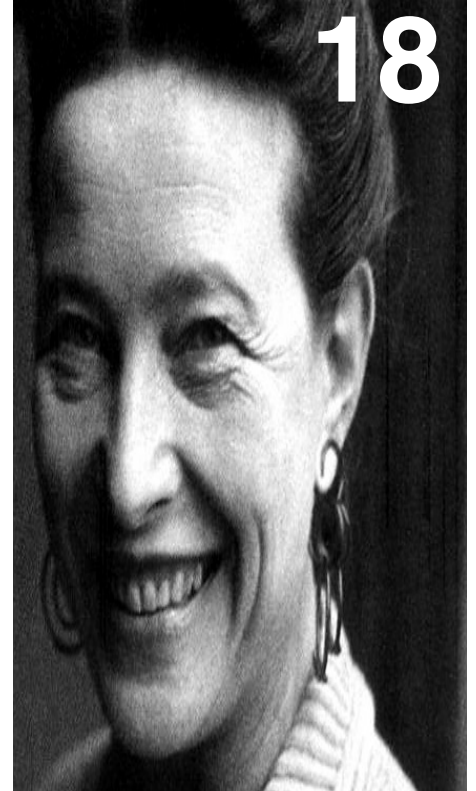
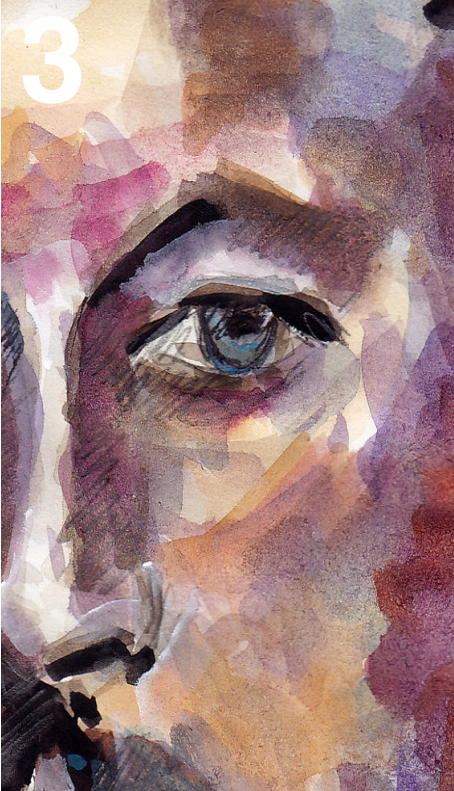


# The IAFOR Academic Review

Volume 1 | Issue 6



Essays on Modern Classics  
from the 20th Century



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**Modernist London  
through English and  
Japanese Eyes: Virginia  
Woolf's The London  
Scene and Natsume  
Sōseki 's The Tower of  
London**

Andreas Pichler  
Aix-Marseille Universite,  
France

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## The IAFOR Academic Review

Volume 1 | Issue 6

### Editorial Committee

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# Editorial Committee Introduction

One of the central missions of The International Academic Forum is to provide avenues for academics and researchers to be international, intercultural and interdisciplinary. One of the ways in which we do this is through our in-house magazine Eye, our various conference proceedings, our Journals, and now beginning in the first half of 2015 our special editions of the IAFOR International Academic Review. In this the sixth issue of the IAFOR International Academic Review we the editorial committee bring together a selection of the most interesting contributions from our recent Asian Conferences on Literature with a special emphasis on modern classics from the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the first paper of the five selected authors for this modern classics edition, Nigel Foxcroft investigates the evolution of the cosmic consciousness of the English Modernist novelist and poet, Malcolm Lowry (1909-57) by scrutinizing the psychogeographic and subconscious dimensions of the Mexican Day of the Dead Hispanic festival. The second paper presented in this edition by Lufti Hamadi of Lebanon, sheds light on the role the French author and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir has played in the development of women's movement in general and feminist intellectual achievements in particular through her long and influential body of work. American based Russian academic Loretta Visomirskis examines the loneliness of human existence, an overriding theme in literature and drama of the 20th century. She explores this emotion through the plays of Chekhov, Harold Pinter and Edward Bond. In her paper Taiwanese author Pin-Fen Huang in reveals the conflict between the traditional conception of gender through the Joycean characters of characters Stephen Dedalus and Molly Bloom. And finally Andreas Pichler's paper sheds light upon the importance of space in modernist literature as it captures a writers visual impressions of the world around them. In particular he examines the viewing of modernist early 20<sup>th</sup> Century London through the eyes of Japanese writer Natsume Sōseki and English writer Virginia Woolf, postulating the question how does London look like when perceived from different cultural backgrounds, and written in substantially different languages?

The five papers selected by the editorial committee for this special edition certainly reflect the international, intercultural and interdisciplinary approach that lies at the heart of both IAFOR and the study of the modern literature classics. We trust you will enjoy reading them.

**Michael Liam Kedzlie**

IAFOR Editorial Committee

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*Psychogeographic Impact on Malcolm Lowry's  
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*The Drama of Loneliness: Its Evolution from Chekhov  
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*Simon de Beauvoir: Mother of Modern Feminism?*

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### Pin-fen Huang

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*Gender Performance in James Joyce's Characterization of  
Stephen Dedalus and Molly Bloom*

Dr. Pin-fen Huang when she wrote this paper for the 2012 Asian Conference on Arts and Humanities was a doctoral student from the National Chung Cheng University in Taiwan. Her interest in gender studies, led her to explore the diversity of social phenomena found amongst gender issues. This exploration led her towards literature, and subsequently the works of James Joyce because in her view only literature was able to vividly depict humanity.

### Andreas Pichler

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*Modernist London through English and Japanese Eyes:  
Virginia Woolf's The London Scene and Natsume Sōseki  
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*"The Great Bonfire of Toba" (2014). Photograph Courtesy of Thaddeus Pope*

The International Academic Forum is proud to announce the launch of the first annual IAFOR Documentary Photography Award. This new award seeks to promote and assist in the professional development of emerging documentary photographers and photojournalists (restrictions apply).

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# Psychogeographic Impact on Malcolm Lowry's Consciousness: From the Zapotec and Aztec Civilizations to Taoism

NIGEL H. FOXCROFT, UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON, UK

## Abstract

This paper provides an intercontinental, cross-cultural, multi-disciplinary framework for an analysis of the influence of cultures and civilizations - both east and west - upon literature and national identity. It investigates the evolution of the cosmic consciousness of the English Modernist novelist and poet, Malcolm Lowry (1909-57) by scrutinizing the psychogeographic and subconscious dimensions of the Mexican Day of the Dead Hispanic festival which he observed in Cuernavaca in 1936.

In its analysis of the material and spiritual domains of both the Aztecs and the Oaxacan Zapotecs, it considers anthropological, cultural, and ethnographic influences associated with pre-Columbian, Mesoamerican rituals. In doing so, it determines Lowry's dedication to his quest for atonement with the spirits of the dead in works, such as *Under the Volcano* (1947), *Dark as the Grave Wherein My Friend is Laid* (1968), *La Mordida* (1996), and *The Forest Path to the Spring* (1961).

In recognition of his need to repent for the debts of the past and for the alienating sins of mankind, synergies are made with cosmic, shamanic, and animist concepts of the universe, as reflected in the celestial visions of the Aztec and Zapotec civilizations. In pursuit of Lowry's search for universal harmony, cosmopolitan connections are established between the rhythms of the universe reflected in Aztec and Zapotec world-views, the significance of the Pleiades star cluster, the intergalactic symbol of Eridanus, and the philosophical concepts of Taoism.

## Introduction

This paper provides an intercontinental, cross-cultural, multi-disciplinary framework for an analysis of the influence of cultures and civilizations - both east and west - upon literature and national identity. It investigates the evolution of the cosmic consciousness of the English Modernist novelist and poet, Malcolm Lowry (1909-57) by scrutinizing the psychogeographic and subconscious dimensions of the Mexican Day of the Dead Hispanic festival, which he observed in Cuernavaca in 1936.

In its analysis of the material and spiritual domains of both the Aztecs and the Oaxacan Zapotecs, it considers anthropological, cultural, and ethnographic influences associated with pre-Columbian, Mesoamerican rituals. In doing so, it determines Lowry's dedication to his quest for atonement with the spirits of the dead in works, such as *Under*

*the Volcano* (1947), *Dark as the Grave Wherein My Friend is Laid* (1968), *La Mordida* (1996), and *The Forest Path to the Spring* (1961).

Furthermore, a consideration of the impact of Sir James Frazer's research into the Aztec and Zapotec civilizations, as reflected in the Day of the Dead festival, leads us to an analysis of Lowry's unique combination of Modernism with cosmic shamanism. The Lowrian world-view provides us with an anthropological basis for Kandinskian psychotherapeutic and shamanic healing, together with a sense of regeneration by ethnographic and artistic means.



Malcolm Lowry by Arturo Espinario (Creative Commons)

## Russian Literary Influences

Lowry's magic is born of a highly inquisitive mind - one which spans the continents in its assimilation of world literature, stretching from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, from the Americas to Europe. His enormous, esoteric literary diet

focusses on Russian, as well as Scandinavian, Czech, and German writers. His heterogeneous erudition is rooted *both* in continental European and in Anglo-American literature. He embarks upon a spiritual odyssey in pursuit of truth and salvation. His aim is to renew what he perceives as being an increasingly materialistic, Western civilization through the power of literature and culture.

Judging from the frequency of their mention in his daily correspondence, we can identify numerous writers of the Golden Age of nineteenth-century Russian literature as Lowry favourites: Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol,<sup>i</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky,<sup>ii</sup> and Anton Chekhov. Indeed, he sees himself not only as a new Goethe, or a Kafka, but also as a Pushkin, and, even, as a “second order Gogol” (Lowry, *Sursum Corda!* II 885; and I 292-93).

Such parallels are pursued in *Dark as the Grave* where Sigbjørn Wilderness reads himself into a newspaper report, as was the case with Major Kovalyov in the Gogolian fantasy, “The Nose” (1842) (Lowry, *Sursum* II: 779). A troika of divine retribution, Gogol’s *Dead Souls* (1842) is described by Lowry as “one of the most lyrical and nostalgic novels ever written”. Indeed, the burning of parts two and three reminds us of the loss of his own manuscript, *In Ballast to the White Sea* which would have concluded the trilogy, *The Voyage That Never Ends*. Gogolian and Dostoyevskian links are also evident in Lowry’s recognition of the importance of an aesthetic appreciation of beauty in the celestial spirit of Eridanus in *The Forest Path* (1947-61).

## The Cultural Renewal of Civilization

Essential connections between the sciences and the humanities have been identified by Sir John Polkinghorne (1930- ), the distinguished Cambridge mathematical physicist and theologian (Polkinghorne 109, cited in Spivey xiii). According to Ted Spivey, the solution to civilization’s dilemma is “for modern man to experience cultural renewal” (Spivey 186). Furthermore, he proposed that “ethics and aesthetics must be integrated with science and technology in new social patterns”, as Modernism intended (Spivey 186). This would necessitate a “new synthesis of knowledge, reason, and the powers of heart and soul” (Spivey 47).

Since Descartes there has been a tendency for Western philosophy to fragment into two divergent movements: objectivism (based upon scientific reason) and subjectivism (referring to the soul, religion, and aesthetics). It is this *fissure* in modern consciousness - between the analytical, empirical, rational nature of science, on the one hand, and the imaginative, intuitive, visionary aspects of the arts, on the other, which has been identified as threatening to dissolve the very basis of humanity itself. Dating from Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), prominent psychologists have established that modern rationalism has tended to *exclude* the existence of the subconscious mind.

Aware of the need for psycho-analysis, Lowry established his own mode of psycho-therapeutic writing under the supervision of Conrad Aiken, the illustrious American poet and caring, ‘surrogate father’ to whom, in February 1940, he writes, “What truer father have I than you” (*Sursum* I: 293). Both Aiken and

Lowry suffered from deep psychological scars affecting them and requiring adaptation. Spivey refers to:

(1) [...] A basic life crisis, which – though often but not always hidden in the unconscious – causes various small physical and mental instabilities; (2) a way of seeing one’s life as a pilgrimage to find a lost love and joy; and (3) the gradual overcoming of a deep death wish and the achieving of a psychic growth in which life and death, love and violence, are seen in a perspective that makes possible a full acceptance of life (Spivey 151-52).

Undergoing a continuous Nietzschean struggle over the fundamental question of what it is to be human, Lowry attempts to attain a higher state of consciousness and self-revelation in order to determine how mankind can realize its full potential.

Lowry’s anthropological and psychotherapeutic investigations are inspired by Sir James Frazer, Robert Graves (an admirer of Dr Rivers’s psychoanalytic method at Craiglockhart) (MacClancy 87) and by Tom Harrisson (founder of the Mass-Observation Experiment) (Heimann). His study of the Judeo-Christian metaphysical system of the Cabbala is motivated by Charles Stansfeld-Jones - alias Frater Achad - a white magician (Bowker 320-21 and Day 294-95). Following in Frazer’s footsteps and embarking upon his own transcendental, supernatural quest for the Garden of Eden, Lowry (and, indeed, the Consul of *Under the Volcano*) traces back the roots of the Aztecs and Zapotecs. These civilizations became caught in the jaws of Spanish conquistadors, contributing to their subsequent decline. Enthralled by the Day of the Dead in Cuernavaca, Geoffrey Firmin, our shamanistic consul, seeks the existence of a divine order - the ‘Holy Grail’ of supreme truth and salvation – through the Cabbalistic and cosmic wisdoms of the past. He embarks upon a mystic pilgrimage, a spiritual mission to discover death in life and life in death.

