

The Journal of the Georgia Philological Association

Volume 9

The Journal of the Georgia Philological Association

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Foreword

From the GPA President...

I am writing this from home where I have been working since March 15, 2020. In the last many months, my life and the lives of everyone reading this edition of the journal have changed drastically. Many of us are working from home, and some of us have lost our jobs. Those working in industries deemed essential like healthcare, food services, and critical infrastructure are putting their lives on the line to keep the nation healthy and fed and safe. We are teaching our school-aged children at home and having Zoom parties with friends we can no longer safely visit in person. We are adapting to online teaching and reaching out to help our colleagues and our students for whom distance learning is a new frontier. Many of us are grieving. We have lost friends and family members, students and coworkers. COVID-19 has transformed all our lives in ways that often feel quite surreal.

Because of COVID-19, the fifteenth annual conference of the Georgia Philological Association was cancelled. We were unable to gather to share scholarship, mentor our graduate and undergraduate student participants, and fellowship with friends old and new. The GPA conference is always the highlight of my academic year, and our inability to meet this past spring is a sharp disappointment for me. I am looking forward to the future when we can come together once again in the spirit of intellectual inquiry and camaraderie, but I am anxious as the future is so difficult to discern at this point.

The members of the GPA are all scholars of the humanities—we are writers, readers, educators, and lifelong students—and so we look to literature and music and art for the inspiration we need to live meaningfully in what feels like an unprecedented time. In the poems we love and the songs we put on repeat, in the paintings we set as our computer desktops and in the novels we curl up with at night to escape the frustrations of the day, we find comfort and a sense of connectivity to the people who share this planet with us. One of my primary goals

as a humanities professor is to introduce my students to worlds outside the narrow spheres they have inhabited. I want my students to experience the universal human condition as represented in literature and also the specific, individual, and subjective human condition each author I teach depicts. In the representations of the lives of people who lived long ago or far away from twenty-first century Georgia, my students are often surprised to find their own anger, joy, and terror mirrored. Now more than ever, I am finding the lessons the humanities hold more vital for my own strength in an uncertain world, and I endeavor to communicate that source of strength to my students as I'm sure we all do.

I do not know if we will be able to physically share the same space in May 2021 when the sixteenth annual conference is scheduled to occur, but I do know that the GPA will be able to adapt to the changing circumstances. If we need to conduct the conference virtually, we have the tools to do that; if the conference needs to consist of several afternoon sessions of remote panels instead of a single day of panels presented back-to-back, we can do that, too. We will continue to publish high quality articles in the blind peer-reviewed *JGPA* as the volume you are reading now attests. COVID-19 may have blindsided the GPA for 2020, but we are prepared to meet the challenges that may await us going forward.

Let me end with a few wishes for us all. May we cherish our friends and family and the increased time that some of us are lucky enough to be able to spend with our loved ones. May we find wonder in our environments (whether a sprawling, two-acre backyard or the eaves of an urban, studio apartment where birds nest). May we seek first to be kind and patient, and may we approach each day with a sense of gratitude for the blessings it contains, however small.

I look forward to interacting with you all in 2021.

Dr. Lorraine Dubuisson
President
Georgia Philological Association

Introduction

From the Editor ...

This edition is the brainwork of multiple individuals who endeavored through uncertain times to find time and energy to devote to the important questions that these very times also bring into sharp relief. Though we never create “boxes” that themed journal issues often manifest and our journal remains open to authors, subjects, and perspectives of all kinds, many of the articles contributed here center on the important relationship between language, culture, and identity. This happenstance is no doubt a reflection of our collective current circumstance.

Matthew Brittingham’s piece “‘And he already knew Hebrew’” discusses language as a delineator of one’s culture as well as one’s class within that culture, delving into the complexities of defining culture in general and displaced and transitional cultures specifically. While Brittingham explores through the lenses of Yiddish and Judaism how different characters’ choices of relative fidelity to their religion influence both their internal and external identities, Asma Dhouioui likewise observes the importance of religious/spiritual activities and spaces on the agency and identity of enslaved black people in the novel *Beloved*, including the parallels to non-fictional realities of the nineteenth century.

Similarly, Mark Johnson’s article “Entwined Etymologies” discusses the impact of the language of religious identity, reminding us not only of these concepts in themselves, but also how language is “slippery,” elucidating the importance of contemporary understanding (see also Johnson’s article “Understand” for further study into that particular term). Additionally, Anna Burnley’s study shows us how our lack of understanding of a language may produce bias of which we may be largely unaware, affecting the way we interact with those who speak a language other than our own. Lorraine Dubuisson’s “‘Nought on the Exhausted Surface of a Dead Earth’” discusses how a character’s self-imposed identity highlights the contrast of science versus emotion and how it equates to progress versus the past, respectively.

This past year’s difficulties elucidate that no matter how much “progress” is made scientifically, we are not immune from the effects

of things that have vexed humanity since the dawn of time: we still long for identity, for a sense of “belonging,” a feeling somewhat robbed when due to safety concerns we cannot gather in our houses of worship or just gather period. Just as Anca Garcia describes of the characters in her article, the trauma of a worldwide crisis leaves an impression on us not just individually, but also on the collective consciousness.

This year also renders one of my favorite assignments about another crisis somewhat moot, at least for this generation. When covering the bubonic plague of the middle ages (“The Black Death”), formerly I would have students write an essay in response to the question, “Could something like this happen now, and how would we react?” In previous years, there was considerable doubt among students that, given our advances in medical science, such a thing could occur. Sadly, their blind faith in progress was not rewarded.

I do not think it too bold to say that I think we offer here, however, a beacon of hope. Serving on the editorial staff affords me the unique opportunity to get a sneak-peak at the articles contributed, and I am proud to bring this collection to press (especially given all the COVID-related setbacks) to offer up to all as thought-provoking solace—or at the very least a welcome and worthwhile distraction—as I was personally able to relate to much of what is contained herein, as well as feel edified both in knowledge and in spirit by reading it. It is my sincere wish that it engenders in you the same. I extend special thanks to our contributors and editorial reviewers whose patience and perseverance is apparently boundless.

Dr. Farrah R. Senn

Editor-in-Chief

Journal of the Georgia Philological Association

“And he already knew Hebrew”: Language, Gender, and Middle-Class Respectability in A.D. Oguz’s *Di Fraydenker*

Matthew Brittingham
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Introduction

In the shadow of World War I, several religiously-inclined Yiddish writers noted an apparent sea change taking place in the Jewish immigrant community in America (see: Elyash, “Nishto” 8; Elyash, “Fun Fraydenkeray” 8; Oguz May-August; Bublick 10; Polland 391). Freethought, a once popular ideological commitment in parts of the immigrant Jewish world, seemed to be on the decline in Jewish ranks. “Freethinker” or “freethought,” both transliterated directly from the English into Yiddish, had functional Yiddish equivalents in *apikoyres* (s.) and *apikorsim* (pl.), which were also almost always interchangeable with “atheist” or “non-believer.” While used to denote Jews or non-Jews, when popular Yiddish religious writers in the United States applied “freethinker” to Jews, they often mapped other social issues, assumptions, and stereotypes onto their depiction of the freethinker. In other words, though the literary image of the freethinker had some resonances with real freethinkers, it was a constructed image that allowed these writers to address a variety of concerns in American Jewish life, such as assimilation, intermarriage, family tensions, generational gaps, and communal belonging.

One of the most intriguing examples of a fictional engagement with Jewish freethinkers appeared in 1922 with A.D. Oguz’s serialized novel *Di fraydenker* (“The freethinkers,” *Der Morgen zshurnal*, May-August). *Di fraydenker* centers on three families living in the same suburban New York neighborhood—an observant Jewish family (the Goldins), a family of German immigrant anti-Semites (the Hochbargs), and a family of radical assimilationist freethinkers of Jewish background (the Johnsons, formerly Jacobsons). As Oguz depicts the freethinking, radical assimilationist Johnsons, they eschew all attachments to the wider Jewish community and attempt to fully blend into the majority culture. The drama arises in *Di fraydenker* when the children in each of these ideologically distinct families develop a close

connection to a child from one of the other families, whether a friendship or love interest. The serialized novel features daily doses of melodramatic intrigue. A fake love letter, a kidnapping, an elopement, Italian mobsters, gun violence, jealousy, revenge, intermarriage, and war all figure into the plot. The main point of the novel, however, is to track a very specific transformation. By the novel's end, most (not all) of the freethinking Johnsons affiliate with the Jewish community and become observant Jews. For this fictional family, interconnected social and personal events—e.g., love, friendship, antisemitism, Zionism, and the American religious context—gradually turn its members toward an embrace of *yidishkeyt*, here meaning “Jewishness,” cultural and religious elements in tandem (Polland 377).

As a family drama set in suburban New York, Oguz structured the transformation of individual characters (or lack thereof) around the wider culture's expectations regarding middle-class respectability and gender roles. In this article, I analyze Oguz's depiction of middle-class gender roles through the interconnected themes of language and moral education. For Matilda Johnson, the supposed matriarch of the free-thinking household, her “vulgar” English testifies to a lack of self-cultivation and stands as a sign of her maternal middle-class failure. Opposite Matilda is her youngest son, Alfred Johnson (age 13), who develops a friendship with the pious Rivke Goldin (age 12). Rivke eventually teaches Alfred Hebrew, and with it gives him a moral and religious education, signs of *true* middle-class respectability. Oguz contrasted Matilda and Alfred through their personal connection to languages representing linguistic assimilation (English) and Jewish linguistic particularity (Hebrew). Oguz's point does not appear to be centrally about constructing an either/or argument regarding English or Hebrew. Oguz deems English vital to American Jewish life as the language of the land. Alfred's Hebrew language learning, on the other hand, is not about overshadowing the practical importance of English in American Jewish life. Unlike Yiddish, with its immigrant, working-class associations, Hebrew provides Alfred with access to Jewish moral literature and Orthodox Jewish ritual life, which, as Oguz represents it, resonate with middle-class propriety. The literary coupling of gender roles, language, and moral education has not often been addressed in scholarship. Here, in a Yiddish novel intended largely for Jewish immigrant women who were middle class or middle-class aspiring, Oguz interlocked these themes to highlight what was at stake for different

generations of Jews living in the United States (i.e., first-generation and second-generation).

Moral Education, Gender Roles, and Language in Modern Times

Scholars who study popular writing by Jews in modern times have long noted the significance of moral education in the Jewish embrace of “embourgeoisement,” focusing particular attention on writing intended to speak to and/or about Jewish women (e.g., Hyman, Prell, Kellman, Rojanski, Seidman, Brinn). For instance, in her well-regarded study of gender and Jewish assimilation in modern Europe and the United States, Paula Hyman noted that, as Jews “adapted [...] to the prevailing bourgeois model of female domesticity” (25), the Jewish wife and mother became responsible for overseeing the religious and moral formation of her household. Beyond the Jewish mother, popular writers—Jewish and non-Jewish, men and women—constructed a litany of imagined Jewish women whose depictions were laced with moral implications. In *Fighting to Become Americans* (1999), Riv-El-len Prell examined particular representations of Jewish women in the American Jewish and non-Jewish press from 1880 to the 1920s, uncovering underlying anxieties about the Jewish encounter with America in these representations (56-57). For instance, depictions of morally-questionable Jewish immigrant women functioned disciplinarily. Writers, especially men but not exclusively, entreated Jewish immigrant women to consciously focus on how they presented themselves to the surrounding American society. Though the stereotypes were far from reality, representations of Jewish women, problematic or praiseworthy, were heavily invested in delineating moral uprightness and moral failure (Prell 46-56). Many popular Yiddish writers, like Oguz, borrowed from and played with a variety of such images and expectations.

The work of Hyman, Prell, and like-minded scholars is helpful for this study of *Di fraydenker*. While scholars have become increasingly aware of moralistic discourses in the Jewish immigrant press and enumerated a diverse array of Jewish immigrant and post-immigrant language ideologies in the United States (e.g., see Hyman, Prell, Kellman, Rojanski, Seidman, Brinn, Michels, Mintz, Praver Kadar, and Goldstein), the literary coupling of moral education and language learning has yet to be addressed. To preemptively clarify, I am not suggesting Oguz *necessarily* presents a language ideology whereby English competency or Hebrew acquisition *automatically* transforms

the moral fiber of his characters. Instead, Oguz gives the linguistic life-worlds of Alfred and his mother an underlying moral significance. Matilda's failure to pursue linguistic competency structures her relationship with her children, Alfred included, such that her children reflect her linguistic vulgarity in their lack of moral character. It is through Hebrew study, however, that Alfred gains access to a moral education, an education mediated by another female, the pious Rivke Goldin, who takes upon her shoulders the role of playing Alfred's surrogate mother.

Sketching Anti-Semites, the Religiously Observant, and Freethinkers

Before turning to Alfred and Matilda's experience with moral formation and language learning, I will summarize the relevant features of *Di fraydenker's* narrative and characters. As previously stated, *Di fraydenker* follows three families in the same suburban New York neighborhood. The anti-Semitic German immigrant parents, Rudolf and Johanna Hochbarg, are the primary antagonists of the novel. Although they engage in criminal activities out of their local saloon, they are able to keep their son, Fritz, from joining their line of work. Fritz graduates from college and achieves a good position at an accounting firm. Fritz eventually falls in love with Helena, the freethinking Johnsons' only daughter. Fritz's parents are quite upset, though Fritz tries to assure them, to no avail, that despite falling in love with Helena he still remains an anti-Semite. Fritz's view is summed up best in his own words, "I don't love the Jews either, with the exception of the Jewess, Helena" (May 11, 1922). The majority of the novel's drama centers on intrigues surrounding Fritz and Helena's relationship, as Rudolf and Johanna Hochbarg and Adolph Johnson (Helena's father) independently attempt to dissolve the romance and bring revenge on the other family. [In the end, Fritz, an anti-Semite indeed, turns on Helena and she leaves him; Fritz's downfall concludes with his murder at the hands of a former family friend.]

The freethinking Johnson parents, Adolph and Matilda, came to the United States without knowing each other, were married on American shores, had three children, and grew extremely wealthy. The son of a *shochet*, Adolph hails from an observant family and was quite pious when he first arrived in the New World at the age of twenty. A native Yiddish speaker, Adolph is depicted by Oguz as someone who constantly sought to improve himself and his English almost right when

he disembarked. Still, Adolph eventually becomes a freethinker after reading some freethinking literature. Now “enlightened,” he turns to a relentless pursuit of money (May 9, 1922). In other words, his transition from Judaism to freethought first involved conviction and then economic incentive. Many characters in the novel refer to Adolph as an “allrightnik” (e.g., May 14, 1922; May 31, 1922; August 6, 1922). As defined by Leo Rosten in his famous *The Joys of Yiddish* (1968), an allrightnik is “One who has succeeded, done ‘all right,’ and shows it by boasting, ostentation, crude manners” (11). This definition holds true for Adolph, but the pejorative sense is deeper still: Adolph disgusts Jews and non-Jews in *Di fraydenker* because he, a rich manufacturer, refuses to support any virtuous, charitable organization or activity that smells of ethnic or religious particularity, and not simply Jewish ones. It should also be mentioned that Adolph does not approve of Helena’s relationship with Fritz, namely because Adolph cannot stand the idea of being in-laws with a “lowly” saloonkeeper (June 7, 1922).

Adolph’s other half, Matilda Johnson, “was a true ‘small town girl’” from a very poor Jewish family in eastern Europe (May 9, 1922). She is described as “a different sort of freethinker” because she, unlike Adolph, could not really say much about religion at all (May 9, 1922). That is to say, her freethought did not emerge from conviction but from her parents’ failure to teach her anything about Jewishness, cultural or religious. Likewise, Matilda also became a freethinker in order to totally assimilate into mainstream “Christian” America (Oguz’s word for native-born non-Jews in America is “Christian”). Her drive to “blend in” is stronger than that of her husband. For example, Matilda wants her children to marry *only* non-Jews and she even refuses to show middle-class hospitality to Jewish neighbors (see below). With three native-born children—Helena (age 19), Albert (age 17), and Alfred (age 13)—Matilda oversees the running of their freethinking home.

Meanwhile, the Goldins, the Johnson’s observant neighbors, largely remain distant from the drama that ensues on account of Fritz Hochbarg and Helena Johnson’s relationship. Although Nachman, the pious Goldin patriarch, regularly debates Adolph on matters of religion and freethought, the two men develop a good friendship. Unlike the native-born Johnson children, the Goldin children were born in eastern Europe and the family emigrated together upon fleeing a pogrom, an anti-Jewish riot in eastern Europe, with the exception of the oldest

Goldin daughter, Shifrah, who remained in the Old World with extended family. [She suddenly appears at the end of the novel and emigrates to America]. Once in the United States, Nachman became a modest grocer while his wife, Hannah Leah, oversees their home. The Goldin parents are not just “orthodox,” but are quite traditional. Nachman does not “touch a hair on his chin, though he would often have to conceal his sizable beard from little rascals or older hooligans” (May 9, 1922). Hannah Leah continues to wear a wig, “though it would cause her much unpleasantness” (May 8, 1922; also, June 18, 1922). Yet, interestingly, Oguz never describes the Goldin family, parents or children, as struggling to adapt to the English-speaking context or American culture. Similarly, there is never any question about the compatibility between observant Judaism and “normative” middle-class values. These lacunae stand in stark contrast to how Matilda is described.

Generally speaking, Oguz clearly constructed the Johnsons and the Goldins in contrast to one another, not only in terms of religion but also in family dynamics. Nachman Goldin is a bit of an autocratic father while Adolph is an absent, workaholic father. Nachman and his wife Hannah Leah are widely beloved by Jew and non-Jew alike while Adolph and Matilda are hated by almost everyone. The Goldin children and the Johnson children could not be more different either (further discussed later). Finally, one of the spouses in each couple, i.e., Nachman Goldin and Matilda Johnson, forbids his or her children from spending time with the children of the other family. Nachman fears the freethinkers will make his children godless or introduce them to *treyf* (non-kosher) foods. Matilda, however, fears her freethinking children will turn into pious Jews. Only one has their fears confirmed when a diverse array of interconnected push and pull factors, such as war, Zionism, antisemitism, and personal relationships, influence many of the Johnsons to affiliate with the Jewish community.

Having only briefly sketched certain facets of *Di fraydenker*, the reader should note that this serialized novel is chock-full of major plot twists, minor events, and fascinating characters that cannot be addressed in this article, in part or in entirety. My remaining discussion dives into particular scenes and select characters in greater detail.

Matilda Johnson: Gibberish, Assimilation, and Moral Formation

In this section, I describe how Oguz portrayed Matilda Johnson’s struggle with the English language and mapped her moral failings

onto this struggle. Chiefly, Matilda emerges as the most “vulgar” character in the novel, a character whose vulgarity never changes while the majority of those around her transform in one respect or another. The depiction of Matilda plays on stereotypes of Jewish women appearing in the Jewish and non-Jewish press, which I highlight where relevant.

It is first and foremost important to understand Matilda’s command of English by comparing it to that of her husband Adolph, as the two are linked by Oguz’s presentation of different types of freethinkers. As stated, Matilda Johnson was born to a poor Jewish family in eastern Europe and her parents failed to educate her in anything Jewish apart from several basic prayers (*hamotzi* and *brokhe*). Similarly, as Oguz depicts Matilda, when she first arrived “she was a domestic and didn’t care to take time to study and learn more,” so “[s]he remained, therefore, a vulgar kind of woman who didn’t know a word of English” (May 9, 1922). When Adolph first arrived, however, he immediately set his hand to more systematically learning English despite struggling to adapt to the American context. In Oguz’s words, “he took zealously to learning the English language and devoted himself to reading books. First, he read Yiddish books and then, when he began to understand English, he would spend his free time pouring over English books.” (May 9, 1922). Adolph goes so far as to totally eschew typical New World distractions, like the theater. Adolph’s self-cultivation tapers off when he becomes a freethinker, after which he essentially declares himself “enlightened” and jumps headlong into the pursuit of money. Despite the fact that neighbors and acquaintances consider Adolph stingy and uncaring, Oguz tells readers that this freethinker is quite compassionate deep down. This is in stark contrast to Matilda, who, again, never really focuses on self-cultivation (May 9, 1922).

When Matilda and Adolph rise into the middle class and adjust their lifestyle accordingly, her sub-par English becomes a significant hindrance to her aims. Matilda intently seeks the love of her so-called “Christian” neighbors because “her coarse rationale told her it’s the greatest honor to gain Christian *yichus* [here, respect or honor]” (May 9, 1922), but there is always a barrier: her “babbling English.” Being far less linguistically acculturated than her driven husband and her native-born children, her speech remains the quintessential sign of her immigrant outsider status. Matilda’s Christian neighbors push her away at every turn and “make her the butt of their jokes” (May 9, 1922). One must remember that, as Hyman defines it, assimilation requires the

willing coming together of the majority culture and the minority individual:

For assimilation to proceed to its last stages, two mutually reinforcing factors must be present: the desire of the minority to become like and to join the majority and the receptivity of the majority to the participation of minority-group members in its midst. Without openness on the part of the larger society, it is possible for a minority to be fully acculturated and yet remain poorly integrated. (13)

Matilda's drive for radical assimilation fails because the American Christians around her revile her as an outsider. She cannot even hope to "pass" as a non-Jew. As Sander Gilman once noted, the Jew, "being unable to truly command the national language of the world in which [the Jew] lives" (12), emerged as a stereotype in the Christian world; the anti-Semitic trope of Jews as linguistically unassimilable continued to haunt Jews in western Europe as they sought integration into modern society (Hyman 139). Here, it is only Matilda who is linguistically marked in such a way. Oguz sets her apart precisely to establish the irony: she expresses the strongest desire for radical assimilation, yet she did not and does not have the fortitude to continue learning.

Matilda can acculturate to American norms in a particularly powerful way that does represent her middle-class rise. She can exercise the power available to her as a bourgeois American woman: consumption. She resides in a middle-class neighborhood among many non-Jews, and her accoutrements apparently signal her wealth. In light of Matilda's wealth, however, Oguz plays on a gendered, Jewish immigrant image of conspicuous consumption. Matilda appears to resemble and extend a stereotype called the "Ghetto Girl." The Ghetto Girl was often envisioned as a young, unmarried, working-class immigrant woman actively embracing her newfound autonomy in modern America. Because her lack of moral cultivation expressed itself physically, she was marked through overabundance. She was "garish, excessively made up, too interested in her appearance, and too uncultivated to dress smartly" (Prell 23). The Ghetto Girl was also, by-and-large, considered uneducated, loud, and unmannered. In other words, the constructed image of the Ghetto Girl signified the threat of middle-class aspiration without actually embracing other middle-class norms, such as personal refinement and respectability. Sure, the Ghetto Girl could exercise her purchasing power to look the part, but in reality she

remained alienated from middle-class respectability. Even further, popular writers often mapped moral assumptions onto the Ghetto Girl's supposedly garish appearance. External excesses, whether in lack of manners or unruly fashion, symbolized the Ghetto Girl's uncontrolled autonomy. She put the immigrant family at risk through wasted resources and overt sexual expression.

Matilda as a Ghetto Girl is not a perfect fit at first glance. Despite being given to excess, Matilda Johnson is not a young, unmarried, working girl whose sexual expression seems risky. She is securely middle class and not working class. As I interpret Oguz's Matilda, she reflects the rise of the Ghetto Girl from working-class to middle-class status. She is a Ghetto Girl who "made it." By the early 1920s, when more and more Jewish immigrants and their children were finding a secure economic footing in America, Oguz used Matilda to extend and recontextualize the threat represented by the Ghetto Girl: Matilda (and women like her) is the Ghetto Girl who has only visibly risen; she has risen economically, married well, and adapted to certain American middle-class norms, but she remains still *internally* unchanged, i.e., morally unformed and "coarse." Matilda is constantly described as excessive, uncouth, and loud, even if she can mask these character traits to some extent via consumption. As a further, damning example, Matilda's claim to fame throughout *Di fraydenker* is the number of times she falls into "hysterics." Juxtaposed, none of the Goldin girls—Hannah Leah or Rivke—ever falls into hysterics. Oguz seems to be extending a warning: you might be able to take the girl out of the ghetto, but it does not mean you can take the ghetto out of the girl.

An unrefined woman in a middle-class setting, Matilda seems displaced throughout the novel, an outsider in the fullest sense of the word. While Adolph will at least associate with other Jews (he is friends with Nachman Goldin), Matilda refuses to show middle-class hospitality to her Jewish neighbors. Considerably more tragic, Matilda's own children ridicule her Yiddish-English admixture to her face. Unacceptable to Christian neighbors, distanced from Jews, mocked by her own family, Matilda can only fantasize about being an insider. In one scene, she imagines a "green" Jewish peddler stumbling upon her home ("green" meaning a more recent, less acculturated immigrant). Protected in her middle-class castle, she can keep the peddler at a safe distance. Oguz writes:

Her desire to achieve respectability was strong, but she just couldn't grasp it.

