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## Table of Contents

<b>Editor's Preface</b> .....	i
<b>ARTICLES</b>	
<b>Coming Across Home: Thomas Hürlimann's <i>Heimkehr</i> (Homecoming)</b> .....	111
Thomas Hürlimann'nın <i>Heimkehr</i> adlı eserinde Eve-Dönüş	
<b>Adelheid Rundholz</b>	
Johnson C. Smith University, US	
<b>Man Engendered: Effeminizing Louis Zukofsky</b> .....	123
Louis Zukofsky Şiirleri ve Şiirin Cinsiyeti	
<b>Dror Abend-David</b>	
University of Florida, US	
<b>Enlightenment, Utopia and Encarnalization of Swift's Houyhnhnms in Carter's <i>Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman</i></b> .....	141
Aydınlanma, Ütopya ve Carter'in <i>Doktor Hoffman'ın Arzu Makinaları</i>	
Romanında Swift'in Houyhnhnm'lerinin Şehvanileştirilmesi	
<b>Fırat Karadaş</b>	
Hatay Mustafa Kemal University, Turkey	
<b>Axel Honneth's Critical Response to Habermas's Critique of Marx</b> .....	155
Habermas'ın Marx Eleştirisine Axel Honneth'in Eleştirel Yanıtı	
<b>Anthony Lack</b>	
Alamo College in San Antonio, US	
<b>Comic Vision and Comedic Devices in Kingsley Amis's <i>Lucky Jim</i></b> .....	172
Kingsley Amis'in <i>Lucky Jim</i> Romanında Mizah Anlayışı ve Komedi Unsurları	
<b>M. Ayça Vurmay</b>	
Hatay Mustafa Kemal University, Turkey	
<b>"Put on that red lipstick": Cross-cultural Analysis of Solutions in Advice Articles of Women's Magazines</b> .....	187
Kadın Dergilerindeki Çözüm Önerilerinin Kültürlerarası Karşılaştırması	
<b>Reem Adib Lulu</b>	
Sharifah Nurul Huda Alkaff	
University Brunei Darussalam, Brunei	
<b>The Failed Struggle for Recognition in Peter Abelard's Autobiographical Letter <i>Historia calamitatum</i></b> .....	205
Peter Abelard'ın Otobiyografisi:	
<i>Historia Calamitatum</i> 'daki Tanınmaya Yönelik Başarısız Çabası	
<b>Ana Irimescu Morariu</b>	
Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes, France	
<b>Contributors to the Current Issue</b> .....	220



## Editor's Preface

Mustafa Kirca  
Editor-in-Chief  
Çankaya University, Turkey

We, as of December 2019, are proud to present to our readers the 26th issue of the *Çankaya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. In this issue of the journal, we continue to publish results and findings of national and international scientific researches in humanities and social sciences. The current issue has been intended to cover a wide variety of interdisciplinary studies from multiple fields that fall within the scope of the journal. This has been made possible with the contributions of the scholars who shared their valuable studies with us, our reviewers who devoted their valuable time and energy to evaluating and commenting on the papers, and the colleagues at Çankaya University who put their efforts to realize this project.

We are glad to present to the readers unique papers on gender and cultural identity, home and the question of belonging, recognition, subjectivation and self-realization, specifically on the works of Axel Honneth, Louis Zukofsky, Angela Carter, Kingsley Amis, and Peter Abelard, and at the intersection of different areas of the human sciences. The articles revolve around the problematics of recognition and politics of identity formation in a variety of texts. We, as the editorial board, would like to thank wholeheartedly all the authors for their scholarly contributions and the team of referees for their reviews once more. We owe special thanks to Dr Gülden Taner and Dr Şule Akdoğan from the University of Warwick for their tremendous work as the guest editors for this issue. We also like to thank the Board of Trustees and the Presidency of Çankaya University, and the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences for their continuous support.

*Çankaya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* is an open-access, double-blind peer-reviewed academic journal which publishes national and international works in humanities and social sciences. Sharing and expanding the new perspectives in humanities and social sciences is of primary focus for the journal, which aims to reach wider audience through its fully open-access policy. We aim to facilitate a more expanded and participatory academic discussion on the theoretical and/or applied scholarly work and to inform scholars and public about recent developments in the fields that fall within the scope of the journal. This year *Çankaya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* is listed in the *MLA* and *Copernicus Index*. We will continue to strive for its inclusion in other prominent scientific research databases.

*Çankaya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, which has years of publishing experience behind it, is a continuation, albeit in a slightly shifting focus of interest, of the *Çankaya University Journal of Arts and Sciences* continuously published between 2004 and 2010.

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# Coming Across Home: Thomas Hürlimann's *Heimkehr* (Homecoming)

Thomas Hürlimann'nın *Heimkehr* adlı eserinde Eve-Dönüş

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## Abstract

Surely, the archetype of all those who returned home, Homer's Odysseus, often thought of Ithaca while being away from his homeland. Dreaming of home from abroad can express a yearning for being there and for nostos (homecoming). Odysseus' return, however, does not constitute a happy reunion with home and family. Instead, it first sparks an act of ruthless violence when Odysseus massacres the usurpers who are trying to take possession of his wife and his throne. Homer's insight here suggests the recognition that home cannot be thought of or grasped as something that actually exists, because both "home" and the one thinking of it are subject to perpetual change. Twentieth-century thinkers seem to concur and describe "modern man" as incapable of 'dwelling' (Martin Heidegger) and as beings who are trapped in a backward-looking gaze (history, memory, home) while relentlessly being hurled to the (unknown) future (Walter Benjamin). In *Heimkehr* (Homecoming, 2018), renowned and prize-winning Swiss philosopher, dramatist, and writer Thomas Hürlimann introduces Heinrich Übel. This protagonist suffers a series of physical (and mental) displacements. The more he thinks of home and about going home, the more he recognizes that there is no such thing as "home" in the world of life experiences. Hürlimann's text is a picaresque quasi coming-of-age-novel (Bildungsroman) that is permeated with allusions to Homer, Gottfried Keller, E.T.A. Hoffmann, the Bible, and more. The intertextual elements of the novel serve to "deterritorialize" the concept of "home" in the homeless protagonist's mind and lead to his realizations that home is a location in the imagination and that literature is the guide to this place. Hürlimann's novel models a way of "dwelling" in the 21st-century world that can be of interest to all who are "displaced"—voluntarily or not.

**Keywords:** (post)modernity, novel, nostos, home, Hürlimann, *Heimkehr*.

## Öz

Hiç kuşkusuz, eve dönen herkesin arketipi olan Homer'ın Odysseus'u, anavatanından uzaktayken Ithaca'yı düşündü. Uzaklardayken evi hayal etmek, orada olmak ve eve dönüş için olan özlemi ifade edebilir. Ancak Odysseus'un dönüşü, ev ve aile ile mutluluk dolu bir birleşme anlamına gelmez. Aksine Odysseus, karısına ve tahtına sahip olmak isteyen gaspçıları katlettiğinde acımasız bir şiddet eylemine yol açar. Homer'ın buradaki anlayışı, evin gerçekte var olan bir yer olarak düşünülemeyeceğini bizlere kabul ettirmektedir çünkü hem "ev" hem de onu düşünen kişi sürekli bir değişime tabidir. 20. yüzyıl düşünürleri, "modern insanı," "hane"den aciz olarak (Martin Heidegger) ve bilinmeyen bir geleceğe savrulan (Walter Benjamin), nostalji içerisine hapsolmuş varlıklar olarak tanımlıyor. *Heimkehr*'de (Homecoming, 2018), ünlü ve ödül sahibi İsviçreli filozof ve yazar olan Thomas Hürlimann, ana kahramanı

Heinrich Übel'i bizlerle buluşturmaktadır. Heinrich Übel, bir dizi fiziksel (ve zihinsel) değişimlere maruz kalır. Ev ve eve dönüş kavramları hakkında düşündükçe yaşam deneyimleri dünyasında "ev" kavramının olmadığını fark eder. Hürlimann'ın metni, Homer, Gottfried Keller, E.T.A Hoffmann, İncil ve daha fazlasına göndermelerde bulunan, pikaresk bir oluş romandır (Bildungsroman). Romanın metinlerarası unsurları yurtsuz olan kahramanı zihnindeki "ev" kavramından uzaklaştırmaya hizmet eder ve evin hayal gücünde bir yer olduğunu, edebiyatın ise bu yerin rehberi olduğunu anlamasına yol açar. Hürlimann'ın romanı, 21. Yüzyılın dünyasında isteyerek veya istemeyerek yerinden edilmiş herkesin ilgisini çekebilecek yeni bir "ev" kavramını modellemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** (Post)modern, Anlatı, Ev, Eve Dönüş, Hürlimann, *Heimkehr*.

Robert Browning's poem, "Home Thoughts from Abroad," written in 1845 while its author was spending time in northern Italy, casts the poet in the role of a traveler who is yearning for his beloved home in England: "Oh, to be in England / [...] In England—now." At the same time, it seems clear that the poet celebrates his home precisely because he is not there. In other words, the poet's feelings about home become most acute away from home. The idea of home, as a particular place and, simultaneously, as a feeling of belonging, has occupied the imagination of uncounted novelists and poets, like Browning. Indeed, "the desire for [...] home," as Renee Mathis writes, "provides one of the strongest themes for authors, poets, and artists of all kind to weave throughout their works" 2). Possibly, the power and persistence of the perennial home topos stem from its antiquity—the idea seems to be as old as humankind. And, apparently, it has never been an 'easy', unambiguous, or thoroughly positive concept. The Biblical tradition, for example, describes humanity's first home to be the garden of Eden. Yet, as the story goes, humankind is not capable of dwelling in this home; human imperfection leads to permanent eviction from the 'original' home.<sup>1</sup> So, from the beginning, it seems, 'home' is a fragile concept that harbors no guarantees of permanence. Next comes Odysseus, whose *nostos*, or homecoming, famously takes ten years. When the Homeric hero finally returns to Ithaca, he finds a large group of men occupying his palace; they are aiming to win Penelope's affection and, especially, to replace the long absent king. To lay claim on his house again, Odysseus has to resort to violence and murders all impostors. Odysseus, in turn, is recognized only because of a scar whose origin the king's old nurse can confirm. In the archetypal homecoming situation, therefore, it is already clear that neither 'home' nor the one returning home are fixed entities; both are subject to change. Furthermore, the scar that triggers recognition is symbolic of the wandering and migrating Odysseus as an injured individual—and the state of homelessness is the impairment he has to suffer. Thus, a home can be lost; if one leaves home, it may be arduous to return, and a successful return may involve the need to fight for recognition and for what one thought was one's own.

<sup>1</sup> The account in "Genesis" has drawn a multitude of readings, interpretations, and critiques. A discussion of those is beyond the scope of the present article, and the only point I wish to make here is one about 'the loss of home'.



Some twentieth-century thinkers worked with the figure of Odysseus and came to assert that homelessness is humanity's natural state—as opposed to a sense of belonging or being home. Erich Auerbach, for instance, chooses Odysseus as the subject of the first chapter of his most impactful book, *Mimesis*, which is written during the author's exile from Nazi Germany in Istanbul. Significantly, he describes the whole world as a place of exile in a different essay. In "Philology and Weltliteratur," Auerbach quotes Hugo of St. Victor's "mundus totus exilium est" (the whole world is exile) and suggests that this viewpoint "is a good way [...] for one who wishes to earn a proper love for the world" (17). It appears that the one who can 'properly' learn to love the world has to be a wanderer. While Auerbach was writing his *Mimesis* in exile in Istanbul, Marx Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno also became fascinated by Odysseus. The fellow exiles (also from Nazi Germany, writing in the United States) interpret Odysseus as an allegory of their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, a project whose goal is "to explain why humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of 'barbarism'" (*Dialectic of Enlightenment* xiv). For Horkheimer and Adorno, the decisive factor is that it is Odysseus' very homesickness that generates his adventures. Moreover, home is likened to a sense of having escaped (all dangers): "Speech itself, language in its contrast to mythical song, is the Homeric law of escape, for language permits to fix the past dangers in memory. Not for nothing is the remembering Odysseus time and again also the narrator" (Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* 67).<sup>2</sup>

Odysseus' incessant movement dissolves any sense of home. Home becomes accessible again only through Odysseus remembering his repeated escapes. Importantly, this 'home' is not like a place of origin, not a place of provenance anymore. In Ottmar Ette's words, Odysseus "is a homecoming homeless person, a homeless homecoming person [and he is] the embodiment of an ultimately perpetual dialectic of homelessness [...] Out of his many escapes emerges a home that did not exist in this form before" (34). It is significant to note that "if home means to have escaped, this also means that escaping is one way, or many ways, to shape home, to capture home in a (movable) picture" (Ette 36). The twenty-first century, it seems, has created more Odysseus-like individuals than any other time. Put differently, the contemporary postmodern and globalized world is seeing a record number of people 'on the move', and indications are that the numbers will rise in years to come.<sup>3</sup> The question about how one can create a home and a sense of belonging in this world, accordingly, becomes ever more urgent.

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own. Also, in the interest of economy, that is, word count, I am refraining from giving the original language text here and throughout the article.

<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe asserts that "[m]igration is a defining feature of the 21st century world" ("Migration Statistics"). According to the United Nations Report "Trends in International Migration" (from 17 September 2019), a comparison of the percentage of people living in a country other than their native place of birth has risen from 2.6% (in 1960) to 3.3% (in 2015). The same report states that "[t]he number of international migrants reaches 272 million, continuing an upward trend in all world regions [and marks] an increase of 51 million since 2010" ("Trends in International Migration"). The report

A very idiosyncratic example of a protagonist, a postmodern Odysseus, attempting to construct a sense of home is Heinrich Übel in Thomas Hürlimann's 2018 novel *Heimkehr* (*Homecoming*). Thomas Hürlimann was born in Switzerland—on 21 December 1950, which is also the exact date he assigns to the protagonist in his novel. His literary debut took place in 1981 with a collection of short stories. Since then, he has been a prolific writer of not just prose, but also of plays and scripts. He has received numerous awards in Switzerland and Germany and published *Homecoming*, his latest work, five years after he finished writing it. He spent the interim reworking the novel while he was overcoming a serious illness. Today, Hürlimann lives and works as a freelance writer in Switzerland and in Leipzig, Germany, where he has taught at the German Institute of Literature since 2000.

*Homecoming* is a dizzyingly wild and non-linear narrative whose protagonist is a contemporary Odysseus by the name of Heinrich Übel.<sup>4</sup> Movement dominates the novel's plot and also its language/style, genre, and realms of reference. The language, at turns, is (regular) narrative, comical, cynical, satirical, ironic, or parodistic, for instance. One critic observes that the novel's language "is in a state of metamorphosis. It changes constantly, sometimes from one sentence to the next" (Kuhn, "Trügerische Heimkehr"). The novel contains elements of the picaresque, the coming-of-age-novel (*Bildungsroman*), the adventure novel, the mystery novel, and the romance novel. *Homecoming* includes references to popular culture, mythology, fairy tales, history, psychology, philosophy, and literature.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the incessant movement on all levels will lead Heinrich to the 'realm of references' (literature, in particular) as the place where a home can be built.

The novel begins on a bridge where Heinrich has just suffered an accident due to the road's icy condition:

... up high a point, a blink, a wink, as star, a satellite, or an airplane . . . The car is lying on its driver's side. A front wheel is still turning and swirls a few snowflakes into a thin flame. From beneath the smashed radiator creeps a pool of gasoline or oil, or both, shiny like a photographic negative.

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stresses that "[m]igrants currently comprise 3.5 per cent of the global population" ("Trends in International Migration"). The report's figures suggest that rates of migration are not only rising, but that they do so at an accelerated pace. It appears that ever larger numbers of people will have to find novel ways 'to capture home in a (movable) picture'. For the rise in worldwide displacement and the rapid changes entailed by these displacements, see Pico Iyer's *The Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls, and the Search for Home*. Furthermore, if it is challenging to create a sense of home, it becomes more so in the globalized world, which sees a proliferation of 'non-places'. This concept was introduced by Marc Augé in 1992; his 'non-places' are defined by "solitary contractuality" (as opposed to social exchange) that determine how individuals are 'processed' in airports, supermarkets, hotel chains, casinos, etc. (76).

<sup>4</sup> The protagonist's name, however, keeps moving from language to language. His first name, Heinrich, becomes an English 'Henry' or an Italian 'Enrico' on many occasions. The last name, Übel, means 'evil', 'bad', 'ill', 'vicious', 'unpleasant', 'wicked', etc. In the novel, his name is rendered once in English: "Dr. Henry Malice" (Hürlimann 320).

<sup>5</sup> In addition to indirect allusions to texts by various authors, among those that are mentioned by name throughout the novel are, for example: Freud, Plato, Thomas of Aquinas, C. G. Jung, Goethe, Böll, Wilhelm Reich, Empedocles, Buddha, Pirandello, Marx, Kierkegaard, et al.

In the splintered, milky windshield gapes a hole; black, jagged by fragments, and how beautiful, how deep, how sublime is the silence! The wind is blowing, but without sound; the loud crash has affected my ears; I am completely deaf. Dead silence throughout the universe. But on the shore of the lake they must have heard the sound, and the factory's fire brigade will shortly leave, pick up the wreck from the bridge, eliminate all traces, and take me to the sanitary facility of our rubber factory. (Hürlimann 7; ellipses in the original)<sup>6</sup>

The circumstances that lead to this moment on the bridge become clear in increments: after an almost twenty year hiatus, Heinrich is urgently summoned to return to his father's rubber factory in the (fictional) Fräcktal in Switzerland. To make this trip late at night from Zurich, he borrows an acquaintance's old Chevy that is, unfortunately, not equipped with appropriate winter tires. The accident prevents Heinrich's return home while he is, literally, within walking distance. Heinrich's feelings about home are as troubled and ambivalent as his memories of home, it turns out, are false and misleading—deceiving both the protagonist and the reader. Heinrich, for example, mourns the loss of his mother. It appears that she left one day when Heinrich was a young child: "In my memory, Mimi [the mother] was a being without flesh and consisted only of the few things that she had left behind beside the factory's swimming pool: the white headscarf, the black Hollywood sunglasses, the handbag made of crocodile leather, and the high heels" (Hürlimann 64-65). Remarkably, what remains strongest in Heinrich's memory is the most transitory of a body's properties: "Mimi's voice, which time and again read *Robinson* [*Crusoe*] to me" (65). It is likely that the repeated readings from Daniel Defoe's novel carved the reader's (mother's) voice into Heinrich's memory; the recitals are also evidence of literature coming to play a significant role in young Heinrich's life.

Several decades later, Heinrich meets the wife of Pablo Feuz in Zurich; she is an American artist and also, shockingly, Heinrich's mother Mimi. According to her version of events, it was Heinrich's jealousy (Mimi had been pregnant and Heinrich resented the prospect of a sibling) and profound hatred of his mother that led to her being evicted from home. Mimi recalls how Heinrich pulled her hair, kicked her in the stomach, and almost strangled her with a necklace. But "the

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<sup>6</sup> The end of the novel returns to the same scene or moment. A change in perspective has Heinrich moving "from death to life," and the final lines, an almost verbatim repetition of the beginning of the novel, reflect the changed viewpoint: "and far below a point, a blink, a wink, as star, a satellite, or an airplane" (Hürlimann 522). Some critics see the novel's initial and final scenes as a frame that captures not only Heinrich's accident, but Heinrich's fatal accident. Combined with the knowledge that the author spent five years rewriting his novel while he was fighting cancer, such critics read the text as a novel about dying. Witness, for example, Wiebke Porombka, who notes that "*Homecoming* is a deeply sad and comforting book about dying" ("Jetzt nur nicht einschlafen"). While there is evidence that one can read the novel in this way, Hürlimann's ellipses—at the beginning and the end of the initial and final passages—create a sense of ambiguity and inspire alternative readings of the text. In this article, I am interested in exploring Heinrich's search for home throughout the roughly five hundred pages that come between the beginning and the end of the novel.

worst,” she says, was when “one day, I swam far into the lake [...] When I returned to shore, all my things were gone, and I heard you yelling triumphantly: ‘She is dead! Mimi is dead! The lake has taken her!’” (Hürlimann 460-61). Mimi remembers running half-naked to Heinrich’s father who chooses his son over his wife: “‘Heinrich’, he said, ‘is my flesh, my blood. If he does not want to see you anymore, you have to go’” (461). Love for his son takes precedence over any relationship with his wife, and Übel senior offers Mimi alimony payments on the condition that she never come back or attempt to make any contact.

Mimi’s revelations about Übel senior’s love for his son unsettle Heinrich. Heinrich does not recall any affection; instead, he remembers his father as a domineering and demanding monster. In fact, he calls his father ‘the minotaur’ early on in the text, who “lurks in his office like the minotaur in his dungeon” (Hürlimann 9).<sup>7</sup> When Heinrich grows older, he starts working in his father’s rubber factory and becomes a writer in the company’s advertisement department. One day, the father abruptly sends his son away and demands that he not return home until he has completed a doctoral program and acquired the appropriate title.<sup>8</sup> The father’s words of farewell are: “My dear trash, you have fallen far from the tree” (82).<sup>9</sup> Clearly, Heinrich has complicated relationships with both his mother and his father, and he lacks a sense of home or belonging on the emotional level with his parents who are, typically, a person’s most immediate and important caregivers (and thus in a position to create a sense of home and belonging). Heinrich seems destined not ‘to fit’ into the world or even into his own life. As Nicole Henneberg notes, Heinrich “[s]uffers most from the unsafe, inconsistent, and hostile world that surrounds him; a kind of nightmare realm in which he feels guilty and alien.” After he is forced to leave home, Heinrich strives to prove that he is not his father’s “most failed product” (Hürlimann 323) and attempts to create a sense of home and belonging throughout his journey(s). In Zurich, he does not enroll in the university (because he did not complete high school), but he audits classes for forty semesters and immerses himself in reading as much as he can. Heinrich’s only friend in Zurich is a male cat whom he finds one day sitting between trash cans. He learns that the cat had escaped from *Cabaret Voltaire*—whose founder,

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<sup>7</sup> This passage also is one of many references to mythology throughout the novel. Significantly, this particular myth begins with the abduction of Europa by Zeus (indicating that an entire continent, Europa, has its roots in the fate of an ‘involuntary migrant’). Zeus whisks Europa to Crete, where she, as a result of Zeus’ rape, gives birth to Minos. Minos later becomes king of Crete and marries Pasiphae. Pasiphae, in turn, becomes mother of the minotaur (a monster with the body of a man and the head of a bull) following the union with a white bull.

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Übel senior, it seems, is making unfair demands. He did not study and earn his doctoral title but appears to have bought it (Hürlimann 97).

<sup>9</sup> This is a play on words that cannot be rendered in English and thus must be explained. The original expression is: ‘der Apfel fällt nicht weit vom Stamm’ (‘the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree’). The saying is generally used (in both English and German) to indicate that children have qualities or characteristics that are similar to those of their parents. Heinrich’s father questions the close familial bond by saying that Heinrich ‘has fallen far from the tree’. He also seems to distance himself from his own offspring by changing ‘Apfel’ (‘apple’) to ‘Abfall’ (‘trash’, ‘waste’, ‘garbage’, etc.)—while the two German nouns are not homophonic, the closeness in pronunciation is unmistakable. The father’s subversion of the saying is thus an ironic take on common or popular wisdom and suggests that he rejects his own son.

Hugo Ball, called out Dadaism in 1916—, and thus decides to name him Dada.<sup>10</sup> He feeds him and lets him live in his attic. Heinrich does not yet realize that Dada will have a significant role—one that, again, is linked to and fueled by a literary source.

In the scene that follows the accident, Heinrich wakes up in a place he does not recognize as he is being carried on a stretcher. He does not know much, but he remembers who he is: “Wherever I am, whatever has happened [...] I know my name. I did not become anonymous to myself” (Hürlimann 17). His wounds are tended while Heinrich moves in and out of consciousness. After several days, he begins to inquire about where he is and learns that he is in a room in Villa Vittoria (a hotel), in Pollazzu—Sicily. When he looks into a mirror, Heinrich does not recognize himself. Not only has his hair been shaved off completely, but he also has an enormous scar on his left temple that looks “as if a black caterpillar was crawling out of my brain” (22). His appearance, however, elicits deferential behavior from those around him. One staff member of the hotel, for instance, calls his scar “an honorary mark, [...] a testimony of courage and bravery” (45). While Heinrich suffers from retrograde amnesia (he has no recollection of how he came to be in Sicily), the hotel staff (mis)interpret his (actual) inability to answer any of their questions as adherence to *omertà*, the mafia code of silence, and they stare at him as if he were “a higher being” (52). Inevitably, the stranger with the “bella cicatrice, [...] the beautiful scar” (80) comes to the attention of the local godfather, the old and dying Don Pasquale.<sup>11</sup> Don Pasquale decides that a man has to wear appropriate clothes to signal his status and manliness and orders his tailor to take measurements and create a suit for Heinrich. The latter learns that is his prominent scar that Don Pasquale identifies with and considers as evidence that Heinrich is a man: “I, too, [Don Pasquale says] have dared to face death head-on. Men like us carry our marks in our faces” (83). Heinrich, however, feels like an impostor and fears that he will be ‘unmasked’ once people learn that the source of his impressive scar is a ‘mere’ car accident. He feels thoroughly alien(ated) in Pollazzu, “because [the behavior of those around him] simply did not befit the Heinrich Übel junior whom I had been all my life” (53).

In Dorothy Wong’s words, “[t]he construction of ‘home’ involves not only a spatial arrangement, but also a transformation of the space into a meaningful place where the occupant inscribes his or her values” (148). When Heinrich turns to the written word, he discovers that Sicily may well be the place that can become ‘meaningful’ to anybody—and thus to him, too. From a travel guide, he gleans that Sicily’s hospitality and respect for outsiders is unique because there cannot be any

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<sup>10</sup> Dadaism is a European avant-garde movement that begins in Zurich. Its aesthetic, according to The Art Story Foundation, is “marked by mockery of materialistic and nationalistic attitudes,” and its goal is to “upend bourgeois sensibilities.” Dadaism dissipates with the arrival of Surrealism.

<sup>11</sup> The nature of the events which Heinrich lives through in Sicily echo Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Godfather* films (from 1972, 1974, 1990, respectively) that are based on Mario Puzo’s eponymous 1969 novel. The films chronicle the Corleones, originally from Sicily, and their career as a crime family in the United States. Many of the films’ stereotypes (such as honor, *omertà*, manliness, and fearlessness in the face of death) regarding a mafia family are present in what Heinrich experiences in Pollazzu.

strangers on the island: people here, “since prehistoric times, have believed in the transmigration of souls [metempsychosis, reincarnation] and [...] consider it possible that the stranger is not a foreigner at all, but a local who has returned from the afterlife” (Hürlimann 51). However, Heinrich is not ‘reincarnated’; he is newly ‘incarnated’: the Sicilian Heinrich does not know how he came to be on the island and is aware that the character that people around him ascribe to him is completely different from the Heinrich he had been before.

Significantly, he also (re)reads the eighth book of Homer’s *Odyssey* and immediately identifies with the protagonist: “All of a sudden, you are Odysseus [...] and are wading, exhausted from a long journey, onto the eastern shore of Sicily” (Hürlimann 67). In the eighth book, Odysseus is a guest of king Alcinous who invites him to a gathering. Nobody recognizes Odysseus. As the festivities unfold, a bard comes to sing about the deeds of “famous fighting heroes” (Homer 193). When Odysseus hears about his own feats during the Trojan War, he “buried his handsome face, / ashamed his hosts might see him shedding tears” (194). Odysseus, unrecognized, is a stranger among his hosts and fellow guests and remains an ‘other’, and, at the same time, he becomes the fictionalized hero of the bard’s song. Heinrich can identify with Odysseus; he, too, is a fiction that the Sicilians have created. And this fiction, moreover, does not correspond to the Heinrich that he has felt to be his entire life. He feels kinship with Odysseus and he finds a sense of belonging in and with the ancient text. Sicily, on the other hand, cannot become home: “[b]etween my earlier life and the island, there is a wide gap” (Hürlimann 51).

On the day he plans to leave Sicily, Heinrich is struck by love while he takes a walk on the beach. He sees a woman—Bo-Derek-like, in the film *10*—coming out of the sea. As she approaches the shore, he knows that “[s]he is it” (Hürlimann 134): “First, she was [...] a reddish button in the blue sea. Then the swimmer neared the shore and emerged [...] naked from the foamy waves” (103). Instead of ‘real’ life (or the popular notion of ‘love at first sight’), Heinrich’s knowledge that he has found the love of his life comes from literature. Heinrich thinks of Plato and his idea that “the soul is eternal and knows everything—including its anima, its most beloved [...] And if one experiences the enormous luck to encounter a being that is the anima’s incarnation, it becomes clear with lightning speed” (134). Heinrich’s ‘anima’ is an unlikely candidate: she is a communist (from the former East Germany, the GDR) and part of a special delegation from a communications company in Berlin.<sup>12</sup> She is a socialist activist, Heinrich is the son of a capitalist. In addition, the status quo of the two Germanys needs to be considered as a concrete obstacle to their relationship (West Germans had limited access to East Germany,

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<sup>12</sup> While there is no room here to elaborate in detail, it is interesting to note that the delegation, the woman and two men (comrades Kress and Kupferschmidt) is a source of irony and ridicule regarding the former German Democratic Republic. They are attempting to sell a wireless telephone that is built into the armrest of a wingback chair. The men carry the unwieldy item across the beach (and, later, on the roof of a car). While the telephone works, it is obvious that this type of phone is thoroughly unpractical. Furthermore, it had not been planned as such. In truth, the design of the wingback chair was faulty; the chairs were too wide to fit through any door, and a new function had to be found. The entire episode (beginning in Sicily and continuing in Berlin) is a sarcastic comment targeted at the five-year economic plan of socialist countries in general, and the GDR, in particular.

and East Germans were generally not allowed to travel to the West—exceptions were made for those who were judged to be completely loyal to the party). Notwithstanding, Heinrich remains convinced that he has found his soul mate. While the East Germans do their business in Sicily, Heinrich travels first to North Africa and then to Berlin, where he hopes to find Montag, his 'anima', again.<sup>13</sup>

When he arrives in Berlin, he acquires a visa to cross to East Berlin and wanders the streets, but does not find Montag. Instead of returning to West Berlin at the end of the day (as the visa would have required him to do by eleven p.m.), he stays in the East. When he thinks about the difference between Sicily and (East) Berlin, the German city does not compare favorably. In Sicily, the prevailing conviction was that "a newcomer could have been one of their own in a previous life" (Hürlimann 360), but the situation in Berlin is starkly dissimilar: "Here, [...] divergence from any norm [was] reported immediately (and anonymously, of course) to the state and party organs. Here, [...] it smelled of denunciation" (360). Heinrich, however, is only interested in finding Montag, declare his feelings, and, possibly, create a home in a new relationship (and, perhaps, a new city).

The following day, he sees Montag as she is leaving her house, together with her young daughter, Paula. Montag makes it clear to Heinrich that she does not reciprocate his romantic interest and thus shatters his ideas about building a home with her. However, she lets Heinrich stay in her apartment. For several days, he hides inside and does not dare to go out—if someone were to ask for his papers, his expired visa would create instant problems for him (as well as for Montag and Paula). Conversations with Montag lead Heinrich to realize that important things are about to happen in the GDR. On the one hand, people are demonstrating in the streets, an indicator that the GDR's "downfall" may be imminent (Hürlimann 327). On the other hand, Montag fears that neighbors may know about Heinrich's (illegal) presence and could denounce them at any time. They decide that they must flee to the West. To this end, Heinrich sheds his Sicilian suit and disguises himself as a woman by donning an ancient coat (that had belonged to Montag's aunt and dates back to World War II; sewn into the coat are gold coins that Heinrich uses during his escape). He finds a large Gatsby-like hat that "could be pulled across the skull like a condom" to conceal both his baldness and his scar (Hürlimann 377). Agreeing to meet Montag later, Heinrich leaves with Paula. They reconnect at an amusement park, and Montag hurries Paula toward the West. She had heard a rumor that the Berlin Wall was open. Heinrich loses Montag and Paula among the throng of people, searches for them, but eventually gives up. The opening of the wall puts a precise date to the situation in the novel: 9 November 1989. This date underlines Heinrich's failure to find a home. Not only has Montag rejected his love, but the very city that could have become a home ceases to exist—along with an entire country and ideology (East Germany was officially reunited with West Germany on 3 October 1990). Put

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<sup>13</sup> The English translation of 'Montag' is 'Monday'. The 'anima's name, which marks the beginning of a new week, can be read symbolically (via Heinrich's state of mind) as an indicator that he may be embarking on a new start, a new attempt to create a home and a sense of belonging.

differently, an entire people became 'homeless' in one day; were he to stay in Berlin, he would be one homeless person among millions.

