’t Klamm that I miss, but you” (Kafka 136–37). This statement is a complete reversal of everything that the reader and K. assume to be true. Klamm is out of reach, but Frieda implies that he is everywhere; K. is living with her, but she displaces him instead of Klamm. It seems that if he were truly attempting to reach the Castle, literally or metaphorically, K. would have learned more from looking in the places that seem the most incomplete, beginning with understanding Klamm’s invisibility instead of approaching Klamm himself.

Even more interesting than the parallel between Klamm’s and the Castle’s simultaneous presence and absence is the connection between Klamm and the assistants, and their consequent connection to the Castle. When K. questions Frieda as to why she does not miss Klamm, assuming that it is because she has been



communicating with him, she goes on to say, “I know nothing about Klammm. I’m talking about others, for instance, the assistants” (Kafka 137). In one breath, Frieda moves from complaining that Klammm is everywhere and needs to escape, to saying she knows nothing of him and that she is talking, instead, of the assistants. Thus, though it goes against everything that we know about these characters and their positions in society, their identities begin to blend in Frieda’s descriptions.

The equation of Klammm to the assistants is extended by Frieda a little later on in the argument:

but we don’t know who they are. Klammm’s emissaries, that’s what I call them in my thoughts, just playfully, but perhaps that is what they really are.... Their eyes, those naïve but sparkling eyes, somehow remind me of Klammm’s eyes, yes, that’s it, Klammm’s glance sometimes leaps from their eyes and goes straight through me. (Kafka 139)

Whereas earlier, Frieda simply describes Klammm then claims to have been talking about the assistants, here, she physically connects them: the assistants possess “Klammm’s glance.” They are Klammm’s messengers, but they embody Klammm’s physical characteristics, as well. In this instance the assistants are closely linked to Klammm, and if Klammm is a political and metaphoric representative of the Castle, the assistants are also linked to the Castle; though what can the significance of two such minor characters be in the great, unsolvable scheme of the Castle?

Like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in *Hamlet*, the assistants are a minute and incomplete component of *The Castle* that ultimately contributes to the deeper meaning of the entire work because of their very incompleteness. Yet theirs is an incompleteness that is not the same as the heavily constructed and sometimes comical incompleteness of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Interestingly, K. treats them as if they were ‘modern’ revisions of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern though they are actually quite different. Herein lies the problem, or the answer, as the case may be. K. treats the assistants as an inseparable and indistinguishable whole, though they are clearly individuals; the empty space that surrounds the assistants is created by K.’s own tendency to measure and name things, and veils their true characters, and consequently,

the true character of the Castle. One of the reasons that K. is never able to reach his goal is his inability to see past the immediate and material world, his inability to see the clear outline of the Castle when it is lost in the vast emptiness of night.

Upon first meeting his so-called old assistants, K. decides that because he cannot distinguish between them, he is going to consider them as one person: “‘So I shall treat you as one person and call you both Artur, that’s what one of you is called—you perhaps?’ K. asked one. ‘No,’ he said, ‘my name is Jeremias.’ ‘Fine, it doesn’t matter’” (Kafka 18-19). At first, this scenario calls to mind a recreation of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two clowns virtually indistinguishable from each other. However, an interesting thread forms from the fact that K. accidentally calls on Jeremias. Throughout the novel, Artur, the agreed-upon name for both assistants, is not mentioned again. Instead, they are either referred to as simply, “the assistants,” or it is the name Jeremias that comes up again and again. Toward the end of the novel, when one of the assistants retreats with Frieda, it is Jeremias who appears at the bottom of the steps. Furthermore, the name Jeremias is mentioned ten times between pages 254 and 257. The name that K. had originally wanted to strike completely from the record appears over and over again; it seems as though this is a reinforcement by the Castle itself that K. is wrong about everything. Even in his attempt to create a sense of order for himself, he clearly chose the wrong name, and Jeremias resurfaces again and again, as if to prove that.

In fact, Jeremias himself becomes somewhat of an adversary for K. Besides that he has taken Frieda from him, the narrator makes a statement about the relationship between K. and Jeremias that is extremely telling: “[If K. were to exaggerate sickness] The result wouldn’t have been as favorable as for Jeremias, who would certainly, and no doubt rightly, have been victorious in this competition for sympathy, and obviously in every other battle as well” (Kafka 257). Jeremias would certainly, and even rightly be victorious in not only the competition for sympathy, but also in every other battle. Suddenly, the characters are put at odds, and this is not K.’s voice that is saying Jeremias is superior, but the third-person omniscient narrator. Perhaps the triumph of Jeremias is actually the triumph of the Castle.

In his essay “Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of his Death,” Walter Benjamin says of the group of characters whom he labels “the assistants” that they are outside the scope of Kafka’s hopeless dream world. Yet, in this case of *The Castle*, it seems that the assistants are more closely tied to that very world than any of the other characters. If there is hope for them, as Benjamin implies, it is only because they truly embody the Castle. The assistants, like Klamm, and ultimately the Castle, blur into everyday life, while still remaining shrouded in mystery. Benjamin writes, “Kafka’s assistants are... neither members of, nor strangers to, any of the other groups of figures, but, rather, messengers from one to the other” (Benjamin, 117). While this is true, these characters are so much more than mere messengers – they are the necessary negative space that surrounds and protects the Castle from intruders, the metaphoric wall that K. could never quite get all the way over in his childhood.

The very function of the Castle is to remain shrouded. To truly know it would mean that it would cease to exist. Though it seems counterintuitive, this notion is supported by the fact that as soon as K. knows too much about anyone, as soon as they become too human or imperfect in his eyes, they lose their connection with the Castle, along with their beauty and/ or appeal. Likewise, the appeal of the Castle is upheld by the gaps and silences around it. Benjamin explains this silence:

Kafka’s Sirens are silent; they have ‘an even more terrible weapon than their song... their silence.’...music and singing are an expression or at least a token of escape, a token of hope which comes to us from that intermediate world—at once unfinished and commonplace, comforting and silly—in which the assistants are at home. (Benjamin 118)

In the case of *The Castle*, the assistants insofar as they are representatives of the Castle, are not silent Sirens leading K. astray from his goal, but silent beacons that would lead him forward on his course. K. is never able to look into that silence and accept it; he fails, and the myth and power of the Castle remain intact.

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# SATAN AND SAMSON, SERVANTS AND SLAVES

Colleen Day

In a variety of work, from treatises to lyrics, John Milton chose to express his themes through pairs. One particularly nuanced pair is slavery and servitude, or rather, service. Stemming from deeper political, social, and religious concerns, the preoccupation with slaves and servants is manifest in some of Milton's most notable texts – specifically, *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes* – usually in connection to a self-struggle with morality. Whereas service is considered to be a Christian's filial duty, slavery is seen as a position of vice and moral degeneracy; it is the basest of human conditions. Further, the lowly status of Milton's slaves is, ironically, often derived from a rejection of subordination and servility in the first place. And ultimately, redemption proves to be unattainable.

Though Milton's lyric poetry abounds in images of slavery and servitude, the pairing is also found in a number of his sociopolitical commentaries. Hence, it seems likely that his fixation originates in seventeenth century European politics. In his 1654 essay *The Second Defence of the English People*, for example, Milton relies on the distinction between slavery and service both to bolster and to defend his anti-monarchical stance. This essay primarily serves as an elaborate rebuttal to his rivals' personal attacks, but Milton also imagines it as *servicing* the English cause for liberation

from government tyranny. He describes *Second Defence* as “destined to be of the greatest service to civil life and religion,” and thus Milton becomes a self-declared servant to a cause, a country, and a people (1099). Milton uses religious language to characterize people and their cry for freedom: they possess “purity of life” and a “lofty exaltation of [the] mind.” Of even more significance is Milton’s claim that the English people are divinely protected and inspired, the righteousness of their polemic ensured: “[I]t was the most righteous defence of law and religion that of necessity gave them arms. And so, trusting completely in God, with honorable weapons, they put slavery to flight” (1098). But by contrast, the chief enemy, the tyrant, is “the meanest of all and most a slave.” Milton contends, “Other men willingly serve only their own vices; [the tyrant] is forced, even against his will, to be a slave, not only to his own crimes, but also to the most grievous crimes of his servants... Tyrants are then the meanest of slaves, they are slaves even to their own slaves” (1101). Here, servants – the English people, their proponents, and Milton himself – connote holiness and spiritual superiority, while slaves are characterized by “vices” and “grievous crimes.” This passage also underscores the inherent irony of the slave’s status: though a tyrant is defined as such according to his abusive wielding of power and the refusal to serve his subjects, a tyrant’s position becomes fully dependent on this abuse and refusal. The “foes of human liberty” render themselves essentially powerless; they become slaves.

Satan encounters similar circumstances in *Paradise Lost*, a work that already reflects Milton’s political convictions. Satan completely embodying sin and vice, effectively becomes the antithesis of Christianity. But more importantly, Satan is also the antithesis of one of Milton’s Christian ideals, a simple, unconditional, “easie” service. Although Satan is the angel Lucifer at the outset, the highest of servants, his refusal to “submit or yield” is the impetus for his banishment and rebellion. Satan’s obsession with hierarchy and power, combined with a denial of his own inferior status moves him to battle; it is a feeble attempt to equate himself with God. The thought of submission elicits disgust: “To bow and sue for grace/ With suppliant knee, and deifie his power... That were an ignominy and shame beneath/ This downfall” (I: vv.111-6). In a later effort to mobilize his followers, Satan further reveals his futile ambition to match God’s power: “Space may produce new worlds... therein plant/ A generation, whom his choice regard/ Should

favour equal to the Sons of Heaven...For this Infernal Pitt shall never hold/ Celestial Spirits in bondage..." (vv.650-8). In addition, he frequently alludes to the "Tyranny of Heav'n," a purposeful phrase that both echoes the credo of *Second Defence* and interweaves politics with religion, calling particular attention to their relationship with slavery and service. But the lines that truly exemplify this idea (the relationship among bondage, service, religion, and politics) are those of Satan's speech in Book I: "Here [in hell] at least/ We shall be free...Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heaven" (vv.258-63). The ensuing battle, therefore, is a necessity: "Peace is despaird/ For who can think of Submission?" (vv.659-60).

As Satan spurns the idea of serving anyone, even God, he epitomizes a kind of antichrist, in complete opposition to Milton's Christian ideal. A key feature of slavery is thus highlighted: the morally depraved cannot differentiate between it and service. Satan completely misunderstands what God asks of him; he does not comprehend what it means to serve. To him, service *is* slavery: it means submission, bondage, subordination, inequality, a relinquishment of power, a surrendering of self: "But what if better counsels might erect/Our minds and teach us to cast off this yoke?/ Will ye submit your necks, and chuse to bend/ The supple knee? ye will not, if I trust/ To know ye right, or if ye know your selves... and if not equal all, yet free/ Equally free..." (V:vv.785-90). Service seems to signify for Satan an acknowledgment of his inherent inferiority, a feat of which he is psychologically incapable. He continually denies his own limitations and secondary status to God; at one point he claims, "... fardest from him is best/ Whom reason hath equaled, force hath made [God] supream/ Above his equals... And what should I be, all but less than he/ Whom Thunder hath made greater?" (I.vv.247-58). Upon returning to his "Palace" after exploring the Garden of Eden, Satan is described as "Affecting all equality with God," or rather, pretending (V:v.763). This inner conflict is translated into moral blindness: the line separating slavery and servitude is blurred.

Ultimately, this blurriness is irreversible, at least for Satan. Having successfully tempted Eve and thus triggering the fall of humanity, Satan offers his followers an inversion of the salvation that the Incarnation eventually bestows on mankind: "Hell

could no longer hold us in her bounds.../Thou hast achiev'd our libertie, confin'd/  
Within Hell Gates till now, thou us impowr'd..." (x: vv.365-9). As Christ's sacrifice later grants redemption, Satan believes he has accomplished something similar, the problem of slavery resolved. Not only have the fallen angels successfully refused submission and service, but Original Sin has opened hell, and Satan imagines himself as "over Man/To rule" (vv.492-3). As far as Satan is concerned, the fallen angels are no longer imprisoned, enslaved, or powerless.