If only a recent immigrant Jewish peddler would go astray and stumble on their home. Mrs. Johnson would refuse letting him into the house. She would, however, talk to him through the window in her gibberish English. She would get considerable pleasure from the thought that somebody considered her a "real American lady." (May 9, 1922)

Matilda's insider fantasy still codes language as a marker of difference. Speaking a gibberish Yiddish-English mix among her family and neighbors, maybe her mixed-up English would mark her as a "real American lady" in the eyes of a recent immigrant, who most likely knows less English than she. Language (i.e., Americanized Yiddish), consumption (i.e., middle-class home), and distance (i.e., window as literal and figurative boundary) unite in an imagined situation where her insider status is confirmed and her insecurities satisfied, if only temporarily.

Aside from fantasy, Matilda finds another way of coping with her "outsiderness." Because Matilda cannot personally find acceptance, she drives her children toward radical assimilation in her stead. While her freethinking husband is comfortable with their children marrying anyone they desire, Jew or non-Jew, Matilda is fiercely opposed to her children marrying a Jew—and by any definition, no less. The key example of Matilda's overwhelming desire to have her children radically assimilated revolves around Fritz and Helena's relationship. When Helena falls in love with Fritz, the son of fierce anti-Semites, Matilda is not only supportive but ecstatic. Even at the novel's end, when her sons have turned into pious Jews, Matilda opposes their eventual marriages to Jewish women.

Until now, I have described Matilda's "coarseness" and how she copes with her immigrant-outsider "tell," her "gibberish." I have briefly mentioned issues of morality but have not yet fully connected language and moral education. As mentioned, by the standards of modern bourgeois societies, the wife and mother became increasingly responsible for the moral education of her children. Matilda's principle maternal failure emerges from her inability to educate her children in middle-class moral norms. Adolph gives Matilda the reins to act as maternal educator, and he even pours money into his children's education, but "the children didn't receive the maternal guidance their father wanted." Consequently, "Matilda gave no regard to what they should

study, what they should be able to do, and what they should know. So, they were given free rein and didn't behave at all how a rich and enlightened father needs his children to behave." Albert and Alfred both run amuck. Albert is a charlatan who steals from his own mother while Alfred is "a rascal of the lowliest sort," a boy who antagonizes bearded Jewish men on the street (May 9, 1922; also, May 23, 1922). Helena is like her mother, obsessed with radical assimilation, marrying a Christian, and is given to "hysterics" when things go awry. Furthermore, despite Adolph forbidding Helena to marry Fritz, she elopes with the anti-Semite, ultimately leading to her own downfall. A firmer connection between Matilda's Yiddishized English and moral education is based on what one might call "inconsistency." Oguz depicts Matilda as a character who does not pursue self-cultivation, represented by the inconsistency between her desire for total assimilation and her failure to pursue language competency. Thus, she is a mirage of true middle-class sensibilities, at least as Oguz presents an idealization of middle-class Jewish life. Matilda's children do not respect her, but, in a way, they mimic her. Her children are also a mirage of middle-class respectability. Despite being native-born and wealthy, they are not *truly* middle class in Oguz's idealized sense. They do not have middle-class respectability because they have no moral anchor. They do not have an anchor in religion, i.e., Judaism, and they were taught no semblance of a substitute. To summarize, I am not suggesting Oguz necessarily says, "were Matilda to have a better command of English, she would suddenly be able to teach her children middle-class respectability." Rather, Matilda's "vulgar" gibberish symbolizes personal inconsistencies and failings that feed her maternal failure.

A reader could certainly try to let Matilda off the hook. She is a freethinker who was raised with no Jewish knowledge, so how could she teach her children anything about Jews and Judaism even if she was so inclined? What about the children themselves? And, could Adolph be blamed? Oguz suggests Adolph is partly responsible for abdicating his fatherly role to wildly pursue monetary gain. Indeed, the absentee father was a particularly American concern, according to some popular writers in the Yiddish press (Malitz 58-62). But, though the reader may want to ease the pressure on Matilda, Oguz does not. The buck stops with Matilda in Oguz's depiction of the Johnson family.

Alfred + Rivke = Hebrew, Morality, and Love

In this section, I address the relationship between Alfred Johnson (age 13) and Rivke Goldin (age 12). Their budding friendship, with hints of other underlying affections, leads Rivke to step into the void left by Alfred's mother. Rivke begins to educate Alfred morally through Hebrew reading. Rivke is just one of the Goldin children who are generally depicted as exemplars of middle-class respectability. They are well-mannered, beloved by Jews and non-Jews, have a moral anchor in Judaism, and are successful in school and business. Although Nachman and Hannah Leah are not perfect (the former is overbearing), both express interest in their children's education, moral and otherwise, even sending them to Hebrew school for advanced study.

While Oguz spends the majority of the novel following the relationship between Fritz and Helena, as that is where much of the drama takes place, Alfred and Rivke's friendship remains a critical subplot in the novel. Oguz opens the novel with a conversation between Nachman and Hannah Leah about Alfred and Rivke. In this scene, Nachman is annoyed that his daughter is spending so much time with Alfred, a "loyfer" (loafer) from a non-kosher household (May 8, 1922). Nachman's fear hinges on the notion that contact between Alfred and Rivke will bespoil his pious daughter, dragging her down to Alfred's "coarse," non-kosher level. Or, even worse, some flirtation between them now will lead to a sexual relationship when they get older, maybe even resulting in a *mamzer* (bastard). Hannah Leah, however, is far more trusting of Rivke. In this opening scene, she assures Nachman that she, Hannah Leah, trained her daughter well. "She won't eat with them," Hannah Leah says, "even if they pull out all the stops" (May 8, 1922), and there is no threat of a child being born out of wedlock. Instead, Hannah Leah believes the opposite: Rivke could be a good influence on the boy. The matter is left temporarily unresolved, but this opening scene has posed a key question surrounding Alfred and Rivke's upcoming interactions—who will influence whom? Will Rivke descend to Alfred's level or raise him up to her own?

In a later conversation between Nachman and Rivke, Nachman's fear leads him to finally forbid his daughter from seeing Alfred. As Oguz portrays Rivke, she has never disobeyed a command of her father and she follows his wishes here, at least at first. Rivke is initially able to successfully avoid Alfred, though it secretly causes her and Alfred much heartache, for reasons they do not yet know (i.e., a budding love affair). Most importantly, Rivke wonders about whether

or not Alfred can be rescued from his lack of respectability. She concludes to herself, “If a person would educate him like her parents had educated her, he wouldn’t be the boy he is” (May 19, 1922). Sometime later, Alfred stumbles upon Rivke sitting under a tree reading a Hebrew book. When Alfred sees her, he cannot help but revere her: “some kind of awe fell on him and he didn’t dare move forward” (May 21, 1922). The reader is left to think that Rivke’s piety, so foreign to Alfred, attracts him. Evidence of her piety’s influence can be seen in the fact that Alfred simply does not act like himself around her. He is described as obeying every law and rule when he is with her, “like a good, obedient schoolboy taking instruction from his teacher” (May 12, 1922). Alfred finally decides to approach Rivke as she sits reading, and this time Rivke does not to spurn him. The two sit together as she translates from the Hebrew. The story, as it turns out, talks about honoring one’s elders. Rivke adds her own commentary by chastising Alfred for mocking bearded, observant Jews. Alfred hangs his head in shame and, it seems, this is the first moment he has felt guilty for his devilish actions (May 21, 1922). After this first educational encounter, Alfred continues to secretly study Hebrew with Rivke: using her readings from Hebrew school, she instructs him in general respectability and aspects of Jewish ritual life. So begins Alfred’s moral and cultural education through reading Hebrew.

While in the Eastern European Jewish context, the moral and religious education of children, especially boys, fell to fathers rather than mothers, in Western bourgeois societies, mothers were supposed to be “the first teachers of moral values to the younger generation” (Hyman 33; see also Brinn 57). Where Matilda fails, Rivke begins her work. In other words, Rivke has taken on the maternal role abdicated by Matilda. Rivke’s education of Alfred centers on religion or morality as part of middle-class norms. Oguz represents the Goldins’ observant Judaism as fully compatible with American middle-class norms, even if the American context puts pressure on maintaining certain traditions (described by other characters in the novel). Freethought, certainly a factor in Alfred’s moral turpitude, appears vacuous and, by extension, at odds with middle-class norms. Rivke enculturates Alfred into Jewishness and American middle-class respectability at one and the same time, mediated by Jewish texts in Hebrew.

The image of these two young friends sitting together and reading Hebrew does raise the question: why Hebrew? In the novel, Oguz

does not endow Hebrew with an intrinsically magical or mystical quality, but Hebrew does provide access to original texts and ideas that shape Alfred. In this way, his continued pursuit of Hebrew, as I show below, defines his ongoing moral formation. It also should be noted that although the state of Hebrew education in America remained largely inchoate in 1922, certain Jewish intellectuals had long advocated for the necessity of Hebrew education in the United States. For example, in the 1910s, Israel Friedlaender, member of the Bureau of Education of the Kehillah of New York, employed a religious argument in his support of Hebrew language learning. Friedlaender said, “We look upon Hebrew merely as the key, and the only key, to the understanding and appreciation of our religious and literary treasures. We do not believe in a Judaism without Hebrew, but just as little, and even less, do we believe in a Hebrew without Judaism” (qtd. in Krasner 99). Oguz’s presentation of Hebrew’s relevance resonates with Friedlaender’s sentiment. Hebrew certainly maintains a connection to Jewish ritual life in certain contexts, but in the novel Hebrew also has moral associations that track well with a middle-class religious education, juxtaposed with the language of the immigrant working class, Yiddish. Other advocates of Hebrew language instruction emerging in the 1920s, as noted by historian Deborah Dash Moore, argued for the language because “Hebrew promised middle-class, second generation Jews self-esteem and an assertive secular Jewish identity” (110). Oguz definitely tied Hebrew to Judaism, but he represented the language as a linguistic expression of Jewish particularity that *should* be embraced by second-generation, middle-class Jews in America. In general, Oguz appears to have moved right along with the social trends of the 1920s, which Eric L. Goldstein aptly summarized: “To the extent that Americanizing Jews continued to celebrate the linguistic aspect of their heritage, most looked increasingly to Hebrew and not Yiddish” (142).¹ Oguz’s Yiddish novel features no character compelled to learn Yiddish and articulates no sense of cultural loss in this regard.

Rivke’s role as surrogate Jewish mother continues in later scenes. The word has gotten out that Alfred and his brother Albert, who has also suddenly changed, have become respectable. In a scene where Nachman and Hannah Leah attest to the changes in the Johnson boys, Rivke happens to be present. When the conversation turns to Alfred, Hannah Leah states, “He no longer badgers Jewish peddlers and no longer participates when other boys make fun of a bearded Jew. And I swear I’ve seen him standing under the window a couple times when

you make *kiddush* on Friday nights.” (May 29, 1922). Rivke ends up confessing that she has been meeting Alfred behind her parents’ backs. Though both parents eventually chastise Rivke for not obeying, Hannah Leah shows some sense of pride in Rivke for proving Nachman wrong. She says, “Your father feared Alfred would, God forbid, lead you astray from the path. In the end, you led him to the path” (May 29, 1922). Rivke’s insolence aside, the results are undeniable: everyone in the neighborhood knows Alfred has become more respectable. The matriarch and patriarch of the Goldin family permit Rivke to keep reading Hebrew with Alfred. From this point on, the Goldin family as a whole starts to care for Alfred. Their house becomes a kosher home-away-from-home for the boy. Rivke remains Alfred’s primary teacher, but he also starts to stretch his own legs in Jewish matters (e.g., August 9, 1922; July 21, 1922).

Approximately midway through the novel, Matilda notices her sons’ budding religiosity as they begin to openly express disdain for their parents’ freethinking ways. Specifically regarding Alfred, Matilda becomes incensed over Rivke’s influence in his life. Oguz writes:

[Alfred] became so influenced by Rivke’s teachings that he repeatedly refused to eat certain foods because they’re *treyf* (not kosher). He also told his mother more than once that when he gets older he’ll leave the house and live like true Jewish children do.

Little Alfred would often talk about Jewish laws and Jewish customs that she, Matilda, had forgotten a long time ago. He knew every Jewish holiday and its significance, and he already knew Hebrew. Young Rivke Goldin had taught him everything. Matilda knew where all this knowledge came from and was enraged that the Goldins had “corrupted” her child. (June 9, 1922; quotation marks in original)

In this quote, the reader is informed that Matilda has become aware of Rivke’s influence on her youngest child. It is Rivke who “taught him everything,” meaning not only Hebrew, but Jewish ritual life as well. Oguz includes the quotation marks around “corrupted” as a form of personal commentary. Rivke has not *actually* corrupted Alfred; his supposed *Jewish* corruption exists only in the eyes of his radical assimilationist mother. Rivke has given Alfred the education Matilda was supposed to. Underlying Matilda’s anger, then, is the fact that her

son has not followed her maternal example in embracing radical assimilation. Instead, Alfred threatens to take up residence in a new home where he will finally be a different kind of child, a *Jewish* child (see also August 10, 1922; August 25, 1922).

Familial disaffection pops up at another key instance late in the novel. After Rivke receives the parental green light to continue teaching Alfred, circumstances are reversed. Matilda forbids Alfred to spend time with Rivke. In fact, Matilda begins taking steps to relocate the entire family to an even more *goyish* neighborhood, all in order to get away from the Goldins. In the meantime, Alfred defies his mother's order, but this raises the question: should a parent be defied? The answer would perhaps appear to be "no," considering how Nachman and Hannah Leah admonished Rivke for violating her father's decree. Oguz has Alfred take a different path in addressing the problem. Nachman, who expresses concern over Alfred violating his mother's command, raises the issue with Alfred. After Alfred confesses to not obeying his mother, Nachman probes the limits of his textual knowledge by asking, "You know, it says in the *chumash* that a mother should be obeyed?" (August 10, 1922). Alfred affirms knowledge of this fact: "Yes, I know. It says to honor your father and your mother." Nachman follows up more pointedly, "So why don't you obey her then?" This question offers Alfred an opportunity to argue his case and reveal the extent of his religious education. Alfred answers first with a question—"Is it better to follow God or one's mother?"—and then offers his view: "I still go to your beloved daughter Rivke to learn Jewish things. God wants me to because it's a *mitzvah*. I don't need to obey the mother who doesn't allow me to do a *mitzvah*. What if my mother commands me to be a *goy* and go to church, do I need to obey her then?" (August 10, 1922). By framing his study with Rivke as a *mitzvah*, Alfred can claim performing the *mitzvah* is more important than following the wishes of his freethinking mother. The question Alfred poses at the end is interesting: "What if my mother commands me to be a *goy* and go to church, do I need to obey her then?" Sure, Matilda is personally a freethinker, but, as we have already seen, Matilda wants acceptance from her Christian neighbors and is more than comfortable with her children marrying Christians. Matilda never converts to Christianity, but she is willing to support her daughter's relationship with a German Christian anti-Semite. If Alfred's question is meant to be taken rhetorically, it indexes Matilda's radical assimilationist hopes and dreams in a potentially not-so-farfetched exaggeration.

The conversation between Nachman and Alfred continues for several more lines, as Nachman grows increasingly impressed with the young man. Alfred's textual knowledge and reasoning shows the tutelage he received from Rivke. However, rather than congratulating Alfred on his educational gains and piety, Nachman immediately directs his attention to his daughter and says the following:

“You, my child, are a good teacher.” Nachman turned to Rivke, “You have taught him well. If only all teachers taught their students so well.” He squeezed her with loving affection and kissed her forehead. Two tears like pebbles trickled from his eyes and fell on little Rivke's face. Hannah Leah followed Nachman's lead and also gave Rivke a heartfelt kiss, but with more tears, as is the custom of women, who are more apt to cry than men. (August 10, 1922)

In this scene, bursting with paternal and material pride (and gendered stereotypes aside), Nachman affirms the crucial role Rivke has played in Alfred's transformation. There is an underlying sense in which Nachman recognizes he erred from the start by distrusting Rivke. That is, Nachman seems to realize he should have trusted the moral foundation established by Hannah Leah, the middle-class mother par excellence. The scene hints at a parental apology, whereby Nachman could be critiquing himself. Is he, in fact, a teacher with shortcomings when he says, “If only all teachers taught their students so well”? The answer to this question is unclear. Regardless, Nachman is a proud father upon seeing the fruit of parental instruction, which Rivke passes on to Alfred.

As a final note, it must be mentioned that Alfred's education does not conclude only with his transformation. As stated, most of the freethinking family returns to observant Judaism at the novel's conclusion, at least in some sense. The transformed Alfred, along with Nachman and his transformed brother, Albert, aid in bringing their father, Adolph, back to affiliating with the Jewish community and, ultimately, observant Judaism. Rivke's education of Albert has extended reverberations as Alfred uses his newfound knowledge to participate in leading his father on a different path than freethought. The situation is not quite the same as that of Rivke and Alfred. Adolph had a religious background, whereas Oguz envisioned Alfred as a blank slate. Alfred's education—linguistic, moral, religious, cultural, etc.—also does not end with the transformation of his father. In the epilogue,

Alfred and Rivke get married and their knowledge of Hebrew leads them from the Jewish past and present—i.e., heritage, texts, rituals, etc.—to the Jewish future, the *Yishuv*. They become pioneers in pre-state Palestine.

What becomes of Matilda? Matilda remains an outsider. However, once an outsider because of her so-called “gibberish,” lack of middle-class respectability, and refusal to associate with anything Jewish, she becomes a different kind of outsider. Matilda is now the lone freethinker in her household. Her children all marry other Jews, some of them recent immigrants. Even Helena, once Matilda’s pride and joy for falling in love with a Christian (Fritz), is forced by the now-observant Adolph to marry a staunchly observant Jew, Adolph’s relative Dovid Jacobson. Most of the people around Matilda change while she remains the same, adrift in a world in transition that still will not accept her. As Oguz presents Matilda, the character is a cautionary tale. She lacks middle-class sensibilities; she fails at her main task, the moral education of her children; and she does not recognize the world’s disdain for her radical assimilationist desires.

Conclusion

As shown, a notable subplot in Oguz’s *Di fraydenker* is a comparison between two particular characters and their relationship to two languages, language relationships onto which Oguz mapped moral considerations in line with perceived American middle-class values. Matilda, the radical assimilationist, is the unassimilated and unassimilable immigrant, marked by her English-Yiddish gibberish, a result of her failure to self-cultivate. Her gibberish and lack of self-cultivation signify a lack of middle-class respectability, despite her acquired wealth and status. This bleeds into the relationship with her children and undermines her maternal role “as the first teacher[s] of moral values to the younger generation” (Hyman 33). The young Rivke Goldin steps in to provide what is lacking, seeing as Alfred is drawn to her pious respectability. Through Hebrew study, Alfred is “brought up” into Judaism and the Jewish community.

Many diverse, complex characters, subplots, and ideas run through *Di fraydenker*. In analyzing portrayals of language in literature, scholars studying immigrant literature could better account for a writer’s gendered, middle-class notions regarding language acquisition and language loss. In the study of Yiddish literature, little attention has

been paid to representations of language outside Yiddish itself. Similarly, scholarship on Yiddish literature has focused especially on how Yiddish writers depict the loss of Yiddish and its impact on Jewish life, rather than how writers use Yiddish as a medium for proclaiming the importance of other languages in Jewish life, particularly Hebrew as a significant “linguistic aspect of [Jewish] heritage” (Goldstein 142). In general, pop-serialized works like *Di fraydenker* have largely been neglected by scholars. By accounting for a wider array of popular works in Yiddish, scholars will be able to better address how writers spoke to fellow immigrants about what was at stake in linguistic acculturation and linguistic particularity.

Notes

¹Apart from historical-textual reasons, the Balfour Declaration (1917) might have made an impact on Oguz, stirring his imagination toward portraying Hebrew as a part of Zionist activity. There is a basis for this interpretation in *Di fraydenker*. Aside from a turn to religion, both Alfred and Albert become firm Zionists. Alfred and Rivke, who become engaged by the epilogue, even relocate to the Yishuv and live their lives in modern Hebrew. For Oguz's characters, the future of American Jewish life is English supplemented by Hebrew, whether for religious or cultural reasons.

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A Glimpse into the Symbolic Order: Trauma and Metafiction in Ian McEwan's Novel *Atonement*

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Ian McEwan's 2001 novel *Atonement* is not only a story about tragic love—Robbie and Cecilia's impossible romance — but also one about World War II atrocities. The second part is based, as the novelist himself declares in a 2002 interview with John Sutherland, on the memories of war survivors—including the memories of his own father who fought at Dunkirk—and on McEwan's ample work of documentation in the archives of The Imperial War Museum. It is as much a novel about the destruction war produces at the level of the individual and the collective consciousness as it is about class. It makes us think about the impact of history on people's lives, and it appears to offer us a view of a certain way of life that could have continued had it not been interrupted by the war.

However, these tropes about war atrocities, class divisions, and individual or collective perceptions cannot explain some of the issues the novel brings forth, such as the real reason the protagonist, Briony Tallis, confesses what she calls her "crime" only in this literary form (fiction) and so many years after the events (145). The text mentions that she moves out of the family house and lives on her own, yet she fails to tell her parents the truth about Lola's rape. In addition, McEwan does not clarify the plot twist at the end when Briony, who proves to be the real narrator of the story, informs us, in less than a page, that Cecilia and Robbie's romance did not acquire the ending covered by two parts of the novel, and that the two lovers never met again before they both died two months apart at the start of the Second World War. In fact, as Brian Finney and C. Namwali Serpell observe, this ending is so unexpected that it has infuriated many critics and readers, some like Margaret Boerner who consider that the novel is an "increasingly discomfiting manipulation of a victim (in this case the reader)," while others "take this narrative retraction to be a betrayal" (Serpell 81). Readers feel cheated by the short annulment in the coda. It compels them, in a way, as Serpell further notes, to go back and reread the novel because they realize that they have understood it wrong all along. It

exhibits the limits of what is usually called an implicit “pact” between the reader and the story. That is, it deceives expectations.

Moreover, as critics have pointed out, many elements in Ian McEwan’s work prompt towards psychoanalytical or trauma theory interpretations. Ilany Kogan speaks about Briony’s guilt and uses the term *enactment* to explain the protagonist’s decision to write a novel. Following M. V. Bergmann’s theories on enactment, Kogan asserts that in *Atonement* this process does not mean “the externalization of traumatic themes from the past [...] [in] a *substitute-for-mourning* mechanism” because Briony is not a victim, but an executioner (50). Instead, the psychological *enactment* represented by Briony’s text functions as “a *substitute-for-atonement* mechanism” (50). For her part, Erin O’Dwyer analyzes the recurrent epistolary episodes and concludes that they could be seen as signifiers similar to the letters in Edgar Allan Poe’s short story “The Purloined Letter,” as were analyzed by Jacques Lacan in one of his seminars. Therefore, O’Dwyer interprets these episodes from the perspective of the Lacanian gaze. As O’Dwyer affirms, in three of its crucial scenes—the scene of the fountain when Briony watches the beginning of the love affair between her sister and Robbie, the moment when Briony opens Robbie’s letter and discovers an insulting word, and the moment when Lola is raped by Marshall—the novel explores the trajectory of this gaze and ultimately convinces us that “it is this lack of love, and a desire to see it restored, that keeps us reading. The book is not about love—rather, it is about absence and impotence. An absent father, a vindictive mother and the death of two lovers. Their love is kept alive only in the (fictional) letters that they send to each other” (O’Dwyer 188).

The same absence of a father is also noted by Georges Letissier in one of his articles, but he discusses additionally, in Freudian terms, the characteristics of trauma in the novel. As the French critic claims, “with the falsely accused young man dying as an anonymous victim of modern warfare, and his beloved losing her life hardly a few months later,” Briony becomes a villain (210). When she realizes her guilt, she cannot express the trauma of the fact that she is unable to change the past except through writing. However, the novel “inscribes the logic of trauma” from the beginning, through the absence of the father, Jack Tallis (although it could be added that Robbie’s father is also absent), and through Briony’s literary creations that make her especially prone to misunderstanding during the scene of the fountain (214). Furthermore, following Cathy Caruth, Letissier attributes the false accusation

against Robbie to a “cognitive disruption” characteristic to traumatic situations. This disruption represents a “tension between ‘seeing’ and ‘knowing,’ which is seminal in trauma theory” (215-16). As he points out:

There is a price to be paid for mistaking reality for fiction.[...] In her eagerness to have reality conform to predetermined narrative frames and because she can only apprehend the referential world through the lens and grids of fiction, Briony more or less deliberately perverts the way reference works. Instead of relying on sight to gather clues, she establishes the priority of her foreknowledge: “Less like seeing, more like knowing,” as she candidly puts it to her interrogators. (Letissier 217)

Letissier does not expand on this tension but observes that the same is true in the second part of the novel where trauma transgresses the level of the individual and becomes instead the collective trauma of the Second World War. In this part, the divisions between past, present, and future are blurred, and the “lack of synchronicity between the events and their perceptions tampers with the logic of retrospective narration” (223). Similarly, Paul Crosthwaite notes that the war scenes in the novel evoke trauma, but he interprets them in Lacanian terms. The war is a glimpse into the Real; it “is peculiarly productive of what Lacan terms the *tuché*—the unpredictable, radically contingent event through which the distorting pressure of the real is exerted upon the fabric of the symbolic order” (59). In addition, Crosthwaite observes that the technique in *Atonement* can be associated with a belatedness in the registration of events specific to trauma survivors and discussed among others by Cathy Caruth. The novel uses what Crosthwaite calls “delayed decoding” to stage “the incapacity to grasp the rupturing event that occurs, in Caruth’s words, ‘too soon,’ or ‘too quickly’” (60). Therefore, Ian McEwan’s *Atonement*, Crosthwaite concludes, is another book among many other contemporary texts that show an interest in shock and trauma.