## Lowry’s *Dead Souls: Under the Volcano, the Day of the Dead, and the Cabbala*

The Day of the Dead festival derives from shamanic and cosmic perspectives akin to those of the animist tribes of northern Mexico. Indeed, the Yaqui and the Huichol communicate with gods and spirits, giving thanks to images, such as that of the Virgin of Guadalupe. With its focus on the Day of the Dead, *Under the Volcano* represents what Perle Epstein has described as “the great battle [...] for the survival of the human consciousness” (Epstein 50).<sup>iii</sup> A “tragic protagonist... like Tchitchikov in *Dead Souls*”, the dipsomaniac and psychotic Geoffrey Firmin is afflicted by a Gogolian sickness observed by the attentive Dr Vigil (Lowry, *Sursum* I 507 and 581). This ailment, we are told, is “not only in body but in that part used to be call: soul” – a malady which the Consul, like Lowry himself, expiates through suffering and self-sacrifice (Lowry, *Under the Volcano* 148). It is through psychoanalysis - the science of “nature *inside*”, dealing with “the obstacles to reason within the psyche” (Frosh 118) - that a state of “intense self-revelation” is achieved (Bowker 224 and Martin 92-93, 45, and 204). Our clairvoyant Consul hallucinogenically aspires to a higher dimension of mescal-induced consciousness. By imbibing the ritualistic drinks of *pulque* and mescal, he is transformed from a priest into a god,



as is the Aztec custom (Miller and Taube 138). Through “simultaneity of experience”, he embarks upon a telepathic crusade in search of civilization’s elixir of life (Orr 166).

According to Epstein, Lowry’s incorporation of the theme of William Blackstone (c. 1595-1675) – a seventeenth-century, shamanic reverend who fled from Cambridge to New England to join the Indians – links Lowry’s ethnological and psychological worlds (Epstein 51). Indeed, “in his outward search for seclusion, Blackstone represents man’s inner search for awareness” (Martin 195). In this respect, the youthful Lowry was mesmerized by Sir James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1890) – a spellbinding study of the correlation between anthropology and religion, “a voyage of discovery” into ethnography, folklore, and magic (MacClancy 79). In it Frazer documents attempts at exorcizing evil spirits in order to attain rebirth. As he explains, “in the primitive mind [...] it was thought that by transferring the evils of a whole people to an individual and sacrificing that individual, it might be possible to get rid of the accumulated sorrows of the entire community” (Downie, *James George Frazer* 33-34 (see also 21, 23, and 37)).<sup>iv</sup>

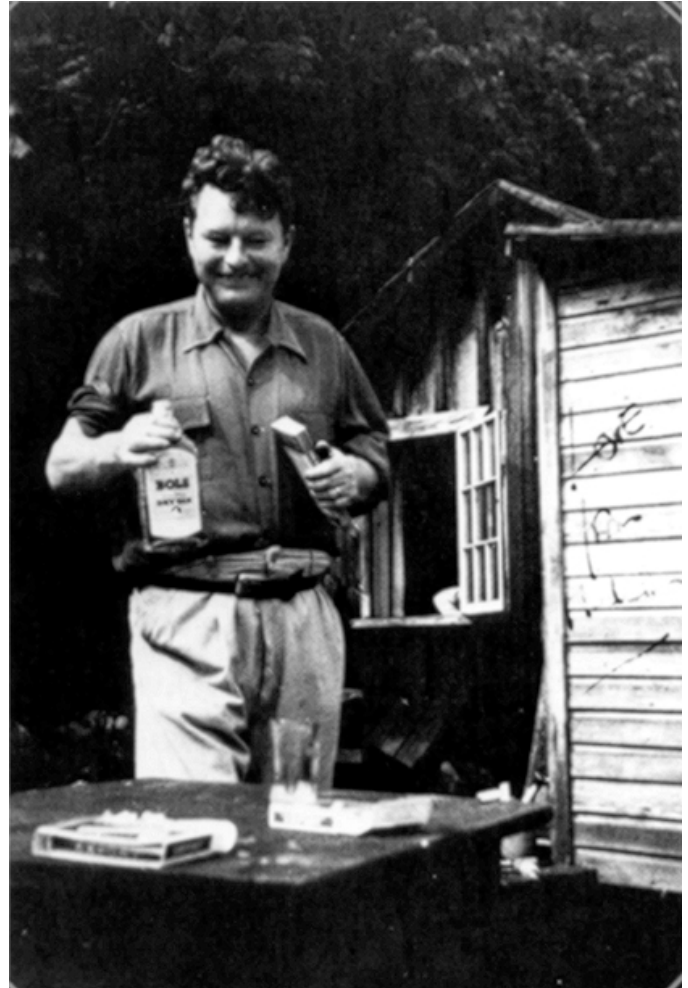
In Aztec culture, death – as “a mirror of life” – is a symbolic celebration, necessitating sacrifice in order to nourish the souls of the deceased on their underworld journey into the afterlife (Miller and Taube 74). Associated with the culmination of the Pleiades star cluster (Lowry, *Sursum* II 367), the tradition of the Day of the Dead – whereby the living communicate with the spirits of the departed – is a widely commemorated festival of pre-Hispanic, pagan-spiritual origin, deeply rooted in the Zapotec and Aztec civilizations. In *Under the Volcano* our Consul makes the ultimate Christ-like, sacrificial surrender, dying for the sins of a bellicose mankind. He reveals “his adversaries as figures of evil by offering himself up as a sacrificial victim”, at the mercy of the trochoidal Máquina Infernal, the great eternal Ferris wheel of life (Orr 157). Such symbols are derived from Aztec mythology which “believed that each human being was, by predestination, inserted into a divine order, ‘the grasp of the omnipotent machine’” (Soustelle 112, quoted in Wutz 66).

*Under the Volcano* sets the stage for the annihilation of the Aztec Garden of Eden, the desecration of Mexico by Spanish invaders (evoked by the dying Indian theme), and the recurring ‘Fall of Man’. It is our Adamic Consul whom Lowry empowers to bear the burden of guilt for the sins of the world (Lowry, *Selected Letters* 85).

According to Mercia Eliade (1907-86), “the primitive magician, the medicine man or shaman, is not only a sick man, he is, above all, a sick man who has been cured, who has succeeded in curing himself”(Eliade, *Shamanism* 27, cited in Spivey 8 and 183). Portrayed as a reclusive “dark magician in his visioned cave” (151 and 206), our consul resorts to consulting his “numerous cabbalistic and alchemical books” (178). A shamanic priest on a pilgrimage, he seeks communion with his imagined, harmonious cosmic order, incorporating the “life-giving force of love” and joy (Spivey 15).<sup>v</sup>

However, Geoffrey Firmin’s dabbling in the supernatural forces of the Cabbala has culminated *not* in an attainment of the transcendental power of love, but in a loss of “the knowledge of the Mysteries” (Epstein 27). As Lowry himself

claims, “the garden can be seen not only as the world, or the Garden of Eden, but legitimately as the Cabbala itself, and the abuse of wine [...] is identified in the Cabbala with the abuse of magical powers [...] à la Childe Harolde” (Lowry, *Sursum* I: 595). An emblem of modern Faustian man, he has sold his transmigratory soul to Mephistopheles in his desire to achieve omnipotence. By untethering the riderless horse, our consul causes a purifying thunderstorm of Messianic divine intervention which resurrects Yvonne, his Aztec ritual sacrifice who has imagined “herself voyaging straight up through the stars to the Pleiades”, as predicted for the sober (202-03, 216, 335, and 373-74).<sup>vi</sup>



Malcolm Lowry at home in Dollarton B.C (Courtesy U. of British Columbia)

## Exorcizing the Spectres of the Past: *Dark as the Grave*

With the cataclysmic combustion of his two-thousand-word script of *In Ballast to the White Sea*, Lowry has no alternative but to amend his plans for *The Voyage That Never Ends*, conceived as an “ordeal, a going through the hoop”, an “initiation”, and “a doing of God’s will” (Lowry, “Work in Progress” 3, cited in Grace, *Voyage* 9). Hence, we glimpse Lowry the voyeur, the visionary, the new Sergei Eisenstein on a *montaged Battleship Potemkin*, storming the Barents Sea.

*Dark as the Grave* exposes a Benjaminian “lost harmony between mind and world” (McCarthy, *Forests* 209). With its Dostoyevskian and Gogolian influences, this novella strives for harmony expressed through the concept of the artist as a visionary. We discover that “life flowed into art: [...] art gives life a form and meaning and flows on into life, [...] and [...]

this flowing, this river, [...] became a flowing of consciousness, of mind" (*Dark* 60).

In *The Valley of the Shadow of Death* (*Under the Volcano's* original title), *Dark as the Grave*, and *La Mordida* (1949-96) we encounter the spiritual odyssey of Sigbjørn Wilderness (Bareham 109). Indeed, Sigbjørn is, what Lowry calls, a Dostoyevskian "underground man", a "modern anti-hero" (Lowry, *Sursum* II 424, 430, 538, and 540), "a doppelganger", with all his contradictions (Lowry, *Dark* 7). He dreams that he is *both* a Lermontovian executioner of fate and a murderer extradited from Mexico to Canada (*Dark* 70-71). Unable to distinguish between the novel authored by himself and that by his daemon, he is shocked by the suspicion "that he is not a writer so much as being *written*" – a true identity crisis (Lowry, *Selected Letters* 332). On his return journey with Primrose from Vancouver to Cuernavaca to exorcize the ghosts, plaguing him since his last visit, Sigbjørn searches for Juan Fernando Martinez, his old friend and guardian spirit, as well as a reincarnation of the legendary Juan Cerillo, the Dr Vigil of *Under the Volcano*. Introduced to voodoo as a way of tapping the supernatural to displace science which "can only help the person whose experience is beyond it", Sigbjørn uses it as a shamanic force to quell anxieties (*Dark* 167). Moreover, its dynamic power is seen by Lowry as a means of subduing the dark Dantean forces of nature, for it is:

A religion, to be regarded with reverence, since unquestionably it is the matter-transcending religion based upon the actual existence of the supernatural as a fact that is fundamental to man himself [...] But that is not to say that one should not regard with awe the great dignity & discipline that is behind it at its highest, nor its conception of God, nor the meaning that it gives to life [...] (Lowry, *Sursum* II 364).

Furthermore, it is a voodoo ritualistic cross that enables Sigbjørn, in his transition to rebirth, to communicate with the spirits of the dead, transformed into gods. It also provides "a way out of the infernal, closed circle into renewed voyaging" (Grace, *Voyage* 73).

However, Sigbjørn's trip to the Zapotec high priest's palace involves a parallel *physical* descent into the cruciform prehistoric tombs of Mitla, down towards the subterranean Column of Death. Representative of the Underworld, Mitla is perceived as the Land of the Dead (Spence 49 and 110, cited in Sugars 155). Sigbjørn's renewal of faith is accompanied by "the mediating influence of the dead" and "the mediating spirit of [...] the Holy Virgin", resulting in a realization of "the mystical experience that suffering had caused him to undergo" and precipitating the acute "feeling of something Renaissance" (*Dark* 262). Sigbjørn is reminded of the constellation Eridanus, the mythological Styx, encompassing Hades – the "river of life: river of youth: river of death" (Lowry, *Dark* 263, 258, 26-27, and 261).<sup>vii</sup>

It is in the Hotel La Luna in Oaxaca where, having survived the perils of the lunar eclipse, Maximilian's Palace, and the temple of Mitla ('the City of the Moon'), Sigbjørn is reunited with his wife, Primrose, a reborn phoenix and moon-goddess (Sugars 158). It is Primrose who enables him to attain a state of psychogeographic harmony with life and Juan Fernando with death. In his dominion over the Mitlan tombs and the Edenic garden endowed by the Banco Ejidal, Juan provides the

key to Sigbjørn's spiritual renaissance. Furthermore, Lowry himself was captivated by the ancient rituals of the 800 BC Mitla, of the pyramids of the 500 BC Monte Albán, with its astronomical Building J where Zapotec gods were venerated, and of the 200 BC Teotihuacan. Indeed, Lowry modestly acknowledges that he «did, however, live in Oaxaca for a time, among the ruins of Monte Albán and Mitla» (Lowry, *Sursum* I 315).



Hotel de Luna (Creative Commons)

## From Eridanus to the Pleiades, and on to Taoism: *The Forest Path to the Spring*

Influenced by Walter Benjamin's concern that the ascent of reason was actually turning life into knowledge (that is, information manipulated to human advantage), Lowry firmly believed that technological progress was extinguishing human contact with the natural environment. It is in *The Forest Path* – replete with its Manx myths and legends – that, having traversed Sigbjørn's wilderness on his Proteus path to paradise, we encounter the soul of Eridanus, which emphasizes a harmonious interaction with our environment.

Bearing in mind the metaphysical concepts of Lao Zi, the Chinese philosopher, Aiken, and Walker Percy, Spivey attempts to "mold a philosophical view that makes man's knowledge – his science, that is, – a part of his human and natural environments" (Spivey 187). As a trained anthropologist, Wassily Kandinsky pursues a parallel shamanic ideal in search of cultural regeneration through ethnographic-artistic methods (MacClancy 90). Similarly, Lowry's shaman "can be healer and guide as well as mystic and visionary" (Eliade, "Yearning" 86, cited in Spivey xiii). It identifies the spiritual need for a Benjaminian, neo-Romantic return to a harmonious relationship with our environment: in aspiring towards a rapport with the world around him, man should be part of nature, nature part of man.

Lowry's utopian vision of the cosmos involves interpersonal and environmental relationships based on "the encompassing power of love" (Spivey xi). Culminating "on a note of harmony and rebirth", the sensuous lyrical novella, *The Forest Path* – "a testament to hope" – enables Lowry to tap the power of his imagination and also his spiritual desire for freedom (Grace, *Voyage* 100 and 102; Cross 105; and Lowry, *Selected Letters* 266).<sup>viii</sup> *The Forest Path* has been described by Daniel Dodson as a "prose poem on man in nature, a Wordsworthian benediction on nature's benevolent power to transform the

heart capable of seeing and receiving” (Dodson 41). In it Lowry advocates a romanticism - reminiscent of the souls of the forests in Ivan Turgenev’s *Fathers and Sons* (1862) which exalts a closer relationship with our natural environment.

*The Forest Path* – with the sinister sign of the ‘Hell’ oil refinery on the horizon (*Forest*, 258) - also conjures up the struggle between man and nature immortalized in Alexander Pushkin’s *The Bronze Horseman* (1833). Familiar with this narrative poem through Edmund Wilson’s translation, Lowry refers to a “serious spirit of Pushkinship” in his letters (Lowry, *Sursum* II: 105 and 889).<sup>ix</sup> It is in *The Forest Path* that he alludes to “the very elements, harnessed only for the earth’s ruination and man’s greed” (*Forest*, 241). They “turn against man himself”, taking their revenge in the forest fire whose relentless advance “is almost like a perversion of the movement of the inlet” (*Forest*, 245 and 260). However, with its seasonal cycles, nature is indeed capable of decontaminating itself, in a regenerative way, from the heinous oil slicks violating the purity of the Eridanus Inlet (*Forest*, 236 and 281).