However, this glimpse of glory and "libertie" is both illusory and fleeting, firstly because God is essentially allowing hell to even exist. Additionally, Satan is described in Book X as "...clad/ With what permissive glory since his fall/ Was left him, or false glitter" (vv.450-2). Satan is not autonomous, nor is he free – he remains a slave to God in the way his feelings of triumph are ultimately dependent on divine permission. His emotions governed by God, Satan is reduced to a type of slavery. So too are Satan's delusions of salvation and grandeur temporary; however, he is made all too aware of what has befallen him. In the midst of boasting of his supposed "victory" over God and Man, "...he hears/ On all sides, from innumerable tongues/ A dismal universal hiss...His Visage drawn he felt to sharp and spare,/ His Armes clung to his Ribs, his Leggs entwining/ Each other, till supplanted down he fell/ A monstrous Serpent on his belly prone..." (vv.506-14). Satan and his followers are reduced to helpless serpents, the form in which Satan had lured Eve to disobedience. Here, the fallen angels are stripped of what shreds of power they were convinced they had; they are degraded to the lowliest of states, the damned serpent. Consequently, Satan is both a slave to God's power *and* a slave to his sin, trapped for all eternity within its shape, an immortal symbol of his transgression. Most importantly, Satan is stripped of his *self*, the very thing he had hoped to preserve by eluding service in the first place. By becoming what he had so vehemently fought – a slave – there is no chance of redemption. Slavery seems a permanent, unalterable state.

Samson, the morally and literally blind protagonist of *Samson Agonistes* shares Satan's debilitating preoccupation with enslavement, as well as his strong aversion to it. Refuting the Chorus's suggestion that he had failed in his obligations to Israel,



Samson bitterly argues, “But what more oft in Nations grown corrupt,/ And by thir vices brought to servitude,/ Then to love Bondage more than Liberty,/ Bondage with ease then strenuous liberty” (vv.268-72). However, Samson also neglects to faithfully serve God faithfully. As he laments in the opening monologue, “strength is [his] bane,/ And proves the source of all [his] miseries;” Samson had allowed himself to be *ensnared* by the physicality of woman, Dalila, and has defied God by revealing the source of his superhuman strength (vv.63-4). Samson is keenly and remorsefully aware of this first source of enslavement, and is psychologically tormented throughout the tragedy for his sin: the failure to obey and serve adequately. Ashamed, he rebukes himself, “...with a grain of manhood well resolv’d/ Might easily have shook off all her snares:/ But foul effeminacy held me yok’d/ Her Bond-slave...servile mind/ Rewarded well with servile punishment! The base degree to which I now am fall’n...is not yet so base/ As was my former servitude...” (vv.408-16). He further mourns his “True slavery” and “that blindness worse then this,/ That saw not how degeneratly I serv’d” (vv.419-20).

Even so, Samson clearly misunderstands his own state, and moreover, is unable to distinguish between slavery and servitude. These words are used interchangeably throughout his monologue as he sees himself as both Dalila’s “Bond-slave” and her servant; he claims simultaneously to have “degeneratly serv’d” her. This hazy conception of reality clashes with Milton’s Christian convictions: service is an unequivocal good; it cannot be “base” or “degenerate.” Even in his response to the Chorus’s accusations previously cited, Samson twice refers to slavery as an “easy” position, which again contradicts Milton’s theological principle, namely, that service is “easy.” Manoa, Samson’s father, apparently recognizes this truth and in effect functions as a consistent voice of Christian morality. At one point he tells his son, “But God who caus’d a fountain at thy prayer...can as easie/ Cause light again within thy eyes to spring/ Wherewith to serve him better than thou hast” (vv.581-5). These lines embody what is arguably Milton’s religious philosophy: easiness, service, moral *sight*, and the supremacy of God’s power. But Samson’s false understanding perseveres; he later indicts Dalila, blaming her for his shameful condition rather than his own moral shortcomings, saying, “How wouldst thou insult/ When I must live uxorious to thy will/ In perfet thralldom, how again betray me...” (vv.944-6). Like Satan, Samson’s moral blindness both prevents him from distinguishing between service and bondage,

and results in scape-goating— Satan deems God a tyrant, Samson demonizes Dalila.

Samson's slavery, like Satan's, operates on a multidimensional level. First, Samson is literally enslaved, physically held captive by the Philistines. But more significant is his metaphorical bondage: Samson is a slave to his sin. Having been "ensnared" by female physicality and having depended so intensely on his own, Samson becomes literally entrapped by his body; without eyesight, there is only a dark, black void. Thus, everything about Samson is internal; he cannot experience the external world holistically. Upon their encounter with Samson, the Chorus describes him as "Shut up from outward light," a "Prison within Prison/ Inseparably dark." He is "The Dungeon of thy self. . . Imprison'd now indeed,/ In real darkness of the body. . ." (vv.153-60). Samson himself piteously grieves the unrelenting darkness, lamenting, "In power of others, never in my own. . . O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,/ Irrecoverably dark, total Eclipse/ Without all hope of day!" (vv.78-82). The darkness is Samson's literal and more excruciating "chains"; it is the constant reminder of his sin, his fall, and his moral corruption. The irony here exists not only in the actual circumstances of Samson's slavery, but also in his loathing of it which is evident in his censure of Dalila and the Israelites. The depravity with which he incriminates them is also the root of his literal and figurative captivities. In other words, Samson's slavery, like Satan's, originates in a refusal, an emphasis on the self (for Samson, his physical self), and an inability to tell the difference between holy service and ignoble slavery.

Despite the text's suggestions to the contrary, Samson never achieves the redemption to which he aspires. Even in his supposedly "holy" suicide, he remains a powerless slave. The climax of *Samson Agonistes* begins with a messenger informing Manoah of his son's death and mass homicide, "The Edifice where all were met to see him/ Upon thir heads and on his own he pull'd" (vv.1587-8). In an apparent effort to defy the Philistines and free himself physically and spiritually, Samson avenges his captors with his famous Herculean strength. The messenger glorifies Samson, saying he "fulfill'd./The work for which thou wast foretold to *Israel*," and had his "inward eyes illuminated" (vv.1660-88). According to this messenger, Samson has been liberated from bodily toil, indeed, from bodily *enslavement*. His spiritual sight is thus restored,

and his self-destruction both ends his slavery and fulfills the prophecy: proof of his service to God. Yet, it seems that Samson continues to rely on the physical, even in the act of destroying it. As the messenger recounts to Manoa, "...those two massie Pillars/ With horrible convulsion to and fro,/ He tugg'd, he shook, till down they came and drew/ The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder/ Upon the heads of all those who sate beaneath" (vv.1649-53). In the end, Samson uses and depends on what he is desperately trying to escape: his physicality. So too does the mass slaughter of the Philistines demonstrate Samson's dependence on the carnal. As such, he has not become a servant, and he has not received salvation. Rather, as with Satan, Samson's slavery is permanent.

Milton's model Christian servant is found in Sonnet 19 which echoes the struggle faced by Satan and Samson. The poem's speaker is also blind, a position of increasing moral vulnerability as he discovers loyal service is not as "easie" as previously thought. In the final lines, however, the speaker experiences a kind of epiphany: "They also serve who only stand and waite" (v.14). The line illuminates Satan and Samson's profound misunderstanding of God's "requirement" which is essentially nothing at all. The application of the service/slavery dichotomy to theology, politics, and even daily life (as represented by the sonnet) is indicative of its relevance to all levels of society. In many ways, it is the crux of a seventeenth-century social philosophy.

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# MY GYPSY SONG

by Vladimir Vysotsky

Yellow fires in my dreams,  
 In my sleep I stutter:  
 Slow down, slow down –  
 Morning is much wiser!  
 But the morning isn't right,  
 Happiness is lacking:  
 Smoke on an empty stomach,  
 Or drink with a hangover.

In the pub – green carafes  
 Paired with white napkins.  
 Heaven for homeless and clowns,  
 But I feel like a bird in a cage!  
 In the church – miasma, darkness,  
 Deacons burning incense.  
 No! The church as well  
 Is not as it should be.

I hurry to the mountain,  
 Hoping for something,  
 Pine trees growing on the top,  
 Underneath – wild cherries.  
 If ivy covered the slopes,  
 Even that'd make me happy.  
 Even the smallest thing...  
 Nothing is as it should be!

I walk the fields beyond the river.  
 Light is dark – God's missing.  
 Blue flowers in the clear fields,

And a long, long road.  
 Beyond the road – a thick forest,  
 Bewitched and haunted.  
 And at the end of the road  
 Await threatening gallows.

I hear horses running somewhere,  
 Unwillingly and slowly.  
 Beyond the road things aren't right;  
 In the end there's plenty more.  
 Not the church and not the pub –  
 Not a single thing is hallowed!  
 No, my friends, nothing is,  
 Nothing is as it should be.

Translation by Borislav Chernev

В сон мне - желтые огни,  
И хриплю во сне я:  
- Повремени, повремени,-  
Утро мудренее!  
Но и утром всё не так,  
Нет того веселья:  
Или куришь натошак,  
Или пьешь с похмелья.

В кабаках - зеленый штоф,  
Белые салфетки.  
Рай для нищих и шутов,  
Мне ж - как птице в клетке!  
В церкви смрад и полумрак,  
Дьяки курят ладан.  
Нет! И в церкви все не так,  
Все не так, как надо.

Я - на гору впопыхах,  
Чтоб чего не вышло.  
А на горе стоит ольха,  
А под горою вишня.  
Хоть бы склон увить плющом,  
Мне б и то отрада,  
Хоть бы что-нибудь еще...  
Все не так, как надо!

Я тогда по полю, вдоль реки.  
Света - тьма, нет бога!  
А в чистом поле васильки,  
Дальняя дорога.  
Вдоль дороги - лес густой  
С Бабами-Ягами,  
А в конце дороги той -  
Плаха с топорами.

Где-то кони пляшут в такт,  
Нехотя и плавно.  
Вдоль дороги все не так,  
А в конце - давно.  
И ни церковь, ни кабак -  
Ничего не свято!  
Нет, ребята, все не так,  
Все не так, ребята!

1968

S Y M P O S I U M

# SMALL ARMS

Priyanka Mehrotra

*“We must not relax our efforts to combat the scourge of illicit small arms and light weapons, which continue to kill, maim and displace scores of thousands of innocent people every year.”*

Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General. Second Biennial Meeting.  
New York, July 2005

It is clear that the global transfer of small arms is a major problem, considering the number of intra-state conflicts that are being fought primarily with small arms. Of the 49 major conflicts fought in the 1990's, 47 were waged with small arms. There are approximately 639 million small arms in circulation in the world today, and they are increasingly the “weapons of opportunity”<sup>28</sup> in these conflicts. They are relatively inexpensive, easy to use, transfer and smuggle; moreover, untrained combatants, including children soldiers, are able to use these weapons with relative ease. While small arms transfers do not wield the same political leverage as the transfer of major conventional weapons, the issue, nevertheless, is in need of immediate attention by the international community. Transfer of small arms to conflict areas has often resulted in the exacerbation of the lethality of the conflict, and in some cases, conflict has been prolonged after the influx of small arms. The Rwandan genocide is a case in point. When the war began in October 1990, Rwanda's army was made up of 5000 soldiers armed with a modest amount of small arms. By the end of the war, the number of soldiers had increased to 30,000 armed with a significant number of small arms and

28 Wezeman, Pieter D. “Conflicts and Transfers of Small Arms” SIPRI. March 2003. <http://www.sipri.org/contents/armstrad/atpubs.html>

light weapons. (Human Rights Watch 1994). More than a dozen countries helped fuel the war, with the majority of weapons being supplied by France, apartheid—era South Africa, and Egypt. Even more shocking, the arms transfers to Rwanda from Zaire, France, Bulgaria and South Africa continued even after the United Nations imposed an arms embargo on Rwanda in May 1994. As a result violence in refugee camps and other “safe areas” continued.<sup>29</sup>

This case brings to light two very important issues related to the proliferation of small arms: the transfer of arms to repressive regimes and conflict areas, and the effectiveness of such efforts as the UN arms embargoes. In light of such incidents, the effect of small arms on development and human rights cannot be ignored. This paper will look at the effect of small arms on development and human rights, the role of NGOs and the business community in this issue, and the major problem areas in effectively regulating small arms transfers.

For the purpose of this paper, the following definition of small arms and light weapons will be used: small arms and light weapons are broadly defined as weapons that can be handled by one or two people, and include pistols, rifles, carbines, machine guns, mortars, rocket-launchers, grenade-launchers, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems including their ammunition.

### Small Arms and Development

The widespread and easy availability of small arms not only creates serious security concerns, but also concerns about human development. If human development is about “the progress of human lives and well-being...living with substantial freedoms...(and about), enhancing certain capabilities (and) the range of things a person can do and be,” then the impact of the use of small arms represents a formidable obstacle to its achievement.<sup>30</sup> Numerous studies in the past have suggested

<sup>29</sup> Waszink, Camilla. “The Proliferation of small arms: A Threat to International Human Rights.” Small Arms Survey, January 2001. [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org). (Human Rights Watch website) Date visited: 2/26/2006.