Nevertheless, these interpretations seem to focus only on Robbie and Cecilia’s traumatic experiences and do not account for the plot twist at the end as well as for other episodes in the novel such as Briony’s desire to become a writer, her decision to follow her sister’s example and volunteer as a nurse, and her drive to reconstruct war scenes. The critical consensus is that Briony is a villain, and that she

destroys her sister's chances at happiness. Yet some questions remain unanswered: for example, what is the role of the theme of writing in the story? Why does Briony abandon her work and training as a nurse once her sister and her lover die, and why does she decide to write about them only now, when she is dying? Given the surprising coda, is the novel a fictional story-within-a-fictional-story or a witness testimony? A possible answer to all these questions would be that Briony herself is a trauma victim and that writing becomes an important part of a traumatic scenario because it represents not only the medium through which Briony delivers her testimony, but also marks her progression toward the Symbolic Order, in the Lacanian sense. In addition, the meta-fictional allusions in the novel are parts of a clear traumatic course—one that covers everything from the characters, the theme, etc., to the level of the structure itself. *Atonement* is thus not only a novel that speaks of traumatic events, but also a novel that attempts to exhibit the mechanism of literary trauma and to warn the reader about its performative characteristics.

Indeed, from the very beginning, the novel seems to contain elements of the family-complex in which Briony's domestic universe is about to be invaded by "her cousins from the distant north" (McEwan 3). Lola and her "army" of twins, Pierrot and Jackson, are ready to fight for their place in the Tallis household, and although Briony has an initial advantage as the writer of *The Trails of Arabella*, a play she wants to stage with them, Lola progressively imposes her will and takes over the part of the main character:

"Do say yes. It would be the only good thing that's happened to me in months."

Yes. Unable to push her tongue against the word, Briony could only nod, and felt as she did so a sulky thrill of self-annihilating compliance spreading across her skin and ballooning outward from it, darkening the room in throbs. (13-14)

Briony is thus suddenly confronted with a disproportionate resistance of an older child and her allies. In addition, Lola's feelings have priority as her parents are going through a divorce. The rivalry that ensues is another element that could be added to the "logic of trauma" proposed by Letissier above.

Briony's writing seems at first to be subject to family problems and sibling rivalry as well. Her play has been written to call for attention and self-definition. She wants to perform it for her older brother, Leon, because she intends "to provoke his admiration" and to persuade

him to return home (4). When she reads it to her mother, Emily Tallis feels forced to react, and she does so by obliging her daughter “with looks of alarm, snickers of glee and, at the end, grateful smiles and wise, affirming nods” (4). Since Jack Tallis, the father, is, as it has been noted by critics, absent in the novel, these reactions are the only bits of close attention the child receives from her parents. Finally, another indication of possible sibling rivalry is Cecilia’s condescending attitude towards Briony’s writings. We are told that Cecilia “wanted each bound story catalogued and placed on the library shelves, between Rabindranath Tagore and Quintus Tertullian,” a sign that she mocks the importance of her sister’s literary attempts (7). Although the novel claims that Briony understands the joke but chooses to ignore it, its mentioning is not incidental. She is deeply affected by it and she feels rejected and undervalued by her sister. In this way, writing becomes an important trope in the novel and in Briony’s life. Therefore, she constantly fights to preserve what the novel calls “her effective status as an only child,” i.e., as the only child who is *writing* (5).

However, the family-complex—marked by an absent father, desire for mother, and sibling rivalry—and the references to writing do not provide quite enough elements to interpret Briony’s trajectory in *Atonement* from the point of view of trauma. Sibling rivalry and parental absence are only minor characteristics of such an analysis. Moreover, as Jacques Lacan observes in his essay “The Mirror Stage,” the initial human trauma that Lacan refers to as “drama” occurs much earlier during childhood (621). In his view, a child’s psychological development involves two important stages: one that takes place during the early months in which the infant does not differentiate itself from the outer world, and a stage that Lacan calls the *mirror stage* which occurs between six and eighteen months when the child starts to identify itself as different: “*an identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to a term: namely the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image” (619). This identity, however, is a fantasy, an “Ideal-I,” that determines the child to develop a false and narcissistic sense of unity with the mother. Consequently, Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan note, in discussing Lacan’s concept, that “the child assumes the mother is himself, and his primary desire is for her desire (of him)” (571). In other words, the false impression of wholeness with the mother produces a desire that the child will try to fulfill for the rest of his or her life.

Yet the acquisition of language changes all that. It creates, in Rivkin and Ryan's terms, "the initial experience of being ripped out of an original imaginary fullness of being and separated from the object – the mother – that provided us with it" (571). It initiates us into what Lacan calls the "Symbolic Order" because language is a symbolic (and hence arbitrary) system of meaning. With the language acquisition process, we realize that we are different from others, so we acquire a new identity, but this identity "is given to us from outside, and we are constitutively alienated" (571). In addition, another "shattering" occurs when the father interposes between the mother and the child "with the incest taboo that declares the mother an inappropriate object. The bar forbidding access to the mother is [thus] akin to the bar that separates signifier and signified or word from thing. Within language, we have access to no real objects," and we enter a world of empty signifiers (571). In other words, Lacan partially replaces the Freudian family-complex as a trauma generator and focuses more instead on language whose signifiers are responsible for the lack that will always constitute the unconscious object of human desire – the nostalgia for the lost union with the mother (or *object petit a* – from *autre*, as Lacan puts it). This loss and the entering into the Symbolic Order—seen as a restrictive medium in which our desires and beliefs are constructed by language—are therefore foundational to Lacanian psychoanalysis.

In *Atonement*, in spite of the apparent sibling rivalry, Briony's behavior could rather be explained in a different way, especially considering the importance of writing and language in the novel. The text insists from the beginning that the protagonist "possessed a strange mind and a facility with words" (6). This facility, however, does not necessarily imply a construction of meaning – she is still learning the language and builds constructions that fail to connect the signifier to its signified: "the long afternoon she spent browsing in the dictionary and thesaurus made for constructions that were inept" (6). Briony's writing is only a preliminary rehearsal of a language she hasn't mastered yet. Moreover, as we progress through the novel, we witness her discovery that she is different from others and her feeling of alienation from a social world that she finds terribly complicated. As a result, in a narcissistic manner, she ends up thinking that the others did not have "the bright and inside feelings that she had" (34). Therefore, she believes that writing makes her unique and offers her refuge. It feeds into what the novel repeatedly calls "her sense of order" (34) and provides support for her narcissism:

A story was direct and simple, allowing nothing to come between herself and her reader – no intermediaries with their private admissions or incompetence, no pressures of time, no limits on resources. In a story you only had to wish, write it down and you could have the world; in a play you had to make do with what was available: no horses, no village, no seaside. No curtain. It seemed so obvious now that it was too late: a story was a form of telepathy. By means of inking symbols onto a page, she was able *to send thoughts and feelings from her mind to her reader's*. It was a magical process, so commonplace that no one stopped to wonder at it. *Reading a sentence and understanding it were the same thing; as with the crooking of a finger, nothing lay between them.* (35, emphasis mine)

Rivkin and Ryan note the disconnect between the signified and signifier in the Lacanian model. Lacan views literature as a medium which “always enacts the way a chain of signifiers simply eternally displaces an end to signification” and can never reach a real referent (573). Briony’s guilt and the consequent source of her trauma is that she does not seem to understand this disconnection. She believes instead that nothing lays between reality and the language a writer uses to construct it. In her trajectory from what Lacan calls the Imaginary Order to the Symbolic one, she fails to comprehend the futility of her creations. Furthermore, although she realizes that language separates her from others—there is no twofold communication in the passage, as the writer only transmits ideas but does not receive them—her writings give her a false sense of fulfillment and the illusion of omnipotence. This illusion will become eventually a catalyst in the mechanism of trauma.

Undoubtedly Briony’s status as a writer provides means for understanding her, but it also explains other characters’ reactions towards her. In a scene mentioned above, while Briony is trying to attract her mother’s attention by asking her to read together *The Trials of Arabella*, we witness Emily Tallis’s stream-of-consciousness and see the nature of her motherly connection with her daughter: “she took her daughter in her arms, onto her lap – ah, that smooth little body she remembered from its infancy, and *still not gone from her, not quite yet*” (4, emphasis mine). The Lacanian mother and daughter wholeness is seemingly intact here. Yet, Emily’s feelings are transient and illusory. She fakes an interest in the play, for her mind is always elsewhere. Her reactions towards her daughter are only meant to feed her own fantasy of still

being the motherly authority of the house. A proof of this is the fact that we see her later in the novel putting her migraine above her daughter's needs: "the child would need all the comfort a mother could give. Finding her would mean [nevertheless] exposure to unadulterated light, and even the diminishing rays of early evening could provoke an attack" (67). Briony's suffering could thus be a result of an absent father and a narcissistic, aging mother who clings to the remnants of a closeness with her daughter only when it suits her interest.

Moreover, Emily Tallis's authority is undermined in the novel by both Cecilia and Leon, who call their mother by her first name in the most important moments—as during the twins' disappearance and Robbie's arrest, for example—suggesting not only their lack of respect, but also a strange equality that is created between the three. This equality is all the more pronounced in the case of Cecilia, who is no longer a child and who has just returned from Cambridge after studying literature. She is thus an expert in Briony's preoccupations, too. Furthermore, most of the time, it is Cecilia who runs the household or the kitchen when she "mediate[s] between her mother's vague instructions and Betty's forceful state of mind" (23). Sometimes the mother-daughter roles reverse completely, with Cecilia carrying up "trays of tea to her mother's room," as if Emily Tallis was incapable of functioning (19). Thus, Emily's role is reduced to being just another child in the family, and Cecilia is, in effect, the head of the household.

However, this also implies that Cecilia has an interesting relationship with Briony. In fact, even from the beginning the novel, the narrator explains that Cecilia stays in the house because "she simply liked to feel that she was prevented from leaving, that she was needed. From time to time she persuaded herself she remained for Briony's sake, or to help her mother" (20). We are also told that it is Cecilia who takes care of Briony when she decides to cancel the play—thus acting, Ilany Kogan notes, "as a substitute mother for her" (56). In one of the most interesting moments in the novel, this role is made explicitly clear:

She wanted to comfort her sister, for Cecilia had always loved to cuddle the baby of the family. When she was small and prone to nightmares [...] Cecilia used to go to her room and wake her. *Come back*, she used to whisper. *It's only a dream. Come back.* And then she would carry her into her bed. (41)

The moment acquires even more significance since it will be repeated several times throughout the text, including during the second and the

third part, this time as a formula meant to soothe Robbie – seemingly a traumatic trope as Briony’s guilt unfolds.

Briony’s experience with language and Cecilia’s role as a substitute mother generate another part of the little girl’s trauma: her rivalry with Robbie, as well as her transformation into a malefactor. In fact, the scenes that reflect that transformation follow closely again the same Lacanian model of the Symbolic Order and the desire of the mother. The first scene that proves that such a model exists is the scene of the fountain. As Georges Letissier notes, the traumatic pattern is provided here by the “cracking of a much-treasured heirloom: a Meissen porcelain vase[...]. The object, far from being merely a precious antique, is endowed with symbolical value. It stands for no less than civilization, so that any damage done to it implies the collapse of the refinement of art to barbarity” (214). It could be added that from a psychoanalytical point of view, the vase can also be associated with the female genitalia, so the scene is important because it represents Briony’s original discovery of sexuality in relation to her sister-mother Cecilia. And together with it, she realizes that she is different from her sister, and that she is still excluded from a world of adults she cannot fully comprehend yet.

The trauma is all the more intense as it affects someone who a few pages earlier was developing the fantasy of acquiring writerly omnipotence. Therefore, when she cannot grasp the couple’s actions, Briony decides to attribute to them her own meaning and see Robbie as a tormentor of her sister. As the narrator declares, she finds it “extraordinary” that her sister “dare not disobey” him (36). Robbie acts in this scene like the father who interposes his law between Briony and Cecilia (although in others he seems to become another rival sibling). Furthermore, the protagonist finds the situation so shameful for her sister and so traumatic for herself that she tries to cover her eyes to “spare herself of the sight” (36). When she cannot do so, she has a glimpse of the Real, in an almost perfect demonstration of the Lacanian “shattering” Rivkin and Ryan write about. Briony is simply pushed to acknowledge that the world does not revolve around her fantasies, and she feels removed from the two lovers’ incipient romance and erased from her sister’s affection:

It was a temptation for her to be magical and dramatic, and to regard what she had witnessed as a tableau mounted for her alone, a special moral for her wrapped in a mystery. But she

knew very well that if she had not stood when she did, the scene would have happened, for it was not about her at all. Only chance had brought her to the window. This was not a fairy tale, this was the *real*, the adult world in which frogs did not address princesses, and the only messages were the ones that people sent. (37, emphasis mine).

She knows that the scene would have happened the same in her absence, and, since this idea is impossible to bear, she continues to fictionalize the moment and construct Robbie's image as an attacker. Although the text does not explicitly state this, the moment of the fountain represents thus the initial trauma that Briony tries to cope with for the rest of the novel.

A further proof that this is true is also the immediate suspension of description after this point. The Lacanian Real is impossible to render, so Briony's experience is abruptly interrupted by the "old-Briony," the true narrator of the novel. In a half-mocking tone, she downplays the importance of the earlier event and provides an explanation for it from a literary perspective: "six decades later she would describe how at the age of thirteen she had written her way through a *whole history of literature* [...] [and] she would be well aware of her *self-mythologizing*" (38, emphasis mine). The previous tension dissipates, but the implications of the intervention are clear – the scene of the fountain gives Briony the awareness of language as a meaning-making system opposed to the Real, and she chooses not to mark the difference: "the truth had become as ghostly as invention" (39). She prefers to continue the proliferation of empty signifiers. Therefore, instead of condemning Cecilia for her "shocking near-nakedness," she decides to blame Robbie (38).

Yet Robbie himself is not entirely innocent. By writing his letter to Cecilia, he contributes to the same amplification of the symbolic language in the novel. The letter he sends through Briony is a product of his fantasies and sexual desires. The offensive word he inserts in the text exacerbates Briony's suffering because it makes his intentions towards Cecilia explicit. In addition, as O'Dwyer notes, citing Lacan, "it is the fact of the wrong letter that becomes a pure signifier in the story. This is the 'signifier without a signified' [in the Lacanian interpretation of "The Purloined Letter"], the meaningless thing. There is no meaning in Robbie's choosing the wrong letter, no explanation of his unfortunate error" (185). Critics have spoken of Robbie's trespassing upon class boundaries, but his main guilt in Briony's eyes is his desire for

Cecilia. When she reads the letter, she understands that his desire is uncontrollable, and she fears it as it risks taking her sister away. That's why she labels Robbie as a "maniac" in a subsequent scene with Lola (114). And, as Serpell notes, since Briony has "the divine power of bringing something to life with words" – simply put, given her ability to produce signifiers, including in the moment she presents her mother with Robbie's letter – she will not find it difficult to convince everyone of her truth (85). Robbie's arrest and Briony's blindness when she witnesses Lola's rape by Paul Marshall, but still unexplainably attributes the crime to Robbie instead, are thus possible consequences of the Lacanian trajectory of trauma and the demonstration of the child's eagerness to eliminate a rival.

As many critics have noted, after Lola's rape and Robbie's arrest, the novel seems fractured. The story is unexpectedly placed during the Second World War and moves towards what Serpell calls a "realist war novel" (96) and to what Crosthwaite perceives as a "vivid depiction of war" (54). Similar to other works of fiction describing trauma which—as Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle observe in the case of *Shark* by Will Shelf—can translate the traumatic experiences at the level of their form, the violence of the war is reflected this way in the temporal shifts in the novel (Bennett and Royle 135). Many episodes in this part seem to suggest, as Cathy Caruth observes in the case of trauma writings, the incapacity of history to be "straightforwardly referential (that is, no longer based on simple models of experience and reference)" (11). The text permanently overlaps the experience of war with Robbie and Cecilia's letters, Briony's explanations of the past, and projections of the future:

These memories sustained him, [i.e., Robbie], but not so easily. Too often they reminded him of where he was when he last summoned them. They lay on the far side of the great divide in time, as significant as B.C. and A.D. Before prison, before the war, before the sight of a corpse became a banality.[...] They were passing more bodies in the road, in the gutters and on the pavement, dozens of them, soldiers and civilians. The stench was cruel, insinuating itself into the folds of his clothes. The convoy had entered a bombed village, or perhaps the suburb of a small town – the place was rubble and it was impossible to tell. Who would care? Who could ever describe this confusion, and come up with the village names and the dates for the history

books? And take the reasonable view and begin to assign the blame? No one would ever know what it was like to be here.

Without the details there could be no larger picture. (213-14)

The war becomes this way a traumatic event not only for Robbie as a soldier who witnesses its terror and is also physically wounded in these scenes, but also for the reader, who is transformed into an involuntary witness to all the suffering.

At the same time, however, we have to keep in mind that the experience of the war is, as Briony herself declares, the fictional part of the story, the one that she constructs while consulting the archives at The Imperial War Museum. In this sense, she becomes an alter-ego of the author, who in his turn is not a direct witness, and this is another suggestion of her desire to become omnipotent. Hence, the novel does not offer a glimpse of the Real, as Crosthwaite believes (163), but rather develops into a meditation on whether a fabric of words can even render trauma in general. Similar to what Kalí Tal observes to be the “mythologization [of catastrophic experience which] works by reducing a traumatic event to a set of standardized narratives,” the bodies of the soldiers and the stench in the scene above are only the product of what the predictable narratives of the “history books” can transmit (6). In other words, the images of the war in *Atonement* are only meant to exhibit the mechanisms of writing *about* trauma and to question the possibility of any truly genuine account of the Real.

In addition, the contrapuntal structures of the second and third part contribute to this impression of artifice and sheer metatextuality. The main tropes in both cases refer just as much to war as they refer to writing and language—Robbie and Cecilia’s romance is preserved through letters, while Briony keeps a diary and struggles to publish the account of her initial trauma in the form of a story entitled “Two Figures by the Fountain.” Briony’s ward experiences do not add anything new to the images of open wounds from the second part and sometimes evoke the same medical terms as Robbie’s, a hint that Briony’s part is just as fictional as his. Furthermore, both parts are centered on the idea of desire—Robbie’s desire for his lover and Briony’s almost too-openly-expressed desire to follow her substitute mother’s example and become a nurse. The only discernible addition to Briony’s story is Jack Tallis’s sole intervention in his daughter’s life, although that is epistolary, too: in a *deus-ex-machina* type of twist, the father suggests who the real culprit is; Briony has the revelation of this truth, remembering

the scene of the rape in detail this time; and Lola and Marshall's story finds its conclusion in the marriage between the victim and her rapist.

Nevertheless, the impression of metatextual contrivance persists, and it covers the last part of the novel, too. After another jump in time, we are placed in London in 1999. Even though the circumstances of her post-war life and of her transition from a nurse to a professional writer are not provided, Briony is a famous author now who is about to celebrate her seventy-seventh birthday back in her childhood residence. When she runs into the Marshalls on her way out of The Imperial War Museum where she has just finished researching her latest book, the old sibling rivalries seem to reignite as she understands that Lola will probably outlive her. However, Lola's description feels excessive, as she resembles a cartoon character: "I thought there was a touch of the stage villain here—the gaunt figure, the black coat, the lurid lips. A cigarette holder, a lapdog tucked under one arm and she could have been Cruella de Vil" (338). With the final staging of *The Trials of Arabella* during the birthday party, the theatrical circle of the novel is thus complete, and Lola is playing the role she was assigned from the beginning.

The metatextual conventions, however, provide a sense of unity to the novel in another important way. Right before the surprising disclosure that Robbie and Cecilia did not consummate their romance and died during the war, Briony receives the news of her vascular dementia. Her memory is slowly getting erased as her "mind is closing down" (334). She will, therefore, revert before her death to a preverbal state, to the Imaginary Order that she left at the beginning of the story. The novel that she claims she has written is this way by no means an "atonement." It does not try to repair anything, as it will not even be published to expose the Marshalls. It is her way to conclude her itinerary through language and to display its traumatizing emptiness through metafictional devices. As Patricia Waugh writes, the dynamics of metafiction usually set "the *mirror* of art up to its own linguistic or representational structures" (12, emphasis mine). The novel thus exhibits the traumatic impact of literary representations:

When I am dead and the Marshalls are dead, and the novel is finally published, we will only exist as my inventions. Briony will be as much of a fantasy as the lovers who shared a bed in Balham and enraged their landlady. No one will care what events and which individuals were misrepresented to make a novel. I know there's always a certain kind of reader who will

be compelled to ask, But what *really* happened? The answer is simple: the lovers survive and flourish. As long as there is a single copy, a solitary typescript of my final draft, then my spontaneous, fortuitous sister and her medical prince survive to love. (350)

The Lacanian demonstration concludes with the text becoming yet another signifier in the meaning-making chain produced by language. Such an ending is not meant to deceive readers, to transform them into victims of a war narrative, but to warn them about the incapacity of literature to render traumatic events in the first place.

Consequently, *Atonement* converts into a meditation on human trauma and on the possibility to represent it through language. It uncovers the limitations of trauma fiction as it suggests that this fiction cannot approximate the Real. Using tropes related to writing that resemble Lacan's theories on the mirror stage and on the acquisition of language, it proves that, in spite of the false authorial illusion of omnipotence, fiction is ultimately a generator of signifiers. In other words, it is not only a novel about war and unhappy love, but also a novel about the remote but imaginable possibility of trauma writing in general.

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The Entwined Etymologies of *Hellene*, *Pagan*, and *Gentile* in the Late Roman Empire

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Historical philology, or the study of the evolution of language, can provide insights into our past and ourselves that are not readily accessible to other disciplines, such as archaeology. As David Anthony recently illustrated, although pottery shards, and even written documents, can tell us much about the human experience, the addition of historical linguistic analysis to a body of research allows scholars to triangulate convergent data sources and increase the sophistication of our understanding of social change (13). Anthony's study of the Indo-European language group, for example, allowed him to assess human migration models by corroborating the purported dates and locations against the dates and locations suggested by models of linguistic evolution. Of particular interest was the word for wheel. Some Paleo-Indo-European (PIE) daughter languages did not include PIE-derived words for wheel. They borrowed those words from languages native to the area into which the Indo-European group immigrated. From this, he concluded the groups whose then-contemporary languages did not contain PIE-derived words for wheel migrated away from other speakers of the mother language before the development and transmission of these technologies in the *Urheimat*, or linguistic homeland, around six thousand years ago. In contrast, those who spoke IE languages that did contain PIE-derived words for wheel and related technologies would have separated from the larger language group after these technological developments occurred in the homeland (which is currently believed to be the Pontic steppes).

Because the practice of writing increased over time, we know much more about the first few centuries of the common era than there are about the fifth and fourth centuries before the contemporary era. Nonetheless, historical philology can improve our understanding of this later period also, and that is what this essay aims to do. This paper proposes that analysis of the evolution of the use of the words *Hellene*, *gentile*, and *pagan*, when combined with the study of a few representative figures in Roman history, illuminates how notions of personal and

group identity shifted from blood relations to civic relations and then to religious identification. The etymological analysis supporting this view is presented in the first half of the essay. The second half of the essay connects linguistic evolution to the confluence of Greek philosophy and Eastern mysticism, as exemplified in the beliefs of emperors Marcus Aurelius and Julian the Apostate.

Etymological Overview

Today, *Pagan*, *Gentile*, and *Hellene* (or, Greek) are not synonymous, but in the past, their meanings overlapped significantly. *Gentile*, for example, previously referred to any group or clan. Everyone was a member of some *gens*, or group. Later, gentile specifically referred to Greeks and/or Pagans. Presently, however, gentile means non-Jewish. Similarly, *Hellene* once identified the biological descendants of one person. Later, the word referred to a linguistic group, and then a cultural group. Even later, *Hellene* pejoratively referred to rural pagans. Today, however, the word means *Greek*, and it is not synonymous with gentile or pagan. The third word under analysis, *Pagan*, today refers to a person who holds religious beliefs distinct from the main world religions. In the past, however, a person would have been branded a pagan if he or she lived in the rural provinces or was a devotee of traditional beliefs and practices.