In Lowry’s “vision of paradise or moment of achieved balance”, the mutually trusting, hard-working community of Eridanus symbolizes an equilibrium in which love for one another is supreme, as witnessed by Lowry who lives here happily after his own honeymoon (Grace, *Voyage* 115). Eridanus is a mythological synonym for the River Po, alongside which Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) is said to have commenced composing his *Paradiso* (Lowry, *Selected Letters* 245).<sup>x</sup> By using *nagual* to depict Sigbjørn’s entry into “the soul of a past self” to confront its wild forces in the form of the animistic cougar, or puma in *The Forest Path*, Lowry connects shamanically with his own childhood ordeals in Wallasey, Liverpool (*Forest*, 246 and 226).<sup>xi</sup> Sigbjørn comes to terms with his current anxieties through “a continual awakening”, to be “baptised afresh” (*Forest*, 235 and 273).

“Known both as the River of Death and the River of Life”, Eridanus is both a bay and a southern celestial constellation (*Forest* 226-27). Relating the terrestrial to the cosmic, the natural to the supernatural universe of myths and legends, it connects us to the Chinese concept of the Tao (The Way). Faith in the wisdom of a “timeless heaven” invigorates Lowry in his pursuit of metaphysical truths concerning humanity and the processes at work in his universe of “eternal flux and flow” (*La Mordida* 216 and *Forest*, 236 and 226-27). In its emphasis upon a harmonious interaction with our environment, the Tao promotes the appreciation of an integral, primal innocence lost to modern civilization. It recognizes “man’s hunger and need for beauty, for the stars and the sunrise” sought in *Under the Volcano* (*Forest* 234). The resultant amicable interface with nature is based upon a balance in the universe, transforming *yin* (the Moon and rain) into *yang* (the sun and the earth), and vice-versa. In *The Forest Path* it is reflected in the centrifugal motion of a raindrop kissing the sea:

Each drop falling into the sea is like a life, [...] each producing a circle in the ocean, or the medium of life itself, and widening into infinity [...] Each is interlocked with other circles falling about it [...] the whole dark water was covered with bright expanding phosphorescent circles. [...] As the rain fell into the phosphorescent water each raindrop expanded into a ripple that was translated into light. And the rain itself was water from the sea, as my wife first taught me, raised to heaven by

the sun, transformed into clouds, and falling again into the sea. While within the inlet itself the tides and currents in that sea returned, became remote, and becoming remote, like that which is called the Tao, returned again as we ourselves had done (*Forest*, 285-86).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, in recognition of a need to repent for the debts of the past and for the alienating sins of mankind, Malcolm Lowry makes synergies between the cosmic, shamanic, and animist concepts of the universe, reflected in the celestial visions of the Zapotec and Aztec civilizations. It is in pursuit of his search for universal harmony that he establishes cosmopolitan connections between the rhythms of the universe - as reflected in their world-views - and recognizes the significance of the Pleiades star cluster, of Eridanus as an intergalactic symbol of civilization, and of the philosophical concept of Taoism.

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<sup>i</sup> Lowry, *Sursum* I 292-93, and 506-07; and II 274, 625, 656, 779, 885, and 889.

<sup>ii</sup> Lowry, *Sursum* I 183, 322, 325-26, 396, 433, 444, 500, 543, 636, and 642; and II 53, 104, 131, 426, 518, 820, 842, 849, and 932.

<sup>iii</sup> Ackerley and Clipper 32.

<sup>iv</sup> Lowry, *Sursum* II 364 and 379; Downie, *Frazer* 52; and Vickery 36, 42-43, 110-11, and 139.

<sup>v</sup> See also xiv and 166.

<sup>vi</sup> Doyen 112 and Grace, "Luminous Wheel" 162 and 165.

<sup>vii</sup> Lowry, 'Forest Path' 231.

<sup>viii</sup> Although Lowry claims that he read Anton Chekhov's comedy, *The Demon of the Wood* (1889) only in 1952, he alludes to Dante's dark wood too. Lowry, *Sursum* II 518 and 524.

<sup>ix</sup> In his letters he also refers to A. S. Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* (1825) and to *Mozart and Salieri* (1830). Lowry, *Sursum* II 105, 155, and 885.

<sup>x</sup> Ackerley and Clipper 414.

<sup>xi</sup> McCarthy, *Forests* 206.

# The Drama of Loneliness: Its Evolution from Chekhov to Pinter and Bond

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The loneliness of human existence becomes an overriding theme in literature and drama of the 20th century due to the emergence of the European Avant-garde movements, Sigmund Freud's theory of the subconscious, and the philosophy of Existentialism (Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus), which focused on an individual in an alienated world devoid of meaning or purpose. Though written at the turn of the 20th century, the Russian author Anton Chekhov's work has been a major influence on the formation of European and British drama in its treatment of the human condition and its innovative dramatic techniques. All of his major plays: *The Seagull* (1896), *Uncle Vanya* (1897), *The Three Sisters* (1901), and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904), are tales of human existence stripped of fulfillment and happiness.



The Cherry Orchard by Michael B (Creative Commons)

Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) wrote at the time when Russia's history was shaping itself against the polarized tensions of the centuries-old political rule of autocracy and the demands of the new rising powers for constitutional rights and parliamentary democracy. Emerging from a 300-year-old system of serfdom abolished in 1861, Russia's socio-economic structure was still largely dependent on agriculture where "only limited land was left to the peasant which had to be redeemed by payments to

the state. The peasants began to lease from the gentry and were left, therefore, at the mercy of this class" (Hosking 144). The rising poverty among the emancipated peasants drove them to the cities in search of work thus giving a boost to the Industrialization of Russia and its growing middle class. The Russian middle class was asserting its powers in the shifting political paradigm of the time: the emancipation of serfs took away free labor from the landed aristocracy and weakened the economic foundations for their existence.

A progressive step in itself, the abolition of serfdom did not create civil liberties for all Russia's citizens, and the country's intellectual climate remained in the firm clutches of the Tsar's political and moral censorship. The last two reigns of the Romanov Dynasty: Alexander III (1881-1894) and his son Nicholas II (1894-1917), invoked the ideological doctrine of Official Nationality which claimed Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality as cornerstone values of Russian citizenship. The doctrine resonated with Russia's rulers at the end of the century as "the triad was inherently unbalanced in favor of centralized autocracy. The Russian Orthodox Church was impoverished and incapable of being an independent political force. Nationality through empowerment of the people was not a choice from the start." It became even less probable after the dreaded nationalist revolutions of 1848 in Europe and after the Paris Commune of 1871 the mere idea of which reduced the Russian emperors "to a state of almost catatonic fear" (Hosking 149).

The Tsar's fear of social revolution and his severe repression against any influence that could challenge the Establishment did not stop Russia's intelligentsia from showing a keen interest in the newest social and political theories infiltrating from the West. The spread of Darwinism and the emphasis on empiricism in natural and social studies along with Marxist theory prepared an ideological platform in Russia's intellectual circles for a materialistic world view fiercely opposed by the Tsar's official propaganda. In response to the ideological tensions of his time, Chekhov defined his philosophical credo in a letter to his publisher Alexei Suvorin, "Materialism is not a school or doctrine in the narrow journalistic sense. Everything that lives on earth is necessarily materialistic. Creatures of a higher order, thinking humans, are also necessarily materialists. They can seek out truth only when their microscopes, probes, and knives are effective. Outside the matter there is no experience or knowledge, and consequently, no truth" (Letter 35 in Anton Chekhov's *Life & Thought*).

A doctor by profession, a writer by calling, Chekhov came to fame at the age of twenty-six as a short-story writer, and by the last decade of his life when his major plays were written, his philosophy and aesthetics had been well defined. He claimed realism as his creative method, "One has to write what one

sees, what one feels, truthfully, sincerely. ...Living truthful images generate thought but thought cannot create an image" (Letter 21 in Anton Chekhov's *Life & Thought*). His core aesthetic principles, itemized with precision in a letter to his brother Alexander Chekhov, included, "Absence of lengthy verbiage of political-socioeconomic nature, total objectivity, truthful descriptions of persons and objects, extreme brevity, audacity and originality, compassion" (Anton Chekhov's *Life & Thought*). These principles masterfully molded into his dramatic work produced the question play, a new genre fundamental to the modernist drama and literature of the 20th century "which was driven by a conscious desire to overturn traditional modes of representation and express the new sensibilities of the time" (Childs 2008, p. 4). Consciously or intuitively, Chekhov rejected didacticism and proscriptive politicking in art; instead, he saw the artist's mission in an intellectual inquiry into the issues of human condition and their objective portrayal as a result of this process. "Anyone who says the artist's field is all answers and no questions has never done any writing. The artist observes, selects, guesses, and synthesizes. The very fact of these actions presupposes a question. ...We are dealing here with two concepts: answering the questions and formulating them correctly. Only the latter is required of an author" (Letter 26 in Anton Chekhov's *Life & Thought*).

In probing the complexities of Russia's life and the individual's ability to survive in it, Chekhov created a modern drama where loneliness became the basic premise of his characters' existence. The deeply ingrained sense of loneliness in his plays stemmed from his own existential angst: as a doctor, he was acutely aware of his failing health, especially after having been diagnosed with an advanced stage of tuberculosis; due to his condition, he spent most of his life in the milder parts of Russia, away from Moscow's cold winters and its vibrant cultural scene which he painfully missed. He often wrote of his loneliness to his friends and family, and his contemporaries spoke of a discernible sadness in him which Chekhov himself denied.

Loneliness in Chekhov's plays is also rooted in his awareness of the societal issues of the time, his keen perception of imminent political change, his deep understanding of the Russian national character, the emotionality and impracticality of "the Russian soul," and his empathy for his fellow human beings trapped in an unjust and frustrating world. The idea of a lonely individual in a fundamentally painful condition ties Chekhov's plays to the Symbolist movement, especially to the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) whose work Chekhov read and admired. Schopenhauer's main philosophical construct, the "Will to Live" (*Wille zum Leben*), represented a malignant metaphysical force which controlled the actions of an individual; since Schopenhauer believed that humans were motivated only by their own basic desires, he saw them as futile and illogical, and so was all human action prompted by these desires.

Schopenhauer's idea that human desiring or "willing" causes suffering and pain becomes the underlying theme in Chekhov's plays where his characters suffer indomitably in their hopeless struggle to reach fulfillment and happiness. In *The Seagull*, the young writer Konstantin Treplyov suffers from an acute feeling of insufficiency of his writings which deepens when his play is rejected by his mother Arkadina, a prima donna of the

Moscow stage. He commits suicide when he loses Nina who cannot return his love. Nina, the Seagull, a young aspiring actress, is in love with Trigorin, an established writer and Arkadina's lover. Trigorin is painfully aware of his mediocrity and inability to control his life when he seduces Nina and leaves her later to come back to Arkadina. Trigorin's aging mistress lives in a frail world of illusion of her past successes on the stage and struggles desperately to win him back from Nina.

Uncle Vanya's theme of unhappiness is built on an intricate pattern of frustrated relationships: the title character, Uncle Vanya, is hopelessly in love with Elena, professor Serebriakov's beautiful wife; Elena is attracted to the country doctor Astrov but scared by Astrov's passionate confession to her, stays with her aged husband, thus leaving both, Uncle Vanya and Astrov, in complete desperation; Sonia, the professor's daughter, remains heart-broken under a heavy burden of unrequited love for doctor Astrov. In *The Three Sisters*, the feeling of loneliness and tragic loss is as dominant as in his earlier plays. The sisters Olga, Masha, and Irina Prozorov are dreaming about moving to Moscow where they spent their happy childhood. Masha, bored with her husband Kuligin, falls in love with the Lieutenant Colonel Vershinin who is stationed in town but cannot commit to Masha as he is married and has to leave with his artillery battery for Poland. Irina's fiance baron Tuzenbach dies in a duel on the eve of their wedding. The sisters lose their chance of happiness as they will not be able to leave their provincial town and return to Moscow, the city of their dreams.

Chekhov's last play *The Cherry Orchard* continues the theme of loss which is summed up in the image of the cherry orchard: Madame Ranevsky loses her young son and her husband who dies of drinking; her lover takes her money and abandons her in Paris; she loses her family estate to debt; the upstart merchant Lopakhin, son of her former serf, buys the estate and cuts down the cherry orchard.

A tragic sense of loss in Chekhov's plays underscores the loneliness of his characters, which he disguises with trivial conversations and routines on the stage. But their everyday conversations inadvertently crescendo into philosophical postulations on human character and the meaning of human life. Chekhov's characters become his mouthpiece in their criticism of their own class, the landed gentry and the educated intelligentsia. In *Uncle Vanya*, doctor Astrov says to Sonia, "I simply can't stand our Russian provincial philistine life. I have the utmost contempt for it. Our dear old friends all have petty minds and petty feelings, and they don't see further than their noses. In fact, they are simply stupid. And those who are bigger and more intelligent are hysterical, given to self-analysis and morbid introspection" (Chekhov 84). Astrov sums up the futility of their lives in his remarks about Elena, "She is beautiful, but all she does is eat, sleep, go for walks, fascinate us by her beauty and—nothing more. She has no duties. Other people work for her" (84).

Chekhov's characters' inability to apply themselves in life is opposed to the idea of work. In *The Three Sisters*, Irina wakes up one morning with an idea that "man must work by the sweat of his brow, whoever he might be. That alone gives a meaning and a purpose to his life, his happiness, his success" (Chekhov 120). In the same scene, baron Tuzenbach relates the idea of work to the imminent social change, "Dear Lord,

how well I understand this craving for work. The time is coming when something huge is about to overwhelm us. A mighty hurricane is on the way; it is quite near already, and soon, very soon, it will sweep away from our society idleness, complacency, prejudice against work, and effete boredom. I shall work, and in another twenty years everyone will work-everyone" (120-21)!