<sup>30</sup> Muggah, Robert. Peter Batchelor. ‘Development Held Hostage: Assessing the Effects of Small Arms on Human Development.’ UNDP. April 2002. <http://www.undp.org/erd/smallarms>.



that a secure and stable environment is a necessary pre-requisite for development. However, small arms are responsible for over half a million deaths per year, including 300,000 in armed conflict and 200,000 more from homicides and suicides.<sup>31</sup>

Small arms have an adverse impact on post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Also, because they are durable, they are often resold after a conflict subsides in a region. Thus small arms are transferred from one troubled region to another. For example, AK-47s and M-16s used by combatants during the Vietnam War have resurfaced as far away as Nicaragua and El Salvador more than 30 years later.<sup>32</sup> In Africa, valuable resources such as diamonds and timber are bartered for arms. This brings the issue of environmental degradation into focus.<sup>33</sup> The following is an outline of the direct and indirect impact of small arms on development:<sup>34</sup>

<p><u>Direct Effects</u>                  Death and injuries                  Associated costs of treatment and care for firearm casualties, measured by disability adjusted life years (DALYs)</p>	<p><u>Indirect Effects</u>                  Criminality                  Forced displacement patterns                  Economic activity                  Social capital                  Development intervention                  Health and education services</p>
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Small Arms and International Human Rights

Human Rights are a necessary condition to ensure development. The transfer of arms to conflict-stricken areas and to repressive regimes adds a crucial dimension to the effect of small arms on human rights. “The use of small arms contributes to serious abuses of international humanitarian law (e.g., in the massacres of civilians, in conflict zones including Afghanistan, Colombia, and Sierra Leone).”<sup>35</sup>

31 Small Arms and Light Weapons. Official UN website. <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/salw.html>  
 32 Waszink, Camilla. “The Proliferation of small arms: A Threat to International Human Rights.” Small Arms Survey, January 2001. [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org). (Human Rights Watch website) Date visited: 2/26/2006  
 33 Control Arms Campaign. ‘Guns or Growth? Assessing the impact of arms sales on sustainable development.’ Report by Amnesty, Oxfam, IANSA. June 2004 Pg 27 [www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/develop/2004/06oxfamarms.htm](http://www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/develop/2004/06oxfamarms.htm).  
 34 Muggah, Robert. Peter Batchelor. ‘Development Held Hostage: Assessing the Effects of Small Arms on Human Development.’ UNDP April 2002. <http://www.undp.org/erd/smallarms>.  
 35 Wyatt, Charli. “The Forgotten Victims of Small Arms.” SAIS Review. Vol XXII no 1 (Winter-Spring 2002) pg 223-8.

The major producers of small arms include China, Russian Federation and the United States of America. Kalashnikovs, more popularly known as AK-47's, are widely used in conflicts in different parts of the world. More than 70 million Kalashnikovs have been manufactured in the former Soviet Union and nine other countries.

The Cold War had a significant impact on trade in Small Arms Light Weapons [SALW]. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a significant part of army material, including small arms, remained in the other former Soviet republics, primarily Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. In particular, arms were stored in these countries after Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan and Eastern Europe (INFO-TASS, 30 January 2002). However, given that Russia was by far the largest Soviet republic and the base for most military and political power, we can assume that Russia must have inherited the majority of the Soviet small arms arsenals.<sup>36</sup> It had large stockpiles of small arms. "It is common knowledge that these reserves were stockpiled for the contingency of a global war involving much greater forces than the Russian Federation can now afford to maintain."<sup>37</sup> Stockpile management is a key issue facing the Russian Federation.

In light of the economic crisis that followed the end of the Cold War, defense expenditures decreased considerably. This trend was experienced not only in the Russian Federation, but also in other countries such as Bulgaria, Hungary, the Czech Republic and others that were a part of the former Soviet Union. In a bid to sustain the small arms manufacturing industry, many countries adopted an export-oriented policy. Throughout the 1990's, in a bid to save the industry and provide the country with indispensable hard currency earnings, Bulgaria pursued a hazardous arms export policy. The country sold large amounts of weapons, principally cheap small arms that ranged from handguns and assault rifles to anti-tank mines and ammunition, to conflict areas. Destinations included former Yugoslavia and several African, Asian, and Latin American countries.<sup>38</sup> It is believed that Sudan gets most of its weapons supplies from Eastern Europe.

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36 Pyadushkin, Maxim. Maria Haug, Anna Mateeva. "Beyond the Kalashnikov: Small Arms Production, Exports, and Stockpiles in the Russian Federation" *Small Arms Survey*. August 2003. Occasional Paper 10..

10 Ibid.

38 Kiss, Yudit. "Small Arms and Light Weapons Production in Eastern, Central, and Southeast Europe". *Small Arms Survey*. October 2004. Occasional Paper 13. <http://hei.unige.ch/sas/publications/occasional.htm>

The weapons left behind by the US in Vietnam in the 1970's showed up in the Middle East and Central America; the US and Soviet armaments pumped into Central America in the 1980's are now a part of a black market feeding violence in Colombia and Mexico.<sup>39</sup> The US is also a major source of weapons in Latin America, especially Colombia. There exists a large black market for American firearms in these regions. Concerns about proliferation of small arms from Afghanistan have been voiced by Iran.<sup>40</sup> Needless to say, Afghanistan was infested with small arms at the time of the Cold War when it was invaded by the Soviet Union.

Africa, a region torn apart by strife is at the center of focus on the impact of small arms proliferation. South Africa is flooded with small arms. Apartheid era South Africa had supplied neighboring countries from Mozambique to Angola with small arms to crush regional opposition to apartheid. These arms are now re-surfacing in South Africa. Small arms have come back to their place of origin. Nowhere else is the impact of circulation of post-conflict surplus arms seen more dramatically than in Africa. In Kenya there is an influx of automatic weapons from war zones in Sudan and Somalia.<sup>41</sup> Key to regulating small arms transfers lies in recognizing the source of demand for these weapons.

#### Understanding the Demand for Small Arms

A look at the potential sources of demand for small arms can go a long way in enabling the international community to get at the root of the problem. Availability of surplus arms is no doubt a problem to be tackled. However, simply implementing supply policies cannot help solve the problem in its entirety. Demand for small arms stems from several basic motivations and concerns, namely, personal security, social and economic security, individual status and social identity, conflict, political identity, and representation.

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39 Renner, Michael. "An Epidemic of Guns" *World Watch* v11 no4 p22-9 JI/Ag '98. Source :Wilson Web.

40 Kharrazi, Kamal. Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Statement before the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all Its Aspects. July 9, 2001. <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/smallarms/statements.htm>.

14 Ibid.

In many areas of the world, personal security is a major concern of the public as a whole. For example, in Brazil, the demand for firearms stems from the perceived need of the middle-class for effective policing which is relatively expensive to obtain. However, “In Rio’s poorer *favelas*, however, ‘security’ is provided by the drug factions; consequently, there is little or no demand for a substitute in the form of firearms.”<sup>42</sup> The social context becomes important in the demand for firearms.

In regions of on-going conflict, the demand for small arms by the warring factions is almost inevitable. For example, in Colombia, armed violence is driven by a number of complex, interrelated factors. One is the 40 year, three sided conflict waged by the army, irregular paramilitary forces, and the leftwing guerrilla groups Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC—Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN—National Liberation Army). There are also strong links between the narcotics trade and small arms transactions in Colombia.<sup>43</sup>

A look at Israel and Palestine also brings to light different aspects of the demand for small arms. Here the “main motivation for acquiring small arms and light weapons is political.” Israeli and Palestinian forces, in addition to various Jihadi factions, possess large numbers of weapons. An environment of instability prevails; neither the Jewish settlers nor the Palestinians trust their own military and police forces to provide sufficient security in the West Bank and Gaza strip. In fact, there is “evidence of a growing gun culture in the West Bank and the Gaza strip.”<sup>44</sup>

These examples clearly show that the roots for demand are complex. Different situations elicit different responses. Thus, in dealing with the issue of small arms proliferation a “one size fits all” approach is sure to fail.

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42 Atwood, David Anne-Kathrin Glatz, and Robert Muggah “Demanding Attention: Addressing the Dynamics of Small Arms Demand”. *Small Arms Survey and Quaker United Nations Office, Occasional Paper 18*. <http://hei.unige.ch/sas/publications/occasional.htm>.

16 Ibid.

44 Boutwell, Jeffrey. “The Wild West Bank”. *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* v55 no1 p41-4 Ja/F '99.

The Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation Process<sup>45</sup>

“Unlike major conventional weapons systems, which are principally traded between states, small arms and light weapons have three distinct sets of clients: national arsenals (military, police), non-state actors (both domestic and extra-national), and other foreign governments.”<sup>46</sup>

A significant proportion of small arms production is concentrated in private firms that may be specialized in military production, but that are not necessarily tightly tied into a particular government procurement network. In other words (and without wanting to overstate this point), small arms and light weapons production is probably more “private” and commercial than that of major weapons systems. The licensed production of small arms is also relatively widespread.

Companies and licensed brokers are the main actors involved in the transfer of small arms. The authorization for the transfer comes from the government. However, the involvement of private actors in the process of transfer of small arms means that there are numerous opportunities for arms to enter from the legal into the illegal arms market. Re-transfers of weapons is a major problem. Often, arms are diverted from their original course and sent to a third party without the knowledge of the government concerned. For example, Panamanian authorities claimed to have discovered a smuggling ring operating along the Colombian border. The smugglers traded in AK-47 rifles, RPG-7 grenade launchers and explosives from Nicaragua in return for Colombian cocaine or cash.<sup>47</sup>

Firearms: Conflicting Interests

The controversy surrounding the issue of firearms in this debate on small arms

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45 Krause, Keith. “Small Arms and Light Weapons: Proliferation Processes and Policy Options” Prepared for the International Security Research and Outreach Programme International Security Bureau, July 2000. Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

19 Ibid.

47 Wezeman, Pieter D. “Conflicts and Transfers of Small Arms”. SIPRI March 2003

brings to the fore a conflict between business interests and broader concerns of human rights and safety.

The firearms community has tried to distinguish itself from the other small arms and light weapons communities. Much has been made by businesses involved in firearms production and even the US government about the need to differentiate clearly between the proliferation of small arms and the actual production and distribution of small arms.

The firearms community was represented by The World Forum on the future of Sport Shooting Activities (WFSA), an association formed in Belgium, at the July 2001 UN Conference on Small Arms. Despite the fact that anti-firearms NGO's far out-numbered the groups from the firearms community, the interests of the firearms community were met to a large extent. These "conference participants accepted the idea that hunting, sport shooting, legal commerce in firearms, and civilian ownership of firearms should not be limited by international law."<sup>48</sup>

The interests of the firearms community also enjoyed support from the US government. The US position on firearms was made clear at the UN Conference in 2001. John Bolton, the US Under-Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Affairs, said in his statement to the UN General Assembly "We separate these military arms from firearms such as hunting rifles and pistols, which are commonly owned and used by citizens in many countries."<sup>49</sup> Hunting and sport shooting is a part of the cultural tradition of the United States.

Many NGO's and even the UNDP report, show clearly the level of concern surrounding the widespread ownership of firearms. According to a UNDP report, "In large parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, South East Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa, social and domestic violence, measured as a function of firearm homicide, robbery and harassment, is reaching epidemic proportions — and is threatening the

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48 Mason, Thomas L. "A Free Trade Perspective from the Firearms Community". *SAIS Review*. Vol XXII no1 (Winter-Spring 2002) Source: Wilson Web.

49 Bolton, John R. US Statement at Plenary Session. Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs. UN Conference on the illicit trade in small arms. <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/smallarms/statements.htm>

long-term development of regions and otherwise unaffected states.”<sup>50</sup> An increase in homicide rates also affects development efforts.

Private security services are flourishing in many countries. “The United States, Britain, Australia, and South Africa are among the countries where private security forces outnumber the public police and even the national armed forces.”<sup>51</sup> Thus in these countries, there is an ever increasing demand for small arms such as firearms for personal security – this in countries that are stable and have an effective police infrastructure in place.

The strong lobbying power that the firearms community wielded at the UN SALW Conference, 2001, cannot be ignored. Middle ground needs to be reached between the right of an individual to possess firearms for personal self-defense, and the threat firearms pose to the community at large. Businesses have their own interests to look into. Reaching a balance between these competing interest groups is going to be a key factor in the future.

#### Steps Taken to Control the International Trade in Arms

A number of multi-lateral, inter-governmental efforts are underway to deal with the global scourge of small arms and light weapons. Despite the stated agreements and commitments however, much remains to be done. Below, a few initiatives have been outlined.

- The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) signed a Moratorium on the Exportation, Importation and Manufacture of Light Weapons. The Southern African Development Community has endorsed the Southern African Action Program on Light Arms and Illicit Arms Trafficking, laying out a program to tackle illicit trafficking, increase regional co-operation, remove and destroy surplus weapons, and strengthen controls

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<sup>50</sup> Muggah, Robert. Peter Batchelor. 'Development Held Hostage': Assessing the impact of small arms on Development. UNDP, April 2002. <http://www.undp.org/erd/smallarms>.