Gentile

In his *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, Walter Skeat defined *gentile* as a *pagan* (237). Many find this a little surprising. My personal experience of asking “what does the word gentile mean?” suggests that most people associate the word with Paul the Apostle and with his distinction between Jewish and non-Jewish converts to Christianity during the first century C.E. For the Jewish-Christian apostle, to be a gentile was simply to not be Jewish. In Paul’s time, around the Mediterranean area, notions of identity were changing, but for most of Hebrew and Israelite history, Jewish leaders held there were more or less two groups of people in the world: Jews and non-Jews. Given this, we might naturally wonder why Skeat claimed that *gentile* formerly meant *pagan* (rather than not Jewish). Douglas Harper, editor of *Etymonline.com*, an online etymological dictionary, provides clues. He identifies gentile to mean “one who is not a Jew,” but he clarifies by noting that this use of the word was first attested to circa 1400 C.E., and by adding that just prior to this date, the English word *gentile*

did not mean “one who is not a Jew.” It meant instead “one who is not a Christian” – i.e., a pagan. Robert Barnhart’s analysis in his *Concise Dictionary of Etymology* supports Harper’s interpretation (422).

Today, gentile means not Jewish, but earlier it meant not Christian (i.e., Pagan). There is an interesting story to be told about changes in the meaning of this word around 1400, but that is not the focus here. We go back earlier still, to around 50 C.E., when *gentile* seems to have meant what it means today: not-Jewish. Or, sort of. Paul took gentile to mean not-Jewish—except Paul did not use the word *gentile*. When writing *The Epistles*, Paul used the word *ethnikos*, which was the Koine Greek form of the Hebrew *ha goyim*, which meant non-Jewish peoples (Nettle). The word *gentile* did not enter the Bible until over 300 years later, and only through the work of St. Jerome (Saltet). Jerome wrote the Vulgate Bible at this time, and he translated the Koine Greek into the vulgate Roman. As part of this work, he translated the Greek *ethnikos* as *gentile*. *Ethnikos* designated a group of people who shared a culture, language, and lineage; therefore, it is easy to see why Jerome made the translation. *Gentile* leads back to *gentilis*, which, in turn, can be traced to the Paleo-Indo-European root *gene*, which meant *tribe*, *clan*, or *race*. Like *ethnikos*, *gentile* denoted group membership and connoted origin. Despite the similarity in meanings, however, the two words do not appear to be derived from the same root. *Gens* was associated with giving birth, begetting, origins, and so on (Skeat 347; Barnhart 319; Harper). *Ethnos*, in contrast, is thought to have evolved from the PIE root *we*, rather than *gen*.

Prior to the shift that occurred after St. Jerome’s translation of *ethnikos* to *gentilis*, the Latin term *gentilis* was commonly associated with the blood-relations that united clans and peoples (Nelte). But by the early Fourth Century C.E., this association was changing, as people increasingly identified themselves via their religious affiliation. This transition can be seen clearly in the writings of thinkers such as Aristides (125 C.E.). This shift from blood identity to religious identity was facilitated by the empire itself, which undermined local identities by making everyone a Roman citizen—especially after the Constitutio Antoniniana, passed in 212 C.E., granted Roman citizenship to all free citizens living in the provinces. Although the success of the empire did not erase local clan identity, in many cases it did create abstracted dual or multiple identities related to clan, civic organization, and religious observance. This change is evident in Roman family life around the

first century, when the designation of heirs was decoupled from physical bloodlines, and beneficiaries were chosen with civic interests in mind (Veyne 17). Changes associated with the spread of the Roman Empire acclimated citizens to the concept of a singular higher spiritual power (the spiritual parallel of the emperor), who was aided by a group of sub-deities. That spread also helped make plausible the idea that everyone was a member of the same spiritual community (the parallel of the empire), whether they embraced it or rebelled against it. That is, the Roman Empire functioned as a conceptual model for a new, universalized conception of God and the cosmos. That this is the case is seen in the philosophical tastes of educated people who increasingly turned to Neoplatonist and gnostic conceptions of the One, Emanation, the World Soul, and so on.

So, the earliest meaning of the roots of the word *gentile* were associated with clan relations. This sense was shared in three languages: Greek (*ethnos*), Latin (*gens*), and Hebrew (*goyim*). As Indo-European languages, Greek and Latin shared a linguistic history, but Hebrew, a Semitic language, did not. Nonetheless, the shared geographical and genetic sense of the word remained evident—was not yet covered up—in Paul’s use of the Greek translation of the Hebrew word. As discussed below, by following the evolution of other words such as *Hellene*, it was non-Christians who primarily came to be associated with *gentile* and identified as an outsider or other. Given the universal nature of imperial Rome and Christianity—accepting all people and assimilating them under a single truth—the notion of a singular god, or a singular organizing cosmic power, was increasingly part of the Mediterranean consciousness.

Hellene and Romaioi

Sometimes, moreover, when Paul appeared to have distinguished between Jewish and non-Jewish Christians in the Bible, he was actually discussing differences between Jews and Greeks, who, for him, would have been a subset of gentiles (Nelte). In the first century C.E., the Eastern part of the Roman empire was culturally and linguistically Greek, at least primarily. Hellenistic culture, spread by the armies of Alexander the Great, officially ended with the defeat of the Greeks by the Romans in 146 B.C.E. Nonetheless, Greek culture remained dominant around the Eastern Mediterranean. The culture is today called Hellenistic rather than Greek, in part because the Greeks did not refer to themselves as Greeks. That name was given to them by

the Romans. The Greeks referred to themselves as Hellenes – as did Paul. After the Greek people fell under Roman political dominion, *Hellene* was primarily a cultural and linguistic designation.

This was not always the case, however. According to Greek mythology, at least, the Greek people(s) were once the blood lineage of a man named Hellen. The genesis story of the Hellene is similar to the Gilgamesh and Noah flood stories. In the Greek version, Zeus became angry with the proto-Greeks, the Pelasgians, and he sent a flood to cleanse the world. Prometheus helped his son, Deucalion, survive the destruction by building a chest or an ark. Deucalion became King, and his wife bore him a son, Hellen, who came to be the eponymous king of the Greek people. The date when the people of the Aegean Sea and the Greek mainland became Hellenes is still debated. But it seems likely to have occurred after the late Bronze Age Collapse (around 1200 B.C.E.) and before the rise of the city states (around 600 B.C.E.). The name remained through the Golden Age, the Hellenistic period, and into the period of Roman domination after 146 B.C.E., despite the shifting designation of *Hellene*.

In *I Corinthians, 1:23* (written around 50 C.E.), Paul contrasted obstacles to recruiting potential Jewish converts to Christianity with obstacles to recruiting potential Greek converts to Christianity. He noted that the Jewish converts would demand their new religion provide signs, while the Greeks would need to be convinced that their new religion held wisdom. He also claimed that many Jewish people would not accept Christianity because it broke the (Jewish) laws, but many Greeks would not adopt the new religion because it was not rational. Here, at least, Paul presented the Jewish population of the Roman Empire to be a people of faith and the Greeks to be a people of philosophy. This claim invites analysis because, at the time it was made, the region was inhabited by Greeks, who were themselves religious, and who engaged in taking the auspices. Ironically, these were precisely those whom today we would call the pagans. Paul excluded these religious Greeks from this binary, however, presumably because he and others associated Hellenic culture (and by extension, Greek people) with its philosophy rather than its Olympic religion.

Interesting by comparison is an essay written a few generations later, in 125 C.E. Aristides, a Christian philosopher living in Athens, wrote to Emperor Hadrian, reminding him that *it is clear to you, O King, that there are four classes of men in this world: Barbarians,*

Greeks, Jews and Christians. Striking in omission is the absence of a Roman people in this letter written to the Roman Emperor. Aristides identified the groups of the Roman Empire based on who or what they worshipped. Unlike Paul, Aristides associated the Greeks with their Olympic religion. For Aristides, the Romans were not a separately identifiable group of people because they did not have their own religion. From this perspective, Romans were not *primarily* Romans; they were either Greeks, Christians, Barbarians, or Jews. Aristides lumped Egyptians and a few others together with Greeks, suggesting that by *Greek*, he meant believers in the Olympic and similar polytheistic religions—i.e., what most today refer to as pagans.

While Paul identified the Greeks with their philosophical culture, Aristides identified the Greeks by their religion. By the time Constantine moved the capitol of Rome to the East in 330, another shift in identification was occurring. Many of the Hellenes in the Greek area (those who were native to the area, who spoke Greek, and who were Christian) ceased referring to themselves as Hellenes. Instead, they called themselves *Romaioi*—or, Romans (the true Romans). And, oddly, they used their former name, Hellene, to identify the Pagans who lived in the area (Malatras 419). So, a couple centuries after Aristides identified the Greeks and all people of the Roman Empire in reference to their religion, many Greeks internalized this belief to such a degree that they rejected their blood/geographical heritage as well as their cultural heritage and identified themselves as the true Romans—with the understanding that the true Romans were Christian.

To recap, then, for Paul, writing about 50 C.E., the Hellenes were primarily connected to Greek philosophy. In the first century C.E., this would have included the Middle Platonists, Epicureans, Stoics, and a few others. For Aristides, writing about 125 C.E., Hellenes were identified by their polytheism, an identity they shared with most Romans. By 400 C.E., the Christian Greeks called themselves Romans, and they called the rural and/or Aristocratic Greek pagans *Hellenes* (or, as we would say, Greeks). I should make clear that this in no way implies that everyone uniformly changed their identification along with these selected writers. Indeed, the point is that these shifts were gradual, occurred over generational spans, and were never fully comprehensive. The actions of emperors, bureaucrats, and religious zealots, as well as non-human events, would surely have influenced changes in identity, but philological analysis can help us confirm long-term changes in

what it meant to be *Hellene*. These changes in Greek identity were interwoven with evolving historical conceptions of gens and gentile, and, as will be discussed now, with what it meant to be *pagan*.

Pagan

According to William Skeat, the Latin *Paganus* identified “a villager or countryman” (422). Alternatively, also according to Skeat, it sometimes meant, “one who believes in the old gods,” as the rural dwellers were generally thought to have remained unconverted after townspeople had adopted the new religion. Richard Trench similarly contends that *pagani* was derived from *pagus*, meaning village—and that originally the term had no religious significance (81). It merely designated the dwellers of hamlets and villages. Douglas Harper interpreted the evolution slightly differently. He noted that although the religious sense of pagan is often said to have derived from conservative, rural adherence to the old gods, the actual use of the word by early Christians was likely derived not so much from the fact that the pagans were rural as from the fact that they were civilians. This is because *paganus*, in Roman military jargon, referred to civilians—in contrast to trained, professional soldiers. Harper pointed to the likes of Tertullian, Augustine, and others who invoked military imagery and identified early Christians as soldiers of Christ. James O’Donnell offered a history that supports Harper’s. Combining these views, a story arc appears: as the Roman army and their retainers became more Christianized, they found that the local people in the rural areas near the frontier were less likely to have abandoned their worship of the old polytheistic gods. This process led to the interconnection of words for rural, civilian, and polytheism.

The case of *pagan* is different than that of *Hellene*. The pagans did not refer to themselves as pagans. In fact, with the exception perhaps of priests, it seems pagans did not identify themselves primarily, and perhaps in many cases at all, via their relation to a particular religion. In the polytheistic tradition, it was taken for granted that there were many gods. People would sacrifice and/or pray to the various appropriate gods. For most, it made no sense to identify with a single god, because the different gods served different needs. This leads to an interesting thought. Perhaps part of the appeal of Christianity and other monotheistic religions was the fact that they provided a strong identity to the believers – one that the traditional polytheistic belief system did

not. Regardless of where a Jewish or Christian person lived, he or she could identify with a people and a familiar set of traditions. This decreased the need to assimilate into the population within which one lived, and it created a positive feedback loop that supported the dispersed religious community. Such a relationship was not without negative consequences, however. The sense of identity provided by monotheistic religion, as many Roman emperors and senators insisted, eroded the existing civic fabric of communities, as people identified more closely with distant coreligionists than with their neighbors. Those who were outcasts or who were unhappy with local civic life had a social outlet that identified itself in opposition to the local community – in opposition to blood and civic relations, i.e., to the world, which, in the case of Christianity, came to be seen as bad, sinful, fallen, etc.

As linguistic meanings shifted and wandered, they also became variously interconnected, reconnected, and reassembled. This occurrence in the words is reflected in changes in identities. These changes included those that persons and groups took on for themselves and those that groups ascribed to other groups. Because word pairings such as gentile/Jew and pagan/Christian are presented as binaries, we tend to follow the language and suppose that there were always stark differences between these two: that a person or group was either one of these or the other, but never both. As noted by O'Donnell, however, it is likely that in the second and third century, the distinction between pagans and gentile Christians was not as stark as we might imagine (160). The openness of the old polytheistic systems allowed early Christians (some might prefer to call them proto-Christians) to accept the Christian god as one of many gods—or as the strongest of many gods. The pagan-in-conversion would have naturally seen the new Jewish/Christian god in this way and, like prior ancestors, would likely have paid some attention to determine whether this god had real power that might be of real benefit. If a friend or someone famous met with fortune and attributed that success or good luck to a particular god, the pagan might scratch down a *quid pro quo* on a pottery shard and leave it at the temple of the god. If the wish came to pass, the beneficiary would know to repay the god as promised. O'Donnell's sense of the practical relationship with the various gods is confirmed by historical examples, such as Constantine and St. Augustine (see St. Augustine's *City of God*). Constantine issued the Edict of Milan *after* his success at the Battle of Milvian Bridge, and for some time after that, he still seemed to hold onto Apollo. After St. Augustine's conversion experience, he strongly

suggested in *The City of God* that the Olympic gods actually existed, but that they were demons or fallen angels. Indeed, it seems likely that it would have been sometime well after the Edict of Thessalonica, in 380 C.E., that the overwhelming majority of gentile converts to Christianity – especially those in the rural West and North – believed that there was only one real God.

Historical Context and Genealogy

Friedrich Nietzsche (1874), the mid-nineteenth century philologist-turned-philosopher, approached the study of history differently than many of his contemporaries. He rejected Georg Hegel's quasi-Neoplatonism, whereby history was understood to be guided by a world-soul (or the German *geist*). For Hegel and other pre-Darwinian scholars of evolution, evolutionary change was understood to be teleological. That is, change was thought to have a goal – something like an Aristotelian final cause. History, in this view, was believed to develop dialectically toward the self-realization of the Geist. Taking this view leads historians and philosophers of history to seek patterns in history that show us its goal and allow us to predict the future. Unlike Hegel (1770-1831), however, Nietzsche (1844-1900) had the benefit of writing after Darwin (1809-1882). Darwin's work provided Nietzsche with a non-teleological, naturalistic explanation of evolution, and in *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche provided an example of this approach. Since then, Foucault (1971) and others (Johnson 2014, 2017; Qvarsebo 2013; Weiler 2006) have developed this historiography, which does not view human history to be a unified *thing* that rationally evolves toward a prescribed end. Human history is understood to be primarily a local phenomenon, full of accident, chance, unreason, guile, self-interest, and so on. As such, a historian with a predilection for Hegelian (or, by extension, Marxist) history will likely find *progress* in the movement from polytheism to monotheism, rural to urban, or localized religion to universalized religion. A genealogical interpretation of history would, in contrast, emphasize contingencies and reject metanarratives.

Given this opening, then, how might a story about the shifting meanings of pagan, gentile, and Hellene be framed? Identity, as we have already seen, is a good place to start – if it is not taken to be universal, unchanging, or teleological. That is, the linguistic changes seem to run roughly parallel to personal and group identities, when each of these are understood to always be in flux. In the natural world, when

the environment changes, organisms in that environment adapt (or perhaps cease to exist). Humans, human societies, human language, and human history are little different.

European and Mediterranean pagans, by and large, were open to new gods. The existence of gods was presupposed, and most people did not contemplate their nature (O'Donnell 53). According to O'Donnell, religion was practical and interwoven into the fabric of the lifeworld, and people sought to garner the help of the gods, avoid their wrath, and enjoy the official festivities and telling of stories that provided a reason to take the day off and celebrate, but offered little more than this (53). However, among those more educated within the Greek culture of the Roman Empire, just prior to the start of the contemporary era, questions concerning the nature of knowledge, of the world, and of and the gods were becoming more pronounced.

The writings of the Neoplatonists, Gnostics, Hermetics, and Jewish mystics sought to combine philosophy with religious mysticism and thereby ascertain through knowledge or experience what lies hidden in the spiritual realm, behind the veil of reality. The idea that there existed a unified spiritual force that guided the world paralleled the reality, whereby empire-guiding decisions were made behind the walls of the Senate and the emperor's mansion. Both remained equally inaccessible to the common person, who had a vested interest in understanding each well enough to secure fortune or at least avoid misfortune.

Despite the synthesis of various monotheistic doctrines, there was no singular or unified school of thought that led from polytheistic paganism to Christianity and that was responsible for the shifts in identity among Greeks, Romans, and others in the late empire. From proto-Egyptian-Jewish Gnosticism to the Stoics, academic Skeptics, and all the other schools listed above, and more besides, there was an often-earnest rummaging in the dark to find what might lie in the recesses beyond visible reality. The groups were stumbling over one another, arguing with one another, becoming one another, and dividing – and this over the period of a few centuries. It would be pleasing to the rational, academic mind to construct a single, clean story of intellectual evolution, but the issue is too complex. There are too many local, disparate stories to be layered, GPS map-style, on top of one another: persons, groups, and ideas, all evolving somewhat independently of one another. In such cases, the goal of intellectual history is to provide

one or a few of these small, local stories that can then be piled atop one another to create interpretations of conceptual systems in flow.

One microstory of entwining gods, ideas, and peoples begins with Elagabalus, who was known prior to his death as Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus. In 218 C.E., as a 14-year-old Syrian priest of a foreign and exotic religion, Elagabalus was crowned emperor of Rome, largely through the intrigues of his aunt, Julia Maesa. Upon being appointed, he forwarded from Syria to Rome a portrait of himself in sacerdotal robes of silk and gold, covered in collars, bracelets, and gems, and with eyebrows and cheeks painted in the feminine fashion. This act did little to impress conservative senators and citizens. Upon arrival in Rome, he married a vestal virgin and attempted to install his god as the primary deity of the Parthenon. He also compelled a leading woman of Rome to marry his god, a black rock. It is unclear to scholars whether the rock was thought to literally be the god or was the symbol of the god (Dio; O'Donnell 127). Although the great wealth of the multicultural empire and the instinctive pagan openness to other religions eased the impetuous insertion of new gods and practices among the cosmopolitan people of Rome, there were those among the old and noble houses of Rome who felt things were clearly moving in the wrong direction. In hindsight, it appears they were correct because, sexual and religious tastes aside, by the time Decius became Emperor in 250 CE, each preceding ruler, going all the way back to Elagabalus, had been assassinated/killed by the Roman army in one way or another. Surely the evolution of power and organizational structures in the army and government can explain much of the political intrigue. Also relevant, however, was the concern shared by many that the values believed to have been responsible for the past success of Rome were being stretched, unraveled, and intentionally torn apart by corruption and Eastern decadence. If even only a quarter of what Cassius Dio wrote in Book LXXX is true, a vast chasm separated the original Marcus Aurelius, who ruled between 161-180 CE, from the Syrian emperor who bore his name a generation later.

There are innumerable, similar stories of the abandonment of traditional virtue, but Elagabalus is representative of the changes that motivated rulers such as Decius to restore the old faith and the old ways. Decius is infamous for his hostility toward Christians, but many besides him blamed the Christians for angering the gods. During Decius's reign, for example, Rome was wracked by the Cyprian

Plague. It is estimated that during this time up to 5000 people died *each day* in the empire from the plague. Combined with barbarians on the frontier and talks in the East of the end of times, many Roman citizens were shaken. For some, the political, economic, and medical crises shook their faith in the established religions and drove them to new ones, such as Christianity – especially when it appeared the old gods were of no help (see Reff). For others, however, it was clear the gods were displeased, and the Christians were to blame. In response, to reassure the population, and likely for other reasons also, Decius reinstated the censor, and he required all persons, except Jews, to publicly sacrifice to the traditional Roman gods. Those who did not sacrifice were deemed atheists who were threats to the public good, and they were thus punished.

Times were bleak, and people were searching for answers. When Constantine declared himself a Christian, the power structure in the West came to be held by Christians – amazingly, only 300 years after the start of the religion. The plague and Constantine’s conversion did much for the Christian cause. However, although Constantine supported Christianity, the shift from paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire was far from complete or secure. In 361, for example, Constantine’s nephew (and closet-pagan) Julian took the throne. Had this ardent anti-Christian lived longer, I would likely be writing a rather different story. Whatever the case, the ascension of the Christian Constantine and then reversion back to the Hellenic Pagan Julian provides yet another example of shifting, rather than uniformly evolving, beliefs.

The final piece of this short story of change involves philosophy, which served as one of several bridges between polytheism and monotheism. A short discussion of the belief systems of Marcus Aurelius and Julian the Apostate will concisely illustrate how philosophical beliefs evolved from Stoicism to Neoplatonism, affected the transition from Paganism to Christianity, and led to the changes in identity revealed in the evolving meanings of *Hellene*, pagan, and gentile.

Aurelius and Julian

Marcus Aurelius and Julian the Apostate were well-educated men of letters: philosophers by choice, they somewhat unexpectedly found themselves in positions of power. Each ardently attempted to embody Roman virtue, and each died while leading an army on the Roman frontier. Marcus Aurelius was a Stoic and a journaler. He wrote to and for himself, mostly, and the product is today called the *Meditations*.

In it, he espoused classical Stoic prescriptions: control your emotions, be modest, live simply, avoid partisanship in politics, and value physical labor. He also maintained that virtuous men do not concern themselves “with trifling things, [nor] give credit to what is said by miracle-workers and jugglers about incantations and the driving away of daemons and such things” (193). Aurelius repeatedly noted that we should not be angered by the ignorant or superstitious, but rather be kind, understanding, and patient with them.

His view of the relationship between religion and governance is perhaps best demonstrated by a renowned event. Around 175 C.E., the emperor passed through Athens on a trip to Rome. While there, he was inducted into the Eleusinian Mysteries (Eliot 360). The Eleusinian Mysteries were an esoteric experience involving conjuration, visions, and probably psychedelic drugs. Although this does not seem to be the sort of thing a Stoic emperor does for R&R, participating in the most famous secret rite of Hellas was surely an act of prudent leadership – especially when one considers that about five years prior to the event, the Temple of Demeter was sacked by the Sarmatians, but then rebuilt, thanks in part to Marcus Aurelius himself, who is said to be the only non-initiate ever allowed into the Temple. The Eleusinian Mysteries celebrated rebirth. In the ritualized story, the goddess Persephone, the granddaughter of Zeus, is taken to the underworld, dies, and then is returned (or resurrected). Her resurrection brings salvation to the people of Greece through her mother, Demeter, who is responsible for the life-giving rain. An early Greek notion of Heaven, the Elysium was associated with ancient rebirth rites, and it was comparable to other mystery cults throughout the Mediterranean and Levant. The similarities to the new Christian religion’s doctrines of crucifixion and resurrection are unmistakable.

For Aurelius, religion was practical. He seems not to have doubted the existence of gods, but neither to have taken seriously the more zealous prophets and priests of the *exotic* religions. A little less than 200 years later, Julian the Apostate would be the last Roman Emperor to experience the Eleusinian rites (Kutask 190). There is every reason to believe that Julian’s participation was enthusiastic, however. Julian’s taste for mysticism seems almost anachronistic when paired in contrast to Marcus Aurelius, the second century Stoic, who was little interested in the mystical, whether Eleusinian or Christian. He took a more rational approach to life. That said, Julian was far from being an

uneducated, superstitious oaf. He was likely better trained in logic, and in philosophy more generally, than was Aurelius or any other Roman emperor. Why, then, did the Roman emperor trained in logic become interested in mysticism? Natural disposition surely played some part, but so did the leading philosophies of the day. Philosophically-infused mysticism was readily available to Julian, but not to Aurelius. Neoplatonism, for example, did not “exist” in Aurelius’ time. The *Enneads*, the seminal Neoplatonist work, would not be written until a century later. Following Aurelius, however, philosophy increasingly became infused with mysticism – and vice versa. By the time Julian the Philosopher (a.k.a. the Apostate) was initiated into the Eleusinian rites, the intellectual scene had changed drastically. Instead of the self-discipline, self-development, and rational reflection associated with Stoicism, the Neoplatonists focused on the contemplation and Emanation of the One. Stoicism emphasized clear thinking, while Neoplatonism was infused with obfuscatory mysticism.