Chekhov's characters speak of work with a fervor of a newly found religion: the juxtaposition of the class that never depended on their work for survival and the object of their worship creates a comic effect which reinforces the meaning of Chekhov's subtitles as comedies. Comic is also professor Serebriakov's admonition to Uncle Vanya and Sonia before he leaves the estate, "We must work, ladies and gentlemen, we must work!" (68). This grotesque character, a scholar who "has been lecturing and writing about art for twenty-five years, and yet doesn't know anything about it" has lived solely at the expense of Uncle Vanya's and Sonia's hard work without ever acknowledging it (68).

As much Chekhov's characters see work as the only remedy against social evil, it does not become a substitute for their personal happiness but rather a disguise for their unhappiness. Doctor Astrov works harder "than anyone else in the district" but "fate is hitting hard" at him, and "there is no light gleaming in the distance" (84). After Elena and Serebriakov's departure, Uncle Vanya says rummaging nervously through his papers, "I'm sick at heart. I must get to work quickly. Do something-anything... To work, to work" (111)! His final words to Sonia, "My child, I am so unhappy! If only you knew how unhappy I am!" - are an outcry of his wounded soul (113).

The inertia and passivity of Chekhov's characters are brought to light by their endless talk about work without ever resorting to any action. Their realization of the need for a change generates more conversation about it but not the change itself. Chekhov felt deeply the ineptitude of the Russian intelligentsia and called it a national malaise. Vershinin sums it up in *The Three Sisters*, "A Russian is particularly susceptible to high thinking but why does he aim so low in life? ...If only we could add education to diligence and diligence to education ..." (141). In the final scene of *The Cherry Orchard*, Lopakhin starts working diligently on his newly acquired property so that he can develop and resell it at a profit. The ax strokes offstage as Madame Ranevsky is leaving the estate are symbolic of the victory of Lopakhin's entrepreneurial spirit over the inertia of the gentry, a dying class. Though socially progressive, Lopakhin's impatience "to take an ax to the cherry orchard" is ethically reprehensible and insensitive towards the heart-broken Ranevsky. The ambiguity of this scene speaks of Chekhov's uncertainty about the imminent social change and its outcomes.

Chekhov's innovation in drama lies not only in his treatment of the human condition but also in the core principles of its portrayal on the stage: he shifts from an action-based plot to a discussion play which speaks of the influence of Henrik Ibsen's drama on his work but unlike Ibsen, Chekhov diffuses the intensity and pointedness of the intellectual discussion by a polyphony of voices, thus creating an appearance of casual, disjointed conversation with layers of meaning hidden in the subtext. Chekhov's precision in the use of language, his disdain of verbosity, and the use of pauses as cadence in the flow of dialog and dramatic action laid the stylistic foundations for the

20th century drama and were adopted by numerous playwrights regardless of their philosophical or aesthetic orientation.

Chekhov's drama of loneliness with a deep subtext underneath a polyphonous, seemingly superficial dialog impacted the work of Harold Pinter (1930-2008) who came to the British stage with the First Wave of post-war dramatists in the 1950s. Pinter, the author of the comedy of menace, wrote his plays in the tradition of the French anti-drama or the Theatre of the Absurd. Influenced by Schopenhauer's philosophy, French existentialism (Albert Camus), and the work of his friend and mentor Samuel Beckett (1906-89), Pinter explores the absurdity of human existence in the menacing and dehumanizing world.



Photo by Marian Gonzalez (Creative Commons)

The hopelessness of the human condition, menace from the outside, and fear of annihilation become the main themes in his first play *The Room* (1957). The main characters Rose and Bert are confined to the room, their private space, which is opposed to the dark and threatening world outside. The mood in the room is tense, the characters are incapable of communication: Rose attempts to care for Bert but Bert ignores her efforts. He speaks of his car referring to it as "she" and imbues his account of traveling home in his beloved van with undisguised sensuality.

Pinter's dramatic situation is based on the existentialist idea that human existence is inherently absurd. "Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose... Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless" (Esslin 5). Therefore, the characters cannot share thoughts, emotions or

exchange words in any meaningful way. Pinter's dialogue becomes a dialog of non-communication where the characters speak in monologs that cannot be heard or understood by others:

Mrs. Sands. Why don't you sit down, Mrs.-  
Rose. Hudd. No thanks.  
Mrs. Sands. What did you say?  
Rose. When?  
Mrs. Sands. What did you say the name was?  
Rose. Hudd. (Pinter 102).

The symbolic figure of the blind black man Riley is a force from the outside that invades Rose's space, the room, and threatens her relationship with Bert. Riley brings her a message from her father to come home. Riley calls her Sal which is a reference to her possibly Jewish background. Bert kills Riley. Rose becomes blind.

According to the critic Martin Esslin, "The Room already contains a good many of the basic themes and a great deal of the very personal style and idiom of Pinter's later and more successful work—the uncannily cruel accuracy of his reproduction of the inflections and rambling irrelevancy of everyday speech; the commonplace situation that is gradually invested with menace, dread, and mystery; the deliberate omission of an explanation or a motivation for the action. The room, which is the centre and chief poetic image of the play, is one of the recurring motifs of Pinter's work" (Esslin 232).

The room as a symbol of human existence, loneliness, and isolation is not a secure place: in Pinter's plays, it is always threatened by the menacing forces from the outside. The characters who inhabit the room are frail bleak images of the human beings trapped in their inability to articulate their thoughts and needs. Their helplessness and passivity makes them kin to Chekhov's characters but their regression into an almost childlike condition makes them worthy inhabitants of the absurd world. Pinter evokes the image of this world through a highly stylized vernacular where allusion, implication, tautology, the meaning of words, and subtext play a special role. The dialog is punctuated by an abundance of silences and pauses, which mark the cadence of the characters' speech and the dynamic of the dramatic situation. In Pinter's work, silences are more meaningful than words. According to Pinter, "There are two silences. One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is employed. ... One way of looking at speech is to say it is a constant strategem to cover nakedness" (Billington 82).

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Another British dramatist Edward Bond (b. 1935) has acknowledged his interest in Chekhov and Chekhov's influence on his dramatic style. He started his career in 1960s as part of the Second Wave of British drama. Bond writes about violence and its causes in the modern world. He considers contemporary society to be inherently unjust; therefore, affecting human lives in dangerous and destructive ways. *Summer* (1982) is also about violence and its effects on the human psyche and human lives but it is Bond's most Chekhovian play in its psychological insight, poetic detail, ambiguity, and allusion. Like his other plays, *Summer* reveals Bond's recurring theme of the oppressors and the oppressed through a collision of class consciousness during World War II. Xenia, the daughter of a wealthy industrialist, comes from England to vacation on the Adriatic in her family home that was expropriated after the war and is owned by her former servant Marthe. On her arrival, she discovers that Marthe is dying of cancer.

Xenia's relationship with Marthe and people who worked for her family is characterized by kindness: she offers to bring Marthe to England for the newest treatments for her condition and to take care of her while she is sick; Xenia saved Marthe's life during the war when she was taken hostage by the Germans. Kindness and generosity run in Xenia's family as her father was known for his generosity to his employees, for giving them education, even for collaborating with the guerillas during the Nazi occupation. But Xenia carries a tragic memory of her father's reprisal and death after the war at the hands of the same people who he supported.

During Xenia's conversation with Marthe about the past, Marthe gathers her last strength and spits Xenia in the face. After all these years, she still sees Xenia as the daughter of a wealthy capitalist and her gesture of ultimate scorn is in the name of all the victims of the war and oppression. She has no forgiveness for the oppressors. The tension between Xenia and Marthe is disguised in a Chekhovian manner by subdued conversation about the inconsequential details of the inconvenience of travel and the lost keys to Xenia's luggage. Xenia's dissatisfaction with the life after the war in her country is felt in her casual remarks about the new hotel, the polluted water in the sea and about the sloppy visitors who put out their cigarettes in her cacti bowls.

As in all Bond's plays, there is an antithesis to hatred, violence, and death: Martha dies but her son David and Xenia's daughter are in love and expecting a baby. The new life is a promise of hope, peace, and innocence.



# Simone de Beauvoir: Mother of Modern Feminism?

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The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the role the French author and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir has played in the development of women's movement in general and feminist intellectual achievements in particular. To this end, this paper explores Beauvoir's intellectual struggle to urge women to get rid of the manacles of the patriarchal system, which has long imprisoned them within its norms and values, denying them the freedom and autonomy they deserve as equal human beings. To show Beauvoir's significance in this respect, the paper traces her influence on feminist academics and authors, with special emphasis on the notable feminist critic Kate Millet for the simple reason that many critics consider the latter's masterpiece *Sexual Politics* as the foundation of what is called radical or second wave of feminism, minimizing or even ignoring Beauvoir's effect.

Feminism is a discourse that involves various movements, theories, and philosophies, which are concerned with the issue of gender difference, the advocacy of equality for women, and the campaign for women's rights and interests. In short, feminism can be defined as the belief that women have equal political, social, sexual, intellectual and economic rights as men do.

Most feminists and critics divide the movement historically into three waves. The first wave, referring to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was originally interested in the promotion of equal contract and property rights for women. This wave focused later on gaining political power, particularly the right of women's suffrage. Almost after achieving these goals by the mid of the twentieth century, joining the personal and the political, the second wave took a new track, emphasizing on women's right to bodily integrity and autonomy, abortion and reproductive rights, including access to contraception and quality parental care. So,

feminists saw women's cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and as reflecting sexist power structures. In brief, it can be said that the second wave of feminism began with a radical view towards matters related to woman's position, while the first wave was mainly interested in civil rights. In her "Radical Feminism and Literature: Rethinking Millet's *Sexual Politics*", Cora Kaplan sees that patriarchy, according to radical feminists, was a "political institution' rather than an economic or social relation and political institutions were in their turn conceived as hierarchical power relations" (157).

Beginning in the early 1990s, third-wave feminism emerged as a response to what was considered failures of the second wave.

Beginning in the early 1990s, third-wave feminism emerged as a response to the over emphasis of the second wave on the experiences of upper-middle-class white women, ignoring the more oppressed women such as women of color and of the working class.

Throughout years of development, a variety of movements have emerged from feminism, most important of which are socialist and Marxist feminisms, radical feminism, liberal feminism, black feminism, psychoanalytical feminism, postcolonial and third-world feminism, post-structural and post modern feminism. At another level, feminist theory is an extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical fields, encompassing work in a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, economics, women's studies, literary criticism, art history, psychoanalysis, and philosophy. Regardless of all differences and trends in feminism, it is almost certain that feminist theories have become of the most important in the field of literary criticism. In an article in *Modern Age*, Anne Babeau Gardiner

writes, "according to one Modern Language Association survey, feminist criticism in recent times has had 'more impact on the teaching of literature' than any other school. It is claimed to be 'already an indispensable part of the study of literature' in universities in Britain, Canada, and the United States" (1). It was during the second wave that feminists started to show interest in women's literature, noticing how this literature was ignored and shunted off the mainstream despite the fact that among women writers were some of the most important of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Consequently, feminist academics and thinkers turned their interest not only towards analyzing male's literary works in innovative ways but also shedding light on women authors and the literature they produced, re-evaluating in the process the preconceptions inherent in a literary canon dominated by male beliefs and male writers.

Although it was published in 1949, Simone de Beauvoir's masterpiece *The Second Sex*, together with her other writings and activities, was a source of aspiration for radical feminism, which started to crystallize in the 1960s. In fact, the remarkable role Beauvoir has played in the history of women's emancipation is undeniable, despite the neglect and harsh criticism she has undergone for a long time, and the attempts to restrict discussion to her relationship with her close lifetime friend, Jean Paul Sartre. *The Second Sex*, which is a detailed analysis of women's oppression and a foundational tract of contemporary feminism, has always been considered the bible of women's movements all over the world and has placed Beauvoir, according to *The Guardian*, as the "mother of modern feminism and a champion of sexual freedom" (1). In *Simone de Beauvoir: A Critical Reader*, Elizabeth Fallaize sees that Beauvoir's name "has come to be synonymous with the feminist voice of the twentieth century" and that "her life and writing have continued to inspire passionate debate" (1). In his *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, Vincent B. Leitch thinks that, "While Beauvoir's argument that in patriarchal cultures man is the norm and woman the deviation has become a commonplace of feminist theory, in 1948 it was revolutionary" (1404). In an article in *The Independent*, Gemma O'Doherty quotes a newspaper headline in 1986 reading, "Women, you owe her everything!", asserting that *The Second Sex*, "an encyclopedic

analysis of women's oppression, is still considered the greatest feminist tract of all time" (1). According to *The Guardian*, *The Second Sex* "catapulted the writer to worldwide fame and spurred a feminist revolt within the French middle classes that spread to the United States and as far as Japan" (6)

*The Second Sex* was published in 1949 in two volumes and was so controversial that the Vatican put it, together with her novel, *The Mandarins*, on the Index of prohibited books. Analyzing women from a variety of perspectives, including the biological, psychoanalytic, materialistic, historical, literary and anthropological, Beauvoir contends in the chapter entitled "Facts and Myths" that one is not born a woman, but becomes one. In the second book, she examines women from their own lived experience, showing the processes through which women internalize the ideologies of otherness that relegate them to immanence and to the position of being man's other.

In the introduction, she tries to find a definition of woman according to the above mentioned fields to conclude that none of them is sufficient. Some, she says, consider woman as a womb, while they describe certain women as not women just because they don't share "in that mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity" (*Second Sex* 2), although biologically they are. Criticizing women who would like to behave like men and deny their womanhood and feminine weakness, she criticizes the notion that considers woman a mystery and asserts that this gives man a justification to evade facing his ignorance of what a woman really is. Indirectly referring to the image given to woman in literary works, she wonders whether woman is an angel, a demon, or an actress. Her answer is that a human being is to be measured only by his acts, so a peasant woman is described a good or a bad worker, and an actress has or does not have talent. The relation "of the two sexes", Beauvoir argues, "is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative" (3).

In a historical preview, Beauvoir shows how the ancients believed that the absolute human type is the masculine, whereas woman was imprisoned

in her body, which has always been seen as a hindrance. Beauvoir supports her perspective referring to ancient philosophers and thinkers. Aristotle, for example, considered that the "female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities", while St Thomas saw that woman is an "imperfect man" (3). Plato, she says, thanked God for two things: being free and being a man, not a woman. Beauvoir continues her reasoning to conclude with her brilliant, innovative idea that woman has always been "the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute-she is the Other" (4).