<sup>51</sup> Renner, Micheal. "An Epidemic of Guns." World Watch. V11 no4 p22-9 JI/Ag '98. Source: Wilson Web

on civilian possession and tracing of arms transfers.<sup>52</sup>

- The European Union's Code of Conduct on Arms introduced human rights, regional stability and development criteria into consideration of license application, as well as setting up a system of denial notifications.
- The Organization of American States Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and other Related Material in 1998 made important progress on harmonizing license procedures and introduced a requirement for firearms to be marked at the time of manufacture.
- The Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa put forward a strategy for dealing with root causes of small arms possession, including tackling internal political strife and extreme poverty.<sup>53</sup>
- The largest initiative taken to date to combat the problem of small arms proliferation is the United Nations' *2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects*. (PoA) :“The Programme of Action (PoA) includes a number of measures at the national, regional and global levels, in the areas of legislation, destruction of weapons that were confiscated, seized, or collected, as well as international cooperation and assistance to strengthen the ability of States in identifying and tracing illicit arms and light weapons.”<sup>54</sup>
- The Geneva Process on small arms: The Geneva Forum launched the Geneva Process on small arms following the 2001 conference to help ensure that international momentum on the issue is maintained. The Geneva Process engages governments, NGO's and international organizations

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52 Oxfam GB. “Up in Arms” ([http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/issues/conflict\\_disasters/up\\_in\\_arms.htm](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/conflict_disasters/up_in_arms.htm))

26 Ibid.

54 <http://disarmament.un.org/cab.salw.html>



in regular, informal consultations to promote and monitor PoA implementation.

- The New York Small Arms Forum: The core group of the New York Small Arms Forum comprises nine governments (Canada, Colombia, Finland, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Sweden), one UN body (the Department for Disarmament Affairs) and three NGO's (Amnesty International, Oxfam International and the Quaker United Nations Office). Meetings are held to discuss various aspects of the small arms issue.
- The Group of Interested States in Practical Disarmament Measures (GIS): The GIS comprises relevant UN Departments and, since 2004, NGO's as well. It provides financial and political support for implementing practical disarmament measures in post-conflict situations. The GIS acts like a kind of market-place, putting donor countries in direct contact with countries, international organizations and NGO's that have concrete, small arms-related disarmament projects in need of funding.
- The Transfer Controls Initiative (TCI): The TCI focuses specifically on assisting states to strengthen controls over the export, import and transit of small arms and light weapons. Launched at the beginning of 2003, the TCI is led by the UK government with support from the governments of Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. In the short term, it aims to build support for common standards on transfer controls.
- The Control Arms Campaign: This campaign is led by Amnesty International, Oxfam International and IANSA. It aims to put pressure on the governments to implement strict controls on the possession and transfer of all arms. It was launched in 2003. Its principal aim is to persuade governments to negotiate an Arms Trade Treaty, that would prevent arms from being exported to destinations where they are likely to be used to commit grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

It enjoys increasing support, and at least twenty-four governments say that they support the negotiation of an Arms Trade Treaty.

### Measures Needed to Combat Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons

Several measures need to be taken to combat the problem of illicit trafficking of small weapons successfully. These steps, once implemented, will go a long way in preventing small arms from falling into hands of rebel groups and repressive governments.

Markings: Smuggling is a major source of small arms for rebels in various conflict stricken countries across the world. Very often, the arms are stolen from larger legal consignments. Keeping this in mind, serious attention is being given to the need for marking all small arms manufactured in order to assist the monitoring of arms movements. The Organization on Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) recognizes the need to improve on the marking system of arms. Its Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons states that “all participating States agree to ensure that all small arms manufactured on their territory after 30 June 2001 are marked in such a way as to enable individual small arms to be traced”.<sup>55</sup> It also says that the marking system so developed should provide information about the year and country of manufacture, weapon’s serial number and manufacturer. This is indeed a step in the right direction and crucial to assist in efforts to monitor movements of arms across the globe.

Record Keeping: Another key element in combating illicit transfer of arms is accurate record keeping of arms transfers by exporters and importers. Additionally, maintaining updated inventories of arms stocks within a country is also crucial.

Regulation of arms brokering: “Brokers are the middlemen who organize arms transactions between two or more parties, in return for a commission from either

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<sup>55</sup> OSCE - Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Adopted at the 308th Plenary Meeting of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) on 24 November 2000. <http://www.sipri.org/contents/expcon/OSCE2000.html>

the recipient, the supplier or a combination of the two.”<sup>56</sup> Brokers are increasingly involved in the profitable illicit arms trade. In fact many of them carry out their illicit transactions outside the jurisdiction where they reside, generally from countries that do not have stringent laws. International law needs to be instituted to deal with this “third-country brokering”. In recognition of the seriousness of the problem at hand, the UN held broad based discussions on further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons . This is an issue in need of immediate attention.

#### Stockpile Management and the Destruction of Surplus Weapons.

In 2001–2002, “the Swedish government (an important supporter of increasing controls on the international flow of small arms) supplied thousands of surplus rifles as aid to the armed forces of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia while failing to link these transfers to the small arms debate, or to comply with the UN Programme of Action’s stated preference that surplus small arms be destroyed rather than traded.”<sup>57</sup> Stockpile management is extremely important given the vulnerability of surplus arms to theft or loss and corruption. Also, much emphasis has been laid on the need to take steps to destroy surplus weapons, especially after the end of a conflict in a region. Surplus weapons often get transferred from one conflict area to another. For example, “Roughly two-thirds of the \$6 billion to \$9 billion worth of weapons supplied to Afghan resistance fighters by the US in the 1980’s were diverted to other recipients”, including Pakistan, Tajikistan and India’s Punjab region.<sup>58</sup> In light of such evidence, the need for stockpile management and destruction of surplus weapons gains center-stage in the drive against illicit arms proliferation.

#### Bridging the Divide: Easier Said Than Done

Research conducted for this paper has shown that there are gaping political differences in the definition of small arms, particularly firearms. Depending on the

56 Waszink, Camilla. “The Proliferation of small arms: A threat to international human rights.” Small Arms Survey. January 2001. [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)

57 Wezeman, Pieter D. “Conflicts and Transfers of Small Arms”. SIPRI. <http://www.sipri.org/contents/armstrad/atpubs.htm>

58 Renner, Micheal. “An Epidemic of Guns.” World Watch. V11 no4 p22–9 JI/Ag ’98. Source: Wilson Web

social and political context, different countries envisage different approaches to solving the problem of small arms proliferation. Also, the aspect of the issue that they call attention to differs.

Firearms are a major area in which the international community stands divided. For the US, firearms are clearly distinct from military arms. The US claims that in dealing with the problem of small arms and light weapons, “Our focus is on addressing the problem where it is most acute and the risks are highest: regions of conflict and instability.”<sup>59</sup> By categorically making a distinction between military arms and firearms, the US is heralding a position where firearms do not figure anywhere in the discussion on small arms. The problems created by the prevalence of firearms in regions such as Africa and Latin America, however, point in the other direction, one where immediate action with regards to firearms needs to be taken.

The greatest challenge in combating the global scourge of small arms is going to be the implementation of the laws, guidelines and proposals put forth in initiatives like the UN Programme of Action. Improving existing laws, implementing them and putting in place a monitoring mechanism for stockpile management and the post-conflict collection of arms, as well as developing marking systems and regulating arms brokers, are all expensive measures. The call for increased financial and technical assistance from the international community to combat this problem of surplus arms was voiced by nations like Nigeria, Iran, Colombia and Sudan among many others.<sup>60</sup> Against this backdrop of a call for greater financial assistance from the international community is the claim by the US that “Bilaterally, we offer our financial and technical assistance all over the world to mitigate the illicit trade in SALW.”<sup>61</sup> Surely, more needs to be done in this regard. The regions most in need of these measures are conflict-prone, poor developing nations with limited resources to give to these initiatives.

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59 Bolton, John R. US Statement at Plenary Session. Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs. UN Conference on the illicit trade in small arms. <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/smallarms/statements.htm>

60 Statements by representatives of these countries at the 2001 UN SALW Conference. <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/smallarms/statements.htm>

61 Bolton, John R. US Statement at Plenary Session. Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs. UN Conference on the illicit trade in small arms. <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/smallarms/statements.htm>

Another major issue in the debate on SALW is the discussion over export to non-state actors. The US maintains that banning exports to non-state actors might endanger a population facing genocide at the hands of the government and undermine the ability of the victims to defend themselves. However, in regions where non-state actors are perpetrators of conflict, the view expressed on the issue differs greatly. For instance, Sudan holds that SALW should be exported only to governments. This is an issue that needs to be resolved.

Eastern Europe has hitherto been a major supplier of weapons. However, in light of the eastward expansion of the EU, things might change. The Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Hungary, among other countries have now become members of the EU. These countries will be obliged to follow the provisions of the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports. More responsible transfer of arms should follow this development.

Due to the links between arms trade and crimes such as drug trafficking, organized transnational and violent crimes, and human trafficking, a comprehensive strategy needs to be developed to get to the root of this problem. Political differences gain center-stage when trying to formulate a multi-lateral solution to a global problem. The views expressed by the Russian Federation clearly illustrate this point. “We also consider it unacceptable for documents and proposals submitted by any regional organizations as reflecting universal principles to be used as the basis of the conferences programme of work.”<sup>62</sup> The regional organization being referred to here is the EU.

Every nation recognizes that arms are a necessity for self defense. Security is a national concern. How does one decide what number of arms constitutes a surplus? “This decision, by nature, is a sovereign decision by each nation.”<sup>63</sup> Every nation has reiterated the view that production and possession of arms for defense purposes is a legitimate right of every nation. Thus countries’ perceived security threats along with the existing demand for small arms fuelled by the various conflicts in different regions

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62 Ordzhonikidze, S.A Head of the Delegation of the Russian Federation . UN Conference on the illicit trade in small arms <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/smallarms/statements.htm>

63 Kastrup, Dieter. Chairman of the German Delegation. UN Conference on the illicit trade in small arms. <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/smallarms/statements.htm>

of the world clearly show that combating this problem is going to be difficult.

One of the biggest problems encountered in this regard to date has been the lack of transparency in arms transfers and the lack of arms transfer data availability. Major suppliers like Russia and China do not report statistics regularly. There is also a problem with countries mis-reporting the level of transfers. Improvements in this arena are needed. The deeper problem is one of trust or the lack thereof between different countries in the international community.

Bridging the political differences on this issue is not easy. With the fervor surrounding weapons of mass destruction and nuclear proliferation, small arms are often forgotten. Differences of opinion exist countries due to different experiences and circumstances. Therefore, there is a difference in the urgency with which different countries view this problem. Commitment on the part of the international community to combating this problem is what is needed to address this issue.

# THE APPEARANCE OF REALITY: CHASING THE ILLUSORY IN BOWLES, ELIOT, AND MAXWELL

By Maeghan Donohue

Although there are various ways in which we humans express ourselves, language is a primary mode, if not *the* primary mode of communication. Thus, language is certainly valuable, and, as innumerable writers throughout history have demonstrated, language has the capacity to be aesthetically rich. However, it is necessary to identify the *limitations* of language when attempting to communicate, especially since the meaning of words is ambiguous. This is particularly pertinent in the work of the Modernists, who, though inextricably bound to language – words being, after all, what they manufacture – underline the inadequacies of language in their attempt to reconnect in a world of alienation. Identifying the limits of words and finding a way to negotiate meaning is also key when trying to comprehend what is *appearance* and what is *reality*, which is yet another concern of the Modernist writers. Paul Bowles, T.S. Eliot, and William Maxwell demonstrate that distinguishing between what one – the writer, narrator, and/or other characters – *claims* to be true and what actually *is* true is a confounding road to navigate in Modernist writing, if not the world in general. To what degree can language, if it is, in fact, a *limited* tool of communication, reveal reality to us?

Paul Bowles' "A Distant Episode" is perhaps the most deliberate and literally paralyzing example in Modernism of the inability to communicate, as Bowles actually removes the tongue of his protagonist:

The Professor was gagging and catching his breath; he did not see what was happening. He could not distinguish the pain of the brutal yanking from that of the sharp knife. There was an endless choking and spitting that went on automatically, as though he were scarcely a part of it. The word "operation" kept going through his mind; it calmed his terror somewhat as he sank back into darkness .(96)

And if this were not a sufficiently dramatic statement, this tongue-less protagonist is a Professor of Linguistics, one who is completely preoccupied with language and the different roles language plays in expression. This removal of the primary muscle of communication so inhibits the Professor that he loses the ability to think and comprehend: "The Professor was no longer conscious; to be exact, he existed in the middle of the movements made by these other men" (96). This lack of consciousness accompanies his inability to communicate, and ends his pain: "Even when all his wounds had healed and he felt no more pain, the Professor did not begin to think again; he ate and defecated, and he danced when he was bidden" (96). It is only when he regains a sense of the world and himself as a part of it that he becomes angry and desperate. This story might lead us to believe that language is actually *quite* powerful in getting to a place of truth and reality, for it is the Professor's physical inability to use language that makes him lose his "reality" and prohibits him from explaining to a French soldier that he is not a madman as he might *appear*, but is actually a victim of kidnapping and mutilation. It would seem that language is the key ingredient, as it would allow him to separate what *appears* to be his state of being from what actually *is*, and his reality would be defined.

