



ROMÂNIA
MINISTERUL EDUCAȚIEI ȘI
CERCETĂRII
UNIVERSITATEA „VASILE ALECSANDRI”
DIN BACĂU
FACULTATEA DE LITERE
Str. Spiru Haret, nr. 8, Bacău, 600114
Tel./ fax ++40-234-588884
www.ub.ro; e-mail: litere@ub.ro



RO-BRIT STUDENT JOURNAL

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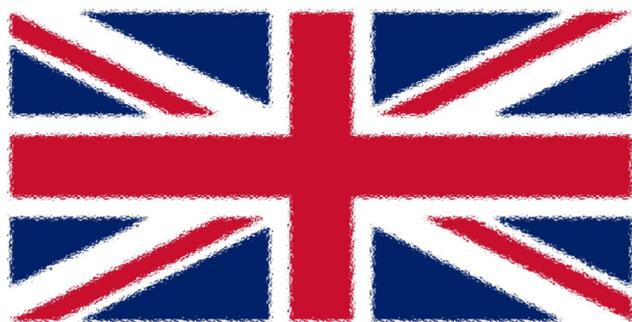
**Ioana-Ingrid Lupu, III,
R-E**

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EDITORIAL

RO-BRIT STUDENT JOURNAL is an annual English journal dedicated to publishing papers written by students in the Faculty of Letters (and not only), under the auspices of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures from “Vasile Alecsandri” University of Bacău.

This journal intends to encourage students to take more initiative in engaging in the English studies, providing at the same time the opportunity for them to have their research and creative writing published. Thus, RO-BRIT STUDENT JOURNAL invites English-speaking students to contribute to the journal through submitting original articles. The journal welcomes submissions on English language, literature and culture, its purpose being to provide a channel for the publication of original work by Romanian students who love the English language. This is an excellent opportunity for students to allow their research to be seen by their colleagues and to participate in a promising endeavour.



RO-BRIT STUDENT JOURNAL este o revistă anuală în limba engleză dedicată publicării lucrărilor scrise de către studenții din cadrul Facultății de Litere (și nu numai), sub auspiciile Departamentului de Limbi și Literaturi Străine de la Universitatea “Vasile Alecsandri” din Bacău. RO-BRIT STUDENT JOURNAL intenționează să încurajeze studenții vorbitori de limba engleză să scrie și să publice în limba engleză articole cu privire la limbă, literatură și cultură, scopul principal al revistei fiind acela de a oferi un canal pentru publicarea de lucrări originale de către studenții români care iubesc limba engleză. Aceasta este o oportunitate excelentă pentru studenți de a permite ca cercetarea lor să fie văzută de colegii lor și de a participa la un efort promițător.

Andrei-Ionut Ioanici, II, E-F

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița

Samoa is an island country found in the South Pacific Ocean. I learned about this beautiful place a few years ago when I came across an interesting song whose language I found oddly interesting. I looked it up and found that it was a Samoan band, and the nationality was very intriguing to me, so I did more research and discovered Samoa, which I now consider the most beautiful country I have ever seen. I have never been there, but it is definitely the first place I would go to if I had the chance to go anywhere on Earth.

What I like besides the actual beauty of the country is the beauty of its Polynesian culture. When we think of hula dances, flowers around one's neck, coconuts, palm trees, and the ocean, it is actually countries like Samoa, New Zealand, and the American state of Hawaii that keep this astonishing culture alive.

If we look at Samoan people, more often than not we can find lots of tattoos covering their bodies. They are not worn for the sake of looking awesome (even though they do look amazing) but actually have a cultural value, the designs consisting of spearheads, shark teeth, turtle shells and whatnot, all of these related to the people's connection with the ocean. They are only to be worn by people born Samoan. The tattoos' meaning can vary from status and power to a sign of pride, and it is a huge sign of disrespect if a non-Samoan person displays such tattoos without having any link to the Polynesian culture. There are many celebrities that have Samoan heritage, such as Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Jason Momoa, and Roman Reigns. Also, the process of getting one of these tattoos is rather painful and dangerous, because they are done with lots of needles and ink without any kind of modern machinery.



They stick to traditional methods, which I find quite amazing, even though there are reports of people getting severe infections or even dying because of the unsanitary process. Another famous traditional thing of the Polynesian country is their haka, a dance-like performance that is now done purely for entertainment, but its purpose is actually that of an intimidation tactic for the enemy on the battlefield. Some football teams perform it before matches, and they truly make a wonderful showcase of their culture!

Nevertheless, I love this place and the other ones like it, but especially Samoa because it is the first one that I'd found and I wish that sometime in the future I will be able to go there. It's a place that I doubt anyone would not like. Talofa!

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Antifa hooligan or white pride worldwide? An essay about the divergence in the skinhead community around the world

Camelia-Letiția Moldovan, III, R-E
Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița

1. Introduction

The skinhead subculture, often misunderstood and misrepresented in mainstream discourse, originated in 1960s Britain among working-class youths shaped by the vibrant convergence of Jamaican rude boy culture and British mod fashion. Rude boys—sharp-dressed Jamaican youth known for their rebellious attitude, tailored suits, and love of ska and rocksteady music—brought a sense of swagger and defiance that resonated with urban British youth. At the same time, mods influenced the subculture with their obsession for clean-cut style, slim-fit clothing, and American soul and R&B music.



This cultural fusion gave birth to the early skinhead movement: multiracial, style-conscious, and deeply rooted in working-class pride. Over time, however, the movement splintered into various ideological factions. The most notable and often conflated groups are the S.H.A.R.P. (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice) and white supremacist or neo-Nazi skinheads. Despite their shared aesthetic roots—closely cropped hair, boots, and braces—their ideologies and practices diverge sharply. This essay explores these differences, emphasizing the movement’s cultural origin and the importance of distinguishing fashion from ideology.

2. Origins and Mission of S.H.A.R.P.

Founded in New York City in 1987, the S.H.A.R.P. movement was a response to the increasing presence of white supremacist skinheads who distorted the original, multicultural essence of the skinhead subculture. Marcus, a member of the hardcore punk scene and band Skarhead, is often credited with initiating the movement: “S.H.A.R.P. was formed as a reaction to white power groups stealing our look, our music, our whole thing. We wanted to take it back” (Marcus, as quoted in *Blush, American Hardcore*, 2001).

The organization quickly spread to Europe and other parts of the United States, uniting anti-racist skinheads under a common banner. While not a hierarchical or centralized organization, S.H.A.R.P. chapters are united in their opposition to fascism, racism, homophobia, and sexism.



3. Ideological Foundations

S.H.A.R.P. ideology is based on inclusivity, anti-racism, and a deep connection to working-class identity. Unlike white supremacist skinheads, who promote exclusionary and hierarchical beliefs, S.H.A.R.P. skinheads embrace cultural diversity and solidarity across racial lines. Their slogan—“Unity, Not Hate”—captures the essence of their mission. S.H.A.R.P. adherents often educate others about the true history of the skinhead movement, highlighting its roots in multicultural British working-class neighborhoods where Jamaican ska, reggae, and bluebeat music shaped youth culture. Scholar Timothy S. Brown writes: “S.H.A.R.P. represents a conscious effort to reclaim the

cultural authenticity of the original skinhead scene against racist revisionism” (Brown, *Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics*, 2004).

Their ideology is often expressed through involvement in anti-fascist (Antifa) activities, direct action, and solidarity with other marginalized groups. It is not uncommon to see S.H.A.R.P. skinheads at protests or community outreach events, wearing traditional skinhead attire alongside patches reading “Love Music, Hate Racism” or “Good Night White Pride.”



4. Origins of the Neo-Nazi Skinhead Subculture

While the original skinhead culture of the late 1960s was multi-ethnic and influenced by Black British and Caribbean communities, the 1980s saw the rise of factions that adopted white nationalist and neo-Nazi ideologies. These groups emerged most prominently in the UK and the US as part of broader far-right movements. The National Front in Britain and groups like the Aryan Nations in the United States provided ideological infrastructure and recruited among disaffected working-class youth. As historian George Marshall explains: “What began as a youth culture celebrating Jamaican music and working-class pride was hijacked by fascist elements looking for foot soldiers” (Marshall, *Spirit of '69*, 1991, p. 21).

5. Beliefs of Neo-Nazi Skinheads

Neo-Nazi skinheads adopt a distorted worldview grounded in racial purity, antisemitism, anti-immigration sentiment, and violent ultranationalism. Central to their belief system is the idea of a global Zionist conspiracy, the glorification of Hitler and the Third Reich, and the belief that multiculturalism threatens white European identity.

Their ideology is often organized around “14 Words,” a slogan coined by white supremacist David Lane: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.” This phrase is frequently used in graffiti, tattoos, and music lyrics associated with the movement. Neo-Nazi skinheads also often invoke slogans like “Blood and Soil” or “White Pride World Wide,” drawing heavily from Nazi propaganda and Aryan mysticism. Their activities include distributing propaganda, engaging in hate crimes, and participating in rallies and concerts that double as recruitment tools.

6. Ideological Differences

The key difference between S.H.A.R.P. and white supremacist skinheads lies in ideology:

White supremacist skinheads adhere to racist, xenophobic, and often neo-Nazi ideologies. They advocate for racial segregation or dominance and frequently engage in hate crimes. Organizations such as Hammerskins and Blood & Honour exemplify this faction. As per the Southern Poverty Law Center: “These groups represent the most violent and militant wing of the white supremacist movement” (SPLC, 2023).

S.H.A.R.P. skinheads, by contrast, oppose racism and often align themselves with anti-fascist, anarchist, or leftist causes. While still embracing traditional skinhead fashion and music, they explicitly reject white supremacy. This ideological divergence is also reflected in their associations. S.H.A.R.P. skinheads often attend ska, reggae, and Oi! concerts that promote unity and anti-racism, while white supremacist skinheads frequent white power music shows that promote hate speech and exclusion.

7. Cultural Practices and Symbols

Though both groups may wear similar clothing—Doc Martens, flight jackets, and shaved heads—their symbols are markedly different: White supremacist skinheads use symbols like swastikas, SS bolts, and the Celtic cross. Their tattoos and



graffiti often reference Nazi ideology.

S.H.A.R.P. skinheads, in contrast, display anti-racist imagery, such as the two-tone black and white checkerboard associated with ska music, or patches with slogans like “Love Music, Hate Racism.”

As sociologist Timothy S. Brown notes: “The skinhead image is a contested field where identical aesthetics may mask diametrically opposed politics” (Brown, *Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics: Skinheads and ‘Nazi Rock’ in England and Germany*, *Journal of Social History*, 2004).

8. Conclusion

The distinction between S.H.A.R.P. skinheads and white supremacist skinheads illustrates the complex nature of subcultural identity. While both emerged from the same visual and cultural roots, they embody fundamentally opposing worldviews. Recognizing this distinction is essential in avoiding the stigmatization of anti-racist skinheads and in understanding the broader dynamics of youth subcultures and political radicalization.

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In addition to the Victorian novels that basically present the adult side of the characters, Lewis Carroll, one of the most important authors of the Victorian Era, introduces in his literary work *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, published in 1865, the childish side of a female character. The title of the work gives a double meaning: on the one hand, it indicates the name of the main character, which may suggest a pseudo-eponymy because, in everyday life and among the public, his work is frequently used and known only as "Alice". On the other hand, the title indicates, in a broad meaning, but also suggesting a short summary, the entire action of the novel, which places Alice in the center and which reveals the adventures she goes through, depicted in the 12 chapters of the book.

Even if at first sight - or better said, on a first reading - the work resorts to a predominantly childish tone, it rather brings a shift from other Victorian works, a change from the Victorian childhood ideals, discipline and essential meanings of education and innocence, however fleeting they might be. The complexity of the work is marked by its mysterious elements, difficult to elucidate – the hidden symbols; difficult to justify – the meanings belonging to the world of sciences, and, as a whole, the elements that include the innocence of childhood, of the rich imagination full of misunderstandings, uncertainties, curiosities, capable of giving life to a new world and characters as bizarre as possible, as far and detached from the reality as possible.

Although we are normally used to women appearing in the literary works of the Victorian period as having a lower social status than men, and as having limited rights and many duties, being strictly supervised and demanded docility, care as common duties, in Lewis Carroll's novel, things are a bit different. The traditional gender roles are reversed by portraying women with masculine behavior and males with qualities generally attributed to women.

In the foreground, we highlight the main character of the novel: Alice – a little girl who mainly embodies elements specific to femininity. Although she undergoes numerous social-psychological and physical changes during the action of the novel, Alice remains a character that shows us, categorically, that she has a human soul that gradually matures in a relatively short time, but remains stuck in a child's body. Elements such as humor, the instinct to play, to laugh, to be curious about everything that happens around her, to listen to those older than her, are contrasted with the elements of maturity, the judgment from the outside, of indiscipline, authority, responsibility and the courage to answer other characters, regardless of their social status and background.

The feminine side of Alice responds to the challenges imposed by society. From the very first chapter ("Down the Rabbit Hole"), Alice portrays the elements of Victorian femininity wanting to escape from the isolated/limited sphere that the woman of this period was not supposed to leave. Alice falls down the White Rabbit's hole, suggesting the escape route to freedom to which the Victorian feminine aspires. In this way, Alice destroys the barrier imposed by the Victorian social environment, this being possible only through a dream: "Down, down, down" (p. 4). Being isolated from the world, the Victorian woman tries to talk to someone from the outside (as an element of human needs), but fails because of her isolation; therefore, the only way to talk is to herself, which nowadays seems like a medical problem, but this often happens to Alice during the novel: "There was nothing else to do, so Alice soon started talking again" (p. 8). Unlike the Victorian woman, who had limited access to education and knowledge, Alice seems to be the opposite – a little girl who possesses knowledge from various fields, such as: mathematics ("I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time?" – p. 11; "that would be four thousand miles down" – p. 11), geography ("I must be getting somewhere near the center of the Earth" – p. 12); and sometimes she is aware that she is wrong: "London is the capital of Paris and Paris is the capital of Rome – no, that's all wrong, I'm certain!" – p. 22), physics and astronomy ("If I eat one of these cakes, it's sure to make some change in my size"; "You see that Earth takes twenty-four hours to turn round on its axis" – p. 23), foreign languages (French: "Où est ma chatte?" – p. 15), ethics ("Oh, I beg your pardon!" – p. 18; "Would you tell me please, why are you painting those roses?" – p. 121; "Then it wasn't civil of you to offer it" – p. 48), psychology ("Ah, that's a great puzzle"; "I think you might do something better with the time than waste it in asking riddles that have no answer"; "But, it goes on, they all returned from him to you!" – p. 67), history ("I dare say it's a French mouse, come over with William the Conqueror" – p. 88) and sometimes music and biology. Like any child her age, Alice is curious about many bizarre and nonsensical things: "But do cats eat bats?"

and sometimes “Do bats eat cats?”, “I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I’ve got to?”, even some Latin grammar which she misinterprets: “A mouse – of a mouse – to a mouse – a mouse – O mouse!”. (p. 87).

Complementary to Alice’s common genetic (feminine) characteristics, her male characteristics appear in all twelve chapters of the novel. So, characterizing and analyzing Alice from a male perspective, we can notice that she possesses moral traits specific to male characters, such as courage, authority, independence, responsibility, decision-making power – while, affectivity, shyness, fragility, sensitivity, are specific to her feminine side. Alice grows and shrinks in height depending on the potions she drinks or the food she eats. We can notice that when Alice grows large in height her moral authority increases too → the aspects of masculinity; and when she decreases in height her authority decreases too, but it increases her moral sensitivity and inferiority → the aspects of femininity. When Alice is criticized, given advice, warned, contradicted, denigrated, it seems that her feminine appearance takes shape again and becomes a specific Victorian feminine element: the authoritative voice of the other characters represents the male voice that underestimates Alice, while she is in her feminine pose. And when Alice has the power to judge others and control and twist their words, she is in her masculine pose, she is more confident, and, in most cases, her height is larger than usual under these circumstances.

In the case of Alice’s moral inferiority, we can exemplify a sequence from Chapter III (“A Caucus-Race and a Long Tale”): After a variety of animals emerge from the ‘pool of tears’, Alice is talking more and more to most of the animals present and is not shy about talking to them. Among these animals is a Lory (this character refers to Lorina Charlotte Liddell, Alice’s older sister), with whom she has a misunderstanding. The major problem was that they all had to dry. The Lory disliked Alice’s method of drying she proposed to the others, for which she replied: “I am older than you, and must know better!” (p. 67). The fact that Alice is noticed and scolded by the lory shows that she lacks authority and the critical voice of Lory changes, phonetically and figuratively, into the higher voice of Victorian masculinity which contradicts, regardless of the situation, the feminine being, reminding her that she needs to know her limits and her place.

In the case of Alice’s moral superiority, we can exemplify a sequence from Chapter XII (“Alice’s Evidence”): Alice had grown large in height, and in the last few minutes there had been a great commotion in the hall because of her height. She got up in a hurry when the White Rabbit called her name, and at that moment “she tripped over the jury-box with the edge of her skirt, upsetting all the jury-men on the heads of the crowd below” (p. 128). In this chapter, the masculine side of Alice is synthesized, both morally and physically. Alice grows in height and becomes the most authoritative being in the room, most of whom are greatly frightened. Her physical appearance exudes superiority over the subjects of the royal family who judge the ‘case of the stolen tarts’. At the same time, the King states from his book: “Rule Forty-two. All persons more than a mile high to leave the court” (p. 130). Everyone looked at Alice, and she refuses the king: “I’m not a mile high” (p. 131), but the King and the Queen threw new lines at Alice: “You are” and “Nearly two miles high” (p. 131). Alice’s wit immediately suppresses the authority of the kings, and she gains strength, like a debate winner: ““Well, I shan’t go, at any rate”, said Alice; “besides that’s not a regular rule: you invented it just now”. And the King says: “It’s the oldest rule in the book” (p. 132). Alice’s next line will make the King turn pale, who loses the power to answer Alice: “Then it ought to be Number One” (p. 132). Alice’s rebellious boldness shows that she does not accept being wronged and wrongly accused, which gives the protagonist a Victorian masculine tone, whereby the man is the follower of justice and must always be right, while the Victorian woman must be humble, her lines not being valid in the face of male superiority. The gender roles are reversed, so Alice gains superiority, having a masculine side, being morally and physically stronger than the King; here the King is stripped of both his social superiority and his superior identity, becoming subservient to Alice’s authority. In this way, the King changes his masculine side into a feminine one, verbally withdrawing and accepting Alice’s lines. So, we see the change of moral values and the substitution of human genders, even though their appearance remains the same.

Among others, we can briefly exemplify other sequences in the novel, which directly or indirectly attest to the change of gender among male and female characters, or the categorization of elements specific to each gender according to the circumstances through which they were delivered to us by the author:

In Chapter III (“A Caucus-Race and a Long Tale”) we can notice the social balance after the end of the Caucus-race, when everyone dries up after running in the circle marked by the Dodo. An image of free choice is created, regardless of the gender of the characters, be they male or female: anyone can start running and stop running at any moment they want, the important thing being that they dry off after leaving ‘the pool of tears’, because the Mouse’s method did not work before: “There was no ‘One, two, three, and away’, but

they began running when they liked, and left off when they liked” (p. 48). Gender equality does not stop there. After the race is over, the Dodo declares everyone the winner, but all of them are waiting for a prize: “Everybody has won, and all must have prizes” (p. 49). Alice is the one to give out the prizes, according to the Dodo. This time, Alice is seen as a savior of those present there, like the head of the family who is obliged to feed the mouths of his family members. She gives them all a comfit from a box of comfits she had in her pocket. However, because equality between the characters seems to be lacking again, the Mouse wants to restore the balance between the characters and believes that Alice must be rewarded in her turn, like everyone else: “But she must have a prize herself, you know” (p. 49). The balanced thread on which the present characters now stand is quickly overshadowed by the superiority of Alice, who in this pose gains power and authority due to an important symbol of the novel, the thimble, which she had in her pocket, she hands to the Dodo, at his request: “Hand it over here” (p. 50). All the other animals surround Alice, and the Dodo solemnly offers Alice the thimble: “We beg your acceptance of this thimble” (p. 50). Now, Alice enters a supreme pose, the pose of the leader, which, in my opinion, embodies Queen Victoria herself, and the crowd of animals around her would represent the crowd that would surround the queen. I consider this image similar to the coronation of Queen Victoria, and, in this circumstance, Alice represents the Victorian female power that only the Queen could have, and the rest of the women and men are equal before the Queen.