Julian’s story provides some insight into what caused this change in perspective among the privileged class in Rome. Julian was schooled in Christian doctrine early in his life. He knew the Bible well, and he understood Christian theology. Around the age of twenty, however, Julian began studying with Neoplatonists. It was at this time, according to his own letters, that “he began to follow the right path” (qtd. in Teitler 10). At first, he studied with the renowned Neoplatonist logician Eusebius of Nicomedia, but he then became more interested in the teachings of Eusebius’s student Maximus. Maximus was half philosopher and half religious conjurer, and he introduced Julian to theurgy and the use of magical rituals (henosis) to evoke deities. This branch of Neoplatonism, connected closely to Gnosticism and Hermeticism, sought to syncretize the mystical and the logical. As philosophy began to incorporate magic, it became less logical and boring and more spectacular. As a result, its popular appeal increased. In this milieu, the zeitgeist changed from tight-lipped Stoicism to a fascination with the unseen and noumenal. Given his taste for mysticism, Julian might have become a gnostic Christian. However, his status as a patrician with a deep connection to Roman glory and tradition drove him to synthesize the new ideas with the traditional Roman/Greek gods and to reject the foreign and relatively-new Christian sect within which he was raised. He took to calling the Christians *Galileans* to bring attention to the humble origins of the purportedly universal religion. He likewise referred to their doctrine as “the creed of countryfolk” (Teitler 25), and

he also suggested the philosophical foundation of the religion was based on the musings of an illiterate Jewish fisherman. In his writings, he praised the Roman gods, and he closed his panegyric, "Upon the Mother of the Gods," by asking that Romans be granted the wisdom to reject atheism. For him this meant Christianity, since it was the Christians who denied the existence of the gods. The poem, with its gnostic themes, reads as though it could have been written by a young John the Apostle. Despite Julian's hostility to the novel foreign religion, his own religious and philosophical thinking had much in common with early Christian, Gnostic, and Neoplatonist theology.

The two philosopher-kings' contrasting relationships to the Eleusinian mysteries, and the differences between their Stoic and Neoplatonic creeds, illustrate a shifting, uneven evolution in thinking. This occurred in parallel with related changes in group identities as well as changes in the designations of words such as *Hellen* and *pagan*. Marcus Aurelius the Stoic sought to live a life guided by reason. He was representative of one of Paul's quintessential Gentiles. He was not interested in Christianity, however, because it was neither rational nor Roman. Julian, who was raised as a Christian, came to identify himself as a Hellene. His rejection of Christianity did not fit Paul's expectation. Despite his strong identification with Greek culture, Julian embraced the mysticism that Paul associated with Jews and early Christianity; he simply wished to base it within the ancient Hellenic/Roman religion. It seems that for Julian the Apostate, then, Pagan represents the changing mindset of the late empire. The effect of Gnosticism, nonrabbinical Judaism, Christianity, similar belief systems, and correlative shifts in identity was that by 360 C.E., few of the gentiles (Hellenes) Paul mentioned around C.E. 50 seemed to remain.

Conclusion

Historical philology, as a form of intellectual history, can improve our understanding of changes in beliefs, identities, and other ideas that do not leave material traces. By examining the evolution of the use of the words *hellene*, *gentile*, and *pagan*, this essay illustrates how Roman citizens understood themselves and others during the first few centuries of the empire. Shifting identities coincided with the increased intercourse between Greek philosophy and Eastern mysticism. These two belief systems intermingled as intellectual preferences changed from a practical, stoic approach to life and one's relationship

with the gods to a taste for the noumenal. A new, monotheistic worldview arose from these intellectual changes, but it was not immediately and never fully accepted by the non-cosmopolitan, civilian, rural inhabitants of the Roman provinces who remained connected to farming, to tradition, and to the homeland.

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Understand: Historical Philology, Philosophical Philology, and Heidegger

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Today in the US, philology is generally taken to be the study of literary texts. In other places and times, however, historical philology has been concerned with changes in the form and meaning of words. This paper is philological in the latter way in that the historical analysis of the word *understand* is addressed. The examination of the historical meaning of *understand* is accompanied by a discussion of two rather different approaches to the historical evolution of the meanings of words. One approach I call philosophical, or Neoplatonist philology, and the other I simply identify as the historical approach. The key difference is that the philosophical method of etymological analysis attempts to uncover the true or essential meaning of a word. If this philosophical approach were taken in this paper, for example, the paper would discuss the true or essential meaning of *understand*. I argue against this philosophical approach, however, and in favor of the historical approach. The historical method traces the historical evolution of the meanings of words and concepts. It presupposes that because meanings are always in flux, there is no *real meaning* to be uncovered. Thus prefaced, this paper has two goals. The first goal is to offer an etymological discussion of the word *understand*. The second goal is to explain and illustrate how the historical approach to philological analysis differs from the philosophical approach taken by writers such as Martin Heidegger. The paper concludes with an example of how the Heideggerian philosophical approach to philological analysis can be transformed into a historical approach.

Thinking, Understanding, and Heidegger

The question *what is it to understand?* calls to mind Heidegger's 1951/52 lecture series, "What Calls for Thinking." Among the ideas Heidegger developed was his suggestion that to understand thinking, we should more closely attend to *how problems present themselves* to us. When thus attuned, he contended, we recognize that thinking inclines us toward *our essential being*, which is to be with,

among, and in the midst of things. As discussed below, these two claims--that things present themselves to us and that we have an essential being--are saliently representative of the problems with Heidegger's approach to philological analysis.

The phrase *to attend to how things present themselves* is standard phenomenological language for the reflective examination of one's personal experience of the world, and it is associated with reflection. The origin of the practice can be traced back at least to Kant's distinction between the noumenal (the spirit world, of which we can have no knowledge) and the phenomenal (those things knowable through human experience) (303-322). Because the noumenal world is beyond human knowledge, all knowledge is phenomenal. It is filtered through and created, in part, by our modes of perception. Because of this, knowledge of human cognition is now thought to be an important aspect of epistemology (the study of knowledge). Since the 1990s, and with the marriage of functional MRIs and high-powered computers, our knowledge of human learning has increased significantly. The act of understanding appears to be significantly different than the accumulation of factual knowledge. For one, understanding entails reflection. Perhaps this distinction between accumulation and understanding led Heidegger to ask, *what calls for thinking?*

I believe the goal – to use reflection to understand the nature of knowing – is valuable. The problem is the way Heidegger used language. Here, and in much of his later work, he offered explanations and analyses that were quasi-mystical. They were quasi-mystical for two related reasons. First, Heidegger assigned essences to things in the world, and second, he too strongly coupled signifying words to objects. This way of thinking can be traced back to the rise of Christianity and Neoplatonism in the 3rd century – in belief systems that merged philosophical and religious thinking. Take, for example, the passage from above, in which Heidegger suggested we allow problems to present themselves to us. The problem is that questions and problems do not actually *present themselves* to us. Here, Heidegger positioned problems as things in the world (but they are not). He then ascribed to them some sort of mystical agency that allows the problems to present themselves. But this is all nonsense. Problems are not things that exist in the world of beings; they are interpretations. They are experiences had by conscious agents. Having no consciousness, agency, or even existence of their own, problems cannot present themselves.

I do not suggest we should reject Heidegger's call to examine thinking, however. I would like to salvage it by more clearly articulating this process of reflecting. Rather than attempt to recognize how things present themselves, a clearer and less misleading task would be for us to reflect on how each of us experiences thinking. Similarly, Heidegger's claim that *our essential being is to be with, among, and in the midst of things* ("What Calls for Thinking" 371) can be improved by removing the reference to Neoplatonic essences and replacing it with language that better represents reality. One way to do this would be to replace Heidegger's metaphysical essences with a naturally occurring (biologically evolved) quality, such as curiosity. Thus revised, Heidegger can be adapted to say that human (and other) evolution has led us to live much of our lives among and in the midst of things.

When we combine these two ideas, we get something like the following: when we reflect on our experience of thinking, we understand that we are conscious agents that live in a natural world that is largely beyond our control. We abide in this world, among these things, and our life consists of engaging with and thinking about them. Understanding this rapport is important to understand what it means to be human, not because it is our singular essence, but because it is one of many qualities that "make us human," or, more precisely, that most of us share as humans.

Standing Under

Understand is a curiously-formed word. The most straightforward interpretation is *to stand beneath*. This spatial interpretation evokes images of standing under some structure to better comprehend it. If you enjoy canoeing Southern US rivers, you have likely found bridges that afford shady, midday stopping points for lunches and breaks. While resting, stretching, and enjoying the scenery, you are allowed, with this vantage of standing under the large bridge, to get a better idea of how it is put together, how the parts function, and how the structure functions as a whole. *Standing under*, you see the bridge differently, and you gain a better *understanding* than you do when merely driving over it in a car.

So, it appears that the act of standing under, and all that this involves, might be a nice place to begin to understand the nature of understanding. Understanding has something to do with perspective. At this point, however, it is important to make a distinction between

how we understand objects and how we understand concepts. The bridge is a built object, and to understand such objects usually involves knowing their function and purpose. We understand concepts in a different manner, however. Generally, to understand concepts is to understand what they mean. To avoid the confusion that results from metaphysical thinking, it is important not to conflate these two types of understanding. This is precisely the error that one encounters in Neoplatonist approaches to philological analysis when the author attempts to understand the essential meaning of something like a bridge, for example. These attempts at analysis often lead to nonsensical assertions, since the underlying assumption—that bridges have an essence, an essential meaning, or a truth—is false. Bridges have no essential meanings, and they have no truths. Heidegger, for example, asserted that “the bridge, if it is a true bridge, is never first of all a mere bridge and then afterwards a symbol” (“Building, Dwelling, Thinking” 355). As developed below, this misguided presumption led Heidegger to nonsensical conclusions. If we want to understand the bridge, we do not want to use philological or linguistic analysis to find the truth of a particular bridge or of bridges in general. We might use philological analysis to better understand the *function of bridges*, or we might use philological analysis to better understand the *meaning* of the word *bridge*. In this case, we would examine the history of the word so that we better understand the evolution of the concept and we better understand how today’s notion of the concept or word has been informed by past instances. This historical method does not seek essential origins or hidden eternal truths, and it much less likely to lead to mystical declarations about the essential truth of some bridge.

Words and Things

Although I might stand under a bridge to gain a better understanding of its function, I cannot actually stand beneath abstractions to understand them, precisely because these are not spatial, physical things. Might it make sense, however, to *metaphorically stand* beneath concepts, theories, arguments, and the like to attempt to understand them? Perhaps. Support for this might be sought in cognitive psychology. A precept of educational and developmental psychology is that we tend to think concretely first before we advance to abstract thinking. As such, it would make sense that the procedural origin of understanding abstractions is to be found in our experiencing physical, tangible, and spatial objects. In the evolution of cognition, physically standing under

might be the predecessor of a future, more abstract, understanding. Indeed, it is common to speak of *conceptual* frameworks and the *structure* of arguments. Further support for metaphorically standing under can be sought in the notion of conceptual space, made popular in 2016 by Zenker and Gardenfors, who argued for a geometric representation of theoretical structures. However, although Zenker and Gardenfors's talk of conceptual spaces initially seems promising, their primary concern is with the communication and transmission of theories and not with the process of how we understand theories as such.

There are larger problems, however, for deriving understanding concepts from a metaphorical standing beneath the concept. When we say someone understands an abstraction such as a concept or theory, we generally do not mean that this person merely has seen its undergirding (conceptual or physical). To *understand* connotes grasping the fullness of something, and *standing under* fails to capture this. However, it is true that our understanding of the novel bridge would likely be enhanced if, after driving over it several times, we finally come to see it from underneath. But if we had only seen this bridge from underneath, and we had never seen a bridge from above, we would likely not want to say that we understood the bridge. The standing under leads to an increased understanding only because it affords a new perspective. Following this line of thinking, it seems that our word for comprehending should have evolved from a more active concept, related to walking around or encompassing, rather than a static concept such as standing. At least we would need to do more than just stand under it. As it turns out, philological analysis of the word *understand* supports this inference and suggests that this word has usually connoted a dynamic rather than spatial intellectual engagement. Moreover, *understand* has also contained a temporal element.

Standing Among

According to Ernest Klein, for example, the contemporary *understand* evolved from the Middle English *understanden* and the Old English *understandan* (975). The literal meaning for each of these was to “stand under.” Like today, however, the meaning-in-use was different. The used-meaning appears to have been associated with the Old English *forstandan*, which meant “to stand before.” Douglas Harper's online analysis provides support for this reading. He interprets the Old English *understandan* to literally mean “stand in the midst of.” This

meaning is constructed by tracing the word back beyond the Saxon *under* to the Paleo-Indo European (PIE) root “*nter*,” which meant *between* or *among*. He also connects “*nter*” to the Sanskrit *antar* and to the Latin *inter*. Both mean “between/among.” Walter Skeat also attested that the Anglo-Saxon *understandan* meant under or among (679).

Spatially, this standing-before suggests a temporary abiding among a plurality—perhaps a group of people or trees or even accusations. The same holds for the Old English *understandan* (to stand in the midst of) and the PIE root *nter* (*between* or *among*). In these prior meanings, temporality is intimated. To stand before means as someone who is in the front, engaging the other, prior to a more general engagement with the other by one’s larger group. This temporal whisper, if you will, is amplified in the word’s German origin. *Forstandan* was connected to the Middle German *verstaen*, which evolved to become the contemporary German *verstehen*. *Verstehen* means “to understand,” but it translates literally as “to stand through.” To stand through, therefore, more strongly suggests duration. Standing through does not make much sense when taken spatially because this phrase combines a static element (standing) with a dynamic one (through). The better interpretation is temporal—as if standing through the speech, standing through the storm, or standing through the night.

Historical analysis reveals that *understand* and its prior manifestations pointed toward an act of *standing among or amidst*. This calls to mind Heidegger’s claim that being human *essentially* involves being-present-with, and being beneath, beside, and among: or, to be among and in the midst of things. In his essay, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” Heidegger maintained that humans, as *Dasein*, are conscious beings in the world that persist through space. We never merely stand on or in space as a surface or container. For humans, all engagements with place are always already temporal. As conscious beings, we do not merely stand upon space. Our occupation of space always exhibits the quality of enduring, dwelling, and abiding because we necessarily carry our past with us: i.e., we are temporal beings. When one comes to a place or a structure and recognizes it as a place or structure, the person unavoidably possesses some foreknowledge of it; otherwise, it could not be recognized as a place or a structure. Even in those cases when someone encounters something previously unseen, a familiarity with some elements of the object is required for the new object to be experienced. Perhaps the person recognizes that the novel object is green, that it takes up space, or that it is larger than some and

smaller than other objects. For conscious beings, all encounters manifest a bringing forward of the past. These qualities attendant to conscious self-awareness are inseparably interwoven into the process of understanding. That is, *to understand* requires being (conscious) in the world. This is true whether the person attempts to understand a physical object in the world or an abstract idea.

Conclusion

In “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” Heidegger mused, “it is language that tells us about the essence of a thing, provided that we respect language’s own essence” (348). By tracing the history of the word back to its *origin* and uncovering the *original* meaning, Heidegger essentialized that meaning. He presented it as pure and immutable and, moreover, suggested that every object in the world would share in or also have the same essence. In “Building,” Heidegger claimed that the original and therefore true meaning of *build* is actually *to dwell* – even though *to build* now clearly has a different meaning than *to dwell*. The same essentializing, Neoplatonic approach was used to claim that the real meaning of the word *bridge* was *to gather*, and he designated *gathering* as the essential function of all physical bridges. This led to the mystical assertions that the banks of a stream “emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream,” that “the bridge expressly causes [river banks] to lie across from each other,” and that “the bridge guides and attends the stream through the meadows” (“Building” 354). Each of these claims are fairytale-like falsehoods, but Heidegger, perhaps under the spell of Neoplatonic thinking, supposed these accounts led to a deeper, mystical truth beyond the veil of language and the boundary of reason. Heidegger’s philosophical etymology is informative, and for some, it is pleasurable to read. I would just caution the reader to remember that its purpose is not to elicit the history of words and thereby to clarify their meanings. It serves other, speculative, or poetic ends.

In contrast with philosophical (Neoplatonist) etymology, authors may use historical philology to tell stories without the infelicitous representation of meanings common to Heidegger’s late work. Let us now revisit the river bridge, which we took as a metaphor for *understanding*. As we reverse our paddles and coast into the shadow of the bridge, we recall that we have been here before. We stood under this bridge. We examined the girthing while we ate lunch, and we improved our understanding of the object. We saw it differently, not because the

bridge changed, but because we changed. The etymological study undertaken between the first and second encounters confirmed our belief that we should not attempt to better understand *understanding* through the apparently literal, but overly-narrow meaning of *standing under*. To understand requires contextual knowledge that comes from viewing objects or concepts from different perspectives. Understanding does not come from a singular perspective, whether that be a god's eye view, or the view obtained by *standing under*. Moreover, understanding is also a temporal act that transports the past into the present. Thanks to shared languages and memory, we revisit bridges with new experiences of our own coupled with the shared experiences drawn from a deep human history of thinking and experiencing.

To gain knowledge of the etymological history of a concept such as *understand* is like walking around a strange bridge and discovering a vine-covered placard that explains not only how, why, and when the bridge was built, but also reveals that the bridge was repurposed after a decrease in rail traffic and was more recently refurbished after a flood. We ascertain that during the renovations, architects decided to leave, for effect, the giant, rusty, rotating pier gears that allowed steamboats to cross under the bridge over a century ago. We realize again that although a stone, without its own meaning and purpose, might lie in the landscape virtually unchanged for eons, there is no essential connection between the contemporary and prior functions of objects and the meanings of words. As Michel Foucault and Friedrich Nietzsche explained, insane asylums were *originally* built to hold lepers, and what today is deemed evil was once lauded as the highest good. Functions and meanings, the purview of the human mind, are biological phenomenon, and as such, they evolve. To seek the unchanging essence of words and their connection to things is a fool's errand. This newly found awareness of the limitations of a popular approach to historical philology does not diminish the value of the endeavor, however. It merely helps us to think clearly and to better understand.

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An Exploration of Pre-service Teachers' Measures of Emotional Resilience and Flexibility/Openness toward English Learners: The Ethnographic Interview

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Overview of Bias Relating to Teaching English Learners (ELs)

In one of the most important demographic shifts in the U.S. public school system, English Learners (ELs) now comprise almost 10% of all students and are the fastest growing student population group (USDOE, OELA). In the U.S., public schools are open to all students, are free to all students, and are funded by taxpayer monies. They welcome migrant children who are documented or undocumented. European and American federally-funded public-school systems share many similarities and with recent migration are seeing similar changes in student demographics. Because the growth in the number of ELs is likely to continue in the U.S., it is critical that pre-service educators be prepared to teach students in both the acquisition of the English language as well as the content areas. Although they learn much during their university training, pre-service teachers often remain unaware that they hold biases against different student populations and may rarely consider bias in any context. It is imperative that pre-service educators receive instruction in bias recognition to prevent them from unknowingly harboring prejudices against the ELs they are learning to teach. Such instruction needs to be provided through practical strategies during the formative university years of their teacher preparation program so that pre-service educators will be empowered to recognize and address biases that interfere with classroom instruction of ELs. In order to facilitate such, pre-service educators must understand concepts of additive and deficit perspectives as they relate to the teaching of ELs.

Classrooms inclusive of ELs are rich with experiences of cross-cultural diversity, a concept that is an additive perspective, not a deficit perspective, and which underlies the provision of equal education for all students. These experiences can extend agency to educators working with students whose first language is a dialect of English as well as to ELs who speak one of the 6,000+ other languages found globally. Sadly, European countries and the U.S. are often engaging in deficit-

based narratives to redefine valuation standards for all persons, regardless of national origin or home language. More importantly for the U.S., the current national conversation regarding who belongs in the U.S.—and, more frighteningly, who does not—has increasingly shifted away from inclusion. Even so, each new U.S. Census report demonstrates that the population is growing increasingly diverse in multiple ways; many of these will surely impact the dominant culture, the balance of power, and concepts of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, culture, and language use. Findings from the 2010 Census Report (2015) indicate that a minimum of 350 different languages are currently spoken in U.S. homes, a figure that does not include any dialects of global languages, which would further increase the Census Report’s linguistic count. However, the majority of U.S. teachers are monolingual. In multilingual Europe, English is perceived to be the most useful foreign language to learn, according to the European Union (European Commission). Additionally, stratification of language minority persons is marginalizing ELs through violent crime and multiple forms of bias in the U.S. (Wilson 3). In Europe, similar events are being reported (Roth 2-5). While the belief is strong that English is an important language to teach in the U.S., teachers do not always welcome or want ELs in their classrooms.

Educational reports cite compelling evidence that the U.S. public school system is failing to achieve substantial growth in standards necessary to retain competitiveness in an expanding global marketplace (OECD). The 2018 PISA Report provides significant data demonstrating that the U. S. assumed slot number 13, trailing academically behind China, Singapore, Macao, Hong Kong, Estonia, Canada, Finland, Ireland, Korea, Poland, Sweden, and New Zealand (OECD). Interestingly, this trend does not appear to be related to the increasing population of migrant students in U.S. public schools, in which the data support additive claims that immigrant students are not consuming a disproportionate amount of educational resources (Pivovarova and Powers), contrary to deficit-based populist claims. The OECD “Country Note” for the U.S. by Pál et al. also supports this assertion with the following data:

In 2018, some 23% of students in the United States had an immigrant background. Amongst these immigrant students, about two in five were socio-economically disadvantaged. There is no

statistically significant difference in reading performance between immigrant and nonimmigrant students in the United States. After accounting for students' and schools' socio-economic profile, the difference shrank to 16 score points. On average across OECD countries, 17% of them scored in the top quarter of reading performance in 2018. In the United States, 24% of immigrant students performed at that level. (Pál et al. 6)

The 2015 OELA “Profiles of English Learners” report provided data noting that the U.S.’s public school classrooms are becomingly increasingly diverse, as related to the number of English learners attending public schools in the fall of 2015, stated to be 9.6% of the total public-school population (OELA). In the U.S., the stratification of language minority persons and/or migrants is leading to marginalization through the rise in violent crime motivated by racism, prejudice, stereotyping, and/or ethnocentrism (AACTE; Taie). In Europe, similar stories are being reported (Wilson 2-5). Such incidents represent deficit-centered perspectives toward immigrants.

Public schools play the most significant role in the reduction and elimination of bias as well as the welcoming of diverse students. However, bias recognition and bias elimination pose substantial challenges to pre-service teachers entering the work force, the majority of whom are white and who do not report having experienced bias (Diallo). By learning to value multiple perspectives, beliefs, faiths, ways of knowing, ways of learning, and home languages, public schools can promote the additive-centered concepts of fairness, respect, and equity for everyone that underlie the premise of pluralism in the U.S. and in democracies around the globe. Pre-service teachers must be taught by their universities these ideals of fairness and respect for all students, and this teaching must be grounded in practical instructional strategies that can be implemented in university settings.

Trends in the Teaching of ELs

Three education trends relating to the teaching of ELs in U.S. K-12 classrooms are relevant to this discussion. The first trend is teacher training and professional practice in meeting the instructional needs of ELs (Simmons 113). This trend is particularly relevant due to the growing need for qualified teachers in the U.S. public schools. The second trend concerns the perceptions held by pre-service teachers regarding the ELs they teach (Harrison and Lakin 87-89). This trend is

important because in the U.S., the number of monolingual, White teachers-in-training is disproportionate in relation to the diverse EL and public-school populations, and their perceptions may be skewed. The third trend is a potential shift in U.S. public schools toward the growing perception of “otherness” in classrooms, with a subsequent move away from inclusive education environments in relation to ELs (Zeller et al. 46-47).

When considering cultural mismatch, it is important to note that White pre-service teachers, who represent more than 80% of students earning a bachelor’s degree in education in the U.S., are increasingly teaching in schools in which the number of Hispanic, African-American, and Asian-American students outnumber White students (AACTE, NCES). With vastly different life experiences, pre-service educators often feel a dissonance between their own culture and the home cultures of their increasingly-diverse classrooms. This dichotomy is viewed as a manifestation of the phenomenon of cultural mismatch (Garrett). Cultural mismatch is the degree of perceived discord that occurs when a student’s or an educator’s personal culture conflicts with the dominant culture found in the classroom (Garrett), and it can occur when a student and an educator do not find shared cultural determinants in the classroom.

Cultural mismatch is especially noted between monolingual, White pre-service teachers and the diverse, bilingual and multilingual students learning Standard American English (SAE) simultaneously with content-area subjects. Despite efforts to recruit a more diverse pre-service teacher cadre (Carver-Thomas 2-6), little progress has been made in this initiative. The failure to recruit a more diverse teacher cadre perpetuates the gap between teachers and their culturally, linguistically, racially, and ethnically-diverse students. Such a gap can perpetuate the high dropout rate among ELs and the high number of new teachers who leave the profession. The recruitment of pre-service teacher candidates must include new teachers who share cultural commonalities with the students they will teach after the pre-service candidates’ college graduations.