It is worth remembering, as Lisa Appignanesi says in her "The Heart of Simon de Beauvoir", that this term, "the other", coined by Beauvoir, and *The Second Sex* "served as the source for those discourses of the "other" which shaped the identity and orientalist politics of the 1980s and 1990s." In his groundbreaking book, *Orientalism*, Edward Said clearly refers to Beauvoir's notion to describe how Western thinkers and writers have always seen the East as the primitive, weak, and feminine "Other", juxtaposed with the civilized, strong, and masculine West. Comparing women to other minorities like Negroes, Jews, or even proletarians, she argues that, unlike these groups, women's subjugation to men isn't a result of historical event or a social change. It has always been there. Women's situation is much worse as "legislators, priests, philosophers, writers, and scientists have striven to show that the subordinate position is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth" (qtd in Selden 535).

In a lengthened analysis of biological and scientific studies of human beings — males and females — and animals, Beauvoir asserts the negative and incorrect concepts adopted by many philosophers that even by nature, a female is the other. According to Hegel, for example, she says, "the two sexes were of necessity different, the one active and the other passive, and of course the female would be the passive one" (*Second Sex* 18).

Concerning psychoanalytic point of view, Beauvoir criticizes Freud's view, which she believes is based upon a masculine model, arguing that if it is true that woman envies man his penis and wishes to castrate him, she may do that "only if she feels her femininity a mutilation; and then it is a symbol of all the privileges of manhood that she wishes to appropriate the male

organ" (57). Similarly, in another chapter, Beauvoir explores the point of view of historical materialism, showing that although the socialist theory has given women a chance to get rid of the oppression they have long undergone, she still believes that the theory has failed to explain several important concepts, which underlie the theory such as the origin of the family or the institution of private property. At the same level, Beauvoir is not convinced of Engels' attempt to reduce antagonism of the sexes to class struggle; nor does she accept regarding woman simply as a worker, or even bringing the sexual instinct under a code of regulations. Beauvoir concludes that, "we reject for the same reasons both the sexual monism of Freud and the economic monism of Engels" (54).

According to women's image in literature, Beauvoir believes that "Literature always fails in attempting to portray 'mysterious' women" (qtd in Leitch 1412). Under the influence of the mysterious image fabricated about women in reality and in some theories, novelists have usually tried to show women as "strange, enigmatic figures", although at the end of a novel, it appears that they are rather "consistent and transparent persons" (1412). Such images, or myths, are to Beauvoir the production of patriarchal society for purposes of justification, no more or less. To support her point, she quotes the French poet, Jules Laforgue, saying "Mirage! Mirage! We should kill them since we cannot comprehend them; or better tranquilize them, ... make them our genuinely equal comrades, our intimate friends" (1413).

For Beauvoir, to see woman equally as a human being doesn't necessarily impoverish man's experience, make her less romantic, or destroy the dramatic relationship between the sexes; "it is not to deny the significance authentically revealed to man through feminine reality, it is not to do away with poetry, love, adventure, happiness, dreaming. It is simply to ask that behavior, sentiment, passion be founded upon the truth" (1413). In this respect, Beauvoir attacks those who think that modern, liberated women are not women at all, because to be a true woman, she has to be the "Other", as patriarchy wants her to be. Even those men who claim to be open-minded and liberal may accept woman to be equal, still they want her to stay inessential. In short, Beauvoir criticizes those who can't

"contemplate woman as at once a social personage and carnal prey" and tells them that only when they "unreservedly accept the situation into existence, only then will women be able to live in that situation without anguish [and only then] Laforgue's prayer will be answered" (1414).

In a clear call for action, she emphasizes that "society, being codified by man, decrees that woman is inferior: she can do away with this inferiority only by destroying the male's superiority" (Second Sex 57). According to psychoanalysts, Beauvoir argues, woman tries to drag man into her prison by keeping his symbol of masculinity under her control. Now woman endeavors to escape from this prison, to end her immanence, and to emerge into the light of transcendence. It is now man's battle not to let her go and keep her under his sovereignty. The solution, she believes is in recognition of each other as equal or the struggle will go on.

Interestingly enough, Millet's most famous work, *Sexual Politics*, which brought her to fame in 1970, and which offers a comprehensive critique of patriarchy in Western society and literature has, in fact, striking similarities to Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Vincent Leitch sees that the selection from *The Second Sex* which he includes in his anthology "heavily influenced Kate Millet's 1970 feminist classic, *Sexual Politics*" (1405).

A close look at Millet's *Sexual Politics* shows that even the divisions and subtitles of the book are in more than one way similar to those in *The Second Sex*, with some additions such as ideology, sociology, and class. In her attempt to prove that the relation of the sexes is a political one, Millet takes races, castes, and classes as examples of how relationships are power-structured and how one group is controlled by another. Except perhaps for directly considering this "politics", her discourse is not much different from Beauvoir's comparison between the sexes and the blacks or the Jews, where as Millet says, such relationship "involves the general control of one collectivity, defined by birth, over another collectivity, also defined by birth" (*Sexual Politics* 2). As Beauvoir traces patriarchal culture starting from Plato, Aristotle, and St. Thomas, Millet also sees that the relation of the sexes throughout history, and even "super natural authority, the Deity, 'His' ministry, together with the ethics and

values, the philosophy and out of our culture — its very civilization...is of male manufacture (3).

Again like Beauvoir, Millet criticizes theories that consider biological differences and physical strength naturally lead to man's supremacy, arguing that the point lies "in the acceptance of a value system which is not biological" (5). She adds that, "Endocrinology and genetics afford no definite evidence of determining mental-emotional differences ...[which] even raises questions as to the validity and permanence of psycho-sexual identity" (6). To Millet, this identity is, therefore, postnatal and learned; in other words, it is the result of "socialization" and "the conditioning of early childhood" (9). Isn't this the core of *The Second Sex* that "one is not born a woman"? Similar to Beauvoir's view of the role of religions in reinforcing patriarchy referring to St. Augustine's writings, Jews' prayers, and others, Millet discusses "the Catholic precept that 'father is head of the family,' or Judaism's delegation of quasi-priestly authority to the male parent" (10). In addition, Millet criticizes the courtly and romantic love which has granted characteristics on women such as virtues and confined them within narrow spheres of behavior, while Beauvoir contends that "The times that have most sincerely treasured women are not the period of feudal chivalry nor yet the gallant nineteenth century" (qtd in Leitch 1413).

In another striking similarity to *The Second Sex*, we read in *Sexual Politics* that "Patriarchal Legal system in depriving women of control over their bodies drive them to illegal abortions" (*Sexual Politics* 19) — a view that was considered scandalous when Beauvoir wrote it twenty years earlier. It is needless to say that Millet's discussion of what she calls "a fear of the 'otherness' of woman" (21) is clearly Beauvoir's innovative term. Even Millet's discussion of Freud and his theory of "castration," echoes Beauvoir's detailed analysis and criticism of psychoanalysts' views towards women. Millet's discussion that the "uneasiness and disgust female genitals arouse in patriarchal societies is attested through religious, cultural, and literary proscription" (22) is just a part of Beauvoir's lengthy analysis of the difference between myth and reality concerning the feminine body (qtd in Leitch 1408). Even the "Myths" of Pandora and Eve, which Millet discusses in page 25, are

referred to in *The Second Sex* such as in the introduction (*Second Sex* 8).

Another point that shows Beauvoir's influence on Millet's *Sexual Politics* is political and economic position of women. In the introduction to *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir writes that men still "hold the better jobs, get higher wages, despite a few rights achieved by women, and have more opportunity for success than their new competitors. In industry and politics men have a great many more positions and they monopolise the most important posts...they enjoy a traditional prestige that the education of children tends in every way to support, for the present enshrines the past — and in the past all history has been made by men" (marxists.org 7). Millet, in her turn, shedding light on the same point, cites examples and statistics to illustrate man's dominance" in such fields (*Sexual Politics* 16). In *The Second Sex*, also, Beauvoir explains the common use of the terms "man" and "woman" where the former designates human beings in general, and the latter represents only woman (qtd in Selden 533-534). Millet explains this idea of patriarchal language considering that "despite all the customary pretence that 'man' and 'humanity' are terms which apply equally to both sexes, the fact is hardly obscured that in practice, general application favors the male far more often than the female as referent, or even sole referent, for such designations" (*Sexual Politics* 29).

A final similarity worth mentioning between the two books is the image of women in literary works. It is true that Beauvoir, unlike Millet, doesn't muse on this issue with detailed examples, as Millet does, yet, she discusses it enough to make her point. Criticizing the unrealistic image given to women in the "gallant" nineteenth century, Beauvoir criticizes "the savage indictments hurled against women throughout French literature. Montherlant, for example, follows the tradition of Jean de Meung, though with less gusto. This hostility may at times be well founded, often it is gratuitous, but in truth it more or less successfully conceals a desire for self-justification" (qtd in Selden 535-536). Echoing Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* and "Professions for Women", while exploring women's literature in the West, Beauvoir tries to unearth the reasons why no woman has written books such as *The Trial*,

*Moby Dick*, *Ulysses*, or *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* in a patriarchal society. She reasons that, "Women do not contest the human situation, because they have hardly begun to assume it" (536). What limits women to be as great as the few rare male artists is not a special destiny; it is rather lack of liberty. To Beauvoir, "Art, literature, philosophy are attempts to found the world anew on a human liberty: that of the individual creator" (536), so she wonders how someone who is deprived of liberty, restricted by education and custom, and whose attempts to find one's place in this world are too "arduous" would be able to achieve such a task of recreating the world. Beauvoir calls, this "the free spirit" women is denied, and that's why "in order to explain her limitations it is woman's situation that must be invoked and not a mysterious essence" (537). To be free, to use Virginia Woolf's words in "Professions for Women", women need to kill their angels, or phantoms, so that they can write, not depend on their charm for a living, and reject their sole role to soothe, flatter, and comfort males. Undoubtedly, Millet's discussion of this issue is so comprehensive while criticizing Norman Mailer, Henry Miller, and D.H. Lawrence, trying to illustrate men writer's use of sex to degrade and undermine women. In a rare reference to Beauvoir, and while discussing what she calls Lawrence's insistence on "celebration of the penis" and "on inherent female masochism", Millet says, "It is no wonder Simone de Beauvoir shrewdly observed that Lawrence spent his life writing guidebooks for women" (qtd in Eagleton 137).

However, though remarkable, groundbreaking, and unprecedented, *The Second Sex* has caused ambivalent response in France, as it was attacked by some feminists as masculinist, especially in relation to its controversial accounts of biological sex and motherhood. In an article in *Simone de Beauvoir Studies* in 2008, Ursula Tidd believes that Beauvoir was cast off adrift as a "first wave" feminist because the 1970s and 80s French feminism mainly depended on psychoanalysis and semiotics, the negative effect her intellectual and personal partnership with Sartre has brought about, and the bad English translation of Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. However, Tidd assures that the "discovery in the early 1990s of Beauvoir's phenomenological approach to understanding gender, combined with a recognition of her original syntheses of

existentialism, Hegelianism, Marxism and anthropology in *Le Deuxieme Sexe*, has led to a major re-evaluation of her contribution to feminist thought" (2). So, according to Tidd, this has led to acknowledgement of her importance and influence. The psychoanalytic Writer Elisabeth Roudinesco, for example, asserts that Beauvoir is "the first thinker in France to link explicitly the question of sexuality with political emancipation" (qtd in Tidd 3). Through her two books *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman* and *Feminist Theory and Simone de Beauvoir*, the well-known feminist Toril Moi has highly contributed to this recognition of Beauvoir's achievements and her influence on radical and on contemporary feminism. Tidd quotes Moi arguing that "Beauvoir's concept of the body as situation is a crucially original and often overlooked contribution to feminist theory" (5). On celebrating Beauvoir's centenary in January 2008, Moi writes in *The Guardian* that Beauvoir, "the greatest feminist thinker of her century, is a phenomenal achievement" (1). Moi argues that although *The Second Sex* was a source of inspiration and insight for countless women even before the women's movement, "major writers of the women's movement – Betty Friedan, Kate Millet and Germaine Greer – barely mention Beauvoir, as if to deny the influence of a threatening mother figure" (1), while other dominant "French theorists such as Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray were openly hostile to Beauvoir" (2). In this respect, Alison Holland quotes Moi writing, "By becoming intellectuals, such women have made themselves the true daughters of Beauvoir: no wonder that many have felt the need to separate themselves from such a powerful mother imago" (9). Briefly and directly Moi insists that, "Everyone who cares about freedom and justice for women should read *The Second Sex*" (2).

In an interview in *Society* with John Gerassi in 1976, Beauvoir mentions the neglect she receives from some feminist writers, and she mentions Kate Millet as an example. Without showing any blame or anger, She modestly says that such feminists "may have become feminists for the reasons I explain in *The Second Sex*; but they discovered those reasons in their life experiences, not in my book" (1). Surprisingly enough, in *Beauvoir and The Second Sex*, Margaret A. Simons quotes Millet saying nineteen

years later that "She 'couldn't have written *Sexual Politics* without [*The Second Sex*]" and that "Now I realize that I was probably cheating all over the place" (145).

The purpose of showing the influence of Beauvoir on Millet's *Sexual Politics* is not to underestimate Millet's remarkable work, or to cast doubts on her artistic talent and potential, as the role she has played in the development of the feminist movement and feminist literary theory is undeniable. What this comparison is trying to do is to show that Beauvoir's innovative ideas and her monumental analysis of women's conditions, aggressively though criticized by some feminists and other critics, have definitely, as Romain Leick says in "A fresh Look at Simone de Beauvoir", "established the theoretical underpinning of modern feminism" (1). If this and many other similar testimonies mean something, it is that Beauvoir's influence is not limited to Kate Millet, but it extends to other feminists of various trends and interests. Despite all criticisms, Vincent Leitch asserts that "The Second Sex, revolutionary in its own time, offers a powerful analysis of the status of women and remains a foundational text for feminist theory" (1405).

No matter how positively or negatively Beauvoir's role in feminist movement and feminist literary criticism is seen, hardly is there a serious academic study on feminism without acknowledging Beauvoir's essential role as a turning point not only in academic and literary studies but in the position of women as well. After Beauvoir, it would not be that easy to ignore women's writings again and shunt them off the mainstream. Nor would Shakespeare's sister of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* have gone mad or killed herself without being able to write any word as she would in a misogynistic patriarchal world of the past.