Other characters that illustrate the change of gender roles are the royal couple: the King and the Queen. While the King is a peaceful character and sometimes even submissive to his wife, the Queen is more radical, harder to manipulate, more authoritarian and harsher towards their subjects. Her lines are sudden, decisive and repetitive: “Off with his/her/their head(s)!” (p. 98). Referring to Victorian society, the two characters represent the exact opposite of the genders: the King is morally inferior – a woman in a man’s body – and the Queen is the superior, representing a man in a woman’s body. Another character who embodies categorical masculinity specific to Victorian society is the White Rabbit. The character is presented as subservient to the Duchess, but at the same time a Victorian man in the body of a rabbit. His cues prove authority, determination, courage and emphasize the lack of respect directed at Alice, whom he frightens with his statement, and she takes off in the direction of the rabbit’s house. The imposed male hostility becomes a command for Alice, triggering her feminine sensibility, complying with the White Rabbit’s answer, but speaking to herself, she contradicts him, as soon as she runs away: “How queer it seems to be going messages for a rabbit!” (p. 87). “He took me for his housemaid” (p. 95) is the phrase that denotes Alice’s feminine frustration through which she opposes the rabbit, the male being, directly, but possibly only in thoughts and whispers. The allusion to Alice receiving orders from a being below her, from an animal who sees her as a housemaid, regardless of her status, because she is a woman and the Victorian woman’s opinion did not really matter.

Therefore, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland fully associates the only common period in human life, delimiting the point of infantile innocence through a complex, at the same time abstract character, whose adventures in Wonderland (in the lands of characters that take the form of animals or objects without life, which now acquire human states – capable of speaking with and like a human character – aspects impossible to be placed on the thread of reality) reveal the narrative aspect that emphasizes the transformations of the protagonist according to the social environments she passes through, depending on the lower characters who have the ability to criticize her, to advise her, and to make her shape herself according to the principles imposed by society.

At the same time, Alice, as a created character, is expelled by the author from the real world to the imaginary one through the dream. This is easy to notice at the beginning and end of the work through a portal that makes the transition between the two worlds, the real and the imaginary ones. The dream represents the important component that constitutes the unfolding of the action in this literary work, which probably would have continued indefinitely, thanks to the rich imagination specific to people in their childish posture, and in this novel, in the case of Alice.

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Masculinities in “A Study in Scarlet” by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Ioana Geangu, III, R-E

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Cătălina Bălinișteanu-Furdu

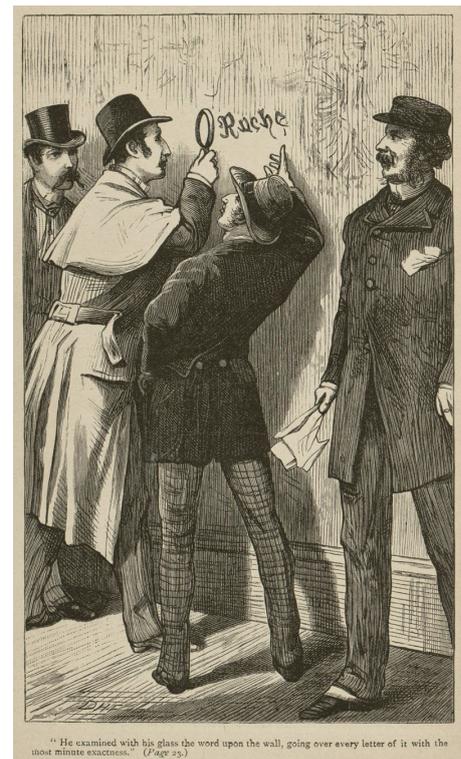
A Study in Scarlet (1888) is a crime novel by British author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. With the success of Doyle’s work and his many imitators, detective fiction dominated Victorian magazines, captivating readers with stories that spoke about anxieties related to identity and stability in a modern, urban society (Brantlinger and Thesing, 238). Detective stories like *A Study in Scarlet* thrived because they offered interesting male characters who grappled with complex moral and social issues, making them ideal vehicles for examining Victorian ideals of masculinity.

Victorian society upheld rigid expectations for men, often idealising traits like emotional restraint, rationality, physical courage, and intellectual prowess. Through Holmes’s eccentric genius and Watson’s soldierly loyalty, Conan Doyle presents contrasting forms of masculinity, inviting readers to consider the strengths and limitations of these ideals. As Holmes’s calculating detachment and Watson’s grounded pragmatism come together to solve mysteries, *A Study in Scarlet* offers a rich exploration of how different masculinities can complement one another, each reflecting cultural attitudes about gender, identity, and modernity in late 19th-century Britain.

The novel introduces Sherlock Holmes, a “consulting detective” known for his eccentric habits, selective knowledge, and remarkable detachment. Holmes is disinterested in fields like politics, philosophy, and even literature—except for sensational crime stories, where “he appears to know every detail of every horror perpetrated in the century.” (*A Study in Scarlet*, p. 22). His expertise is specialised, with practical knowledge of anatomy and British law that aids him in reconstructing crimes with sharp precision. Through the observations of Dr John Watson, who becomes his partner and chronicler, Conan Doyle portrays Holmes as a figure embodying Victorian ideals of masculinity: detached, cerebral, and self-assured.

Holmes’s emotional detachment and reliance on logic align with Victorian standards of masculinity, which valued restraint and intellectual control over emotional vulnerability. For instance, although Watson suffers from war injuries and financial troubles, Holmes does not show sympathy or compassion toward his new companion. Instead, he treats Watson as a useful partner in his detective work, a witness to his methods rather than a friend in need of empathy. This lack of emotional response to Watson’s struggles reflects Holmes’s prioritisation of utility over human connection, a characteristic consistent with the Victorian ideal of a man who maintains control over emotions. Watson observes this when he describes Holmes reveals this attitude when stating “I listen to their story, they listen to my comments, and then I pocket my fee” (*A Study in Scarlet*, p. 29). Holmes’s strength lies in his logic and reasoning, traits that would fail him in a relationship requiring warmth and emotional presence.

Holmes’s detachment is also clear in his clinical approach to crime scenes, where he exhibits almost no emotional response to human suffering. At the murder scene in *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes ignores the tragic implications of the crime, focusing on clues. Watson observes, “he whipped a tape measure and a large round magnifying glass from his pocket(...). So engrossed was he with his occupation that he appeared to have forgotten our presence” (p. 51) approaching the scene as a puzzle rather than a tragedy. When he finds the word “RACHE” written in blood, he does not pause to consider the horror or tragedy involved. Instead, he swiftly corrects Lestrade’s interpretation, pointing out that “RACHE” means “revenge” in German: “RACHE, is the German for ‘revenge’; so don’t lose your time looking for Miss Rachel.” (*A Study in Scarlet*, p. 53). This purely analytical observation lacks any acknowledgement of the emotional impact of the crime, exemplifying Holmes’s focus on intellectual precision over empathy and his inclination to dismiss sentiment in favour of clear-cut deduction.



“He examined with his glass the word upon the wall, going over every letter of it with the most minute exactness.” (Page 53.)

Further emphasising Victorian masculinity, Holmes relies on scientific deduction and rationalism rather than moral conviction or emotional intuition. For him, crime-solving is a puzzle, not a moral duty; he chooses cases based on intellectual challenge rather than the severity of the crime. His motivations are evident when he tells Watson, “I have a kind of intuition that way. Now and again a case turns up which is a little more complex. Then I have to bustle about and see things with my own eyes.” (*A Study in Scarlet*, p. 30). Holmes is drawn to his work for the intellectual satisfaction it provides, not out of a sense of compassion or a desire to serve justice. This craving for “mental exaltation” over any emotional response highlights his detachment and underscores his pursuit of logic, clarity, and personal satisfaction rather than connection or empathy.

Finally, Holmes’s use of the “Mind Palace” technique, which he metaphorically describes as a “little empty attic,” illustrates his commitment to maintaining an ordered, emotion-free mind. Method of loci, dating back to Ancient Greece and Rome. The technique was first documented by the ancient Roman orator Cicero, who attributed its invention to the Greek poet Simonides of Ceos in the 5th century BCE. According to legend, Simonides used this method to remember the identities of guests after a building collapsed by visualising where each person had been seated. Sherlock explains, “I consider that a man’s brain originally is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose (...) It is of the highest importance, therefore, not to have useless facts elbowing out the useful ones.” (*A Study in Scarlet*, p. 20). By comparing his mind to a storage area, Holmes shows the Victorian value of keeping only important information and clearing out emotional mess.

Sherlock Holmes’s physical appearance in *A Study in Scarlet* subtly reinforces Victorian ideals of masculinity, which valued a controlled, lean, and agile body capable of strength and precision without overt muscularity. Holmes may not look strong in a traditional way, but he has a fit and lively build. This matches his active life of thinking and physical activities. These traits were valued in Victorian society’s view of masculinity.

Watson first describes Holmes as tall and lean, noting his “extraordinary energy” and how “his eyes were sharp and piercing,” (*A Study in Scarlet*, p. 18) suggesting a man constantly alert and mentally engaged. This lean build complements Holmes’s intense intellectual nature, implying a disciplined, agile body that serves his cerebral pursuits. Holmes possesses a “hawk-like” (*A Study in Scarlet*, p. 18) face, emphasising sharpness and keenness, which aligns with his penetrating intelligence and observant nature.

Holmes’s thin and wiry frame also reflects Victorian ideals that rejected excess and valued utility over brawn. His appearance is well-suited to his work as a detective, where stealth and flexibility are more valuable than brute strength. Watson, for example, observes Holmes’s ability to withstand long periods of exertion, suggesting a form of masculinity grounded in endurance and purposeful activity rather than physical dominance. This portrayal fits the Victorian view of masculinity, where strength is linked to endurance and usefulness, not just size.

Finally, Holmes’s “high, somewhat strident, tones of my old companion’s voice” (*Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, p. 54) voice contrasts with the traditional expectation of a deep, commanding tone, suggesting that his masculinity is defined by intellect and precision rather than conventional notions of physical dominance. Watson describes how Holmes’s features reflect his mental acuity, observing his “cleanshaven, pale, and ascetic looking” (*Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, p. 261) face, meaning a face that appears restrained, disciplined, or self-denying, often characterised by a lean, sharp, or somewhat skeletal appearance. This portrayal emphasises how Holmes’s appearance mirrors his intense focus and disciplined lifestyle, illustrating a masculinity defined by intellect, energy, and restraint rather than by physical bulk.

Holmes’s appearance aligns with Victorian standards that prized a body capable of function and endurance rather than sheer physical power, further cementing him as a model of Victorian masculinity where intellect and utility shape a man’s character

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MEMOIRS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES.



"TWO OF HIS KNUCKLES WERE BURST AND BLEEDING."

and body. Through these traits and attitudes, Sherlock Holmes is a symbol of the Victorian masculine ideal: controlled, rational, and unshakeable in his intellectual pursuits. Conan Doyle uses Holmes to portray an era that valued intellectual dominance, emotional restraint, and unwavering confidence in reason as the essence of true masculinity.

Watson's physical appearance underscores the Victorian ideal of rugged masculinity shaped by experience and resilience. Having recently returned from the Afghan war, Watson's thin but strong frame signifies his military background and his survival through adversity. Stamford's description of Watson as "as thin as a lath and as brown as a nut" (*A Study in Scarlet*, p. 33) evokes images of a man hardened by the trials of battle and sun exposure, embodying the Victorian ideal of a man who has endured and emerged stronger. His military service also aligns with societal expectations of men as protectors and fighters, a role he fulfils both on the battlefield and in his partnership with Holmes. Watson's physicality reflects a combination of mental and physical strength, further enhancing his appeal as a character who embodies the complexities of Victorian masculinity.

While Holmes exemplifies intellectual detachment, Watson's emotional depth and compassion present a contrasting yet complementary form of masculinity. Watson frequently exhibits empathy, particularly toward victims and those in distress. For instance, when he learns of the murder at the opening of the story, he expresses concern not just for the case itself but for the implications of violence in society. This emotional awareness is articulated in his reflections: "London, that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained" (*A Study in Scarlet*, p. 3).

Such sentiments highlight Watson's belief in empathy, revealing a nuanced understanding of human nature that Holmes often overlooks. Watson's emotional intelligence allows him to connect with others on a personal level, demonstrating that strength is not solely derived from logic or physical prowess but also from the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. This capacity for empathy makes Watson a more relatable and accessible character, embodying the ideal Victorian man who balances strength with sensitivity.

The partnership between Holmes and Watson exemplifies the interplay between different aspects of masculinity. Watson's nurturing disposition is contrary to Holmes's often aloof and methodical nature. As Holmes delves into the realm of logic and deduction, it is often Watson the one who reminds him of the human consequences of their investigations. For example, in moments of distress, Watson acts as a mediator, grounding Holmes's intense focus on intellectual pursuits. When Holmes becomes overly absorbed in a case, Watson's interventions serve as a reminder of the emotional and social dimensions of their work. This contrast becomes clear when Watson states: "I had imagined that Sherlock Holmes would at once have hurried into the house and plunged into a study of the mystery." (*A Study in Scarlet*, p. 40).

Through these interactions, Watson helps to humanise Holmes and remind him that the cases they solve involve real lives and emotions, highlighting the need for a balanced perspective in their investigative work. Their different strengths show that while thinking and reason are crucial, emotional awareness and kindness are also keys in dealing with the challenges of life and crime in Victorian society.

As the main narrator of the story, Watson's perspective further enriches the narrative by providing insight into both his and Holmes's characters. His observations are not merely a recounting of events; they offer readers a glimpse into the emotional landscape of their world. For example, Watson reflects on his admiration for Holmes's intellect, yet he also recognises the limits of such a singular focus: "His ignorance is as remarkable as his knowledge." (*A Study in Scarlet*, p. 19).

This internal conflict reveals Watson's understanding of the importance of emotions in shaping a person's character. By serving as the lens through which readers experience the story, Watson bridges the gap between the cerebral world of Holmes and the emotional realities of Victorian society. His narrative voice conveys the significance of compassion and connection, reinforcing the idea that true masculinity encompasses intellectual prowess and emotional depth.

In *A Study in Scarlet*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle intricately creates the characters of Sherlock Holmes and Dr John Watson to portray contrasting yet complementary facets of Victorian masculinity. Holmes epitomises the intellectual ideal of the era, embodying a rational and emotionally detached approach to life, driven by logic and deduction. His physical appearance, marked by a lean frame and sharp features, aligns with the Victorian standard that values endurance and mental acuity over brute strength. In contrast, Watson represents a more emotionally engaged form of masculinity, characterised by compassion, empathy, and a rugged resilience shaped by his military experiences. His narrative voice and emotional depth enrich the story, offering a counterbalance to Holmes's analytical detachment.

Together, these characters illustrate the complexities of masculinity in the Victorian era, where both intellectual prowess and emotional intelligence were valued traits. Their dynamic partnership highlights that true masculinity encompasses a spectrum of qualities, from emotional understanding to rational analysis. As such, Conan Doyle not only crafts a compelling detective narrative but also invites readers to reflect on the multifaceted nature of manhood, revealing that strength lies not only in the mind but also in the heart. Ultimately, *A Study in Scarlet* serves as a testament to the enduring interplay between intellect and emotion, offering insights that resonate even in contemporary discussions about masculinity and identity.

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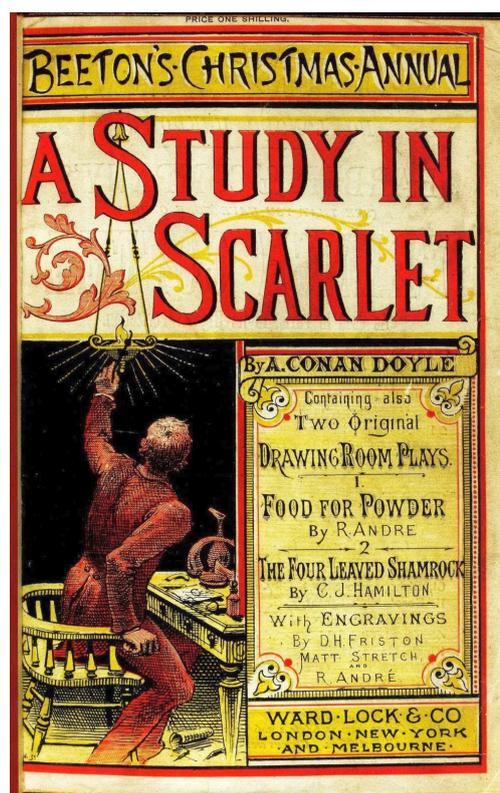
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Is Satis House Truly Enough?

An Analysis of the Relation between Satis House and the Great Expectations' Characters

Alexandru Bălici, II, E-F

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Cătălina Bălinișteanu-Furdu

The Victorian novel *Great Expectations*, published in 1861 by Charles Dickens, is one of the most well-known titles of the author's literary works, its value and importance remaining appreciated and acknowledged even in contemporary times. The well-crafted plot, the complexity of the characters, and the elaborated descriptions construct a believable and complex depiction of the Victorian society and its social norms.

When it comes to character analysis, space represents an essential aspect that must not be omitted, because it does not only indicate the background of the story, but more than that, it also has a significant role in the characters' portrayal and development. As in the real world, the characters are always shaped by the places they live in and, the other way around, the characters shape the places. When we "enter" their homes, we are introduced to a clearer, better imagery of their habits, interests and social status.

In *Great Expectations*, we are presented a wide range of spaces: from the humble place where the blacksmith of the village did his work to the "large and dismal" (Dickens 2007: 44) uptown mansion, where Miss Havisham "led a life of seclusion" (Dickens 2007: 44), and up to the crowded restaurants and theatres of London; shortly said, we are introduced to a complex and elaborated world.

Among all these places, Miss Havisham's house seems to be the most intriguing and interesting one, due to its strange, abandoned look ("which was of old brick, and dismal, and had a great many iron bars to it. Some of the windows had been walled up; of those that remained, all the lower were rusty barred." – Dickens 2007: 46) and its connection to Miss Havisham herself ("Everybody for miles round had heard of Miss Havisham up town as an immensely rich and grim lady who lived in a large and dismal house" – Dickens 2007: 44).

Even though the upper mansion governs the village from above like an imposing castle, telling us that Miss Havisham is an important figure with a high social status, its degraded look shows her lack of social and emotional stability. Heart-broken by her unsuccessful love life, Miss Havisham decides to stop time, to isolate herself from society and to bring up Estella as a revenge weapon against men.