Heinrich travels back to Switzerland—with false papers and by avoiding official border controls. During his journey, he falls ill, becomes feverish and delirious, and wakes up in hospital in Zurich. He later relives the summons to his father's factory, travels from Zurich to Fräcktal, and has the very accident that the text starts with. In this instance, however, Heinrich discovers that he is not alone. The cat Dada, Heinrich's only friend, has been a blind passenger and fellow accident victim. At the end of the text, Dada is behind the wheel of the car, wears leather boots, and is talking with Heinrich. Dada drives so fast that Heinrich has the impression the car has left the road, and he asks: "Where are we flying to?" (Hürlimann 522). Dada's response is: "To the other side, [...] from death to life" (522). The moment, together with their brief exchange, suggests that Heinrich is finding his home and his place, namely in life. It also hints that Heinrich's life, his home, is with and in literature, because Dada represents yet another literary reference. In this instance, the inspiration is "Puss in Boots," the famous (or infamous) fairy tale's protagonist who helps a miller's youngest (and therefore poorest) son to gain great wealth and the hand of a princess. The story is not usually considered to be a suitable tale for children: the 'helper cat' is not a typical figure in fairy tales and, especially, Puss achieves his objectives through deception, trickery, and violence, all of which are not desirable for a child's moral development.<sup>14</sup> While some critics suggest that Heinrich actually dies in the accident (and that the novel is a text about dying; see footnote six), I contend that Heinrich leaves behind his 'real' life. His actual life experiences and attempts to find home have failed in both Sicily and Berlin. He replaces 'real' life with a home in literature—home is in the texts that he can identify with (like *The Odyssey*) and that reveal meanings that make sense to him. Such reading is supported by the nonlinear character of the narrative. Time, in the text, is as pliable as the rubber products of Übel senior's factory. The elasticity of time underscores the chaotic nature of (real) life, which is a (random and mysterious) series of events that defies the construction of meaning (and home). As Heinrich has it, "I understand cat language, and I know: Everything is the other way round. We are on the other side" (Hürlimann 376).

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, Odysseus transgresses the law of myth in all his adventures. Odysseus, an individual and unique character, "represents the general validity of rationality against the inevitability of fate" (*Dialektik* 66). Odysseus acknowledges the law of myth and, simultaneously, finds a way around it. Horkheimer and Adorno cite the example of the Sirens. The 'contract' of the myth specifies that nobody who hears their song can escape falling prey to the Sirens. However, Odysseus finds a loophole: nowhere does the myth prescribe

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<sup>14</sup> Folklorists Iona and Peter Opie critique the tale and note that it is "unusual in that the hero little deserves his good fortune [...], and his unquestioning acceptance of the cat's [...] instructions [is] not nowadays looked upon as [a] virtue" (110). Bruno Bettelheim observes that "the more simple and straightforward a good character in a fairy tale, the easier it is for a child to identify with it and reject the bad other" (10). The implication is that Puss is neither 'simple' nor 'good' (because he uses deception) and that the tale thus does not provide a moral compass.



that he who listens cannot do so while being restrained. The law of the Sirens, mythical figures that are stronger than human beings, feeds off and is upheld by the (human) inability to fulfill its rules. Odysseus' cunning shows how he "cling[s] to the word in order to change matter" (*Dialektik* 67). In other words, Odysseus defies the very fate that the myth(s) held in store. His defiance, in turn, is an escape (from fate) and the beginning of a new reality in which Odysseus is the author of his own life's text—the account and recall of his adventures. Odysseus is at home in himself, and his change is both profound and essential, turning him, eventually, into "a homecoming homeless person, a homeless homecoming person," to recall Ette's words (34).

Hürlimann's Heinrich, a postmodern and globalized Odysseus, is on the opposite trajectory. He experiences life to be chaotic, uncontrollable, unpredictable, and homeless. His 'fate', it seems is to be blown from one event to the next, and all of them prevent him to feel at home. Heinrich escapes the 'law' of an unruly life in favor of a permanent abode in the written tradition; the end of the novel indicates that he does so literally. Heinrich's way to build a home is in the literary tradition; he leaves 'matter' (actual life) behind and focuses on the word (and meaning) transmitted in texts. Heinrich's solution to a homeless world is exemplary and an invitation to fellow nomads, that is, his readers, to consider following this kind of route. These readers could be anyone and anywhere (and may know very different literary traditions that go beyond Heinrich's Europe, or even lay completely outside it). The important lesson is that the path that takes Heinrich Übel to a home in and with literature is one of many possible ways to find a home in a homeless world; his is a soothing model suited for copying.

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# Man Engendered: Effeminizing Louis Zukofsky

Louis Zukofsky Şiirleri ve Şiirin Cinsiyeti

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## Abstract

This article considers the poetry of Louis Zukofsky, who writes from the margins of American society in the beginning of the twentieth century as he comes from a poor family of Jewish immigrants. The article applies a number of attributes that are associated with Women's Poetry to Zukofsky's work. The purpose of the article, however, is not to demonstrate that Zukofsky's poetry is feminine, but that literary characteristics that are labeled feminine are common to writers of different backgrounds that are forced to create from the margins. Such writers are forced to merge the public and the personal and to deconstruct poetic norms, creating new forms of self-expression that will contain their different identities.

**Keywords:** Zukofsky, Gender, Jewish Culture, Identity, Social Hierarchy.

## Öz

Bu makalede, Yahudi göçmeni fakir bir aileden geldiği için yirminci yüzyılın başlarında Amerikan toplumundan dışlanmış bir yazar olan Louis Zukofsky'nin şiirleri ele alınmıştır. Zukofsky'nin eserleri, "kadın yazını" ile ilişkilendirilerek birçok açıdan incelenmiştir. Ancak makalenin yazılış amacı Zukofsky'nin şiirlerinin kadın şairlerin eserleriyle benzerliklerinin olduğunu göstermek değil, kadın şairlere özgü olarak nitelenen yazın özelliklerinin, aslında toplum dışına itilen tüm yazarlarda görüldüğünü açıklamaktır. Böyle yazarlar, toplumla kendi kişiliklerini harmanlayıp alışılmış şiir yapılarını yıkar, özgün kimliklerini yansıtır kendilerini ifade edebilecekleri yeni yapılar oluşturur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Zukofsky, Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Yahudi Kültürü, Kimlik, Toplumsal Hiyerarşi.

*To say that she just 'happened to be a woman' is to suggest that gender is irrelevant, that it is immaterial to the production and the reception of poetry. The present book proposes that gender is relevant, that it does have a bearing. Even the act of denying gender's importance is itself implicitly a way of confirming its stranglehold. It is, after all, only women who are required to address questions such as these and to distance themselves from, or to disavow, their sex. (Gill 19)*

## Introduction

John F. Kennedy famously said in 1960: "I am not the Catholic candidate for president. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for president, who happens also to be a Catholic" (National Public Radio). But did his religious background truly

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have nothing to do with his ideology, his decisions, or the manner in which he was perceived by others? At the very least, one has to acknowledge that Kennedy was forced to address the issue of his religion. Identity can be presented and viewed in different manners, and through various cross- and inter- sections. One can be female, Jewish, Arab, Black, gay, middle-class, middle age, any, or none of the above. But can these identities be selected, discarded or reinvented? This article considers the poetry of Louis Zukofsky, a Jewish poet that, born in 1904, that had to contend with great odds in order to be recognized (or “reinvented”) as an English speaking “real” American poet. Zukofsky, the founder of the objectivist movement, winner of several prestigious awards, and author of some 49 books and volumes of poetry, was the first American born son of a poor immigrant family. His first language was Yiddish, and he first encountered the works of Shakespeare in the Yiddish Theater. He was one of the first Jewish students in Columbia University, graduating with a Master’s degree in 1924. He taught at the University of Wisconsin and later at the Polytechnic Institute in Brooklyn, and was admired by many other poets and critics. However, he also had to contend with limited social and financial opportunities, as well as the anti-Semitic antics of his sometime mentor and supporter, Ezra Pound. These challenges, as well as Zukofsky’s cultural and economic background, his life experience, and his social identity, are reflected, and often inspire the unique features of his poetry.

In this article, some of the attributes that are associated with Women’s Poetry are applied to Zukofsky’s poetry. These, largely taken from Jo Gill’s book, *Women’s Poetry*, are defined as: self-reflexivity, a private voice, local scenery, and experimentation in form and in language. In doing so, the article does not attempt to read Zukofsky “as a woman,” but rather to suggest a brand new method for reading a complex work that combines scholarship and tradition, philosophy and politics, linguistic complexity and emotion, erudition and humor, and great intellectual authority with the vulnerability of an economic, social, and religious outcast. Moreover, what some erroneously refer to as “Women’s Poetry,” is the natural response of any writer who feels that they are coming from the margins. Recognizing this, this article suggests a new definition of gendered poetry.

## **1. Theoretical Discussion – Women’s Poetry and Louis Zukofsky**

### ***i. Identity between overemphasis and disregard***

A discussion of identity must negotiate two polarities: The need to judge people outside of biological, ethnic, political and cultural identity on the one hand – and the insistence that everyone is “the same,” without regard to the social implication of one’s identity. While Judith Butler (*Gender Trouble*), Jacques Derrida (1981), Edward Said (1978) and others teach us that identity is a fiction (or construct), they also acknowledge that such fiction, or performance, is not easily abandoned; that if identity is a fiction, it is a very powerful fiction that is often requested, required and even forced by society. When it comes to gender identity, the significance of physical experiences, childbirth and various health factors should be taken into account. Similarly, the different social circumstances of men and women in society make for very different life experiences and different forms of expression. These require a careful consideration both of Showalter’s discussion

of “organic or biological criticism” in “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness” (336) and Juliet Mitchell’s rejection of the assignment of the feminine to the “area of the Carnival” in “Femininity, Narrative and Psychoanalysis” (428). Identity, a powerful fiction that can perhaps be deconstructed and even changed over time, is also a significant part of one’s personal history and worldview. And while one’s identity (or identities) should not be taken as a “totalization” of one’s self (Butler, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” 15), disregarding one’s identity can result in as much discrimination as placing an exaggerated emphasis on it.

## **ii. Identity in relations with women’s poetry**

Much of the criteria that is used in the following discussion is taken from Gill’s book, *Women’s Poetry*. Her study (among others) was chosen for this discussion, not only because it addresses Women’s Poetry specifically (as opposed to other forms of writing or gender in general), and because it provides clearly defined criteria for Women’s Poetry – but also because it encompasses a vast number of studies and anthologies about Women’s Poetry, recognizing the conundrum of creating an inclusive definition for a vast field of Women Poets from many times, locations, ethnicities and other marks of identity:

It has become something of a commonplace in critical surveys of poetry by women to announce the heterogeneity, complexity and richness of the field. [...] If poetry by women is disparate and heterogeneous, on what ground do we study it as a distinct strand within the larger poetic genre? [...] In other words, if all that can be said about poetry by women is that it is various, why do students study it, publishers publish it and critics write about it as a coherent body of work? (Gill 1)

Gill argues, therefore, that while it might be reductive to try and contain the entire vast field of Women’s Poetry, some common traits, definitions and shared traditions are necessary in order to legitimize Women’s Poetry as a field of literary study.

Creating such a definition can be challenging. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, not only a concern about stereotyping and essentializing Women’s Poetry, but also the growth and development of women’s writing during the twentieth century, gives scholars pause before attempting to summarize it in any conclusive manner. In their introduction to the first of three volumes of *No Man’s Land* (1988), a sequel to *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1978), Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar confess that they initially underestimated the task of discussing women’s writing in the twentieth century:

What exactly is the canon of twentieth-century literature by women, given that increasing numbers of women have entered the literary marketplace in the last one hundred years and that so many reputations are still in flux? How can we disentangle ourselves from a history in which we ourselves are enmeshed? And finally, considering that at last it is, and has for some time been, evident that women do have a literary tradition, what have been the diverse effects of that tradition on both male and female talents?

As we explored these issues, we saw with some alarm that our enterprise had significantly expanded. We had, now, to discuss not just literary

history but social history; we had, also, to examine not just the writings of women in the twentieth century, but the texts and contexts associated with those men who have long been considered the most canonical modernists. In fact, we had to rethink everything we had ever been taught about twentieth-century literature. (Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land* xi)

Identity is, therefore, neither easy to break from, nor clearly defined, and when it comes to many women poets at different places and in different times – it is just as difficult to find a comprehensive definition, as it is to walk away from defining Women's Poetry as a field.

### **iii. Gill's criteria of women's poetry**

Gill responds to the conundrum that is presented by Gilbert and Gubar (and herself, among others) with a thoughtful discussion that considers both some of the characteristics of Women's Poetry, as well as the many ways in which not all women share the same characteristics. She presents seven chapters in which she discusses what she sees as characteristics of Women's Poetry: self-reflexivity, performance, private voices, embodied language, public speech, poetry and place, and experimentations in form and in language. These do not apply to all women poets, of course, and Gill also recognizes in a number of places (such as in "private voices" (79) that a reductive discussion of these traits can essentialize and stereotype Women's Poetry. In addition, the titles of some chapters, such as "performance," can give the reader an erroneous impression. It is in fact a chapter that discusses unease about performance as well as the performance of gender, as it is expressed by Butler (*Gender Trouble* 140). In addition, the chapter about performance shares with the first chapter, "self-reflexivity," the preoccupation with language, and the consciousness about finding one's voice and authority in a field and a language in which the poet might not see herself (or might not be seen by others) as naturally conversant. The same concern, of course, extends to the chapters on private voice and public speech, as the discussion in the entire book, including the experimentation with language and form, reverts to the need of women poets to find their authority and public voice in a traditionally male-dominated field, while expressing their unique voice and form of expression. Using the first person pronoun, discussing one's private and intimate sphere, and grounding oneself in one's physical and geographical location is a Descartes-ian method of asserting authority when it is not obvious. As often occurs in social situations, when one is unsure of either their status or their expertise, one's tendency is to revert to their most immediate experience: "This is what I see; think; feel". If not for any other reason, a testimonial statement cannot be refuted. Who can argue that "this is what I experience"? Similarly, new forms of expression and experimenting with form is an important step towards establishing one's own voice rather than attempting to excel within the style and format that were created by others to best accommodate their own sentiments and reflections. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, these traits may not immediately appear to be feminine. But historically, the ability of modern women poets in the beginning and middle of the twentieth century to express a personal voice (such as in "Her Kind," by Anne Sexton (1981)) has freed men and women to do the same, particularly in the cases of those who, as Gill writes (19), cannot distance themselves from their identity, and whose poetry is likely to be read as a

reflection of 'their kind' regardless of the poet's intentions. And, of course, the self-reflexivity over one's status and position is not limited, but often inescapable for those whose acceptance and appreciation are not guaranteed.

#### **iv. Applying the characteristics of women's poetry to Zukofsky's poetry<sup>1</sup>**

Gill is correct in writing that women cannot divorce their identity as they write. But it is not true that "it is, after all, only women who are required to address questions such as these" (19). The important issues that she raises, and their effect on a poet's work are shared by others who, for various reasons, write outside the comfort zone of authority and acceptability; those whose access to publication and public acceptance is not obvious; and who are read as hyphenated poets of various kinds. Zukofsky, whose work during the first half of the twentieth-century was the subject of limited acceptance, as were the professional and monetary opportunities that have been extended to him during his lifetime, is one such poet who could not divorce his identity as he wrote. To rush ahead with the briefest and most compelling of examples, Ezra Pound, his mentor and sometime supporter, writes to Zukofsky on May 28, 1935: "I suppose it comes of being a damn foreigner and not having bothered to learn English". Zukofsky replies on June 7: "Yr. English language (private property!)" (Ahearn, *Pound/Zukofsky* 168, 172). Of course, that is exactly the point: Even though Zukofsky was born in the United States and most likely spoke and wrote English better than any man or woman on earth, he was regarded as a foreigner who appropriated and subverted the English (American) language. And, of course, he did subvert it, and could not have done otherwise. Perhaps Edith Wharton expresses this conundrum best in *The Age of Innocence* when she writes: "A woman's standard of truthfulness was tacitly held to be lower: she was the subject creature, and versed in the arts of the enslaved" (Wharton 308). As a "subject creature," Zukofsky could not simply 'play by the rules' to prove that he was worthy of consideration. He had to find an alternative and possibly adversarial voice, outside the rules of a game that was set against him in the first place. And being able to express oneself against these odds while still gaining literary acceptance is perhaps what Wharton refers to as "the arts of the enslaved".

Much like many men and women poets, who did not only need to demonstrate their linguistic ability, but also had to find a brand new form of expression, Zukofsky experimented greatly with language and poetic form while creating a professional network for himself out of thin air. One method of doing so included the creation of a poetic movement, Objectivism, which, although it was not labeled a movement of Jewish Poetry, consisted almost exclusively (with the notable exception of Lorine Niedecker) of Jewish men who found in it a vehicle to express their own voice as Jewish-American male poets who wrote in English.

Zukofsky, of course, does not share all the characteristics of Women's Poetry that Gill suggests, as not even all women poets share them. And, of course, he does not share certain essential characteristics, such as those that have to do with the female body and childbirth, while few Women Poets who write in English (though some) share his experience of immigration and Eastern European Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> See the appendix at the end of this article about theoretical venues that are not followed in this discussion.

tradition. But there is enough common ground – not to claim Zukofsky as a female poet, or even to create a masculinity studies version of what ‘male poetry’ might look like – but to suggest a new definition of gendered poetry. What many scholars refer to as gender is a completely different category which, allowing for significant circumstances and life experiences of different poets, has more to do with power and social acceptance than with gender as most scholars see it. In the words of Raewyn Connell: “To understand gender, then, we must constantly go beyond gender” (Connell 76).

In exploring the possibilities of defining and applying marks of identity while avoiding stereotypes and essentialisms, perhaps what is common to all the studies that I mention in this article is that, at the end of the day, scholars of various disciplines seem to have enough decorum to keep men and women separate. My purpose is to breach such good manners, and claim that, to the extent that the phallus can be used as a symbol of power rather than an anatomical term, Zukofsky should be read as a poet without (literary) phallus, suggesting a method for reading gender as a matter that is (almost completely) separate from biological categories.

## 2. Self-Reflexivity and Local Scenery

Gill’s discussion of “self-reflexivity” describes the challenge and the self-consciousness of the female poet about her place within a hegemonic canon and the work (or lack thereof) of female predecessors (Gill 50). One related phenomenon has to do with the lack of female ancestry in the poet’s own life, as the maiden name of the mother (or the grandmother) is often lost along with a good deal of matriarchal family history. Gilbert and Gubar quote a passage from a poem by Ruth Stone that addresses this issue:

My grandmother’s name was Nora Swan.  
Old Aden Swan was her father. But who was her mother?  
I don’t know my great-grandmother’s name.  
I don’t know how many children she bore.  
Like rings on the tree the years of woman’s fertility.  
(qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man’s Land* 238; Stone)

Zukofsky, much like other descendants of East European Jewish immigrants, was cut off from both his maternal and paternal history. As Sandra Kumamoto Stanley writes, the culture of the Lower-East Side encouraged a preoccupation with the present rather than with the past (Stanley 30-31). And, in *The Poem of a Life*, the most definitive biography of Louis Zukofsky to date, Mark Scroggins writes that “We know very little of the couple’s lives [his parents] before they emigrated. Pinkhos and his father, Maishe Afroim Zukofsky, probably worked as farmhands” (14). In fact, Scroggins adds that there is some doubt about Zukofsky’s own birthdate, and perhaps even the Latin spelling of his last name. In “A”-12, after his father’s death in 1950, Zukofsky describes his father’s life, supplementing few facts with myth and conjectures, adding:

Put 91 or 15  
On his tombstone.



He had forgotten birthright and birthday,  
Who can remember?  
(1-12 161)

The biography of Zukofsky's mother is neither less nor more elusive than his father's. But, as Scroggins writes, his mother plays a more dominant role both in his life and his poetry than his father: "Given the hours that Pinchos Zukofsky worked, Louis Zukofsky could have seen little of his father during his childhood, and if his poetry is any indication, he was emotionally far closer to Chana Zukofsky, his mother" (Scroggins 17). Stanley takes this further, speaking of Zukofsky's "Jewish matrilineal culture" (60),<sup>2</sup> highlighting what is referred to elsewhere as: "the matriarchial nature of Eastern European Jewry, as well as other historically poor communities [...] where family structure often disintegrates as a result of a missing father figure" (Abend-David 4). Zukofsky's references to his mother begin most directly, and most famously, in "Poem Beginning 'The,'" his first major work, written in 1926, a year before her death:

238 If horses could but sing Bach, Mother, –  
239 Remember how I wished it once–  
240 Now I Kiss you, who could never sing Bach, never read Shakespeare.  
(Zukofsky, *Anew* 17)

Less direct, but significant references to his mother are found later in "A"-5 and 6 from 1930 (Ahearn, "A" 66, 202), in "Death's encomium," and the veiled mention of "my mother" as "My other:" (Zukofsky, "A" 24, 30) – as well as in the character of the grieving son in the 1936 play, *Arise, Arise* (Scroggins 157). And while the references to his father are mostly tied with traditional and philosophical thought ("We had a Speech, our children have / evolved a jargon" (Zukofsky, "A" 18)), the references to Chana Pruss Zukofsky allow for domestic scenes, filled with a sense of time, places and sensations:

What a great bubble comes up at the top of the water  
This is the wind – the bubble's the soul.  
All these dead years.  
My mother sat away from the stoop,  
    the new bride coming up,  
To catch her breath in the hottest summer.  
Some old landmarks down  
The bridge is aging  
Effaced their ties  
And their sorrow –  
History, all its cornices.  
(Zukofsky, "A" 153)

This short scene from "A-12," with Zukofsky's mother seating on the stoop, most likely in front of his first home of 97 Christie street in New York, in sight of the arch and ramp leading to the new Manhattan bridge, sets both a place and a time (between the completion of the Williamsburg Bridge in 1903 and the Manhattan

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<sup>2</sup> On this, read also Martha A, Ravits' article, "The Jewish Mother: Comedy and Controversy in American Popular Culture" in which she discusses the changing images and stereotypes of the Jewish mother throughout the twentieth century (2000).

Bridge in 1912), as well as Zukofsky's return, in the company of his son, Paul, to what he considers in *Autobiography* to be a mythical nativity scene. Using the visit of Henry James in the Lower East Side during the year of Zukofsky's birth, Zukofsky sets James as the magi who forecasts Zukofsky's "first-generation American infusion into twentieth century literature" (Zukofsky, *Autobiography* 13). And, indeed, the same scene, leading to further memories of the Lower East Side, quickly unearths Henry James Jr., whom Zukofsky claims to have run into on Rutgers Street, a street that crosses Henry Street on the Lower East side, exactly at the point which, as the poem mentions, one can still find "a frightening / Copy of a Norman church in red brick" (Zukofsky, "A" 154). And to recall the nativity myth of his birth, Zukofsky quickly adds: "Practically where I was born" (Zukofsky, "A" 154).

While this nativity myth might seem romantic and self-aggrandizing, it is important to understand the significance of each street corner; proximity to historical events; and other tangible landmarks in the absence of a detailed personal history, and much less, a personal connection to mainstream society. While Jewish tradition, symbolized by the elusive character of Zukofsky's father, seems to offer a great deal of religious scholarship and tradition, to the modern American poet of Zukofsky's time, it offered little help in terms of picturing oneself as part of an American Literary tradition that is largely Christian, and which offers few precedents of Jewish writers who publish in English. Writing in *Singing in a Strange Land*, Maera Shreiber describes a situation that echoes this predicament, though discussing Jewish poetics rather than Jewish poetry: "Jewish American poetry has largely been overlooked. Until very recently, those who wanted to consider the subject found themselves, like the speaker in Virginia Woolf's classic 1929 essay, *A room of one's own*... 'looking about the shelves for books that were not there'" (Shreiber 3). Considering the reference to Woolf and a number of Shreiber's discussions that are related to gender (Shreiber 8, 46-97, 119, 120, 121, 123, 126), and in particular her comment that - "If we substitute a narrow definition of hysteria as a woman's disorder of Elaine Showalter's more generalized description of it as the 'disease of the powerless and silenced,' we understand Zukofsky as struggling under the sign of the racially marked other" (Shreiber 112) - it would have taken a relatively small step to compare the plight of Jewish American poets writing at the beginning of the twentieth-century to that of women poets at about the same time. However, Shreiber does not go as far as making this comparison.

Zukofsky's situation was not different than that of other men and women poets who are faced with this lack of both genealogical and literary ancestry. He had to rely both on his literary knowledge and imagination to respond to this situation. Like the protagonist of Karl Emil Franzos' 1905 German novel, *Der Pojaz*, who stumbles for the first time out of the Jewish Eastern-European town to face the legacy of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (2012), Zukofsky might have often seen himself as Shylock, who is made to face the gentile court on his own:

- 252 And once the Faith's askew  
 253 I might as well look *Shagetz* [non-Jew] just as much  
                                           as Jew.  
 254 I'll read their Donne as mine,

255 And leopard their spots  
 256 I'll do what says their Coleridge,  
 257 Twist red hot poker into knots.  
 258 The villainy they teach me I will execute  
 259 And it shall go hard with them,  
 260 For I'll better the instruction,  
 261 Having learned, so to speak, in their  
       colleges.

(Zukofsky, *Anew* 17-18)

It is in the same part of "Poem beginning 'The'," that Zukofsky summons Heinrich Heine and his experience as a solitary Jewish author who is cast off into Gentile society ("Keine Kadish wird man sagen [one will not say the prayer for the dead]") as a possible historical mentor. But his objective is to become the follower of Henry James and Walt Whitman. And he achieves this objective through his connections to the Lower East-Side and Brooklyn Heights (Zukofsky, *Autobiography* 13). In addition, it is through his vivid memories of his mother, and her daily routine on the Lower East Side, that Zukofsky is able to claim his birthright as a "first generation American" poet, albeit one who dwells on the very margins of American society:

241 In Manhattan here the Chinamen are yellow  
       in the face, mother,  
 242 Up and down, up and down our streets they  
       go yellow in the face,  
 243 And why is it the representative of yours,  
       my, race are always hankering for food, mother?

(Zukofsky, *Anew* 17)

Self-reflexivity, referred to by Gill as "A range of perspectives on [poetry by women's] relationship to the dominant canon and to the work of female predecessors" (50), is mirrored in Zukofsky's work, not only by the reference to possible literary predecessors, but by his closest female ancestor who, much like the grandmother in Stone's poem, is the best mark of authenticity that he can summon, with a past that is disappearing quickly in a haze of immigration and assimilation, and a future in which he must situate himself as "a literary orphan in the [Anglophone] storm" (Showalter 331, rephrased).

### 3. Experimentation in Form and in Language

"A horse is a horse, of course..." but not always (*Mister Ed* 1958-1966). At times, one needs an additional source of insight in order to understand certain poetic idiosyncrasies. These, even when they defy one's conventions and expectations, are not only meaningful, but often the point in which poets reveal their personal relationship to their own poetry and to poetry in general. As Gill writes:

There has been a long history of experimentation in women's poetry... To take up the pen at all has been, as this book has shown, a radical and transgressive gesture. From Sappho to... Dorothy Parker... women have

unsettled and disrupted poetic conventions and readerly expectations.  
(Gill 201)

One of Zukofsky's disruptions of poetic conventions is his repeated and seemingly obsessive reference to horses throughout his poetry. As quoted above, Zukofsky compares the ability of his mother, and perhaps himself, to either sing Bach or read Shakespeare, to that of a singing horse. The metaphor becomes even more convoluted when one realizes that there is a world of difference between the western image of exalted horses, such as that of Pegasus, or Richard III's missing horse that, in Shakespeare's play, is valued over an entire kingdom, and the images of horses that are repeated through Zukofsky's poetry. These, as other images, structures and references throughout Zukofsky's work, require a deep understanding of his global and encyclopedic knowledge, as well as his Jewish cultural and linguistic background. The latter is often used to Judaize and subvert modern American poetry in a manner that allows Zukofsky to find his own unique voice within a system that might have regarded him as unconventional as a talking horse. And, as not all horses and their images are the same, it is important to read Zukofsky's work, particularly in relation to some of his apparent idiosyncrasies and obsessions, with an eye to glossing some unique cultural and personal experiments with both poetic language and structure.

Scroggins devotes an entire "interchapter" to two recurring motifs that appear throughout Zukofsky's work (190-198): Numeric structures and horse imagery. Scroggins provides detailed accounts of both motifs, but despite his best efforts, he finally dismisses them as "private obsessions:" "A number of motifs recur throughout his [Zukofsky's] writing that are far less highbrow—that seem less intellectually or artistically motivating themes than mere private obsessions" (190). Nevertheless, Scroggins compiles diligently the occurrences of Zukofsky's "obsessions" and their apparent meanings.

Scroggins offers a long list of occurrences on which horses are either mentioned or implied in Zukofsky's poetry: He begins with a description of wild horses in lines 224-237 of "poem beginning 'The,'" and goes on to describe some of the references to horses that occur in every single movement in *A*. These include "hinny / by / stallion" in "A-16;" the animation of wooden sawhorses on the street in "A-7;" an image of a horse as a reference to the poet in "A-12;" and the decaying horses in "A-22" and "A-23." Finally, Scroggins refers to what he sees as an optimistic image of a horse in the epigraph to *80 Flowers*, where the horse "tenaciously retains his passion to gallop free" (Scroggins 195-198). Scroggins refers to these references as "an eccentric hobby" as well as a "psychological fixation, some Freudian 'complex'" (194). Accordingly, Scroggins searches for an explanation to the repeated references to horses in Zukofsky's childhood, and the horses that he might have seen either on the Lower East Side or in Central Park. Elsewhere, he explores the relationship between horses and the name of thirteenth century philosopher and poet, Guido Cavalcanti, who was the subject of great admiration by both Zukofsky and Pound. He also notices that in Zukofsky's erudite reading of Shakespeare's work, *Bottom: On Shakespeare*, it is actually the symbol of a donkey, "the lowest form of 'horse'" (Scroggins 197), that is credited with insight into the bard's work. This occurs through the character of Nick Bottom, whose name is featured in the title of the work, and who is awarded with

insight to love and reason through the transformation of his head to that of a donkey. Here, perhaps, the image of the horse is most conspicuous in its absence.

The explanation, however, is that in a Jewish Eastern European tradition, it is not the donkey who suffers the libel of being either stupid or stubborn, but rather the horse. In fact, in the Hebrew Bible, it is Balaam's ass (Numbers, 22:20-30) that is endowed with divine speech. It is therefore the horse who is "the lowest form of 'donkey.'" The Yiddish saying, *מע ווייזט ניט א פערד קיין ה' אין סידור* [one does not show a horse the letter *hey* in the prayer book], is a play on the name of the fifth letter in the Hebrew alphabet, *hey*, and the inability of the horse to tell *hey* from *hay*.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, an uneducated person should not be offered an intellectual task beyond their ability. Scroggins is correct that Zukofsky often likens himself to a horse, as well as poets and artists in general, to invoke "the sheer drudgery involved in the pursuit of art" (197-198). Given the context of the image of the horse in a Jewish-European tradition, this must be seen as a self-deprecating comment, and perhaps an ironic statement about the role of genius and artistic inspiration. Moreover, Zukofsky, who sees himself sometime as Shylock, sometime as a praying mantis, and sometime as a talking horse, retains this humbling image throughout his work to insist that, even after he had received professional recognition, he remains a working-class poet: neither a stallion, nor war horse, nor racing horse, nor a flying Pegasus – but a work horse, one who can expect little glory or compensation. In "The Old Poet Moves to a New Apartment 14 Times," the reference is to "toy translucent / plastic horses / with Greek bangs / (Xanthus and Balius)" (Zukofsky, "The Old Poet Moves" 376). The two mythological horses, demoted to plastic toys, must serve Achilles. And, like the poet, they are given only a brief opportunity to function as talking horses, bearing important testimony before they are silenced forever.

Scroggins also documents Zukofsky's other "obsession," his use of numeric symbols and structures. Out of a long list of numeric structures within Zukofsky's poetry, one can notice his epic poem, *A*, which is divided into 24 movements, much like *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, but also the original number of books in the Old Testament. Scroggins adds that some numeric significance within *A* includes the division of "A-7" into seven sonnets, and of "A-8" into eight themes. "A-20," published in 1963, is written during the year of Paul Zukofsky's twentieth birthday; and in "A-23," the numbers "21-2-3" contain the birthdates of Zukofsky's nuclear family: Celia (January 21), Paul (October 22) and Louis (January 23). Likewise, his volume, *80 Flowers* (which is also included in *Anew* (Zukofsky, *Anew* 321-353)), was planned as a volume of eighty poems, containing precisely forty words each. Scroggins adds that *80 Flowers* was planned as a decade-long project, with eight poems written annually, totaling sixty-four lines per year. These, in turn, would yield the number 40, which is repeated in various dramatic contexts throughout the Old Testament, and 4, "the Pythagorean number of justice," and, assumingly, 6, the Pythagorean number of creation. Adding an epigraph to *80 Flowers*, Zukofsky draws the number 9, "the number of the Muses and the Pythagorean universal" (Scroggins 192-193). While Scroggins' explanations of these enumerations are well argued, and refer to other scholarly readings of Zukofsky's poetry, he does not seem fully convinced. He writes: "I doubt that

<sup>3</sup> The Hebrew letter *hey* is also one of the many Hebrew names of god.

Zukofsky took Pythagorean number symbolism entirely literally” (Scroggins 192-193). Scroggins does, however, recognize that Zukofsky uses numeric structures to create “a model of self-sufficient, self-enclosed system of thought” (Scroggins 192-193). And Scroggins comes even closer to the source of this practice when he writes: “Zukofsky’s obsession with numbers seems at first merely superstition” (190). While Zukofsky was likely not superstitious, numeric values and their mythic and textual meaning are very much a matter of tradition. Anyone who is intimately familiar with Jewish Orthodox culture is aware of the extent to which the number of units, lines, and characters (and, in Hebrew, the numeric value of each character) within the text are as much a part of the meaning of the text as its contents.<sup>4</sup> The structure of the text, as well as numeric values that are written into the text (such as sums, dates and occurrences) are an integral part of Jewish interpretation, as well as Jewish writing. This tendency did not only inspire Zukofsky’s textual approach – which was reflected in the principles of his Objectivist movement, and which was one main point of contention with Pound<sup>5</sup> – it enabled Zukofsky, as Scroggins writes, to create his own “self-sufficient” system of poetry, and an original approach to language and literature that informs both his echomimetic translation of Catullus’ poetry, and his *midrashic* exegesis of Shakespeare’s work in *Bottom: On Shakespeare*. Most importantly, this approach enables Zukofsky to use his cultural heritage to create a unique voice, offering a quality that no other English writer could offer, and yet doing so in response and as commentary on existing western traditions. In this, very much in the manner that Gill writes about the history of experimentation in Women’s Poetry, Zukofsky has certainly “unsettled and disrupted poetic conventions and readerly expectations” (201).