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# Gender Performance in James Joyce's Characterization of Stephen Dedalus and Molly Bloom

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The conflict between the traditional conception of gender and the way James Joyce presents his characters has aroused a series of critical discussions. In traditional thinking, women are required to behave submissively, while men have to be dominant and even aggressive. However, some critics claim that Joyce has reversed this kind of tradition, and the characterization of Stephen Dedalus and Molly Bloom can be the most appropriate examples to prove this argument.



James Joyce by Simon K (Creative Commons)

Actually, there has been a large of literature concerning with the gender issue in *Ulysses*, especially the personality of Molly and Stephen. For instance, Richard Pearce has pointed out that "Molly is engendered in a male-dominated establishment, and, equally important, the way gender-specific assumptions about the nature of women were encoded in society" (5). By observing this comment, Molly seems like a reformist who intends to change the male-dominated view. Her monologue is the best evidence to prove this belief because she creates another vision to analyze the woman identity in the society. Additionally, Stephen is another character who uses his body to pursue the extreme beauty in his discovery. Joshua Jacobs discovers that:

"This dispersion of the source and nature of language beyond the confines of a discrete, fully cognizant agent undermines Stephen's attempts to assert such an agency for himself. By staging the materiality of language and the diffusion Stephen with the corporeality and diffusion of sexuality more firmly than can Stephen's hyperbolic denials or embracing of his sexuality" (21).

Through this observation, language is a very important elements for Stephen due to his performativity in text. Stephen uses language to perform his feminine characteristic. It displays that Stephen against social exception in society rule as he is writing and thinking. In other words, a man speaks in sissy tone, which is a sort of rebellion to the social vision. Of course, Molly is also another character who, fights against the social value.

Why does Stephen Dedalus become a womanly man in sexual intercourse? How can Molly enjoy sex easily like a man? Why does Joyce reverse the gender stereotypes of the two characters? Based on the description of Joyce, the plot of having sex with a prostitute also shows Stephen's different features from other normal men because he imagines himself to be a submissive woman when he is with a prostitute. On the other hand, Molly announces her body to possess and to dominate man's body as she frankly admits that she enjoys the process of owning a lovely man. Hence, the focus throughout this essay will reside on the reversed gender performance of Stephen and Molly by adapting the concept of gender performativity, which is proposed by Judith Butler. I attempt to argue that Butler's idea of performativity, not only demonstrates the gender identity of Stephen and Molly whether in physical or psychological aspects, but also symbolizes the new gender meaning in this world because of the interaction between the social ideology and the individual value in the 20th century. That is, James Joyce subverts Molly Bloom and Stephen Dedalus' sexual performance, which is similar to Judith Butler's performativity.

## The Definition of Judith Butler's Performativity

What is the difference between women and men? Based on the biological analysis, womb and penis are the key points to display their uniqueness. Applying this recognition into the social system, therefore, the meaning of sex is established by the biological definition instead of the mental situation. Here, Aristotle regards that "the female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities" and St Thomas Aquinas says that



“woman is an imperfect man” (Selden 115). That is, penis seems like an authoritative symbol in the patriarchy society. Therefore, Freud further announces penis envy to demonstrate the authority of patriarchy. To fight against this kind of ideological oppression, feminism begins to be prevalent. It focuses on the historical stereotype of women.

According to feminism, biological inequality between men and women is the key point to cause social injustice. Judith Butler, who is a crucial queer theory critic, borrows J.L. Austin’s idea performative in her theory. Here, Kira Hallin says that:

The origin of the term performative can be traced back to Austin's posthumous *How To Do Things with Words*. Austin, objecting to the logical positivists' focus on the verifiability of statements, introduced the performative as a new category of utterance that has no truth value since it does not describe the world, but acts upon it—a way of “doing things with words”. (1, original emphasis)

In this passage, Austin’s performative is based on language of philosophy. For Austin observation of performativity in linguistic is that “[sentence] is used in making a statement, and the statement itself is a ‘logical construction’ out of the makings of statements” (Austin 1). By observation, sentence means word, which makes a statement to limit in area. Also, the statement is law and logic, which makes you believe. That is, people’s original recognition toward gender should be judged as the consequence of the social evaluation system instead of innate ability.

Influenced by J.L. Austin’s performative, Judith Butler has addressed that the social ideology has regulated the behavior of men and women, and the characteristic of gender is limited by the society. For Judith Butler’s gender performativity, she not only indicates the link between gender and society, but also applies it into the explanation of individual spirit. Actually, this idea can be traced back to the words of Simone de Beauvoir, “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Norton 1403). That is, girls are educated to wear pink dress rather than blue because pink symbolizes female, in other words, boy should dress in blue. In other words, our history is to educate us to be a man or a woman. Hence, Butler says that “nothing is nature even sexual identity” because we living in social constructed natural world in our gender (Norton 2485).

In Judith Butler’s *Bodies That Matter*, she casts doubt that “constraint is thus built into what that language constitutes as the imaginable domain of gender” (13). Here, Butler totally points out that our gender is restricted by language. In other words, language limits gender’s performance which language made us believe what it is. Therefore, Butler combines many ideas to explain the definition of performativity:

“linguistic performativity refers to speech acts that effect what they announce, for instance, ‘I dare you’; ‘I sentence you’. Butler adapts this into theory of gender performativity whereby certain announcement or performance of gender produce the effects they seem to describe. Central to the theory of gender performativity are the mechanisms of citation and repetition” (Brady 140).

Based on sentence, from linguistic part of performativity refers that when the sentence announces to you, then, you will be

follow what it thinks. That is, language creates a world what it is. Also, you believe language without any hesitate. Here, it accords that men and women perform their gender identity in society. The authority makes an order, and then, people have to perform their gender role unconsciously.

Therefore, Butler points out gender should not only include men and women but also they may exchange what they want. For instance, women’s performativity is still ambiguous to people. Butler also says that “ [it] is difficult to say precisely what performativity is not only because my own views on what ‘performativity’ might mean have changed over time, most often in response to excellent criticisms, but because so many others have taken it up and given it their own formulations” (Salih 94). Based on her confession, performativity changes over times, also, the meaning changes. Therefore, it is not easy to define exactly what performance of gender is.

Sexuality follows the main stream, which is heterosexuality, to create a rule of what men and women should be. Here, Butler points out gender formed by our history. The history process, which controls by authority. Therefore, it not only depends on social rules but also reflects on literature. “As literary theory in general, however, began to acknowledge the uncertainty of its premises, the nature of sex, sexuality and gender studies moved decidedly away from a position of censoriousness and toward one of intense ideological significance” (Gillespe 47). In other words, people can define their own sexuality, which is not controlled by society. That is, sexuality defines by you. For instance, it defines what you performance for your attitude. It is not depend on your gender. So, sexuality is defined by the personal decision. Hence, gender is open up to men and women because they do not have to care social limitation.

Also, “ Ulysses is a ‘female’ book and that a radical reinterpretation of masculinity and femininity [in this text]” (Brown 102). James Joyce attempts to subvert the traditional impression toward male and female to stimulate readers to notice their uniqueness. Therefore, sexuality is one of the main points for Joyce who reinterprets male and female identity in this fiction.

As the studies show James Joyce’s work which gender performance vividly shows in *Ulysses* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Joyce not only famous his skill in modernism but also challenges reader’s nation of gender.

## Comparison of Molly Bloom’s and Stephen Dedalus’s Sex Replacement Molly Bloom’s Sexual Desire

In *Ulysses*, Molly Bloom’s monologue regards another female view to reader. For instance, McMullen says “Undeniably, Joyce through Molly provides a cross-section of thoughts, expressing the needs and desires of everywoman and supporting new understanding of the feminine psyche.” (1, original emphasis). From this argument, it shows the difference of Molly from other traditional women.

Molly Bloom’s sexual desire and performance display the issue of sexual disorder in order to present her uniqueness in *Ulysses*. For instance, Charles Darwin says, “Man is more courageous,

pugnacious and energetic than woman, and has a more inventive” genius” (316). That is, men’s behavior is more driving and powerful than women. In other words, women show themselves by passive behavior in front of men.

However, Molly does not belong to the traditional woman when she talks about sexual intercourse. It totally changes the image of the female character in traditional novel. When Molly recalls the memory of how she and Boylan made love on the bed, it shows that she does not blush as she wants to have sex. “I wished he was here or somebody to let myself go with and come again like that I fell all fire all inside me” (Ulysses 754). By observing this sentence, Molly admits her desire which is eager to have Boylan’s body or someone would touch her since she is on fire. The word, fire, symbolizes that Molly cannot control herself. For this reason, Molly is not shy to ask for sex to man. Moreover, Molly likes a leader to have a sexual intercourse. She pursues her freedom and enjoys the process.

Additionally, it is similar to another plot that Molly announces like a man to assign Boylan’s position as she has sex. “ If I could dream it when [Boylan] made me spend the 2nd time ticking me behind with his finger I was coming for about 5 minutes with my legs round him I had to hug him after” (Ulysses 754). Through this comment, Molly asks Boylan to touch her back while she feels impulsive. Therefore, Molly is not hesitated to ask Boylan what she wants. Also, my legs round him I had to hug him, which represents that Molly is an active woman when she has desire.

Beyond that Molly prefers to control man as she has sex. For instance, she says “I didnt like his slapping me behind” (Ulysses 741). From this sentence, Molly regards that Boylan offends her when he slaps her bottom. She does not like slapping due to the transfer for power. Here, the action of slap represents authority who have power to control the situation he wants. Boylan slaps Molly’s bottom which he reminds Molly to follow his steps as she enjoys sex. It is similar that the power exchanges while the action of slap remind Molly is a woman. So, Molly senses that she cannot follow her desire as she enjoys the intercourse. Therefore, Molly feels that Boylan cannot slap her bottom because she wants to control the feeling. Joyce puts this action to perform the double images of Molly’s inner world.

Molly uses playful words as she looks like a man. She vividly describes man’s behavior when they make love. “yes I think he made them a bit firmer sucking them like that so long he made me thirsty titties he calls them I had to laugh yes this one any how stiff the nipple gets for the least thing Ill get him to keep that up and Ill take those eggs beaten up with marasala fatten them out for him” (Ulysses 753). In this passage, it appears that Molly describes that man named woman’s breast in titties and she laughs at man. Hence, she also names man’s testicles with eggs, which seems a revenge of man. Molly just likes to play a game with male as she teases man. Therefore, she sneers at man’s organ to make fun of male’s situation such as eggs beaten up with marasala fatten.

Molly not only enjoys sexual relationship with man but also perceives male’s thought as she gets control in sexual intercourse. She imagines what would man think and she becomes a director to control the process of sex. Molly becomes man-like as she watches man in sex process. “I gave

him all the pleasure I could leading him on till he asked me to say yes” (Ulysses 782). She apparently knows man and performs them in reality. Man loves woman to say affirmation as they make love. Yes seems to be a positive word to male. By observing the sentence, Yes sounds aphrodisiac to male. According to this analysis, Molly is familiar with male characteristic especially in sexual aspects.

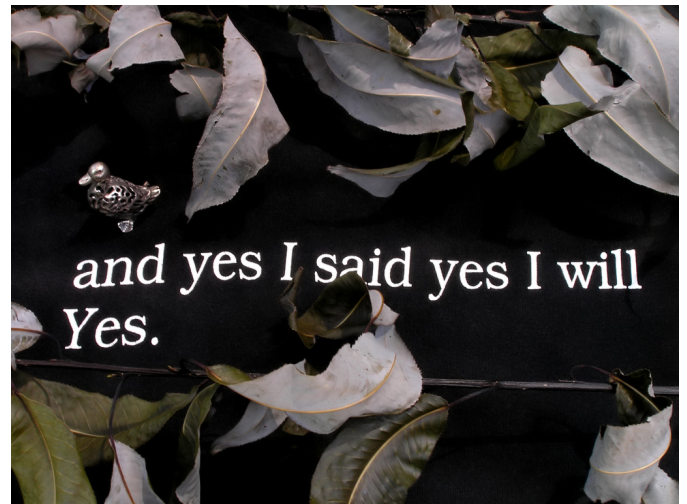


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The word yes seems like an icon to Molly. She repeats yes many times in “Penelope”. In the end of this chapter, Molly gives a chance to Bloom and she visualizes that “first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will yes” (Ulysses 783). This sentence indicates that Molly fancies Bloom will do what she thinks. Also, she becomes a leader to lead Bloom to discover her body. The performance of Molly, she says yes as an inspiration to man. It seems praise to men. Now, Molly switches the status of man and woman as she enjoys the process.

## Stephen Dedalus’s Sexual Desire

James Joyce depicts Stephen Dedalus in a very different way compared with Molly Blooms’ understanding of herself in her want. His behavior is not similar to male attitude as they have desire. For instance, when Stephen was a child, he wants to marry a girl called Eileen. But Stephen is scared when he discovers his parents seem to deny his yearning. His mother said to him.

--- O, Stephen will apologies.

Dante said:

---O, if not, the eagles will come and pull out his eyes (A Portrait 8).

This memory in Stephen’s childhood makes him to be a bad boy for religious reasons. Stephen’s parents want him to forsake romance, because his parents do not accept this situation because---- their religion is different. Therefore, Stephen is like a coward; he does not fight for his love, yet, afraid of it. In traditional stereotype, man should be a strong person to face troubles. However, Stephen is different the image of man totally. Here, gender performativity exposes that when human face dread, gender is not a main issue because they are the same. For instance, Stephen cannot challenges his parent’s authority and fight against for his love, however,

Molly has sexual intercourse with Boylan without fear even Bloom knows. Based on these examples, it collapses the stereotype of man and woman.

On the other hand, Kiss to Stephen has very different meanings to him. When he was a teenager as high school student, his classmates asked him a question:

--- Tell us, Dedalus, do you kiss your mother before you go to bed?

Stephen answered:

--- I do.

Well turned to the other fellows and said:

--- O, I say, here's a fellow says he kisses his mother every night before he goes to bed.

The other fellows stopped their game and turned round, laughing. Stephen blushed under their eyes and said:

--- I do not.

Wells said:

--- O, I say, here's a fellow says he doesn't kiss his mother before he goes to bed.