In his case, the attempt to communicate without the use of language is futile, thus making it seem as though the ability to speak is *enough* to explain what is real, and distinguish it from what appears to be. But this story cannot be the model for extrapolating reality from a complex world of appearance. Even if his tongue were given back to him and the Professor were suddenly able to explain what happened to him, this would not necessarily give him or the French soldier who dubs him a



madman any totalizing sense of reality. Would the Professor be able to explain how he came to be kidnapped to begin with? He, himself, seems conflicted as to why he descends into this abyss: "It occurred to him that he ought to ask himself why he was doing this irrational thing but he was intelligent enough to know that since he was doing it, it was not so important to probe for explanations at the moment" (94). Not all situations of evasive reality can so easily be rectified by the ability to explain actual events, not even in this story where it seems that the easiest solution to the problem of unraveling reality would be to replace a tongue. The mere ability to *speak* cannot be equated with the ability to *communicate*; there are many characters who *do* have the capacity to speak, but either cannot communicate due to inner conflicts or the inability of those around them to understand, *or* can communicate, but choose to do so through lies, using language to fabricate truth, which prevents us from achieving a firm grasp on reality.

T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is the internal monologue of a man who is utterly unable to communicate though he is not physically inhibited like Bowles' Professor. Prufrock uses language to reassure himself that he will have time to make the major decisions of his life (or any decision for that matter): "There will be time.../Time for you and time for me,/And time yet for a hundred indecisions,/And for a hundred visions and revisions... (Eliot 4). But of course there isn't time. Time is not eternal; it elapses as he asks a series of questions which go unanswered in his internalized, immobilized state: "Do I dare/Disturb the universe?/...So how should I then presume?/And how should I begin?" (4) Eventually there is a shift in the poem from "there will be time" to "I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker" (6), and it is apparent that his time has run out while he has been struggling to decide what to do.

Prufrock is not only alienated and unable to communicate with himself, but he cannot communicate with the world around him. The outside world breaks his monologue from time to time with the repetitive, "In the room the women come and go/Talking of Michelangelo" (4), but though he is aware of them, he cannot be a part of their dynamic since he is paralyzed by indecision, and cannot communicate

with them. As he claims near the end of the poem, “I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each./ I do not think that they will sing to me” (7). Again, Prufrock acknowledges an outside force, but one with which he cannot connect.

What is perhaps the most powerful image in this poem is that of the last line: “Till human voices wake us, and we drown” (7). Here, supposed “reality” or connection with humanity is being rendered by the voice of Prufrock as the ultimate destructive force, even though we have just witnessed how his isolation/alienation has resulted in his life of paralysis. In this poem, language is limited in its ability to solve Prufrock’s problems; his questioning never leads to any decision other than the seemingly mundane, “I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.../I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach” (7). Language isn’t powerful enough to transcend his paralyzed, isolated state and allow him to connect or communicate with a world outside, which could potentially end his state of perpetual alienation and actually allow him to *live*. Whereas the ability to use language seems as though it would be a solution to the Professor’s problems in Bowles’ story, language further complicates Prufrock and keeps him isolated from any sense of reality outside of himself. In this case, speaking certainly cannot be equated with communication. This is not to say that Prufrock is never aware of his state. At moments he does seem to recognize what we might consider his reality: That time is passing; he is alienated, and because of this alienation he cannot connect. But we are left to wonder, does he recognize the reality of the world outside of himself? Because of the precarious psychological condition of Prufrock, we the readers have to do more work to distinguish between appearance and reality – if we can make such a distinction – and look beyond what Prufrock’s language literally conveys. Perhaps it is what he does not say, or the way in which he manipulates language which will reveal a clearer sense of reality to us. His language alone doesn’t necessarily do it. He might have a sense of appearance and reality, but if he does it slides back and forth internally.

William Maxwell, or the voice in Maxwell’s *So Long, See You Tomorrow*, further complicates our attempt to uncover reality through language, as he purposely uses language to fabricate a lie or imaginary scenario so realistic, that it is difficult to distinguish what

is truth and what is fiction. The voice of Maxwell's narrative recounts an actual murder, but in order to cope with his minor role in it as well as the tribulations of his own life, he creates what he imagines might have been the circumstances both leading up to and following the murder. He details conversations which never happened, emotions that were never experienced, glances that were never exchanged. And we might not have known the difference, had it not been for the instructions he gives to the reader: "The reader will have to do a certain amount of imagining..." (Maxwell 56). In this way, Maxwell communicates directly with us, but his use of language does not assist us in extrapolating a sense of reality; it does the opposite, in fact. He is requiring us, in order to proceed, to imagine: To accept the *appearance* of a situation he is about to render. "If any part of the following mixture of truth and fiction strikes the reader as unconvincing, he has my permission to disregard it. I would be content to stick to the facts if there were any" (56). This not only highlights the way in which language can be manipulated to steer us *away* from reality, but also seems to undermine the idea of reality in general. He sets forth on his adventure to fabricate the lives of several characters under the pretense that this is legitimate because no facts exist at all.

Maxwell – or the voice of his narrative – also undermines the idea that we can, on a basic level, discover reality by explicitly recounting events which actually happened, the kind of potential in revealing truth/reality that we can observe in "A Distant Episode," if only the Professor could have had his tongue back in order to explain what happened to him, as the voice of the novel questions the trustworthiness of memory:

What we, or at any rate what I, refer to confidently as memory – meaning a moment, a scene, a fact that has been subjected to a fixative and thereby rescued from oblivion – is really a form of storytelling that goes on continually in the mind and often changes with the telling. Too many conflicting emotional interests are involved for life ever to be wholly acceptable, and possibly it is the work of the storyteller to rearrange things so that they conform on this end. (27)

This raises the question: if even expressing what we consider the bare facts of actual events is fabrication or "story-telling" to an extent, then can language *ever* really communicate or reveal reality?

While Bowles' Professor *physically* cannot use language to reveal reality, and Eliot's Prufrock *psychologically* cannot communicate in order to reveal reality, Maxwell attempts to *create* a reality by overtly manipulating language. The voice of his narration self-consciously negotiates appearance and reality, and communicates to the reader that he will *not* engage only with what is real, or what has really happened, because even recounting his memory and passing it off as reality would be illusion considering the untrustworthiness of memory. Can it be that even through fabrication Maxwell brings us closer to reality than Eliot and Bowles because he sets forth without the intention of rendering reality? Maxwell writes, "... We lie with every breath we draw" (27). If this is the case, is it possible that as long as we recognize the lie, we will in turn recognize reality?

This seems unlikely. Recognizing a lie does not appear to necessarily be a fast-track to the truth. Just as it seems impossible to pin down the empirical meanings of words, it is equally as difficult to identify what is truly "real" and what is mere appearance. Appearance and reality are often pitted against each other as binaries – appearance *vs.* reality – though there is an obvious problem with this binary: Reality is an intangible concept, the definition ambiguous, and the only way we seem able to experience supposed reality without an explicit definition is by identifying what *appears* to us to be real. Following such logic, the tendency to separate seems tentative, as the line between appearance and reality is blurred. Thus, determining reality – since it comes to us only through what *appears* to be real and true – is illusory, ever-shifting, relative in nature. Language and communication can only establish a sense of reality on a small, subjective scale, meaning, for instance, that though Bowles' Professor knows he has been kidnapped and mutilated, this is only the *Professor's* reality. To the French soldier, the Professor is, in fact, a babbling madman; this is *his* reality. Prufrock's reality for the first half of Eliot's poem is that he has plenty of time to worry about making decisions. His reality then shifts, and he feels he no longer has time to hope for mobilization or rescue from alienation. Thus his individual reality differs from one moment to the next. And as Maxwell demonstrates, a reality can be compiled of lies alone. Reality equals artifice.

Language is limited in its capacity to reveal reality to us in general, because it can only really assist us in understanding our own perceptions and in constructing our own realities. Communication is not capable of freeing us enough to transcend appearance and reach some empirical idea of what is real in the world, but can anything? If a reality beyond perception actually exists, we sure don't know about it.

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S Y M P O S I U M



*The heart*  
                   *leap up*  
                                   *when I behold*  
   *a rainbow in the sky.*  
 It merely acknowledges the aesthetic excellence of a natural  
 phenomenon.

Having survived  
                                   through thundering cataracts  
   and  
                                   murderous slopes,  
 Will I,  
                                   like Yeats,  
   be able to remake myself?  
 Or will poetry be put to sleep  
 By the lush, drowsy greenery of shallows?

**II.**        *The Inquiry*

In his essay “The Symbolism of Poetry,” William Butler Yeats wrote the following:  
 All sounds, all colours, all forms, either because of their  
 preordained energies or because of long association,  
 evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions, . . . call down  
 among us certain disembodied powers, . . . and when sound,  
 and colour, and form are in a musical relation, they become . . .  
 one sound, one colour, one form. . . . (879)

Throughout his long literary career spanning half a century, Yeats remained faithful to this credo. The style and structure of his poems mature. His perspective changed with age. Yet the major themes remained the same. And through its philosophic exploration of love and despair, alienation and belonging, and national character, Yeats’s poetry continued to evoke emotions and feelings that somehow blended together into a unified whole, resonating with every individual’s quest for meaning in life, for understanding the complexities of the human condition.

In all of Yeats’s rich *oeuvre*, the search for the poet’s spiritual home assumes a prominent place. As Yeats’s poetry is seamless, it would be of great interest to pursue the evolution of this journey in its entirety, from the early, Celtic mythological period of “The Stolen Child,” through the national cataclysms of “September 1913” and “Easter 1916,” up until “The Circus Animals’ Desertion,” in which Yeats ends his



journey by completing the circle with a return to “the foul rag and bone shop of the heart” (*Selected Poems [SP]* 199). The following inquiry, however, has no such grand ambitions, as it merely wishes to illustrate some of the different stages of the poet’s quest by examining three of Yeats’s most renowned poems, “The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” “Sailing to Byzantium” and “Byzantium.”

Before embarking on a separate exploration of these poems, it is necessary to highlight their common themes and aspects in light of Yeats’s *oeuvre*. The structure of all three poems is based on the contrast of two conflicting concepts, or what Yeats would call gyres, which converge to a certain extent in the mind of the lyric hero, thereby giving birth to the tension of the world of the poem. In “The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” the gyres are the natural, inspired, faery lake of Innisfree versus the prosaic, greyish, dull streets of London. In “Sailing to Byzantium,” they are the youthful, joyous Ireland versus the ancient, wise Byzantium. In “Byzantium,” they are the supernatural night with its purging fires versus the dull day.

Written in 1890, “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” is the earliest of the three poems under consideration. It belongs to Yeats’s symbolist period, which is infused with lush, decadent imagery combined with traditional Celtic mythological symbols like the bard, the faery and the lake. These features of Yeats’s early poetry are manifest in the structure of “Innisfree.” The lines of the poem are substantially longer and more melodious than the “powerful and passionate syntax, and...complete coincidence between period and stanza” of his mature period (“General Introduction...” 886). As a result, the rhyme scheme, albeit a conventional ABAB, is almost dissolved in the musical flow of the quatrains. The imagery, while not as sentimental as that of “He Wishes for the Clothes of Heaven,” is nevertheless rather flamboyant and overwrought. The transition between subsequent lines and stanzas is also smooth and gentle, unlike the stark ellipsis of some of his later poems.

“The Lake Isle of Innisfree” begins with the determination of the lyric hero to forsake the everyday and start an idyllic life amidst nature. In essence, this is the Romantic appreciation of nature, combined with a deep dissatisfaction with the ennui

of conventional life. Although not elaborated upon, the spleen of the hero is described in the third stanza by way of a synecdoche (the “roadway” and the “pavement grey”). In his *Autobiography*, Yeats shed further light on the particulars of the circumstances associated with writing “Innisfree”: “when walking through Fleet Street (in London) very homesick I heard a little tinkle of water and saw a fountain in a shop-window which balanced a little ball upon its jet, and began to remember lake water” (103). In the context of the poem, however, the basic feeling of homesickness is transformed into a more abstract, universal emotion in accordance with the Symbolist fashion.