#### 4. Private Voice

Gill devotes an entire chapter to the complex subject of “private voices” in Women’s Poetry. She argues convincingly that while the expectation of reference in Women’s Poetry to home, family, relationship, and the poet’s immediate surrounding might seem limiting and stereotypical – it is the ability to erode the binary relationship between the tentative position of the personal and the authoritative status of the public that results in a new form of poetry:

The private voices of women’s poetry might be read as resisting both relegation to the realm of the private and more broadly the system of thought (phallogocentrism) which would see these binaries as functional, necessary and explanatory. In exposing and complicating the set of binaries (in this case private vs. public, personal vs. social, quiet and intimate vs. rhetorical and authoritative), women’s poetry also critiques the problematic and essentialist binary of male vs. female. (Gill 106)

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<sup>4</sup> Of course, most scholars are aware of the significance of numeric structures in religious Jewish texts, but perhaps not of the pervasiveness of this phenomenon in Jewish Orthodox society, sometime outside of religious context. At any rate, Scroggins does not consider this venue of interpretation in relation with Zukofsky’s numeric structures.

<sup>5</sup> See Abend-David (11-12).

Merging the binaries of the private and the public is naturally the topic of Zukofsky's *Autobiography*. However, this passionate love poem to his wife and son ("daughter of music and the sweet son" (Zukofsky, *Autobiography* 45)), could not respond more perfectly to Gill's description. The entire poem is built on a metaphor of merging binaries, as chill and warmth are consolidated: "winter spring," "winter is spring," "snowsleet barberries," "snow's berries," "water hot and cold," "cold and warm" (15, 17, 55, 63). Moreover, the merging of hot and cold in this song is a merger of the intimate and the abstract, as it combines a discussion of the poet's home life with a complicated philosophical principal.

The *Autobiography* is a joint project of Zukofsky and his wife, Celia Thaw Zukofsky, who provides musical notes to most of Zukofsky's text. On most pages (other than a number of separate notes that are not composed), the poet's and his wife's initials are printed on top, each followed by the date on which the text was either written or set to music. Zukofsky adds two notes in which he both thanks his wife for her musical composition (Zukofsky, *Autobiography* 7), and highlights the extent to which the love and support of his wife and son are an inseparable part of his work:

My wife Celia and son Paul have been the only reason for the poet's persistence. She has collaborated with me in my work on Shakespeare and Catullus. Paul is a violinist and composer. I trust, considering his gifts, that his art will be welcomed sooner than mine. (45)

Zukofsky and his wife, represented by the opposing forces of text and music, lend themselves to the prevailing metaphor in the poem of chill and warmth, which culminates in "Song 22." The poet invites the reader into the intimacy of his washbasin, where the mixing of hot and cold water results in song, the offspring of harmony between antithetical forms of energy:

To my  
washstand whose square is marble and inscribes two smaller  
ovals to left and right for soap Comes a song of water  
from the right faucet and to the left my  
left and my right hand mixing hot and cold  
Comes a flow which if I have called a song is a  
song entirely in my head a  
frieze of stone completing what no longer is my  
washstand since its marble has completed my  
getting up each morning my washing before going to bed.  
(Zukofsky, *Autobiography* 25)

It is not difficult to see that Zukofsky invites the reader into the intimacy of his washing room and his bed to describe a process of creation that is simultaneously intellectual and biological, and, in fact, implying that his poetry is as much a product of his relationship as his son, Paul. Family, love, and artistic creation are described as a triangle of water running hot and cold to achieve a perfect union of body and mind.

This, however, in no way means that the *Autobiography* is either naïve or lacking in intellectual rigour. As Zukofsky is careful to mention in "Song 22," his reference is "to my washstand whose base is / Greek" (*Autobiography* 25). This point

becomes clearer when the metaphor of chill and warmth, “Water... Fire in winter” is extended to the short song, “Xenophanes” (55). Xenophanes of Colophon (c. 570–c. 475 BC), quoted by Eusebius Pamphili (ad 260/265–339/340), sees all of existence as the amalgamation of antithetical forces that “give birth” to the physical world as we know it:

One says that existences are three, and some of them are sometimes warring in a manner with one another, and then becoming friends again they exhibit marriages, and births, and rearing of offspring; another says that they are two, moist and dry, or hot and cold, and he makes them dwell together and marries them. (qtd. in Pamphili 124d)

Like John Donne in his poem, “The Flea,” Zukofsky uses Xenophanes’ idea to describe a conceit of “three lives in one” (1993). Unlike Donne’s poem, however, Zukofsky’s conceit in *Autobiography* is by far more personal and sentimental. More importantly, Zukofsky is able to convince the reader of the strong tie between his family life and his poetic creation. In doing so, he is “exposing and complicating the set of binaries” (Gill 106) that include romantic love vs. intellectual creation, family life vs. professional occupation, and private life vs. publication. Here, as elsewhere in his poetry (as in his description of his mother on the house stoop in the Lower East Side, above), Zukofsky merges private memories, classical literature, political thought, and personal emotions to create a new form of poetry that legitimizes, and even necessitates the merging of public and private experiences.

## Conclusion

Zukofsky’s life circumstances provide insight to the significance of his domestic relationship, the support, and even the creative collaboration that he received at home. Unlike the stormy romantic life of other modernists of his generation, Zukofsky’s stable home life seems abnormally sane. But as he has always worked in the margins of the American Modern mainstream, having to prove that he was worthy of writing poetry in English, and suspected of never quite being a “real American,” he relied heavily on any form of professional support that was available to him. Such support came from his colleagues in the Objectivist movement and occasional successes, as well as his unstable relationship with Ezra Pound – but the home provided him with a constant, unflinching source of emotional strength that other poets, who might have been better connected, more easily accepted, and both professionally and financially more successful – might have found elsewhere. With time, his wife might have become his peer to compensate for a relatively small number of writers and artists that he was in constant touch with. It is human nature, therefore, that home and family become significant when one is unsure about their public status and their ability to establish a strong professional support group. And it is possible that under different circumstances, Zukofsky’s inclusion of the personal in his own poetry might have been less prevalent. As he writes: “My wife Celia and son Paul have been the only reason for the poet’s persistence” (see above), one can hear in his words the traditional authoritative voice of “the poet” in the third person, as well as the first person



("my") and the content of his statement: that his wife and child are both his emotional and professional support group.

It is therefore because Zukofsky wrote from the margins that he was forced to incorporate his unique personal experience both as an inspiration and a justification for his poetry. And it is because he writes from the margins, that, as Gill writes, his experience renders his poetry unique, highly personal and yet sophisticated, densely referenced, and at times opaque and intricate. Whether or not one is inclined to label such poetry as "feminine," the result is a deconstruction of binaries that subverts established notions about appropriate subject matter, structure and imagery, and a poetry that offers a new form of self-expression.

## **Appendix: Theoretical Venues that are not followed in this article**

### ***i. Masculinity studies***

Because I believe that a theoretical discussion of gender has more to do with power relations than with biological gender, I am choosing not to ground my argument in masculinity studies. As Rachel Adams and David Savran concede: "Masculinity studies analyzes a dominant and oppressive class that has, arguably, always been the primary focus of scholarly attention" (Adams and Savran 7). It is precisely because Zukofsky is not coming from the position of patriarchy that I am placing my argument elsewhere. Admittedly, a masculinity studies approach would have been useful in works such as Chris Blazina's *The Cultural Myth of Masculinity* (2003), which presents masculinity as a distinctly western ideology – and which would be helpful in discussing the maternal, Jewish Eastern European tradition in Zukofsky's poetry. And, certainly, works by scholars such as Daniel Boyarin (1997) and Michael Gluzman (2002), who discuss the history and cultural position of Jewish masculinity, could be extremely helpful in reading certain parts of his poetry. These and other sources already discuss in detail the emasculation of minority male writers (and other men). However, these discussions still refer to masculinity as a constant. Zukofsky's "masculinity" was certainly neither constant nor comparable with those of other male American poets of his generation, despite the fact that some critics make the mistake of conflating them (Rifkin 8).

### ***ii. Cultural studies of Zukofsky's poetry***

It is important to mention two major studies of Zukofsky's work: *Not One of Them in Place* by Norman Finkelstein (2001), and *A Menorah for Athena* by Stephen Fredman (2001). While both authors do a great deal to consider Zukofsky's cultural and personal background, they also assimilate him within a palatable version of either "American" or "Jewish American" poetics. As Finkelstein employs the device of placing Jewish American poets as belonging either to the tradition of Stevens or of Pound (Finkelstein 5), or Wordsworth or Keats (Finkelstein 11), or even Blake (Finkelstein 5), he "naturalizes" them within the respected body of American-English, or even British poetry. Of course, the reference to Blake is even more useful in the creation of a poetic dichotomy that is echoed by several scholars, between a Biblical, "Hebraic," tradition and a Western Classical or Hellenistic tradition (Fredman 8). Similar claims are repeated by Maeera Shreiber in *Singing in a Strange Land* (Shreiber 119) and by Rachel Blau DuPlessis in *Purple*

*Passages* (DuPlessis 79). This is a useful device since it ties Jewish American Poetry both to an entrenched Classical tradition, and a Biblical tradition that is just as much a part of Western Culture as Hellenism. To be fair, both Finkelstein and Fredman pay attention to Yiddish as well as Hebrew elements in Zukofsky's poetry (Finkelstein 38; Fredman 127, 130-132, 141) – but these references are often devoid of social, economic and political context. And, by situating Zukofsky within the traditions of 'Wordsworth or Keats', Finkelstein and Fredman (and others) assimilate Zukofsky within an Anglophone tradition – with the hope of raising the poet's (and his researchers') literary status.

## ***ii. Gender-based studies of Zukofsky's poetry***

Three books that are dedicated to the discussion of Zukofsky and Gender are *Career Moves*, by Libbie Rifkin (2000), *Uncloseting Drama* by Nick Salvato (2010), and *Purple Passages* by Rachel Blau DuPlessis (2012). The claims in these studies are that Zukofsky was either a typical "aggressive" male poet (DuPlessis 66, 72), a closeted gay poet (DuPlessis 66), or, paradoxically, both (Rifkin 8, 88-89). The "queering" of Zukofsky is invaluable in taking him out to the paradigm of mainstream "straight" identity and enabling the reader, in principle, to benefit from the recognition that he is "queer," or rather different in a significant and positive manner that some have labored to disguise. Salvato is at his best when he suggests that the "prerequisite for love" can be applied equally on "page, stage or bedroom" (Salvato 67-8), rendering either the erotic or homoerotic part of the discussion less significant than the question of identity in general. Whether Rifkin and Salvato are successful in outing Zukofsky sexually is less important than what is suggested by their discussion that can be taken out of the biological definition of sexual functions: The notion that Zukofsky is "queer;" that he does not fit neatly into definitions of either sexual identity, culture, class, religion, race, nationality, language or tradition. He is a "queer" poet who cannot be easily assimilated as he fits neither his contemporary molds of English-Poetry nor of Jewish nationalism – and must find ways to expand and modify such molds to fit in. However, all three scholars keep falling into the same essentializing, biological and stereotypical discussion of "aggressive core statements concerning maleness" (DuPlessis 66), "White, generally middle-class [man]" (Rifkin 8), and "perennial bottom" (Salvato 98), that prevents them from taking an important additional step.

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# Enlightenment, Utopia and Encarnalization of Swift's Houyhnhnms in Carter's *Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*

Aydınlanma, Ütopya ve Carter'in *Doktor Hoffman'ın Arzu Makinaları* Romanında Swift'in Houyhnhnm'lerinin Şehvanileştirilmesi

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## Abstract

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno trace the roots of modern bourgeois thought in the Enlightenment ideology that is characterized by the effort of establishing order over nature and that dates back to *Odyssey*. They argue that the whole human history has been motivated by the fetishism of 'truth' and 'facts,' devaluation of nature, a fear of social deviation. Well-known utopian works such as Plato's *The Republic*, Augustine's *The City of God*, and Thomas More's *Utopia* represent this 'fear of social deviation' and 'devaluation of nature.' The Fourth Part of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, entitled "A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms," is a utopian work in which a horse-race called 'Houyhnhnms' creates such logocentric system based on the 'fear of social deviation' and on the control of nature and the carnal. In *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* Angela Carter parodies the logocentric world of Swift's *Houyhnhnms*. In the chapter entitled "Lost in Nebulous Time," which is an overt parody of Swift's the "Country of Houyhnhnms," centaurs which are half horse and half human creatures are depicted as extremely involved in carnal desires and as having an innate tendency for evil. The article handles the logocentric enlightenment discourse represented in Swift's "A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms" and studies how in "Lost in Nebulous Time" of *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* Angela Carter parodies Swift's utopia by carnalizing and carnivalizing it.

**Keywords:** Enlightenment, Utopia, Logocentricism, Carnal, Deconstruction.

## Öz

*Aydınlanmanın Diyalektiği* adlı eserlerinde Max Horkheimer ve Theodore Adorno modern burjuva düşüncesinin köklerini doğayı denetim altına alma çabası olarak tanımlanabilecek ve tarihi Homeros'un *Odysseus* eserine kadar giden aydınlanma ideolojisinde ararlar. Onlara göre, bütün insanlık tarihi doğru ve gerçek olanın fetişleştirilmesine, doğanın değersizleştirilmesine ve toplumsal olarak doğrudan sapma korkusuna dayanmaktadır. Platon'un *Devlet*'i, Saint Augustine'in *Tanrı Şehri* ve Thomas More'un *Ütopya*'sı gibi ünlü ütopyalar bu doğrudan sapma korkusunu ve doğanın değersizleştirilip tahakküm altına alınmasını yansıtmaktadırlar. Jonathan Swift'in *Güliver'in Seyahatleri* romanının "Houyhnhnm Ülkesine Seyahat" başlıklı son bölümünde, bir at ırkı olan Houyhnhnm'lerin yarattığı akılmerkezci bir ütopya anlatılır ve bu ütopya Houyhnhnm'lerin doğrudan sapma korkularını ve doğayı ve şehvani olanı bastırma arzularını yansıtır. *Doktor Hoffman'ın Şeytani Arzu Makinaları* adlı romanında Angela Carter Swift'in akılmerkezci Houyhnhnm'lerinin parodisini yapar. Swift'in Houyhnhnm Ülkesinin açık parodisi olan romanın "Zamansızlıkta

Kaybolma” (Lost in Nebulous Time) başlıklı bölümündeki insan başlı atlar (centaurs), hayatı bedensel ve şehvani zeminde yaşayan ve doğuştan kötülüğe eğilimli varlıklar olarak resmedilirler. Bu çalışmada, *Güiver’in Seyahatleri*’nin “Houyhnhnm Ülkesine Seyahat” başlıklı bölümünde temsil edilen akılmerkezci aydınlanmacı söylem incelenmekte ve Angela Carter’in *Doktor Hoffman’ın Şeytani Arzu Makineleri*’nin “Zamansızlıkta Kaybolma” bölümünde Houyhnhnm’leri şehvanileştirip karnavallaştırarak ütopyalarındaki akılmerkezci özün yapıbozumunu yapması ele alınmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Aydınlanma, Ütopya, Akılmerkezcilik, Şehvani, Yapıbozumu.

The enmity between the carnal and the spiritual and the organization of social, religious and intellectual lives on the rejection of the carnal has a long history in the Western world. In *Phaedo* Plato describes the philosopher as one who rejects all bodily pleasures including food, sex, and clothing; “such a man’s concern is not for the body, but so far as he can aside from it, is directed towards the soul” (64c). The philosopher differs from other men in releasing his soul, as far as possible, from its communion with the body (64c). In Book II of his *Confessions*, Saint Augustine states how in young age he was surrendered to the foul pleasures of the body until learning to detest the body and dedicate himself to the love of God. We can even say that all Christianity, as explicitly seen in the Seven Deadly Sins, was founded on the profanation of the body and bodily functions. As such, Christian thought categorized the spirit and everything related to it as sacred and the body with its functions and desires as profane. The first utopia in Semitic religions, the story of *Genesis*, ended with the exclusion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden because of Adam and Eve’s recognition of their body and their tasting bodily pleasure, with Eve being held responsible for the sin.

Using poststructuralist terminology, all Western thought is based on binary oppositions in which two opposites are set off against one another and in which one item of the pair dominates the other or struggles for the absence of the other. Nature/culture opposition, according to Derrida, is one of the oldest and can be seen as the basis for the others. Derrida states,

In spite of all its rejuvenations and its disguises, this opposition is congenital to philosophy. It is even older than Plato. It is at least as old as the Sophists. Since the statement of the opposition—it has been passed on to us by a whole historical chain which opposes “nature” to the law, to education, to art, to technics—and also to liberty, to the arbitrary, to history, to society, to the mind, and so on. (963)

In a similar vein, talking about binary oppositions and sex, Michel Foucault argues, “with the great series of binary oppositions (body/soul, flesh/spirit, instinct/reason, drives/consciousness) that seemed to refer sex to a pure mechanism devoid of reason, the West has managed not only, or not so much, to annex sex to a field of rationality [...] but to bring us almost entirely—our bodies, our minds, our individuality, our history—under under the sway of a logic concupiscence and desire” (*History of Sexuality: An Introduction* 78). According to Max Horkheimer and Theodore W. Adorno, the root of these oppositions should

be sought in the enlightenment ideology. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, they call the logocentric western thought enlightenment ideology and state how this ideology fights against the carnal and feminine spheres. The enlightenment ideology, they argue, whose history can be traced back to Homer, is the effort to dominate nature and the body and to make them analyzable, calculable, and modifiable under the rule of logic and the mind. According to them, "self-preservation, for which, the endeavour of preserving oneself is the first and only basis of virtue, is the true maxim of Western civilization" (22). The enlightened social self was founded on the control of nature and of everything related to it. This led to the creation of binaries and dichotomies that the enlightened social self should be cautious about. The criterion of the enlightenment ideology was self-preservation, the ability to control oneself against the enchantments of the body, nature and the feminine. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, Odysseus' struggle with the song of the Sirens in *The Odyssey* represents the effort of enlightened man to keep nature and pleasure outside the circle of life. The Sirens, invoking the primeval feminine life source, "threaten the patriarchal order, which gives each person back their life only in exchange for their full measure of time" (46). In order not to hear the song of the Sirens, Odysseus plugs his ear with wax. Anyone who wants to survive must not listen to the enchanting sound of nature. Odysseus realizes that "however he may consciously distance himself from nature, as a listener he remains under its spell. He complies with the contract of his bondage and, bound to the mast, struggles to throw himself into the arms of the seductresses" (46).

With this centralization of reason or *logos* and classification of everything not subject to it or not controlled by it as dangerous, the enlightenment ideology did not only cause the creation of such binaries as female/male, body/spirit, and nature/culture but also led to the abhorrence of the body and sexual desire and to the fetishization of male logic and the spirit. We can say that well-known utopian works such as Plato's *The Republic*, Augustine's *The City of God*, and Thomas More's *Utopia* represent the fetishization of male logic under the name of "Reason" and the 'fear of social deviation.' These works represent the male logic of enlightenment philosophy which labels everything that is carnal, everything that falls into the spheres of nature and desire as 'different' and 'deviation.' They are based on the rejection or control of the body and on the effort of subjecting the enchantments of nature to the rules of logic. To use Nietzschean terminology, the world of these utopias represents an Apollonian state of existence, and thus its very existence is based on the exclusion of the Dionysian desire. Thomas More's *Utopia*, for instance, is a work in which the ideal society is defined as one in which the rule of reason is perfect, nature is subdued, desire excluded, and women presented in terms of their reproductive functions and on the basis of "loyalty" to the husband.

Thomas More's *Utopia* is worth of note among these utopias because it seems to have provided a model for the creation of the Houyhnhnmland. In the prefatory letter to *Gulliver's Travels*, defending the reality of the societies he encountered in his voyages, Gulliver says, "I have great reason to complain that some of them are

so bald as to think my book of Travels a mere fiction out of mine own brain; and have gone so far as to drop hints, that the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos have no more existence than the Inhabitants of Utopia” (Swift 40). Both works are similar in that “in the fictional societies of Utopia and Houyhnhnmland More and Swift have created memorable images of simplicity, utility, fellowship, and justice which readers are encouraged to compare with the ‘justice’ in their own lands” (Hammond 449). They also share a common ground in their attribution of great importance to reason: “The Utopians believe that a person who is following the guidance of nature and obeys the dictates of reason. The grand maxim of the Houyhnhnms is to cultivate Reason, and to be wholly governed by it” (Hammond 450). Thus, the Houyhnhnmland of Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* can be studied as a utopia in which, analogous to *Utopia*, the man of enlightenment fulfils all his ideals. However, when taken in terms of the strict logocentric world of the Houyhnhnms and the way the Yahoos are represented, it is difficult to call the Houyhnhnmland a utopia. As Houston discusses in “Utopia, Dystopia or Anti-Utopia? *Gulliver’s Travels* and the Utopian Mode of Discourse,” “the text is neither a utopia, nor a dystopia, nor even an anti-utopia (as it has variously been read); rather, it contains images of and interactions with ideas of utopia and dystopia which reflect its engagement with the Utopian mode and qualify it as simultaneously Utopian and dystopian” (427). Based on the overall discussion of this article, it is simultaneously utopian and dystopian because what is utopian for the Houyhnhnms is dystopian for those who do not accept the strict confinements of reason.

The word *Houyhnhnm*, in the tongue of the island of the Houyhnhnm, signifies a horse and means the perfection of nature. Nature here should not be taken as separate from reason; it is subdued to reason because the social order of the Houyhnhnm is based on reason which is the most frequently mentioned word in the language of the Houyhnhnms. The Houyhnhnms’ taking Gulliver to their house because they see some glimmerings of reason in him indicates the importance of reason in their world. The Houyhnhnms are described with terms that are totally absent in the Yahoos. In other words, in ideological and metaphorical terms, where they are present the Yahoos are absent, and where they are absent the Yahoos are present. The world of the Houyhnhnms is one that excludes everything that is carnal, whereas the world of the Yahoos is totally carnal. Gulliver observes that “these noble Houyhnhnms are endowed by Nature with a general disposition to all virtues and have no conceptions or ideas of what is evil in a rational creature, so their grand maxim is, to cultivate *Reason*” (Swift 315). When they converse, their subjects are usually “on friendship and benevolence, or order and economy, sometimes upon the visible operations of Nature, or ancient traditions, upon the bounds and limits of virtue, upon the unerring rules of Reason” (326). Friendship and benevolence are the two principal virtues among the Houyhnhnms, and they preserve decency and civility to the highest degree. They have no fondness for their children, but they take special care for educating them according to the dictates of reason. Such enlightenment values as temperance, industry, exercise, and cleanliness are taught to the children.

In contrast, the Yahoos are completely carnal beings. They are presented with an elaborate emphasis on bodily functions. We can see this as soon as they appear in



the novel when they discharge their excrements on Gulliver's head. Though they are just like humans, they are more hairy and their females are more hideously shaped. Unlike the Houyhnhnms, they are ambitious, sexually immoral, jealous, interested in precious stones, and always liable to fight with each other.

As already mentioned, the place of women is a highly controversial issue in well-known utopias. Reason, which is fetishized by the ideology of enlightenment, is attributed to man, and, as Horkheimer and Adorno argue, "for the being endowed with reason, concern for the unreasoning animal is idle. Western civilization has left that to women" (206). The man of enlightenment is one who is temperate and who does not fall prey to the enchantments of nature or to his own desires. In *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault discusses, "Western man has been drawn for three centuries to the task of telling everything concerning his sex; that since the classical age there has been a constant optimization and an increasing valorization of the discourse on sex (*History of Sexuality: An Introduction* 23). What distinguishes these last three centuries is "the variety, the wide dispersion of devices that were invented for speaking about it, for having it be spoken about, for inducing it to speak for itself, for listening, recording, transcribing, and redistributing what is said about it: around sex, a whole network of varying, specific, and coercive transpositions into discourse" (34). According to these discourses, a man should not allow himself to be dominated by his desires and pleasures. Abstinence from sex (with a woman or a boy), abhorring bodily pleasures, and moderation were seen as the main criteria of male sexual ethics. Falling into the trap of bodily pleasures was identified as a feminine attitude. As Foucault puts it, "that moderation is given an essentially masculine structure has another consequence, which is symmetrical and opposite to the one just discussed: immoderation derives from a passivity that relates it to femininity" (*History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure* 84). The role prescribed for women in the enlightenment logocentrism is only a domestic one: subordination to the husband and childbearing. In the logocentric society, Horkheimer and Adorno argue, woman "became an embodiment of biological function, an image of nature," and "to dominate nature boundlessly, to turn it into an endless hunting ground, has been the dream of millennia" (206). The subjugated woman "mirrors her conqueror's victory in her spontaneous submission, reflecting defeat back to him as devotion, despair as the beautiful soul, the violated heart as the loving breast" (207).

In the Fourth Book of *Gulliver's Travels*, like in most other utopian works, women are rarely mentioned, and when mentioned, they are presented through their domestic or child-bearing functions. The prevailing atmosphere of the world of the Houyhnhnms, as in previous utopias, is either totally rejecting sex and women or approaching them with self-restraint and only on the basis of domestic love, with all bodily pleasures excluded. In Chapter 8 of the Book, while describing the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver observes that courtship, love, presents, and settlements have no place in their thoughts. Marriage is a technical issue for preserving the quality of the race and controlling the population, and women are lifeless agents that are there just for the achievement of reproductive purposes.

While the female Houyhnhnm is depicted with no desire or any other bodily function apart from childbearing, the female Yahoo is presented as nothing but body and desire. The Yahoos, it is said, have their females in common and a female Yahoo admits a male one even when she is pregnant. The females do whatever they can to attract male Yahoos. She often stands "behind a bank or a bush, to gaze on the young males passing by, and then appear, and hide, using many antic gestures and grimaces" and then, attracting the male with her offensive smell, she runs into some convenient place where she knows the male would follow her (Swift 311-12). Gulliver is never so detested than when he is attacked by a desirous and lustful female Yahoo while bathing stark naked in a stream. Being enflamed with desire when she sees Gulliver's body, the female Yahoo comes running towards him with all speed, leaps into the water, and embraces him in a fulsome manner, upon which Gulliver cries for help from his master. After being driven to the opposite bank of the stream by the master, the female Yahoo continues gazing and howling all the time while Gulliver is putting on his dress.

As it is seen in the analysis above, the utopian world of the Houyhnhnms is based on reason and on the rejection of the carnal sphere. In the logocentric world of the Houyhnhnms, there is no place for desire, passion, courtship, love, and the body in general. While nature identified with the body and the feminine is ominous and detestable, what the Houyhnhnms call 'Nature', the initial letter always written in capital, is very important in the conceptual world of the Houyhnhnms; it is the so-called universal and static hu/man nature, the ultimate end of male logic and ethics. In contrast, the Yahoos are presented as detestable creatures with no reason, moderation, and control over bodily functions. They are presented as body incarnate, and thus what is a utopia for the Houyhnhnms is a dystopia for them.

In "Lost in Nebulous Time" of *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* Angela Carter parodies the logocentric world of Swift's *Houyhnhnms* by depicting centaurs (half human and half horse creatures in Greek mythology) as extremely involved in carnal desires and as having an innate tendency for evil. *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* is a novel about a journey through a world in which all of man's desires come true with the help of a machine built by a scientist named Dr. Hoffman. The novel relates the journey of Desiderio, the first-person narrator of the novel, through the world of desire and his assistance to the Minister of the city in the war against Doctor Hoffman's desire machine and his manipulation of reality. *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* is mostly described as a picaresque novel because of Desiderio's journey through the world of desire and the sexual ordeals he undergoes during this journey. The novel includes retelling of many myths and stories with an erotogenic view, and thus it can be regarded as a response to the enlightenment ideology which ignores the body and desire and which locks the woman in the prisonhouse of domestic life.

In *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, the enlightenment logocentrism and its binary thinking are deconstructed in many ways. One of them can be seen in the presentation of femininity and masculinity. In the novel, "Carter subverts traditional quest narratives by changing the fate of the female characters to challenge the patriarchal order (Kilic 35). To do this, instead of strict male-female categorization that is characteristic of logocentric thinking, she

presents the world of the novel as a mostly androgynous one. For instance, Albertina, Doctor Hoffman's daughter whom Desiderio searches and desires throughout the novel, appears in ambivalent and androgynous forms. At first, she appears in the disguise of a male ambassador whom Hoffman sends to communicate the terms of the war with the minister. As soon as Desiderio sees the Ambassador, he thinks he is "the most beautiful human being" he has ever seen (Carter, *The Infernal* 31). He resembles the dialogue between the ambassador and the minister to one between a flower and a stone. As he goes, the ambassador leaves behind a handkerchief on which the name Albertina is written, making Desiderio realize that the ambassador is in fact Albertina and hence a female. Likewise, in the chapters entitled "The Erotic Traveler" and "The Coast of Africa," which are about Desiderio's journey with a Sadeian Count, the Count's male assistant Lafleur—whose name means 'flower' in French—turns out to be Albertina. After the death of the Count, Desiderio says, "two privates seized Lafleur's shoulders and dragged him away from me. They cut off his robe, although he struggled, and I saw not the lean torso of a boy but the gleaming, curvilinear magnificence of a golden woman" (197). He recognizes that the face is Albertina's. Another example of androgyny is in the chapter entitled "The Acrobats of Desire," at the end of which Desiderio—the narrator of the novel—is raped by nine Moroccan acrobats while accompanying a traveling fair. In this chapter, one of the exhibitionists of the travelling fair is a woman with a beard, Madame la Barbe, who makes a living by exposing her androgyny with the name of the Bearded Bride.

The ambivalent sexual status of Desiderio also manifests the deconstructive representation of gender. Carter states: "To be the object of desire is to be defined in the passive case" (*The Sadeian*, 88). While we expect the woman to be the desired one and in the passive case, in the novel, as Kilic puts it, "it is not Albertina but Desiderio as a man who is defined in the passive case" (60). Kilic adds: "the literal meaning of his name, the desired one, signals that he is the object of desire whom Albertina follows wherever he goes" (60). Her appearing to him in different disguises—as the ambassador, the little girl Aoi in "The River People, as Lafleur in "The Erotic Traveller" and "The Coast of Africa," and as the prostitute in The House of Anonymity—and his seduction by the Mama in "The River People," by the Acrobats of Desire, and the Count are examples that show that he is in the passive case and the desired one in the novel.

The deconstruction of the enlightenment logocentricism is also seen in the representation of time, which is one of the most important aspects in the study of "Lost in Nebulous Time." In his *Laocoön*, G. E. Lessing distinguishes painting from poetry discussing that "painting uses completely different means or signs than does poetry, namely figures and colors in space rather than articulated sounds in time" (78). Lessing adds:

If these signs must indisputably bear a suitable relation to the thing signified, then signs existing in space can express only objects whose wholes or parts coexist, while signs that follow one another can express only objects whose wholes or parts are consecutive. Objects or parts of

objects which exist in space are called bodies. Accordingly, bodies with their visible properties are the true subjects of painting. Objects or parts of objects which follow one another are called actions. Accordingly, actions are the true subjects of poetry. (78)

Thus, while painting is necessarily spatial because the visible aspect of the objects can best be presented juxtaposed in time, poetry makes use of language and is composed of a succession of words proceeding through time. Having thus described the spatial aspect of painting and the temporal nature of poetry, Lessing categorizes music, dance and the novel as temporal arts, and painting, sculpture and architecture as spatial ones. Discussing the weaknesses of Lessing's strict categorization of painting as spatial art and literature a temporal art, Joseph Frank analyzes the poetry of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot and claims that aesthetic form in modern poetry "is based on a space-logic that demands a complete reorientation in the reader's attitude toward language" (15). For Frank, this space-logic exists not only in poetry but also in the novel. This method of spatialization was applied on a gigantic scale by James Joyce in the composition of *Ulysses*. In *Ulysses*, Frank argues, Joyce presents a picture of Dublin seen as a whole by breaking up his narrative and giving the impression of simultaneity (19). In "Secondary Illusion: The Novel and the Spatial Arts," Joseph Kestner develops Frank's idea arguing that the simultaneity of the spatial arts implies a temporal relation and the succession of the temporal arts implies a spatial relation: "In the spatial arts, therefore, time is the secondary illusion; in the temporal arts, like the novel, space is the secondary illusion" (103). It follows that though the novel as a genre is a temporal art, the spatial always exists in it as a secondary illusion because the tendency to attain the spatial form of the picture is what distinguishes the novel from history texts.