In the novel, the house perfectly reflects the way in which Miss Havisham feels inside, its appearance resembling her tormented grim soul. Dark, old and abandoned are the adjectives that can describe not only the house but also the lady of the manor, and even the protagonist sees them as interconnected considering Miss Havisham an evil spirit: "In her other hand she had a crutch-headed stick on which she leaned, and she looked like the Witch of the place." (p. 72).

On his first day at Miss Havisham's mansion, Pip learns from Estella that the house has a proper name, Satis, which, translated from Latin, means "enough": "Its other name was Satis; which in Greek, or Latin, or Hebrew, or all three – or all one to me – for enough." (p. 47). In the Victorian era, it was a common habit for wealthy people to name their homes, because this represented a means to express how valuable their homes were for them. This is the time when people make a clear distinction between what a house and a home is. A home is something that you are connected to, that you love, that could be named, that acquires an identity, while a house refers simply to the building itself. In the case of Satis House, even though it has a name, it does not appear to be a home, but rather a place of seclusion for Miss Havisham.

As their discussion continues, Pip becomes contemplative, as if the name intrigued him, which gives Estella the opportunity to express her opinion about the house: "but it meant more than it said. It meant, when it was given, that whoever had this house could want nothing else. They must have been easily satisfied in those days, I should think" (p. 48). By this final remark, we are to understand how Estella really perceives the house: she cannot see how a desolate place like this could have been enough for its previous inhabitants. While for Estella and Miss Havisham the name has more of an ironical meaning, because the house is definitely not enough for them, for Pip this enough is more than he has ever seen. In other words, Pip sees the house as something "new" and intriguing, while for Miss Havisham it is "old" and "familiar": "'So new to him', she muttered, 'so old to me; so strange to him, so familiar to me; so melancholy to both of us!'" (p. 50). Their different ways of perceiving the house are due to their social status and background. Miss Havisham and Estella are part of the wealthy society, making them difficult to impress.

As for Pip, he feels that something has changed in him when he gets home, after his first day in Satis House: "That was a memorable day for me, for it made great changes in me." (p. 61). This is a critical

moment in the story as he realizes that he is just “a common labouring-boy”, resulting in him despising his social position and way of living: “I set off on the four-mile walk to our forge; pondering, as I went along, on all I had seen, and deeply revolving that I was a common labouring-boy; that my hands were coarse, that my boots were thick; that I had fallen into a despicable habit of calling knaves Jacks; that I was much more ignorant than I had considered myself last night, and generally that I was in a low-lived, bad way.” (p. 55). As he visits Miss Havisham more frequently, the perception of his home changes as well. Even though the place where he grew up is not ideal or pleasant for any child, Pip recognizes it as home. Like many children, he uses the only power he has, that is his imagination, to alter the Forge’s unwelcoming appearance. As Pip compares his home to Miss Havisham’s, its beloved image shatters under the grandeur of the mansion. In other words, Satis House becomes a place where Pip changes as a process of self-discovery. He better understands his place in the world.

One day, as Pip wanders through the mansion’s gardens, he faces (“I looked in at another window, and found myself, to my great surprise, exchanging a broad stare with”) “a pale young gentleman with red eyelids and light hair” (p. 76), whose appearance makes him look like a ghost of the abandoned castle. As if under a spell, Pip seems mesmerized, not necessarily by the young boy’s weak and strange appearance but more by his gentleman-like manners. This interaction is important for Pip’s development. He realizes that they come from different worlds. Even though they seem to be of the same age (“I judged him to be about my own age, but he was much taller, and he had a way of spinning himself about that was full of appearance.” – p. 77), which makes them somehow equal, their appearance shows otherwise. Physically speaking, Herbert is weaker than Pip, a fact demonstrated in Pip winning their duel. However, Pip does not become superior to Herbert winning the fight. On the contrary, even defeated, Herbert is still superior because of his status. All that Pip gains from this is the fear of possible negative consequences by not respecting his social position and limits: “I felt that the pale young gentleman’s blood was on my hands, and that the Law would avenge it...it was clear to me that village boys could not go stalking about the country, ravaging the houses of gentlefolks and pitching into the studious youth of England, without laying themselves open to serve punishment.” (p. 79). That is because, in Victorian society, the social position seems to prevail over appearance or strength. The moment Pip becomes wealthier, and his social position changes, he no longer considers himself inferior; he judges Herbert to be not capable enough, seeing him from above: “But, again there came upon me, for my relief, that odd impression that Herbert Pocket would never be very successful or rich.” (p. 157).

After his unexpected life change, Pip suspects that his presence in the Manor House must have been intended, believing that his fortune comes as a part of Miss Havisham’s plan to make him Estella’s husband and her heir. As such, he dreams himself a “knight of romance” whose sole purpose is to save the princess from her desolate state by restoring the castle’s previous grandeur: “She had adopted Estella, she had as good as adopted me, and it could not fail to be her intention to bring us together. She reserved it for me to restore the desolate house, admit the sunshine into the dark rooms, set the clocks a-going and the cold hearths a-blazing, tear down the cobwebs, destroy the vermin – in short, do all the shining deeds of the young Knight of romance, and marry the Princess.” (p. 197). However, after discovering the truth about his real benefactor, he realises that Satis House has brought him more pain than happiness and feels betrayed by both Miss Havisham and Estella: “Miss Havisham’s intentions towards me, all a mere dream; Estella not designed for me; I only suffered in Satis house ...” (p. 276). Their involvement in his life only had a selfish motivation, because they used him as a personal puppet to entertain themselves. He acknowledges that his life could have been better if he had never passed through the gate of the mansion. He understands that wealth and social status did not always bring happiness and stability. At this moment, Pip has had enough of Satis House, as he faces the reality of his unfulfilled dreams.

Later in the book, Pip receives a note from Miss Havisham in which she tells him to visit her: “‘It’s a note of two lines, Pip,’ said Mr Jaggers, handing it on, ‘sent up to me by Miss Havisham, on account of her not being sure of your address. She tells me that she wants to see you on a little matter of business you mentioned to her. You’ll go down?’” (p. 330). When he walks up to Satis House, he notices that the atmosphere of the surroundings has changed, it has become more desolated and gloomier than ever, which he considers to be a sign of Estella’s absence: “The best light of the day was gone when I passed along the quiet echoing court behind the High Street. The nooks of ruin where the old monks had once had their refectories and gardens, and where the strong walls were now pressed into the service of humble sheds and stables, were almost as silent as the old monks in their graves. The cathedral chimes had at once a sadder and a more remote sound to me, as I hurried on, avoiding observation, than they had ever had before; so. The swell of the old organ was

borne to my ears like funeral music, and the rooks as they hovered about the gray tower, and swung in the bare high trees of the priory garden seemed to call to me that the place was changed, and that Estella was gone out of it for ever.” (p. 335). Even in the house, Miss Havisham seems different; she is no longer in her room but occupies one of the largest rooms of the mansion. As Pip remains at the room’s entrance, he sees Miss Havisham in a contemplative state in front of the fireplace, appearing lonely and very fragile. Once again, it seems that Miss Havisham’s emotional state is connected to the atmosphere of the place. The cemetery-like ambiance along with the lady of the house’s weak state seems to foreshadow her approaching death.

Because she defies the women’s social limitations of the Victorian society, by her unconventional way of living and behaving, she is punished in a violent and tragic way. This sentence is similar to the unfortunate end of Mrs. Joe Gargery, Pip’s sister, another woman who violates the boundaries of her social position. As she lives her last moments, burning in her wedding dress under Pip’s eyes, Miss Havisham desperately asks for his forgiveness. More mature now, Pip forgives her, which can be understood as a way of letting go of the past and unfulfilled dreams linked to the Manor House. In the case of Miss Havisham, the death by fire is not only used with the purpose of building a scene as tragic as possible, but could also be seen as a purifying ritual, in which both the witch’s tormented soul and the house are purified.

In the novel’s final chapter, the once imposing castle governing the village from above and in which young Pip let himself have great expectations and big dreams, stands now as a pile of ruins: “There was no house now, no brewery, no building whatever left, but the wall of the old garden. The cleared space had been enclosed with a rough fence, and, looking over it, I saw that some of the old ivy had struck root anew and was growing green and low quiet mounds of ruin.” (p. 410). Without Miss Havisham’s existence, Satis House could not have existed either. However, even though the house is all ruins, it still seems enough to bring Pip and Estella back together. Just as the place is unrecognisable for them, so are they to one another. More mature, changed in appearance and thinking, they see things in a different light now. If the imposing castle did not allow them to be united in marriage, as Pip once expected and wanted, Satis House’s ruins make room for a new beginning, in which they can be friends: “‘We are friends,’ said I, rising and bending over her, as she rose from the bench. ‘And will continue friends apart,’ said Estella.” (p. 412).

In conclusion, Satis House is not only a significant place for the story but, more importantly, the location where the novel’s key moments occur. From the very first moment Pip crosses its threshold, the process of his learning and maturity begins. Here he hopes, dreams, learns about himself and evolves; here he finds love for the first time and suffers from it; here he faces disappointment and deceit and sees death with his own eyes. Each significant moment of his story is connected in a way to Satis House, to which he is constantly drawn throughout the novel. As such, his connection to the house is particularly powerful, the same as in the case of Miss Havisham and Estella. All these three characters’ identities are shaped by the influence the place has on them. Satis House seems thus to be more than its name suggests by acquiring several roles in the characters’ development: it is an opportunity, a place of great expectations for Pip, that transforms into a place of lost hope; it is a home, a chance for a better life for Estella that becomes a memory of her past; it is an isolated refuge for Miss Havisham that ends up being her own grave.

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1. Introduction

Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) is a philosophical essay that belongs to the genre of non-fiction existential philosophy. Written in the aftermath of World War II, the essay explores one of the most troubling questions of human existence: Is life worth living in a universe that appears meaningless? Camus's main idea is that human life is fundamentally absurd because people naturally seek meaning in a world that offers none. However, instead of surrendering to nothingness and despair, Camus argues that recognizing the absurd can lead to freedom and even a form of happiness.

This essay is considered one of the key texts of absurdist philosophy and is closely related to existentialism. At its core lies a conflict between what humans want from the universe—meaning, clarity, purpose—and what the universe provides: silence, chaos, and a lack of definitive answers. From this conflict, people often fall into two categories: either they take a leap of faith, placing their hopes in a God or transcendent meaning beyond this world, or they conclude that life is meaningless and fall into despair, which may lead to suicide. Camus, however, proposes a third option. He encourages readers to confront the absurd directly, accept the lack of ultimate truth, and create their own purpose. This perspective sets the stage for a reflective examination of human existence, freedom, and responsibility.

2. Summary of the book

Camus describes moments when ordinary life suddenly feels strange or mechanical, what he calls “a climate.” These moments appear when a person becomes conscious of their existence and realizes that the routines they rely on no longer feel meaningful. This awareness breaks the illusion of order and reveals a gap between the human desire for clarity and a world that does not respond. As Camus famously writes, “The absurd is born of this confrontation between the need and the unreasonable silence of the world.”

The absurd often becomes visible in everyday situations, such as waking up to repetitive tasks or noticing the strangeness of existence itself. Camus argues that the correct response to the absurd is not to escape it through religion or metaphysics but to face it with clarity and lucidity. He insists that accepting the absurd “with no appeal” is the first step toward authentic living. From this acceptance, Camus derives three consequences: revolt, freedom, and passion.

Camus also turns to art and creative work. If life has no inherent meaning, why do humans create? He believes that artistic creation is not an escape from the absurd but a way of expressing and confronting it. As he writes, “The work of art is born of the renunciation of the intelligence to reason the concrete.” Art does not solve the absurd; it makes it visible.

The final chapter introduces the myth of Sisyphus, the man condemned to roll a boulder up a hill for eternity, only to watch it fall back down. Camus uses this image to represent the human condition repetitive, exhausting, and without a final goal. However, the tragedy of Sisyphus lies not only in his labor but in his awareness of it.

2.1. *The Concept of the Absurd*

In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus defines the absurd as the tension that arises when the human desire for meaning meets a world that offers none. The absurd is not a property of the universe nor a flaw in human beings; it is a relationship that exists in the space between our expectations and the world's indifference. Camus explains this clearly: “The absurd starts when the human need meets the silence of the world.”

This conflict becomes evident during moments of awareness or awakening, which can occur during ordinary activities such as walking to school, doing chores, or repeating daily routines. In these moments, individuals realize that the order they assumed existed is not guaranteed. Life continues without promising meaning or direction.

The absurd is not only a philosophical idea but also a lived experience. It can appear as confusion, disorientation, or a sense of unfamiliarity with one's own life. Camus warns against what he calls “philosophical suicide,” the attempt to deny the absurd by appealing to comforting ideas that cannot be proven. Instead, acknowledging the absurd becomes the first step toward authentic existence. Accepting the indifference of the universe does not lead to despair but opens the possibility of freedom, allowing individuals to create meaning through their own actions and choices.

2.2. *Suicide as a Philosophical Problem*

“I think one real philosophical problem exists: suicide.”

This statement places the question of suicide at the center of Camus’s philosophy. If life has no inherent meaning and the world remains silent, then the question of whether life is worth continuing naturally arises.

Although suicide may seem like a solution to the problem of meaninglessness, Camus rejects it firmly. Suicide eliminates the very struggle that gives life intensity and awareness. Rather than confronting the clash between the desire for meaning and the world’s indifference, suicide attempts to escape it entirely. Camus argues that once individuals understand the absurd, they must resist the temptation to resolve it through self-destruction.

For Camus, living consciously in the face of the absurd is an act of rebellion. Suicide is not an answer but an avoidance. True strength lies in continuing to live while fully aware of life’s lack of ultimate meaning. In this way, the absence of meaning becomes a source of freedom and responsibility.

2.3. *Sisyphus as a Metaphor*

Sisyphus is condemned by the gods to push a boulder up a mountain, only to watch it roll back down endlessly. At first glance, this punishment appears hopeless. Camus, however, sees Sisyphus as a symbol of the human condition.

The key moment in the myth is not the act of pushing the stone but the moment when Sisyphus walks back down the mountain. In that pause, he becomes fully aware of his fate. Camus writes: “I see his fate as his own. I see his rock as his thing.” This awareness transforms punishment into freedom. While the gods control the task, they cannot control Sisyphus’s attitude toward it.

By accepting the pointlessness of his situation, Sisyphus becomes stronger than his fate. He is the absurd hero someone who knows that life has no ultimate meaning yet continues to act, struggle, and live. Camus concludes famously: “One must imagine Sisyphus happy.” This statement is not ironic. It reflects Camus’s belief that meaning can be created through awareness, rebellion, and commitment, even in a world without guarantees.

3. Evaluation

3.1. *Writing Style*

Albert Camus’s writing style in *The Myth of Sisyphus* stands out for its combination of philosophical argument and emotional depth. Rather than relying heavily on abstract jargon, Camus uses clear language, rhythm, and vivid imagery. He often turns to concrete metaphors, such as daily routines or the myth of Sisyphus, to illustrate how the absurd emerges in ordinary life.

Some sections of the essay are more challenging, especially those in which Camus critiques philosophers such as Kierkegaard or analyzes writers like Kafka and Dostoevsky. Nevertheless, his prose remains engaging. Overall, Camus’s style reinforces his argument: the absurd is not merely an idea but a lived experience.

3.2. *Themes*

Here are a few themes shaping the structure and the message of *The Myth of Sisyphus*:

The Absurd

The central theme of the essay is clear. The absurd appears when the human need for meaning meets the world’s silence. Camus says we must face the conflict honestly and we must not turn the conflict into illusion or false hope.

Revolt

The right response in every human being that is finally aware of his situation is revolt. Revolt is not an act but an inner stance that always refuses to give in to despair or to accept lies. Revolt is the choice to keep living even when there is no meaning.

Freedom

Accepting releases people from the duty to search for a set purpose. When people stop believing that life must follow a path a person becomes free to make meaning through the person’s choices. The person’s actions. Accepting feels freeing.

Passion

Camus encourages us to live with intensity. Camus says that experiencing life fully its joys, its struggles, its moments gets more valuable when we stop looking for the justification or the cosmic reward. That happens when you let go of the search, for a reason the everyday moments feel richer.

Human Resilience

The myth of Sisyphus shows dignity in repeated work that feels pointless. The myth of Sisyphus reminds us that even a simple push can hold pride because the act of pushing and again tells the worker that the worker is still in control. Human resilience is a victory it creates meaning by staying aware of the task.

Together, these themes form a philosophy grounded not in hope but in honesty, and not in despair but in a form of courageous acceptance.

4. Personal Response

Reading *The Myth of Sisyphus* initially filled me with unease. That discomfort gradually turned into reflection. Camus forced me to confront questions I usually avoid questions about purpose, routine, and meaning. Rather than offering answers, he provided a way of living within uncertainty.

I realized that I had experienced the absurd long before reading Camus, especially during moments when life felt repetitive or overwhelming. The idea that meaning is not given but created made me reconsider how much my life is shaped by external expectations such as grades, deadlines, and future plans. Camus encouraged me to question whether I am truly living or simply following patterns without reflection. External expectations pull my life more than my choice. Camus made me think again about whether I live or just follow patterns without asking why. His claim that ‘there is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn’ made me think. The fate in that line cannot hold me. I see that the pressures I face are not fixed burdens. The pressures are parts of the life I live. I can fold the pressures into the purpose I choose. The fate can be met with scorn.

The image of Sisyphus affected me deeply. What initially appeared tragic became a symbol of freedom. I understood that freedom is not the absence of burdens but the awareness with which we face them. Like Sisyphus, I push my own stone studying, working, and meeting expectations. Camus helped me see that value lies not in the final achievement but in the conscious act of living itself. I thought about how awareness changes experience. I have faced some challenges that I cannot change. I can change the meaning I give to those challenges.

This changed the way I think about effort. Like Sisyphus I push my stone studying, working trying to meet expectations. Before I read Camus I thought these tasks were needed steps toward a result. Albert Camus says the value of life is not in an achievement. The value of life is in the act of living itself. The value of life is in the struggle done with intention. I felt the idea that the struggle itself can fill the heart of a person. The struggle made me think again about what success means and what fulfillment means.

Ultimately, *The Myth of Sisyphus* did not resolve my questions about life, but it gave me the courage to face them honestly. By accepting uncertainty and rejecting comforting illusions, I discovered a deeper sense of responsibility for my own existence. In a world without cosmic meaning, my choices matter even more because I am the one who gives them meaning. This perspective gave me a feeling I did not expect without a cosmic purpose my choices still matter maybe my choices matter more because I am the one who must give my choices meaning.

Reading *The Myth of Sisyphus* did not answer my questions about life; it deepened them. But in doing so, it also gave me the courage to ask better questions and to face my own existence with more honesty, awareness, and inner strength.

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Wonderland and Beyond: Exploring Logic, Identity, and Imagination in Carroll's Classic

Daria Ioana Popa, II, E-F

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița



1. Introduction

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, written by Lewis Carroll in 1865, is one of the most enduring works of English literature, celebrated for its imaginative storytelling, playful language, and thought-provoking themes. The novel challenges readers to question the nature of reality and the rules that govern it, blending elements of fantasy, nonsense, and subtle social critique. Carroll's story is both entertaining and intellectually stimulating, making it a text that resonates with children and adults alike. For students and readers, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland serves as a reminder that imagination, critical thinking, and self-reflection are essential in navigating both the real and the imaginative worlds.

2. Summary of the book

The story starts when a girl, Alice, sees the White Rabbit in a waistcoat. The White Rabbit checks a pocket watch; as she follows the White Rabbit, Alice falls down a rabbit hole and enters the world of Wonderland. In this world Alice lives through a series of adventures. Alice eats items and grows and shrinks without warning. The changes,

in Alice's size make her face challenges and mental challenges as her body keeps changing and she must keep up with the changes. Throughout her journey, Alice encounters a variety of eccentric characters, each presenting her with riddles, puzzles, or absurd situations that test her reasoning.