The envisioned life of solitude on the lake is described in the second stanza. This portrayal *par excellence* involves all five senses. In the perfect balance of nature, in a place simple in its fragile perfection and at the same time enchanting in its mythological, unreal, faery-like allure, where “the cricket sings,” where “midnight’s all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,” where the “evening [is] full of linnet’s wings,” the lyric hero finds contentment in contemplation and a sense of belonging: “I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow” (*SP* 12). The poet’s complete identification with the magical lake equates the qualities of the place with the qualities of his spiritual self, which is described indirectly.

The third and final stanza begins with the poet restating his firm resolve to pursue life at the magical lake. The alluring character of Innisfree is re-emphasised by the poet’s perpetual hearing of dripping lake water, which resonates with his “deep heart’s core.” Whether he actually goes there, however, is not resolved in the context of the poem. If it were, the poem would lose its intensity, which is the result of the convergence of the opposing gyres from which dramatic uncertainty arises. It can therefore be asserted that, albeit identifying and portraying his spiritual home, the young Yeats voyages on a journey of the imagination rather than a physical journey, as he physically remains on “the pavements grey.”

Yeats’s preference for a journey of the imagination becomes stronger with the years as his body grows weaker and his mind more astute. Consequently, how to deal with old age becomes one of the central themes in his later poetry. In “Sailing to

Byzantium” written in 1927, he already has to distinguish himself from the young. The basic confrontation in the poem is between the young Ireland he leaves in his mind, described in the first stanza, and the imaginary Byzantium for which he sets sail.

Even though he is forced to forsake his beloved Ireland, the lyric hero is not altogether depressed at the thought of this. On the one hand, Ireland is gay, youthful, bountiful with birds’ songs and lovers’ caresses and by no means a “country for old men” which causes feelings of sadness in the poet who once was part of it all. On the other hand, Ireland is no longer sufficient to his intellectual requirements precisely due to its exceedingly charming demeanour: “Caught in that sensual music all neglect/ Monuments of unageing intellect” (*SP* 102). In light of these developments, the exodus of the ageing lyric hero from the land of his younger and more impressionable days is both obligatory and desirable.

The second stanza justifies the poet’s journey to “the holy city of Byzantium” by explaining the nature of the new challenges facing an older man. His flesh decaying irreversibly, he is compelled to pursue intellectual growth and wisdom, “the “soul... studying/ Monuments of its own magnificence” (*SP* 102) as the only way to defy his mortality and get a glimpse of the eternal. Byzantium, the place where this mission can be accomplished. The choice of the fabled capital of the Byzantine Empire as the final destination of the spiritual journey here is by no means random. “I think that in early Byzantium,” Yeats wrote in *A Vision*, “maybe never before or since in recorded history, religious, aesthetic and practical life were one... The painter, the mosaic worker, the worker in gold and silver, the illuminator of sacred books, were almost impersonal, almost perhaps without the consciousness of individual design...” (279). It is interesting to observe the evolution of Yeats’s idea for the ideal spiritual home, from the specific, temporal, nature-defined Innisfree to the abstract Byzantium of timeless ideas and minds.

The third stanza is an apostrophe to the sages of Byzantium, all those wise men who have completed the journey before the poet, asking them to make the lyric

hero's journey easier by invoking the purging "holy fire" (*SP* 102) wherein his soul is to be immersed in order to be reborn into eternal life. The metamorphosis is described as freeing the soul from its carnal prison "fastened to a dying animal" (103) and losing the limitations of understanding of the individual in the conventional world. The poet implores, "consume my heart away" (102), which will enable the poet to enter "the artifice of eternity" (103).

The final stanza provides a glimpse into this coveted "artifice of eternity", in whose ultimate reality the poet's soul has been transformed into one of the golden mechanical nightingales which astonished the Holy Roman diplomat Liutprand of Cremona during his visit to the court of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. The poet emphasises his determination not to choose his new bodily form from nature, which is in stark contrast with his utter identification with it in "The Lake Isle of Innisfree." This is due to the fact that everything in nature is subject to death and decay, and therefore incongruous with the poet's aspirations. As a mechanical nightingale, on the other hand, he can perpetuate his poetic voice and attain artistic heights.

If "Sailing to Byzantium" relates primarily the voyage of the lyric hero to his new spiritual home and his expectations thereof, "Byzantium," its logical sequel written in 1932, creates an actual description of the place. Its position at the intersection of two conflicting gyres is depicted by revealing its inherently dialectic nature.

The action in the poem takes place in the time span between twilight and midnight, each stanza portraying a different scene. The first stanza signals the departure of the conventional, earthly world into oblivion, "the Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed" (*SP* 138) and the advent of the mysterious world that Byzantium really is. One image of this world is the gong and the dome of the cathedral Haghia Sophia, which is the epitome of Divine Wisdom. The complex, ethereal nature of this world is at once revealed with the description of the dome, which can be either starlit or moonlit. The world of Byzantium thus mocks the conventions of the normal world with its irrelevant and futile strife and fury.

A weird vision appears before the lyric hero in stanza two. An amorphous being without any specific characteristics, “an image, man or shade,/ Shade more than man, more image than a shade”(SP 139), it seems to have been invoked from the depths of Erebus. Its underworld characteristics notwithstanding, the vision is not necessarily evil. Like the cathedral, it is of a dual nature: “death-in-life and life-in-death” (139). The third stanza describes the very mechanical nightingale the poet wished to transform himself into in “Sailing to Byzantium.” Here, the nightingale is the material equivalent of the spiritual visions, which is why it is equally complex and dual in its essence.

The passing of time is evident at the beginning of the fourth stanza, which takes place at midnight, signifying the point of catharsis in the poem. At this hour, the long coveted, mesmerising, purging fire finally appears on the pavement of the Imperial palace. Around its flames, spirits gather and indulge themselves in the primeval rites of revelling and dancing, thereby achieving a state of trance “dying into a dance,/an agony of trance” (SP 139) and purging themselves of any terrestrial resemblance.

The intensity of the action in the penultimate stanza creates the explosion manifest in the last stanza, where the marble mosaics depicting dolphins explode into a multitude of confusion which gives birth to a new and somewhat disturbing reality: the reality of the “dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea” (SP 139). This underlines the explosive and ambivalent nature of the world of Byzantium, and at the same time provides a contrast to the peaceful waters of the Golden Horn and the Sea of Marmara that surround the earthly city of Byzantium in the light of day. It also shows that the “artifice of eternity” is no Garden of Eden, that ambivalence and volatility are as much a part of it as is peace and contentment. The notion is yet another radical departure from the spiritual home envisioned in “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” where tranquillity reigns undisturbed and “peace comes dropping slow”(SP 13).

One of the reasons for the dramatic transformation of the notion of an ideal spiritual home is Yeats’s increasing interest in Eastern mysticism and occultism late in his life. The artistic image of Byzantium is in many ways reminiscent of these

influences on the poet's *oeuvre*. Another reason is Yeats's amazing ability to remake himself constantly in a variety of ways and thus enable his poetic voice to remain fresh and relevant to the changing times long after the post-Romantics and the Symbolists sunk into oblivion. It should be noted that Yeats's vision of the poet's spiritual home continued to evolve steadily after "Byzantium" until his very last poems which closed the circle for him. At the end of his life, Yeats no longer felt the necessity to embark on emotional journeys. The pain and heartache of this world notwithstanding, he found himself enamoured with the wondrousness of being alive and was ready to "live it all over again" (*SP* 199). Because of this immense richness and resonance of Yeats's poetry and ideas, T.S. Eliot declared him to be the greatest poet of our time shortly after his death in 1940.

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# QUANTUM KEY DISTRIBUTION AND ITS ADVANTAGES OVER CLASSICAL

by Vivek Singh

Encryption techniques have been used for centuries to transmit valuable information in a secure manner. During the last century, these techniques gained tremendous importance especially due to World Wars I and II. Government leaders needed to send out highly-confidential information and strategies to their generals on the battlefield, and could not risk interception. However, over the past three or four decades, cryptography has increasingly come into civilian use. For example, banks and other financial institutions make extensive use of cryptographic techniques to protect valuable customer records [1]. Similarly, websites that feature payment gateways use encrypted communications to prevent theft.

In general, cryptography works by the use of a secret key. Using some sort of encryption algorithm, the sender, say Alice, combines the plain text of the message being sent with a “key” to obtain a scrambled message commonly known as the “cipher text.” The key is usually made up of randomly generated numbers. The cipher is then sent to the recipient, Bob, who reverses the process to recover the original message by simply combining the cipher text with the secret key using a decryption algorithm. No matter how hard Eve (an eavesdropper) tries, she cannot decipher

the scrambled message without the secret key. Thus, keys are vital to cryptography and hence, their security is of utmost importance. Furthermore, in order to use encryption/decryption algorithms, both parties must know the key beforehand and no third party must be able to intercept this key. This leads to the so-called key distribution problem [2, 3].

Traditionally, the problem of security is overcome by using a large number of bits for generating a key. The more bits one uses, the harder it is to crack the key. One special case of this technique involves the use of “one-time pads” where the key is as long as the message being sent. However, this method is useful only in scenarios where the message being sent is relatively short. In another common technique, the recipient sends an open “padlock” that the sender uses to protect the data being sent. Only the recipient knows how to open this “padlock” and hence this method is quite secure. Mathematically hard to reverse functions, known as “one way functions” are used to lock the data. For example, it is easy to multiply two prime numbers, say 47 times 41 to obtain 1927. But it is a lot harder to break down 1927 into its constituent prime factors.

However, given the right amount of computing horsepower and appropriate algorithms, classically encrypted data can always be cracked. With rapid technological growth, the only way to avoid losing valuable data to eavesdroppers and hackers or codebreakers is to use longer keys. But even longer keys will only hold up for a finite period of time. Besides, in 1994, Peter Shor demonstrated a quantum computing algorithm that can easily crack any type of classical encryption [2, 3]. Hence, newer methods of protecting data are required.

Enter quantum cryptography. With the power of quantum mechanics firmly behind it, quantum cryptography claims to provide absolute security, guaranteed by the laws of physics. Keys generated by exploiting quantum phenomena such as photon polarization and entanglement are subject to the laws of quantum mechanics. And the laws of quantum mechanics dictate that a measurement on a quantum state irreparably perturbs it. Since eavesdropping involves some sort of measurement, the



sender and the recipient are immediately alerted to the presence of an eavesdropper. They can then stop their transmission and the eavesdropper ends up with no useful information [2, 3, 4].

There are two primary methods used for quantum key generation and distribution. In 1984, Charles Bennett and Gilles Brassard introduced a protocol known as the BB84 protocol for key distribution using single-particle superposition. Here, an eavesdropper can monitor a signal, but since he or she needs to make a measurement, the sender and recipient can tell when the signal is being monitored. The other often used method involves EPR states, first suggested by Arthur Ekert. A simpler technique was later proposed by Bennett, Brassard, and Mermin which did not use Bell's Theorem, unlike Ekert's work. [4]

With single particle superposition, information is encoded into binary code and then the train of qubits representing the information is sent to the recipient (Bob). Photons with appropriate polarization states represent the 1's and 0's for the binary code and act as quantum bits or qubits. For example, a horizontally polarized photon can be assigned a "0" while a vertically polarized photon can be a "1." Thus, the sender (Alice) sends out a signal comprising of the photons arranged in a particular sequence that represents the key. However, this method opens up a vulnerability. An eavesdropper (Eve) could use a polarizing beamsplitter and get hold of the photons intended for Bob. Then, she could generate her own string of qubits and send those to Bob and he would never know the difference. Hence, a more secure protocol is needed [2, 3, 4].

Bennett and Brassard suggested an improved method. Under their proposed protocol, Alice and Bob use not one, but two different bases for the transmission. In addition to having polarization along the vertical and horizontal directions, they also use polarizations that are at  $45^\circ$  to the first pair. Furthermore, they randomly switch between the two bases during the transmission. For example, a 0-bit value can be encoded either as a horizontal state or a  $-45^\circ$  diagonal one. For a 1-bit value, they will use either a vertical state or a  $+45^\circ$  diagonal one [1, 2, 4]. At the receiving end, Bob

also randomly chooses an orientation for his detector and records his measurements. Statistically, this leads to Bob choosing the right polarization half the time and 45° rotated polarizations for the remaining half. Then, Bob informs Alice of the detector orientations he used for each incoming photon without revealing what measurement he made in each case. Alice then compares her orientations to the bases she chose for the transmission and tells Bob which ones agreed [4, 5].

The next step in this process is to check if an eavesdropper intercepted the communication. A small subset of the matching data is selected and compared. After accounting for normal signal degradation, if the data matches exactly, there was nobody intercepting the signal. This is absolutely guaranteed because Eve has no clue about the orientations used by Alice while sending the signal. Eve is in the same position as Bob and statistically speaking, will receive incorrect data a quarter of the time. The twenty-five percent figure is easy to calculate: Eve will use the wrong filter half the time and half of those incoming photons will have the wrong polarization. Then, to mask her presence, Eve would have to send back the data she received to Bob and since only a quarter of her data is accurate, Bob's data will match Alice's only a quarter of the time instead of the fifty percent figure without Eve. Thus, Alice and Bob can determine Eve's presence due to the errors introduced by her. Once Alice and Bob are sure there was no eavesdropping, they can use the good data to form a sequence of bits that will act as a key [2, 4].