What makes *Gulliver's Travels* not a history text but a great novel is the presence of such supernatural characters as the six-inch-high Lilliputians, the colossal-sized Brobdingnagians, the flying island Laputa, and the Houyhnhnms, which indicates the existence of the space-logic of fantasy in the novel. In other words, the known and familiar world of temporality is disrupted with the picturesque, imaginary, and otherworldly elements of fantasy. However, in spite of the fantasy in it, *Gulliver's Travels* still has a strong temporal element. It represents or satirizes the European world or more specifically the English society of the time with a successive arrangement of the events in the plot; satire of the religious and political conflicts and the scientific developments and philosophical discussions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe and England are the main concerns of the novel. For instance, the political parties and religious segregation in the first book of the novel, titled "A Voyage to Lilliput," represent those in 18<sup>th</sup> century England. Thus, the novel deals with the socio-temporal reality of the period and problematizes the weaknesses in conforming to the rules of reason. In other words, problems of the historical period are presented with a chronological plot, which implies the strong temporal relation of the novel.

The logical/temporal world of *Gulliver's Travels* is countered in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* with what is called nebulous time, which is an indefinite and atemporal time. In *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, the space logic becomes the primary illusion because the novel attains the form of

the picture. This novel follows the young Desiderio's (from Latin 'desiderius': 'ardent desire') erotic adventures and journeys through nebulous time, 'the anteriority of all times' (Sellberg 95). At the beginning of Doctor Hoffman's war with the minister of the city, a messenger the Doctor has sent to the capital announces that the Doctor is in the process of sending out a variety of images which transform the perception of reality. Doctor Hoffman's warfare of illusions has rendered time and space non-linear and multi-dimensional (95). In this regard, the war of the doctor is to distort the temporal world of the city with the spatiality of images to release all that has been repressed with regard to people's desires. With these images, the consecutive nature of time is spoiled with the flux of mirages so that the relationship between the past and the present becomes no longer a matter of chronology. As Satoshi Masamune puts it in "Timelessness in Angela Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*":

To Desiderio's eyes, not only do the things of the past that are unknown to him appear isolated, they also overlap with images associated with the present...it seems clear that the Doctor, in sending his images, wants to make the status of the past equal to that of the present. As can occur in film, which is referred to several times in this novel, he tries to make what happened in another place and time appear here and now. Apparently, he believes that if he continues to emit images, he will eventually succeed in eliminating the distinction between the past and the present. (80)

The distortion of temporality by images results in the novel in nebulous time that manifests itself not only in the experience of modes of repressed desire but also in the construction of the plot. The old peep-show proprietor, who is Hoffman's assistant and with whom Desiderio travels, describes nebulous time as "absolute mutability when only reflected rays and broken trajectories of an entirely broken source of light fitfully reveal a continually shifting surface, like the surface of water, yet a water which is only a reflective skin and has neither depth nor volume" (*The Infernal* 116). The peep-show provides a good example for representing nebulous time. The samples in the peep-show are pictures displaying different forms of desire without any order. The chapters of the novel are also organized like sliding samples of the peep-show in which Albertina appears in "a series of marvelous shapes formed at random in the kaleidoscope of desire" (6), which indicates that the plot structure of the novel is organized not on well-sequenced events—as in *Gulliver's Travels*—but on random shots of pictures of desire experiences. The picaresque journey of Desiderio can be said to be one among peep-show samples of desire because as soon as he begins his journey, the first object he sees is the peep-show. The peep-show proprietor he meets there describes his purpose in the peep-show as "to demonstrate the difference between showing and saying. Signs speak. Pictures show" (50). From this point of the novel onwards, each experience of Desiderio—his sexual experience with the Mayor's pallid-faced daughter Mary Anne and her death, his living for a period of time with the river people and his marriage ritual with the nine-year daughter of Nao-Kurai, later on his journey with the traveling fair and his rape by the nine acrobats of desire—is presented as a journey among the sliding pictures in the

peep-show in which different kinds of desire, most of which are Sadeian, are exhibited. The peep-show samples are all “the most outrageous tableaux of blasphemy and eroticism, Christ performing innumerable obscenities upon Mary Magdalene, St. John and His Mother; and, in this holy city, I was fucked in the anus, against my will” (135). Thus, the peep-show samples deconstruct such grand logocentric narratives as Christ and Mary Magdalene by carnalizing the relationship between them, that is, by devoiding them of their spiritual kernel and drawing them to the plane of the body. The above quotation also indicates that Desiderio sees his sexual experiences as part of the sliding picture-narratives of the peep-show. In “Lost in Nebulous Time” the word ‘nebulous’ means being outside of time and place and suggests the atemporal world of the chapter and the novel in general.

In “Lost in Nebulous Time” the temporal/rational world of Swift’s Houyhnhnms is made ‘nebulous’ by carnalizing the centaurs. Angela Carter shows her interest with *Gulliver’s’ Travels* in the novel by mentioning it in the chapter “The River People,” where Desiderio makes Nao-Kurai buy it to learn English. The relationship with Swift’s novel is made obvious when the Houyhnhnms are directly mentioned as Desiderio tells the bay centaur that “the greater number of social institutions were created by weak, two-legged, thin-skinned creatures” much the same as Albertina and him, for which the bay centaur says Desiderio is lying because they are men and not Houyhnhnms and thus they have many words to describe deceit (227).

After having many experiences, Desiderio finds out that Albertina has appeared to him throughout the novel, as already mentioned, in different disguises: first as the sexually ambivalent Ambassador of Doctor Hoffman, then as Lafleur who is the Count’s assistant and who is sexually badly treated by the Count, and lastly as the Madame of the brothel, which Desiderio visits with the Count to satisfy his unappeasable hunger for sex. “Lost in Nebulous Time” is chapter 7 of the novel and it is towards the end of the novel. After the Count is killed in the Coast of Africa, Albertina reveals her identity, and the samples which keep Doctor Hoffman’s desire machine working are destroyed, and consequently Desiderio and Albertina are lost in nebulous time, that is, in the atemporal world of the centaurs.

Desiderio and Albertina move in nebulous time for three days when they come to the strangest of all trees which is rooted in the earth by four quivering legs, which they call ‘equine tree.’ They stand on the hill beside the buzzing tree, half horse, half tree, when they see four strange creatures approaching them, one of dark brown colour, one black, one a speckled grey, and one all unspotted white and all covered with mazy decorations. As these creatures come closer, Albertina and Desiderio realize that they are centaurs covered with the most intricate tattoo work. The males of these centaurs are partly tattooed, whereas the females are tattooed all over their body.

The centaurs are Houyhnhnm-like creatures that have created their utopian world. At the very beginning of their appearance, though nature is hostile, the scene is idyllic and edenic. They are so comely that Desiderio does not want to mount on their backs. They look like “Greek masterpieces born in a time when gods walked among us” (207). The centaurs are presented as good-mannered and

reasonable folks who base their lives on the spiritual plane, trying to correct an ancestral guilt with ritualistic songs. It turns out the centaurs believe they are the deformed children of a union between Sacred Stallion and the Bridal Mare because the Bridal Mare and her lover, Dark Archer, once killed the Sacred Stallion so that they might be together. The centaurs believe that they are to spend all of the eternity making amends for this affair, which includes self-administered beatings and tattooing, especially against the women.

While in *Gulliver's Travels* the carnal plane is left to the Yahoos, Angela Carter brings the logocentric world of Swift's Houyhnhnms to dialogue by carnalizing her centaurs. As Mikhail Bakhtin argues in his analysis of Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, presenting the body with all its parts and members, all its organs and functions, that is, focusing on the corporeality of human life had a revolutionary effect in the history of ideas (170). For Bakhtin, "in the process of accommodating this concrete human corporeality, the entire remaining world also takes on new meaning and concrete reality, a new materiality; it enters into contact with human beings that is no longer symbolic but material" (170). The human body plays a crucial function in this process in that it is "a concrete measuring rod for the world, that measurer of the world's weight and of its value for the individual" (71). In other words, drawing the novel to the level of the body, that is, 'fleshing out' the novel functions to destroy the established hierarchy of values which culminated in Christian thought and later on in neoclassical ideology.

Angela Carter destroys the hierarchy of established order represented in the utopian world of the Houyhnhnms by overemphasizing the bodily functions of the centaurs. First and foremost, their mythical past is based on pleasure-taking and its consequences. Second, shit, which is related to the Yahoos in the world of the Houyhnhnms, signifies the presence of the Sacred Stallion here, on whom all religious world is based. Their holy hill on which the strange horse-tree is situated is a dungheap. Their religious services end with explosive shedding of all the dung in every bowel present.

Most importantly, as soon as the centaurs bring Desiderio and Albertina home, a white centaur lowers his muzzle and begins to sniff her vagina comprehensively. The bay centaur, who hosts Desiderio and Albertina, lies them side by side on a table. Maybe the most striking scene of this chapter is the centaurs' raping Albertina all in turns and with a cold-blood, which is reminiscent of Desiderio's precedent rape by the nine Moroccan acrobats of desire in the chapter entitled "The Acrobats of Desire." While the males make "this prolonged and terrible assault upon Albertina," the bay centaur organizes the females into a line to do the savage game on Desiderio this time. However, they treat Desiderio with far less severity because the aim of the activity is just to humiliate the female centaurs. And while doing these activities, comically enough, they are serious like the Houyhnhnms. "None of them seemed to extract the least pleasure out of the act. They undertook it grimly, as though it were their duty" (207).

This pornographic submission of Albertina, the meatifying of her flesh, and her treatment as a prey for the carnivorous male agent represent the sexual politics of enlightenment ideology towards women. In *The Sadeian Woman* Angela Carter

argues that all pleasure “contains within itself the seeds of atrocities,” and thus “all beds are minefields” (28). In other words, it is in the nature of sex that sexual pleasure consists primarily in the submission and “annihilation of the partner” (167). In the novel, both women and men undergo submission and violence in the sexual act. Desiderio’s rape by the nine acrobats of desire, the valet’s sexual harassment by the Count and the Count’s bestial sex with a woman in the brothel, which is called The House of Anonymity, are examples that show different forms of Sadeian desire directed to different genders. However, Carter thinks that the one who is mostly treated as a slave and whose body is mostly harassed is the woman. She states, “Violence, the convulsive form of the active, a male principle, is a matter for men, whose sex gives them the right to inflict pain as a sign of mastery” (*The Sadeian* 25). Sexual activity, for Carter, is a predatory act in which “the butcher’s job of rendering the flesh of the victim into meat on the table [...] is the assertion of the abyss between master and victim” (166). Thus, using Carter’s terminology, it can be said that the rape of Albertina is a sex orgy directed to the enslavement of the woman in the sex act. It is like “an infertility festival with a choric quality” in which the participants “assemble themselves in architectonic configurations, fuck furiously, and discharge all together— all fall down” (170). Even if Albertina is harassed here, the carnalization of Swift’s Houyhnhnms and ‘fleshing out’ the relationship between the sexes is a deconstruction of the noncarnal relationship typology in the logocentric enlightenment ideology.

The sexual treatment of Albertina indicates that females are oppressed in many ways in the world of the centaurs. As we have already said in the previous parts of this article, in the logocentric worldview of enlightenment, man approaches woman with a certain self-restraint and the woman is either dismissed in utopia or her place in the society is defined in domestic terms: she is bound to the husband and functions as a childbearing agent. In the world of the centaurs of Angela Carter’s novel, women are also seen as inferior, and they are tormented in social life as they are seen as the cause of the original sin in the mythic world of the centaurs. For instance, while the male centaurs are partly tattooed, “the womanfolk are tattooed all over, even their face, in order to cause them more suffering, for they believed women were born only to suffer” (*The Infernal* 208). It is said that the centaurs prize fidelity more than all other virtues. An unfaithful wife is “flayed alive and her hide is given to her husband to cover his next marriage bed,” and her lover is castrated and he is forced to eat his penis, uncooked (211). However, Desiderio says this rigorous puritanism does not prevent every male in the village from raping Albertina (211). There are many other points which represent the centaurs’ bad treatment of women. For example, females eat after the males eat their meal; the males eat meat, while the females eat oat and grass; the females do all the work, while the males do nothing but reading and singing their ritualistic songs; the wife is responsible for giving birth to sons and continue the race. If she does not give her husband a son, the husband has the right to dismiss her from the house and get married to another woman. When the rape of Albertina is taken within this context, it can be said to be a reenactment of the punishment of the female centaurs by transforming, to use Carter’s terminology in *The Sadeian Woman*, her flesh into meat butchered by the male knife, that is, the male organ that is always erect and always ready to bleed the vagina, for it is in the very nature of the vagina to bleed.



The oppression of woman is so exaggerated that it may be thought by the author as part of the parody of the Houyhnhnm-like world of the centaurs. In the parodied world of the centaurs, Swift's Houyhnhnms are dialogized with a detailed description of bodily functions. It is not possible for the female centaurs to be left outside this parodying.

As seen in the overall discussion of the paper, the enlightened world of the Houyhnhnm-land is deconstructed in "Lost in Nebulous Time" by carnalizing and carnivalizing its logocentric gist. Swift's "A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms," like famous utopias that precede it, is based on the subjugation of nature and woman and on the profanation of the body and bodily functions. The Houyhnhnms are presented as beings that base their world on reason, moderation, and on the refusal of the carnal sphere. On the other hand, the Yahoos, the detested ones, are identified with nature, desire and the body. In this respect, we can argue that Swift's utopia is based on the conflict between the carnal and the spiritual, and the triumph of the spiritual over the carnal. In this regard, it represents the victory of enlightenment ideology over all forms of deviation. Different from Swift's novel, Angela Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* glorifies the carnal sphere and desire. In the chapter "Lost in Nebulous Time" of the novel, Swift's utopia is encarnalized by drawing the Houyhnhnm-like centaurs to the carnal sphere experiencing different forms of carnal desire. Women are subverted in both works; however, in "Lost in Nebulous Time" this is done not on the submission or rejection of the body but on the experience of excessive carnal desire. Even their religion is grounded on bodily functions. Angela Carter's novel deconstructs logocentricism and enlightenment ideology by 'fleshing out' the novel and carnivalizing Swift's Houyhnhnms. Angela Carter also carnivalizes the novel genre in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffmann* by distorting the temporality of the enlightenment with the help of images of desire released by Doctor Hoffman. This replacement of the temporal reality with the nebulous time of mirages also manifests itself in the spatial formation of the plot upon distorted images.

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# Axel Honneth's Critical Response to Habermas's Critique of Marx

Habermas'ın Marx Eleştirisine Axel Honneth'in Eleştirel Yanıtı

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## Abstract

Jurgen Habermas and Axel Honneth have each criticized Marx's emphasis on human labor as the most fundamental concept in any critical theory of society whose goal is human emancipation. Habermas's critique resulted in the development of Discourse Ethics, a Neo-Kantian approach to normative criticism and social justice. Discourse Ethics obtains its universal basis by marginalizing the non-rational, such as reactive emotions and various forms of desire for recognition that often underlie and motivate the social criticisms whose aim is human emancipation. I argue that Honneth's Neo-Hegelian theory of recognition is a productive response to two problems in Habermas's overly cognitivist and rationalist approach. These are the problem of the role of emotions in moral motivation, on the one hand, and the problem of locating acceptable boundaries between public issues of moral right or justice and private issues of ethical life or well-being. The strengths of Honneth's approach are clarified through two brief exegeses of classic works in political theory, Peter Strawson's *Freedom and Resentment* and Joel Feinberg's "The Nature and Value of Rights."

**Keywords:** Honneth, Habermas, Marx, Hegel, Recognition, Discourse Ethics, Moral Emotions.

## Öz

Jurgen Habermas ve Axel Honneth, Karl Marx'ın insan emeğinin insanı özgür kılmayı hedefleyen toplum kuramlarının temeli olduğu yönündeki görüşünü eleştirmiştir. Habermas'ın eleştirisi ile normatif eleştiri ve toplumsal adaleti Neo-Kantçı bakış açısıyla ele alan Söylem Etiği ortaya çıktı. Söylem Etiği evrensel temelini akılcı olmayı aykırı kabul ederek oluşturur. Bu bağlamda insanı özgür kılmayı hedefleyen birçok toplumsal eleştirinin altında yatan duygusal tepki ve tanınma isteği akılcı olmayandır. Bu çalışmada, Honneth'in Neo-Hegelci tanınma kuramının Habermas'ın aşırı bilişselci ve akılcı yaklaşımındaki iki soruna yaratıcı bir yanıt verdiği savunulmaktadır. Bu sorunlardan ilki duyguların ahlak motivasyonuna etkisi, diğeri ise toplumda ahlaki doğruluk veya adalet anlayışı ile kişilerin yaşam veya yaşam kalitesi etiği arasına çizilecek sınırın nerede konumlandırılacağıdır. Honneth'in yaklaşımının güçlü yönleri, siyasi kuram alanındaki iki klasik eser; Peter Strawson'un "*Freedom and Resentment*" ve Joel Feinberg'in "*The Nature and Value of Rights*" isimli eserleri üzerinden açıklanmıştır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Honneth, Habermas, Marx, Tanınma, Söylem Etiği, Ahlaki Duygular.

*“The proletariat, which will not permit itself to be treated as rabble, needs its courage, its self-confidence, its pride, and its sense of independence more than its bread.”*

Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*.

Both Jurgen Habermas and Axel Honneth have criticized Karl Marx’s emphasis on human labor as the most fundamental concept in any critical theory of society whose goal is human emancipation. Habermas’s critique resulted in the development of Discourse Ethics, a Neo-Kantian approach to normative criticism and social justice. However, Discourse Ethics obtains its universal basis by marginalizing non-rational forms of expression as well as the human desire for intersubjective recognition which is a primary motivating force in discourses about norms and justice. Habermas also draws a sharp distinction between norms that ground political rights or public justice and norms that relate more directly to private issues of ethical life or well-being. Axel Honneth’s Neo-Hegelian theory of recognition is a productive response to two problems in Habermas’s overly cognitivist and rationalist approach. These are the problem of the role of emotions and desire in moral motivation, on the one hand, and the problem of locating acceptable boundaries between public issues of moral right or justice and private issues of ethical life or well-being. The strengths of Honneth’s approach will be demonstrated through two brief exegeses of classic works in political theory, Peter Strawson’s *Freedom and Resentment* and Joel Feinberg’s “The Nature and Value of Rights”.

Habermas and Honneth have each taken issue with Marx’s interpretation of the emancipatory potential of human labor. Both philosophers are skeptical about the reduction involved in defining labor as the most fundamental concept in critical theory. Habermas moved away from Marx in a Kantian direction while Honneth has developed a Hegelian theory. Before explaining and evaluating their criticisms of Marx, and the subsequent paths they have taken in their own work, we should briefly revisit the claims that Marx made about labor.

Marx understood labor in terms of the distinctly human self-actualization made possible through the externalization of our rational and creative powers. Labor and its products are tangible expressions of human ability which enable us to develop a sense of who we are as we contemplate ourselves in a world we have created. By expressing our rational and creative potentials freely as equals in cooperative ventures, we discover our capacities, and we become empowered as human beings. We also become conscious of our needs through labor, and of the way our needs are distorted under capitalism, which is a system that expropriates our creative, world-building activity and commodifies it. Because our potential for creative-expressive activity and self-realization is distorted under capitalism, Marx assumed that the path to the fulfilment of truly human needs would be gradually discovered as workers first came to realize, through the experience of alienation, the ways that their human potential was being distorted. Capitalism and the alienation of labor that it creates initiate a learning process which forces workers to understand the real basis of their humanity or species-being. Marx

conceived of the factory not only as a miserable place but also as a school for the education of the revolutionary class:

[In the factory] the mass of misery, degradation, and exploitation grows; but with this there also grows the revolt of the working class, a class constantly increasing in numbers, and trained, united and organized by the very mechanism of capitalist production. (Marx and Engels 929)

The concept of labor was Marx's key to a critical theory of society as well as the source of his revolutionary optimism. He appropriated Hegel's understanding of labor as an externalization of human capacities and combined it with its own interpretation of Feuerbach's materialism. In this manner, he transformed the ancient philosophical concept of praxis into labor. Labor was seen as the principal source for the expression of human knowledge, skills, and abilities, distorted under capitalism. Labor was also the key to human emancipation and social transformation, as long as the exploited could become conscious of their alienation and learn that the system that creates it must be overcome. Marx also saw labor as the primary means of existence and the source of human consciousness, thought, belief, and action. Labor was the central category in Marx's theory of social change and social emancipation.

### **Habermas's Critique of Marx in the *Labor and Interaction* Essay**

From the beginning of his intellectual career, Jürgen Habermas perceived the weaknesses of Marx's 'productivist' or labor-based theory. Much of his early work can be seen as a sustained effort to formulate a critical theory of society based on an ideal of communicative interaction and rational reflection in a free and open context which he called an "ideal speech situation" (*Communication and the Evolution of Society*). He was particularly critical of Marx's reduction of the complexity of social interaction to one essential form of labor, which Habermas called, "the reduction of praxis to techne" (17).

In an essay titled "Labor and Interaction: Remarks on Hegel's Jena Philosophy of Mind" Habermas located three analytically distinct, but practically interrelated, dimensions of self and societal constitution in Hegel's early thought. These dimensions are language, labor, and moral relations. The development of self and society occurs in each of these three dimensions of interaction. These three domains of interaction were conflated in Marx's appropriation of Hegel because Marx's basic assumption was that labor is the primary means of self and societal development as well as the basis of any social learning process. Thus, Marx saw self and societal constitution in only one of its forms, labor. At the level of basic theoretical concepts, Marx did not address the irreducible nature of moral demands, nor did he theorize the relative autonomy of language and its role in the process of mediation between self and world.

In this critique, Habermas was gradually shifting the normative center of critical theory away from a Hegelian-Marxist theory of self-objectification and self-fulfilment through labor and interaction toward a Kantian moral theory stressing the formal and procedural aspects of language and social interaction. He represented the emancipated society in terms of an idealized picture of the

intersubjectively recognized system of public norms that are the outcome of an inclusive discourse that followed rational rules which he derived from the procedural aspects of language. Habermas argued that labor does not adequately represent the full range of human self-expression and self-development because it follows the logic of only one type of rationality and one form of human possibility. Invoking a distinction made by Max Weber, Habermas claimed that labor is a form of instrumental rationality (*Zwekrationalität*) the value-free application of techniques of human mastery in the quest for control of the external world, society, and human beings when they are conceived of as objects or resources. However, Weber had identified a different form of rationality (*Wertrationalität*) that was structured by human values, and that could help express, clarify, and reflect on the meaning of these values. The moral relationship follows a different logic than labor because it is governed by a different set of rules. It was this form of rationality that Habermas began to promote and develop as he moved away from his Hegelian-Marxist roots in a Kantian direction. Habermas claimed that Marx's emphasis on the mode of production as the source of social change produced a one-dimensional understanding of progress based on the technocratic management of problems rather than rational reflection and public debate. The institutionalization of technical-rational problem solving has colonized the lifeworld, marginalizing a more democratic form of moral-practical reflection that can only be achieved through public deliberation and debate. Social interaction ceases to be regulated democratically by means of free, rational, discussion over the validity of norms. Instead, social interaction is systematically distorted because it is motivated by the pursuit of economic interests and technocratic management. The results are commodification and bureaucratization, the reduction of people and things to exchange values, and the transformation of citizens into clients as civil society succumbs to greater administrative control.

To make matters worse, the process of colonization is institutionalized and naturalized in the functioning of the economy and state. This precludes the possibility of addressing a wide range of problems from a moral-practical standpoint. This is both a theoretical and practical problem. Solving the practical problem requires revitalizing civil society through public participation in voluntary organizations and grassroots social movements. Solving the theoretical problem requires reconceptualizing human potential and social emancipation in a less one-dimensional fashion than Marx had done. For Habermas, morally-motivated communication replaces labor as the privileged medium of individual and social development, and rational argument assumes the status of a normative ideal. His later work on 'Discourse Ethics' (*Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics*) is a more formal and rigorous reconstruction of the practical rules and presuppositions inherent in ordinary language use that makes it possible for participants in a dialogue to arrive at a valid, binding, rational consensus on social norms. Habermas claims that when the social acceptability of any norm is questioned, people affected by that norm can do one of three things: (1) they can refuse to argue further; (2) they can engage in strategic manipulations of one another; or, (3) they can continue to interact, entering into a critical discourse about the validity of the norm called into question. When individuals agree to enter into a discourse, it is structured according to rules that are designed to facilitate a fair and binding outcome.

Discourse Ethics is a means of responding to and processing substantive issues, but the theory itself is simply a formal procedure, grounded in the universals of practical language use rather than one particular set of values. Any assertion made by a sincere speaker forms the substance of deliberation. The procedure for arguing is grounded in what Habermas claims are unavoidable steps that any honest or sincere speaker must adhere to. The rules of discourse are:

- (1.1) No speaker may contradict himself.
- (1.2) Every speaker who applies predicate F to object A must be prepared to apply F to all other objects resembling A in all relevant aspects.
- (1.3) Different speakers may not use the same expression with different meanings.
- (2.1) Every speaker may assert only what he really believes.
- (2.2) A person who disputes a proposition or norm not under discussion must provide a reason for wanting to do so.
- (3.1) Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.
- (3.2) a. Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever.
- b. Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatsoever into discourse.
- c. Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires, and needs.
- (3.3) No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in (3.1) and (3.2). *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* 87-90)

For Habermas, moral judgment is deontological. Ideally, moral questions should be extracted from their particular contexts so they can be argued about rationally and impartially. He has also made a distinction between discourses of justification and discourses of application. Once deliberation has taken place and a consensus has been reached, it must be re-contextualized in accordance with the values of the specific culture it emerged from. For example, the question of whether a recently justified law against inheritance will affect a culture's long-standing tradition of support for family members has to be bracketed from a discourse on the justness and fairness of inheritance. That issue must be addressed in a subsequent process of application, which requires another discourse (*Justification and Application*).

Habermas's theory relies on a number of background values that form the core of his ideal of social solidarity. For example, empathy for others is a necessary condition for fairly hearing and justly interpreting their rational claims: "Without the empathetic sensitivity by each person to everyone else, no solution deserving universal consent will result from the deliberation" (*Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* 202). We can listen to the protest of others with great attentiveness to the facts at hand, but until we give others the benefit of the doubt, until we learn to see the ways that their problems, while different from ours, might be worth responding to, we will make little progress toward social justice. In Habermas's own terms then, the validity of a claim, demand, or protestation, is not to be decided by rational argument alone. Even the most rational argument relies on a prior moment of empathy on the part of the listener. Solidarity is one of

the necessary conditions for the speech situation in a discourse to be ideal, that is, fair and effective. It is important to restate that solidarity is not a formal aspect of the theory of Discourse Ethics. It is a set of values and presuppositions that lie outside its scope and make an ideal speech situation possible, including the willingness to be truthful and to give others the benefit of a fair hearing.

Although Habermas's work is a powerful synthesis of ideas that has transformed contemporary philosophy, his theory of communicative action retains a number of the problematic elements of the philosophy of consciousness; including a strong and overly formal cognitivist bias. Communication oriented toward understanding has two levels. One is the "interactive use of language" (*Communication and the Evolution of Society* 63). We attend to others at this level. This is the level of promising, requesting, warning, and expressing solidarity. The other level of language use is the "cognitive use of language". In this latter usage, speakers, "thematize the content of the utterance as a proposition about something that is happening in the world". Language, properly used, separates the world into three primary spheres: the objective, social, and subjective worlds. To put it in another way, pragmatic speech necessarily constructs different types of world relations. They are schematized below:

Type of Speech Act	Validity Claim	Relation to World/Reality
Constative	Truth	Objective/Facts
Regulative	Rightness	Social/Norms, Laws
Expressive	Sincerity	Subjective/Feeling/Opinion

Speech-Acts, Validity Claims, and World Relations, Habermas, Jurgen.  
*Theory of Communicative Action*. 1984.

When 'A' makes an assertion, she puts into play a process of demarcation that is necessary if her statement is to be comprehensible. Consider three sentences about the 'same' thing, pollution:

- (1) The lake contains sulfuric acid.
- (2) The pollution in the lake should be reduced.
- (3) I do not like pollution.

The first sentence is regulated according to 'constative' speech-acts because it is an objective claim about a state of affairs in the world. When we respond to this, we should accept, reject, or otherwise dispute the factual assertion that the lake contains sulfuric acid. The second sentence is not factual but normative. It makes a claim about what ought to be, rather than what is. When discussing and defending normative claims, we employ 'regulative' speech-acts, utterances that defend normative positions in light of factual evidence and realistic human ideals. The third sentence is a statement of personal preference. When we claim that we do not like pollution, we are expressing something personal, similar to a taste or a preference. As such, this type of claim cannot lead to a conclusive argument. We may give reasons why we do not like pollution, but ultimately, it will remain a matter of individual preference. If we are to argue to a consensus about what we



ought to do, we must follow the logic of regulative utterances and debate about the rightness rather than the truth or sincerity of an issue like a polluted lake.

This strictly demarcated approach to interaction purchases formal rigor at the expense of diminished significance and meaning. This is not to say that Habermas assumes individuals are or must be completely cut off from others and the world around them in order to function as responsible moral subjects. However, his approach to morality presupposes a high degree of cognitive ability and a deeply internalized commitment to fair play and a dutiful adherence to the rules of rational argument. One envisions machines playing chess rather than living, breathing, humans engaged in crucial conversations about life and how to live it.

Habermas also glosses over some motivational problems regarding the willingness of listeners to give fair and equal consideration to the speech of others. He claims that participants in a process of argumentation have always-already accepted the propositions and rules of argument. This tacit acceptance obligates them to participate fairly, as if entering into the game is tantamount to playing it fairly. The participant who lacks the motivation to follow the rules is caught up in a performative contradiction. By refusing to argue or defend her claims, she is contradicting the assumptions behind the pragmatic use of language that she has tacitly accepted by making the claim in the first place. For example, if she asserts that, "I never tell the truth," she presupposes that people will believe her. She is, in effect, requesting that her interlocutor believes her and could agree with her. However, the content of her statement demands that she should not be believed. The form of her statement contradicts its contents. Or, to give a more general example, if I enter into what we both understand to be a rational argument and then refuse to respond to you rationally, I have contradicted the meaning and definition of a rational argument.

However, it is not possible to justify the principles of discourse such as reciprocity and symmetry with a logical or formal argument. Discourse Ethics is grounded in Habermas's claim that there are no alternatives to these rules of argumentation. But it is an intellectualist fallacy to suppose that by pointing out the existence of rules of discourse inherent in the structure of language, people would acknowledge the normatively binding character of these rules.

Charles Taylor has weighed in on this issue. Taylor, who is ever concerned with the relationship between identity, culture, motivation, and moral commitment, asks what it is that pushes us to adopt the goal of mutual understanding in the first place:

I nevertheless also have other aims, other interests. Why then should I prefer rational mutual understanding? Why should precisely this aim occupy a special position? One must show why it is I attach a value to rational understanding so great that it should be preferred to other purposes? ("Language and Society" 31)

Indeed, one must show why it is that participants in a discourse would feel obligated to follow the rules committing them to fairness as well as empathy for strangers. Considered in this light, the view of moral motivation that follows from Habermas's interaction model is strangely counter-intuitive. It appears that the primary obligation is to safeguard the public use of reason and the logic and

language of rational argumentation, while the secondary obligation is to ensure that social norms are valid. But neither one of these goals appear in the forefront of most people seeking justice or making moral demands.

In summary, Habermas could do two things to provide a more convincing case for what motivates participants to engage in discourse in a fair and open manner. He could provide a deeper argument for the motivational function of values that create social solidarity, or he could place greater emphasis on the human desire for recognition and its importance in processes of identity formation, self-determination, and self-actualization. But resources for theorizing emotional connections to others are not part of Habermas's theory, which requires us to distance ourselves from the people, places, and things we are concerned with. Habermas uses a Hegelian theory of recognition only when it leads to Kantian conclusions. He understands intersubjective recognition as a means to a rational argument, rather than an end in itself. Once the individual has achieved moral autonomy through intersubjective recognition, that process has only peripheral relevance for Habermas's theory of discourse.

If we consider the claims and assertions of people involved in a struggle for recognition, we see that it is usually not the integrity of reason and rational speech or the validity of norms that are at stake so much as the demand for recognition of some aspect of individual or group identity.

### **The Revival of Philosophical Anthropology: Honneth's Critique of Habermas**

A theory of recognition allows us to pursue a much broader normative critique of everyday life than Habermas's Discourse Ethics. Honneth claims:

The only anthropological propositions Habermas would maintain nowadays are those describing mechanisms of understanding in human beings via language. Going back to a philosophical anthropology is a necessary step if you want to have a stronger foundation, a broader foundation, for the normative critique of our present society. ("An Interview with Axel Honneth" 32)

Honneth's dissatisfaction with the cognitivist bent of Discourse Ethics has three aspects. First, he claims that the focus of Habermas's analysis is directed away from social injustice as it is lived in everyday experience. Second, Habermas's existentially thin, rationalistic theory suffers from a lack of a plausible source of moral motivation. Third, Habermas's claim to an emphasis on strict value neutrality in the construction of his theory of discourse is untenable because he has to rely on a constellation of values such as openness, fairness, and empathy.

Much has been said and written about the way Habermas's separation of justice from everyday experience reproduces the Kantian distinction between private freedoms and public duties. The gendered nature of this rigorous separation has also been noted and critiqued. So has the hegemony that whites have established over the logic of public discourse, as well as the literal and symbolic exclusion of the working class from participation in the public sphere (Fraser: Benhabib: Taylor *Multiculturalism*).

Honneth's primary concern is more general than these equally important criticisms. He clearly states his intent in the introduction to *The Fragmented World of the Social*. He claims that Habermas's theory of discourse requires people to abstract from their life experiences in such a way that the full depth and significance of it, and its relation to social justice, get lost. In Habermas's model, a person must first experience injustice, then recognize it as such, then articulate it in such a way that it becomes relevant for public debate as an issue of justice rather than an issue of the good life. The problem is that a lot gets lost when feelings are excluded from rational debate. In order to grasp the perceptions of unjust treatment as they are more directly experienced before translation into a discussion of social norms. It is necessary to deploy a theoretical language whose concepts are grounded in everyday interaction and are therefore closer to experience than Habermas's theory allows.