Educator preparation programs should implement every available advantage in assisting pre-service teachers in understanding their future classroom learners. This drive also supports U.S. notions of a pluralistic culture. A clearer understanding of diversity and the marginalizing perception of “otherness” must be also addressed as bias in

order for pre-service teachers to more successfully instruct ELs (Zeller et al. 46-47). Such an attitude strives to humanize the EL rather than to further marginalize the student based on language-minority status. As researchers from Michigan State University noted, ELs are treated very differently when educators and school administrators are given the background knowledge necessary to understand the legal requirements pertinent to the education of ELs (Mavrogordato and White 293-97). The need to guide pre-service teachers toward the inclusive classroom will simultaneously direct them away from viewing ELs as outsiders or “others.” When “otherness” is diminished, so, too, is cultural mismatch.

Throughout the U.S., public school student demographics differ, but the demographics of K-12 teachers and teachers-in-training remain relatively unchanged. Cultural mismatch in pre-service teacher education thus feeds into the K-12 classroom following graduation. Historically, teaching as an occupation in the U.S. has been dominated by women, and pre-service teachers are most often White, female, monolingual English speakers who are unfamiliar with the diverse cultures populating U.S. classrooms (Lue 6-8). Such pre-service teachers can unconsciously bring unrecognized biases into their classrooms, particularly in relation to English Learners. Because they are ELs, this student population is also in the process of learning both SAE and content-area matter. The dual nature of the EL’s classroom learning needs presents the pre-service teacher with an opportunity to achieve two distinct equity goals. It is important to prepare pre-service teachers to work in a classroom environment that is welcoming of the EL’s cultural knowledge and respectful of their cultural traditions. If the pre-service teacher is not prepared in this way, then as the teacher-in-training encounters an EL whose clothing, mannerisms, food preferences, worldview, or pragmatics differ significantly from that to which they are accustomed, he or she can experience dissonance, leading to emotional disconnect from the EL. The inability to welcome diverse cultures into the classroom is a manifestation of cultural mismatch. As the U.S. population becomes more diverse, cultural mismatch between pre-service teachers and ELs can be expected to continue unless there is active intervention during the formative university years.

Furthermore, cultural mismatch plays a substantial role in the motivation experienced by pre-service teachers. As understood by the teachings of Albert Bandura, student motivation is a major issue that pre-service educators may need to ponder as they prepare to teach ELs

in their future classrooms (“Functional Properties” 10). Although pre-service educators are trained in methods for motivating their students, they may know very little about how to overcome obstacles regarding their own low levels of motivation in educating students in the EL population.

Albert Bandura persuasively argued the idea of self-efficacy as a foundational aspect of motivation (“Functional Properties” 10). Bandura believed that success in any endeavor would rely upon an individual’s belief in his or her own ability to succeed (“Functional Properties” 10). For Bandura, motivation depended largely upon self-efficacy, which tapped into the “ability to succeed” concept, positing that persons who had a higher degree of self-efficacy in a given domain would also have a higher rate of success in that domain, and vice-versa (“Functional Properties” 10-11). Associating self-efficacy with a task area meant that a student would be more motivated to complete an assignment, but only if the student understood how to do so (Bandura, “Functional Properties” 10-11). Accordingly, a student who did not achieve the goal lessened her personal expectations due to lower self-efficacy, and a student with greater self-efficacy in a content area raised his or her personal goals (Cervone 44-45).

In the classroom setting, teachers-in-training might notice that when they possess high self-efficacy in their perceived ability to meet the challenges of teaching ELs, they should then adapt to these new challenges in an anticipatory, proactive way instead of reactively. Such a shift would promote a spiral of increasingly complex, self-set objectives that the pre-service teacher would feel motivated to achieve (Bandura, “Functional Properties” 11-12). Educators-in-training should be given agency by understanding that lower self-efficacy would be linked to ambiguity as it is related to the task requirements, rather than to their actual ability (Bandura, “Functional Properties” 13). This understanding can increase their own classroom expertise by encouraging them to be certain that they, as pre-service teachers, receive explicit, clear instructions coupled with modeling from their practicum teachers as well as from their university professors. These directives and practice opportunities should be available to the pre-service teacher through his or her university education coursework in bias recognition, bias reduction activities, the ethnographic interview, and other opportunities. If pre-service teachers are taught the motivational theory that underlies their success in teaching ELs, this can then increase their

comprehension of the task. Such a growth mindset could predicate ability.

The U.S. public school system is becoming increasingly diverse, and has a long history of educating immigrants, refugees, and second-language learners. Because pre-service teachers are placed in school communities across the U.S., theories of cultural mismatch focus primarily on race, ethnicity, and gender differences of teachers and teachers-in-training. Such teachers-in-training are mostly White, female, middle class, monolingual, and native English speakers (Hansen-Thomas et al. 309-310). However, the ESOL population tends to register lower socioeconomic status than pre-service teachers, often speaks a different home language, includes bilingualism or dual language learning, is consistently over-recommended for Exceptional Student Education services, and experiences substantially reduced social interactions, all due to their minority-language status (NCELA 2-6). Additional observed differences between pre-service teachers and ELs can include racial and ethnic diversity and prior academic experiences in which the EL may not have been taught using similar or familiar instructional strategies in their prior academic settings. Motivation for pre-service teachers will predicate success.

Impacts in the Classroom

On World Refugee Day 2016, the United Nations Secretary General reported that approximately 1% of the world's population, a staggering 5.8 million increase from 2015, was either seeking asylum, was internally displaced, or was a refugee (Guterres). To bring perspective to this data, the global number of forcibly displaced humans was now larger than the population of the United Kingdom, making it the 21st largest resident population in the world (UNHCR 2016). In the 2017 UNHCR report, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres noted that 1 out of 113 humans globally had been forcibly displaced, a figure exceeding 65.6 million persons (UNHCR 2017). In 2019, the UNHCR reported that there "are at least 3.9 million known stateless people but the true global figure is estimated to be significantly higher, and not less as statistics on statelessness are reported for only a third of states globally" (UNHCR 2019). And, given the increasing number of climate refugees, this number could reasonably be expected to rise significantly in the next decade.

Refugee children arriving in the U.S. will learn American English, the commonly-shared language. Pre-service teachers working with

students coming from refugee camps or migrant children arriving from tent cities in Mexico along the border between the U.S. and Mexico often feel no connection to their new learners. The result of this disconnect is frequently bias manifested as issues, including cultural mismatch, perceptions of/by the dominant culture, and privilege.

Potentially the most important challenge in teaching ELs is the cultural mismatch experienced between the teacher-in-training and the student who is both a content classroom learner and a foreign language learner. As explicated by Bourdieu, the concept of a mismatch between a student's culture and the culture of the school, perhaps a cultural mismatch, is explained by his concept of the system of "cultural capital," understood in today's terms to be both access and agency, based on a student's understanding of the school's power-holding culture. From his findings Bourdieu believed that the incongruities between school and home values, priorities, backgrounds, and knowledge led to lower academic outcomes for students of lower socioeconomic status (488-93).

Further complicating the relationship between pre-service teachers and ELs is the concept of the dominant culture. Spring defined the dominant culture as the most widely-recognized group of persons who hold the majority of governmental, economic, and social power within any given society (3-19). The dominant culture promotes the values, norms, and beliefs typically recognized as being affiliated with a given culture. In the U.S., the dominant culture is understood to be White males. Observational evidence of this assertion can be seen in all federal, state, and local government entities, agents of commerce, and the societal industries of sports, leisure, and entertainment as examples of the "primary influencers in the formation of values and beliefs" ("Dominant Values"). But, White female pre-service teachers and educators hold significant rank in the dominant culture and may experience a personal disconnect with those who do not. English Learners, who reside outside of the dominant culture, face this disconnect, and without access to either the culture or the language, they may not succeed academically.

In addition to cultural mismatch and the existence of the dominant culture, ELs are often subject to privilege described by McIntosh (1) as the unearned advantages of privilege and elitism experienced by White Americans. Because these experiences are a normalized, routine aspect of their daily life, those who live with privilege typically remain

oblivious to it. English Learners, who might have experienced privilege in their first country, are faced with the loss of their prior status as currency, which is then compounded by additional losses, including their home language and their cultural understandings (European Immigration). Pre-service teachers who do not comprehend privilege are unaware of the ramifications of their actions and may fail to recognize loss-related behaviors demonstrated by ELs.

Utilizing the Ethnographic Interview as a Teaching Tool to Mitigate Against Bias Among Pre-Service Teachers of ELs

When pre-service educators are not taught empathy or caring behaviors during their teacher education university studies, there is reason to believe that they will demonstrate a high level of discursive resistance to any shift in their own levels of caring as related to the teaching of ELs. Such resistance is a manifestation of a deficit perception of students who speak a language other than English. Bandura's theories relating to perception of ability seem to suggest that pre-service teachers would demonstrate higher levels of self-efficacy if they are taught empathy and caring behaviors which could be utilized when teaching ELs ("Functional Properties" 10-13).

In studying self-efficacy scores among 62 pre-service teachers, Durgunoğlu and Hughes found that self-efficacy relates to teacher commitment, teacher strategies, and behavior changes (32-34). They further noted that self-efficacy levels remain stable over the years, which could negatively impact the teaching of ELs whose low achievement may be viewed as being based on factors outside of the teacher's control. They noted that pre-service teachers express low self-efficacy in teaching ELs and that mentoring teachers often fail to provide adequate guidance to the educators-in-training in teaching isolated ELs. Another 2010 study found similar outcomes as pre-service teachers shifted their attitudes toward a more inclusive classroom environment for ELs following intervention (Zeller et al. 46-47). Intervention at the university level through the use of the Ethnographic Interview could serve to lower bias against ELs, an assertion clarified by the study research.

A research study was conducted to gauge pre-service teachers' potential bias toward ELs in the U.S. K-12 public school setting (Burnley 49). As educators-in-training progress through their university teacher education coursework, they will likely encounter ELs during practicum and internship experiences. Bias held toward ELs, whether

the pre-service teacher is aware or unaware of it, can negatively impact learner outcomes. The survey instrument used in this study was the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Index, which was followed up with a semi-structured interview conducted with the focus group (Burnley 52-53). This paper specifically examines the implications, supported by the research, of utilizing the ethnographic interview as an instructional strategy to reduce bias against ELs.

The two groups of accessible volunteers were pre-service teachers at a liberal arts college and were representative of pre-service teachers in the U. S. Twenty-two responses from the control group and 29 from the experimental group were collected. A total of 29 pre-service teachers volunteered for the experimental group (N=29), 22 pre-service teachers volunteered for the control group (N=22), and 5 students participated as focus group members (n=5). The CG included 22 pre-service teachers who had completed an ethics-based cross-cultural communications course that specifically addressed bias recognition and bias reduction and who had conducted an ethnographic interview with an Adult ESOL learner (Burnley 51-52).

Volunteers from the experimental group were drawn from third-year college students enrolled in their first Education Department course. The experimental group of volunteers had not taken or begun a cross-cultural communications course that included information regarding bias recognition and bias reduction and had never conducted an ethnographic interview with a non-native speaker of English (Burnley 51-52)

The Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) is an instrument designed to assess adaptability through measurement of an individual's scores on four adaptability dimensions, namely emotional resilience, flexibility/openness, perceptual acuity, and personal autonomy (Kelley and Meyers 5). These dimensions encourage survey "participants [to] explore their own cultural identity and learn to improve their interactions with other cultures" (Kelley and Meyers 5).

The dimensions are described as follows:

1. Emotional Resilience: Measures how one balances emotions, navigates difficult feelings and maintains a positive outlook.
2. Flexibility/Openness: Indicates how nonjudgmental and tolerant one can be towards new ideas and customs. This also measures how much a person enjoys encountering different ways of thinking and behaving.

3. **Perceptual Acuity:** Measures how effective an individual is at discerning the subtle verbal and nonverbal cues in a cultural environment. Perceptual acuity encompasses attention to detail, sensitivity to the feelings of others, and general awareness of nuanced interpersonal context.

4. **Personal Autonomy:** Indicates how dependent one is on familiar cultural cues to form an identity. This dimension shows how strongly one retains his or her sense of self and values in any environment or culture. (Kelley and Meyers 5).

Outcomes

Based on the data, adaptability was deemed to be linked to self-efficacy, as described by Bandura (“Functional Properties” 10-13). Quantitative results from pre-test and post-test studies combined with qualitative results support the use of the ethnographic interview as both an intervention and an instructional strategy for use with teachers-in-training during their formative university years (Burnley 97-99).

Interestingly, qualitative insights from the focus-group interview confirmed that the ethnographic interview experience is viewed as exposure to other ways of being and other ways of thinking (Burnley 80-82). Exposure provides pre-service teachers with an opportunity to recognize shared areas of sameness and similarity with the Adult EL learners. Such understandings represent a degree of recognition of personal bias among pre-service teachers and a change in their perceptions of ELs.

Implications of Utilizing the Ethnographic Interview as a Practical Teaching Tool for Pre-Service Teachers

The ethnographic interview is a practical instructional strategy that can change potential biases held by the educators-in-training. Given their constant exposure to a divisive political environment, pre-service teachers may form biases which they simply do not recognize. In the absence of exposure to persons who speak many other languages and who are also learning English, the perspective of ELs could easily veer toward a deficit model in which the inability to speak the only language spoken by the monolingual pre-service teacher is an indicator of their outsider or “other” status. In the classroom, there can be no outsiders, so exposure to ELs through the ethnographic interview can be a formative experience for pre-service teachers and experienced in

multiple ways, including transformation and the replacing of deficit perceptions with those which are additive in nature.

From 2009 research by Ryan et al., the data indicate that exposure to ELs can diminish bias toward them (167-68). This study also noted that exposure to diverse student populations at different times in the pre-service teacher's training can create important changes in attitudes toward classroom diversity concepts. Such a transformative experience is helpful to pre-service teachers because it can provide them with an authentic method of recognizing their own biases.

For all educators, moreover, the perception of ELs as having outsider or "other" status in the classroom is both false and ethically unsound. Only limited research has studied the relationship between teachers-in-training and the ELs they are learning to teach. Because they are educators-in-training, the most opportune time to address attitudes and biases toward ELs is during the former group's university years, which are the formative period for this student population. The teaching of ethics through an ethnographic interview creates opportunities for the pre-service teacher to learn what constitutes bias and then apply that knowledge to concepts of cultural perception, cultural ways of knowing, and culturally-imbued means of communicating. An ethnographic interview is conducted by an educator-in-training between the learner and a "guest," notably someone whose culture differs significantly from that of the student. Such an interview is objective in nature and allows the pre-service teacher to learn about another person's cultural background as he or she also learns how the other person's home culture can influence classroom behaviors and learning patterns.

An important research concept was manifested while the pre-service teachers were conducting the ethnographic interview because they were being asked to view the ELs as students like themselves. This new approach shifted the ELs from outsider or "other" status to in-group status and reordered the thinking of the pre-service teachers. When the ELs were viewed as students, the teachers-in-training recognized and responded positively to this new role. The replacement of deficit perceptions of the ELs being interviewed resulted in additive perceptions by the pre-service educators. Teachers teach, and this role was familiar and comfortable for the pre-service teachers because they were both students and teachers (albeit in training). Such new understandings established a number of positive outcomes as interpreted

from the qualitative results (Burnley 80-82), including allowing the pre-service teachers to notice and celebrate sameness along with difference as well as moving the pre-service teachers away from the concept of “otherness” and toward the ethical, legal precept of inclusivity (i.e., their perception that “the EL is a student like me” or “the EL is a mother like me,” etc.). With the reduction of “otherness” and deficit perceptions, caring behaviors can more readily be utilized by pre-service teachers in their future classrooms.

Implementation of the Ethnographic Interview

The ethnographic interview can be implemented in a face-to-face university classroom by including as many of the following considerations as deemed necessary or helpful by the professor. Additional considerations besides the ones below may also be included at a particular university:

1. After securing permission to proceed, the professor can create community connections by coordinating with local Adult ESOL centers to facilitate the ethnographic interviews. The professor and the Adult ESOL center would set a mutually agreeable time and location for the interview to occur, and the center would vet all questions prior to the interview. Adult ESOL centers could include the university’s International Students office, a local school district’s Adult ESOL program, a public literacy organization, or other group. The vetted questions and conversation cues should then be provided to the pre-service teachers. This step is designed to introduce the pre-service teachers to community stakeholder involvement.
2. The professor should lead pre-service teachers through an overview of the steps involved in the ethnographic interview and explain why it is a useful instructional strategy for pre-service teachers. One book that might be utilized is Carolyn Frank’s text, *Ethnographic Eyes: A Teacher’s Guide to Classroom Observation* (1999). Depending upon classroom dynamics, small groups of pre-service teachers can interview pairs or trios of Adult ESOL learners. This step is designed to deepen the pre-service teacher’s understanding of the ethnographic interview process and potentially reduce anxiety about the interview.
3. Prior to the ethnographic interview date, the professor should explicitly teach bias recognition and bias reduction measures through an ethics-based approach. Group lecture can be utilized

for definitions of new terminology, small group activities can foster deeper understanding of the concepts, and educational materials can supplement the classroom teachings. These new concepts can include generally-accepted definitions of manifestations of bias, such as stereotyping, prejudice, racism, and nationalism. This early teaching is designed to teach bias recognition.

4. As the class is preparing for the ethnographic interview, specific caring behaviors that are culturally sensitive should be explicitly taught by the professor to the pre-service teachers. This measure is designed to teach inclusivity.
5. Before and after the ethnographic interview, pre-service teachers should be encouraged to self-reflect upon their perceptions of ELs, noting how they changed (or didn't change) and why they believe this occurred. This measure is designed to teach ethics and to promote responsibility.
6. As a final step, the pre-service teacher could be required to generate a substantial paper modeled along the lines of an ethnographic interview report. Samples of such reports are readily available online and in texts. This report is designed to explore the pre-service teacher's journey through the bias recognition and bias reduction processes, serve to debunk biases, create follow-up activities, and link these actions to the results of the exposure experience, which, in this case, is the ethnographic interview.

The change in group mean FO score (Burnley 86-87) correlates with studies citing exposure to ELs by pre-service teachers as an important strategy to use in recognizing and decreasing bias (Ramirez et al. 32-38; Gainer and Larrotta 43-46). These studies support the concept that conducting an ethnographic interview during the teacher preparation studies at a university can precipitate changes in the level of bias expressed by pre-service teachers against ELs. The activities noted above in describing considerations involved in conducting ethnographic interviews hinge upon exposure as the pathway to bias recognition and subsequent bias reduction.

Pre-service teachers need an array of strategies that will allow them to recognize potential bias (Ramirez et al. 32-38) and enable them to overcome the effects of cultural mismatch. Although it may be difficult for professors to initiate classroom discussions regarding bias, the

ethnographic interview provides an initial opportunity to introduce and discuss concepts of bias, an occasion to then use this knowledge, and a time for reflection following the interview. The pre-service teachers in this study demonstrated significant changes in their ability to recognize bias in their personal concepts of ELs, and then to apply that recognition to their teaching of ELs in their future classrooms.

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“Nought on the Exhausted Surface of a
Dead Earth”: The Evils of Progress in Ouida’s
*Tower of Taddeo, Princess Napraxine, and
Othmar*

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Progress—scientific, technological, and intellectual—characterized the nineteenth century, as did anxiety about the way that progress might affect society. From environmental concerns to worries about the significance of scientific discovery for religious belief, the Victorians wrestled with the consequences of a century of rapid innovation. One Victorian writer, Ouida, devoted a significant portion of her literary energy to writing about what she perceived to be the negative effects of progress on the world around her. Ouida (Marie Louise Ramé, later Marie Louise de la Ramée) was a highly successful English author widely known for the high society novels she began publishing in the 1860s. Over the course of her decades-long career, the style of Ouida’s work shifted from the more sensational themes that characterize her early publications to a concentration on strident social commentary and urge for reform. In *Views and Opinions*, Ouida writes that “the faults of an age are begotten and borne out of itself; it suffers from what it creates” (“Vulgarity” 341). In a time that generated such beneficial social, political, scientific and technological progress, that progress itself was recognized by the Victorians as responsible for what Arnold describes in “The Scholar-Gipsy” as “sick fatigue” (line 164) and “this strange disease of modern life” (line 203): the fear of failure, the mental breakdowns, and the ever-increasingly hurried pace of life that plagued them (Houghton 61). Quality of life was improving in many ways—medical advances and the newfound, relative ease of communication and travel, for example—but those improvements often came at the expense of traditional values and long-held beliefs. Perhaps more than people in any other period of time before

them, the Victorians were conscious of living in “an era of change *from* the past *to* the future” (Houghton 1), a future they faced optimistically but also not without fear of what that future might hold in store for humanity. Ouida’s novels encapsulate both the fear and the confidence characteristic of the Victorian age and comprise “a comparatively unexamined record of Victorian cultural paradoxes. [. . .] Ouida’s works are therefore worthy of study not only for their literary merit but for their value as cultural artifacts” (Schroeder and Holt 10). Ouida was prolific and popular, writing many short stories, novels, and non-fiction articles published in well-regarded journals; she was read by a massive audience that crossed class and gender lines (Schroeder and Holt 9), and she used the wide-reaching platform of her writing to warn her fellow Victorians about the dangers of progress, including a disregard for the past and the proliferation of psychological issues she believed related to scientific advancement.

In 1896, Ouida published a collection of essays that includes “Some Fallacies of Science,” her response to an address given by Lyon Playfair to the British Association (281). “Some Fallacies of Science” critiques the scientific endeavors of the times, elaborating on a set of problems Ouida finds inherent to the Victorian practice of science. While some of her criticism focuses on other issues, Ouida is primarily concerned with two problems in this article —the effects of scientific progress on the natural world and its effects on the psychological makeup of humanity. She worries that both will be irreparably damaged by what she calls “that bigotry of science” (“Fallacies” 283).

In “Some Fallacies of Science,” Ouida points to nine scientific fallacies she discovers in the writing, speeches, and practices of Victorian scientists. First, Ouida suggests that scientists form a kind of closed-membership club in which only scientists are fit to judge the work of other scientists and no criticism from outside sources is considered valid (“Fallacies” 281-82). Later in the essay, she likens scientists to religious fanatics; replacing the yoke of the Church with one of science does not constitute progress to Ouida (“Fallacies” 301). She highlights the importance of a liberal arts education, stating that unlike a

scientifically-oriented education, familiarity with the humanities is quite at odds with the proliferation of imperialism, capitalism, and consumerism (“Fallacies” 284). In fact, Ouida remains wary of the idea that “all knowledge is valuable” and that all “methods of obtaining it are justified” (“Fallacies” 299). She believes that studying anatomy and physiology makes people egotistical and ill, writing, “those nervous illnesses which are the peculiar privilege of modern times, are largely due to the exaggerated attention to themselves which science has taught to humankind” (“Fallacies” 286). Ouida goes on to suggest that the drudgery of factory work is more than equal to the drudgery of crafting items by hand (“Fallacies” 287) and that scientific pursuit pollutes both water and air (“Fallacies” 292). In her discussion of the final fallacy, Ouida offers her most damning commentary on the evils of science. She posits that “science offers prizes to the prurient curiosities and the nascent cruelties of youth with which literature can never compete. To study all the mysteries of sex in anatomy, and to indulge the power of a Nero in little when watching the agonies of a scientifically tortured or poisoned dog, are enjoyments appealing to instincts in the frame of the school-boy” (“Fallacies” 298). For Ouida, the pursuit of science is not only dangerous to the environment; it also threatens the emotional and mental wellbeing of practitioners, foregrounding their cruelty and self-absorption in ways that are dangerous not only to themselves but to those around them.

Ouida’s concern for the present is underscored by her reverence for the past, a reverence shared by many of her contemporaries. For example, in more than one of his essays, Matthew Arnold identifies the ancient Greeks as models for the Victorian world. In *Culture and Anarchy*, he writes that “Greece did not err in having the idea of beauty, harmony, and complete human perfection, so present and paramount” (Arnold 466). For Arnold, classical Greek ideals are still relevant and should characterize current, English culture. In another example, Thomas Carlyle suggests in *Past and Present* that “the Centuries too are all lineal children of one another; and often, in the portrait of early grandfathers, this and the other enigmatic feature of the newest grandson shall disclose itself, to mutual

elucidation” (130). Carlyle believes that great truths can be uncovered in the study of the past and the great men who people it; an understanding of what has come before is necessary to understand current times, and great figures of history should serve as exemplars to the modern Victorian. Like Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnold, Ouida clings to a vision of an idealized past full of virtuous heroes that contrasts sharply with the callousness and selfishness she believes to be typical of her day. In Ouida’s writing, this reverence for the past most often evidences itself in despair for that history’s effacement. For instance, in “The Passing of Philomel,” an essay largely about the destruction of bird habitats, Ouida laments “the mania for restoration and innovation” (141) that leads to the loss of historic landmarks and the damage done to those which are allowed to remain standing. In addition to devaluing monuments to antiquity, Ouida’s fellow Victorians also drastically altered the natural landscape in ways she finds appalling. She mentions air, noise, and light pollution as modern problems as well as the practice of clearing forests for tramway lines (“Passing” 142). In fact, Ouida goes so far as to call damage to the natural world the “curse of the town” (“Passing” 142) and to blame it on the “filth of urban cesspools” (“Passing” 142). She believes “it is very probable that the conditions of human life in the future will be incompatible with the existence of the nightingale at all” (“Passing” 143). Throughout this essay, Ouida yearns for a mythical past characterized by unspoiled Nature, a past that is very much rooted in the world of classical Greece.