Key distribution by this method involves the use of several quantum principles including superposition and measurement. The data Alice sends out are eigenstates in her own bases but anything Eve intercepts are superpositions in her bases. Hence, when Eve tries to measure anything, superposition ensures that she only measures one term of the superposition. Furthermore, since quantum mechanics is acausal, there's no way for Eve to infer the state of the detected photons. Also, she has no way of identifying what are good data since individual detections will look the same, whether the incoming signal is a superposition or not [4].

Research teams have succeeded in sending keys created by single-particle

superposition methods using optical fiber networks over distances stretching to about 70km. A research team comprising D. Stucki, N. Gisin, O. Guinnard, G. Ribordy, and H. Zbinden has successfully demonstrated quantum key distribution over 67km with a plug & play system. Their method made use of previously installed aerial and terrestrial fiber-optic cables and strong 1550nm laser pulses. It's one of the few demonstrations of quantum key distribution outside a laboratory environment. Their work led to id Quantique developing simple systems which can be connected to a computer with a USB port and optical fiber. Such systems are commercially available and facilitate key distribution over 60km or more and a net key rate of around 60 bits per second [6].

Another widely-used method of creating keys makes use of entanglement. Unlike single-particle superposition, EPR entangled states are utilized to give rise to bits that generate keys. So, instead of photon polarizations, particle spin is used to encode bits such that spin up (positive) represents a 0-bit value while spin down (negative) represents a 1-bit value [4, 7]. A source, such as a  $\text{KNbO}_3$  (potassium niobate) crystal being continuously pumped by a laser [8], generates EPR pairs and sends one particle to Alice and the other to Bob. Beyond this, the method for exchanging the key is very similar to that used for single-particle superposition. Both Alice and Bob make spin measurements on the particles they receive, along one of the two directions perpendicular to the direction of propagation of the particles using equipment such as Stern-Gerlach detectors. Both parties switch between the orientations randomly and then communicate their sequence of orientations to each other. However, they do not reveal the results of their measurements. Once they have compared their orientation data, they choose the data when their orientations matched and use that sequence of bits as a key [4].

Since the detections are entirely random, the sequence of 0's and 1's is also completely random. Also, EPR states obey anticorrelation which means that when Alice measures 1, Bob measures 0, and vice versa. Thus, if Bob inverts his results, he will end up with a sequence identical to Alice's. Hence, both parties now have the same key. If Eve intercepts one particle of an EPR pair and then transmits a similar

particle, the new particle is no longer entangled with the other one and hence, entirely uncorrelated. Therefore, when Alice and Bob compare their initial data, they will be alerted to the presence of an eavesdropper. It would seem that this method of exchanging keys violates relativity by transmitting information faster than the speed of light. However, the information comes not from the measured particles, but from the source of the EPR states and this information does indeed travel slower than light. Besides, the key was generated by a purely random process and no information was sent from Alice to Bob other than their open communication after the measurements have been made. Interestingly, the key doesn't quite exist until the measurement has been made. Since EPR particles carry no information prior to detection, correlation is only established after a measurement has been made. Thus, theoretically, Alice and Bob can receive and store a bunch of particles without measuring them at all. Whenever they need a key, they just carry out their respective measurements and generate a key. Thus, this leaves Eve with nonexistent information [2, 7].

The Group of Applied Physics at the University of Geneva has successfully demonstrated quantum key distribution over 30km of optical fiber using energy-time entangled photons. Their setup consists of an unbalanced Mach-Zender interferometer at each end, with photon counting detectors connected at every output. Under their method, four possible events can be detected. Both photons could go through the short arms of the interferometers or both could go through the long arms of the interferometers. With path differences matched to within a fraction of the coherence length of the photons, the detections for the short-short and long-long cases are indistinguishable, and yield two photon interferences as long as the coherence length of the photons is longer than the path difference. The other possibilities include one going through the short arm of Alice's interferometer and the long arm of Bob's interferometer and vice versa. Usually, this type of setup introduces dispersion effects which cannot be neglected. But this group presented ways for dispersion compensation that allowed them to extend the range to 30km [8].

Recently, a research group led by Anton Zeilinger at the University of Vienna was able to send encrypted messages over 140km. They used entangled photons

for their encryption. They aim to send such messages to satellites orbiting around 300 – 400km above the earth. Atmospheric effects could degrade the quality of the transmission but they believe that such a system is definitely feasible [9]. Their techniques could provide a boost to the distances over which quantum key distribution can function effectively.

Ultimately, quantum encryption techniques will replace classical methods due to the superior levels of security they offer. Eavesdropping yields no information without disturbing the photon states and the keys generated are stronger than the best classical keys. Work is being done to improve the distances over which keys can be sent as well as to reduce error rates. Unfortunately, using repeaters as in computer networks amounts to an eavesdropper so new ways of overcoming the distance restrictions are needed [2]. Manufacturers such as Magiq Technologies and id Quantique have already introduced commercial cryptography devices including ones that can be simply plugged into the USB port of a computer. Future research should focus on improving signal quality which will lead to keys being distributed over larger distances and on coming up with safeguards to prevent eavesdropping.

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# IMPERFECT LOVE IN THE *INFERNO*, *PARADISE LOST*, AND *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*

Allison Robb

The mind, the soul, and matters of the heart are entities not easily defined. In this realm of thought, an attempt to provide a clean, clear, and concise description of love simply does not seem possible or desirable. Dante's *Inferno*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* contain instances of divine, unconditional, and flawed love. While their respective arrays of triumphs are too numerous to list, perhaps their greatest achievement lies in a failure – a failure to simplify and alleviate confusion. These examples of such love challenge the mind of the reader in ways that few others can, ultimately leading to a deeper search for definition and recognition of life's proper path.

In one aspect, this trio of theorists presents love as a force with the ability to govern behavior, essentially dictating the most reliable path to be followed throughout life. In the *Inferno*, the reward for remaining true to the course is entrance into heaven. The souls whom Dante and Virgil encounter in hell have sinned during their lifetimes, and have since been assigned to a layer and punishment deemed appropriate for their wrongdoings on earth. Interestingly enough, the souls who have performed a violent sin of will are least at fault if they have sinned against others, whereas

injuring oneself and thinking harmfully of God are more serious. Dante depicts the barren realm of the suicidal spirits in stark shades of black and white, mirroring the deficiency of love near the end of life. The narrator's mention of the absence of a path reflects the concept of flawed love in relation to the disappearance of life's proper course. If these souls had loved enough to overcome scorn in life, the predestined route to heaven would have been a guarantee. In failing to love God's creation and creatures – themselves – they destroy themselves and bring into existence a forest of trees on which their souls hang.

These crucifix trees serve as a reminder of Christ's meaningful death and of his love for future mankind. And they form a meaningful end for these suicides who have failed in love.

Similarly, Milton depicts his Adam and Eve as figures who become aware of their gift of free will, but are still expected to stay on course by obeying the word of God. If the reader categorizes their devotion for the creator as love, it can be said that they, too, lose their way as they fall into sin. God has given them simple rules by which they should live. But since their strength of love for obedience is not great enough to overcome the curiosity and desire, they are tossed from the imposed path and ultimately doomed to endure the saddest fall known to man. In the cases of Dante's suicides and Milton's Adam and Eve, each figure encounters an unpleasant fate as a result of imperfect love for God's word. They can each look forward to feelings of misery in the near future, but the origins of flawed love have come to determine their destiny. Hence, the suicides' taking of their own lives is only seen as an indirect act of violence against God in hell, calling for their placement to be less severe than those who would injure him directly. Adam and Eve's unequivocal disobedience of God's word, however, leads to an arguably harsher fate, in which they will forever be the originators of sin for all mankind. Thus, both Milton and Dante have captured an underlying message concerning love's dictation of life's course, in which a more severe divergence will lead to a more drastic punishment.

Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* manages to contribute an extremely similar



yet secular idea of imperfect devotion, in which a leader's love for his city's ways cannot overcome his romantic sentiments for another. While the reader may question the sincerity with which Antony expresses his love for Cleopatra, it immediately becomes clear that his feelings for her are the result of his straying from the typical path of Roman duty, honor, and obedience. He simply does not have the capacity to love these values in a way that would keep him on the path of effective Roman leadership. To his comrades, he has become someone other than himself. His flawed love for duty culminates in his abandonment of the Roman course of pride, focus, effective leadership, and undying devotion for his position and nation.

Here, rather than *God's* word dictating his destined course, Antony's story has been written by his great predecessors, his peers, and his loyal followers. And just as Milton and Dante have demonstrated in their respective works, perhaps the brand of love that keeps us on the "right" path does not lead to the most meaningful life. We are thus encouraged to question any and all possible routes or established definitions as we embark on the epic journey, just as Dante begins his. In addition, there are certain entities which, like Shakespeare's crocodile, seem to lack external standards by which they can be measured. Love *is* love and truth *is* truth, but what is this road paved for us beforehand? Love absent of flaws may serve as a perfect guide for a possible journey in life, but it is the questioning of the emotion and the observance of imperfect examples that concludes with the establishment of a unique and momentous course. Thus, the suicides seek an end to their torment, Adam and Eve tackle a path of truth and knowledge, and Antony chases an enchanting Egyptian love.

Dante, Milton, and Shakespeare also examine another aspect of love – the intense attraction of what seems a natural desire. Canto V of the *Inferno* depicts the section of hell in which those undone by love or lust reside, doomed to be forever swept off their feet. We absorb the story of Paolo and Francesca, a couple whose forbidden relationship has led to their brutal deaths. The location of this circle within hell is not purely a result of impropriety in life, but more importantly for the plot, a consequence for love's misdirection; they have moved away from God. This again causes the reader to question the value of what is correct and what is natural. In order

to justify their actions, the couple places much of the blame on a book whose plot creates the initial spark for their affair, thus shedding light on the truly blinding effects of love. In their minds, they will hold anyone accountable but themselves, when it seems that their first priority should include the acceptance of responsibility for a natural connection. The most irresistible loves may seem most meaningful. Paolo's and Francesca's inclination to commit this act deemed as sin by society may have resulted in their expulsion from earth, but resistance would have been seen as a sin against the heart and instinct.

Many of Cleopatra's speeches and actions also reveal her as a character undone by love; her obsession with Antony drives her to discover his true level of devotion. Her efforts to deceive him by spreading news of her death travel one step beyond the idea of love as a natural feeling; Cleopatra tries to make their love essentially perfect, resulting in an inevitable backfiring of events. The imperfections in their relationship certainly cause frustrations and setbacks, but the natural quality of their love keeps it fresh and exciting. In the end, the path to perfection culminates in unnecessary and regretful tragedy. This scene of Antony's self-mutilation and eventual death provides a significant contrast with the deaths of his comrades; their honest respect and love for Antony suggest the possibility of a more noble death. Enobarbus' suicide is a consequence of nothing more than his regretted betrayal of Antony, before which he states: "O Antony, / Nobler than my revolt is infamous, / Forgive me in thine own particular, / But let the world rank me in register / A master-leaver and a fugitive. / O Antony! O Antony!" (IV. ix. 21-26) These emotionally charged exclamations precede a death which seems much more gracious and dignified than Antony's; for Enobarbus' suicide is an act of natural, brotherly love, while Cleopatra's desire to instill unconditional devotion within Antony through unnatural means ends in bitter heartache.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton portrays Eve as a being who recognizes the true worth of choice and freedom soon after her creation. Her great argument includes the question of worthwhile obedience; she wonders how any meaning can become attached to her actions without a test of strength, thus linking the devices of love's

worth, natural inclination, and the challenge of free will:

And what is faith, love, virtue unassayed,  
 Alone, without exterior help sustained?  
 Let us not then suspect our happy state  
 Left so imperfect by the Maker wise  
 As not secure to single or combined.  
 Frail is our happiness if this be so

And Eden were no Eden thus exposed! (Book IX, lines 335-341)

Thus, it seems she, too, only finds value in deeds that are natural extensions of the soul. While in the *Inferno* God places Francesca in hell for her choice to pursue a love natural to her, His actions in Milton's epic may suggest a change in character. He acknowledges the significance of the free will embedded within Adam, Eve, and future mankind by sending Raphael to explain the depth of this power. Hence, the individuals whose primary concern is not adoration of God are punished in the *Inferno* for displaying imperfect love. *Paradise Lost*, however, presents a God who values the idea of loving voluntarily; this concept of deliberate undertaking becomes the origin for any and all meaning throughout life. In Cleopatra's case, she appears to go so far as to force perfection among a sea of flaws. Her concern for her status as the chief focus of Antony's thoughts becomes obsessive and dangerous despite his earlier professions of absolute love. This eventually works against her, serving as the flaw responsible for their downfall. Francesca, Eve, and Cleopatra each possesses a love that is effortless from the start, whether it be an incontrollable affection for another or a passionate desire to test one's feelings. This trio of individuals, like this trio of authors, understands the value in choice, intellect, and adherence to instinct. And while these heroines may fall as a result of their actions, they manage to stand out from the generations of leaves who have fallen before them; Francesca, Eve, and Cleopatra have to some extent been undone by love and have discovered the meaning in their choices as well as their plunge.