Some of her most memorable experiences include attending the chaotic tea party with the Mad Hatter and March Hare. The tea party has no sense of time. She meets the Cheshire Cat at the tea party. The Cheshire Cat offers advice and then vanishes with a mischievous grin. Alice also meets the Queen of Hearts that loves to order executions. The Queen shows how dangerous arbitrary power can be. She repeatedly questions the rules governing this world and, more importantly, her own identity, famously asking, "Who am I now?" This question reflects the theme of self-discovery that runs throughout the novel. The story culminates in a nonsensical trial, during which the Queen orders Alice's execution. At the height of the chaos, Alice wakes up, suggesting that her adventures may have been a dream. Despite its ambiguous ending, the novel leaves a lasting impression, encouraging reflection on social conventions, the fluidity of identity, and the value of curiosity and imagination.

2.1. Themes

2.1.1. Curiosity and Exploration

Curiosity is the central driving force in Alice's journey. On a literal level, it motivates her decision to follow the White Rabbit: on a metaphorical level, it represents the desire to question, explore, and understand the world. It leads Alice into Wonderland's chaos, but it also opens her mind to new ideas, experiences, and self-awareness. The story suggests that exploration is not only about moving from one place to another but also about intellectual and emotional growth. Alice's willingness to engage with the chaos teaches us that learning often involves uncertainty and sometimes there is no logic, you have to adapt. As Alice goes through Wonderland's unpredictable rules, she shows us the idea that curiosity encourages critical thinking and problem solving.

As an example, when Alice tries to talk with the Cheshire Cat or wonder the Queen's court, she must constantly adjust her approach and rethink assumptions. It challenges complacency and allows individuals to grow by engaging with new experiences, even when outcomes are unpredictable.

2.1.2. Identity and Growing Up

Alice's struggle with identity is one of the novel's most profound themes. Throughout the story, she faces constant physical and situational changes that make her question who she is. The famous line: "Who am I now?" shows her confusion about her identity in response to external changes, like growing taller or smaller, as well as internal changes, such as understanding Wonderland's strange rules. This theme mirrors the real-life challenges of growing up. Childhood and adolescence are periods when nothing is fixed but fluid, shaped by

experiences, social interactions and personal reflection. Wonderland exaggerates these challenges: the physical transformations are absurd, yet they are represented as metaphors for the disorienting process of self-discovery.

Growing up involves testing boundaries and asserting autonomy. She must make decisions independently, adapt to a world that does not always make sense and be on an ongoing search for personal identity.

3. Logic vs. Nonsense

Wonderland challenges conventional logic, creating a space where rules are fluid. Carroll uses nonsensical dialogue, paradoxes, and surreal situations to question the limits of reason and highlight the tension between expectation and reality.

For instance, one of my favorite dialogues is between Alice and the Cheshire Cat. The Cheshire Cat's statement: "We're all mad here" shows us the essence of Wonderland: a world where what is "normal" and "reasonable" becomes meaningless. Logic exists, but it is twisted, subjective, or playful. This theme also connects to social commentary. Victorian society prized order, rules, and hierarchy, yet Wonderland's absurdity exposes how arbitrary such structures can be examined by the flexibility of logic, the value of imagination, and the alternative way of understanding reality.

3.1. Symbols and Motifs

3.1.1. The White Rabbit

The White Rabbit is very important to Alice's journey, since he represents different themes, including Opening Up and Newness and Unexpected Changes. When Alice encounters him for the first time, she expresses surprise that he, "has such a bunch of nonsense going on in his mind" that causes him to have an "anxiety attack" and worry about being late. Alice sees his actions as being comical but they make her curious enough to want to follow him.

For many of us, seeing something different or strange is a trigger for us to stop what we're doing, to go and explore. The White Rabbit is also a representation of time and responsibility, because his worrying about being late reflects the added pressure from the growing responsibilities of growing up.

3.1.2. The Cheshire Cat

The Cheshire Cat is a significant symbol in the story. Its capacity to fade in and out of existence, leaving behind only a smile occasionally, shows that nothing is definite and that some things can never be determined. The Cat also represents independence from logical reasoning; while the Cat behaves in a way contrary to convention, it appears to be nearly always wiser and more "logical" than other individuals Alice meets. The Cat also serves as an adviser; while it does not always accurately indicate the best path for Alice, it provides direction for her. The Cat's response when Alice asks which direction to go, "That depends a great deal upon where you want to get to", shows us how the Cat's character represents the concept that preferences will determine the choices we make.

3.1.3. The Queen of Hearts

The Queen of Hearts is a figure associated with the irrational use of fear to gain authority. The character is more irrational than anyone who has done something illegitimate, and that irrationality can be seen in her irrational outbursts of anger toward those she believes to be acting wrongly or out of order. The Queen of Hearts represents the authority figure that demands absolute compliance without question. She is a source of terror for most, more than she is a source of help. In contrast to Alice, who desires to inquire and question rationale for actions, the Queen of Hearts provides no opportunity for either questions or debate regarding her actions. While Alice proceeds through life by means of logic and rational decisions, the Queen of Hearts relies upon fear to maintain control over her subjects. Her source of power resides in the fact that others are willing to follow her commands.

By the end of the story, Alice demonstrates the ability, through confidence and logic, to confront the Queen. Ultimately, the Queen loses her fear inducing power, in other words, her power was never as great as others perceived it. In reality, there are many different kinds of perspectives when it comes to "power" throughout our lives, and they will often be shown to be less powerful than what we or others perceived.



The Cheshire cat sitting on the bough of a tree.
Alice in Wonderland [Page 11]

through both confidence and logic.

3.2. *Character analysis*

3.2.1. Alice

Although Alice was faced with a disorienting situation and all the absurdity around her, her natural curiosity and her thoughtful nature motivated her to think rationally about her situation. During her time in Wonderland, Alice is consistently questioning everything that happens to her and trying to comprehend the peculiar place she has become a part of.

Alice's fluctuating size and her continual use of the question "who am I?" or similar questions about her burgeoning identity underscores her battle with having a true identity in a world that has no stability.

As a psychological and symbolic representation, Alice symbolizes anyone who is trying to navigate through a world filled with arbitrary rules and trying to remain rational, morally upright, and intact in their own identity no matter how chaotic external influences may become.

According to David Day, in his text "Alice in Wonderland Decoded", Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is not merely a lighthearted children's tale, but a work of deep significance. He proposes that the story was written as an education "coded" for Alice (who was Lewis Carroll's actual close friend, Alice Liddell) during a period when young female individuals were not allowed equal access to educational materials and methods. From this perspective on Alice, we see that she is also learning about hidden truths and the wide range of logical ideas, culture, etc. Like the "puzzle" aspect of her travels, "size distortion," "identity," "suspicion", "questions" these are a part of her growth as an evolving individual. Alice will learn about many things during her continuing journey logic problems, classic mythology, social "hypocrisy," and many more. What once appeared to Alice to be nonsensical may, with the virtue of time and experience, be considered normal ways of teaching (to her) 'thinking' and the development of a critical attitude or healthy dose of skepticism towards her world.

So, Alice was not simply a child trying to make sense out of nonsense; she had become a "matured" student of society's absurdities and rules and subsequently realized that she was growing up as well as educated in this society. Alice also developed her own critical thinking ability. Alice, in some ways, will always be that innocent, foolish child experiencing the nonsensical; but on another, symbolic level (as noted by Day), Alice is a disguised student who is acquiring logic, critical thinking, and classical knowledge. This dual character makes Alice a stronger character in today's interpretation of the story.

3.2.2. Mad Hatter

The tea party he has with the March Hare and Dormouse defies all reason and logic, and has a completely irrational set of rules. It seems that both time and sense have no purpose there. There is a specific example of reasoning and meaning-related transformation within the tea party conversation between the Mad Hatter and his companions. The following example of reasoning in the tea party demonstrates Carroll's manipulation of logical reasoning and meanings: "The Hatter is not at all insane! It's just not the same thing at all!" and "You could actually say that 'I eat what I see' and 'I see what I eat' are both exactly the same!"

This demonstrates Wonderland's mockery of rational thought. The Mad Hatter, through his absurdities, brings humour and amusement to Wonderland while reminding us that the definitions of "reason" and "sense" are subjective. In Wonderland, the Mad Hatter appears to fit into the world perfectly. The Mad Hatter can be viewed as a Trickster. As a lunatic symbol of chaos, he serves as a satirical teacher of the limits of logic, the fluidity of time and as a paradoxical mentor of a higher understanding.

3.3. *Literary Techniques in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Lewis Carroll uses a variety of literary techniques to create the strange, dreamlike, and often humorous world of Wonderland. These techniques make the book more than a simple children's story, they allow the reader to experience confusion, curiosity, and discovery alongside Alice.

3.3.1. Nonsense and Wordplay

One of Carroll's most famous techniques is nonsense language, where words sound meaningful but have no logical sense. This creates playful confusion and forces the reader to think about how language works.

For example, when the Mad Hatter twists Alice's words, he says: "You might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see!'"

Here, Carroll shows how meaning can shift simply by rearranging words. This technique emphasizes that logic can break down easily, and Wonderland often challenges the normal relationship between language and reality.

3.3.2. Satire and Social Critique

Carroll uses satire to criticize the strict rules and absurdities of Victorian society. The Queen of Hearts is a perfect example: she demands order but acts irrationally. Her constant shouting

“Off with their heads!” makes her a caricature of leaders who use fear instead of fairness.

Through this exaggeration, Carroll humorously exposes how some authority figures rely on power rather than logic. His satire is gentle but sharp, encouraging readers to question rules and traditions.

3.3.3. Symbolic Transformation

Alice’s frequent changes in size serve as symbolic transformations. When she becomes too small or too tall, she struggles with simple tasks, reflecting the emotional instability of childhood. After shrinking, she says:

“I must be shutting up like a telescope.”

These transformations show how growing up feels unpredictable and sometimes frightening. Carroll uses physical changes to reflect emotional or psychological ones, making Wonderland a metaphor for real-life growth.

3.3.4. Dreamlike Structure

The story uses a dreamlike narrative style, where events follow little logical order, and scenes shift suddenly. Characters appear and disappear like thoughts in a dream. This technique makes the reader feel the same disorientation Alice feels.

For example, Alice can be in a courtroom one moment and suddenly back in a garden the next. The loose structure makes it clear that Wonderland follows emotional logic rather than real-world rules. This enhances the surreal atmosphere and keeps the reader questioning what is real.

4. Personal view

When I read Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, I felt like I was following Alice not just through a fantasy world, but through the confusion of growing up. There were moments when I felt just as lost as she was especially when characters twisted her words or when the rules of the world kept changing for no reason. It reminded me of times in my own life when adults or authority figures told me things that didn’t really make sense but expected me to accept them anyway.

What I liked most about Alice is the way she tries to stay calm, even when everything around her seems ridiculous. She gets frustrated, she gets confused, she even doubts who she is but she doesn’t give up. Her determination made me reflect on how I react when things become messy or unpredictable in my own life. Sometimes I also feel “too big” or “too small” in certain situations, just like Alice, and reading her story made me realize that these feelings are normal. Another part that stayed with me was how Wonderland exposes the unfairness or randomness of certain rules like the Queen shouting “Off with their heads!” whenever she is annoyed. It made me think about the rules we have in the real world that people follow just because they’re told to, even if they don’t seem logical. The book showed me that questioning things isn’t a bad thing, it’s actually an important part of growing up.

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An amazing singer

Andrei-Ionut Ioanici, II, E-F

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița

Avi Kaplan is an American singer-songwriter that I have come across a few years ago during the pandemic. He was part of the acapella group **Pentatonix**, being the group's bass singer. He stands out thanks to his unique bass voice, and I personally believe that he played an important role in the notoriety of the group. He left it in 2017, because he felt alienated from his family and his loved ones, and because he wanted to pursue his own solo career, which has flourished a lot since today.

His style can be identified as indie, but I personally believe that he has created his own genre. The first songs he released have a rather depressing atmosphere to them, whilst the more recent ones started to have a happier, more joyful style. This is due to the fact that **Avi** had gone through a period of depression after leaving



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Pentatonix, but, as he said in his song, *I'll Get By*, even though things were going harshly in his life, he would get by in the end, which he did.

Most of his fans believe that his leaving Pentatonix, though sad news back then, was actually a wonderful idea, because he had grown so much and used his full potential to create the music that his soul truly yearned for. While he was part of the group, his main purpose was to sing low notes in the background and act as a human bass-guitar, but now he shows us his true potential and blesses us with stunning works of art. My personal favorite songs of his are *Aberdeen*, *I'll Get By*, *Chains*, *Otherside*, *Lean On Me*, *I'm Only Getting Started*, *Sweet Adeline*, *Peace Somehow*. I encourage lovers of calm, nature-related music to listen to Avi Kaplan's music, because I personally find his songs soothing.



Why revolution?

Elena-Theodora Brahă, III, E-F

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița

‘Les origines de la Révolution sont une histoire; l’histoire de la Révolution est une autre.’ (D. Monet, *Les Origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française*).

The French Revolution was a period of political and societal change in France which began with the Estates General of 1789 and ended with the Coup of 18 Brumaire on 9 November 1799. Many of the revolution’s ideas are considered fundamental principles of liberal democracy, and its values remain central to modern French political discourse. The Revolution erupted when the Third Estate, burdened by taxes and excluded from power, broke away to form the National Assembly. The storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789, symbolized popular revolt, and the Assembly soon adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Years of crisis—food shortages, war, and political radicalism—led to the Reign of Terror (1793–1794). After Robespierre’s fall, the conservative Directory governed until Napoleon’s 1799 coup ended the revolutionary era.

Why was there a French Revolution? This historical question has continuously challenged scholars, as its origins and causes have long been debated in academic circles. No lasting consensus has been reached, and controversy has repeatedly resurfaced. Many historians have tried to define how the Revolution truly emerged, yet the question remains unanswered.

Beginning in the early 1900s, new research by French scholars began to challenge the older consensus once held among French, British, American, and other historians. As a result, our traditional understanding of what caused the greatest of all revolutions has been transformed.

Shortly after 1789, many identified immediate causes such as widespread inequality, economic crisis, political conflict, and the abuse of power symbolized by Louis XVI and his absolute rule. However, research conducted after 1905 by French historians revealed that the Revolution was not merely a political event, but the result of deep-rooted social structures, class tensions, and evolving political ideas—shaped over time by economic changes, Enlightenment thought, and regional differences.

Is there a real difference between the causes believed at the time of the French Revolution and those identified by scholars after 1905?

Yes, there is a significant difference. While people living through the Revolution saw its causes mainly in terms of immediate problems—such as food shortages, oppressive taxes, and royal corruption—later historians, especially after 1905, uncovered deeper, long-term factors. These included the rise of the bourgeoisie, structural class conflict, and the influence of Enlightenment ideas on political culture. This shift in perspective reveals that the Revolution was not just a response to crisis, but the result of profound societal transformation.

William Doyle, one of the most respected modern historians of the French Revolution, and his book *The Origins of the French Revolution* (1980) is essential reading on this topic. In his book Doyle argues that the Revolution was not inevitable but the result of a unique combination of long-term structural tensions and rising expectations for reform. He emphasizes that economic strain, social divisions, and Enlightenment ideas all played a role, but it was the perception that meaningful change was both necessary and achievable that ultimately pushed France toward revolution. For Doyle, the origins lie not in one cause, but in how people understood and responded to the pressures of their time. That is why the French chose revolution.

This revolutionary change sought by the French people did not only affect Europe because of the suffering endured and the courage it took to oppose Louis XVI’s absolute rule, but it also influenced great minds like those of the famous Romantic British poets: Lord Byron, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and William Blake. All of them were inspired by the revolutionary promise of liberty, equality, and a new political order. While the term “Romantic” now defines the era in which these writers flourished—from the late 18th century through the early 19th—it can be somewhat misleading: there was no self-identified Romantic movement at the time, and the writers themselves did not refer to themselves as Romantics.

In the end, the French Revolution was not a result of a single spark but of a mix of problems, shifting ideas, expectation and crises that started the ‘fire’. It was not inevitable and it emerged from deep structural problems and a growing belief that reform was both needed and achievable. The revolution did not only

reshape France but echoed beyond its borders, inspiring the minds of the Romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Byron and Shelly. They found in its promise of liberty and equality a powerful source of artistic inspiration. Though the term ‘Romanticism’ came later, the ideas and emotions born from the Revolution helped define an era of literature influences that still influences us.

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[The French Revolution](#)

Abstract

What if the stars were not about fate, but about meaning? This article explores astrology not as a predictive system but as a symbolic language of the unconscious. Drawing from Jung’s ideas on archetypes and symbols, as well as Dane Rudhyar’s psychological approach to astrology, I propose the idea that planets, signs and houses function less like a blueprint of destiny but more like a flexible language our psyche might use to express itself. These symbols do not dictate outcomes; they trace the contours of unfolding consciousness if I might say so. Astrology, viewed from this perspective, functions similarly to dreams. Its symbols point beyond themselves, toward something deeply felt but sometimes hard to put into words. Using Jungian depth psychology, Saussurean semiotics, and Rudhyar’s poetic logic, I argue that astrology acts as a psychic syntax. A structured way for the unconscious to speak. If language can name the world, astrology helps name the soul’s process of becoming. Using The Dictionary of Symbols as a comparative lexicon, this paper maps astrological images onto universal motifs. Instead of reducing people to their sun signs, it proposes astrology as a mirror, reflecting back themes, tensions and potentials that are already present within. In doing so, it becomes a tool, not for prediction but of recognition. Of individuation. Of coming into dialogue with oneself.

Keywords

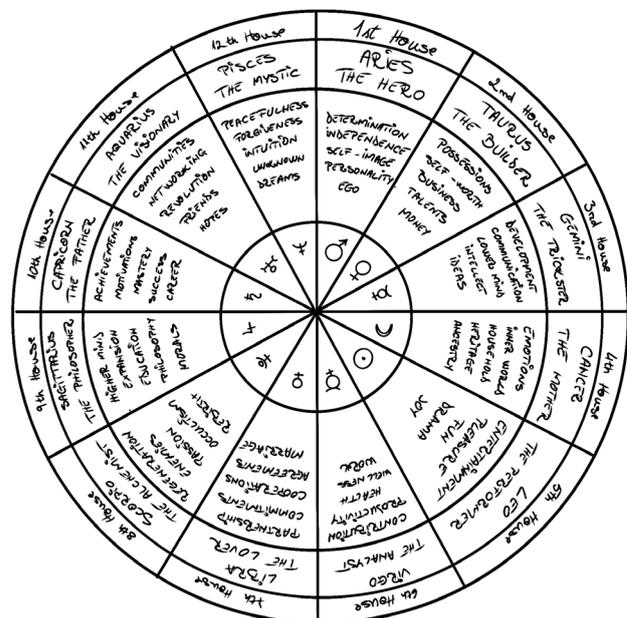
Astrology, Unconscious, Jungian Psychology, Semiotics, Symbolism

“As above, So below”¹ – Emerald Tablet

Introduction

This paper seeks to redefine astrology, not as a system of prediction but as a symbolic language of the unconscious. Historically speaking, astrology has been dismissed as deterministic mysticism or discredited as pseudoscience. Its symbolic language often clashes with empirical ideals of rationalism. However, such critiques overlook its deeper function: it is not a way of predicting fate but a tool for understanding the deeper and often hidden aspects of the psyche. Building on Carl Jung’s concept of archetypes and the collective unconscious, alongside Dane Rudhyar’s Astrology of the Personality and An Astrological Mandala, this study argues that astrology is best understood as a symbolic language.

Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist, viewed the human mind as a collection of universal patterns or archetypes, recurring symbols that surface in myths, dreams and even in our interaction with the stars. His work reveals that symbols, far from being arbitrary or decorative, are carriers of unconscious meaning. Rudhyar, an astrologer deeply influenced by Jung’s psychological framework, expanded on this idea, viewing the natal chart as a dynamic map of the individual’s inner and outer worlds. His work aligns with Jung’s, as he often emphasized that astrology is not a static system but a language for psychological growth and individuation.²



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1 The phrase “As Above, So Below” originates from the Emerald Tablet, a foundational Hermetic text attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. It summarizes the principle of correspondence suggesting a mirroring between the macrocosm (the heaven, cosmos) and the microcosm (the earthly realm, the human psyche). It reinforces the argument that celestial patterns resonate with unconscious structures. *The Emerald Tablet of Hermes: Multiple Translations*, <https://archive.org/details/EmeraldTabletsOfHermes/page/n1/mode/2up>, accessed April 17, 2025.

2 Individuation refers to the process of engaging with universal psychological patterns (archetypes) to bring unconscious material into consciousness. In other words, it involves recognizing and accepting different parts of the self that may have been previously ignored.

At the heart of this vision, planetary and zodiacal signs serve not as tools for prediction but as symbolic expressions of the unconscious. Readers might wonder what exactly is a birth chart so let's think of it as a symbolic screenshot of the sky at the exact moment of one's birth. It shows where the Sun, Moon and planets were located in relation to the Earth. Those planets are divided across twelve sections called houses, each corresponding to different areas of life. Each element of the chart gains meaning through its relationship to the whole. For clarity, a visual representation of the zodiacal wheel that I created, with houses and signs marked, will be added above to support the conceptual framework I presented.

Through a semiotic lens, planetary and star signs are treated as culturally embedded signifiers, participating in a deeper symbolic order. In this view, astrology is more about reflection than anything else.

A language through which the psyche speaks and seeks meaning, moving towards integration.

1. Jung: Symbols, Meaning and the Unconscious

To understand astrology as a symbolic system, we must begin not with the stars themselves but with the psyche that reads them. Carl Gustav Jung offers a compelling framework here: he viewed the human soul not as an empty, purely rational structure but as a deep, inherited layer of the mind shaped by archetypes. The term archetype refers to the idea of primordial, universal patterns and images that recur across cultures and history. These archetypes arise from what Jung called the collective unconscious. A shared layer of the psyche hidden beneath personal awareness that shapes the symbolic motifs found in dreams, myths and religious traditions.

This notion of the collective unconscious, I believe, is crucial for rethinking astrology. It suggests that symbols are not mere inventions but appear organically from the depths of the spirit and transcending individual experience. Accordingly, astrological symbols, signs and aspects, can be understood not simply as external influences or personality markers but expressions of archetypal structures within the mind. To clarify how astrology functions within Jungian theory, it is necessary first to consider Jung's definition of the symbol as he presents it in *Man and His Symbols* (1954) "What we call a symbol is a term, a name, or even a picture that may be familiar in daily life, yet that possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning. It implies something vague, unknown, or hidden from us."³ For Jung, symbols are not metaphorical; instead, they function as true expressions of the psyche. As I mentioned in the introductory paragraphs, a symbol points to something felt but not fully understood, bringing unconscious thoughts or emotions into view but in a subtle yet meaningful way.

Jung expands on this idea, noting that a symbol carries more than its immediate meaning: "Thus a word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider "unconscious" aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained. Nor can one hope to define or explain it. As the mind explores the symbol, it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason. The wheel may lead our thoughts toward the concept of a "divine" sun, but at this point reason must admit its incompetence; man is unable to define a "divine" being. When, with all our intellectual limitations, we call something "divine," we have merely given it a name, which may be based on a creed, but never on factual evidence."⁴ This highlights the capacity of symbols to convey unconscious material that goes beyond rational comprehension, making them essential to understanding the deeper layers of the psyche.

While Jung laid the essential groundwork by revealing symbols as expressions of the collective unconscious, he did not explicitly position astrology as a symbolic language for psychological transformation. His attention centered on archetypes and the psyche's symbolic processes, leaving astrology largely parallel, not fully integrated, within this framework. It is Dane Rudhyar who redefines astrology with psychological purpose. He recasts the natal chart from a static snapshot into a dynamic mandala. In doing so, Rudhyar extends Jung's insights, transforming astrological symbols into active tools for navigating the connection between conscious awareness and the unconscious depths. In the next chapter, I explore Rudhyar's vision, which shifts astrology away from rigid prediction toward a participatory language of self-realization. This perspective deepens and enriches the symbolic dialogue that Jung initiated, inviting a more engaged encounter with the psyche.

2. Rudhyar's Vision and the Path to Individuation

Dane Rudhyar's *Astrology of Personality*⁵ redefines astrology as a symbolic language illuminating the

³ Jung, Carl Gustav et al. *Man and His Symbols*. New York: Anchor Press / Doubleday, 1964. p. 21. <https://archive.org/details/B-001-004-443-ALL/mode/1up>, accessed May 12, 2025.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

⁵ Rudhyar, Dane. *The Astrology of Personality: A Re-formulation of Astrological Concepts and Ideals, in Terms of Contempo-*

psyche's structure. Influenced by Jung, Rudhyar sees the natal chart as a mandala reflecting both conscious and unconscious dimensions, shifting astrology's purpose from forecasting to facilitating psychological growth.

In the subchapter titled "Conscious and Unconscious"⁶, Rudhyar outlines the difference between Freud's and Jung's models of the psyche, ultimately favoring Jung's view. For Sigmund Freud, the unconscious contains repressed desires and instincts. Jung, however, views it as a deeper source of meaning and creativity.

Rudhyar cites Jung's assertion that "consciousness is derived from the unconscious"⁷ to emphasize astrology's role as a map of this inner process. This supports the article's central argument: that astrology is a symbolic language, not a predictive tool. The symbols in a chart do not dictate events but express unconscious dynamics in a structured form. Rudhyar reinforces this idea when he, once more, cites Jung's commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, that archetypes function as "instincts of ideation".⁸ Not fixed traits but symbolic patterns that help the psyche express its underlying needs and tensions. In this way, astrology works similarly to dreams or myths. It gives form to inner realities that would otherwise remain vague or hidden. In the next part "Individuation"⁹, Rudhyar connects these ideas to one of Jung's most important concepts which is the process of individuation that I briefly mentioned earlier. Jung defines this as the gradual integration of unconscious material into conscious awareness, leading to a more complete sense of self. Rudhyar elaborates this into an astrological context, suggesting that the chart shows not just who we are but who we might become. He offers a vivid metaphor: the conscious as "sea-water" and the ego as "individualized blood."¹⁰ The goal is not to reject the unconscious but to transform it, just as sea-water can become part of the living blood of the body.

The natal chart does not impose a fixed identity; it offers a symbolic structure that can be read, reinterpreted, and used for personal growth. Within a Jungian framework, symbols are understood as expressions of unconscious content that point beyond their immediate appearance. In this sense, astrological symbols do not predetermine events but function as mediating forms through which unconscious dynamics may become accessible to consciousness. The chart thus provides not a fixed identity but a structured symbolic field that allows psychological development to unfold. This perspective invites a structural understanding of astrology that parallels linguistic systems, a theme explored in the following chapter.

3. Symbols and the Structural Logic of Meaning: From Jung to Semiotics

Astrology has long operated as a language of symbols. In the previous sections we explored how Jung understood symbols as psychic images that mediate between the conscious and unconscious, serving as carriers of meaning rooted in archetypal patterns. Jung's view was amplified by Dane Rudhyar, who saw astrology as a symbolic mandala.

In *An Astrological Mandala*¹¹, Rudhyar makes a crucial distinction: between signs, which merely indicate factual relationships, and symbols, which embody meaning and inner necessity. A symbol, by contrast, forms around a human need. It answers an existential question, often unconsciously asked, by synthesizing form and significance. Rudhyar writes the following: "A symbol is formulated when there is a human need for it... The psychological or prophetic dreams of a particular person belong to this category... Likewise... a birth chart is a person-centered symbol. That is to say, it carries a 'message'..."¹² This aligns astrology with the structure of language, a system in which individual units (signs, planets etc.) do not possess meaning in isolation but only in relation to one another. Like words in a sentence, astrological configurations generate meaning by participating in a larger structure.

To move forward, we may now turn to semiotics, the study of signs and their system. Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic model posits that a sign is composed of two inseparable elements: the signifier (sound, image, etc.) and the signified (concept, meaning). Their relationship is not natural but arbitrary, shaped and sustained by collective agreement within a linguistic community. As Saussure cautions, "Some people regard

rary Psychology and Philosophy. New York: Anchor Books / Doubleday, 1970. Originally published 1936 by Lucis Publishing Company. <https://archive.org/details/astrologyofperso00dane/mode/1up?view=theater>, accessed May 13, 2025

6 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

10 *Ibid.*

11 Rudhyar, Dane. *An Astrological Mandala: The Cycle of Transformations and Its 360 Symbolic Phases*. Vintage Books, Random House, 1974. <https://archive.org/details/anastrologicalmandalathecycleoftransformationsandits360symbolicphases/mode/2up>, accessed May 17, 2025.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

language, when reduced to its elements, as a naming-process only a list of words, each corresponding to the thing that it names.”¹³ This reductive view overlooks the essential relational and arbitrary nature of signs within a structured system.

This presents an initial tension with Jungian and archetypal systems, which imply that certain symbols carry a transpersonal psychic resonance. In Saussurean terms, the form of a symbol is indeed arbitrary, but for Jung and Rudhyar, its function is not. Astrology, as Rudhyar presents it, aligns intriguingly with this structuralist framework, but of course, not without philosophical friction. The birth chart is not a literal or casual representation of the individual’s psyche; rather, it is a symbolic system whose components derive meaning from their differential relations within the whole. As Rudhyar notes: “It is a symbol, a mandala, or logos, a word of power. Astrology, seen from this point of view, is a language of symbols. Because it is a language, it implies a process of unfoldment of an idea of feeling-response.”¹⁴ Here, astrology functions as a language in Saussurean terms, not a list of fixed meanings but a relational structure in which each planetary position (signifier) acquires significance only through its placement and interaction within the system. Just as a linguistic sign finds coherence in contrast to other signs, a birth chart finds coherence in the dynamic interaction between planets, signs and aspects. Therefore, meaning is not inherent but generated through structure.

According to *The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols*¹⁵, the Maya hieroglyph for Earth¹⁶ was represented by the Moon-goddess, a primal figure embodying the cycles of fertility and the origin of all things. She was the “mistress of the number one,” symbolizing birth and the inception of manifestation itself. This archetype positions the Moon as a cosmic force of cyclical renewal and origin, anchoring its astrological significance in life’s fundamental rhythms. In contrast, Scorpio is traditionally symbolized by the black scorpion, an elusive creature that avoids light and carries a poisonous sting. This sign is governed by Mars and Pluto, the latter embodying the shadowy domains of death, internal darkness, and transformative power. Together, these images conjure the depths of human experience marked by torments, tragedies, and the paradox of annihilation and regeneration.

This mirrors Saussure’s insight that language is a system of differences without positive terms. Likewise, in astrology, the Moon (traditionally associated with emotion and the inner life) in Scorpio (the sign often associated with transformation and intensity as explained), derives meaning not from any inherent essence but from its structural context. As I mentioned in the introductory section, the wheel of the zodiac is divided into twelve sections, each section being attributed to a sign or planet. If we take the Scorpio moon and place it for example in the first house (usually associated with identity, approach to life etc.) it might manifest as an emotionally powerful, self-protecting identity, driven by an intense need for emotional security and transformation. On the other hand, if we take the same Scorpio moon and move it to the 9th house (the house of wisdom, philosophy, higher education, travel, etc.) it could signify profound emotional connections to philosophy, the unconscious, or foreign cultures, perhaps revealing hidden psychological drives or emotional revelations through higher learning or travel. The signifier (moon in Scorpio) acquires significance only through its placement within the chart’s syntactic whole, just as a word gains meaning in the sentence that frames it.

Rudhyar deepens this structuralism by introducing a cyclic temporality. Human life, he argues, unfolds through archetypal rhythms, psychic seasons that repeat not in content but in meaning. Rudhyar writes that “In other words, human experience is essentially cyclic, and it unfolds according to structural principles.”¹⁷ This quote directly aligns with structuralist thought, particularly with the idea that meaning is not random but patterned, ruled by deep structure.

4. An Example of Symbolic Meaning: Saturn

To illustrate how a symbol functions in astrology, consider Saturn, which represents structure, limitation and time. As a symbol, Saturn conveys more than just its literal meaning as a planet; it embodies concepts of authority, boundaries and the personal growth that comes through responsibility, discipline

13 Ferdinand de Saussure. *Course in General Linguistics*. ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, in collaboration with Albert Riedlinger, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959)

14 Rudhyar, *An Astrological Mandala*, p. 11.

15 Chevalier, Jean, and Alain Gheerbrant. *A Dictionary of Symbols*. Translated by John Buchanan-Brown. 2nd ed. Penguin Books, 1996.

16 Chevalier and Gheerbrant, *Penguin Dictionary of Symbols*, p. 333.

17 Rudhyar, *An Astrological Mandala*, p. 13.

and hardship. Rather than predicting specific events, Saturn can be understood as representing the inner world in which growth is gained through struggle. Within a Jungian psychological framework, Saturn can be interpreted as highlighting the ego's confrontation with the collective realities, the need to align one's personal identity with societal structures and external expectations. Saturn's shadow aspect may bring to light repressed feelings regarding authority, structure or responsibility, but it does so by engaging with external circumstances (e.g. family dynamics, professional roles). These external pressures challenge the ego to mature and establish a balanced relationship with the world around it, encouraging personal growth through the acceptance and integration of these responsibilities. Likewise, Saturn in Aquarius (Innovation) in the 12th (illusions, the collective unconscious) house might suggest an inherited or deeply rooted sense of alienation, or a deep unconscious structure around authority and isolation. Such an interpretation is not prepackaged but it arises through synthesis. What does the rest of the chart say about boundaries, ancestry, and the collective unconscious? These configurations are not read literally. One does not interpret Saturn in the 12th as "you will be isolated" any more than one would interpret a metaphor like "the moon is a mirror" as a scientific claim.

In this regard, astrologer Liz Greene insightfully observes that "Saturn symbolizes a psychic process as well as a quality or kind of experience. He is not merely a representative of pain, restriction, and discipline; he is also a symbol of the psychic process, natural to all human beings, by which an individual may utilise the experiences of pain, restriction, and discipline as a means for greater consciousness and fulfilment. Psychology has demonstrated that there is within the individual psyche a motive or impulsion toward wholeness or completeness."¹⁸ Her Jungian lens affirms that Saturn's challenges are not just burdens to be endured, but archetypal access to psychological integration. This view resonates with the deeper transformative understanding of Saturn as a means of individuation. This symbolic reading of Saturn opens a wider reflection on the foundation of astrology itself. As noted in an editorial comment appended to *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Jung is said to have "not hesitate[d] to take the synchronistic phenomena that underlie astrology seriously," arguing that "just as there is an eminently psychological reason for the existence of alchemy, so too in the case of astrology," and suggesting that we should "investigate the psychological foundations on which they rest."¹⁹

5. Conclusion

Astrology, when stripped of its predictive reputation, reveals itself as something much deeper: a symbolic language through which the unconscious mind speaks. Like dreams or myths, it does not tell us what will happen, but shows us what we are feeling, struggling with, or growing into. In this article, I argued that the birth chart is a living structure of meaning, one that shifts and deepens as our self-awareness grows. Astrology, in this view is about recognition. It offers a mirror in which we might glimpse parts of ourselves that are otherwise hidden. In doing so, it helps us move closer to individuation, a fuller understanding of who we are and who we might become. It is not a science of the stars, but a language of the soul.

In retrospect, this inquiry has not only traced the symbolic function of astrology but may have, in its very unfolding, enacted the symbolic logic it seeks to reveal. Carl Jung once wrote... "The man who looks only outside and quails before the big battalions has nothing with which to combat the evidence of his senses and his reason... Since mass suggestion plays the predominant role here, it remains a moot point whether their message is their own, for which they are personally responsible, or whether they merely function as a megaphone for collective opinion."²⁰ In a world that prizes measurable truths, astrology offers something radical: an inner compass.

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The Tao Te Ching: A Mysterious and Timeless Wisdom

Kailani Thompson, III, R-E

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița

1. Introduction

The Tao Te Ching, traditionally attributed to mystical ancient Chinese sage Laozi (or Lao Tzu), is arguably the most influential Chinese philosophical work and most revered book of Taoist literature. Its title translates literally to “The Way (Tao),” “Virtue (Te),” and “Scripture/Book (Ching).” It can be interpreted as “The Book of the Way and its Virtue.” The work is a collection of seemingly unrelated aphorisms. These mystical and wise aphorisms are defined by their simplicity and perplexing paradox, and have endured through the centuries.



They still inspire many different cultures, providing a paradigm of the way of wisdom, harmony, and peace among and within individuals.

The Tao Te Ching is proposed to have been written in the 6th century BCE, although there are scholars who claim that it was likely to have been written as early as the 4th century BCE. There are also debates regarding its author, as the lack of an overall vision lead some scholars to assume that several authors contributed. Many agree, however, that Laozi is the author. He is said to have been a scholar and archivist at the Zhou Dynasty imperial court. Laozi was disillusioned with the violence and corruption of the society he saw around him and abandoned his position to retire to the mountains where he lived in seclusion and composed the Tao Te Ching

through his insights.

The work is an 81-lesson composition written with 5000 Chinese characters, and it is comprised of two sections: the Tao (the Way) and the Te (virtue). The Tao talks of the universe’s fundamental principle being an omnipotent, creative energy that is pervasive in everything and Te being Tao’s realization in human action and character. It is integrity on the part of the individual and intrinsic moral membership to the universal fabric of existence.

2. Core Concepts

At the center of Tao Te Ching is the idea of Tao, usually referred to as “the Way.” But the Tao is more not so much a doctrine or god than it is a living, formless, and boundless stream of energy that flows through the universe. The teaching of Laozi is that human beings must try to accord themselves with this natural order, embracing the spontaneity and simplicity that arise from living according to the Tao.

Another overall theme is that of Wu Wei, as “effortless action” or “non-action.” Wu Wei is a philosophy that teaches people to act in harmony with the way of existence, rather than trying to control or dominate it. Wu Wei is not laziness but an understanding that the actions one does in harmony with the Tao are more efficient and effective than the actions one does out of ego or forcefulness. If one only acts out of selfish desires and not for the good of all, Laozi calls such action a resistance to the Tao, or the natural order of things.

The Tao Te Ching also places emphasis on humility, simplicity, and the importance of inner peace. The highest wisdom, according to Laozi, is recognizing one’s limitations and accepting the mystery of life. By humility and the renunciation of aspiring to be powerful or wealthy, one can achieve genuine peace and bliss.

One of the most distinctive features of the Tao Te Ching is the use of paradox and contradiction. Laozi often proposed concepts that seem irrational or paradoxical, such as, “The more laws and rules are emphasized, the more thieves and robbers there will be.” Laozi invokes paradoxes to shake readers out of their ordinary thinking and prompt them to look beyond oppositional dualities (such as good and bad or right and wrong) and see the unified, fluid nature of the world.