This is because people experience moral injury as violence to identities and beliefs, or as obstacles to their self-determination and self-actualization rather than as a crisis of normative legitimacy. Moreover, the demands we place on others in our everyday action context are typically not initially articulated as demands for a revision of social norms, but instead as demands for basic respect and dignified treatment. Honneth argues that we should understand dignified treatment and respect, as well as their opposites, mistreatment and disrespect, as instances of recognition or denial of recognition. We must acknowledge this feeling first, and then we can debate the fairness or justness of the structures and processes that contribute to the denial of recognition. Many instances of everyday injustice would not be discussed or criticized if people had to do the work of translating their experiences into a set of statements amenable to rational discourse. A wide range of insults and threats to personal integrity are not initially seen as issues of justice until they are interpreted and translated, often by social justice advocates and activists, into broader reflections on social norms, structures, and processes. But before moving to this level of abstraction, we should view social experiences in terms of whether or not they allow for or impede a positive relation to our self-identity. We will still invariably be involved in a discussion of justice because it is a condition of interpersonal experience that must be met before human flourishing is possible. Justice includes the expectation of decent treatment as well as the recognition of basic rights which are necessary for self-development and self-realization.

I will now expand upon the problems of moral motivation in Habermas's theory, and Honneth's solution to them. Consider again the moral skeptic who simply refuses to take normative claims seriously, saying something like, "I have no obligation to be decent to others, I only care about myself and I won't argue the validity of any of this." Habermas claims that anyone who makes a statement has tacitly accepted that it is valid and in this sense has already agreed to argue the point further if challenged. If the skeptic refuses to defend her statements she is either not making sensible claims or has fallen into a "performative contradiction" (*Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* 80-82). She is performing an argument while denying the validity of argument as a mode of communication. Her actions affirm what her words deny, and that is a contradiction. However, a skeptic could say, "I do not accept your logic, and I couldn't care less about a so-

called performative contradiction.” According to Habermas, this places her completely outside rational social life, and she will simply remain *in* but not *of* society until she agrees to argue rationally. By leaving it at this, Habermas suggests that eventually the skeptic will come in from her cold, isolated world because it is in her interest to belong. Yet, Habermas seems to overestimate the degree to which not belonging would matter to people living in a post-traditional world where liminality is the norm and most people are already *in* but not *of* society.

If we are to begin to convince people to extend empathy, reciprocity, and equal treatment to those outside their circle of moral concern, they must be shown why they should care, in stronger terms than arguments about their membership in a shared socio-cultural web. The skeptic must be shown how self-identity is dependent upon intersubjective recognition as well as how her moral obligation to others is related to her own interest in maintaining a secure and fulfilled self-identity. The central concept involved in this type of argument is what Honneth calls the “practical- relation-to-self” which depends upon distinct forms of recognition. The first form is the recognition of basic emotional needs such as care, love, and friendship. This type of recognition is particular and subjective. It depends on affective bonds with significant others, rather than principled relations between citizens and strangers. Care, love, and friendship are the most fundamental forms of recognition, occurring earliest in life. The practical-relation-to-self created through this form of recognition is called “basic-self-confidence” (*Selbstvertrauen*). Basic-self-confidence is similar to that state of being which the psychoanalytic theorist D. W. Winnicott called “basic trust.” When we possess basic-self-confidence, we are better equipped to interact with strangers or new acquaintances without experiencing fear and insecurity. Our capacity for this type of trust is a prerequisite for self-development and self-realization in post-traditional societies. Basic-self-confidence is the foundation of the other practical-relations-to-self, which are self-respect and self-esteem.

The second form of recognition described by Honneth is the recognition of one’s rights as a person and a citizen, which makes it possible to develop self-respect (*Selbstachtung*). Self-respect is a practical-relation-to-self that is developed and strengthened through political participation. By exercising political autonomy, asserting rights, making political demands, and holding leaders accountable, a person can see herself as morally responsible and capable of making autonomous decisions about her own future and the future of the collectivity she identifies with. When exercising rights or demanding political accountability, she makes the implicit claim that she should be recognized as an equal, with the same rights, and the same responsibilities, as others. Honneth’s normative argument, in a nutshell, is that the state and other political and legal institutions are obligated to support and enforce the recognition of civil rights because our identities require self-respect, the development of which is only possible by participating in key decisions as a political equals. It could be argued that this does not constitute an obligation but only describes a desirable state of affairs. That is, it would be nice if we all had rights, so that we could develop self-respect. However, we must keep in mind Honneth’s underlying Hegelian assumption that the slave’s forced recognition of the master is less valuable to him than the recognition he earns

from his peers. Rights can only be a legitimate basis for the development of self-respect if they are recognized and respected by equals with the same rights.

To see the significance of Honneth's claims, consider Feinberg's discussion of *Nowheresville*, in his classic article, "The Nature and Value of Rights". *Nowheresville* is a society where life is fundamentally secure, people are decent, and goodness prevails over evil; but nobody has any rights. Feinberg argues that the ability that people have to make "rights claims" is an indispensable part of being human. What is most relevant is the route Feinberg takes to arrive at his main point.

In *Nowheresville*, nobody has any individual rights. To make a claim that one person has violated another person's rights is unthinkable in *Nowheresville*. However, things are not so bad in this society. Feinberg adds a communitarian sense of decency to *Nowheresville*. He claims that all of the virtues of moral sensibility such as benevolence, compassion, and sympathy are alive and well in *Nowheresville* to a much greater degree than in any other society. However, compassion and sympathy alone are not enough for the smooth functioning of a well-ordered society. Feinberg also claims that moral, social, and economic duties, as well as a variety of personal obligations will always prevail over other greedy or selfish attitudes and behaviors in *Nowheresville*. In order to make this argument, Feinberg introduces duties into the social milieu without a correlative sense of rights. He does so by arguing against the "doctrine of the logical correlativity of rights and duties" (244). This doctrine assumes that rights and duties are necessarily reciprocal; the presence of one guarantees the existence of the other. Feinberg argues that this is only one way to understand duties. It is true that etymologically, duties refer to that which is due, or owed to, someone else. However, there are several ways to understand what this means. We could understand dues in the sense of a debt owed to another, *quid pro quo*. Alternatively, we could understand dues in terms of what we are required to do, regardless of any debt or lack of debt we may have to others and regardless of how they have treated us. This is the sense of the word that Feinberg argues for: "Thus, in this widespread but derivative usage, 'duty' tends to be used for any action we feel we must (for whatever reason) do. It comes, in short, to be a term of moral modality" (244). In this interpretation, duties to others can be introduced into *Nowheresville* without any correlative sense of rights. These duties can even be backed up by the rule of law. If I wrong someone, I can be arrested for breach of duty. However, the law will not allow the person I wronged to sue me for violating her rights. Feinberg uses a traffic analogy to explain this.

In our own actual world, of course, we sometimes owe it to our fellow motorists to stop; but that kind of right-correlated duty does not exist in *Nowheresville*. There, motorists owe obedience to the law, but they owe nothing to one another. (244)

It should be clear that in *Nowheresville*, there would be a great deal of social order. There will also be a coherent sense of obligation to others that comes from empathetic feelings and sensibilities combined with a deeply internalized and thoroughly institutionalized notion of duty. However, there will be no blaming, no grievances, no "right to complain" (244).

Feinberg addresses one remaining problem. If we are to have this degree of social order and personal obligation without having individual rights, then what is the ultimate source of this wellspring of decency? That is, what ultimately backs up or grounds this constellation of sentiments, duties, and laws? The Hobbesian answer is a “sovereign right-monopoly” (246). A sovereign right-monopoly is a situation in which the governing body has rights against all of the subjects. The subjects have no rights and can make no legal claims against each other. Everybody owes their allegiance to the sovereign, the source of social order, and the sovereign commands, as a matter of right, that each does her duty to everyone else. Feinberg also points out that when children wrong each other, they often apologize to their parents, rather than to the sibling they harmed. This is because they see the parents as possessors of the sovereign right-monopoly, but they do not see the other sibling as a person with rights. To repair the damage done to the other sibling, it is not necessary to apologize to the person they wronged - this would be to acknowledge their sibling’s rights - but instead to apologize to the parents, to whom they owe a duty to be good.

A society such as the one Feinberg has created certainly meets the criteria of a well ordered, smoothly functioning society. However, unless we wish to remain childlike, something is missing. What is missing is precisely what would humanize the citizens of Nowheresville, the resources for developing self-respect. These resources are individual rights. Feinberg claims:

Having rights enables us to stand up like men, to look others in the eye, and to feel in some fundamental way the equal of anyone. To think of oneself as a holder of rights is not to be unduly proud but properly proud, to have that minimal self-respect that is necessary to be worthy of the love and esteem of others. (251)

Rights make demands for recognition feasible. If I am going to demand something of the other, I can do it under the aegis of my right to be heard or my right to be recognized. Rights also compel people to take the other person’s assertion of autonomy seriously, which is one condition for the cultivation of human dignity. Feinberg claims: “What is called human dignity may simply be the recognizable capacity to assert claims. To respect a person; then, or to think of him as possessed of human dignity, simply is to think of him as a potential maker of claims” (251). Feinberg distinguishes between two types of rights-claims, “performative claims” and “propositional claims” (248-50). Performative claims are claims for recognition of an already-existing right. For example, claims based on the “right to petition the Government for a redress of grievances” are already guaranteed by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. All full-fledged citizens of the United States have this right; it is only necessary to exercise it. On the other hand, propositional claims are claims that people ought to have a certain type of right, even if they do not have it at the time. Propositional claims are important because they allow people to exercise autonomy and self-determination as they create a world in their own image.

There are several senses in which Feinberg’s argument strengthens Honneth’s normative claims about self-respect and the recognition of rights. What Feinberg demonstrates is that a society like Nowheresville would probably create overgrown children, heteronomous subjects without a sense of autonomy or a full

understanding of the significance of the rules they are dutifully obeying. Feinberg's discussion of 'propositional claiming' is an analysis of the transformation of the status of rights in a given society. This type of claim opens up a new domain of problems or a limiting condition in the social or political structure which has not been examined. Propositional claiming empowers people to question and transform the world they live in, which then expands the potential scope and structure of rights and freedom. This questioning also invigorates the moral consciousness, perhaps by opening up a new terrain of possibilities for self-determination and self-actualization, or, conversely, by provoking a reaction and a series of counter-claims. Propositional claiming generates a dialectic between the moral consciousness and the ethical substance of a society, which provides people with the empowering awareness that they live in a world that they have created, that they can understand, and that they can change, rather than simply submit to. This is the essence of what Feinberg means when he says that a person 'in need' is in a position to address that need even if there is no one who can do anything about it. By envisioning a set of conditions or a process that would satisfy the need, and by asserting the right to those conditions, people are able to create and maintain the ongoing possibility of rights:

A person in need, then, is always 'in a position' to make a claim, even when there is no one in the corresponding position to do anything about it. Such claims, based on need alone, are 'permanent possibilities of rights,' the natural seed from which rights grow. (255)

Honneth understands the struggle for recognition similarly. The struggle for recognition enables the transformation and revaluation of existing rights and opens up opportunities for the development of self-respect.

The third and final form of recognition is cultural recognition. Cultural recognition makes self-esteem (*Selbstschätzung*) possible. Developing self-esteem involves being recognized as a person who has a valuable skill, has made a social contribution, or whose culture or ancestors have done so. This might include accomplishments such as playing the guitar, repairing electrical systems, being a member of a group that has something of interest or value to contribute to the larger society, or belonging to a group that has a rich and valuable heritage. Each person or group must be given the opportunity to make their cultural contribution in the absence of collective denigration. Social capital, educational resources, occupational opportunities, and income should also be structured and allocated fairly, with the goal of fostering human flourishing.

Honneth describes a number of ways that rejection and misrecognition can damage our practical-relations-to-self. A damaged self is one that is created in contexts that deny appropriate recognition. This may take the form of political disenfranchisement, denial of rights, abuse or lack of care in the family or in intimate relationships, or cultural denigration or discrimination against those whose identities, occupations, or lifestyles differ from the mainstream. These forms of misrecognition may be explicit, involving intentional discrimination, abuse, intolerance, or exclusion, or they may be implicit, as in the case of marginalization based on a lack of sensitivity and empathetic understanding of others.

If we return to the position of the skeptic and begin with the claim that we should alleviate social inequalities because insult, injury, and injustice undermines our self-confidence, damages our self-esteem, and erodes our self-respect. She would immediately ask, "Why does that matter?" If we point out that a damaged practical-relation-to-self reduces our ability to exercise our individual capacities, feel secure in our culture or subculture, or stand on our own two feet as dignified adults, she might say, "Those are matters for each individual to deal with on their own." We must then show her why taking our claims seriously is in the best interest of everyone involved. To illustrate this point, I turn to an exegesis of Peter Strawson's *Freedom and Resentment* with the goal of demonstrating the ways that reactive attitudes such as resentment and indignation force others to give serious regard to a person's claims to self-esteem.

In *Freedom and Resentment*, Strawson attempted to refute the thesis of determinism as it applies to moral motivation. This is the idea that it is possible to view human action as fully determined, and hence responsibility to others as irrelevant to moral theory. In arguing against this position, Strawson claims that the interpersonal demands placed on each one of us in everyday social interaction are so compelling that we cannot view others in an entirely determined or objective fashion. If we are to sustain the webs of social interaction that give meaning and purpose to our lives, we must treat others as autonomous subjects at least some of the time. Based on this observation, Strawson argues that a wholly deterministic account of social life is unsustainable, and therefore, strict determinism in moral theory is untenable. What is most relevant to my argument is the emphasis Strawson places on the relationship between reactive feelings and sentiments and the possibility of moral accountability to others. What I want to bring out in this analysis of Strawson's argument is the connection between feelings such as indignation, and resentment, which result from being wronged or harmed or denied recognition, and the sense of personal autonomy and self-respect that emerges from expressing these feelings. I will also show how Strawson's argument highlights the importance of possessing rights, which, for Honneth, are the grounds of self-respect.

Strawson's point of departure is really a theory of interpersonal recognition. He begins by saying:

The central commonplace I want to insist on is the very great importance that we attach to the attitudes and intentions toward us of other human beings, and the great extent to which our feelings and reactions depend upon, or involve, beliefs about these attitudes and intentions... We might speak, in another jargon, of the need for love, and the loss of security which results from its withdrawal; or in another, of human self-respect and its connection with the recognition of the individual's identity. (62)

Strawson argues that it is practically impossible to sustain an 'objective' relationship toward others for long. The attitudes of involvement and participation in human relationships cannot be entirely replaced by an objective attitude to other human beings. We require deeper forms of recognition from others, as they require it from us.



The objective attitude Strawson refers to is exemplified in the way we treat small children or people considered mentally ill. These people are not held responsible for their actions because we assume their actions are determined by other factors, such as immaturity or illness. This objectifying, depersonalizing, perspective is also taken toward clients of the welfare state and other social service agencies. Strawson claims

To adopt the objective attitude to another human being is to see him, perhaps, as an object of social policy; as a subject for what, in the wide range of sense, might be called treatment; as something certainly to be taken account of; to be managed or handled or cured or trained; perhaps simply to be avoided. (66)

The important point is that certain "reactive attitudes," such as resentment and indignation wouldn't have any meaningful effect on those we view with an objective attitude. Strawson also points out that an objectifying attitude toward others can be used as a resource when the strain of involvement with people and their genuine concerns becomes too great. However, this "refuge from the strain of involvement" cannot be sustained for long if we are to maintain a human relationship with others and with ourselves (Strawson 67). "A sustained objectivity of inter-personal attitude, and the human isolation which that would entail, does not seem to be something of which human beings would be capable" (Strawson 68).

Once the objective attitude is ruled out as a realistic mode of interaction, the significance of "personal reactive attitudes" comes into relief. Reactive attitudes are frustrated responses to the desire for recognition. The reactive attitudes serve to steer and repair human interactions, leading to greater equality, care, and concern among people. Personal reactive attitudes also play a central role in humanizing interpersonal relationships. The person who is able to respond to objectifying treatment with some sense of indignation or resentment is able to assert herself as a person, rather than an object.

Habermas has argued that what is morally significant about Strawson's discussion of resentment is that the reaction to objectifying treatment points most directly to the violation of norms of solidarity and mutual respect:

Emotional responses directed against individual persons in specific situations would be devoid of moral character were they not connected with an impersonal kind of indignation over some breach of a generalized norm or behavioral expectation. It is only their claim to general validity that gives an interest, a volition, or a norm the dignity of moral authority. (*Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* 48-9)

Indignation and resentment result from a feeling that a social norm has been violated. The reaction demands a revision of the norm in question and an accompanying change in social relations. Habermas is correct to point out that resentment and indignation will eventually point to a more impersonal state of affairs, such as the denial of the rights of an entire group or class of people. However, it is not the norm that people are immediately concerned with but their sense of personal and group dignity. However, in this Kantian interpretation,

Habermas stresses that the move from personal indignation to an evaluation of social norms is what is morally significant about the reactive attitudes (47-50).

While I agree with Habermas that emotional responses have to refer to shared normative criteria in order to be morally significant, I contend, contra Habermas, that reactive attitudes owe their significance to the fact that they are responses to a violation of a person's self-confidence, self-esteem, or self-respect. These are the primary moral goods and the fundamental source of motivation for morally significant action. I can demonstrate this point by asking what it is that gives legitimacy to reactive attitudes. Are reactive attitudes justified in the eyes of those who express them because of a background of general norms that speak against ill-treatment? It is not difficult to picture an ancient society in which slavery is both legal and normatively acceptable to most people. When slaves are freed in this society, they often become slave owners themselves. When a slave in this society responds to his condition with resentment and indignation, he is frustrated that something is being denied him. However, it cannot be the case that the slave's resentment points most immediately and directly to the injustice of the society's dominant norms because slavery is socially acceptable. It is not social norms that are in question, but something much more fundamental, the slave's sense of autonomy and self-respect, experienced as feelings of resentment and indignation.

It is true, as Habermas's argument suggests, that the norms of slavery themselves can and will eventually be criticized for providing the justification for violations of the slave's sense of self. However, it is not a feeling that impersonal social norms have been violated that makes the slave indignant and resentful. The slave *feels* violated, unfree, and unfulfilled. The expectation of receiving recognition from others, and of developing a sense of self from that recognition, is what gives the slave's indignation and resentment moral significance. Because it is a basic need, this expectation exists even when there are no norms that could support a slave's claim to fair and equal treatment. Moreover, as Hegel pointed out in his discussion of "Lordship and Bondage" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a moment in history will emerge when slaves desire freedom but have not yet understood that for one to be free, all must be free, and they will enslave others as soon as they receive their freedom. They will not engage in reflection on social norms until it is in their interest to do so. This will only happen when they realize that the partial and unsatisfactory feeling of their own freedom and dignity is a byproduct of their position in a social structure that compels the unfree to recognize their social role but not their self-identity.

Honneth's relocation of the normative basis of critical theory in a theory of recognition and self-identity brings the existential dimension of injustice to the foreground. The personal, subjective, experiential, dimension brought out in Honneth's work is balanced by his theorization of the intersubjective character of all experience. Just as a purely private language has no meaning if there are no other speakers who can comprehend it, so too the practical-relations-to-self have no meaning outside of a socio-political context that recognizes them. The struggle for recognition is always a simultaneous struggle for the validation of something important about identity and the transformation of the socio-political context that makes this validation possible.

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# Comic Vision and Comedic Devices in Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*

Kingsley Amis'in *Lucky Jim* Romanında Mizah Anlayışı ve Komedi Unsurları

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## Abstract

The aim of this article is to examine the comic vision and comedic elements in Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*. As a post-war realistic novel, *Lucky Jim* implements various techniques of comedy to ridicule and satirise personal and social flaws, focusing on the critique of the phoniness of the academic world. Amis employs parody, farce, irony and satire to deride affectation, rigidity and social flaws. The novel depicts the absurdity of the condition of the anti-hero in an alien society through the use of comedy, showing the incongruous coexistence of the serious and the comic, the lofty and the vulgar in a grotesque, carnivalesque manner. It can be argued that humour functions as a weapon to cope with antagonistic forces in post-war existence and helps the individual to overcome repressions and preserve self-respect in the face of a ridiculous and duplicitous reality. Laughter is remedial in the novel, which subverts the monolithic, and aims to satirise and correct social imperfections. This article will explore *Lucky Jim* by investigating and applying theories of comedy and humour, focusing mainly on the ideas of Bergson, Freud and Bakhtin.

**Keywords:** Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim*, Comedy, Contemporary British fiction, Humour

## Öz

Bu makalenin amacı Kingsley Amis'in *Lucky Jim* adlı romanında mizah anlayışı ve komedi unsurlarını incelemektir. İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası romanı olarak *Lucky Jim*, bireysel ve toplumsal kusurları özellikle akademik dünyanın sahteliğinin eleştirisi odağında yermek ve alaya almak için birçok komedi tekniği kullanır. Amis, yapmacıklık, katılık ve toplumsal kusurları alaya almak için parodi, fars, ironi ve hicivden yararlanır. Roman anti-kahramanın yabancılaştığı toplumdaki absürd durumunu komedi aracılığıyla, ciddiyle komiğin, asil ile vasatın uyumsuz beraberliğini grotesk, karnavalsı bir biçimde göstererek ortaya koyar. Mizahın romanda, savaş sonrası varoluş içinde yer alan karşıt güçlerle başa çıkmak için kullanılan bir silah işlevi gördüğü ve bireyin baskıları ortadan kaldırmaya ve anlamsız ve aldatıcı gerçeklik karşısında kendine olan saygısını korumasına yardımcı olduğu düşüncesi ileri sürülebilir. "Gülmece" kavramı romanda, tekdüze olanı yıkması ve toplumsal sorunları yermesi ve düzeltmesi bakımından iyileştirici bir özelliğe sahiptir. Çalışma, *Lucky Jim* romanını komedi ve mizah teorilerini inceleyip uygulayarak ve özellikle Bergson, Freud ve Bakhtin gibi düşünürlerin görüşlerine odaklanarak irdelleyecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim*, Komedi, Çağdaş Britanya Romanı, Mizah

## Introduction

*Lucky Jim* (1954) is a realistic post-war novel which reflects the absurd and fragile reality of humanity in the mirror of comedy. Kingsley Amis projects a faithful as well as a bitter image of society through his boisterously comical tone, his grotesque and carnivalesque humour. He derides both personal and social flaws by juxtaposing the dignified and the common, the serious and the comic, the official and the unofficial, the nice and the nasty and by turning hierarchies and conventions of truth inside out. Amis applies comedic devices such as parody, farce, juxtaposition, exaggeration, inversion, repetition, carnivalesque humour and satire to disclose as well as rectify the topsy-turvy reality of contemporary society. Amis ridicules and thereby satirizes the monolithic aspects of society through the parody of the phoney life of the academe. This article will investigate the comic vision and the comedic devices in *Lucky Jim* mainly through the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, Henri Bergson and Sigmund Freud concerning the comic. It will examine the ways in which comedy relates to such concepts as mechanism, inhibition, repression, and affectation.

Comedy is concerned with monoliths, rigidity, inhibition, deviation, incongruity and inelasticity, which has a social aspect. As Glen Cavaliero puts it, comedy aims to “disrupt” and thereby “correct” the monolith: “Comedy exposes the fallacy inherent in every monolithic interpretation of human experience; it refutes exclusiveness, points out inconsistencies, and harmonises them in a renewed pattern of relationships. It deconstructs the monolith in order to breathe life into it” (4).

In his essay *Laughter*, Bergson defines the comic as “that side of a person which reveals his likeness to a thing, that aspect of human events which, through its peculiar inelasticity, conveys the impression of pure mechanism, of automatism, of movement without life” (87). The laughable or “imperfection” can be both individual and social. Laughter, for Bergson, is derision of rigidity or mechanism: “something mechanical encrusted on the living” (37). As Bergson puts it, “Society will therefore be suspicious of all inelasticity of character, of mind and even of body” as it is a deviation from the common (19). Laughter thus has a “corrective” function in Bergson’s vision as he considers the comic as the corrective of “rigidity” (21).

In *The Labyrinth of the Comic*, Richard Keller Simon examines comedy and comic theory and argues, in a Bergsonian manner, that comic theory and literature have a “labyrinthine” aspect. In his vision, comedy is like a labyrinth in both its “complexity” or difficulty but also in its “order” and “control”: “a labyrinth is not only a tangle of contradictions and inversions, of paths that go nowhere and threads that disappear, but it is also an order” (8). Simon is particularly concerned with the “self-conscious” aspect of comic literature in that comic works are not only “comic” but they are also “about the comic,” demonstrating both the practice and the theory of comedy in a “reflexive” manner (3-4). Simon emphasises the “interdependence” of comic theory and comic literature: “Comic theory derives from comedy, makes its generalisations on the evidence supplied by comic drama and comic fiction, but comedy also derives from comic theory, builds its structures on the ideas supplied by comic criticism” (6).

An investigation of the comic vision and comedic devices in *Lucky Jim* involves not only individual vision and style of Amis but also the social/historical conception of comedy. Therefore, a brief introduction to the theories and practices of comic fiction in the twentieth century might throw a light on this study. Unlike the 18<sup>th</sup> century novels, most of which ridiculed individuals and characters rather than social issues, and the 19<sup>th</sup> century novels that mainly ridiculed institutions and social issues, the twentieth century saw a change in the perception of comedy and laughter due to radical changes taking place after the World Wars. In this period, the previous institutionalized elements in society lost their validity, as new norms were born. In parallel with this process, comic fiction lost its material when what was monolithic once was no longer valid (Cavaliero 15-20). Post-war comic fiction was marked by an "erosion of social absolutes" or "breaking of monoliths," which demanded the "redefinition" of the comic (20). In comic fiction of the period immediately succeeding the Second World War, Cavaliero says, there was "a trend towards individual experience and a discarding of any socially prescriptive standard of moral measurement," which resulted in the development of both "social and psychological consciousness" in the writers as well as the public (18-9). There was also a tendency towards reflexive aspects of comedy, the theoretical aspect of the comic as well as its practice, which was seen particularly in late twentieth century fiction (19). Cavaliero also comments on the comedic process of *Lucky Jim* and notes the farcical and parodic aspects of the work and its "mordant" ridicule. However, to Cavaliero, "the comedic work" in *Lucky Jim* "is obstructed by the absolute lack of generosity towards the people and the institutions anatomised, and by the absence of any underlying moral conviction beyond a seedy scorn," although it is characterized by "a robust and unsparing comic process" (20).

As Richard Bradford puts it, "the post-war novelists were involved in a counter-revolution against both the modernists and the classic realists" (8). Bradford argues the post-war realistic novels were "unconventional" not in form but in "manner and outlook" (7). He further states that *Lucky Jim* is among the contemporary novels "embodying a new wave of post-war realism- intelligent, reflective of contemporary mores and habits, amoral and contemptuous of the class distinctions and ethical norms that the likes of Evelyn Waugh and Anthony Powell had carried forward from the nineteenth century" (8).

Bakhtin's idea of "carnival" denotes an alternative and temporary life of folk culture "outside officialdom," which differs from "the serious official, ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and ceremonials" and shared by all people (5-6). Carnival refers to the ridicule and the cessation of the status quo and of social barriers. As Bakhtin puts it, "carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (10). Laughter and festivity are intrinsic to carnival as "carnival is the people's second life, organised on the basis of laughter. It is a festive life" (8). Bakhtin calls carnival "a parody of the extracarnival life, a 'world inside out,'" that involves "numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings" (11). Bakhtin accentuates the positive aspect of the carnival, referring to its affirmative parody: "We must stress, however, that the carnival is

far distant from the negative and formal parody of modern times. Folk humour denies, but it revives and renews at the same time. Bare negation is completely alien to folk culture." Bakhtin also expresses the ambivalent aspect of the carnival which is simultaneously serious and gay, constructive and destructive: "[Carnival] laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives" (11-2). Distinguishing between carnival and official festivities, Bakhtin stresses the element of laughter which is peculiar to carnival and lacking in serious official ones (9). For Bakhtin, carnival festivities "were the second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance" (9). Compared with official feasts, which sanctify the conventional, serious, permanent and the past, carnival champions the unconventional, unofficial, change, laughter and future. Bakhtin refers to the Saturnalia "as an escape from the usual official way of life" (8). He identifies three main forms of folk humour: (i) Ritual spectacles: carnival pageants, comic shows of the marketplace; (ii) Comic verbal compositions: parodies both oral and written, in Latin and in the vernacular; (iii) Various genres of billingsgate: curses, oaths, popular blazons (5).

Laughter, in its forms of grotesque realism such as parody, in Bakhtin's vision involves derogation or lowering of the high and the lofty by stressing the elemental and physical aspects through grotesque realism: "The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (19-20). The debasement of authority involves destruction and regeneration, death and rebirth. "Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect but also a regenerating one" (21). Bakhtin adds:

Not only parody in its narrow sense but all the other forms of grotesque realism degrade, bring down to earth, turn their subject into flesh. [...] The people's laughter which characterized all the forms of grotesque realism from immemorial times was linked with the bodily lower stratum. Laughter degrades and materializes. (20)

At the heart of grotesque realism lies the binary opposites of imagery representing world views of the "the folk culture of humour" and "the bourgeois conception of the completed atomized being" and of "class society" (24). The grotesque body relies on unfinalizability and on the unity with the outer world through exceeding its boundaries "in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation" (26). Bakhtin also draws attention to the language of the grotesque, which is "abusive" (27). Masquerade, which is inherent in the grotesque, is among the basic tenets of Bakhtin's idea of the carnivalesque. Bakhtin elaborates on his idea of the mask and masquerade by arguing that the mask is concerned with change, the ludic, nonconformity, non-closure, contingency and difference:

Even more important is the theme of the mask, the most complex theme of folk culture. The mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to oneself. The mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries,

to mockery and familiar nicknames. It contains the playful element of life; it is based on a peculiar interrelation of reality and image, characteristic of the most ancient rituals and spectacles. [...] Let us point out that such manifestations as parodies, caricatures, grimaces, eccentric postures, and comic gestures are per se derived from the mask. It reveals the essence of the grotesque. (39-40)

Regarding the use of the grotesque in modern literature, Bakhtin says, "A new and powerful revival of the grotesque took place in the twentieth century" (46). Bakhtin identifies two main forms such as "the modernist form," which is related to the Romantic and existentialist lines and "the realist grotesque," connected with realism, folk culture and carnival (46).

In *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, Freud elaborates on his idea of the comic. The comic is social in Freud's view: "The comic arises in the first instance as an unintended discovery derived from human social relations" (189). To Freud, the comic resides in the release of the repressed elements in the unconscious due to inhibition or social constraint: "In laughter, therefore, on our hypothesis, the conditions are present under which a sum of psychical energy which has hitherto been used for cathexis is allowed free discharge" (148). Comedy also arouses "the feeling of superiority" and "empathy" (196). Freud compares comedy to "childhood" and "infantile" in that laughter is the recovered naiveté of childhood (226).

Freud accounts for the part the comic plays in the relief of the inhibitions in the psyche as a return to the "preconscious" or infantile stage of childhood. He relates repression mainly to civilisation, which he considers culpable for inhibition of the previously acceptable and enjoyable:

It is our belief that civilization and higher education have a large influence in the development of repression, and we suppose that, under such conditions, the psychical organization undergoes an alteration (that can also emerge as an inherited disposition) as a result of which what was formerly felt as agreeable now seems unacceptable and is rejected with all possible psychical force. The repressive activity of civilization brings it about that primary possibilities of enjoyment, which have now, however, been repudiated by the censorship in us, are lost to us. But to the human psyche all renunciation is exceedingly difficult, and so we find that tendentious jokes provide a means of undoing the renunciation and retrieving what was lost. (101)

The comic, as Freud conceives of it, involves the "degradation" and defiance of authority or the lofty:

The joke then represents a rebellion against that authority, a liberation from its pressure. The charm of caricatures lies in this same factor: we laugh at them even if they are unsuccessful simply because we count rebellion against authority as a merit. If we bear in mind the fact that tendentious jokes are so highly suitable for attacks on the great, the dignified and the mighty. (105)



Freud mentions mimicry, caricature, parody, travesty and unmasking among the “sources of comic pleasure”. The mechanisms of parody, travesty, caricature and unmasking “bring about degradation” of the sublime: “Caricature, parody and travesty (as well as their practical counterpart, unmasking) are directed against people and objects which lay claim to authority and respect, which are in some sense ‘sublime’” (200).

### **Comic Vision and Comedic Elements in *Lucky Jim***

*Lucky Jim* implements various comedic devices to achieve its end, which is to instruct and entertain. The novel is primarily concerned with and satirizes monoliths or institutionalized values and behaviours. It attacks uniformity and certainties, and champions such concepts as spontaneity, sincerity, amiability, flexibility, playfulness and relativity. Thus, excessive and mechanical qualities are ridiculed in the novel. Pretentious and rigid aspects of life are criticised and derided through the use of comedic elements of farce, parody, irony, and grotesque and carnivalesque humour.