The Tower of Taddeo is emblematic of Ouida’s anger at the demolition of the physical remnants (forests, historic buildings, parks) of the idealized periods of antiquity she venerates as well as the destruction of the natural world in the name of progress. The novel follows the plight of a family who lives in the historic Tower of Taddeo and maintains a library there. The library has been losing money for some time when the head of the family, Ser Checchi, finds an extraordinarily valuable manuscript of Dante’s *Divine Inferno* at the bottom of a chest where it has lain forgotten for years. He buys the volume on credit and

ultimately sends his family to ruin when he cannot pay his creditor. Ser Checchi and his daughter Beldia subscribe to a code of ethics with origins in antiquity; in many ways, their beliefs conflict with those of Ouida's Victorian society. As a result, Ouida's cautionary tale warns of the dangers the modern world can pose for a family whose values are so closely connected with those of the past.

Ouida describes the Tower of Taddeo as a testament to the skill of its ancient architects: "it had been given both grace and poetry by its builders, who had belonged to that age in which men knew so well how to unite the useful and the beautiful, how to harmonise the lovely with the formidable, and how to use the sports of peace to hide the strength of war" (*Tower* 5). The tower represents the history of Florence in microcosm: "the whole course of Florentine history has passed through the deep and narrowed street on which its frontage looked" (*Tower* 17). Indeed, Ouida treats the reader to lengthy, and at times tedious, litanies of the historical events and personages the tower has witnessed over the centuries. It is an archetype of beauty, an example of the great works made by hands who understood beauty in a way that contemporary artists do not (*Tower* 6), but it is also a physical reminder of the richness of history and the value of historical knowledge to the Victorian people. Alas, the Tower of Taddeo is one of the last of such structures standing. Ouida writes, "There were so many of those towers once in this city; and now they are nearly all levelled and destroyed by people who prefer factory-chimneys with their hellish stench, and the frightful follies of the jerry-builder" (*Tower* 14-15).

The tower's inhabitants seem drawn from another time altogether, perhaps from the time of the tower's construction. Beldia is named after the nurse of a saint (11), which immediately identifies her with both the past and with religious purity. She is well educated although not in the same manner or on the same subject matter as her contemporaries (*Tower* 22), and "reverence for all great things, and heroic lives" (*Tower* 15) is her defining characteristic. For instance, Beldia enjoys pretending that she lives during the Renaissance. She escapes to the top of the tower and imagines that her view from that vantage point

is of a medieval skyline rather than the “modern ugliness” (*Tower* 133) apparent from a street view of the city. Beldia believes the Renaissance to be an era of beauty, one full of romance and mystery (*Tower* 133), and feels out of place in the modern world as a consequence.

Not surprisingly, Beldia’s strong identification with the distant past directly results from living in the Tower of Taddeo, which serves as the source of her fascination with all things medieval. As the narrator explains:

For anyone deeply versed in the traditions of the past, and amorous of their beauty, as she was, the dead arise and live again in such historic and hero-haunted precincts. To the fool, to the vain, to the puffed-up ape of modernity, they are but dark walls, narrow ways, dumb stones, closed portals; but to those who love them with humility and tenderness they are full of eloquent and undying life. Beldia dreamed of these dead people often in her rare enjoyment of unoccupied time, and when she lay in her bed in the narrow chamber under the roof they came about her smiling gladly or weeping wearily, and telling her many things. (*Tower* 19)

Because she is not a “puffed-up ape of modernity,” because she is not a fool or consumed by vanity, Beldia has access to the wisdom of the ages. She can read the tower much in the same way others read books, and she benefits both intellectually and emotionally from the information writ invisibly on the tower’s walls.

Beldia’s absorption in the past also stems from exposure to her father’s interests and personality. The omniscient narrator of *The Tower of Taddeo* asserts that “in the country which once produced the noblest literature of the world, books are in the present era the least esteemed, are read the least, and are regarded with the most indifference and contempt” (8). Not so for Ser Checchi, whose passion for books and the knowledge they contain consumes him, causing him to regard books in the same way a mother might regard a child. Ser Checchi derives from books the same emotional and intellectual satisfaction that Beldia derives from the tower: “Beside all that old books said

to him as a scholar, they awoke his affections and his imaginations [. . .] [H]e could never see a volume which had weathered centuries, a manuscript which had been written in other ages, without a strong emotion as of tears” (*Tower* 79).

At times, Ouida portrays Ser Checchi’s affinity with the past negatively. In one example, he refuses to confide in Beldia and instead relies on her strength without understanding the sacrifices she makes for his comfort because “he held to ancient views concerning parental austerity, and had unconsciously something of the old Greek and Roman contempt for the mind and the opinions of women” (*Tower* 40). In another example, Ouida links Ser Checchi’s downfall with “that absence of mind which is so often the accompaniment of intellectual devotion to an ideal or an art” (*Tower* 203). Because he devotes himself to dusty tomes and ancient knowledge, he is unable to successfully navigate the treacheries of a society in which young men plagiarize him for their own gain and a shop-keeper with whom he’s been friendly for years sacrifices him on the altar of capitalistic greed.

However, the narrator’s final verdict on Ser Checchi is one of pity. Though he bears some blame for his family’s ruin, including the loss of the tower, Ouida holds more culpable the society which does not value the past or Ser Checchi’s role as its caretaker. When the tower is stripped of all material goods, the workmen see only ““ugly old books”” (*Tower* 297) barely worth the paper they are printed on rather than the treasure trove of knowledge those volumes contain. Ser Checchi remains an honorable and noble figure even in his defeat, while his tormenters are characterized by greed, coarseness, and ignorance. He dies just before the family can be evicted from the tower, making Ouida’s intimation that Ser Checchi cannot physically survive in the modern environs outside the Tower of Taddeo more than clear (*Tower* 304).

Beldia’s love interest, Odisio Fontano, possesses a “reverence for the past” and “the spirit of the past” (*Tower* 118) similar to that of Beldia and her father. Though his ancestors were once wealthy, Odisio no longer enjoys any of that ancestral wealth, only the noble and manly characteristics passed

down through his bloodline (*Tower* 115). As a result of both his poverty and his captivation with the past, Odisio “was like one of those errant students of the Middle Ages, who roamed over Europe, with nothing but a staff and a satchel, welcome everywhere to scholars for sake of their facile wit and well-stored brain” (*Tower* 116). Odisio shares with Beldia a fondness for the Renaissance, with Ser Checchi a love of books and ancient knowledge, and with the architect of the Tower of Taddeo “something of the fire and of the emotion [. . .] which made the men of the Middle Ages call the builder in stone *magister in vive lapide*” (*Tower* 118). Though he suffers great hardships, as do Beldia and Ser Checchi, Odisio remains a heroic figure throughout the novel, a standard of chivalric and ethical behavior who retains Beldia’s love where all other suitors would fail.

In direct contrast to the novel’s protagonists, *The Tower of Taddeo*’s antagonists are prime examples of modernity. The first of these, Aurelio Vestucci (or Vestuccio as he is more commonly called in the novel), is a self-made man, one who has risen above his impoverished childhood at a seaport to become the *nouveau riche* proprietor of a well-maintained, respectable curio shop in Florence (*Tower* 71). In addition to dealing in antiques and knickknacks, Vestuccio also extends lines of credit to his fellow Florentines, the mechanism by which he is able to seize Ser Checchi’s land and other assets. When Vestuccio demands repayment and Ser Checchi cannot pay his debt, debt that the shopkeeper has cleverly concealed in other people’s names in order to obscure his involvement (*Tower* 277), Vestuccio cannot understand Beldia’s insistence that Vestuccio’s behavior is morally wrong: “For to Vestuccio it seemed so natural, so holy, so beautiful a thing to allow interest to rule existence, that he did not see that there was anything but what was most creditable in the avowal that it did so” (*Tower* 227).

Vestuccio’s love of money and of himself causes him to abandon his finer impulses (as from time to time he does feel guilt for his treatment of Ser Checchi), but ultimately he adheres to the tenets of capitalism that assure him he has done nothing wrong. He explains to Beldia that her father managed his money poorly, and after years of such financial mismanagement,

Vestuccio could not extricate Ser Checchi from the morass of debt if he tried (*Tower* 229). Loath to accept his explanation, Beldia replies:

“I cannot deny that my father’s errors are such as you have said. But you have taken a cruel advantage of them. You have turned to your own profit his trustfulness and absence of guile. You have filled your strong box with his signatures, and when the time was ripe to most profit by them, you have pulled the cord and let the axe fall. You cannot deny it.” (*Tower* 230)

The novel’s second antagonist and Vestuccio’s partner in crime, Pompilio Querci, is a notary who

admired nothing except the smoke of the dirty tramway car in which he went out to Sesto or Campi on feast days, to shoot songbirds in the hedges; and the stuccoed box which he was pleased to call a house, where he slept every night amongst iron rails, pollarded acacias, a brand-new jute factory, and an acre or two of boarding covered with posters and lithographed advertisements of new soaps and cheap furniture. When the young advocate went to sleep amongst those surroundings he felt indeed that his head was pillowed on progress. (*Tower* 119)

The quintessential Victorian man of business, Querci embraces the modern ugliness *The Tower of Taddeo*’s protagonists eschew. He finds beauty in factories that pollute the air and water and joy in poorly-constructed buildings and furniture. No avatars of the past come to speak wisdom to Querci before he falls asleep each night; the squeal of train wheels on rails sings him to sleep instead.

Like Vestuccio, Querci’s mercenary impulses separate him from the protagonists of the novel. Ouida reveals that “he had skill enough to send his own little bucket of a mind deep down again and again into the profound wells of [Ser Checchi’s] intellect, and to draw up the waters of knowledge, which he knew how to pour forth again thinly and carefully, as if brought from his own especial springs” (*Tower* 55). With Ser

Checchi's borrowed brilliance, Querci begins to build a reputation for himself in the public press as an erudite scholar and political contender (*Tower* 55). Like others before him, then, Querci is willing to pass off Ser Checchi's brilliant ideas as his own in order to move a rung or two up the ladder of success (*Tower* 54).

Querci is also willing to use Ser Checchi's financial misfortunes to punish Beldia for rejecting his romantic interest in her. At several points in the novel, Ouida emphasizes Querci's power to square Ser Checchi's debt with Vestuccio (*Tower* 148); after all, he works with Vestuccio behind the scenes to manage the vast reach of Vestuccio's credit empire (*Tower* 205) and has achieved a certain amount of political clout already. But, Querci's pride has been so wounded by Beldia's rejection that he revels in the pain Ser Checchi's debt causes her and works with Vestuccio behind the scenes to oppose any measures Ser Checchi attempts to relieve his debt (*Tower* 269). In Querci's estimation, "she might have possessed him, and his dapper person, and his checked suit, and his brand new house amidst the tramway lines and the jute factories, and she had preferred a wandering Lombard scholar, with loose chestnut curls and an old velvet jacket, and no house at all anywhere, except in outlines upon his drawing board" (*Tower* 272). That Beldia refuses Querci's suit in favor of Odisio comes as no surprise to anyone but Querci himself. Querci embodies all the evils of progress and modernity that Beldia despises; his ambition and wealth cannot compete with Odisio's authentic scholarly and artistic nature.

Ouida thus closes *The Tower of Taddeo* with the tower's destruction. A workman preparing the tower to be razed tells the distraught Beldia that

"at Palazzo Vecchio they want to have everything spick-and-span new; they want to make a quay here, they say, with electric light, and a tramway, and new houses, all whitewashed, just like the quay on the other side where the old Zecca, and the trees, and the Alberti chapel used to be. And like enough, when all's been cleared, they'll

choke it up with factories and gas-works, just as the shore is choked up down yonder.” (*Tower* 288)

The tower must come down to make way for modernity. Florence (and by extrapolation, Victorian England) no longer sees value in monuments to the past, viewing them instead as impediments to social and scientific advancement of dubious worth. Ouida leaves the reader with the following tragic image: “On the site of the Tower of Taddeo there is now standing the chimney of a factory, belching forth its stinking vapours to the sullied waters and the outraged heavens. The change is called Progress” (*Tower* 313).

In *Princess Napraxine* and its sequel *Othmar*, Ouida shifts her focus from the destruction of the natural world to the destruction of the human psyche. In these two novels, Princess Nadine Napraxine is described as if she is a scientist or an amateur psychologist. She does not experience emotions but rather analyzes them. She even engineers situations and fashions experiments in order to examine human behavior as a dispassionate observer. Unfortunately, Nadine’s scientific sensibilities get her into trouble. They sever her from her humanity and prevent her from finding fulfillment in her children or her marriage—the preservation and cultivation of which Victorians considered the natural purview of woman. Nadine’s scientific eye is habitually turned inward, making her unhealthily introspective and incapable of true intimacy. In addition, Nadine and the other characters of these two novels frequently weigh in on the scientific practices and theories of the day, passing judgment on their both their validity and their effects on the physical and mental wellbeing of the Victorian people.

Nadine, an emotionless and detached observer of human behavior, “had one unending appetite—that of the study of character” (PN 1:66). The only true entertainment Nadine seems to derive from her life stems from psychoanalyzing the people in her social circle. As the narrator explains: “The various degrees of passions in her lovers diverted her; she had no vanity; she could dissect and weigh their emotions with perfect accuracy and philosphise [sic] upon them with a clearness of understanding wholly beyond the reach of vain woman” (PN

1:351). She ruthlessly examines the motivations of everyone with whom she comes into contact, relentlessly teasing out the various reactions she can cause with a gesture or a word. She takes an acquaintance's measure quickly, accurately, and dispassionately—and very rarely allows anything approaching the bonds of friendship or love to color how she uses the information she gathers. In fact, more often than not, Nadine uses that information to engineer the downfall of a lover or friend because “she valued her power of destruction as the only possible means of her own amusement” (PN 1:69).

Quite naturally, Nadine's friends and family find her analysis and subsequent psychological manipulations off-putting in the extreme. Lady Evelyn Brancepeth, the woman with whom Nadine's relationship most closely approximates actual friendship, describes Nadine's machinations in the following way: “It is the exercise of a merciless power which is as chill as a vivisector's attitude before his victim” (PN 1:341-42). Monsieur Melville, Nadine's acquaintance of many years, tells her, “I fear, Princess, that you are like Virschow or Paul Bert, who are so absorbed in cutting, burning, and electrifying the nerves of dogs that the dog, as a sentient creature, a companion, and a friend, is wholly unknown to them. Humanity, poor Humanity, is your dog” (PN 2:211-12). Repeatedly, those who encounter Nadine link her behavior to the very worst behaviors of scientists—those behaviors that devalue life and award to the scientist limitless and terrible power. Nadine is the product of a scientific education; she has internalized the scientific mindset so valued by many in her society, and as a result, her psyche has been damaged.

Ouida warns in her essay “Death and Pity” that the deification of science will lead to a generation of citizens who have been encouraged from their earliest days to hold human and animal life in contempt, a generation whose selfishness knows no limits. She writes:

And when the new scientific lexicons opened to them teach children how to make a white rabbit ‘blush’ by the severance of certain sensitive nerves, and bid them realise that in the pursuit of ‘knowledge,’ or even of

fantastic conjecture, it is worthy and wise to inflict the most hellish tortures on the most helpless and harmless of sentient creatures. To sacrifice for experiment, or pleasure, or gain, all the other races of creation, is the doctrine taught by precept and example from the thrones, the lecture-desks, the gunrooms, and the laboratory-tables of the world. It is not a doctrine which can make either a generous or a just generation. Youth is callous and selfish of itself, and by its natural instincts; and all the example and tuition given from palace, pulpit and professorial chair are such as to harden its callousness and confirm its selfishness. (“Death” 244)

Just like the youth Ouida depicts in this essay, Nadine delights in torture and disregards the injury her experiments cause to others. She is a fictional representation of the very real harm that Ouida attributes to scientific progress in her non-fiction essays.

In large part, this harm occurs as a consequence of the tendency of science to divorce life from its more metaphysical components. In *Princess Napraxine* and *Othmar*, the prickings of conscience can be reduced to mere byproducts of a scientific process (PN 2:295). Creativity can similarly be defined as “a question of brain tissue and blood-globules” (*Othmar* 77) rather than a spiritual gift or a connection to the metaphysical. According to Nadine, even the soul is little more than a collection of neurons firing. She tells Othmar that “there are no such things as human souls. It is an exploded expression. There are only conglomerates of gases and tissues, moved by automatic action, and adhering together for a few years, more or less. That is the new creed” (*Othmar* 75). Othmar agrees with Nadine’s assessment that the body is a machine, its gears grinding on in many ways irrespective to emotional sensibilities (*Othmar* 24); however, Othmar does not deny the existence of the soul. He does not privilege the quantifiable machinations of the body over the esoteric workings of the mind. Unlike Nadine, Othmar uses the language of science to explain his theories of body and mind without erasing the soul. In Othmar’s opinion, bodily processes have “nothing to do with the suffering of the soul”

(*Othmar* 24). In fact, he believes that ““nothing can be more unjust than to confuse the one with the other”” (*Othmar* 24).

That Nadine does not exempt herself from the severe scrutiny she turns on others does not surprise, perhaps, when regarded in this light. If the soul can be measured and weighed as dispassionately as blood and bone, surely Nadine’s self-knowledge should rival her understanding of her acquaintances. As a result, she puts herself under the microscope and examines her own motivations with the same intensity she devotes to the behavior of others. At one point in *Princess Napraxine*, Ouida compares Nadine to a scientist who is so eager to make a scientific discovery that he demonstrates no attachment to or sentiment for even his own child. She writes: “There is a well-known physiologist, now head of a famous laboratory, who, when his son died, a boy of twelve, scarcely waited for the child’s last breath to plunge his scalpel into the still warm body in hopes of some discovery of the law of life. If she had had any emotions she would have done a similar thing; she would have dissected them even if they had sprung from her own life blood” (PN 3:113-14). In Ouida’s comparison, paradoxically, Nadine is both the scientist and the poor, dead child. She destroys with and is destroyed by her unnatural desire to understand the inner workings of the human mind.

The most poignant examples of the self-injury her analytical nature causes occur between Nadine and her closest family members. Because Nadine holds herself so aloof, so far above the reach of ordinary human emotions, Othmar and their children together do not believe (and perhaps rightly so) that she truly cares for them and have trouble cultivating healthy affection for her in return. Otho and Xenia, their children, grow to fear her (*Othmar* 339) and respond to the physical affection she offers them at the end of the novel with bewilderment (*Othmar* 340). As for Othmar, his fervent love for Nadine comingles unpleasantly with the deep sense of failure and shame her coldness produces in him (*Othmar* 236). In many ways, Nadine spends the majority of her relationship with Othmar preparing for his love for her to wane; this, along with her innate reticence, prevents her from declaring with any certainty whether she

loves him or not. Cognizant of her lack of emotional commitment, Othmar wonders, “Was it that she had it not in her to give any man more than that mingling of momentary aphrodisiacal indulgence and of eternal immutable derision; and that whilst her power to create a heaven of physical passion was so great, her power of satisfying the exactions of the heart and soul was slight?” (*Othmar* 236). Nadine does not believe in the existence of the soul or love or the possibility of permanent happiness in marriage; years of scientific observation have led her to both these conclusions and the potentially irreparable distance she places between herself and her family.

Nadine constantly questions her feelings (or lack thereof) in an effort to predict what she might feel in the future and also in order to control her actions and the actions of those around her. Ultimately, she proves unable to formulate scientific laws that govern emotions accurately, even though she dedicates a significant amount of time and mental energy to applying scientific methods of observation and experimentation to human behavior. Despite Nadine’s desire to slot all her experiences neatly into a set of scientific principles, emotions—even her own—do not follow the rules suggested by her theories. Confronted by the definitive test of her life’s pursuit, Othmar’s falsely-alleged infidelity, Nadine’s theories fall apart quite dramatically. She believes she has prepared herself to lose Othmar’s affections; after all, the data she has collected over the years suggests the unavoidable nature of such a loss. She believes that she can manage changes to her marriage dispassionately and is quite surprised to find that all her carefully crafted hypotheses bear little relationship to what actually occurs and what she feels as a result:

A sensation of failure, of loss, of humiliation, was always with her [. . .] for her own consciousness that she herself had been untrue to all the theories and philosophies of her existence, that she had failed to guide their lives into that calm haven of friendship and mutual comprehension which had always seemed to her the only possibly decent grave for a dead passion; and had failed also in this crisis of their fates to preserve that wisdom,

patience, and composure, which can alone lend dignity to the woman who sees her power passed away. All her life long she had woven the most ingenious and elaborate theories as to the failure of men and women to secure fidelity and peace; she had reasoned with perfect philosophy on the causes of that failure, and turned to ridicule that childish passion and that fretful inaptitude with which the great majority meet those inevitable changes of the affections and the character which time brings to all. But now, she herself, having been met with such changes, had done no better, and been no wiser than they all. She had suffered like them, she had made reproaches like them, she had allowed indignation and offence to hasten her into anger which could only gratify her enemies and all the gaping world. (*Othmar* 386)

Science fails Nadine and fails her spectacularly. She has built her life on a meticulously-constructed scientific foundation and must watch in astonishment as all her assumptions unravel.

Nadine's miscalculations unsettle her so deeply precisely because scientific laws undeniably governed so many other aspects of nineteenth-century life. For example, the growing field of medical science could finally explain and cure a variety of ailments that had baffled physicians in the previous centuries. Medicine also offered relief for the more mundane complaints of modern life. For instance, why should any person pine sleeplessly for love when sleeping pills could quickly remedy the problem (PN 1:216)? Scientific rationale successfully described the political and economic workings of the Victorian world (PN 3:39), and even beauty in the arts could be dissected to discover its roots (PN 1:282). And yet, the novels foreshadow Nadine's comeuppance almost from the very beginning because even while she and the other characters continuously deify science, they also constantly undercut its power.

Nadine says near the beginning of the first volume of *Princess Napraxine* that “the astronomers who are now busy seeing canals in the planet Mars, would see nothing if they had not their glasses” (PN 1:41). Here she implies that the technology that allows scientists to examine the surface of Mars

actually obfuscates the truth as the canals themselves are imaginary interpretations of natural phenomena. On more than one occasion, she insinuates that the preponderance of scientific progress has advanced little more than “the art of intellectual hair-splitting” (*Othmar* 2). In fact, “to the satirical clearness of her highly-trained intelligence the delirium of science was quite as much a malady of the mind as were the rhapsodies of religion” (PN 3:98). Notwithstanding Nadine’s faith in science to account for the vagaries of human emotion, she clearly believes it incapable of evaluating all facets of life, even going so far as to say that she finds comfort in knowing that scientists will never “explain away, or regulate, or measure with their pocket-rule” (PN 3:190) all the mysteries of the natural world.

Other characters in the novels foreground the destructive capabilities of science and the alacrity with which those in power have adopted scientifically-engineered methods of retaining that power, methods which have trickled down to rebels who would divest leaders of their authority. As Lady Brancepeth asserts:

“You underrate, too, the immense fascination of the power to destroy; *on se grise* with that sense of holding the annihilation of a whole community in their hands. What made the Roman emperors mad—the unlimited power of destruction,—now intoxicates the mechanic or the clerk who has the task of planting a can of nitroglycerine. When statesmen, and even philosophers, theorise about human nature and all its disorders, they never give weight enough to the tremendous attraction which pure destruction alone exercises over so many minds.” (PN 1:34)

Like Ouida in “Some Fallacies of Science,” Lady Brancepeth emphasizes the destructive potential of science and the way in which that harmful tendency proliferates through society as science advances. While Nadine wields her destructive potential on a smaller, more personal level than what Lady Brancepeth describes in this passage, the novel plainly connects Nadine’s small-scale scientific endeavors with those occurring in the national and global arenas.