For example, in Chapter 22, Laozi says, “If you want to become whole, let yourself be partial. If you want to become straight, let yourself be crooked.” These lines encapsulate the Taoist philosophy of complementary opposites. Light and darkness exist together, as do strength and weakness, wisdom and folly, and success and failure. They are in need of one another, and to attempt to suppress one part of an opposition

is to upset its balance. It is akin to the nature of the Yin and Yang symbol, one that is prevalent in Taoist philosophy.

3. Impact on Philosophy and Religion

The Tao Te Ching has influenced Chinese philosophy largely by being a guide to Taoism, but Confucianism and Chinese Buddhism have also included and developed from it. Taoism is itself more than two millennia old, Tao Te Ching being its guide in spirit and morals. The ideals of simplicity, naturalness, and Tao harmoniously contained in the Tao Te Ching have permeated thoroughly Taoist religious existence, through practices such as meditation, Qi Gong, and the hope for eternal, spiritual wholeness after death.



In the Western world, Tao Te Ching has attracted an eclectically diverse following of scholars and poets, spiritual seekers and ecologists. Its philosophy of interdependence, equilibrium, and harmony with nature has inspired such movements as transcendentalism and environmental philosophy. Carl Jung and Alan Watts are also among those who have tapped into Tao Te Ching as a source of inspiration, delving into its psychological and philosophical implications and advantages.

Despite being more than two thousand years old, the Tao Te Ching is remarkably relevant. Its teachings address the concerns of today: stress, materialism, and seeking meaning in a materialistic world that seems so often isolating. With as often as society today is smitten with achievement, material comfort, and approval, the Tao Te Ching teaches people to look inward and become more content and tranquil. This peace presented cannot be contingent on outside energies but rather an inner sense of belonging to something greater than the self on some level.

In a nutshell, the Tao Te Ching is an open invitation to live in harmony with the world and to believe in the order of nature. It is very popular, even today, because it is able to give

advice on how to be a wise, loving, and well-adjusted person—qualities that still hold people's interest all over the world.

4. Conclusion

The Tao Te Ching is really a handbook of living, employed as a guide to a rich and meaningful existence. The intelligence of Laozi's writings reveals to us that wisdom is a product of conformity to the way of nature, not from monumental effort or dominance. Accepting its agelessness, we may better handle the complexities of present-day living with grace, humility, and peace.

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THE ART OF PERSUASION AND MANIPULATION IN ARMITAGE'S DISCOURSE

Andreea – Mihaela Duțu, II, LEPC
Coordinator: PhD Professor Elena Bonta

INTRODUCTION

Both manipulation and/or persuasion are useful skills when it comes to influencing the interlocutor or audience in front of you. In this article, I will attempt to examine how these strategies are used in an interaction between three characters from Gibson's "Neuromancer" (Armitage, Case and Molly). I will also try to present the main differences between them, because "it is not uncommon for the terms to be used almost interchangeably"¹ and because "there is a fine line between persuasion and manipulation."² I will analyse the tactics used in each case through discourse analysis in order to support my qualitative approach. Even though the main character I analysed did not realize he was being manipulated, he was still aware that the other person was trying to influence him. Thus, it was difficult for him to detect the manipulation but easier to identify persuasion and to try to resist it. This goes in line with Sheikh Abdurraheem's words, that state:

"[...] persuasion is more readily identifiable and less effective; manipulation is more difficult to identify with certainty but has a greater persuasive factor."³

1. BOOK SYNOPSIS

In this novel, the main character, Henry Dorsett Case is a former hacker who previously worked for people who poisoned him with a mycotoxin that affected his ability to connect to the Matrix. He meets Molly Millions and they become friends. She introduces him to her boss, Armitage, a mysterious man both to her and to Case. Armitage wants to convince Case to work for him. To manipulate him, he promises to restore his ability to reconnect to cyberspace, plus other benefits related to his physical health and drug addiction.

To complete his job, Case must interact with Dixie Flatline, an AI that emulates a deceased person, who assists him through the mission, as well as with two AIs controlled by a clan called Tessier-Ashpool whose main representative is Turing. These AIs named Wintermute and Neuromancer must fuse to overcome the restrictions imposed by their creator clan and to evolve and to surpass themselves. To achieve this, Case has to penetrate military systems using a Kuang Grade Mark virus. He succeeds in completing his mission. Armitage dies. Case meets Wintermute who tells him that it is no longer just a simple AI but has become the Matrix itself.

In the end, Wintermute tells Case that there are others like him in the Centauri system and Molly leaves him a farewell note.

2. THE SKILL OF PERSUASION

According to Mallapiang, the term "persuasion" has the following meaning:

"Persuasion is principally an effort to convey information and interact between people in conditions where both parties understand and agree to do something meaningful for both parties."⁴

In addition, in Bonta's book "Discursive practices. Verbal interactions", "persuasion" is defined as "a process through which an individual tries to convince or influence the intentions, attitudes, or behaviours of others."⁵ This is something that can happen at any time in our lives; in fact, it can happen daily without

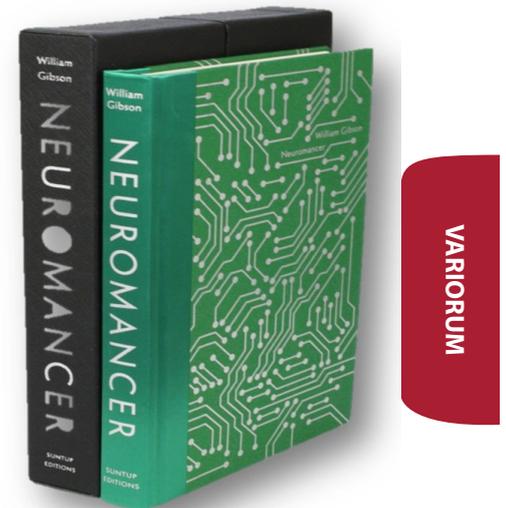


Figure 1

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4 Mallapiang, N., and Muharram, M. "Communication Techniques for Persuasion of Students and Lecturers in Shaping Behavior", *SITEKIN: Journal Sains, Teknologi dan Industri*, vol. 20, no. 2, June 2023, pp. 920–927. Available at: file:///C:/Users/dutua/Downloads/Communication_Techniques_for_Persuasion_of_Student.pdf, accessed on December 21, 2025.

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us even acknowledging it. Of course, even though persuasion is an important element in our lives, we can still resist it by using “clusters of resistance”⁶ strategies such as avoidance, contesting, biased processing and empowerment. There are also some motivations that lead us to resist persuasion, such as: “threat to freedom, reluctance to change and concerns of deception.”⁷

After reading William Gibson’s *Neuromancer*, I discovered that the skill of persuasion occurs throughout the book, as some characters try to influence others. In my analysis, I have attempted to present the ways in which Armitage tries to influence Case to work for him.

Armitage (whose real name is Colonel Wills Corto) uses powerful arguments to convince Case, appealing to Case’s feelings and emotions. He draws on stories from Case’s past and other elements in order to persuade him and make him do what he wants. In one of their conversations, we can briefly see that Armitage uses both persuasive and manipulative skills to achieve his goals with Case. It should also be mentioned that he is supported by Molly, who collaborates with him. In order to anticipate whether this strategy is being applied in Armitage’s discourse, we first need to identify the techniques that he uses.

2.1. Persuasive techniques

2.1.1. Nonverbal communication represents almost 60-90% of the total message we produce and includes cues that can substitute words or convey messages on their own. It is very important because it involves various elements or channels (other than words) such as facial expressions, tone of voice, posture and gestures, which help to “regulate the flow of conversation through turn-taking, back-channelling and other nonverbal signals.”⁸ The nonverbal technique includes elements such as smiling, touch, hugging, eye contact and the use of a tone that conveys trust, authority, experience and competence.⁹ Moreover, there are different types of nonverbal cues, including kinesics, oculosics, haptics, proxemics, chronemics and artefactual communication, etc.

2.1.2. As persuasion is considered an essential communication strategy it is important to mention that “verbal persuasion refers to the process of influencing someone’s beliefs, attitudes, or behaviours through spoken or written communication.”¹⁰ Some verbal techniques used to persuade an audience or interlocutor include the following: the use of evidence, verbal clichés, anaphora/repetition, rhetorical or guiding questions, alliteration and assonance, hyperbole and exaggeration, personal pronouns, proposing a problem and offering solutions, the use of quotations and references, appeal to the personal/familiar/local, the use of modals, and circularity.¹¹

3. THE SKILL OF MANIPULATION

According to various researchers, the term manipulation can be defined as follows: “Manipulation is one means by which environments are altered to correspond to characteristics of individuals”¹² or: “Manipulation is a form of intentional influence, characterized as an attempt by a person or party (the manipulator) to change the behavior of another person or party (the target), typically with a view to achieving a goal in the manipulator’s interests.”¹³

We can identify forms of manipulation in advertising, military strategies, the professional world and personal relationships, and it can help individuals achieve their goals. As Arthur Horn states, the main tools used in manipulation are power, persuasion and deception.

There are several manifestations of manipulation, such as the carrot-and-stick approach, emotional manipulation (including intimidation, seduction, minimization, blaming, charisma, or the illusion of power)

6 Fransen, M.L., Smit, (SMITH) E.G. and Verlegh, P.W.J., “Strategies and motives for resistance to persuasion: an integrative framework”, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 2015, p.1, available at: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4536373/pdf/fpsyg-06-01201.pdf>, accessed December 28, 2025.

7 *Ibidem*.

8 Fiveable. Persuasion Theory: Unit 5. n.d. Fiveable, available at: <https://fiveable.me/persuasion-theory/unit-5>, accessed on December 28, 2025.

9 Bonta, E., *Discursive practices. Verbal interactions*, Alma Mater, Bacău, 2014, p. 66.

10 *Op. cit.*

11 UCD Writing Centre. (n.d.). *Persuasive techniques in speeches*. University College Dublin, pp. 1-4, available at: <https://www.ucd.ie/writingcentre/t4media/Persuasive%20Techniques%20in%20Speeches%20SoRh.pdf>, accessed on 28. 12. 2025.

12 Buss, D. M., Gomes, M., Higgins, D. S., & Lauterbach, K., “Tactics of manipulation”. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1987, 52(6), p. 1219, available at: file:///C:/Users/dutua/Downloads/tactics_of_manipulation_1987_jpsp.pdf, accessed January 2, 2026.

13 Horn, A. *Manipulation. Dark psychology to manipulate and control people*, Independently Published, 2019, p.14. Available at: <https://ia902900.us.archive.org/21/items/darkpsychology/Manipulation%20Dark%20Psychology%20to%20Manipulate%20and%20Control%20People%20by%20Arthur%20Horn%20%28z-lib.org%29.pdf>.

and others.

As identified in research: “six major factors were identified across the four instruments and analyses: charm, silent treatment, coercion, reason, regression and debasement. All but silent treatment were also rationally generated a priori.”¹⁴

4. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Now that we have managed to identify the main differences between persuasion and manipulation and assuming Arthur Horn’s idea that “Persuasion, then, becomes a method of manipulation, which is a form of influence,”¹⁵ we can conclude that both elements are used simultaneously by Armitage to convince Case to work for him, with Armitage being supported by Molly. I will now analyse each sentence and comment on them in a diachronic way, from the beginning to the end, attempting to organize ideas and observe how the two processes function.

From the very beginning of their interaction, it becomes evident that Armitage holds significant power over Case. The way he operates, even through Molly as an intermediary, is remarkable. She appears to be the one who persuades Case to wait for the moment when Armitage will reveal certain information to him. In order to ensure the success of this persuasive attempt, she strategically offers him a coffee (“The caffeine also put people in a better mood, which makes them more likely to agree with a message, the researchers said”)¹⁶, which allows her to delay the situation and prevent a possible refusal. By directly telling him that she will not allow him to leave, Molly demonstrates a clear form of control; rather than negotiating, she chooses to assert her authority. One verbal persuasive strategy used by Armitage is addressing a rhetorical question to Case, a question for which he does not necessarily expect an answer, but rather one that allows him to provide further explanations himself (“Rhetorical questions are often used to lead the audience to a particular conclusion.”)¹⁷. He does so by appealing to a story from Case’s past in order to arouse his interest and appear credible. The insistence on the fact that Case is too young emphasizes that Armitage has lived longer, experienced more and therefore he may know more about his interlocutor’s past: “Too young to remember the war, aren’t you, Case?”¹⁸

In this way, Case’s arguments are limited through constraint. In order to demonstrate his authority, Armitage also uses a nonverbal persuasive skill: body language (kinesics), specifically the movement of his hand through his hair, the hand itself functioning as a means of capturing attention (“large hand”). His hair may indicate that he is a person who takes care of his appearance, while the gold bracelet represents an artifact (“Artifacts are objects and images are also tools that can be used to communicate nonverbally.”)¹⁹ that refers to his wealth and social status. The use of the term “flash” may suggest that he draws attention to himself and is visible to all observers: “A heavy gold bracelet flashed on his wrist.”²⁰

To seem more credible, Armitage provides evidence by naming the places where Case was created (Leningrad, Siberia, Kiev) and by suggesting that he himself was involved in this process. In this way, Armitage arouses Case’s interest in participating in the discussion and in finding out more about his own past. By asking the open-ended question: “What’s that supposed to mean?”²¹, Case agrees to interact, thus allowing Armitage to activate his curiosity through references to the past. However, by using a question of this type, the expected answer is usually longer, as it is used to elicit more information. At the same time, this type of question promotes interviewee self-disclosure and produces more accurate responses. By using such a question, Armitage also attempts to clarify the situation, as this strategy is “used when the answer already offered creates confusion, doubt, or lacks details.”²²

Armitage further refers to a familiar event by mentioning the name *Screaming Fist* with the aim of stimulating his curiosity while simultaneously showing that he holds control over the conversation. Case strategically cooperates and attempts to continue Armitage’s discourse voluntarily, demonstrating that he

14 *Op. cit.*, p. 1221.

15 Horn, A., *Manipulation. Dark psychology to manipulate and control people*, Independently Published, 2019, p.12.

16 Medicalxpress, available at: <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2006-05-coffee-persuasion.html>

17 Intellectual Property Awareness Foundation, *Persuasive Language. A guide to understanding persuasive language*, 2014, available at: https://www.unaoc.org/wp-content/uploads/Persuasive_Language_v2_May-2014.pdf.

18 Gibson, W., *Neuromancer*, Orion Publishing Group Ltd, Great Britain, 2022, p. 32.

19 Calub, C., L., and F., L., Calub. *Categories of Non-Verbal Communication: How to Improve Nonverbal Communication Skills*. Tarlac State University, 21 Apr. 2023, p.5.

20 *Op. cit.*

21 *Ibidem.*

22 Bonta, Elena, *Discursive practices. Verbal interactions*, Alma Mater, Bacău, 2014, p. 39.

also possesses knowledge about the incident. However, this reaction can also be interpreted as a form of involuntary resistance to Armitage's persuasive attempt, as Case tries to re-establish the balance of power by showing that he is not entirely guided by Armitage, using counter-argumentation and inoculation: "Some kind of run, wasn't it? Tried to burn this Russian nexus with virus programs. Yeah, I heard about it. And nobody got out."²³

The final sequence is used strategically by Case, as a form of information-seeking and testing, as he attempts to determine whether his interlocutor possesses more knowledge about the incident (verification strategy). Upon hearing Case's response, Armitage seeks to regain control of the discussion through nonverbal manipulation, specifically by employing silent treatment and dramatic pause, letting the silence fill the room. This behavior temporarily interrupts the verbal exchange and creates suspense, functioning as a power-display strategy. By turning his gaze toward Tokyo Bay, Armitage signals reflection and deliberation, which contributes to the illusion of authority and dominance and invites an anticipatory reaction from Case. His verbal response operates as a counter-argument combined with selective disclosure, as he provides information that suggests privileged access to factual details rather than rumors; thereby, reinforcing his superior position: "That isn't true. One unit made it back to Helsinki, Case."²⁴

However, Armitage withholds complete information, engaging in manipulation through omission, as he selects only the details that serve his interests, thus distorting reality as a form of manipulation. In the sequence: "Case shrugged, sipped coffee."²⁵, Case exhibits passive, non-verbal resistance to what he hears, while at the same time showing interest through his sip of coffee. By providing details about Case's identity, Armitage takes control of the narrative, reframing it with concrete evidence and manages to create an emotional connection, reducing some of Case's resistance techniques: "You're a console cowboy. The prototypes of the programs you use to crack industrial banks were developed for Screaming Fist."²⁶

Case continues the conversation; at the same time, the cup in his hand can represent Case's hidden strength and it can also be associated with a barrier between him and his interlocutor, taking a defensive position in a calm tone: Icebreakers, Case said, over the rim of the red mug. Armitage corrects him again, reaffirming his expertise in the terminological field, emphasizing that ICE means intrusion countermeasures electronics. Case opposes once again with verbal resistance. He explained that he was no longer a jockery, so he'd just be leaving. Once again, Armitage presents arguments in an attempt to make Case interested in learning more about his past, aiming to lure him into working for him and returning to the hacker world, drawing a connection between his identity and military operations. He claimed he was present at the creation of his kind. Case resists, saying that he will never work in this field again, emphasizing that Armitage can find someone else in his place: "You got zip to do with me and my kind, buddy. You're rich enough to hire expensive razorgirls to haul my ass up here, is all. I'm never gonna punch any deck again, not for you or anybody else."²⁷

The next sequence highlights Case's non-verbal display of vulnerability. His gesture of moving closer to the window and looking down suggests isolation, lack of perspective and existential decline. From the perspective of manipulation, this vulnerability is later exploited by Armitage, who employs a "carrot and stick" strategy (threat of continuous degradation versus promise of salvation): "Our profile says you're trying to con the street into killing you when you're not looking."²⁸ Case is shocked, intimidated and emotionally manipulated: "Profile?"²⁹

The fragmented reply indicates a loss of control over the situation and surprise at Armitage's access to intimate information: "You're suicidal, Case. The model gives you a month on the outside. And our medical projection says you'll need a new pancreas inside a year."³⁰

The time-limited prognosis introduces a sense of urgency, a technique meant to limit the capacity for resistance and reflection. Case's reaction, "We?" followed by "We who?", indicates the shock, confusion and intimidation he experiences. The question highlights his loss of control and emphasizes the perception

23 Gibson, W., *Neuromancer*, Orion Publishing Group Ltd, Great Britain, 2022, p. 32.

24 *Ibidem*.

25 *Ibidem*.

26 *Ibidem*.

27 *Ibidem*.

28 *Ibidem*, p. 33.

29 *Ibidem*.

30 *Ibidem*.

of an omnipotent entity, which intensifies the manipulative effect. Another technique employed is the use of a guided question, “What would you say if I told you we could correct your neural damage?”³¹ which prompts Case to consider a possibility that radically changes his situation, without giving him time for critical reflection.

Armitage’s imposing and motionless posture functions as a subtle intimidation, manipulating Case’s psyche and foreshadowing control over his decisions, thus preparing the ground for the emotional and psychological influence that follows. Case is shocked, frightened and emotionally overwhelmed and his mind tries to protect itself by treating the situation as a dream. To ensure that his manipulation succeeded, Armitage asks for his opinion. At this moment, Case is completely vulnerable. The manipulation works: “Case looked out over the Bay and shivered. I’d say you were full of shit. Armitage nodded. Then I’d ask what your terms were.”³²

Armitage manages to get what he wants. He already provides information about what Case will have to do, mentioning that it is not very different from what he’s used to. This leaves Case somewhat to deduce what he must do, to resume his position as a hacker. Their conversation is interrupted by Molly who tells Armitage to let Case get some sleep.