To David Lodge, *Lucky Jim* is “a classic comic novel”; however, he also notes it is not a continually comic novel (2). Lodge maintains that serious and comic tones coexist in the novel. Comedy, as Lodge puts it, mainly derives from “situation and style” in the novel, through the “violation of a polite code of manners” and “the element of farce”:

Comedy of situation is exemplified by such memorable scenes as Jim’s accident with the bed-clothing at the Welches’ and his efforts to conceal the damage, his attempt to deceive Mrs Welch and her son Bertrand on the telephone by disguising his voice, his hijacking of the Barclays’ taxi after the College Ball, and his drunken lecture on ‘Merrie-England’. (2)

The characters in the novel can be regarded as foils in terms of their morality. While Jim Dixon, his beloved Christine Callaghan, his friend Carol Goldsmith, Christine’s uncle Julius Gore-Urguhart, and Dixon’s friend Bill Atkinson are morally sanctioned characters, Ned Welch, his son Bertrand, his wife Celia, his spy Johns, and his colleague Margaret Peel represent the pretentiousness of society. To Dale Salwak, “Gore-Urguhart functions as a mediator between common sense (Jim) and excess (the Welches), providing the norm by which to judge other frequently unstable personalities” (64). Dixon’s innate goodness and sense of honour help him survive in a false society, thereby leading him to his final decision to leave the affected world of the Welches for genuine human relations with people like Christine and Gore-Urguhart. Dixon is lucky at the end due to Urguhart’s benevolence in offering him a job and getting the girl he loves.

Jim Dixon, the protagonist of the novel, is a junior lecturer of history, in his mid-20s, working at a provincial university. He is also known as a former R.A.F corporal in western Scotland. The reason for his choice of academic profession is a financial necessity. He gets his job through a degree in Medieval History. He admits being lazy and reading very little. Being a lower-middle class person, Dixon rises to the higher class of the academe and feels like an outsider as he realizes not only the affected manners of society but also of doing a job he does not like.

Although he considers his job and colleagues to be boring, he endures them through playful ways. He struggles in vain to fix his position in the department and continues enduring his professor to secure his job. To Don Nilsen, Jim Dixon “is a prototypical anti-hero,” who “represents the lower-middle class drive to become part of the higher-class social system, and the guilt and self-contempt that results from abandoning one’s own class” (346). Dixon represents the well-educated, provincial and underprivileged class in the Welfare State. Nilsen notes that the four elements of traditional comedy, including “the use of festivity, “the playful tone or mood” “the pervasive use of comic irony” and “the happy ending” can be found in *Lucky Jim* (347).

Dixon is a vulnerable angry man, which is typical of the post-war condition. His life is distinguished by uncertainty, dissatisfaction, anxiety, absurdity, discord and estrangement. He is anxious for financial, emotional and social reasons. His sense of insecurity partly results from his temporary position at the university. He is employed there for two years; however, he cannot be assured of his future, as he may be dismissed as well. For this reason, he tries to treat Welch nicely hoping that he might be of help in this matter, though he hates him and the phony institution he represents. The War is a major factor in the insecure position of not only Dixon but others as Welch says to him in Chapter 8: “Yes, I know a lot of young chaps, find some difficulty in settling down to their first job. It’s only to be expected, after a war, after all” (Amis 5).

Lodge maintains that although the Second World War, or “the People’s War,” the victory of the Labour Party in the General Election of 1945, and the founding of the Welfare State, and “free secondary and tertiary education” had truly “democratized British society” and “got rid of its class divisions and inequalities,” a majority of the young population growing up in the post-war period, despite the 1944 Education Act, still suffered from the inequalities between the privileged upper classes and the underprivileged (9). Lodge states that humanities graduates like Dixon, chose educational careers because “entry to the other liberal professions – administrative civil service, the foreign service, law, publishing, etc. was still controlled by the public-school-Oxbridge-old-boy network” (9-10).

Dixon’s discontent with his condition is manifest in his thoughts concerning his relationship with Welch. In Chapter 8, “He was tired of being blackmailed” (Amis 3). Dixon feels anger due to his social depravity, as he considers himself impoverished and unlucky in contrast to the wealthy and privileged such as the Welches. In Chapter 18, Dixon embodies “rage” at the opportunities conferred upon Michel, the Welches’ “effeminate writing” son living in London, which contrasts sharply with his own lack: “Why hadn’t he himself had parents whose money so far exceeded their sense as to install their son in London? The very thought of it was a torment. If he’d had that chance, things would be very different for him now” (5-6). The chapter also manifests a critique of the Welfare State by contrasting Welch’s British outlook with Mrs Welch’s Continental view in that Welch regards his view rather conservative or “backward-looking bias” in comparison to the more progressive outlook of his wife (3). Mrs Welch’s “attitude towards the Welfare State,” Welch says, is “a great advantage” as it enables them “to view that problem in what you might describe as a wider perspective.” In Chapter 19, following his meeting with Christine, Dixon meditates on the

importance of luck in an uncertain existence: "It was luck you needed all along; with just a little more luck he'd have been able to switch his life on to a momentarily adjoining track, a track destined to swing aside at one away from his own" (20).

The main monolith the novel criticises and ridicules is the phoniness of the academe. The pretentious arty-weekend meeting of the Welches illustrates this aspect. Amis employs parody, farce and satire to ridicule the phoniness of academic life. The affectation of the Welches is manifest, for instance, in their imitation of the French, as it is seen in Bertrand's name. In Chapter 8, Welch's imitation of the French is criticised by Dixon (8). Bertrand's use of language also displays affectation and pompousness as it is seen in Chapter 4 (7). In Chapter 4, Dixon's comment on the French play they perform at the arty-weekend party reveals Welches' affectation as he criticizes them for not choosing an English play (11).

Hypocrisy and vanity in the academic life are mainly demonstrated through Professor Welch and Editor Dr. Caton. Through Welch's inefficiency in his profession, Amis criticizes and ridicules the academe. In Chapter 1, Dixon's views concerning Welch shows not only his professional incompetence but also his dependence on him to guarantee his position at the university, which emphasizes Dixon's insecurity and Welch's abusive exercise of power. Dixon thinks to himself

How had he become Professor of History, even at a place like this? By published work? No. By extra good teaching? No in italics. Then how? As usual, Dixon shelved this question, telling himself that what mattered was that this man had a decisive power on his future. (3)

It is observed that Welch abuses his authority by letting his personal life and relations intrude into his professional decisions and relations. His decision about Dixon is affected by personal reasons, including Dixon's relations with his family. Dixon associates Caton with Welch as he considers both men phoney, rigid and mechanical and ridicules them. In Chapter 19, when Dixon calls Caton to assure that Caton will publish his article soon, he is disgusted with Caton's elusive answers and mocks his repetitive mechanical words such as "Things are very difficult" which have a comic effect. Dixon compares Caton's evasion to Welch's evasion: "A rival to Welch had appeared in the field of evasion technique, verbal division, and in the physical division of the same field this chap had Welch whacked at the start" (8). Repetition, parody, grotesque imagery, and farce produce the ludicrous in this scene. Dixon searches for ways to control his anger, being denied a satisfactory answer by Caton:

nothing answered him except the metallic tapping. [...] 'Things are very difficult, things are very difficult, things are very difficult', Dixon gabbled into the phone, then mentioned a few difficult things which occurred to him as suitable tasks for Dr. Caton to have a go at. Still devising variations of this theme, he went out muttering to himself, wagging his head and shoulders like a puppet. (7)

Dixon's critique of his own article demonstrates his dissatisfaction with his work and ridicules academic pretentiousness and fallacy. In Chapter 1, Dixon considers his unpublished article "niggling mindlessness," "yawn enforcing," "worse than

most[articles] in its air of being convinced of its own usefulness and significance" (11). He regards himself "more of a hypocrite and a fool" as he has not destroyed it" (11).

Laughter serves as a means of censuring inertia, uniformity and stagnation in the novel. The novel champions change and novelty as it ridicules rigidity and stasis. Characters who are inflexible and rigid are laughed at and criticised whereas those who are resilient and innovative are endorsed. In Chapter 13, Dixon examines his present condition and realises, with pleasure, that his life has changed for the better in contrast to the last eight months. Departing from the Summer Ball, he is confused and excited about the prospects of his life as he realises his love for Christine. The progress in his life is particularly due to his spontaneity or freedom from restraint in his thoughts, actions and expressions. The comic acceptance of the world in its absurdity and the value of adaptation to this world to survive are demonstrated through Dixon's struggles in a sham world. His remark about his plight, having lived for eight months in an alien society, echoes Amis's stress on the value of adaptation, although Dixon's state shows the difficulty of adaptation as the ending justifies. Laughter functions as an antidote to an absurd existence as Dixon realises at some point in his struggle. In his search for contentment in a chaotic and absurd existence, Dixon, the anti-hero, like Prometheus, tries to adjust himself to new conditions by finding new ways of coping with them:

What was he doing here, after all? Where was it all going to lead? Whatever it was leading towards, it was certainly leading away from the course his life had been pursuing for the last eight months, and this thought justified his excitement and filled him with reassurance and hope. All positive change was good; standing still, growing to the spot was always bad. [...] The one indispensable answer to an environment bristling with people and things one thought were bad was to go on finding out new ways in which one could think they were bad. The reason why Prometheus couldn't get away from his vulture was that he was keen on it, and not the other way round. (2)

Comedy functions as a means of emotional or psychological relief for the protagonist whose restrained and unexpressed thoughts and feelings find an outlet through his imaginary world, which is opposed to absurd and nasty reality. Dixon contemplates imaginary farcical scenes where he freely utters what he desires to the antagonistic forces in his existence. Dixon resorts to masquerade and farce to cope with his anger and to relieve his true views and feelings. In other words, comedy is the weapon for Dixon to fight with his opponents. It is a tool for him to defy the authority of Welch. In the Bakhtinian and Freudian sense, comedy aids the degradation of the authority as Dixon lowers Welch's status through instruments of grotesque humour. He fancies, for instance, using "obscenity," billingsgate, parody and grotesque imagery in a carnivalesque manner to fight not only with Welch but also with the society and reality represented by him, which he abhors (7-8). To illustrate, in Chapter 1, Dixon derides Welch's vanity, by thinking "No other professor in Great Britain [...] set such store by being called professor" (2). In Chapter 8, in the conversation between Dixon and Welch, Dixon becomes frustrated by Welch, whom he considers indifferent, eccentric,

incompetent, absentminded, vain, boring and annoying. He envisions mimicry, making faces that express his true feelings concerning Welch at that moment. He even imagines beating Welch. He also criticizes his affectation of French and his management of the department through farce. Dixon thinks he “felt real, overmastering, orgiastic boredom, and its real companion, real hatred” (7). Degradation of the authority through mimicry contributes to comic effect in the scene where Dixon’s humming the Welch tune, through which he tries to relieve his fury against Welch secretly. He suits words to a piano rondo tune formerly played by Welch, which he names “the Welch tune” and sings it to himself in the Common Room: “You ignorant clod, you stupid old sod, you *havering slavering* get ...’ Here intervened a string of unmentionables, corresponding with an oompah sort of effect in the orchestra” (10).

The scene of Dixon’s dream vision partakes of both the carnivalesque aspects and the Freudian reaction to the repressed desires. On the one hand, the lavatory is a carnivalesque image which reveals the true self of Dixon, without his disguises. (11-2). It signifies the unofficial, light and liberating aspects of carnival. When faced with a situation or reality which he dislikes and wants to avoid, Dixon dreams of a fantasy world of escape. To illustrate, Dixon’s hate towards his job as well as his difficulty in warding off Margaret’s pressure on him causes Dixon to try to escape from reality through dreaming another space and an alternative reality. Dixon recurrently has the dream vision of being in London. In Dixon’s dissatisfaction with his life can be seen the magnitude of his repression of his true self as he has a pressing need to leave his present space and not return. However, he returns out of “economic necessity,” “call of pity” and “fear”: “More than ever it was the moment to dart into the street and fail to return” (12). On the other hand, Dixon’s vision may be considered a psychical mechanism that helps articulate his unconscious desires in a repressive society. The image gives expression to the innermost reality of his being that involves the kind of life he aspires to with the kind of girl he could love. It is observed that the dream vision, for Dixon, serves as a refuge from the world of the Welches and Margaret, or from a false society.

As he stood in the badly-lit Jakes, he was visited again, and unbearably, by the visual image that had haunted him ever since he took on this job. [...] The image was not purely visual, because he had a feeling that some soft unidentifiable noise was in his ears, and he felt with a dreamer’s baseless conviction that somebody was going to come into the room where he seemed to be, somebody he knew in the image but not in reality. He was certain it was an image of London, and as just certain that it wasn’t any part of London he’d ever visited. He hadn’t spent more than a dozen evenings there in his life. Then why, he pondered, was his ordinary desire to leave the provinces for London sharpened and particularized by this half-glimpsed scene? (12)

The festivities in the book such as the madrigal get-together at the Welches function as the opposite of the carnivalesque festivities. The kind of festivity represented by the Welches is the official, monolithic, hierarchical, repressive order, enforced by Welch, while festivities such as Dixon’s festive vision, are carnivalesque being unofficial, universal, derogatory, renovative, playful, flexible and emancipative. The drawing room of the Welches and the Common Room at

the university signify the claustrophobic, labyrinthine social system contrasting with the carnivalesque space.

Humour has a “therapeutic function” in Dixon’s case, as his “strong sense of humour,” as Salwak puts it, “enables him to make light of much of very real distress and disaster” in his picaresque journey (65). Salwak states that Dixon “resorts to a comic fantasy world in which he can express rage or loathing towards certain imbecilities of the social group the Welch set represents, “in order to maintain self-respect” (65). The tricks the anti-hero plays to cope with an alien and senseless world are justified and contribute to comedy. Dixon’s tricks such as the fire, the taxi, and the Evening Post business illustrate the ways to survive in such a world.

Dixon makes faces or mimics to deal with some sort of deviation or eccentricity. Both masquerade and mimicry, as tools for humour, afford an opportunity for a sense of superiority and victory over the antagonistic forces in the protagonist’s life. Such comic devices help him to maintain his self-confidence and self-esteem. Masquerade and mimicry yield an alternative to the dissonance and senselessness of reality. In Chapter 17, for instance, Welch’s idiosyncrasies or accidents as he first pushes the wrong door to leave the library and then hits his head on the panel, makes Jim Dixon make his monkey-face, looking at Welch by “allowing his mandrill face full play” (Amis 14). In other words, humour endows Dixon with the ability to survive in an incongruous existence. Dixon then mimics Welch, which he thinks, helps him to tolerate the nasty reality and people: “Dixon went away, beginning to whistle his Welch tune in a solemn, almost liturgical tempo. He felt that it was things like this that kept him going” (14).

Dixon’s ways to keep his sanity in an absurd existence represent the healing power of comedy in the twentieth century. While playing the role of an agreeable and obedient member of the staff, Dixon relieves his anger and boredom through the comic world of his imagination. The comic fantasy world Dixon dreams of is a temporary escape from the society in which he is an outsider and pretends to comply with it in order to survive. In other words, it is only when Dixon wears faces/masks that he returns to his true self. Confronted with continuous orders of his professor, he expresses his feelings of rage or boredom silently and privately. Considering Welch unfit for his profession and his personality dull, he imagines playful solutions to suppress his anger. To illustrate, in Chapter 1, when Welch evades his invitation of Dixon to his house by changing the topic of the conversation, Dixon gets very angry and fancies fitting Welch into a lavatory basin (5). In Chapter 8, for instance, being fed up with Welch’s evasion regarding the decision over his becoming a permanent staff, Dixon fancies he would ask Welch how an “old cockchafer” like him “can run a history department” (8), yet when their conversation ends, he thanks Welch sincerely out of obligation without manifesting his true feelings to him. After that, he goes to the Common Room and sings swear-words by imitating Welch’s intonation, under his breath.

Mimicry and masquerade perform the function of an outlet for Dixon to express his repressed desires, feelings and thoughts. He imitates a variety of faces. However, it is often when Dixon faces someone or something undesirable or nasty that he makes faces. For this reason, when he encounters someone or something really nice, he is at a loss to express his feelings. In the last chapter, Dixon is very

happy for he is offered a job in London and learns that Christine separated from Bertrand, which will enable him to attain what he desires: getting the job he desires and marrying the girl he loves; however, he does not know how to express his joy as the previous masks/faces articulated his dissatisfaction. Dixon's lack of faces to express his happiness also demonstrates that happiness is accidental or rare in contemporary existence. "He thought what a pity it was that all his faces were designed to express rage or loathing. Now that something had happened which really deserved a face, he'd none to celebrate it with. As a kind of token, he made his Sex Life in Ancient Roman face" (6).

Laughter has revolutionary, empowering and contemptuous aspects in Dixon's case. In Chapter 9, for instance, laughter is anarchic as Dixon, through masquerade, deludes and thereby triumphs over his opponents, including the Welches, Celia Welch and Bertrand Welch in particular, and regains his power and self-assurance through the laughter following his masquerade. Dixon deceives Bertrand being disguised as the *Evening Post* and manipulating and mocking his vanity and authority by feigning that the newspaper will publish an article on him. The object of laughter in this scene provides the agent, namely Dixon, with superiority: "Before making any move, however, he threw back his head and gave a long trombone-blast of anarchistic laughter. [...] The campaign against Bertrand he'd fantasized about at the Welches' had begun, and with a dazzling tactical success" (17).

It is "nasty" things and people which are the targets of criticism and ridicule in the novel. In Chapter 14, as Dixon answers Callaghan's question concerning the appropriateness of a possible marriage between Bertrand and her, the central motto is "nice things are nicer than nasty ones" (10), which he reiterates in the penultimate chapter, with the sudden twist of his fate and luck (11). Categorising people as nasty and nice, Dixon labels people like Bertrand and Welch as boring and nasty, which is seen in his words to Christine Callaghan: "It means each of you belong to the two great classes of mankind, people I like and people I don't. [...] Bertrand is a bore, he's like his dad, the only thing that interests him is him" (14).

Role-playing is a major mechanism in the novel, which serves different functions. For one thing, the characters have recourse to role-play to survive in a false, mechanical society. Dixon's epiphany after playing various roles in a corrupt society is his motto, which is truth to oneself as the proper role that the individual must play, as it is observed in Chapter 14. Sense of security amidst post-war discord is achieved through sincerity and doing what one wants to do. Mainly with Christine Callaghan's influence on him and his love for her, Dixon becomes aware of the absurdity of his existence, goes through a change and tries to resist his plight via sincerity and humour:

More than ever he felt secure: here he was, quite able to fulfil his role, and, as with other roles, the longer you played it the better chance you had of playing it again. Doing what you wanted to do was the only training, and the only preliminary, needed for doing more of what you wanted to do. (18-9)

Yet, although Dixon is hypocritical, the reader sympathises with him, as he is aware of his hypocrisy unlike the Welches. He replaces his pretentiousness with

self-respect when he is honest with himself, as he awakens to his true self, and leaves the job and space he dislikes and moves to London.

Another major comedic device in the novel is the disruption of the serious by the comic or incongruous. James Gindin relates this to Amis's acceptance of contemporary existence in its incongruity, namely, the disruption of the serious by the irrelevant or trivial from daily life. He also relates this use of the comic to the absence of moral instruction in Amis's novels. Gindin expresses this conception of the comic as follows: "The comic acceptance of the contemporary scene, along with the verbal texture of incongruous image and reference, provides whatever unity exists in Amis' fiction" (49). Considering the "social and political attitudes of Amis's characters" to be "essentially conservative," Gindin argues there is "a comic and tolerant acceptance of the power structure of the contemporary world" (49).

An instance of the interruption of the serious by the trivial is manifest in Dixon's tea-date with Christine Callaghan in Chapter 19. While talking about the future of their relationship, Dixon has a digressive moment and starts to think about the waiter. The comic quarrel between the waiter and Dixon over the tip, interrupting the latter's thoughts concerning his relationship with Christine after leaving her reinforces the comic effect by underlining the discordant nature of things as a source of the comic. The greengages and rhubarb comparison is another instance of the suspension of the serious through a comic image. In Chapter 14, in the scene where Callaghan tells Dixon about her difficulty in deciding whether she is in love with Bertrand or not, Dixon likens the act of decision of love to the deciding if you like greengages or rhubarb (Amis 15-6). The juxtaposition of the serious and the comic accentuates the discordance in contemporary existence.

Dixon's relationship with Margaret is another source of ridicule, as Margaret's hypocrisy, neurotic excess and pressure on Dixon arouse contempt and disgust in him. In Chapter 16, Dixon has an imaginary vision of "rush[ing] at her and tip[ping] her backwards in the chair, to make a deafening rude noise in her face, to push a bead up her nose" (5). Lodge contends that "Her [Margaret's] claims on Jim's emotional loyalty is analogous to the university's claim on his professional allegiance" (11).

The role of chance and the sense of contingency dominate the novel. The precariousness of existence in post-war society is depicted through the lens of comedy. Dixon's ludicrous experience and acceptance of life provide a notable example of post-war predicament. Dixon reflects on the power of chance in life, which is also justified through the happy ending. However, the ending is ironic, as it is through certain values and humane ways such as sincerity, honesty, and decency that Dixon attains happiness and success. Dixon defeats his antagonists and cures his sickness with his environment including the university, its members and the Welches in particular, through his satirical lecture, entitled "Merrie-England" in Chapter 22. Dixon feels sick, due to intoxication, nervousness and irritation. However, his vertigo feeling is emblematic of his nausea or disgust due to his meaningless existence as well. The language provides a comic effect in this scene. Although Dixon detests Medieval History and has difficulty in keeping up with the university life, being drunk, he turns his lecture into a parody of the language used by Welch and ends with a note on the failure of that period. Dixon lampoons institutional and social ills in his speech by changing his intonation,



estranging his accent and parodying through mimicry the speech of the persons of authority, such as the Principal and the Head of the department. His derisive speech aids him to demonstrate the bitter truth to the audience and serve to correct the wrongs in society. The lecture is a crisis point in Dixon's coming to self-awareness. The crowd's laughter makes him aware of the absurdity of his own plight and the futility of the idea of Merrie-England. Far from merriment, Dixon shows his audience, that the history of England ironically involves the opposite: "What finally, is the practical application of all this? [...] The point about Merrie-England is that it was about the most un-Merry period in our history" (Amis 8). Dixon's lecture epitomises the Bakhtinian carnivalesque which is derogative, denunciatory, affirmative and regenerative:

Gradually, but not as gradually as it seemed to some parts of his brain, he began to infuse his tones with a sarcastic, wounding bitterness. Nobody outside a madhouse, he tried to imply, could take seriously a single phrase of this conjectural, nugatory, deluded, tedious rubbish. [...] Almost unconsciously he began to adopt an unnameable foreign accent and to read faster and faster, his head spinning. [...] He began punctuating his discourse with smothered snorts of derision. He read on, spitting out the syllables like curses, leaving mispronunciations uncorrected, turning over the pages of his script like a score-reader following a *presto* movement, raising his voice higher and higher. (6-7)

In Chapter 23, after the Merrie-England lecture, Dixon is dismissed from his position at the university, and decides to look for another job in another place. Moreover, as he learns that the article he submitted to a journal to enable him to secure his post as a permanent staff at the university has been plagiarised and published by another one, he resorts to shrill laughter to express the absurdity and painful reality of his condition rather than curse it: "At a loss for faces, he drew in his breath to swear, then cackled hysterically instead" (3). Dixon's anger yields to laughter in this scene, which accentuates the remedial function of humour. Through laughter, Dixon attacks the corrupt aspects of the academe such as the unethical conferment of academic positions: "So that was how people got chairs, was it? Chairs of that sort anyway" (3).

The ending of the novel underlines the value of honesty and the therapeutic function of comedy in postmodern life. Dixon eventually learns how to deal with a nasty world: by not taking nasty people and things seriously but by facing them and laughing at them. It is worth noting that it is humour which helps Callaghan and Dixon to cope with the antagonistic forces in their life, as they laugh together at them. In the last chapter, Dixon faces the Welches, and he does what he wants and derides them thereby triumphing over them. Amis mocks the inhumanity of the Welches through caricature. The exchange of the hats Welch and Bertrand wear strip their individuality, and they become interchangeable. Dixon squeezed Christine's arm encouragingly and walked up to them. "Excuse me," he said in a fruity comic-butler voice. [...] The incident was almost closed when he saw that not only were Welch and Bertrand both present, but Welch's fishing hat and Bertrand's beret were there too. The beret, however, was on Welch's head, the fishing-hat on Bertrand's. In these

guises and standing rigid with popping eyes, as both were, they had a look of being Gide and Lytton Stratchey, represented in waxwork form by a prentice hand. Dixon drew in breath to denounce both, then blow it all out again in a howl of laughter. [...] With Christine tugging at his arm he halted in the middle of the group. [...] The Welches withdrew and began getting into their car. (7)

## Conclusion

Investigating the comedic aspects of *Lucky Jim*, it can be concluded that comedy serves as a carnivalesque critique and parody of the grotesque reality of the post-war society, attacking its monoliths, cults and inhibitions, thereby having a therapeutic and affirmative effect. Humour does not only save the hero and the heroine of the story, but it mainly has a cathartic impact on the reader, thereby effecting a relief in society and a Freudian outlet for the repressed desires and inhibitions. Comedy, as the novel evidences, has an ambivalent aspect, being both constructive and abusive, light and dark, playful and serious. As a satirical work, the novel ridicules the moral deficiencies, the grotesque inhumanity and hypocrisy of the bourgeois, while it aims to correct the shortcomings of society through the elastic order and vision of the carnivalesque humour of Amis. As Jim Dixon's example reveals, comedy serves as a powerful weapon to battle with and thereby reform and remedy society, its monolithic minds and institutions.

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# ***“Put on that red lipstick”*: Cross-cultural Analysis of Solutions in Advice Articles of Women’s Magazines**

Kadın Dergilerindeki Çözüm Önerilerinin Kültürlerarası Karşılaştırması

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## **Abstract**

Women’s magazines are widely seen as mirrors of social change in society; thus they have increasingly become an important topic for scholarly exploration. This paper focuses on the sex and relationship advice column in locally-produced English language women’s magazines in the US, the Middle East, and Malaysia. Sixty relationship advice articles were obtained online from the selected magazines. The study investigates the solutions these publications promote to their readers. It also examines whether these solutions reflect the dominant values of the respective society, or do they challenge them. Machin and Van Leeuwen’s problem-solution discourse schema is used to analyse the texts. Although Machin and Van Leeuwen’s solution categories of their problem-solution discourse schema are found in our data, not all of these categories are found in all of the contexts studied. This study also finds an additional four solution categories, namely, ‘Pleasing Oneself’, ‘Acquiring Knowledge’, ‘Taking Responsibility’, and ‘Forgiveness’. In addition, the socio-cultural, political and religious beliefs of the three parts of the world studied reflect the types of solutions appearing in the articles. The findings of this study also suggest that frames of femininity are polarised to form two images of women: a traditional feminine image of women and an empowered image of women.

**Keywords:** Women’s magazines, Sexuality, Cross-cultural, Solution categories, Female empowerment

## **Öz**

Kadın dergileri, genellikle toplumdaki sosyal değişimin bir aynası olarak görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla, kadın dergileri bilimsel araştırmalar için giderek önemli bir konu haline gelmiştir. Bu çalışma, ABD, Ortadoğu ve Malezya’daki İngilizce yayımlanan yerel kadın dergilerindeki ilişki tavsiyeleriyle ilgili köşe yazılarına odaklanmaktadır. Seçili dergilerden ilişki tavsiyesi üzerine yazılan 60 makaleye çevrim içi olarak erişim sağlanmıştır. Yapılan bu çalışma, yayımlanan dergilerin okuyucularına önerdiği çözümleri incelemektedir. Aynı zamanda çözüm önerilerinin ilgili toplumdaki baskın değerleri yansıttıp yansıtmadığı ve bu değerlere karşı çıkıp çıkmadığını da araştırmaktadır. Metinlerin analizinde Machin ve Van Leeuwen’in problem çözme söylem şeması kullanılmıştır. Bu söylem şemasının çözüm kategorilerinin hepsi veride yer almaktadır, ancak her kategori incelenen tüm bağlamlarda bulunmamaktadır. Analizler sonucunda, bu kategorilere ek olarak dört çözüm kategorisi daha ortaya konmuştur: "Kendini memnun etmek", "Bilgi edinmek", "Sorumluluk almak" ve 'Affetmek'. Bunlara ek olarak, makalelerde görülen çözüm türleri, ele alınan üç bölgenin sosyokültürel, politik ve dini inanışlarını

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yansıtılmaktadır. Aynı zamanda, kadınlık algısının kutuplaştırıldığı ve iki farklı kadın imgesi oluştuğu görülmektedir: geleneksel kadın imgesi ve kendi ayakları üzerinde duran güçlü kadın imgesi.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kadın dergileri, Cinsiyet, Kültürlerarası, Çözüm kategorileri, Kadının güçlendirilmesi

## Introduction

Women's magazines have been one of the most popular media forms around the world. They have played an essential role in the production, reproduction to hegemonic cultural norms around sexuality, race, class and gender, as well as challenges to such norms (Kitsa and Mudra). Women's magazines cover different kinds of advice related to women's issues under different columns, such as advice on lifestyle, fashion, beauty and others. One of these columns is sex and relationship advice, which is the focus of our present study. As asserted by Morris, sex and relationship advice articles are very important since they deal with private problems in a very public sphere (326). That is, they include the very serious treatment of issues which are focused on in the socio-political discourse of the day.

The majority of studies on women's magazines have been conducted on advertisements (Akinro and Mbunyuza-Memani Renaldo; Mbure and Aubrey). Other studies carried out on women's magazines investigate the ways in which women's magazines' producers understand feminism (Favaro and Gill; Kitsa and Mudra). Studies on sex and relationship advice articles are under-researched in the literature of studies on contemporary women's magazines. Among these are studies by Lorenset and Conradie who explore the linguistic constructions of advice articles. Other scholars investigate the dominant themes of advice articles (Gill; Gupta et al.), while Machin and Thornborrow ("Branding and Discourse;" "Lifestyle and the Depoliticisation of Agency") examine other aspects such as the discourse of sex and power in these magazines. A recent study by Temmerman et al. analyses the textual representation of men, women and their mutual relationships on three Flemish women's magazines, from the period 1953-2013. Their findings reveal that women's relationships with men are still integral to the ethos of these magazines. They also find that the topic of marriage has declined and the existence of a loving man in women's world is still an important topic.

Furthermore, there are fewer studies that offer a cross-cultural comparison of advice columns in women's magazines. Among these studies are "Global Schemas and Local Discourses in Cosmopolitan" by Machin and Van Leeuwen and "A Cross-cultural Study of Relationship Advice Articles in Women's Magazines" and "A Cross-cultural Study of Persuasive Strategies in Relationship Advice Articles in Women's Magazines" by Lulu and Alkaff. Machin and Van Leeuwen explore advice articles on a number of topics including work, sexuality and relationships in several international editions of *Cosmopolitan* ("Global Schemas"). They reveal that a 'problem-solution' discourse schema is used for all the articles analysed, regardless of the topic. They also report that despite the existence of '*local accents*', the problem-solution discourse schema used by these magazines is a global one shared by all the editions. Lulu and Alkaff, on the other hand, investigate the prevailing values in the relationship and sex advice articles of

home-grown women's magazines from three different contexts, which are, Malaysia, the Middle East (the UAE and Egypt), and the US. They find that the producers of these articles are aware of the values of their society ("Cross-cultural Study"). They also confirm that women's empowerment is foregrounded in the texts analysed; however, this empowerment is constructed within a traditional framework of male-female roles. It should be highlighted that Lulu and Alkaff's study investigates messages which are either foregrounded or backgrounded in sex and relationship advice articles unlike this study which specifically examines the solution categories appear in such articles.

Our study is important as few studies are carried out on home-grown English language women's magazines in non-Western contexts in particular. Few studies have also been conducted to explore the categories of the problem-solution schema in sex and relationship advice articles. Hence, this research has attempted to explore further what is known about the genre of sex and relationship advice articles in women's magazines, and has hoped to bridge the existing gap in this area.

In this present study, sex and relationship advice articles in six home-grown English language women's magazines from three different contexts, namely, the Middle East (Egypt and UAE), the US and Malaysia, are explored to find out the kinds of relationship solutions that appear in each context. Analysing home-grown women's magazines would provide better understandings on the values they seek to promote in relation to the norms or values of the society they are set in rather than analysing local editions of international magazines. Thus, the following research questions are proposed:

1. What kinds of solutions are found in the relationship advice articles of home-grown English language women's magazines in the US, the Middle East and Malaysia?
2. Do these solutions reflect the dominant norms and values of the respective society, or do they challenge them?

## **Methodology**

The data for this study were drawn from six locally-produced English language women's magazines, two women's magazines from each of the three contexts. As mentioned earlier, analysing these magazines rather than local editions of international magazines would help us to explore whether the values of these publications reflect local norms of their society or whether they have adopted a more global outlook on women's issues. We chose the three contexts, that is the US, Malaysia and the Middle East based on our belief that these three societies represent varying degrees in terms of attitudes towards gender equality, ranging from mainly liberal (US), fairly conservative (Malaysia) and mainly conservative (Middle East). Furthermore, our data are drawn upon two Middle Eastern countries since there are few locally produced English language women's magazines in the region. It is also important to highlight that most Middle Eastern countries share a similarity of thinking regardless of their economic and cultural

differences because of homogeneity in terms of language and religious beliefs, as confirmed by many scholars (Moghadam; Nydell).