They all laughed again. Stephen tries to laugh with them. He felt his whole body hot and confused in a moment (A Portrait 14).

The teenage Stephen seems afraid to confess his love to his mother. When his classmates ask the question to make fun of him, he denies his passion to his mother after his face blushed. Moreover, he also feels uneasy in his behavior as he felt his whole body hot and confused in a moment. In other words, Stephen's behavior is like a woman as he confesses his passion to his mother. He is similar to a woman who will be shy when she explains her desire. Stephen's whole body is hot and confused which is familiar with woman as woman do not comprehend her body. It matches that Stephen performs the feminine as he confesses his desire. Another time, when Stephen is an adult, his friend Cranly asks him a question:

--- Have you never loved anyone? Cranly asked.

--- Do you mean woman?

--- I am not speaking of that, Cranly said in colder tone. I ask you if you ever felt love towards anyone or anything (A Portrait 240).

From this passage, Cranly wants to know if Stephen has emotions to somebody. But Stephen answers him in strange answers. The sentence of Do you mean woman in text suggests that Stephen hasn't been in love before. His response indicates that he never loved someone and understood woman except his mother. Stephen exposes that he lacks experience about woman and he shies to explore female. He appears that he is an introvert due to his characteristic. Stephen is like female when they met question about love.

For Stephen, kiss has a special meaning to him. When he has sexual desire he looks for a prostitute to solve his problem. During their sexual intercourse, the prostitute requests that Stephen has to reaction to her:

--- Give me a kiss she said.

His lips would not bend to kiss her. His lips would not bend to kiss her. He wants to be held firmly in her arms, to be caressed slowly, slowly slowly. In her arms he felt that he had suddenly become strong and fearless and sure of himself. But his lips would not bend to kiss her. But his lips would not bend to kiss her. (A Portrait 101)

The meaning of kiss for Stephen symbolizes the pure image of his mother. Therefore he will hesitate to kiss the prostitute because of the conflict image between his mother and this woman. Stephen is similar to woman because his hesitation is just like a woman to who pursues truth of love. But the prostitute initiatives to lead Stephen to reconsider the behavior of his performance during the beginning of make love due to his hesitation. Women restrain their real feeling when they have desire. Hence, Stephen is passive to prostitute's passion because he regards kiss is for his mother.

When Stephen wanders on the beach, he finds a girl who is wearing white dress. "A girl stood before him in midstream, along and still, gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird..... Her slateblue skirts were kilted boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her" (A Portrait 171). In this passage, Stephen sees woman as a seabird. The seabird is similar to dove or purity. It is coherent with Stephen's image of his mother. And this image is the function of purity and innocence, which responds to Stephen's innocence of sexual desire. Stephen reverses man should have social skills in society, which includes sexual experience. Stephen reflects his innocence and purity in sexual behavior, which accords the traditional female like a white angle in society including sexual intercourse. Therefore, feminine personality accords Stephen's passive attitude.

According to Simon de Beauvoir, "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute- she is the Other" (16). According to her argument, woman is totally an outsider in the society. In other words, man is one voice to interpret vision in our world. However, Joyce changes the traditional view and invents another vision to readers. Therefore, Joyce puts Molly in "Penelope" to become a woman's voice export. Additionally, Stephen has a feminine personality as he faces sexual desire.

Under Joyce writing, Molly and Stephen displays that they exchanges their gender. Molly seems to be a pioneer to woman. She not merely exposes her desire but also reveals her male personality as she has sexual intercourse to man. Molly is totally different from Stephen. Molly prefers to control her body and assign her lover movement to give her enjoyment. She seems like man to appoint that woman position as they make love. She is positive and aggressive on her sexual desire especially on sexual position. On the contrary, Stephen is passive to his desire on woman. During his sex with prostitute, his attitude and behavior totally matches the image of woman. Otherwise, Molly teases man as she looks man's reaction in sexual intercourse. Joyce puts this part to liberate many women's monologue about man. And Stephen's sissy personality during sexual behavior reverses traditional way in novel. Therefore, Joyce exchanges their sexuality to make other angles to show the difference man and woman. It is a challenge to Joyce. Also, he discovers not only man's voice but also woman's voice in the world.

## Conclusion

James Joyce reverses our conventional view toward men and women as he exchanges Molly's and Stephen's mental sexual characteristics. He reinterprets women's monologue toward men, and also tries to change the traditional male image. The personality of Molly and Stephen in this novel can demonstrate this idea. Therefore, Molly's masculine performance shows that women are not passive and shy as they face their desire. Also it is a way to display their power of emotions. Stephen's feminine performance appears passive and unnatural as he has sexual intercourse. It is coherent with the

attitude of women as they face sexuality. Judith Butler's performativity is a good way to explore the dilemma of sexual desire. Hence, Joyce reveres not just the stereotype of sexual emotions on human desire but also challenges the identity of sexuality. So, Judith Butler's performativity indicates the way Joyce vividly explores. Also, the skill colors Joyce's works. In conclusion, Joyce uses his ways to reverse the gender roles of men and women. So the gender of Stephen and Molly is transformed in text because Joyce displays the multiple voices and interlaces their monologue in their conversation.

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# Modernist London through English and Japanese Eyes: Virginia Woolf's *The London Scene* and Natsume Sōseki's *The Tower of London*

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## Abstract

Images of stream-like tides and waves, trailing mists and fogs, and a floating sensations of seeing and observing are present in Woolf's *The London Scene* and Sōseki's *The Tower of London*. Both, Woolf and Sōseki, lived for some time within the famous Bloomsbury Square (Woolf at 46 Gordon Square and later at 29 Fitzroy Square, Sōseki at 76 Gower Street), both visited the same iconic sites such as the Thames, the Docks, the Tower, the City and Carlyle House. Their views, one European the Japanese, coincide in the way they seem to portray the modern metropolis from a highly personal and visual perspective. This article aims at conveying to what extent a sense of prevailing spaciousness has been the authors' distinct hallmark. Through English and Japanese eyes, native and non-native alike, this publication will shed some light upon the importance of space in modernist literature to capture some of their visual impressions.



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## Introduction

What would a “viewing of modernist London” through Japanese and English eyes look like? How would London look like when perceived from different cultural backgrounds, written about in substantially different languages? Is it conceivable to avoid the pitfalls of a metonymic representation

of London when analysing the way of regarding, seeing and trying to understand a metropolis on the brink of modernity?

With close to seven million inhabitants in 1905 (London City Council, 23), the Greater London area was the world's ultimate surreal, disorientating urban landscape compared with the relatively small scale of Tokyo's two million in 1900 (Tokyo Statistics Division). The founding of the Metropolitan Police Service in 1829, the inauguration of the world's first underground line between Paddington and King's Cross in 1862, and the creation of the London County Council in 1889 to organise London's first elected administration, all contributed to the increasing size of the world's largest urban centre. Towards the end of Victoria's reign and during the Edwardian period London's sheer vastness surpassed any previously known municipal dimension.

Sent to London on a Japanese government scholarship in 1900, Natsume Sōseki arrived in this phantasmagoric city on 28 October and moved in at 76 Gower Street in the Bloomsbury District just north of the British Museum. Life in England and in London for Sōseki was characterised by profound historical and cultural changes during his two years' stay, marked by Queen Victoria's death on 22 January 1901 and London's emergence as the world's leading metropolis. Setting up house on 85 Priory Road, West Hampstead, then on 6 Flodden Road, Camberwell, on 2 Stella Road, Tooting and finally on 81 The Chase in Clapham Common, Sōseki lived in a number of distinctively different districts experiencing the city from diverse geographical locales. When returning to Japan in 1903, he started working on seemingly disconnected short stories in an attempt to put on paper his encounters with London. Two of the stories – “The Tower of London” and “The Carlyle Museum” – were published in 1906 in a volume entitled *Drifting in Space*, while “Fog” and other short stories were comprised in *Short Pieces for Long Days* in 1909.

Virginia Woolf on the other hand was born in the posh district of Kensington in 1882 and spent most of her cherished years in the British capital. In order to escape the rather grim atmosphere following the death in 1904 of her father, Sir Leslie Stephen, she decided to move together with her sister Vanessa from Hyde Park Gate to 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury. In contrast to Kensington, 46 Gordon Square figured, as Michael Whitworth observes, “as a place of light, space, and freedom after the darkness and claustrophobia of 22 Hyde Park Gate; as a place of rational if slightly chilly beauty after the ugliness of their old home” (Whitworth, 10).

Through the informal Thursday evening events first organised by her brother Toby, the initial core of the so-called Bloomsbury Group came into existence. The regular meetings with Lytton Strachey, Clive Bell, Desmond MacCarthy, Roger Fry, Maynard Keynes and E. M. Forster allowed Woolf to advance and share her literary talent through a mutually supportive network of friends.

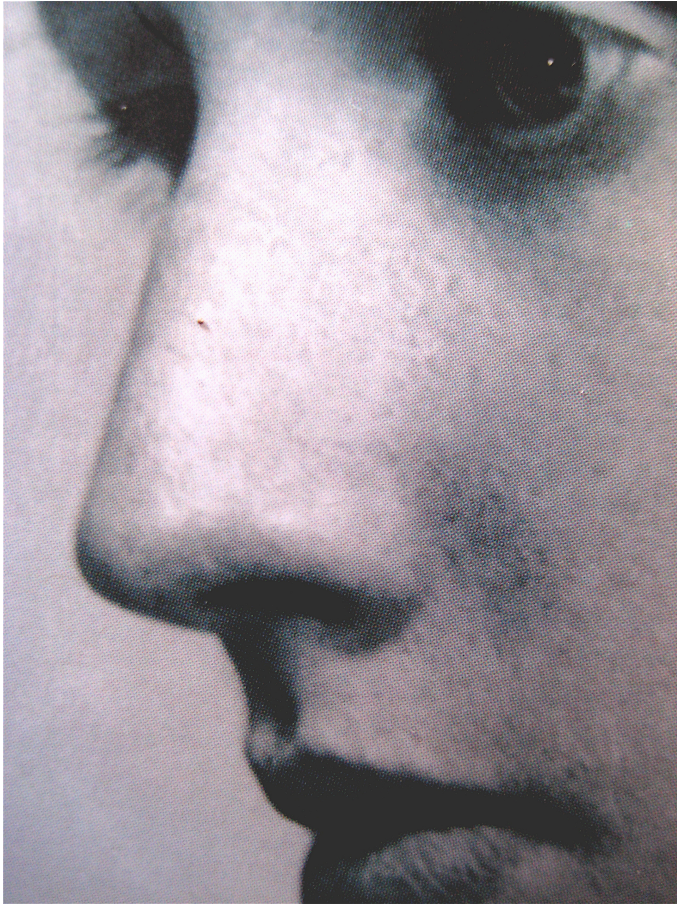


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## Peering about

In her collection of short stories entitled *The London Scene*, Woolf describes “the power and the ‘vast conglomeration’ of the city” (Lee, 554). London, as Lee says in her biography, is “the modern ‘surface’ which stimulates and absorbs her, and yet in which she is ‘alien’ and ‘critical’” (Lee, 554). Images of stream-like tides and waves, trailing mists and fogs, afloat sensations of seeing and observing make up the fabric of the modern city in an ever-changing environment of the vast metropolis. What seems to dominate Woolf’s vision of London is the fact of seeing, or rather peering about, of just becoming visible: “Waving long blades of wood to which lamps have been fixed, we peer about” (Woolf, *London Scene* 21). Sōseki’s *The Tower of London* similarly portrays London through a haze of sensual awareness and gazing: “When I gaze from the Tower Bridge at this Tower of London, there before my eyes across the river Thames, I lose myself in an intensity of gazing” (Soseki, *Tower* 93). Conveying to what extent a sense of prevailing visual perception, of personal gazing and “peering about” has been the authors’ distinct hallmark, I argue that a “visual” stream of consciousness is present in their essays in an attempt to link rational geography to the literary portrayal of London.

Most critics have focused on the London cityscape as a literary subject matter, modern-culture readings, empiricist, impressionist and symbolist renderings of the city. Works such as Bradbury’s *Modernism*, Dennis’ *Cities in Modernity*, Freeman’s *Conceiving the City*, Brooker’s *Geographies of Modernism*, and Ackroyd’s *London The Biography*, all focus on geographical representations of the city in a metonymic way. Woolf’s *The London Scene* is at its best only marginally portrayed; in her notorious biography Lee devotes only half a page to *The London Scene* and says that “there was nothing insular or complacent about her view of her city. Such patriotism as she had was for places, not people or traditions or beliefs” (Lee 554). Sōseki’s *The Tower of London* has been entirely ignored by recent critics; most have focused on his novel *I Am a Cat* and *Kokoro* including Yiu’s remarkable study entitled *Chaos and Order in the Works of Natsume Sōseki*.

Brooker is correct in pointing out in his introduction that “the distinction between the physical and imagined city proves important [...] and is closely related to the distinction between literary or artistic modernism and social modernity” (Brooker, 5). Arguing that physical geography and the built environment function as a “determining influence upon consciousness and conduct” (Brooker, 5), I shed some light upon Woolf’s *The London Scene* and Sōseki’s *The Tower of London* analysing a rationally geographic view on modernist London.

## The London fog

Linking geography to *The London Scene* (Lee is right in saying that Woolf had a patriotism for places, in particular for London which she loved and preferred over the countryside) and *The Tower of London* to advance an innovative approach that is both physical and metaphorical is based upon a surprisingly single geographical feature: the London fog.

Fog was construed as an image of hiding and covering up by authors such as Dickens, Doyle, Stoker and Wilde in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The geographical environment is not topographically linked to reality and mystifies places in works such as *Dracula*: “I find that the district he named is in the extreme east of the country, just on the borders of three states, Transylvania, Moldavia, and Bukovina, in the midst of the Carpathian mountains; one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe. I was not able to light on any map or work giving the exact location of the Castle Dracula, as there are no maps of this country as yet to compare with our own Ordnance Survey maps” (Stoker, 1). The image of fog used to shroud specific and rational settings is an all too familiar one: “In this fog, my dear Basil? Why, I can’t even recognise Grosvenor Square. I believe my house is somewhere about here, but I don’t feel at all certain about it” (Wilde, 167). Wilde’s use of fog in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to blur the clear contours of Grosvenor Square in central London is similar in its metaphorical depiction to Doyle’s covering up of the murder in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*: “I have said that over the great Grimpen Mire there hung a dense, white fog. It was drifting slowly in our direction, and banked itself up like a wall on that side of us, low, but thick and well defined. The moon shone on it, and it looked like a great shimmering ice field, with the heads of the distant tors as rocks bore upon its surface. Holmes’s face was turned towards it, and he muttered impatiently as he watched its sluggish drift” (Doyle, 189).