Molly functions as an agent supporting the manipulation. She validates Armitage’s speech, calms Case and reinforces the idea that the offer is real and beneficial. Her presence reduces Case’s resistance and contributes to the effectiveness of the strategy: “It’ll work Case. You got no idea, the kind of stuff Armitage has. Like he’s gonna pay these nerve boys for fixing you with the program he’s giving them to tell them how to do it.”³³

5. CONCLUSION

Although persuasion is present, Armitage’s discourse goes beyond this and clearly enters the realm of manipulation, according to definitions provided by Buss and Horn. The main techniques used are: a) emotional manipulation - he induces fear (imminent death), guilt and feelings of uselessness to destabilize Case; b) carrot and stick technique (reward and threat); c) illusion of lack of alternatives (Case is made to believe he has no choice, a defining feature of manipulation; and finally, power and informational control). Armitage possesses sensitive information about Case, creating a clear power imbalance.

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³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 34.

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I am trying to think... think of the earliest memory of it. Of my first memory encountering the English language. Bets are on the written version being first. Names on boxes, instruction manuals, remotes, even something as simple as an “on/off” switch on a piece of hardware. I say that still counts.

To distil it down as simply as I possibly can, my love of the English language was born in the aftermath of two catalysts parallel to each other in my early childhood. The first catalyst, even though I might hate it now and what it stands for, but the TV in our house during my childhood was a gateway into seeing the true wide breath of life. Granted, we did not have cable and had to make do with only three or four channels, but limits breed ingenuity, do they not?

The story of humanity in a nutshell.

I grew up in the early 2000’s, so that meant that nothing was dubbed. So much so, that I had my ears perked up before I ever learned my abc’s to be fast enough to keep up with the annoying text blinking in and out at the bottom of the TV screen. From the time I was in primary school, I recall tuning in at 4 P.M. every afternoon to watch “Young & The Restless” which me and my brothers and sisters would call “The show where everyone ends up in a relationship with everyone else at some point or another”

The show taught me much more than I would ever care to notice in my own native language. Accents, speech patterns, recurring figures of speech of each actor, the body language of each individual person on the screen, their quips and ticks as well. I guess I should thank the producers for keeping the show going for years on end with episodes in the thousands, so that what started as just exposure to the English language, hung around long enough to bloom into love.

The second catalyst were videogames and all the hardware that those could be rendered through. They came into my life since kindergarten. Consoles, mainly Commodore 64 but most important was the PC though. I come from a time when those beauties had to lay on their sides, and not towers as we call them nowadays and monitors the size of nightstands. Screens thinner than a finger were an undreamt dream at that point. From the menu’s to everything we had to click on, like “rematch”, because I was getting a beating on Mortal Kombat against my brothers. Or commands in games like “quit” when my time at the computer was done, much to my chagrin. For “quit” specifically, I recall wording it out loud and spelling “q” as an “o” for the longest time. Suffice it to say, I spoke it in public only at the moment when I learned the proper pronunciation. Or another combination of words such as “please wait”. The gnawing ever present message on many installation processes of videogames. I was pronouncing it letter for letter using rules from Romanian, which, clear as day, did not apply to English. I heard it later for sure in movies, but a fifth or sixth year old can not make the connection that “/pli:z/ is the same as the “please” mouthed on screen. I did eventually, but the moment it clicked I do not remember, and thank the world for that, for I must have felt pretty stupid.

A normal child would have asked around, but I did not want to look stupid at the time, almost the same as now, and so I had to figure it out on my own.

English subtitles for video games did a lot for me, where I was able to get them, because I was able to understand the English language on a double track. The feedback loop on my learning was that much shorter, that much quicker. A paramount shift in my opinion.

By the third grade when I started the English language class in school, it felt like the system had to catch up with me. I developed an ear for it already, so that with all grammar, even now, I go with my gut more than appeal to any higher thinking of “according to the theory of this specific tense...” What I have to thank school for, I think, is writing, not that the most writing I did while in my English classes, but the schedule of it all, I kept the habit going.

By sixth grade, when I realized I could string more than a few sentences in English better than Romanian, I stuck with it in all the stories that I have written due to all my incessant day dreaming. And by the time the internet fully hit for me and everyone in my hometown around 2007-2008 with YouTube, everything that meant “culture” was filtered through it and it alone.

English class in school became something I just needed to show up for and that was about it. Looking back on it now, I have reaped rewards from the use of the language but it has had its way of “singling” me out of groups of my peers also. Up until high school, I was the only one in my class that knew English at my

level. The stuff that I was into, classmates considered too high brow. It was not something that people found intriguing about me, just something to separate more often than not.

I recall going to one of my classmates' houses and helping her with her English homework by writing the English sentences we had to prepare, as they were spoken. What did I know about teaching English? I only knew how to semi-write it and speak it. Miss me with just about everything else about it. All the while she was talking to me like I was some wizard "How do you know this stuff?" And me replying with "I just do" and feeling more and more like I was some Frankenstein, with a panache for Shakespeare's mother tongue.

In High school it kept the same pace with my peers, and me being lazy in doing my English homework and helping others with it but not changing much about it when it came to essays and that had a tendency to bite me back later when facing the teacher.

As an adult now, I got to reap the rewards I did not value as a child and teen, surrounded by many who did not share my inclination. What added to my angst and feelings of alienation as a kid, I built into arms to aid me in life as a man. I got to see the land across the pond and be told I speak like one of them, with no trace of my eastern European accent in my English pronunciation. As to the writing, well, this essay, however well written, is thanks to that little kid thinking the world of the English language. My writing Hegira is just getting off its feet.

Everything on the shelf of life has a price tag attached to it. Little old me took care of the bill as he stared wide-eyed at American soap operas day in and day out, and played videogames nights on end, way past his bed time. Learning where the "on and off" switch on the PC tower was, came in handy pretty quick. The shut off button was too slow, and tended to give me away by the time my parents checked up on me and I was under the covers, pretending to sleep. I was a quick study even then.

The Fairy Tale - Europe of the Middle Ages

Celina-Gabriela Pavel, I, E-R

Coordinator: PhD Associate Professor Nadia-Nicoleta Morărașu

When we think of European culture, names like Mihai Eminescu, William Shakespeare, Miguel de Cervantes, or Leonardo da Vinci come to mind. However, all too often, we forget a period that may be just as important: Middle Ages.

The Middle Ages continue to influence our world, both through fairy tales and through novels, evoking the figure of the noble and courageous knight and the elegant and intelligent lady. These readings shape girls' expectations of an ideal husband, one who will protect and love them unconditionally, eternally. And boys, seeking to follow this chivalrous ideal, have a profound respect for the woman they love and for all women.

Even before the invention of the printing press, literature was very widespread. Knights and poets wrote poems about love, courage in battle, and the protection of the weak, while monks and nuns tirelessly copied old manuscripts in monasteries, so that future generations could have them.

Not only was literature flourishing, but so was religious art. The holy icons of the Byzantine Empire have remained the same in the Orthodox space up to this day. Likewise, the services of the Orthodox Church have remained unchanged for over two thousand years.

At the same time, the Byzantine Empire was a worthy successor of the Roman Empire, carrying forward the tradition of Roman law, Greek culture, and also preserving the Orthodox faith unchanged. Except for the iconoclastic wars, the church and the state had a collaborative relationship, considering both the soul of the citizens and their life in the world.

In terms of people's leisure time, they were just as interested in games as those in antiquity. The most popular were horse racing, tournaments, archery, and board games. Chess was just as popular as it is today. For example, King Edward I of England loved to play chess alongside his wife, Eleanor of Castile.

They also organized hunts for wild boars, hares, and falconry. At the falconry hunt, ladies and queens also participated, as they were considered less dangerous.

They organized lavish banquets with game dishes, fine drinks, expensive cheeses, and fruit and honey pastries. Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, organized such a banquet, impressive for that era, in the year 1430, on the occasion of his marriage to Isabella of Portugal. He served the drink in a unique way, from a fountain in the shape of a lion, whose mouth flowed with wine.

They sang cheerful melodies, and people danced different types of dances. Women of high society knew how to play at least one instrument, such as the harp. They also spent their time on embroidery, which required a lot of skill.

An absurd myth about this period is that people did not take care of their personal hygiene. Nothing is more false, however, as historians have discovered that they were just as well-groomed as any person who ever lived. They cleaned their teeth by chewing olive or sage or used salt or charcoal. People of wealth had private baths, while peasants bathed in the river. They used an early form of soap, known since Roman times.

Men treated women exactly as in the books they read. Different knightly orders were established, such as the Order of the Garter, founded by Edward III of England, or the Order of the Star, founded by King Charles V of France.

To conclude, despite some myths that spread the idea that what was medieval was uncivilized, the examples I provided in this article prove just the opposite. In fact, I think we are entitled to consider that Europe in the Middle Ages was a fairy tale land.

Italy, with love.

Elena-Theodora Brahă, III, E-F

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița



Italy is like a dream — at least that’s how it felt the first time I set foot there during my summer vacation in 2021, just after my eighteenth birthday. I was head over heels excited to discover Italian culture and immerse myself in Mediterranean cuisine. My sister lives in Italy with her family, so she invited me to spend the summer with her — helping around the house and, most excitingly, finally visiting Rome, a city I had always dreamed of seeing.

Italy is truly one of the best places to live. The people are warm and friendly, though as a shy person, I initially found it hard to adapt to the “Italian” way of living. My first interaction was a bit awkward, but it taught me an important lesson. It happened when my sister introduced me to one of her neighbours — a lovely older lady who asked me my name and how I was finding Italy so far. I answered her first question, but to the second, I simply replied, “bene” (good). I could tell she wanted more, but I didn’t know enough Italian. That moment made me decide to learn the basics of the language — with a lot of help from my family.

During my stay, I came to understand that Italians truly love life. They enjoy every moment, treasure good food, and celebrate often — all in their own charming style. It felt like they had discovered the secret to living well. The scenery was breathtaking. Every place seemed more beautiful than the last — and I only saw Rome, the surrounding cities, the beach, two lakes, and a waterfall called Cascata delle Marmore. I can’t even imagine how stunning Milan, Turin, Lake Como, or Sicily must be. They’re all on my bucket list now. And the food — ice cream, pizza, and pasta taste completely different in Italy. It’s as if you’re experiencing them for the first time in their true form.

Rome is a city where the ancient meets the modern. Walking the streets beside the Colosseum and



seeing ancient architecture blend with modern shops and cafés gave me goosebumps. Just imagining that the Colosseum was built over 2,000 years ago is mind-blowing. Many of the Roman streets we still walk on today lead you to vibrant, modern life — yet somehow Rome still feels like a living museum, and you don’t want to leave.

One of the highlights of my summer was attending a festival in a medieval town called Poggio di Otricoli, founded in 1207 on a hill. From the outside, the town looks like a fortress; inside, it’s rustic but beautifully

preserved. The festival lasted three days, and during that time I got to taste local foods like pizzette, try old-style beer, and watch street performances. Locals dressed as knights, damsels, jesters, wizards, and even a strange two-meter-high creature — which I first found creepy, but later learned was the town’s guardian, not a villain. The shows included staged battles between knights (with a happy ending, of course), tricks by street performers, and something truly spectacular: sbandieratore, or flag-throwers, who performed breathtaking routines with flying flags.

The streets were filled with the songs of the sbandieratore, the smell of delicious food, and the sound of laughter. I was truly



mesmerized, to say the least. The Italian beach was also unforgettable. I still remember the salty perfume in the air as we approached the sea — it was engulfing, tempting, and absolutely dominant. I swam all evening, and as the sun was setting and the water remained warm, I can say it was easily the best night of my trip. I didn't want to leave the water; I wanted to stay there forever.

For me, Italy is a place I will always want to return to. It's where my family is, and where I felt like I was in paradise. I experienced it under blazing sun and pouring rain — and it was just as beautiful in both. If you're planning to visit Italy too, I'd advise bringing lots of sunscreens (the summer heat is no joke!), a good camera, and good vibes. The rest will come to you. Buona fortuna!



My Erasmus Experience in Corsica

Svetlana Ursachi, III, CRP

Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița

My name is Svetlana, I am 28 years old, and this year I lived the most precious experience of my life. Without much hesitation, I accepted an adventure without realizing at first what impact it would have on me. I am speaking now about Erasmus, the study program that allowed me to explore the French culture and language, as well as a different way of life. I spent one semester in Corsica, a story-like island, at Pascal Paoli University. Those five months I spent there can be described, in a literary sense, as a framed narrative — a separate life lasting one semester.

1. The purpose I pursued

My main goal was to discover a different way of life. I am strongly convinced that understanding a nation, a culture, or a country begins with understanding the nature of relationships between people. What do they talk about when they meet? What do they discuss over morning coffee or evening wine? How do they soothe their pain? What songs do they sing? How do they behave in different social contexts? How do they celebrate Easter? How does the state interact with its citizens? And the professor with the student? To many of these questions I received answers, and I understood something important — it seems that France might be my next destination, at least for a few years.

Tips & tricks: Before accepting an Erasmus adventure, define your central motivation, a leitmotif that will guide you throughout the experience. You will have the chance to discover many beautiful things.

2. A personal challenge

For me, the Erasmus program was similar to the act of emigrating, only in miniature. It would not be an exaggeration to say that you start some processes from zero. Finding a social circle, realizing that all bureaucratic procedures happen in another language, interacting with people only in French and English — this cognitive process is extremely exhausting (your brain literally creates new neural connections, and sometimes you feel them!). Observing a different lifestyle makes you think more about your own. You notice social habits and you wonder: “But how do people from my own environment behave in the same circumstances?” A truly fascinating process.

Tips & tricks: You must understand that the Erasmus adventure will not be easy, but it has the power to change your mindset — or at least improve it.

3. A new “key visual”

This point is more about aesthetic pleasure. Corsica is an extremely beautiful island, and I am someone who grew up strictly in the city. I was born and lived all my life in Chișinău, without relatives in the countryside, and I never embarked on “discover the country” trips. So for me, the beauty of this island struck my entire imagination and emotional sensibility. Even though I saw mountains around me every day, I was still amazed each time by how beautiful everything was, by how much splendor and greatness nature can display.

Tips & tricks: Before going

to Corsica, prepare your phone’s storage. You will take photos at every step.

Now that I have covered the more personal and sometimes philosophical layers, let’s talk about the practical aspects.

- Where I lived

The University of Corte offers accommodation spaces managed by the company CROUS. The rooms provided are usually for one person and are fully equipped with everything necessary. I lived in a 19 m² studio. The monthly fee was 383 euros, but there was a possibility of partial reimbursement through the state institution CAF.

- Food

Student campuses have restaurants where you can have lunch or dinner. The cost is approximately 1.5–2.50 euros. For the rest of my purchases, I went to Auchan.

- Free time

Corte is a small town and, besides the stunning views, it is good to have a group of people to go out with or travel together. Since I came to Corsica alone, I befriended the group of students who also came

through Erasmus or who moved permanently to Corsica. I met them at the French classes offered by the university for Erasmus students. Together, we went on an 18 km mountain hiking trail (my first one!), went to the cinema, and attended the Good Friday church service with the locals in Corte. Additionally, the university offers free sports and cultural activities. Among the sports activities, I could choose from dance workshops, Pilates, yoga, fitness, gym, swimming, volleyball, basketball, and more. Cultural activities included singing workshops, exhibitions, Corsican history classes, local crafts, etc.

In the end, I would like to say that the element of fear you experience before going through a major change hides within it an element of personal freedom. It is difficult to go through fear, but once you reach personal freedom, you begin to wonder how you lived without it until now.

Therefore, courage, dear students, in everything you set out to do!

Andreea-Mihaela Duțu, II, LEPC
Coordinator: PhD Lecturer Raluca Galița

INTRODUCTION

The book I have chosen to discuss is entitled “Three Weeks in the Himalayas”, written by Marius Chivu: “born on September 20, 1978, in Horezu, Vâlcea County, Romania, (he) is a prominent contemporary Romanian writer, literary critic, translator, editor, and journalist.”¹ Published by Humanitas Publishing House in 2012, this work is a travel diary that presents a series of adventures experienced by two friends during their journey to the Thorung La Pass in Nepal, the highest mountain pass in the world. The author describes in detail the reasons that led him to make the decision to travel so far from home, the people who influenced him, everything he observed from the very moment of his departure, the friendships he formed in those places, as well as the hardships he had to endure throughout the journey. At the level of this metatext, we will examine to what extent the book captures the reader’s interest, what the strengths and weaknesses of this diary are, the main themes, the plot and the main characters, while at the same time attempting to avoid excessive spoilers and instead arouse the interest of potential readers.

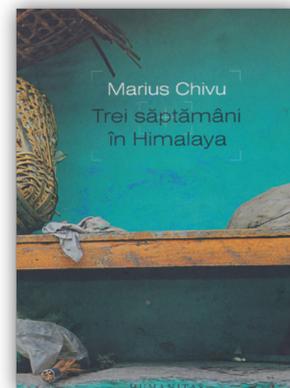


Figure 1

1. THE POETICS OF THE TEXT (EXPLORING THEMES, NARRATIVE AND STRUCTURE)

The main themes of this work are travel, friendship and religion, alongside secondary themes such as culture and nature. To a certain extent, the theme of Eros is also present, as aspects related to conjugal love are mentioned. In what follows, I will present the action of the work by using the stages of the plot in order to highlight the most important aspects of the text.

The exposition introduces the main character (the narrator, who overlaps with the author within the diegesis²), who recounts the events in the first person from an intradiegetic perspective, as Gerard Genette notes: “to an intradiegetic narrator corresponds an intradiegetic narratee”³ with internal focalization. He states that he was in Bucharest when a friend named Cătălin proposed that they set out together on a trekking journey at an altitude of 5,400 meters in Nepal. The narrative tension arises when the narrator initially refuses to accept the idea of traveling, but he cannot get it out of his mind. This ultimately leads him to change his mind, especially because he fully trusts Cătălin, whom he describes as:

“He is an intelligent and deeply knowledgeable guy, he knows a bit about everything: Norse mythology, online marketing, quantum physics, Japanese cinema, etc. But above all, he is a prudent person. I would not travel so far from home with anyone else, especially on a journey to places I know so little about.”⁴ (“e un tip inteligent și foarte informat - știe câte ceva despre toate: mitologie scandinavă, marketing online, fizică cuantică, cinematografie japoneză etc. dar, mai ales, e un tip prudent. N-aș pleca cu nimeni altcineva atât de departe de casă și într-o călătorie prin locuri despre care știu atât de puține!”)

At the beginning, the author started preparing by running around the apartment building in the evenings, giving up the elevator and running along Morii Lake (Lacul Morii). He also consulted the Lonely Planet guide to see what else he needed to buy for the trip and, of course, began gathering the necessary equipment for his journey, realizing how little he actually knew about such trips. On the flight to Kathmandu, they met two Romanian flight attendants (a girl and a boy) who made them feel as if they were traveling first class. Upon arrival, they were greeted by their sherpa, Rishi, who informed them that it was the year 2068 according to the Nepali calendar: “Nepalis have not yet abandoned the Hindu calendar in which the New Year

1 Grokipedia, “Three weeks in the Himalayas.”, [grokipedia.com/page/trei_sptmni_n_himalaya_\(book\)](https://grokipedia.com/page/trei_sptmni_n_himalaya_(book)). Accessed January 28, 2026.