The two women's magazines selected from the US are *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire*. The former is the best-selling women's magazine in the US and the world, while the latter competes with the international editions of *Cosmopolitan*. These magazines are published by *Hearst Magazines*, which is one of the world's largest publishers of monthly magazines. The two women's magazines selected from Malaysia are *Her World* and *Female*. The former is the first local English language women's magazine in Malaysia while the latter is Malaysia's top selling lifestyle magazine. These two women's magazines are published by *Blu Inc Media*, Malaysia's biggest publisher of magazines. The two Middle Eastern women's magazines selected are *What Women Want* (Egypt) and *Ahlan* (UAE). The former is one of the leading English language lifestyle women's magazines in Egypt while the latter is the first home-grown English language lifestyle women's magazine to hit the shelves in the Middle East. The names of the magazines studied are represented in the findings of this study through the use of initials for brevity.

Sixty articles, ten from each magazine, were retrieved from the sex and relationship advice sections of the magazines. The articles were sourced online from the websites of the respective magazines because online magazines are expected to be accessed by a greater number of women as they are free and shared in different social media like Twitter and Facebook, as confirmed by Karan et al. The articles were chosen from the time period of 2013-2015. As these articles are not news articles, we believe that it is not necessary to have exactly the same time frame covered for each magazine.

In exploring the types of solutions that appear in these magazines in their sex and relationship advice articles, we referred to the solution categories found in Machin and Van Leeuwen's "Global Schemas and Local Discourses in *Cosmopolitan*" study since some of the articles they analysed were similar to those this research examines. However, our study focuses only on the solution categories that appear in the sex and relationship articles of these magazines unlike their study which explores solutions in articles on a number of topics, as mentioned earlier. Furthermore, in this paper, we only focus on solution categories and we exclude problem categories as we believe problem categories need a separate research or paper to be discussed in details.

The categories of solutions of Machin and Van Leeuwen are summarised as follows:

1. Acquiring Skills: learning new skills might relate to self-presentation, and the intentional exploitation of women's attractiveness through dressing, seductive behaviour, or even being well organised.
2. Rejection: this solution is a way to deal with people women should not easily trust by cutting off the relationship or withdrawing.
3. Communication: it means 'talking things over' and it is always a frequent solution for the problem 'Unreliable Partners'.
4. Pleasing People: when having problems with others (especially men) then the solution is pleasing them through some ways such as seductive behaviour or flattery.

5. Taking Control: taking the initiative almost always related only to sexual problems. ("Global Schemas and Local Discourses in Cosmopolitan")

With regard to the inter-coder reliability, the data was first analysed by the researchers separately to identify themes and coding categories. After the initial coding, the data was then analysed again by both researchers and a colleague together. Both a priori codes and emergent codes that have been obtained from the analysis of the data were studied. The coding scheme was then further refined and agreed upon by all three coders. Although we did not use statistics to determine inter-coder agreement, we believe that sufficient measures and steps have been undertaken by the researchers to ensure reliability and validity of the coding schema. According to Tinsley and Weiss, inter-rater (or inter-coder) agreement is important because it measures 'the extent to which the different judges tend to assign exactly the same rating to each object' (98). This helped to reaffirm the proposition that the frameworks that were conceived with the consensus of coders were sound.

## Findings

The analysis of the data reveals that all of Machin and Van Leeuwen's solution categories in their "Global Schemas and Local Discourses in Cosmopolitan" are found among the 60 articles analysed. The findings also reveal an additional four solution categories that were not found in their study are present in our study. These new solution categories are, 'Acquiring Knowledge', 'Taking Responsibility', 'Pleasing Oneself' and 'Forgiveness'. As the articles we analysed are exclusively on sex and relationship advice articles unlike Machin and Van Leeuwen's study, it is expected that new solution categories would emerge from our data.

In some articles, more than one solution categories are identified. A main solution is sometimes presented with another minor solution ensconced within it. Table 1 below shows the solution categories and the frequency they appear in each of the three contexts:

<b>Solution Category</b>	<b>US</b>	<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>Middle East</b>
*Acquiring skills	9	11	7
*Rejection	4	1	5
*Communication	7	7	7
*Pleasing people	2	3	2
*Taking control	3	2	0
**Acquiring knowledge	7	5	3
**Pleasing Oneself	3	4	3
**Taking Responsibility	6	3	10
**Forgiveness	0	0	2

* Machin and Van Leeuwen's categories
** New categories

**Table 1.** The frequency of solution categories in sex and relationship advice articles in women's magazines

The solution categories are discussed in more detail in the following sub-sections:

### **Acquiring skills**

Women are highly advised to learn new skills, either sexual, personal, or social skills, in order to constructively deal with some problems in their lives. This category appears to be the most prominent solution category in the US and the Malaysian data, and the second prominent category in the Middle Eastern data. This finding matches Machin and Van Leeuwen's findings that this solution category is a frequently proposed solution ("Global Schemas"). In the article "How to Destroy Your 6 Biggest Orgasm Obstacles" (CP), for example, women are advised to learn new sex skills to overcome sex problems. For instance, the sex skill women should learn for the sex problem "He's Got a Tiny Penis" is "Have him try thrusting in a circular motion with his hips — the circling creates a fuller feeling than the classic in and out". In another example, in the Malaysian data, the article "10 Things You Must Try for Mind-Blowing Sex" (HW) provides sexual skills for women such as "Take a shower together", "Do it blindfolded", and "Read Erotica".

The article "How to Marry a Millionaire" (AH), in the Middle Eastern data, provides women with personal and social skills which are needed to *snare* a rich man. The personal or self-presentation skills relate to women's physical attractiveness through makeup and clothing style, for instances, "Back away from the blusher and put down that eyebrow pencil" and "Wear dresses that fit your body type". Women are also advised to learn social skills which relate to the way they communicate with rich men, for instances, "avoid controversial topics like religion and politics" and "engage in positive conversation and show an interest in his life and stories". These pieces of advice are imperatives, and hence, women seem to be submissive as they are encouraged to satisfy rich men in order to *procure* them.

### **Rejection**

Women may feel resentment towards people, especially men, and they seek ways to overcome such feelings either through withdrawing or cutting off the relationship. This solution category appears in four articles in the US data, three of them as a subordinate solution and one as a main solution. In the article "Do You Have Sex FOMO?" (CP), for example, the solution for the problem of sexual dissatisfaction can be found in the two separate narratives of Raquel and Zoe. Due to their (perceived) problem of sexual dissatisfaction, they both rejected their boyfriends, as demonstrated by the following phrases, 'she broke up with her boyfriend' and 'ditching our boyfriends'.

In the Middle Eastern women's magazines, this category appears as a subordinate solution category in five articles. In the article "Marital Porn\_ Is Watching Porn the Real Deal Breaker?" (WW), for example, which is basically an account of the unreliability of a husband who secretly watches porn, one proposed solution is expressed in the following statement "If you have a partner who masturbates while



*watching porn 15 times a day...in those situations divorce and/or sex addiction rehab might be the right thing to do*". The solution category 'Rejection' is demonstrated by the noun '*divorce*'.

This category appears in one article in the Malaysian data, which is, "Would You Snoop on Your Boyfriend's Phone While He's Asleep?". It appears as a subordinate solution category in the two separate sample narratives of the characters mentioned in the articles, Joanna and Hannah, where both rejected their boyfriends because the former discovered that her boyfriend, Ted, *had been keeping in touch with a former flame*, and the latter discovered that her boyfriend cheated on her with his female friend as he *had been staying over at her place secretly*. This category is expressed in this article by the phrases '*These revelations pushed her to end their relationship*', and '*she finally had enough and broke up with him*'.

It is observed that the solution category 'Rejection' does not only appear when women reject their relationship with men but also when they refuse a new idea such as their refusal to meet new people online, as featured in the article "Are You a Screen Siren?" (AH). In this article, this category appears in the narrative of a girl called Daniella who *had a hard time meeting interesting new people* during her stay in Dubai. She rejects the solution of communication through *Tinder* to find new people, as expressed by the phrase '*she dismissed it as superficial and shallow*'. It also appears when women withdraw from a pregnant friend, as shown in the article "How to Handle Your Best Friend Getting Pregnant" (CP), where the writer *drifted apart* from her pregnant friend.

In Machin and Van Leeuwen's findings, this solution category is proposed when '*people form a potential risk and should not be trusted too easily*' ("Global Schemas" 504). However, our data showed that this solution category is also found when women are sexually dissatisfied with their relationships with their partners, as revealed in the US data and shown in the example above. Furthermore, Machin and Van Leeuwen find that this solution occurs often in the Asian versions of *Cosmopolitan* they have studied ("Global Schemas"). However, this study finds that this solution category occurs only in one article in the Malaysian data, and hence, this finding contradicts Machin and Van Leeuwen's findings. This could be due to the fact that they studied the Asian versions of international magazines, unlike our study which investigates home-grown magazines.

### **Communication**

Women may solve their problems with men or friends through communication or '*talking things over*'. This category appears in seven articles in the US data. It appears as a main solution in five articles and as a subordinate category solution in two articles. In the article "Are You on the Verge of a Public Meltdown?" (CP), for example, this solution category appears as a solution after experiencing a public meltdown which results from the feeling of being *upset and tempted to go public* through *airing our frustrations online* in the social media. The solution category is expressed by the following phrases of communication '*consult your people*', '*talk to the people*', and '*address the problem*'.

In the Malaysian women's magazines, this solution category appears in seven articles—as a main solution category in five articles and a subordinate solution category in the others. It is mainly proposed for women to solve sex problems, through communication. In the article “5 Tricks to Spice Up Your Sex Life” (HW), for example, this solution category is presented in the following phrases ‘*Address emotional needs*’, ‘*the intimate conversation*’, and ‘*Talk openly about your sex lives*’.

This solution category appears in seven articles in the Middle Eastern women's magazine. It appears as a main category in five articles and as a subordinate solution category in the others. In the article “Tips for a Pleasant First Time...” (WW), for example, which is basically an account of the lack of sex skills due to it being the first time for sex, this solution category is expressed through different types of communication; communication between a husband and a wife as demonstrated by the phrases, ‘*Create an understanding and cooperative environment*’ and ‘*Be patient and communicate with each other*’, communication between a woman and medical specialists as expressed by ‘*To avoid first day failures or disappointments, read up and ask medical specialists*’, and communication between a couple and their family as expressed by the phrase ‘*Communicate with the families your need for privacy and stress to them that no proof is needed for a bride's chastity*’.

### ***Taking control***

In this solution category, women are advised to take the initiative to solve sexual problems. This solution category is found in three articles in the US data, as a main solution category in one article and as a subordinate category in the others. In the article “How to Destroy Your 6 Biggest Orgasm Obstacles” (CP), for example, the solution for the problem of sexual dissatisfaction ‘*He's Got a Huge Penis*’ is to “*...get on top to control the speed and lean forward to limit depth*”.

In the Malaysian women's magazines, this solution category appears in two articles as a subordinate solution category. In the article “10 Things You Must Try for Mind-Blowing Sex” (HW), for example, this solution category is demonstrated by the following verb phrases ‘*Take control*’, ‘*Initiate sex*’, and ‘*Go on Top*’. The phrases ‘*you're the one in control*’ and ‘*you're taking control*’ also express this category and show women in control of how they have sex. Thus, as our examples have shown, this solution category is confined to solving sexual problems, similar to Machin and Van Leeuwen (“Global Schemas”). It is found that this solution category does not exist in the Middle Eastern data because topics which relate to sexuality continue to be a taboo subject across the Arab world (Mahadeen 47).

### ***Pleasing people***

Women may please people, mainly men, by paying attention to their feelings. This solution category is found in two articles in the US women's magazines as a subordinate solution category. In the article, “This Is How You Should Break Up with Him”, for example, this solution appears as a subordinate solution category where ‘*Acquiring Skills*’ is the main proposed category. In this article, women are advised to follow appropriate ways of breakup related to time, place and way of saying the breakup with the purpose of paying attention to men's feelings: for instances, “*Don't make him cry at a restaurant...so don't do that to him*” and “*Don't do it right after a family member of his dies*”.

This solution category is found in two articles in the Malaysian women's magazines. It appears as a subordinate solution category where 'Acquiring Skills' is the main solution category for the two articles. In the article "10 Secrets to a Successful Marriage" (HW), for example, women are advised to satisfy their men by pleasing them for the sake of improving the marital and sexual relationship. This solution category is clearly demonstrated by the following imperatives: *"Don't ask your man to work on the house when you know he's tied up with a deadline at the office or had a rough week at work"* and *"Bite your tongue sometimes: Do not criticise your man for the work he has done."* However, it seems that women are taught to be submissive as they learned to be compliant to their partners and value their partners' pleasure over their own.

In the Middle Eastern women's magazines, this solution category is found in three articles. It appears as a subordinate solution category in two articles and as a main solution category in the other. This category appears as a subordinate solution category for the problem of unreliable partner in the article "Marital Porn\_ Is Watching Porn the Real Deal Breaker?", where there is another proposed solution category, which is, 'Rejection', as previously mentioned, the 'Pleasing People' category is expressed in the following piece of advice *"Ask yourself this, is it really worth breaking up a whole family over some tasteless, anonymous videos on the internet?"*. In this advice, the writer suggests that the woman should think about her family because if she follows the 'Rejection' solution it means *'breaking up a whole family'*. The writer is also seen trying to trivialise the problem by describing these videos as being *tasteless* and *anonymous* ones. The writer is also seen trying to indirectly inform the woman that the decision of divorce may make her family suffer. Hence, she should consider her family's feelings over her own.

### **Acquiring knowledge**

In this solution category, which we have found, women must access new information and be up-to-date with new streams of knowledge which are related to current social issues, especially pertaining to sex and relationships. Unlike the solution category 'Acquiring Skills', the solutions presented under the solution category 'Acquiring Knowledge' are presented in the form of informative advice about situations that women should know or take into their consideration. Hence, this solution category relates to theoretical facts or abstract information women should know rather than practical tips or instructions of skills. In such a case, this solution category helps women to have a clear understanding about different social issues. This solution category is found in three articles in the US women's magazines. The article "6 Things You Should Know About Dating by the Time You're 30" (MC), for example, provides information that women should know about dating such as *"Flowers Are a Given"*, *"A Man Will Not Complete You"*, and *"Space Is a Good Thing"*.

This solution category appears in five articles in the Malaysian women's magazines. The article "Here's How Women Can have More Sex with Their Man" (F), for example, provides women with the solution for the problem of sexual dissatisfaction through informing them that *'women who have more male friends and colleagues tend to have more sex than women who often surround themselves*

with females instead'. On the other hand, this solution category appears in three articles in the Middle Eastern women's magazines. In the article "How to Avoid Getting Clooney-ed" (AH), for example, women are provided with signs they should know to watch out when the guy is interested in marriage. One sign, for instance, "He hasn't introduced you to family or friends after sometime together".

### **Pleasing oneself**

In this solution category, which we have found, women are advised to please and focus on themselves by finding alternatives for the problematic issues they may face in order to be happy and to please themselves. This solution category is opposite to Machin and Van Leeuwen's solution category 'Pleasing People', in which women are advised to please others, especially the men in their lives, by paying attention to their feelings. However, the solution category 'Pleasing Oneself' encourages women to make themselves a priority through satisfying their own hopes and dreams and paying attention to their own feelings instead of solely paying attention to others' feelings. This category appears in three articles in the US women's magazines as a subordinate solution category. In the article "16 Tips for Surviving the First Year of Your Relationship" (MC), for example, this solution category is clearly demonstrated in the following tip "Spend plenty of time with your friends...even at the beginning when you're totally obsessed with each other...You'll need your friends later..." In this example women are encouraged to please themselves by surrounding themselves with their friends who can provide happiness and support rather than just focusing on their lovers. It is noted that the solution category 'Pleasing People' is used more than the 'Pleasing Oneself' category in this article since the latter occurs in one tip while the former occurs in four tips, which are, "Be a generous compliment-giver", "Go to their family/work events if you're invited", "Don't Judge their sex habits", and "Get to know their friends in doses".

With regards to the Malaysian women's magazines, this solution category appears in four articles as a subordinate solution category in those articles, where the solution category 'Acquiring Skills' is the main solution. For example, in the article "5 Tricks to Spice Up Your Sex Life" (HW) this solution category is clearly demonstrated in the following tip: "Explore other ways: You don't need to have intercourse to enjoy sexual pleasure. There are plenty of other ways to have fun such as manual sex, mutual masturbation, or even using sex toys". In this example, the woman is an actor who makes herself happy through seeking other ways or alternatives for her sex pleasure, as expressed by the verb 'explore'. Such pleasure can be gained through alternatives to intercourse, which are, 'manual sex', 'mutual masturbation', and 'using sex toys'. Other examples of phrases that propose this solution category from other articles include 'Do something to feel sexy', 'Put on that red lipstick', and 'Smell like a million bucks'.

In the Middle Eastern women's magazines, this solution category appears in three articles. For example, in the article "Are You the Last Single Girl at the Party?" (AH) which is basically an account of the problem of the social stigma of being single as perceived by society, single women are advised to please themselves through finding alternatives for the feeling of being an outcast among other members in the society, as expressed by the following piece of advice "Be a smug singleton. On your way over to social events, think about the things in your life that

*you are finding especially interesting or meaningful or rewarding, then share those wonderful experiences with the other guests”.*

### ***Taking responsibility***

In this solution category, which we have found, women are responsible for finding appropriate solutions to problems they might face in life. Their ultimate success depends on their choices. That is, they are encouraged to make their own decisions which are perceived to be part of the solution. It is worth noting that the difference between ‘Taking Control’, which is one of Machin and Van Leeuwen’s solution categories, and ‘Taking Responsibility’ is that the former only relates to solving sexual problems. This new category is found in six articles in the US women’s magazines, as a main solution category in five articles and as a subordinate category in the other. In the article “How to Handle Your Best Friend Getting Pregnant” (CP), for example, women may *experience some growing pains* that result from their pregnant friends as pregnancy may threaten their relationship and they may *feel a little betrayed*. Hence, three possibilities of solutions are provided in the body of the text. The first proposed solution category is ‘Rejection’, which appears through the personal experience of the writer, who withdrew or *‘drifted apart’* from her pregnant friend and she replaced the damaged relationship through finding other *likeminded women*. The second proposed solution category is ‘Communication’, where women are advised to communicate with their pregnant friend through finding ways to *renegotiate the friendship*. The other proposed solution is ‘Pleasing Oneself’, where women are encouraged to find some alternatives to overcome the damaged relationship. These alternatives which aim to please women are expressed by the phrases *‘Get in touch with yourself’*, *‘Maybe you want...a husband and baby’*, and *‘make more friends’*. In this case, the final solution is that women are responsible for choosing their lifestyle, and hence, they should take a step to overcome a specific problem they may face.

In the Malaysian women’s magazines, this solution category appears in three articles. In the article ‘Juicy Read: “It’s Just casual Sex...” (F), for example, the solution for *whether casual relationship necessarily end up in heartache for women* is implicated from the two separate narratives of two girls, Kim and Pamela, where both present their opinions based on their experience on this field. The opinions of the two girls show the pros and cons of casual relationships. For example, Kim sees the pro of casual sex as that *‘one doesn’t have to deal with the problems that couples do in serious relationships’*. On the other hand, her con of such a relationship is that *‘one might miss little things like having someone to come home to or someone to hold hands with’*. Kim also easily gets attached to the man which leaves her *‘hoping it would get better or that he would want to get serious’*. However, Kim took a step of responsibility through dealing with the feelings that come after casual sex, as she *‘train[ed], desensitise[d] and programme[d] herself to block off the feelings that come after sexual relations’*. In this article, the writer presents the opinions of the two girls while she left the solution for the reader to decide on her own. Thus, this category encourages the reader to be independent and strong when making her decision since she is the one who is responsible for

the choices she makes in her own life. In addition, the writer is aware of the different social and cultural beliefs of the Malaysian society, and hence to avoid sensitive cultural issues for the topic of casual sex, she left the solution in the article for the reader to draw her own conclusion by presenting two possible solutions.

In the Middle Eastern women's magazines, this category appears to be the most prominent solution category for these magazines since it is found in ten articles. In the article, "Marital Porn\_ Is Watching Porn the Real Deal Breaker?" (WW), for example, which is basically an account of the unreliability of a husband who secretly watches porn, the writer provides two different solutions under the solution categories 'Rejection' and 'Pleasing People' as discussed earlier. Yet, the writer presents a third piece of advice, which is, "... ask yourself this, if the roles were reversed and it was you hiding out in the bathroom in the middle of the night – would you expect him to leave you?". It seems that the writer indirectly trivialises the issue of watching porn and urges a woman to rationally think about her decision before taking any step such as *divorce*, which means she is responsible for drawing her own decision from the possibilities of solutions presented in the text, since she has the power to decide on the choices she makes in her life. Similar to the Malaysian women's magazines finding, it is worth noting that the writer may use this solution in order to avoid sensitive socio-cultural issues, such as watching porn. It hence seems that this solution encourages women to become more independent and confident through making their own choices. This new trend of giving advice may change the traditional ways of giving advice in women's magazines.

### ***Forgiveness of yourself and/or others***

In this solution category, which we have found only in the Middle Eastern data, women who may face problems, especially with men, are advised to stop the feeling of anger and hurt towards themselves and others in order to sustain good relationships with others, and to release the hurt and the blame and hence have a happy life. Releasing the negative emotions of resentment, anger, indignation, and guilt towards others or oneself through forgiveness paves the way for developing positive emotions such as happiness, joy, contentment, love and peace (Friedman 2), and hence, it is worth noting that this new solution category can be categorised under the solution category 'Pleasing Oneself'. On the other hand, forgiveness is a conscious choice as a person has the freedom of *choosing and deciding to forgive* (Friedman 2). Therefore, this new category can also be categorised under the solution category 'Taking Responsibility' since the person is responsible for her choice of releasing unpleasant emotions. However, it is worth categorising this new solution under a separate category because this behaviour of forgiveness is found only in the Middle Eastern women's magazines. It appears in two articles, which are, "How to Let Go of Past Relationships" and "Second-Chance Love". It appears as a solution for the former article and as a subordinate solution category for the latter where 'Taking Responsibility' is the main solution category. This category is expressed by the actual use of the word 'forgiveness'; by the noun '*Forgiveness*', and the verb '*forgive*', as demonstrated in the following quotes "*Forgiveness, of yourself and others, is also key to letting go of the past. Refusing to forgive can be a major obstacle to happiness*", "...when she wrote the letters and she

*found a way to forgive, seek positively, and simply find a reason to laugh every day”, and “You need to forgive your ex of past mistakes and decide to love them unconditionally, otherwise you will always be replaying the same cycles of disappointment”.*

This category only happens in the Middle Eastern women's magazines probably due to cultural and religious reasons; in the context of culture, the Arabs have a tradition of forgiveness which is an important value that elders have traditionally used to encourage certain behaviours of tolerance (Abu-Nimer 44), and in the context of religion where this conservative society depends heavily on Islamic teachings (Khimish 132), forgiveness is considered as an important value in Islamic tradition, and hence, the notion of forgiveness is also derived from their religious identity (Abu-Nimer and Nasser 490).

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

This study found that all of Machin and Van Leeuwen's solution categories are found in our data. However, the solution category 'Taking Control' is not found in the Middle Eastern context. In addition, our study also found four new solution categories, namely, 'Pleasing Oneself', 'Acquiring Knowledge', 'Taking Responsibility', and 'Forgiveness'. This suggests that Machin and Van Leeuwen's claims that their problem-solution discourse schema found in women's magazines across cultures is "*a global socio-cognitive schema for interpreting the problems and vicissitudes that can arise in women's lives*" ("Global Schemas" 508), may not necessarily be true as far as locally-produced women's magazines are concerned.

This study also supports Machin and Van Leeuwen's findings that this problem-solution discourse schema allows for variations in terms of the types of problems and solutions it can accommodate. That is, the socio-cultural, political and religious beliefs of the three parts of the world studied reflect the types of solutions appearing in the articles, as shown earlier. In general, it is apparent from our data analysis that even though there are variations in the definitions and contextualisation of each solution category in the three contexts, as discussed above, the overall *aim* of these articles is similar. That is, to help women achieve certain life goals such as freedom, independence, sexual satisfaction, confidence, and others, as supported by Machin and Van Leeuwen's point of view. In relation to this, the findings of this study also conform to Machin and Van Leeuwen's findings that the construction of the magazines articles' content is 'increasingly localised' even though they all follow the structure of problem-solution genre ("Global Media"). In their study, Machin and Van Leeuwen look at representations of women at work in several international editions of *Cosmopolitan*. They believe that the different contents in these magazines reflect differences in the readership as well as differences in the cultural and economic backgrounds of the countries.

The findings of this study also suggest that frames of femininity are polarised to form two images of women: a traditional feminine image of women and a modern, independent, and empowered image of women. This idea is supported by other scholars, such as Farvid and Braun; Gill; and Machin and Thornborrow. As pointed

out by Winship, this suggests the contradictory nature of women's magazines that encourage women to stand up for their rights and to be more independent, but at the same time, messages on women's passiveness and their traditional roles are still observed. Such an idea aligns with McCracken's view that women's magazines present a contradictory world and they are unsuccessful in providing women with a coherent model for living.

With regards to the traditional feminine image of women, it is observed in our data that there is an obsession with men in the women's magazines studied, where men are implicitly depicted as the source of women's happiness and sexual fulfilment, and hence, women are depicted as needing men in their lives. This idea is supported by other scholars such as Benson and Whitaker and Gauntlett. In addition, women are perceived as naïve and are in need of basic information and knowledge about men, as shown in the solution category 'Acquiring Knowledge', which we have found from the data we obtained, for example, as appeared in the articles "4 Things You Never Knew About Men and Sex" (HW), and "10 Ways to Know if your Guy is Really Ambitious" (WW).

Women receive messages that it is their responsibility to guide or help men to deal with relationships, and it is the women's responsibility to improve, maintain and sustain good relationships with their partners, as observed by other scholars such as Gupta et al. and Gill. In addition, they are also depicted as being uncertain about sex and relationships; thus, they constantly need advice on how to talk, behave, and form relationships, similar to Gill's theme 'Men-ology'. For example, "*Turn to your partner*" and "*Don't overanalyse*" (AH). In another example, "*Stop picking fights about things you don't really care about*" and "*Apologize when you know you're wrong*" (MC). They also often receive messages that they are responsible for men's sexual pleasures, as they receive instructions on sex, for the purpose of understanding and satisfying their men's sexual desires or needs. This was also observed by other scholars such as Farvid and Braun and Gupta et al. This reinforces the traditional roles of women which include male sexual priority and the expectation that women have to do all the hard work on their own. For example, "*Create a sexy playlist*", "*Read Erotica*", and "*Playing with food: 10 Things You Must Try For Mind-Blowing Sex*" (HW). However, it is noted that this message of satisfying men's needs is not found in the Middle Eastern data due to restrictions on sexual contents in the Middle Eastern media as mentioned earlier. In addition, women also receive messages on enhancing their own sexual pleasures and to be empowered, as found in the solution category 'Taking Control'. However, these messages are still framed within the traditional role of women as they seem to be mainly connected to their body and sexuality, and their ability to please men. This idea is also supported by Machin and Thornborrow ("Branding and Discourse").

The traditional view of women in these magazines is reinforced in the solution category 'Pleasing People', where women are advised to make others, especially the men in their lives, the priority of their lives by paying attention to their feelings rather than their own feelings, as shown in the article "*Marital Porn\_ Is Watching Porn the Real Deal Breaker?*"(WW) earlier, where women are advised to make their family a priority before thinking about *divorce* when they discover their partner's unreliability. Hence, women are advised to be more logical when it



comes to the future of their families, as any negative decision means '*breaking up a whole family*'. Thus, women are expected to be more logical and less emotional in dealing with any problems, as similarly observed by Gupta et al.

In contrast to the view of women discussed above, women in these articles are also constructed with another image, that is, as someone who is active, independent and empowered in the data studied, as revealed in studies by Kauppinen and Machin and Thornborrow ("Lifestyle and the Depoliticisation of Agency"). This contradictory views of women can even be found within the same article, as in the article "Marital Porn\_ Is Watching Porn the Real Deal Breaker?" (WW) where two opposite solutions are proposed, namely, 'Rejection' and 'Pleasing People'.

The idea of independence and empowerment can clearly be seen in the solution category 'Taking Responsibility', which we have found, where women have the right to decide on their own lifestyle, in the domain of sex and relationships. This finding goes beyond the traditional nature of advice in women's magazines where women are instructed on following certain tips and instructions provided by the writer. However, the way of presenting such messages vary across the three contexts studied due to socio-cultural differences.

The US women's magazines seem to promote independent women whose priority is to experience a sexually fulfilling life rather than focusing on marriage, which supports Crumac's finding on the Romanian edition of *Cosmopolitan*. For example, having a pregnant friend or a baby is even viewed as problematic for those young women, as featured in the articles "Why It's Completely OK If You Don't Like Babies", and "How to Handle Your Best Friend Getting Pregnant". Women are seen as sexually active and independent with the right to desire sex. They also have the right of 'Rejection' for any relationship which results in their 'Sexual Dissatisfaction', and the right of 'Taking Control' to overcome 'Sexual Dissatisfaction'. However, 'Taking Control' in these articles can be viewed from two opposing perspectives. It can be framed as 'taking control' of sexual problems in order to satisfy their men, hence reinforcing the traditional role of women, as espoused earlier. On the other hand, it can be framed as a solution women may take to overcome their sexual problems in order to satisfy themselves rather than their men, as featured in the article "How to Destroy Your 6 Biggest Orgasm Obstacles" (CP), where women are advised to acquire skills and to take control for achieving their sexual fulfilment. This finding supports Machin and Thornborrow's idea that sex is used in women's magazines as power, choice, and a lifestyle that is used to challenge previous traditional regimes ("Lifestyle and the Depoliticisation of Agency"). Women are also encouraged to communicate with their men to solve specific problems pertaining to sex and relationships, which promotes gender equality where women have the same right as men to share their thoughts, and their sexual needs and fantasies. They also have the right to please themselves and make themselves a priority, as found in our new solution category 'Pleasing Oneself'. Hence, women's rights to pleasure may result in a sense of empowerment which is linked to control and agency, as supported by Kauppinen.

In the Malaysian data, women are constructed as active and confident with the right of 'Communication' with their men about their sexual needs and fantasies, and about other social matters, which helps them to overcome gender role obstacles where in this patriarchal society women still occupy a secondary position in their community (Abdullah 88). They also have the right to please themselves and to transform their feelings about sex as they are advised to become sexually adventurous and to try something new, as shown earlier in the article "5 Tricks to Spice Up Your Sex Life" (HW). However, this freedom of exploring alternatives for actual sexual intercourse is given under the context of marriage, unlike the US data which encourage women to have sexual experiences before marriage. Women are also responsible for their lifestyle, pertaining to sex and relationships, and this constructs women as having power and agency to get what they want through their own decisions. However, it seems that 'Taking Responsibility' for Malaysian women relates not only to agency but also to socio-cultural issues as mentioned earlier. That is, the writers are aware of these issues in the Malaysian society, and hence, they indirectly advise women to be in power by challenging the traditional beliefs of society and to stand by their decisions.

In the Middle Eastern context, women are also constructed as being independent since they are informed that they have the right to reject any relationship, the right to communicate and negotiate with men in order to develop or maintain a relationship, and their right to communicate with their men (and others) about their first sexual encounters. For example, *"Practical tips for losing your virginity...Be patient and communicate with each other...To avoid first day failures or disappointments"*: "Tips for a Pleasant First Time..." (WW). They also have the right to please themselves to overcome the issue of being single, as they are encouraged to be happy and to find alternatives for the feeling of being an outcast in society. In addition, women have the right to take responsibility and to decide on their own; and similar to the Malaysian context, it seems that 'Taking Responsibility' is implicitly provided in the articles to avoid sensitive socio-cultural issues. In this case, the Middle Eastern data constructs women with power and agency needed to defend their own rights and to decide on their own lifestyle, which implicitly encourages them to challenge their traditional roles imposed by their society. Thus, even though messages of empowerment vary across the three contexts, nevertheless the ideas of independence and agency are promoted in all of the contexts.

In general, regardless of the contradictory nature of the women's magazines studied as noted earlier, it can be argued that the main focus of these magazines is to empower women and encourage responsibility and independence, as reflected in my new solution categories, specifically, 'Taking Responsibility', 'Pleasing Oneself', and 'Forgiveness' as well as the overall data from my study. It can be argued that the depiction of women as empowered individuals might be expected in contemporary women's magazines since these publications invariably reflect changes in attitudes towards women and their role in society. Thus, it can be argued that women are empowered in contemporary women's magazines but within a traditional framework.

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# The Failed Struggle for Recognition in Peter Abelard's Autobiographical Letter *Historia calamitatum*

Peter Abelard'ın Otobiyoğrafisi:  
*Historia Calamitatum*'daki Tanınmaya Yönelik Başarısız Çabası

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## Abstract

In this article, I intend to use the struggle for recognition paradigm in order to provide a new interpretation of Abelard's autobiographical letter, *Historia Calamitatum*, through a psychological analysis of the author's personality and his physical and psychological traumata. My working hypothesis is that Abelard's desperate need to be recognized as an exceptional human being set him on a course that led to an unsuccessful rebellion which, in turn, provoked some of the unjust acts directed against him in both his personal and public life. Unable to align his negative qualities with the (positive) perception Abelard had of himself, he systematically projected his envy and jealousy onto others. After several traumatic events, he felt stripped of his dignity and incapable of maintaining control over his life. However, the struggle to restore his good name led to antagonistic and inimical confrontations with others, and these confrontations produced more rejection time and again.