Thus, Dante's *Inferno*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* appear to unite as a team of triumvirs unable to provide us with solid answers, definitions, or explanations throughout their works; we simply receive

questions, contrasts, similarities, and impeccable accounts of imperfect love. In fact, these contrasts are numerous: the religious and secular, love's existence as natural and voluntary, the moral path and the just path, the God who demands unconditional love and the God who values choice, and the establishment of meaning in the perfections and the flaws all coexist as attributes worthy of discussion. But if every aspect were able to coincide precisely, this would not be a fair assessment of love, life, mortality, or the human condition, since these features are simultaneously indescribable and resist precise definition. Love may keep us on the right path, but its true value lies in the flaws of the stonework. Hence, these epic characters come to understand the implications of instinctual love as well as the idea that flawed love can lead us on a predetermined yet incorrect course. These figures support each other in their quest for answers, providing flawless examples of imperfection for the reader. In the end, it is their courage and determination to create their own paths that translates into a remarkable message.

# REFLECTING ON AUSCHWITZ

Leah Prestamo



To the children: They took away your lives; we return the memory.

Introductory note:

*In March of 2006, Adelphi University held a symposium about business ethics and the Holocaust. After the symposium, I was offered the opportunity to visit several Holocaust sites in Poland.*

*Of the two essays that follow, the first is my initial response to the Holocaust Symposium, and the second is what I wrote upon my return from Poland. I believe what I wrote in the first essay has some merit, which, when viewed through the lens of the second, may perhaps make a stronger point than I was initially able to.*

### Can the Holocaust Occur Again?

*In every part of the world, wherever you begin by denying the fundamental liberties of mankind, and equality among people, you move toward the concentration camp system, and it is a road on which it is difficult to halt.*

– Primo Levi

During the Holocaust Symposium at Adelphi University, the question of whether the Holocaust could ever happen again, given the state of our current world, was raised and answered with an ambiguous, “maybe.” This question struck me with terrible force, as I began to think about the lessons humanity should have carried away from an event as devastating and purely wicked as the Holocaust, lessons that have not been sufficiently learned. The economically influenced responses of the wealthy nations of the world to genocide and terrible breeches of human rights in recent times give us no reason to believe that the Holocaust could not happen again and have, in fact, already allowed mini-Holocausts to leave bloody marks on the past few decades.

Before I continue, it is necessary to point out that the Holocaust was a unique historical moment for a number of reasons. Hitler’s government had legally come to power and had legitimate authority in Germany. Furthermore, the position of the Jews was unambiguous; there had been no civil war, Jewish uprising, or other instance of violence or strife which could make the Jews a logical target for annihilation by

the Nazis. The Jews' only crime was their ethnic heritage – a crime for which they could atone only through their permanent removal, by death or expulsion, from Germany. In this sense, the Holocaust had little to do with the Jews, as they bore the brunt of a racial prejudice they had done nothing to create and could do nothing to remedy. These facts stand out in contrast against most cases of genocide today which often have long histories of violent conflict, or are carried out by illegitimate governments or other groups. Nevertheless, we cannot reasonably claim that circumstances identical to the Holocaust are an impossibility today.

In order to believe that the Holocaust could not happen again, we would have to see at least one of two things in the modern world: either international indignation at genocide and immediate action being taken against it, or nations, particularly wealthy nations, beginning to give human rights higher priority than economic interest. We have seen neither. In fact, over the past few decades, the world's most powerful nations have shown a complete unwillingness to do anything to stand against genocide. In what is perhaps the greatest atrocity of modern times, the wealthy nations of the world were careful to avoid labeling the situation a genocide when the slaughter in Rwanda began in April of 1994 and continued for approximately three months (“Rwanda: How the Genocide Happened”). No action was taken either by the UN or by powerful nations to end the killing. Although many nations glibly discussed how terrible the situation in Rwanda was, no intervention was made (Powers).

Economic interests played a huge role in the failure of the UN or any other nation to declare the situation in Rwanda a case of genocide. Because of articles adopted by the UN in 1948 requiring all nations that signed them to intervene in cases of genocide, the nations that had signed this law were actively interested in masking the reality of the situation. It would not have been economically beneficial to any of these nations to send troops into Rwanda. There was no land to be gained, no profit to be made by intervention, and the conflict there did not threaten these nations' interests. In order to avoid the expenditure of saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, the situation was conveniently misrepresented so that action

would not be necessary.

Rwanda is certainly not the only example of genocide in the modern world. The present situation in Darfur is another terrible example of genocide which has been allowed to go unchecked. The conflict in Darfur began in February of 2003 and has continued through to the present. While the members of the UN have debated whether this situation qualifies as genocide, the people of Darfur have been allowed to suffer and die for more than three years. Quibbling over terms has made it easy for the nations powerful enough to intervene in the situation to instead sit by and do nothing (Powers).

These facts show us the chilling reality of our times. When human life is weighed against economic interests, it is human life that comes up short. This is precisely the attitude that allowed the Holocaust to occur the first time. In Dr. Peter Hays' presentation at the symposium, he discussed the fact that part of the reason there was little resistance to the German policy regarding the Jews was because no one had anything to gain by resisting save honor which would only come if Germany lost the war. It was a lack of potential gain from resistance which left the Jews no ally to speak out in their behalf. In the present day, the same is true for the victims of genocide all over the world.

So what is more important to us, human life or economic interests? It has become more and more obvious in recent years that governments do not act in behalf of humanity unless there is some potential for payoff, an attitude which is accompanied by tacit endorsement of breeches of human rights and the silent but clear statement that some human life is not worth fighting for. This being the case, what indication have we that if a legally elected government should come to power and begin the mass murder of an ethnic group – or perhaps several – that any stand would be made against it? To put an end to this trend, the citizens of powerful nations must put tremendous pressure on politicians, making inaction so unbearable that no government will consider it.



In closing, I return to Primo Levi, with whose quotation I began. In speaking of the Holocaust, he wrote,

I do not find it permissible to explain a historical phenomenon by piling all the blame on a single individual. . . . Monsters exist, but they are too few in number to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the common men, the functionaries willing to believe and act without asking questions. (393-4)

We have no right to sit by and watch as people die, nor have we the right to blame these deaths on government officials; responsibility lies equally with all of us. Because we can look back at the Holocaust and see the effects of passivity, we must take that knowledge and use it to ensure that such atrocities will never again come upon the world. To this point in history, we have failed to learn this lesson. We cannot claim ignorance; we already know too well what can happen if racial conflict, ethnic cleansing, and genocide are allowed to go unchecked. Consequently, we must open our eyes to the fact that, if things remain unchanged in the world, we may see the rise of another Hitler and witness another bloody Holocaust. History need not be allowed to repeat itself when we have both the knowledge and the power necessary to prevent it. Are we going to give human rights a higher priority than personal gain and force our governments to do the same? The way we answer this question may determine whether or not another Holocaust ever ravages history.

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## DESTINATION: AUSCHWITZ

I stepped tentatively under the words, *Arbeit Macht Frei*, half-expecting the earth to implode or the skies to rend themselves in grief. Nothing happened. Glancing at those around me, I discovered a look of anticipation that mirrored my own thoughts. Despite my senses, it was impossible to believe that here, in Auschwitz, the sun might shine, birds sing, and the breeze whisper around the corners of barracks and gas chambers.

If, before I left, anyone had asked me what I expected to find in Auschwitz, I could have answered in a word: despair. In my mind, the Holocaust was proof of only two things, first, of the extent to which humans can torture and abuse their own kind, and second, of how painfully foolish we are as a species, refusing to learn from our mistakes. That humanity in general had, either willingly or through neglect, failed to take a lesson from the Holocaust was the one thing I was entirely certain of, and this caused me horrible discomfort, because I was sure it would be all I'd see in Poland. To me, the Holocaust was a horrible chapter in human history and we were writing its ending: a tragedy.

The trip began with a 24-hour orientation, which included presentations from an array of professors and authors, all of whom specialized in different aspects of the Holocaust. Additionally, a number of students were asked to speak about their motivation for going on the trip and what they hoped to learn. One young woman

in particular made a great impression upon me when she said she was traveling to Poland to question life and God, but in the end, to make peace with it all again. From their responses, I could see those around me were moved by her words; it seemed I alone was unconvinced. Her certainty further amplified my doubts that I would be able to make peace with life in the aftermath of despair. How, after I looked into the face of evil and questioned God and life and humanity and even myself, could I find a way to make peace with anything again? I felt I was about to undergo a shipwreck. When all we cling to is destroyed, what hope have we of salvaging the pieces? And so it was with a sense of foreboding that I left for Poland.

From its outset, the trip defied my expectations. My first moments in Auschwitz encapsulate the feeling of utter confusion I felt during the majority of my stay. Nowhere I looked could I see the devastation I had expected, and far from comforting me, this disturbed me all the more. Nature itself seemed joined in a conspiracy to compound the infamy of the Holocaust. Auschwitz seemed a sunny, pleasant place. Auschwitz-Birkenau was even worse, because there, in between the barracks and gas chambers, thick green grass and wild flowers grew in abundance. Treblinka also was covered in greenery and flowers. Does nature mock the dead? Where were the flowers when these camps were teeming with people living in mud and filth?

I and those with me mourned collectively and individually as we made our way through Auschwitz and Auschwitz-Birkenau. But as we pressed on, I became less and less certain of what this mourning meant. In Birkenau, we held a ceremony at which several Holocaust survivors said Kaddish for relatives and friends they lost in the Holocaust. Although I could not understand the words, I stood by the stage crying openly, until Irving Roth, one of the survivors, came down to where I was and brushed my tears from my face. He left my thoughts in further disarray. For what was I mourning? What *right* had I to mourn? His loss was actual, his grief something concrete, and, though I admired his strength of character, I did not understand how it could be that while I mourned, he comforted me.

Our visit to Majdanek came toward the end of the trip and when we arrived and I once again saw flowers and sunshine, I was unpleasantly unsurprised. Majdanek was the worst of all the camps. In addition to nature's apparent treachery, Majdanek still holds a tremendous black mound of human ash and bone which makes the very air around it feel heavy and thick. I and several others sank to the ground outside one of the gas chambers, crushed by the atmosphere and the enormity of what had happened there.

Suddenly, everything changed. Inside the gas chamber, we discovered a pair of birds had built a nest in the rafters and were laying eggs inside: new life emerging in a place of death. The thought was staggering. Immediately, the flowers and the sunshine appeared to be nature's way of continuing on, of refusing to allow death and destruction to have a permanent hold on the camps. This was the triumph of life over death.

As we moved on, these thoughts became stronger. In Majdanek more than any other camp we were told of uprisings and resistance among the prisoners. At one place in the camp, there is a column the prisoners were forced to build as a symbol of Nazi greatness. However, whenever the prisoners found ashes of their murdered comrades, they placed this ash under the column, so that when they were forced to salute it, instead of saluting Hitler and the Nazis, they could genuinely salute in respect for their friends.

Tales like this made me feel a certain pride in my humanity that I had not felt previously during the week. If this sort of strength and heroism and ultimate triumph of life were part of the story of Auschwitz and Majdanek, then here, at last, I had found a way to make peace again with everything the week had called into question. Further, I realized that perhaps this was the thread which might tie the entire experience together. Perhaps the basis for my mourning also rested in my humanity. This was the conclusion I drew: my ability to make peace and my right, and responsibility, to mourn and remember were permanently united one with the other.

I think it is entirely fitting and proper that those of us who remain behind should mourn the memory of the Holocaust. We must do so, or we commit a sin against humanity. But in the midst of the pain, we must learn to recognize that all the beauty and the mystery of life hangs in the balance between hope for the future and sorrow for the past, in reaching for tomorrow without letting go of yesterday, and in the paradoxical moments when Irving Roth can wipe tears of grief from my face. For the loss belongs not solely to the survivors, but to all of us who choose to remember. So too can we share the knowledge that the story of the Holocaust is not merely one of sorrow, though there is that, nor of devastation, though that is also present, but that it is also a story about the ultimate triumph of life and the human spirit.



Irving Roth in Treblinka

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