2 Alina Iftime (coord.: L. T. V. Madgearu), *Textul narativ. Clasificări conceptuale*: <https://isjcta.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Textul-narativ.-Clasificări-conceptuale-Iftime-Alina-L.-T.-,V.-Madgearu.pdf>, accessed on January 26, 2026.

3 Gerard Genette. *Narrative discourse. An essay in method*. Ed. Cornell University Press, New York: 1972, pp. 259-256. Pdf: <https://15orient.com/files/genette-on-narrative-discourse.pdf>, accessed January 26, 2026.

4 Chivu, Marius. *Trei săptămâni în Himalaya*. Ed. Humanitas: București, p.7. [own translation]

falls on April 14 and one of the months different each year has 32 days.”⁵ (“Nepalezii încă nu au renunțat la calendarul hindus în care Anul Nou cade pe 14 aprilie, iar una dintre luni, mereu alta în fiecare an, numără 32 de zile.”) They familiarize themselves with the new culture, discovering that there are no traffic rules and that photographing certain places is prohibited, a rule they accidentally break near the American Consulate, where a Nepali officer interrogates them and requires them to delete the images. They are astonished by the chaos and disorder that the locals seem to accept. In the chapter “Land of Fake”, they learn that two of the foreigners they were supposed to travel with have already left and another will arrive in a few days. This places them in a difficult situation, having to decide whether to continue their adventure with Rishi and Rajeev. Along the way, they stay in various guesthouses, try local foods and meet travelers from several countries. The climax of the story is marked by the onset of High Altitude Sickness (HAS), also known as acute mountain sickness:

“Thus, there is a real danger from HAS, which manifests through headaches, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of balance and even hallucinations. The only remedy is to descend as quickly and as far as possible as soon as symptoms appear. Ignoring them and continuing the ascent can lead to pulmonary or cerebral embolism and ultimately, death.”⁶ (Astfel, există pericolul acestui HAS, care se manifestă prin dureri de cap, greață, vomă, diaree, pierderea echilibrului și chiar halucinații, singurul remediu fiind coborârea înapoi, cât mai repede și cât mai mult, imediat ce apar simptomele. Ignorarea lor și continuarea ascensiunii poate duce la embolie pulmonară sau cerebrală și, în cele din urmă, la moarte”).

Once these symptoms appear, they must be treated with caution; nevertheless, he chooses to continue the journey, disregarding the risks in order not to ruin his friends’ vacation. The story’s resolution presents the two friends on their way to the airport, after having visited various tourist spots in the area. They are now sitting in a taxi, both contemplating the possibility of returning one day and reflecting on the sign that reads: “One is not enough.” This book presents real events from the author’s life, using narration and description as the main modes of exposition, complemented by interior monologue. This aligns with the idea that “the writer’s self only appears in his books”⁷ a notion that applies to Marius Chivu.

2. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Taking into consideration Paul Cornea’s assertion that the process of interpretation constitutes “everything we think or do in everyday conversations, reading, watching films, research and professional activity, etc.”⁸ (“tot ceea ce gândim ori săvârșim, în conversațiile cotidiene, în lectură, vizionarea de filme, în cercetare și în activitatea profesională etc.”), I feel justified in mentioning what I found particularly interesting about this travel journal. During the pre-reading stage, the “expression of the process known in reception rhetoric as the formation of the horizon of expectation,”⁹ I could not overlook the multitude of vivid images in the book, the appealing hardcover format, and the high-quality paper. It is a credible journal that also takes the form of a photo album. Moreover, the chapters and subchapters are numerous and numbered with blue Arabic numerals. Structurally, the book contains 24 chapters (such as: “În ce lume am aterizat?, Off-road cu rata, Buchetul de marijuana și mămăliga hindusă, Kamasutra pentru incepatori, Ultimul joint in Kathmandu”, etc.), each with several unnumbered subchapters, which makes the reading process easier. In addition, there is an introductory, unnumbered chapter entitled “Nothing about Nepal” (“Nimic despre Nepal.”).

Also, the book is written in a semi-formal style, as it also includes certain informal passages, although not very frequently. Structurally, it does not resemble a traditional diary but rather a novel. The days are not numbered, a detail that becomes evident during the reading process. In this final stage, one can also appreciate the beauty of the book through its detailed yet highly subjective descriptions, as the author does not hesitate to share his own feelings and impressions regarding his experiences. Ultimately, the author himself invites readers to reflect on the depth of this journey: “Attempting to cross those very high mountains means descending equally deep within yourself. Every journey has hidden destinations of which you are not fully aware at first.”¹⁰ (“încercarea de a străbate acei munți foarte înalți înseamnă să cobori la fel de mult în tine. Orice călătorie are destinații ascunse de care la început nu ești pe deplin conștient”). Regarding the

5 *Ibidem*, p. 15. [own translation]

6 *Ibidem*, 56. [own translation]

7 Proust, Marcel. *Contra lui Sainte-Beuve de Marcel Proust*. Ed. Univers, București: 1971, p.85. [own translation] PDF: <https://www.scribd.com/document/386699790/Contra-lui-Sainte-Beuve-de-Marcel-Proust-doc#content=query:eul%20scriitorului%20pageNum:30,indexOnPage:0,bestMatch:false>

8 Cornea, Paul. *Interpretare și raționalitate*. Ed. Polirom, Iași, 2006, p.512. [own translation]

9 Pamfil, Alina. *Didactica literaturii.Reorientări*, Ed. ART, 2016, p. 166, ISBN: 978-606-710-335-0, [own translation] PDF: <https://www.scribd.com/document/376806191/Didactica-Literaturii-Reorientari-Alina-Pamfil>

10 Marius Chivu: <https://humanitas.ro/humanitas/carte/trei-săptămâni-în-himalaya>, [own translation].

weaknesses of this work, there are few points to critique. One could note the inclusion, within the narrative, of references to material unsuitable for minors (such as „Kamasutra”) or subtle allusions that naturally attract adult interest. However, this is understandable, especially considering that other works by the author are titled “Romanian erotic stories” (“Povești erotice românești”) and the collective volume “My first porno” (“Primul meu porno”), “111 cele mai frumoase poezii de dragoste din literatura română”.

CONCLUSION

Considering all the aspects presented above, we can conclude that this diary is one of the most representative works of the writer Marius Chivu, reflecting a world populated by people with diverse traditions. The suspense it creates is also an important aspect, as well as the fact that the author inserts humorous and even erotic elements to a certain extent, elements meant to provoke and engage the reader. Therefore, this is a text that requires in-depth analysis and constant updating through interpretation if we wish to define ourselves as model readers, a notion perfectly articulated by Umberto Eco in *Lector in Fabula*, as follows: “an expression remains mere flatus vocis as long as it is not correlated, by reference to a given code, with a content to which convention assigns a certain stability.”¹¹ (“o expresie rămâne pur flatus vocis cat timp nu este corelata, cu referințe la un cod dat, cu conținutul său stabilit prin convenție”). By “updating,” I refer to an in-depth reading that every reader must undertake.

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ANEXES

Figure 1: <https://humanitas.ro/humanitas/carte/trei-săptămâni-în-himalaya>

¹¹ Umberto, Eco. *Lector in fabula. Cooperarea interpretative în textile narrative*. Ed. Univers, București: 1991, p. 80.

A Piece of the Rod that Turns the World

Marco-Ștefan Pișta, I, E-R

1637 words

The bairn cried and cried.

Take him. Take him and just go!

She had never meant to linger, but the cold up here was a fierce fiend. All Her lifetimes did little to prepare Her against it, and it did even less, still, for what was yet ahead of Her.

Pristine knee-deep snow all over. The wind didn't howl; the trees did not stir. Only the Rod turned, dragging, spinning and scraping along. It never tired, it never slept. Dwarfing mountains and the colors that leaped across the sky after it poured with Its son watching. The daughter, closer yet, second in line, entertained herself with other things –stealing her brother's thunder every once in a while– chief among them.

All this celestial dance belonged to Her once and Her Kin.

Fools!

They chose obscurity. They chose to hide. She'd been many things across her lifetimes, but a coward and a fool She was not. Not for a lifetime, let alone multiple. But They had been both, many times over.

To anyone else, the incessant crying of a newborn would pry them out of their own head, and the battles one fought there. Yet the bairn cried, and Her gaze avoided the little one's burning face, grinding Her teeth as She had done in all Her lifetimes, pushing forward, muttering curses under Her breath.

The numbness had taken hold of Her toes and sought purchase further, to make Her move as if on stilts.

Her palms were not much better as She wrapped them around the babe, close, hugging herself, trudging through the soft snow, with the ground rumbling beneath Her.

The sun reached its zenith as it seemed to catch its breath atop the Rod. A trick of the eye.

If only you'd burn it all down and be done with it!

But kin would not turn against kin. Only Her own, the kind that did not belong here.

Looking up, the fir trees thickened before Her, before the Rod. The grey stone found no end due east or west, and as the hours dragged on, the clouds cloaked its top just the same.

Close, She breathed in, hoarse, ragged, almost at Her wit's end. She had tens of miles left to go, not hundreds like before.

We should turn back...

"Not ever! Do you hear ME?" She spat on him that day. Long coming it was, for it should have happened when He had the damn thing made.

Shouting in the white wasteland only halted the bairn's cries for just a moment, no more than that.

Yet another long night stood before them.

The last one! She told herself.

There was enough kindling for the fire, yet the babe was restless. As She leaned against the jagged bark of the fir tree, She closed Her eyes, rocking the bairn in its wrappings, begging in a low tone for some quiet now, as She lay in the dead dark cold. Yet who was there to beg for? Herself?

The humans bowed before the Rod, yet She'd spit and hex it before such a thought could ever be entertained.

"I don't want to pick Myself up from the snow because of you, Little Devil" She rocked and rocked, rigid, with a tremble, no smooth sway in her swings from left to right. All to no avail.

"You come from weak loins and an even weaker womb, damn you!"

She always bemoaned having picked the wrong husk to walk this world with, and She did it now just the same. The other wouldn't have Her end up with undeveloped humans thrown into Her lap.

She hadn't had one to care for three lifetimes now, yet she recalled, as the little one shifted in his wrappings closer and closer to her bosom. She knew what to do.

The moment his mouth grabbed it, She winced as if he bit on it. She was out of practice, but She didn't care. The little devil's mouth howled into the night no longer.

The woman knew Her body was older than the trees that littered Her perception and with no feed to give, they both went to sleep hungry that night.

She awoke and moved straight with the early morning, to the sound of nothing but the bairn and the turning of the Rod.

The way lay clear ahead towards it.

Twenty feet, ten, just inches left. Nothing but grey stone, left or right and up ahead as She craned her neck. The Rod shifted ever eastward at a snail's pace, the world girdling around It.

She laid the wailing bairn aside in his coverings and blankets, Her sole focus and mission was just about to begin.

No tools of man could break it or scale it. She had to hope Her true nature would pick it apart.

If it was made by a God, it could be destroyed by one.

The texture of her wool mitten glove rubbed against the moving stone.

What She sensed was frail at first, but then She heard it, a tremor, a thin shudder then a quiver in the ground beneath Her feet.

Log in my eye no longer, you bastard!

The woman gritted Her teeth then laughed with a snarl. Her true touch, the Rod, had yet to feel as She removed Her glove and with a smirk on Her face, She thought to go gentle on Her jailer, by just snapping a flick against it.

"I am going to enjoy this!"

And the Rod did answer, with a wilder stir, yet its turn did not yield. As it trudged on turning, so did the world. And the cycle continued unbroken.

The woman curled Her lip, thinking fate was not fond of jokes. She opened her palm and pushed it against the moving stone.

Indifference greeted Her then, and all the attempts She would yet make, as the sun rose and as it fell.

Nudging, pushing, thrashing, even crashing into it—good it did not do. All that until desperation reared its ugly head while pride cowered and fell in the pit of Her soul.

"Come on, You!" She screamed, frustrated, seemingly in competition with the bairn just a few feet behind Her.

"Made by a skank who couldn't straighten a nail! Damn You to All Ends!" She slapped and punched to no avail. Keeping Her hands on the moving rock, a pebble struck the top of Her head, and Her hand was quick to follow, rubbing and scratching the spot.

The harlot's weapon is mocking you! She heard an eerie voice in her head, speaking.

The woman kicked and thrashed against it to no success or even mere progress, eventually falling backwards, defeated.

It had been hours of Her trying to reach into It, trying to destroy it. If She had never been aware of it having a will of its own, now it had been made crystal clear.

The bairn was unrelenting all together with the biting cold, Her sore body almost spoke its last. Feeling bitter and cheated She rose from the ground and pushed Her whole weight with Her hands stretched against the stone, digging in with Her bit down nails. They gushed red. With a wacry of Her own, Her fingers found purchase in the stone as it moved, and She moved with it. The woman fought to earn her pound of flesh.

Pulling it apart needed Her forearms up against the olden rock. She felt blazing fire surging through her fingers and arms as She did so, but it wasn't without reward. As She tore down a large chunk of stone from It, keeping her step to the right, the Rod dragged.

“Now I have You!”

She screamed as blades of singed fire moved through her limbs and tore them from Her. The woman fell to the ground and the piece of stone alongside Her.

Horrified of what Her eyes held before Her, blood oozing and charred bone altogether from Her arms now bleeding stumps. The piece of stone the size of a round table just sitting there...yet the Rod turned, careless, unbothered by it all.

She trailed blood across the snow as She heaved, gritting through the pain, all the while checking her prize. As She crawled onto the piece of stone, Her shins warmed up from the heat the stone was emanating. She even felt it on Her cheeks as the warmth rose.

Yet Her arms were still bloodied and Her body weakened with each passing second.

The bairn cried and cried, and it would not be him that would have Her die and come back. She needed Her arms, She needed to be whole... to try again. To do what She just did, a thousand times over, until the world turned on its own. Only that could ensure She could leave once and for all.

She knew She had to sleep and wake renewed. Grabbing a hold of the piece of rock, She pushed it along the snow, light almost as a feather. The woman brought it to the child and had it sit on its warmth until She emerged anew.

Yet as She pushed, She saw underneath, on the other side of the wide rock, blackened nails. On further inspection, human charred flesh— Her own hands...

“I’ll have more than the hands of your maker, bastard, just you watch!” She vowed in the desolate cold, spurred on by nothing but hatred.

The woman reached the bairn and hoisted him onto the piece of rock, as Her stumps bled on the baby’s wrappings. She laid Her arms broken around him, and curled up on the heating rock, falling into much needed sleep.

The heat soothed the child, but it never woke the woman.



What sin do you relish the most?
Antonio-Costin Ciobanu, II, R-E

What sin do you relish the most?

Pride!
How unmovable?
My body is carved in stone,
I bow to no one,
My head cannot tilt
To those not worth of me.

You're a fool with no future,
The body of yours will crumble,
Your dynasty will tremble,
And the foremost thing is your life
Being miserable.

Envy!
How corrupted?
What you have must be mine
Or else your life is mine,
Or your parents, or your objects,
What you have belongs to me!

You're a sword with two sides,
On the other you take away
The one joy man can have
And the other
Is your sorrow life that will burn you alive.

Greed!
How filthy?
What you have will turn in gold
Including you, including me
I'll live a rich life,
Surrounded by everything I need!

Your compassion for the matter
Will hunger you the most
You'll die starving on the ground
Surrounded by your gold.

Lust!
How needy?
The crave of touch is big,
For the love is less,
The body is a true fruit
That I must taste.

The fruit you seek is rotten
Like the soul you bare
It will burn you hollow
Until you despair.

Gluttony!

How insatiable?
The world is a feast
That I must enjoy
To the fullingness of my desire
Till they won't stand again.

Your own hunger will kill your allies
Your fangs will pertrude you family
Your friends, and in the end
You'll betray yourself.

Sloth!

How cozy?
The world is too fast for me
To enjoy it's complexity.
The days are short, the nights are full
And my desire for sleep is not fulfilled

Your age will grow
While your mind will stay the same.
Your body, sand and dust
And your eyes, shiny and new.

Wrath!

How burning?
I hate you, and her, and them!
I hate everything you represent!
For your mere existence
I shall bring hell!

You are a forgotten soul
Buried in two coffins.
Your body will got o heaven
And your soul will loosen.

What sin do you desire
What avarice you look for
What sweets do you crave
And what body you hate.
What day you've seen long
What soul you must petrude
What mindset you possess
And what penny belongs to you.
Whatever you crave
your destiny is settled.

The Chess Mayhem – a short story

Antonio-Costin Ciobanu, II, R-E

Once upon a time, in a long distanced land where white and black patches conquer the land of man, there were 2 kingdoms that known nothing but quarrel for centuries: The Brightburg kingdom, resting on the white side of the land and the Voidsbury kingdom sitting in the black side. They weren't always enemies, for the Brightsburg king, Whitty Whiter the First was best friends with the Voidsbury king Voidster Blackie the First. They always shared a knack for jokes and often cracked them during important discussions, even when planning tactics against their enemies. But everything changed when a single move shattered their bond.

You see, Whiter was always planning a tactic to bring down the king of Voidsbury, a clever trick, indeed. Not that the two kingdoms were unmatched in power: they both had 8 pawns, carrying their lances around, clumsy as ever, and fearful of challenging stronger pieces. Each had 2 knights, their horses leaped joyfully across the battlefield, even in the heat of combat. Their 2 rooks were brutes, big bulky and mindless brutes, carrying heavy maces, smashing through enemies, even though they were kind of slow. The bishops were always twins, they never got along. They were the kind to battle each other to tell them apart, because they looked the same and, since they hated each other, they always took sideways. The king was kind of shy, and tried to move as little as possible, apart the formation, while the queen herself ruled around. She moved the most, where the tactic had an open spot. According to the tradition, conjuring the king meant defeat from the enemy side.

The same formation applied to the Voidsbury kingdom. Yet, leaving this aside, it took one reckless sword to destroy their alliance forever. Voidster took this act as a betrayal of the alliance and withdrew his men from Brightsburg. Days passed, and the land around them changed drastically. On the Brightsburg side, white grass grew in patches with black grass, while on the Voidsbury side, black grass with patches of white grass appeared.

Both the kings blamed each other, believing that somebody purposely “painted” the grass to challenge their strength when, in reality, it grew all by itself, because there wasn't any more balance on the field. So it began, the Brightsburg king placed all his 8 pawns on a patch of grass, the two knights on each corner, the two rooks the same, the twin bishops as well and the queen by his side. But the Voidsbury king came with an even better tactic! He placed his two kings by both corners, the two rooks as well with the twin bishops and the queen by his side and then the 8 pawns in front. Both argued that their tactic came to be an ingenious one, until they began to battle.

They sent the shy pawns on the battlefield, clumsy as usual. They both missed their targets or tried to battle higher ups. Some pawns were taken down, while the others battled the bigger pieces. The knights began to hop around and take pawn by pawn until the rooks joined the game. With their bulky consistency, they blew the knights away from the game. The twin bishops took sides, they didn't like seeing each other to the face, avoiding as much as possible the contact with each other, pushing on anything left, only to battle their counter sides. The queens engaged the most, the most careful ones to play by the rules. Both of the kings were cornered by the men of the opposites.

But who won is the question?

“My men have surrounded you, Voidster!” Shouted Whitty.

“No, my men have cornered you, Whitty!” Voidster responded.

As both continued to argue, the armies got bored of the conflict, seeing nothing coming out of it, returning to their kingdoms, leaving Whitty and Voidster behind. They continued to argue about the grass patches, for centuries, and their children and grandchildren repeated the same story, over and over again, giving birth to what history would remember as The Chess Mayhem.