**Keywords:** self-narrative, dispositional envy, psychological trauma, emotional struggle, mutual recognition.

## Öz

Bu makalede, Abelard'ın otobiyoğrafik eseri olarak kabul edebileceğimiz *Historia Calamitatum*'a yeni bir yorum getirmek amacıyla yazarın kişiliği, yaşadığı fiziksel ve psikolojik travmalar ile ilgili psikolojik analizler yoluyla tanınma paradigma çabasını kullanmayı amaçlanmıştır. Üzerinde çalıştığımız hipotez, Abelard'ın olağanüstü bir insan gibi görünme çabasının verdiği umutsuzluğu, başarısız bir başkaldırısı hem kişisel yaşamında hem de toplumsal yaşamda kendisine karşı haksız kışkırtmaları konu alır. Abelard'ın sahip olduğu (olumlu) algıyla olumsuz özelliklerini dengeleyememesi giderek onu kıskançlığa ve bu kıskançlığı başkalarına yansıtmasına neden olmuştur. Yaşadığı birkaç travmatik olaydan sonra, onurunu kaybettiği ve hayatı üzerindeki kontrolü elden bıraktığını hissetmiştir. İtibarını geri kazanma mücadelesi, başkalarıyla düşmanca ve meydan okumalara yol açmıştır. Bu çatışmalar sonucunda düşüncelerinin tekrar reddedilmesine neden olduğu bilinir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** öz-anlatı, yatkınlığa imrenme, psikolojik travma, duygusal gerilim, karşılıklı tanıma.

## Introduction: New Ways of Reading Abelard's Autobiography

The aim of this article is to exemplify the way in which the struggle for recognition is depicted in medieval literature by examining Peter Abelard's famous letter of consolation, *Historia calamitatum*. Abelard's purpose in writing this work is, it

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seems, to comfort a suffering friend by recounting the misfortunes in his own personal and intellectual life before 1132/1133. Looking back at many years of social failure and emotional instability, the author fearfully contemplates his future as he recalls some of the most defining events of his life. The impressive “self-narrative,” as Ricoeur describes it in *Temps et récit* (108), that Abelard produces for this occasion (to console a friend) is almost impossible to properly label among the usual genres in medieval literature. For a long time, McLaughlin, in “Abelard as Autobiographer: The Motives and Meaning of His *Story of Calamities*” (463) and others considered *Historia calamitatum* to be the most original and the most significant medieval autobiography. At the same time, Sweeney regards Abelard’s letter as a work of “self-martyrology,” “self-apology,” “self-revelation,” and even “self-consolation” (305). In the present study, which is based on a psychological reading of Abelard’s text, I will argue that the interpretative framework represented by the struggle for recognition paradigm can highlight some important aspects of the author’s personality. My working hypothesis is that Abelard’s constant claim to be recognized as an exceptional human being caused him to unsuccessfully rebel against behavioral patterns that were held to be more ‘normal’ in the social, and ecclesiastical environments of his time. According to his testimony, the recurrent impression of being unjustly persecuted was reinforced by some traumatic events—such as his involuntary castration or his condemnation by the church—which radically affected his ability to assert his identity in a socially accepted way. Stripped of his dignity and unable to seek reconciliation, he struggled to restore his good name through antagonistic confrontations, which, unsurprisingly, only resulted in additional rejection by people and institutions.

The appeal to the struggle of recognition paradigm is justified by the overall methodological principles underlying my approach. In reading Abelard’s text, I deliberately pay only scant attention to the literary, theological, philosophical or historical points of view, because I mean to favor a psychological perspective. Those familiar with Abelard’s works are fully aware of how rich the material is presented in his letter. Incidentally, the scope of Abelard’s material explains the many different ways in which *Historia Calamitatum* was read and interpreted over time. While I acknowledge, of course, the legitimacy and the importance of contributions made by fellow scholars guided interested in the literary, theological, philosophical, or historical perspectives, I choose to build my analysis on the “psycho-critical method,” which Charles Mauron developed in his *Des métaphores obsédantes aux mythes personnels*. The material I will consider consists mainly of particular words that Abelard uses ‘obsessively’. While it is certain that Abelard spoke about himself in the ‘codified’ manner typical of his (medieval) time and his particular cultural and social environment, a primarily psycho-critical analysis will not stress these particular aspects Abelard’s literary work. Indeed, the psycho-critical method will shed light on some of the author’s psychological patterns, which become visible when one examines his ‘obsessive metaphors’. The present approach aims to restore the author’s ‘personal myth’ defined as the (subconscious) image he had of himself and which emerges from his own words. The present approach is unconventional because it applies the struggle for recognition paradigm to a remarkable and complex work of medieval literature, and because I am guided by the principles of the psycho-critical

method. Working thusly, I am taking into account the possible objection that there is a structural incompatibility between a concept developed in modern times, that is, the struggle for recognition paradigm, and the reality of a medieval society. However, I will argue in favour of the idea that the struggle for recognition paradigm proves to be a useful intellectual tool in a current (psychological) interpretation of a text written nearly ten centuries ago. I am especially interested in the psychological reality of the author's experience and am mindful of the fact that the modern concept of self-consciousness cannot apply, as such, to the medieval man. From among three types of truth that, according to Bellemin-Noël, are present in any literary production, namely, (1) the historical truth of the narrative itself, (2) the personal truth of its author, and (3) the truth that goes beyond this subjective experience to reach the universality of the work of art, I am particularly interested in the second form of truth, that is, the author's personal truth (96).

A discussion of Abelard's intellectual, social, and moral attitudes towards people around him constitutes a new angle for the present analysis, and I will emphasize some aspects of his tragic romantic relationship with Heloise and his intense academic relationship with his masters, his fellow disciples, and with monks in some of the abbeys where he resided after his retirement from public life. In light of these elements, I aim to show that the failure of Abelard's struggle for recognition is partly motivated by his profound inability to recognize other people's identity and the need of others to be esteemed. Furthermore, I argue that Abelard's attitude was fueled by a characteristic called 'dispositional envy,' which was triggered whenever he found himself in a position of horizontal or vertical rivalry with other people. The goal is to point out not only discontinuities but also continuities that exist between medieval mentalities and modern (Western) culture.

The normative and psychological dimensions of the concept of recognition are fundamental for the present approach. Indeed, most theories of recognition assume that to develop their identity, human beings fundamentally depend on the feedback they get from care-givers and from society as a whole. According to this view, those who fail to experience adequate recognition in their childhood, or later in life, tend to develop unsuccessful relationships with their own selves. Since recognition constitutes a "vital human need" (26), any form of misrecognition is a threat to the identity of subjects who then need to engage in a struggle for recognition. Furthermore, this type of struggle does not only concern the realm of personal experience, because the subject of recognition also is, simultaneously, an object of recognition in any given interpersonal situation.

A difficulty arises when one asserts that mutual recognition is not a self-evident concept. In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, for instance, the interpersonal encounter between two subjects culminates in a life or death struggle (Kojève 28). By fighting against others, the subject expresses his autonomy, but this attitude can lead to difficult confrontations when mutual recognition is not achieved (Hegel 111). In his treatise *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel had already developed the importance of the mutual recognition in the interaction between individuals by

referring to the three spheres of any individual's life, namely that of (1) love within the family, (2) contractual respect within civil society, and (3) solidarity within the state. The intricate connections between these spheres allow the subject to find meaning in his or her life in a process of mutual recognition (Laitinen 322). The recognition related to each of Hegel's three spheres can thus be interpreted as genealogically distinct stages that a subject passes one by one to gain self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. In any case, the recognition of individuality in contexts of loving care is, from a psychological point of view, of utmost importance.

### **Psychological Commentary of *Historia Calamitatum***

Abelard's *Historia calamitatum* is a highly atypical production in the field of medieval literature. The author gives an account of his actions, thoughts, and emotions in an attempt to retrospectively explain a series of important and dramatic events in his life. Since I refer to a historical time where self-revelation was socially codified and controlled for cultural and religious reasons (Von Moos 131), it is not important for me here to find the exact correspondence between Abelard's description of his life and the actual events he recounts. The work is proof of his desperate need to maintain the feeling of continuity in his own existence. Using the pretext of writing to a (maybe imaginary) friend, he consciously directs his thoughts towards posterity, in general, and expresses his need to re-establish the truth about his life as he perceived it. Some contradictions can certainly be found in his account, but I will refrain from interpreting them as incoherent elements that discredit his narrative, because mine is not a historical, but a psychological method and interest.

### ***Abelard's early academic achievements in relation to dispositional envy***

The first objective of my analysis is to identify the most important points in the structure of Abelard's letter. From the very beginning, he focuses on two main topics in his discourse which are rivalry and persecution: "Attend to me a moment, hear but the story of my misfortunes, and yours, Philintus, will be nothing as compared with those of the loving and unhappy." (Abelard 52). From a psychological point of view, the concept of rivalry is directly related to the place occupied by each of the siblings in the family dynamics in their early childhood and to the recognition they received from their primary care-givers with regard to their respective position. According to the information given by Abelard, he was the eldest of his siblings both boys and girls (Cook 207). His position in his family could partially explain his constant need to assert his identity both from a psychological and a socio-economic point of view, since he was the rightful heir of the family title and fortune and he had specific privileges and duties related to this position. His father, who belonged to the rural nobility in Brittany wanted his sons to be instructed in the arts before joining the military. However, Abelard developed a keen interest for studying and decided to give up his privilege as the first born in order to pursue an academic career:

As I was his eldest, and consequently his favourite son, he took more than ordinary care of my education. I had a natural genius for study, and made extraordinary progress in it. Smitten with the love of books, and the



praises which on all sides were bestowed upon me, I aspired to no other reputation than that of learning. To my brothers I leave the glory of battles and the pomp of triumphs; nay, more, I yielded them up my birthright and patrimony. I knew necessity was the great spur to study, and was afraid I should not merit the title of learned if I distinguished myself from others by nothing but a more plentiful fortune. (Abelard 52)

This choice was definitely not an easy one to make for Abelard and this may be the reason why he conceived the discipline of dialectics as a combat where he had to defeat his adversaries at all cost. From the very beginning, he presented himself as a warrior of the spirit and he probably expected his future victories to bring him the trophies which he gave up, namely fame, fortune and political dominance: "Furnished with the weapons of reasoning I took pleasure in going to public disputations to win trophies; and wherever I heard that this art flourished, I ranged, like another Alexander, from province to province, to seek new adversaries with whom I might try my strength" (Abelard 53). After these introductory remarks, Abelard talks about his arrival in Paris, where he became the student of William of Champeaux, who was considered by that time to be the most notable scholar in the field of dialectics. Abelard described himself as the best disciple of the best master that he wanted to surpass as a philosopher. The rivalry is present both in relation to his master, an older man who could be seen as an oedipal figure of authority and to his colleagues and peers who were outraged by Abelard's arrogant attitude.

The ambition I had to become formidable in logic led me at last to Paris, the centre of politeness, and where the science I was so smitten with had usually been in the greatest perfection. I put myself under the direction of one Champeaux, a professor who had acquired the character of the most skilful philosopher of his age, but by negative excellencies only as being the least ignorant! (Abelard 53)

Abelard seems to have sincerely thought that the real reason for the harsh criticism from the part of his peers was that they felt envious for his genius and his many academic talents, all the more since he was the youngest of them all and the last to have joined the school. At this stage of my analysis, his attitude could be interpreted as being narcissistic and somewhat tainted by a paranoid way of relating to others. He later stated that he truly believed that his growing academic and social fame intensified his colleagues' envy which was actually the origin of his misfortunes culminating in the failure of all his personal and professional projects.

In spite of his young age, Abelard aspired to become the chief of his own school of dialectics, and he chose to start his independent academic career as a teacher in Melun, an important city and royal residence at the time. He soon became very successful and he especially enjoyed the social recognition that his fame brought him, while all his rivals remained in his shadow. The question of fame and good reputation seems to be vital to Abelard and he does not appear to be able to conceive that this kind of social recognition could be shared with his peers of his teacher who is presented as being overwhelmed by envy in a process of mutual

recognition. On the contrary, once he started teaching, he proceeded to successfully multiply his attacks against his academic adversaries.

Nevertheless, at the time of his great victories in the academic field, he became nervously exhausted on account of his excessive intellectual effort and he felt the need to return to his parents' house in order to recover from his illness. He remained convinced during his absence that everyone missed him and wanted him to come back. In psychological terms, Abelard was experiencing a process of regression due to the pressure under which he was probably living:

The rush of travelling threw me into a dangerous distemper, and not being able to recover my health, my physicians, who perhaps were in league with Champeaux, advised me to remove to my native air. Thus I voluntarily banished myself for some years. I leave you to imagine whether my absence was not regretted by the better sort. (Abelard 54)

Abelard resumed his struggle for academic recognition when he decided to directly challenge William of Champeaux, who was teaching a new course. In order to get the recognition he craved for, Abelard 'destroyed' his master's theory of the universals and thus completely discredited him as a teacher. He also found great satisfaction in 'stealing' some of his master's students, including his own ex-adversaries. When William of Champeaux decided to give up teaching, he conceded his post to one of his students considered to be best suited for this position. However, according to Abelard, William's successor was so impressed with his own intellectual qualities that he offered to him the position recently granted. According to Abelard, William's assigned successor willingly accepted to take place among his students rather than be his teacher. In his personal perspective on things, this is the high point of Abelard's academic career. He then felt that he was the greatest thinker in his field. Regardless of his success, William of Champeaux continued to persecute him, since he did not approve of the changes made in his school after his departure and decided to appoint a second successor. Abelard's reaction was virulent and almost hateful. Since his master preferred one of his rivals for a position that was rightfully his own, Abelard decided to take over his old school by organizing an intellectual 'siege' destined to overthrow his opponent. From a psychological point of view, it is highly remarkable that when he related this episode, Abelard mentioned 'his place' and 'his post' unjustly denied to him by his former master. As a reaction to this painful rejection, he started once again teaching on his own and he successfully managed to defeat all his intellectual enemies. But once again, Abelard is consumed by the idea that his peers are envious of him. The same situation is later reproduced in Laon, where he went to study under Anselme of Laon's supervision. Despite his new master's remarkable reputation, Abelard noted that he was actually worthless from an intellectual point of view: I was recommended to one Anselm, the very oracle of his time, but, to give you my own opinion, one more venerable for his age and his wrinkles than for his genius or learning. If you consulted him upon any difficulty, the sure consequence was to be much more uncertain in the point. They who only saw him admired him, but those who reasoned with him were extremely dissatisfied. He was a great master of words and talked much, but meant nothing. His discourse was a fire, which, instead of enlightening, obscured

everything with its smoke; a tree beautified with variety of leaves and branches, but barren of fruit (Abelard 55).

He felt again that the other students were particularly envious of him and that they constantly tried to marginalize him. However, this did not stop him from giving a brilliant conference in theology without any previous training in the commentary of the Bible normally requested for this task. According to his perception of this event, even his most fierce opponents were impressed by his performance but his intellectual victory did not prevent them from turning Anselm against him.

Abelard systematically presented himself as the unfortunate victim of unjust persecution. In each account of these repeated attacks against him, he is always struggling to get the intellectual recognition he felt that he deserved. In a strictly psychological perspective, Abelard appears as the victim of a pathological behavioural pattern. The only explanation he found for the conflicts with his rivals is their envy. This could be the sign of a pathological personality feature essential for understanding the exact nature of Abelard's way of thinking. In order to clarify this particular aspect, I will appeal to research from the field of social psychology dealing with the concept of "dispositional envy." According to a study conducted by Kenrick et al., human beings naturally try to achieve social status in relation to their need for respect, admiration and influence (Kenrick et al. 293). Accordingly, any threat to personal status can provoke strong emotional reactions such as envy. Usually described as morally reprehensible and highly maladaptive, the inclination to experience intense envy could actually prove to be functional in some cases and may even contribute to the regulation of social hierarchies at an interpersonal and societal level (Steckler and Tracy 202).

Traditionally, envy is presented as a painful emotion occurring when people feel that they lack another's superior quality, achievement or possession. Envious people try to obtain the advantage or wish that the other loses it. Therefore, envy elicits the motivation to level the difference between the self and the superior standard (Van de Ven et al. 428). In essence, envy is conceptualized as an immoral emotion of inferiority, resentment for the other and hostile tendencies. However, the one-dimensional character of this emotion could be completed by a positive perspective on envy. Recent research in psychology shows that "dispositional envy" could be associated with admiration (Schindler 22) and increased positive desire to obtain the other's advantage (Crusius and Mussweiler 150). Van de Ven et al. incorporated these conflicting findings into a unified theory of envy as a dual construct. More specifically, recent theories distinguish between a "benign" and a "malicious" form of envy (Van de Ven et al. 420). Thus, malicious envy and hostility toward superior others is completed by a form of benign envy which is also painful because of the underlying feelings of inferiority but which motivates individuals to improve themselves. It especially motivates behavioural tendencies to re-gain status and leads to increased personal well-being in contrast with the dispositional malicious envy which motivates behavioural tendencies to harm the other's status and which finally leads to decreased personal well-being and potentially societal disruptions.

Finally, the relation between narcissism and envy needs to be emphasized here (Lange et al. 168). In many ways, narcissists are complicated human beings, who are often admired and celebrated, but at the same time they push the others away by their inflated egos. Indeed, it seems that narcissists are highly driven by their enhanced desire for status, and they are mostly subject to malignant envy (Wallace and Baumeister, 821). These seemingly opposing effects can be explained by two distinct yet positively correlated facets of grandiose narcissism, namely narcissistic admiration and narcissistic rivalry.

In Abelard's case, as described by himself in his autobiographical letter, he appears to be a narcissistic personality motivated by malignant envy in his struggle for recognition. However, he is not aware of his hostile feelings, which he cannot integrate in his personality by admitting them, so he constantly projects them onto others. The paradox in this situation is that his need to be recognized is at the same time completely legitimate but also somewhat abusive in the name of this unshakable idea that he was a persecuted genius superior to everyone. His attitude certainly pushed people away from him, because he was unable to conceive a positive way to go past rivalry and share the social and psychological benefits of mutual recognition. The tragic consequences of this situation will be outlined in the next sections of my paper.

### ***The psychological implications of Abelard's emotional and sexual life***

According to Abelard, when he came back to Paris from Laon, he dominated the academic environment for a few years. Once his successful career was well established, he genuinely thought about himself as being "the only philosopher in the world": "Thus I, who by this time had come to regard myself as the only philosopher remaining in the whole world, and had ceased to fear any further disturbance of my peace, began to loosen the rein on my desires, although hitherto I had always lived in the utmost continence" (Abelard 56). By the time he became highly appreciated for his teaching, he fell prey to the two moral 'diseases' of vanity and lust from which he suffered until he was set free by divine intervention: "Thus did it come to pass that while I was utterly absorbed in pride and sensuality, divine grace, the cure for both diseases, was forced upon me, even though I, forsooth, would fain have shunned it" (Abelard 56). Abelard who described himself as young and handsome, felt invincible and irresistible especially because of his excellent reputation. Fully aware of his social achievements, he was looking for a woman to seduce. Soon he decided that this person should be Heloise, a young woman of noble origin whose truly exceptional intellectual gifts had already secured her a great reputation:

There was in Paris a young creature (ah, Philintus!) formed in a prodigality of nature to show mankind a finished composition; dear Heloise, the reputed niece of one Fulbert, a canon. Her wit and her beauty would have stirred the dullest and most insensible heart, and her education was equally admirable. Heloise was the mistress of the most polite arts. You may easily imagine that this did not a little help to captivate me; I saw her, I loved her, I resolved to make her love me. (Abelard 57)

Guided solely by his passion and his selfish desire to seduce her, Abelard did not seem to contemplate for one moment, at least at the beginning of their relationship, the consequences that his plan could have on her own life from an emotional and, especially, from a social point of view. On the contrary, he manipulated Fulbert, the young woman's uncle and tutor, into believing that he was sincerely interested in giving her private lessons while he actually only wanted unrestricted access to her. Unaware of Abelard's intentions regarding Heloise, Fulbert entrusted him with the education of his niece, compared by her future seducer to a "tender lamb" handed over to the "ravenous wolf" that he was. This particular aspect of Abelard's life, which was widely discussed in the secondary literature mostly because the correspondence between the two lovers was several times edited and published over the centuries. From his letter, Abelard appears to have been quite ambivalent towards Heloise. Based on his own writings, he does not seem to have chosen her for what she really represented as a woman and as a human being but because she was a trophy that he felt entitled to claim for himself since she was young, beautiful and very well instructed in the arts. In fact, he did not see in her, at least at the beginning of their relationship, an equally dignified human being but an object suitable for his own desires and sexual impulses. Furthermore, Abelard most likely used Heloise in order to mirror himself in her as an exceptional feminine version of himself in a very narcissistic way of relating to the object of his affection.

For various reasons, the relationship between the two lovers became very complicated. First, Abelard's passion for the young woman overcame his passion for study, which was an important step back in his efforts to maintain a positive image of himself and to assert his intellectual superiority: "But I was so far from making any advances in the sciences that I lost all my taste for them, and when I was obliged to go from the sight of my dear mistress to my philosophical exercises, it was with the utmost regret and melancholy" (Abelard 59). Soon after that, when Heloise's uncle Fulbert learned about her love affair with her teacher, his reaction to this act of betrayal soon turned into tragedy for both of them. Abelard seemed sincerely affected by this situation not only for himself but also for Heloise's sake: "The anger of Fulbert seemed too moderate on this occasion, and I feared in the end some more heavy revenge. It is impossible to express the grief and regret which filled my soul when I was obliged to leave the Canon's house and my dear Heloise" (Abelard 60).

At the same time, Abelard received the news of Heloise's pregnancy, presented as a moment of great joy for her. Since they were not married, he intended to protect her, so he took her to his sister in Brittany in an attempt to keep her safe until the birth of their child, a boy named Astrolabe. Abelard's guilt over betraying Fulbert's trust did not disappear after he became a father. Surprisingly enough, he did not feel that he owed anything to Heloise, since in his opinion women were the cause of the fall of many great men: "from the very beginning of the human race, women had cast down even the noblest men to utter ruin". But since he wanted to make amends, he promised Fulbert to marry Heloise on the condition that their union

remained secret. In this way, his reputation was protected and he could continue his academic career to which he intended to devote his life:

I began to pity his misfortune, and to think this robbery which love had made me commit was a sort of treason. I endeavoured to appease his anger by a sincere confession of all that was past, and by hearty engagements to marry Heloise secretly. He gave me his consent, and with many protestations and embraces confirmed our reconciliation. (Abelard 64)

Heloise's long plead against marriage in the text where she supposedly urged him not to inflict the miseries of married life on himself seems to echo his own fears to publicly accept his responsibility as a husband and a father: "She urged all that was possible to divert me from marriage--that it was a bond always fatal to a philosopher; that the cries of children and the cares of a family were utterly inconsistent with the tranquility and application which study require" (Abelard 65). Proof of his reticence in this sense is Abelard's decision shortly after the secret wedding ceremony to send Heloise to a monastery near Paris. Although she gracefully accepted her husband's decision, her family did not agree with this project. In their eyes, Abelard was only trying to get rid of his spouse, so they decided to take revenge on him for his behaviour. Assisted by one of Abelard's servant, who betrayed him for monetary gains, they broke into his house during the night and there they immobilized him and proceeded to castrate him:

I now thought Fulbert's anger disarmed; I lived in peace; but alas! our marriage proved but a weak defence against his revenge. Observe, Philintus, to what a barbarity he pursued it! He bribed my servants; an assassin came into my bedchamber by night, with a razor in his hand, and found me in a deep sleep. I suffered the most shameful punishment that the revenge of an enemy could invent; in short, without losing my life, I lost my manhood. (Abelard 66)

When recalling this traumatic event in his life, Abelard mentioned the stupefaction that this violent attack against him had on his own family and friends, but he did not talk much about his own feelings, except to say their empathic attitude was "pure torture" to him. According to Abelard, the real reason for his suffering at that time was the way in which people looked at him after his castration, especially when they showed him any compassion. I would like to stress here the importance of the negative experiences of disrespect since even in situations where the victims know that their degradation is not justified, they cannot but feel humiliated all the same. It was particularly the case with Abelard's forcible castration, which could be one of the reasons why he lost complete faith in his capacity to control his life. Indeed, in the course of mistreatment or torture, which was definitely the case with Abelard, the perpetrators do not only intentionally inflict pain and injury on their victims but also deride their agency, and this undermines basic self- and world-trust (Scarry 31). However, it is worth noticing that Abelard was definitely not looking to be recognized as a victim. In fact, being perceived as a victim by the others was actually very hurtful for him, even more hurtful than the act of castration in itself. According to his testimony, Abelard saw this barbaric mutilation as an attack against his good fame and as an unbearable humiliation. Indeed, he felt terribly dishonoured, fearing that he had been

deformed from a physical and spiritual point of view and turned into a monster in the eyes of society and an abdominal being in front of God.

The most important source of Abelard's distress seems to be the way in which he was perceived because of the terrible stigma represented at the time by castration. The narcissistic wound was greater for him than the physical mutilation of his body. However, I would like to insist on the idea that the forcible castration is a very traumatic event in itself, regardless of the interpretation given to it by the victim or the perpetrator, because this kind of attack destroys the conscious (and the unconscious) image that people have with regards to their own body. Regardless of the circumstances in which it occurs, this kind of event deeply alters the self-representation based on the physical and psychological experience of one's own body. This kind of radical change, even when it is accidental, always has a deep impact on identity. The victims who manage to restore a positive self-image necessarily go through a long and painful process of psychological adaptation to their new situation. The multiple consequences of this trauma may not have threatened Abelard's reputation as a scholar, but he was nevertheless under the painful impression that he was from then on being denied basic recognition as a human being and as a man. He therefore decided to retire from public life in an abbey near Paris and insisted that Heloise did the same. From that moment on, the two spouses and lovers were physically separated until the end of their lives. However, their relationship continued through their correspondence, which was fortunately preserved, edited, translated and published many times since the twelfth century.

### **Abelard's Failed Struggle for Basic Recognition**

#### ***The condemnation by the church of his theological work***

According to Abelard, before he retired from public life, he pursued a teaching career mainly for money and glory. In the new setting of his life, he decided to resume his academic activity for the sole purpose of becoming 'the true philosopher of God'. Once again, he described himself as being unjustly persecuted. It is interesting to note here that Abelard, who previously admitted his own immoral conduct regarding Heloise, felt that he was morally entitled to take action against the 'obscene and scandalous' behaviour of some monks from the Saint-Denis monastery just as corrupted as the abbot himself. In his own words, his attitude made him become the person most hated by all the members of the community. Unable or unwilling to adjust to his new environment, Abelard decided to go outside the monastery and start teaching again. Like before, he described his success as being immediate, in spite of the fact that his envious rivals continuously denigrated him. By this time in his life, the perception he had that he was an innocent victim took on hyperbolic proportions. The coup de grace in this process was the ecclesiastic attacks initiated against his teaching in theology by his former colleagues. Another psychological aspect of the problem of recognition arises when he recounts the circumstances that led to the resembling of a church council against him in Soissons. Abelard's complaint that he was not recognized as one of the intellectual and spiritual heirs of his former master,

William de Champeaux, is somewhat surprising, especially since he had acted in the past against him and even managed to discredit his philosophical doctrine of the universals. Just as before, Abelard did not react well in the context of rivalry for the approval of this symbolic father whom he had previously rejected.

According to Abelard, the main purpose of the council of Soissons was to condemn his theological treatise on divine Trinity. Abelard presented his opponents as hateful people dominated by jealousy. At the same time, he said that during the council, all his adversaries were very impressed by his defense of his theological work. In his opinion, the genuine admiration that people had for him intensified the anger that his opponents felt against him. Indeed, Abelard felt hunted, threatened, and accused of all kind of offences among which the fact that he was 'presumptuous'. By the council's decision, he was forced to throw his theological treatise into the fire with his own hands. The church authorities did not want to listen to his defence and only ordered him to recite Athanasius's credo as a symbol of faith. According to his testimony, this was meant to infantilize and silence him: "[...] my enemies declared that it was not needful for me to do more than recite the Athanasian Symbol, a thing which any boy might do as well as I. And lest I should allege ignorance, pretending that I did not know the words by heart, they had a copy of it set before me to read. And read it I did as best I could for my groans and sighs and tears" (Abelard 68).

For Abelard, this was an intellectual and a spiritual humiliation of a truly traumatic nature. After his official condemnation by the council, Abelard presented himself as being overwhelmed by confusion, shame and despair. Soon after, he was sent 'as a prisoner' to the Saint Ménéard abbey where he also faced different conflicts. In this part of his letter, he recalls his castration as a form of physical torture which he compared to the moral torture represented by the public attacks against his good name and reputation. In his attempt to give a rational meaning to these extreme events, he justified his physical mutilation as a well-deserved punishment for his sins, whereas his intellectual persecution remained in his eyes completely unjustified and morally reprehensible. In any case, Abelard assures his readers that he was "the most miserable among men":

Comparing these new sufferings of my soul with those I had formerly endured in my body, it seemed that I was in very truth the most miserable among men. Indeed that earlier betrayal had become a little thing in comparison with this later evil, and I lamented the hurt to my fair name far more than the one to my body. The latter, indeed, I had brought upon myself through my own wrongdoing, but this other violence had come upon me solely by reason of the honesty of my purpose and my love of our faith, which had compelled me to write that which I believed. (Abelard 67)

### ***Abelard's final struggle for elementary recognition***

Thinking that he had no other choice than going back to Saint-Denis, Abelard soon realized that everybody hated him and acted like enemies. A new disagreement opposed him to the community, but once again he refused to take any responsibility for the situation and complained that he was persecuted. After this new confrontation, he felt as if "the entire universe was conspiring against him". Therefore, he tried to take refuge outside the abbey and resumed his teaching



activity. In his letter, he explained that many disciples came to his school even though the living conditions were extremely difficult. Abelard thought that their perseverance in following him attracted the envy of his adversaries, who recruited new 'apostles' against him. Terrified at the idea that new attacks against him could be initiated, he relived the humiliation of his condemnation at the council of Soissons.

By the end of his letter, Abelard appears anxious and completely dominated by the jealousy he systematically provoked in others. Desperate to find a noble purpose to his life, he accepted a position as an abbot at Saint Gildas de Rhuys in Brittany, where he intended to reform the monastery despite the opposition of the monks. The atmosphere in the community became very hostile and Abelard, who even received death threats, was forced to face the fact that his efforts as a religious leader were completely ineffective. The unsuccessful role of a symbolic father for the community of monks is a new failure for Abelard, since his spiritual sons rebelled against him and wanted to eliminate him. In his new position, he strongly condemned the insubordination of the monks and denied them any kind of legitimacy while he never doubted his own behaviour.

But now has Satan beset me to such an extent that I no longer know where I may find rest, or even so much as live. I am driven hither and yon, a fugitive and a vagabond, even as the accursed Cain (Gen. iv, 14). I have already said that "without were fightings, within were fears" (II Cor. vii, 5), and these torture me ceaselessly, the fears being indeed without as well as within, and the fightings wheresoever there are fears. Nay, the persecution carried on by my sons rages against me more perilously and continuously than that of my open enemies, for my sons I have always with me, and I am ever exposed to their treacheries. The violence of my enemies I see in the danger to my body if I leave the cloister; but within it I am compelled incessantly to endure the crafty machinations as well as the open violence of those monks who are called my sons, and who are entrusted to me as their abbot, which is to say their father. (Abelard 69)

Abelard certainly experienced an existential crisis and he was deeply hurt by the failure of his projects. He described himself as feeling completely powerless and unable to govern his own life which seemed futile to him. His pessimism was reinforced by his conviction that he was forced to roam aimlessly like Cain, the biblical figure of the unfortunate man who killed his own brother because he was jealous of him. Abelard felt that he was wandering hopelessly. At this point in his life, he was no longer looking for social and intellectual recognition but basic acceptance as a human being. Not only did he not find his place anywhere but he could not even find refuge in a place where he could feel safe without the constant fear for his life. He hoped he could go back to his old oratory "Paraclete" passed under his wife Heloise's authority who had become the abbess of a congregation of nuns. Despite his sincere charity and his purified love for Heloise, the church authorities did not allow him to join her community because of their immoral past. Once again, he perceived this attitude as an attack on his good name. And once again, it was less hurtful for him to be reminded of his physical castration

than to endure the repeated hostile acts meant to discredit him from both a social and a moral point of view.

Abelard based his attitude on a subtle distinction between a good name, which is more valuable than great fortune, and moral conscience. Although he was aware that he was a sinner in front of his own conscience and in front of God, he still wanted his reputation to be flawless. Since this was no longer possible because of his romantic past with Heloise and his subsequent castration, the idea that his failure was public knowledge was a constant source of torment for him. Alone and defeated, Abelard ended his letter on a moral note, stating that the history of his misfortunes which go back to his early childhood should be an example for the ambitious people who constantly try to assert themselves as being superior to all the other human beings.

In light of these elements, I would like to summarize the main ideas presented in this article. (1) As a philosopher specializing in medieval studies and a clinical psychologist, my approach is a psychological interpretation of Abelard's medieval autobiographical work by means of the struggle for recognition paradigm. (2) This paradigm is highly compatible with recent psychological studies concerning especially the topic of dispositional envy and narcissistic personality disorder. (3) By applying these intellectual tools to Abelard's text, I was able to show that Abelard was probably a victim in his struggle for intellectual and social recognition, (4) The failure of his struggle for elementary recognition as a human being (especially after his forced castration and his condemnation by the church) could be partially explained by his incapacity to take part in any form of mutual recognition. (5) This new interpretation reinforces the idea that recognition is vital both for the process of subjectivation of individuals and for society as a whole.

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