More importantly, fog is intrinsically related to the physical geography of London. Fog as a meteorological phenomenon belongs to the study of geophysics which in turn is a subcategory of physical geography as part of the atmospheric layers of the earth. And as such, fog conveys a physical barrier to seeing and perceiving. Both authors, Woolf and Sōseki, employ fog as such a physical and real geographical phenomenon when “peering about” London.

In his sequence entitled *Drifting in Space* (1906) Sōseki mentions fog in terms of the urban landscape: “Walking across the park before dinner, I sit down in a seat by the riverside and gaze at the opposite shore. The deep fog so characteristic of London is particularly evident by the river” (Soseki, Tower 117). Sōseki traces the layers of fog with his own eyes: “I [...] look straight ahead at the shadows of fog creeping along the road on the far distant bank as they become gradually darker” (Soseki, Tower 117). Fog is equally present in Woolf’s *The London Scene*: “And the season of the house – for every house has its season – seems to be always the month of February, when cold and fog are in the street [...]” (Woolf, London Scene 40). The house Woolf talks about is the Carlyle House<sup>1</sup> just north of the Chelsea Embankment, the very same which Sōseki observes shrouded in fog from the opposite Thames’ bank.

But why the fog, one might ask. Fog, I argue, – as a material geographical substance and as a literary metaphor – not only occurs frequently in their works but is tied to question of visual depictions of the London metropolis at the turn of the last century.

## Sōseki’s foggy London

The employment of fog as a material substance is distinctively different in their essays. Sōseki’s London literally fades away from vision due to the foggy layers: “In the midst of air saturated with sepia-coloured moisture I vacantly stand and gaze at it. Twentieth-century London gradually disappears from the back of my mind and, at the same time, the image of the Tower before my eyes starts like a phantom to sketch the history of the past in my brain” (Soseki, Tower 93). Sōseki is “unable to see anything” (Soseki, Tower 111), “the whole spectacle vanishes into thin air. When I look around there is no trace” (Soseki, Tower 112). The moisture, drizzle and sepia-coloured smoggy atmosphere belongs to the London fog shrouding the city behind an impermeable veil. The cityscape vanishes as “everything disappears little by little into the trailing mist. In the end, like a distant, future world dragged in front of my eyes” (Soseki, Tower 117). Drawn away from vision, London gradually becomes invisible.

Fog as a material substance lends itself to a much wider interpretation in terms of the space-time continuum. In his

essay *Fog*, Sōseki returns to the evaporating vision of London in the fog: “From the bottom of the lawn below to the top of the brick walls over six feet high that surround it on three sides, nothing is visible. Only a total emptiness clogs the air. [...] Now this garden, so rich in memories, is also buried in fog, and between it and the unkempt garden of my own boarding house there is no boundary, as one seamlessly fuses into the other” (Soseki, Fog 146). The Dictionary of Physical Geography defines fog as “the index ( $I_p$ ) is expressed by:  $I_p=f(dw, tp, Sp, ep)$ , where:  $dw$  is the distance from and the spatial extent of standing water;  $tp$  is a function of the local topography at point  $p$ ;  $Sp$  is a function of the road topography at point  $p$ ;  $ep$  is an expression of any environmental feature likely to help or hinder the formation of [...] fog” (Whittow 196).

Fog is linked to space as measured in the distance from one point to another point and always remains in relation to the local physical topography because the environment dictates the spatial dispositions of the misty mass. The very same environmental dispositions are present in Sōseki’s descriptions: “When I go outside only about four yards ahead is visible. When one proceeds four yards, another four yards ahead becomes visible. I walk along wondering whether the world has shrunk to a four yards square, and the more I walk the more a new four yards square appears. In its place, the world I have walked through passes into the past and continuously disappears” (Soseki, Fog 147). The fog’s space-time continuum limits the visibility and the urban landscape recedes from view. The local topography and physical environment simply melt away.

Fog unveils its own dynamics due to its characteristics of formlessness (fog has no definite or consistent spatial form), content-lessness (apart from the water particles), site-lessness (no specific geographical location), and time-lessness (not tied to a specific time aspect).

There is no beginning nor end for fog forms and dissolves along the lines of its own dynamics. Fog acts like a self-vibrating region with its own intensities because its substance – white, empty and colourless – relies on the vibration of the water particles constituting its own energy. Similar to Sōseki’s evocation in *The Tower of London*: “But in an instant the coloured object disappears into the middle of the turbid emptiness. It is enveloped in the middle of a vast colourlessness. As I cross Westminster Bridge, a white object flaps fleetingly once or twice past my eyes. [...] At that moment Big Ben starts solemnly striking ten o’clock. When I look up there is only sound in the emptiness” (Soseki, Fog 147). Fog’s material substance has become so heavy-laden in the air that the city’s invisibility only allows for the striking sounds of Big Ben to come through.

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<sup>1</sup> Preserved since 1895 this writer’s house in the heart of one of London’s most famous creative quarters tells the story of Thomas and Jane Carlyle. Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) was a Scottish satirical writer, essayist, historian and teacher. The couple moved here from their native Scotland in 1834 and became an unusual but much-loved celebrity couple of the 19th-century literary world. [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/carlyles-house]



Soseke Natsume courtesy Japan National Library

## The charm of Woolf's modern London

The emptiness and colourlessness of the misty mass are similarly striking in Woolf's *The London Scene*, not due to the fog's all-encompassing presence but due to its absence. Smog, a compound word coined from smoke and fog in 1905 by Henry Antoine in the July 26 edition of the London newspaper *Daily Graphic*, appears as the only residue of fog present in Woolf's renderings of London: "As we come closer to the Tower Bridge the authority of the city begins to assert itself. The buildings thicken and heap themselves higher. The sky seems laden with heavier, purpler clouds. Domes swell; church spires, white with age, mingle with the tapering, pencil-shaped chimneys of factories. One hears the roar and the resonance of London itself" (Woolf, *London Scene* 16). Similar to Sōseki, the resonance of London itself pierces through the smog, the metropolis however does not appear to be enshrouded.

A crystalline clear transparency seems to reign over its roofs: "The charm of modern London is that it is not built to last; it is built to pass. Its glassiness, its transparency, its surging waves of coloured plaster give a different pleasure and achieve a different end from that which was desired and attempted by the old builders and their patrons, the nobility of England" (Woolf, *London Scene* 31). While the temporary nature of modern London seems to correspond to the temporary nature of fog as a material substance, its visibility is not affected by it. On the contrary, London comes to light: "The Abbey is full of Kings and Queens, Dukes and Princes. The light falls upon gold coronets, and gold still lingers in the folds of ceremonial robes" (Woolf, *London Scene* 55). Its visibility to the observer becomes an integral part of its modernity, to the changing

nature of the metropolis, its freshness: "The delightful thing about London was that it was always giving one something new to look at, something fresh to talk about" (Woolf, *London Scene* 82). Woolf's London is present, here and now, afresh and alive while Sōseki's London is absent and dull, wrapped into a Victorian-like fog.

## The effacement of subjectivity

The fog's absence and presence as a material substance disclose dissimilarities in terms of its metaphorical modes. Linked to its visibility and invisibility, the image of fog, is responsible for an effacement of subjectivity. The image of fog veiling the landscape is an all too familiar phenomenon of effacing the clear and pertinent contours of trees, houses, hills and mountains.

While Woolf uses fog as a metaphorical concept to shroud the Victorian past (she employs fog when talking about the Carlyle House from the 19<sup>th</sup> century as quoted above), fog on the other hand metaphorically objectifies Sōseki's London. The metropolis vanishes behind the layers of mist and loses its subjectivity from grey shades into dark depths of shapeless forms: "and the world that has appeared grey until now suddenly turns dark on four sides. Like thick liquefied peat washing around my body, the heavy, black-stained fog has started to assail my eyes and mouth and nose" (Soseki, *Tower* 14). The metropolis seems to melt into a hazy and formless ocean of urban blackness: "I blankly pause for a while in the middle of this oppressive murkiness. [...] At that moment a pulse of yellow light the size of a pea dully appears at a single point in this ocean of haziness. With this as a target I move forward about four paces" (Soseki, *Tower* 148). The fog has dissipated street names, monuments and sights effacing the metropolis' subjectivity. Street names, localities and monuments have been lost to foggier climes.

Exploring Sōseki's topography of London appears to be anachronistic. Physical geography has simply disappeared behind the veils of fog: "faint ghosts of spires disclose themselves as the smoke clouds shift. 'In the direction of London' is already an anachronism. [...] I cast my eyes towards what he (Carlyle) would have called 'the direction of London'. But neither Westminster nor St Paul's are visible" (Soseki, *Tower* 123). The spatial and temporal characteristics of physical geography linked to the human interference in the natural operation of the physical systems, belong to the past as the two most imposing of London's monuments, Westminster and St Paul's, have faded away from vision. London's subjectivity is a relic from the past: "I hardly knew one direction from another and, of course, knew nothing at all about geography" (Soseki, *Tower* 91). The use of the map, an object of urban representation, seems to strengthen the geographical anachronism: "I had to walk about gingerly using a single map as my guide for sightseeing and errands every day" (Soseki, *Tower* 91).

The fog has deprived the metropolis of its subjectivity; the existence of the mind may likewise be at issue: "If I say, 'I came not knowing from whence I came, and left not knowing from whence I left', it will sound Zen-like, but, even now, I have no idea which roads I passed along to arrive at the Tower or what districts I crossed over to get back to my house" (Soseki, *Tower* 92). The blurring of the city runs in a parallel fashion to the



blurring of the mind: “I felt like being a Gotenba rabbit<sup>2</sup> suddenly set loose in the heart of Nipponbashi. Thinking I might be swept away in a human wave when I went outside, [...] I had peace of mind neither day nor night” (Soseki, *Tower* 91). The reference to the dislocation of the Mt Fuji rabbit within Osaka’s most commercial district, the Nipponbashi, called Nagamachi (長町) during the Edo period, alludes to the fogging of the mind and places Sōseki completely out of time and space.

## London’s perpetual stream

While the effacement of London’s subjectivity plays a central role in Sōseki’s *The Tower of London*, an effacement of a different sort seems to take place in Woolf’s *The London Scene*. Rather than writing in the first person singular as opposed to an autobiographical account, Woolf uses the first person plural *we* in her London impressions. The subjectivity of the observer/narrator, in the role of an urban wanderer, seems to gradually vanish giving way to an omnipresence of the metropolis. Eying the wholeness of London from Hampstead in the north: “we find ourselves on top of the hill and beneath shall see the whole of London lying below us. It is a view of perpetual fascination at all hours and in all seasons. One sees London as a whole – London crowded and ribbed and compact, with its dominant domes, its guardian cathedrals; its chimneys and spires; its cranes and gasometers; [...] London has lain there time out of mind” (Woolf, *London Scene* 46). The fog has dissipated leaving the translucent metropolis stretched out below eternally. London simply dominates, acts as the dominant subject matter: “It is a commonplace, but we cannot help repeating it, that St. Paul’s dominates London. It swells like a great grey bubble from a distance; it looms over us, huge and menacing, as we approach” (Woolf, *London Scene* 49).

A threatening submission to the sheer vastness of the English capital looms over “us”, crushed under the swelling monument of St Paul’s. The city can not come to a conclusion, it appears as an uncontrollable and perpetual stream: “But as one saunters towards the sunset – and what with artificial light and mounds of silk and gleaming omnibuses, a perpetual sunset seems to brood over the Marble Arch – the garishness and gaudiness of the great rolling ribbon of Oxford Street has its fascination. It is like the pebbly bed of a river whose stones are for ever washed by a bright stream” (Woolf, *London Scene* 26). Long ago the mists dissolved exhibiting the bright and shiny urban ribbon of Oxford Street rendered visible by its tasteless, but fascinating shops and department stores.

The urban subjectivity sways a human one: “Where Shakespeare and Jonson once fronted each other and had their talk out, a million Mr. Smiths and Miss Browns scuttle and hurry, swing off omnibuses, dive into tubes. They seem too many, too minute, too like each other to have each a name, a character, a separate life of their own” (Woolf, *London Scene* 50). The distinctive Shakespeare and Jonson are replaced by faceless Smiths and Browns taken up by the ebb and flow of the impersonal urban stream. The dissipation of the fog has also unshaken London’s dominance upon the observer whose

subjective and personal accounts have been effaced: “And we must not admit a distinct tendency in our corrupt mind soaked with habit to stop” (Woolf, *London Scene* 71). The visible omnipresence of London has eclipsed and corrupted the mind causing an ambiguous stream of consciousness: “Something of the splendour of St. Paul’s lies simply in its vast size, in its colourless serenity. Mind and body seem both to widen in this enclosure, to expand under this huge canopy where the light is neither daylight nor lamplight, but an ambiguous element something between the two” (Woolf, *London Scene* 52). The ambiguity results from the effacement of subjectivity as mind and body are challenged by the vastness of the metropolis.

Modernist London appears distinctively differing and deferring through English and Japanese eyes. Exchanges and encounters between the fog and its dissipation, between the human mind and the metropolis, between Woolf and Sōseki unveil the complexity of a city on the brink of modernity, with its countless tube lines, its never-ending suburban terraces and its all polluting smog. London has gained its status as the largest capital of the world with over seven million people in 1910 – New York had 4.5, Paris 3, Berlin and Vienna 2 million inhabitants (London City Council, 23) –, but has it lost its visibility? As a literary subject matter definitely not, to the human eye maybe. It is interesting that both, Woolf and Sōseki, seem to have been in their very own way overwhelmed by London.

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<sup>2</sup> A Gotenba rabbit is said to originate from the village of Gotenba on the flanks of Mt Fuji.



*"The Changing Place of Making"*. Grand Prize Winner & Best Newcomer Mini (2014). Image Courtesy of Jack Weisman.

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