In addition, Baron Fritz provides some of the most detailed and fascinating commentary on the dangers of scientific advancement in the second volume of *Princess Napraxine*. According to Fritz, science has so muddled the thinking of the modern man that his mind is damaged as a result. Using his nephew Othmar as an example, Fritz avers that modern men are caught between traditional ways of thinking and the new approaches that science offers. He says,

“[Othmar] is a pessimist; he has a mental nevrose [sic], to borrow the jargon of scientists; he has so cultivated his conscience at the expense of his reason, that I sometimes believe he will be satisfied with nothing but the abandonment of all he possesses; and no doubt he would have tried this remedy long since, only he has no belief in any Deity who would reward him for it. The misfortune of all the thoughtful men of [Othmar’s] generation is, that they combine with their fretful consciences an entire disbelief in their souls, so that they are a mass of irritable anomalies. The mirthful sceptics of Augustan Rome, of Voltairian France, and of Bolingbroke’s England, were all consistent philosophers and voluptuaries; they disbelieved in their souls, but they believed in their bodies, and were amply content with them. They never talked nonsense about duty, and they passed gaily, gracefully, and consistently through their lives, of which they made the best they could materially, which is only reasonable in those who are convinced that the present is the sole sentient existence they will ever enjoy. But the tender-nerved pessimists of [Othmar’s] kind and age are wholly inconsistent. They believe in nothing, and yet they are troubled by a multitude of misgivings; they think the soul is merely a romantic word for the reflex action of the brain, and yet they distress themselves with imagining that the human animal has innumerable duties, and should have innumerable scruples, which is ridiculous on the face of it, for, religion apart and Deity denied, there is no possible reason why man should have

any more duties than a snail has, or a hare.” (PN 2:333-34)

Fritz suggests that a choice must be made between what has come before and the future opening up to his contemporaries; science and tradition seem mutually exclusive to him, and efforts to reconcile the two lead only to anxiety and other neuroses, in his estimation. By Fritz’s reckoning, Othmar’s inability to fully embrace the modern world produces the kind of distress and doubt that regularly features in both the fiction and the prose of the Victorian era.

Fritz correctly points out the trouble that Othmar and his circle have with reconciling the past and present. In addition to his uncle, Nadine also accuses Othmar of subscribing to ideas of the last century, specifically antiquated notions of manners and nobility (*Othmar* 276), and suggests the same sort of problems with holding these notions as Fritz does in the previously-quoted passage. Most damningly, the two characters most closely identified with the past—Yseulte and Damaris—do not survive to the novels’ end, intimating a much more tragic conclusion for those unable to cope with progress than mere neurosis.

Much as Ouida does in her non-fiction essays, Nadine contrasts the travails of her own century to the integrity of an idyllic past. She and the other characters continually reference different historical periods as times in which people had genuine feelings and possessed virtues no longer accessible to Victorians. Nadine believes that people living in the past must have been quite different from their modern counterparts (*Othmar* 120), able to feel much more deeply than she and her contemporaries do, for example. While holding court at one of her homes, Nadine declares: “I think all feelings were stronger, warmer, deeper, more concentrated in the earlier ages of the world” (*Othmar* 25).

Ouida’s focus on the past in *Princess Napraxine* and *Othmar* highlights the tension many Victorians experienced when confronted with the changing scientific landscape and its impact on their lives. Ouida insinuates that while the past was better (and people better as a consequence), progress remains

inevitable. The pursuit of science damages the psyche, and yet how can Victorians avoid that damage? Nadine is a product of her times; she cannot move through the world around her in any other way except along with the tide of advancement. If she attempts to hold on to the past, she risks courting death like Othmar's first wife, Yseulte, and Damaris, the orphan he takes under his wing.

Ser Checchi delivers perhaps the best articulation of Ouida's fears concerning progress in *The Tower of Taddeo*. He tells Beldia:

“They are producing new wheat by artificial fertilisation, but I am not sure that what is so produced will answer so well as the natural plant. [. . .] Do you not think the most wonderful secret of all in nature is how that germ lies hidden in the grain and sprouts when restored to earth? Those ears of wheat from the Pharaohs' sepulchres which germinate after two thousand years, explain it scientifically how you will, the miracle and the mystery of it still remains the same. Man is dumb-founded before it. I once saw an Etruscan tomb opened away yonder by Volterra. There were some small kernels of wheat in a stone cippus. I planted them in a fresh-turned furrow, and they grew and multiplied! That I saw with my own eyes. And in due time I ate bread from the harvest of those grains. They had lain there in the dark, in the bowels of the rock, for hundreds upon hundreds of years; they had been put there in the stone cippus before the birth of Caesar, before the rise of Rome; yet life was still in them, dormant life, which awoke when they once again felt the moist, warm soil open to receive them, felt the dew, and the mould, and the showers. What is impossible in any resurrection after that? How should the human mind follow or grasp the living spirit which was at work within the dry husk?” (*Tower* 67-68)

According to Ser Checchi, science can never quantify the mysteries of the universe, and it can never improve upon the time-honored methods of the past. He also insinuates in this passage that if ever modern man is once again ready to receive

the wisdom of the ages, that wisdom will germinate in willing soil just like the ancient Egyptian and Etruscan seeds he mentions to his daughter. However, while Ser Checchi does not grasp the peril inherent to his belief, Ouida clearly does. Ser Checchi may be right, but he also dies because he cannot bring himself to live in the present, and he is not the only character in Ouida's body of work to do so. The past may exemplify all that is noble and worthwhile in human nature, but progress marches relentlessly on, destroying much in its path, including those who cannot (or will not) learn to function in the modern world. Ouida's novels imply that despite the threat scientific advancement poses, it cannot be stopped, and those who cannot adapt will succumb to the law of survival of the fittest. Unfortunately, those who do manage to adapt (like Nadine) will find no guarantees of happiness or health as a result. Ouida does not offer a clear-cut solution to the problem either in her novels or her essays, choosing instead to leave the tension unresolved—much as it remained in her life and the lives of her fellow Victorians.

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The Clearing as a Site of Empowerment and an Identity Maker in Morrison's *Beloved*

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Introduction

Toni Morrison studies identity problems in the African-American community. Her characters are commonly in search for identity and for a definition for themselves within their society. But black identity posits an inaugural trauma and an initial division, and the question is: how can a mangled and divided self survive and re-establish meaning by restoring the lost link and tie in space and in time? The present paper examines the concept of religious sacred space in Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), especially insofar as it is relevant to alternative pulpits, and studies the character of Baby Suggs as a speaker, preacher, and ancestor, and reveals that her preaching unites her people. While the focus is on *Beloved*, comparison with real black (female) preachers is occasionally evoked within a New Historicist approach. Morrison does not claim the neutrality of space, but rather unearths the symbolic association of African-Americans with space figuratively duplicated in the novel. The text, with its strong evocation of the vivid sense of place, exposes how black identities are (re)constructed. The Clearing, a social and religious space featured in the novel, gives the African-American community a sense of pride in place and intimately connects them to group identity. Identity is then conceived in a way that celebrates religious beliefs, communal life, and shared values. For Morrison, identity formation, or more particularly developing a "free" black identity in a multiracial society, is not only a personal affair but also a matter of community that is influenced by religious and socio-cultural forces.

Religious Identity

Among the multiple identities people have, springs a specific type of identity, i.e., religious identity. It is the belonging to a particular religious group. The role of religion, or

religious practice, in creating individual and communal identity is quite important, for religion is a main constituent of personal identity. Morrison herself belongs to a spiritually-oriented family; she alludes, through the character of Baby Suggs, to the fact that religion makes part of individual formation. Lene Arnett Jensen's remarks are pertinent here:

Cultural identity formation also in some respects intersects with the formation of identity in spheres such as religion and morality. Often religious beliefs and behaviors as well as moral beliefs and behaviors are crucial elements in peoples' understanding of their cultural identity. For example, the extent to which one values autonomy and independence, or familial duties and obligations, or adherence to spiritual precepts and practices constitute [sic] important elements in one's understanding of one's cultural identity. (190)

In the nineteenth century, the black Church had a central role in the lives of African-Americans. This role was not only religious but also didactic, social, and political. Milton Sernett argues that "social conditions placed a special burden on black churches; they have to be social centers, political forums, schoolhouses, mutual aid societies, refuges from racism and violence, and places of worship" (4). Presumably, religion was a significant part of the black identity that links the individual to the larger social structure.

However, blacks in the fictional world of *Beloved* do not have the opportunity of belonging to a specific church, but rather the chance to gather in the Clearing where religious identity/group identity is constructed through blacks' minority discourse. Indeed, religious gatherings engender their solidarity and enrich their social identity. Therefore, religious identity has an influence on ethnic and cultural identity. The formation of an ethnic identity, founded on common characteristics, history, religion, and memory, connects the group, and creates a sense of unity and belonging, or what Denise Heinze calls "a sense of rootedness" (113). For the newly-freed blacks in *Beloved*, religious identity refers specifically to the belonging to an ethnic group.

Baby Suggs: The Preacher Who Heals Fragmented Identities with Love

The importance of space in shaping individual identity is related to larger realities, that of the ancestor whose physical or at least spiritual presence is quintessential for the development of the self within the African-American context, and for the growth of the community whose existence is fundamental in forming the social being of the individual. As they are two of the most important cornerstones in the African-American identity, both community and ancestry are valuable for Morrison and her characters.

Part of Baby Suggs's irresistible appeal to her people is, undoubtedly, exhorting them to love, and this is one of her faith-healing strategies. According to her, the path of salvation involves love and mercy, through which she invokes God's blessing and people's passionate response (88). Through preaching, Baby Suggs expresses her compassionate sensibility and spiritual conviction, recapitulates her life experiences, and communicates the word of God to ex-slaves. In the Clearing, she insists on the importance of loving one's body abhorred by whites. Her effort to rouse her audience to reject hatred by stirring up their emotions taps the power of religion and presents Christian rituals as embedded within African traditions. Her capacity for genuine feeling culminates in a strong bond of connection with her people. Teaching them the value of love agitates their passions and sends them to practice "the art of love," to borrow the words of Anissa Janine Wardi (214), as Baby Suggs goes into rhapsodies. "In the silence that followed," Morrison writes, "Baby Suggs, holy, offered up to them her great big heart" (88). In a word, she asks them to seek salvation through love.

Using a different religious rhetoric, and through repetition and parallelism, Baby Suggs lyrically conveys new meanings to an attentive audience. She speaks forthrightly and sensitively about secular and religious matters. Her sermons on racial pride, which involve both reason and feelings, transcend the limitations imposed by time, place, and race while she

teaches them to love themselves, their bodies, their colours, and each other. As emotion seizes her, she says quite candidly:

[I]n this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. [...] And O my people they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! Love them. Raise them up and kiss them. Touch others with them, pat them together, stroke them on your face 'cause they don't love that either. *You* got to love it, *you!* [...] This is flesh I'm talking about here. Flesh that needs to be loved. Feet that need to rest and to dance; backs that need support; shoulders that need arms, strong arms I'm telling you. (88; italics in the original)

Her speech's rhetorical function emerges, and auditory effects are achieved through repetition at brief intervals, recreating the oral touch of her speech. The value of the hands is figuratively made explicit in Baby Suggs's religious discourse while giving voice to her anger and pain. David Gauntlett argues that "the body is the outer expression of our self, to be improved and worked upon" (113). Hands heal, bear witness to the past and to the difficulties of the present, and construct sociability, first through tactile healing, and then through effective help. So, hands become a sort of bridge between human beings, particularly those belonging to the same society. The novel almost begs, particularly in this part, to be read aloud to echo Baby Suggs's resistant discourse. Then through her spiritual vision and enlightenment, she guides her people to what she considers the best thing to feel--to love themselves—and the best thing to do—to help each other. Baby Suggs preaches the values of reconciliation with one's body and one's community as well. Her persuasive style and performative preaching among freed men and women seem to be influential in encouraging love and dialogue in her community.

Her role as a spiritual leader and the distinctiveness of her character as a simple woman make her inhabit a position of importance and a sort of moral authority to lead those in her

community; she is both respected and authoritative among them. Her powerful spiritual resources and the prophetic basis she adds to her sermons endow her with a different sort of authority, raising her to the position of preacher, mother, ancestor, and healer all at once. She sacrifices herself for the good of the family, the community, and the race. Morrison portrays 124, Baby Suggs's house, as "a cheerful, buzzing house where Baby Suggs, holy, loved, cautioned, fed, chastised and soothed" (86-87). And, most crucially, she has the capacity to empower others. In this way, she develops the strength to guide them to acceptance, to a fulfillment of spiritual purposes.

For Baby Suggs, preaching does not require learning or education but deep religious feeling. Indeed, the utmost majority, if not all, black women preachers in postbellum (as well as in antebellum) America preached without access to formal schooling or to theological instruction. Like them, Baby Suggs is not formally educated; like them, she belongs to the lower classes. But, illiteracy does not prevent her from preaching; her humble religious awareness suffices to awaken her people's dormant spirituality, to lead them spiritually, and to exhort her congregation. Being illiterate does not reduce her audience's interest because her facial and bodily gestures, intonation, and oral touch (vernacular) are quite expressive of her serious and thoughtful speeches that function as a safeguard against the loss of the oral tradition. Instead of showing erudite knowledge about theology, Baby Suggs, with a rudimentary grasp of Christian religion, includes rhythmical phrases and songs in her oratorical speeches; it is this very orality that offers solace to her listeners and elicits their emotional and spiritual responses. Self-taught, she offers her people a different religious discourse. Morrison's narrator further elucidates:

She did not tell them to clean up their lives or to go and sin no more. She did not tell them they were the blessed of the earth, its inheriting meek or its glorybound pure. She told them that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine. That if they could not see it, they would not have it. (88)

Baby Suggs's preaching does not presume an educated audience either. The informality of her sermons and the familiarity of her language make her preaching intimately close to illiterate black people. This fictional character's preaching reminds readers of that of real black female preachers who used songs in their sermons. Roxanne Reed explains that the songs black female preachers would add to their sermons "present an alternative to the formality associated with male preaching" (65). Even without having access to education, thanks to this sense of religious belonging, neither Baby Suggs nor her congregation loses their innate religious feelings.

With her sermons, Baby Suggs offers her congregation her kind heart, the last thing she preserves after slavery and with which she bestows enduring love on everybody in the community. She spent her seventy-year life "[g]iving advice; passing messages; healing the sick, hiding fugitives, loving, cooking, cooking, loving, preaching, singing, dancing and loving everybody like it was her job and hers alone" (Morrison 137). Love, then, is the most healing force that makes one's psychological wounds disappear; it heals not only the body and the mind, but also the soul. Nothing goes deeper than love. Nourished by emotional generosity, and as she heightens her rhetoric, Baby Suggs displays a markedly potent charisma. Preaching, for her, requires instead spiritual involvement and communal love, love that binds the worshipping group together and gives its members a common identity thanks to the sense of belonging to the same community with the same religious interests. In this context, one can quote Sernett, who says: "Religious belonging is an elemental bond of group identity. Communities define themselves around a set of religious beliefs, symbols and rituals" (3). Linking the text to its historical context confirms Morrison's deep interest in history, especially in *Beloved*. Part of this history is black religious practice in the United States.

The content of Baby Suggs's fictional teaching is different from real traditional male preaching for it is based on the spread of love. The Bible is, in general, differently interpreted by African-Americans; its function is not to reform morals and spread the gospel, but rather to teach love for the self and the

other. Baby Suggs discovers a social message in the Bible. She helps her people realize that if religion teaches anything, it teaches love, support, and humility. Hence, the journey is not toward redemption but toward love. While no traditional pulpit is provided, no traditional preaching is offered. Her call to preach love is simply electrifying for her congregation; her radical message reaches their hearts. As an act of love in itself, her preaching inspires her beloved community because it is not only religious, but also emotional, motherly, and didactic. The wisdom which dictates such preaching is the result of varied and difficult experiences she relates to her people. Motherly preaching is presented in the novel as a site of power for Baby Suggs, who spends most of her life without any sort of power, except for the power of the Word. In a New Historicist fashion, one can compare this character with nineteenth-century black female preachers. Roxanne Reed evinces a thorough understanding of the distinction of black female preaching in the nineteenth century:

Relegated to alternative spaces, such as the open, natural environment apart from the physical edifice of the church, women exercise more control and inevitably success in achieving the goals of community. Women's reliance on narrative, particularly personal and informal sources, counters the tendency of male preachers to use abstract or nonpersonal narratives and biblical sources of narrative text to advance their sermonic message. (60)

The extended metaphor of the community as a caring mother/ family is powerfully used to portray the black community of Cincinnati years after Baby Suggs's death. Morrison offers a striking image of communal unity and of the rewards of the individual's openness to the community, for it is a sort of strength that seems to function as a safety net and buffer zone for people. The outcome is obviously identity affirmation for people belonging to an integrally coherent community.

Baby Suggs's preaching extends far beyond its religious discourse to a political discourse embedded with racial awareness. Her preaching becomes most likely a symbol of hope for

her fellow African-Americans, and this is one of the reasons for which they seek her guidance. Under this guidance, they face adversity. Baby Suggs is depicted as a character who seems always to have an aura of compassion about her, and that is what rallies her people who still face the daily struggles of the after-slavery period. She addresses their economic difficulties as well as their social problems and troubles due to racism, and permits them to address their grievances. Baby Suggs is not exceptional in that, although she is so in a number of other ways; indeed, black female preachers, in reality, discuss similar issues. Implicitly, religious conviction is deeply linked to race consciousness. Baby Suggs, who believes “that there was no bad luck in the world but whitepeople” (104), triggers her people’s awareness about racial inequality and white racism. After *Beloved*’s death, however, Baby Suggs abandons preaching; she “refused to go to the Clearing because she believed *they* had won” (184; italics in the original). Her visionary preaching, while validating kindness and understanding, is in the nature of a political act; it sounds like political speech, a kind of political rhetoric couched in religion to make her people keep on, make a life, and survive. She performs a sort of social/political gospel very influential on her listeners. Black identity is, then, partially shaped by context, and an imperative component of this context is race. Georgia Warnke claims that “identities are parts of contexts and make sense only within the contexts of which they are a part” (245). She also says: “As coherent ways of understanding who we are, our racial identities are historically rooted and situationally limited” (120). In the novel, Baby Suggs and her Clearing stand for the black church; like a black church, or even better than the edifice itself, the Clearing serves multiple roles. It is the center of religious, social, and political life for the black community in *Beloved*. Teresa Reed links text to historical context again, relating that by the turn of the nineteenth century, “the black church had become the moral, social, and political focal point of African-American life. The church consolidated communities, preserved traditions, and shaped codes of behaviour and interaction” (51). To overcome the shortcomings of an

after-slavery period, Baby Suggs, while preaching, does not forget to remind black people that religion serves both sacred and secular concerns.

The Need for an Identifying Space, the Search for a Pulpit

Baby Suggs, holy, as her community members call her, is not an ordained preacher; yet, she is their own preacher. Morrison explains: "Accepting no title of honor before her name, but allowing a small caress after it, she became an unchurched preacher" (87). She simply feels the call to preach and thus ordains herself; and the community members need that and accept it. Like Baby Suggs, Nanny, in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, "wanted to preach a great sermon about colored women sittin' on high, but they wasn't no pulpit for [her]" (187). What she is denied is summed up in this wish: a "pulpit." What the novel seeks to do is to offer some "pulpit." The notion of "pulpit" recurs from time to time in the narrative; it is claiming back a voice, a say. Through it all, Morrison gives blacks a voice and claims back a say to history; for in spite of their fear, they have to claim history. The idea of "pulpit" is even taken up again in the reference to Halle whose name (Hall) offers a symbolic room/freedom to his mother. Without being a member of the clergy, and belonging to no church, Baby Suggs assumes the pulpit away from the white community. Assuming the pulpit, she also assumes her voice silenced for six decades under slavery. More than that, she attains a fullness of voice.

Therefore, some pulpit is needed; Baby Suggs finds it in that platform in the woods where she preaches without a book, but with her life experiences flavoured with her African-American oral tradition. She does not need a church (and her community does not have one either) to preach, pray, or to keep in touch with spiritual concerns that are part of her African-American culture. She merely requires listening and response to her aural calls and phenomenal exhortations. Strongly connected to the African oral tradition, Baby Suggs uses simple words and easy yet noteworthy language. Her oratory is neither marked by elaborate rhetoric nor adorned with figures of speech but with simple words coming out of the heart and revealing

rhetorical power. “With Baby Suggs’s heart in charge,” Morrison writes, “the people let go” (94). Baby Suggs’s oratorical art is based on speech and performing and used for persuasion; it is, in itself, an act of persuasion. Her preaching owes its power to its simplicity which cannot blur its significance. Baby Suggs is an orator who tries to capture the essence of black life and religion through spontaneous words with which she expands the limits of religious language. It is the evocative power of the oral word that will sway her audience.

As she relies on a daring rhetorical conceit, the charismatic Baby Suggs develops her abilities as a speaker and proves herself a notably effective speaker using a clear theological diction. In a passage where she relies upon word of mouth, a sort of power in itself, and where she draws on the black rich oral tradition, it is obvious that her black fellows love and respect her word(s) and so evidently respond openly to her calls. In addition, as Morrison requires an active reader, Baby Suggs requires an active listener who responds to her calls for participation. Thus, she incites black men, women, and children to laugh, dance, and cry in turn. Her exaltation appeals to the multitude and merits attention from the reader:

After situating herself on a huge flat-sided rock, Baby Suggs bowed her head and prayed silently. The company watched her from the trees. They knew she was ready when she put her stick down. Then she shouted, “Let the children come!” and they ran from the trees toward her.

“Let your mothers hear you laugh,” she told them, and the woods rang. The adults looked on and could not help smiling.

Then “Let the grown men come,” she shouted. They stepped out one by one from among the ringing trees. “Let your wives and children see you dance,” she told them, and groundlife shuddered under their feet. Finally she called the women to her. “Cry,” she told them. “For the living and the dead. Just cry.” And without covering their eyes the women let loose. (Morrison 87-8)

Significantly, this passage, where orality is used as a community “cementing” material, is quite revealing. Her sermonising, as depicted in the novel, moves the hearts of her people and their bodies too; for they dance and move, and that is why there is no need for pews.

The imagery and rhetoric of this famous passage offer moments of insight and echo the perceptive nature of Baby Suggs’s discourse. And here, too, the novel becomes poetry. The use of repetition of important phrases, a characteristic of oral expression and a device linked to church sermons, is deliberate; sound devices, especially alliteration, confer upon the passage a poetic touch. The end of this passage suggests that the words of Baby Suggs, holy, motherly, ancestral, corroborate the importance of female identification with things done to the race past and present. Her call for the women to cry attests to her acknowledgement of the obvious fact, at least for her and at most for many African-Americans, that black women are the storeroom (Baby Suggs’s room in 124 is called “the keeping room”) or the repository of the community’s collective and versatile memory. By virtue of her quite poetic verbal performance, Baby Suggs exhorts crying but also laughter, laughing at their worries but also at their happiness with their newly-acquired freedom. Hence, the effect of the Clearing is a sort of magic spell, or “charm touching,” for the blacks of Cincinnati.

The Clearing as an Alternative Pulpit

Like Baby Suggs’s preaching in Morrison’s novel, black women preaching in the nineteenth century faced comparable challenges. Most churches then denied women the pulpit, forbade them from leading in prayer, exhorting, and teaching religious matters. Like real female preachers in nineteenth-century America, the fictional character Baby Suggs is not allowed to the pulpit, not only because of her race, but also because of her gender. The fact that women were not welcome to the pulpit confers additional significance upon the act of creating one’s own pulpit and holding fast to it. African-American women

preachers were allowed to preach on rare occasions, for instance when they substituted for male preachers or when they were called for specific events or for Christian services, but even then not from the pulpit. The main feature that characterises all of these female preachers is their recognition of restrictions on their speech and that the pulpit was exclusively a “masculine space” (Brekus 21). Like these real black women preachers, Baby Suggs struggles to get hold of a pulpit to preach the word of God and to articulate personal statements against injustice and oppression.

Clearly personal, Baby Suggs’s preaching makes use of call-and-response to enhance communication with her fellow blacks. Call-and-response treasures the sense of dialogue and restores trust in community values. Finishing her call-and-response preaching, Baby Suggs performed her “holy” dance while her audience sings for her, thus reversing the action and consequently the reaction. The religious enthusiasm that her preaching arouses in her exclusively black audience often leads to creating a visceral response that is quite revealing of her direct influence upon them. By provoking such a response, she spreads her message far more successfully than does any male preacher in a traditional church building. Even the woods respond to her call; they echo her sermons, and even the trees ring back to her wise words. The “rock” is her pulpit; the “trees” are the pillars of her “natural” temple. The echo returned by the woods creates a sort of redemptive music that links Man to nature. Such reversal in call/response patterns whereby the response becomes a call is indicative of the degree of compliance that exists between Baby Suggs and her community members. This balancing act that reflects the African background is central to the African-American Christian tradition of sermons followed by songs. Besides, her preaching reveals a tone of love and encouragement. In a broader religious context, spiritual power is transformed into social power, pushing black people onward who may think they are powerless to alter their situation or to improve their lives. The power to move masses through religion reminds the readers of *Beloved* of influential real female preachers. What distinguishes Baby Suggs from

them is that she is so familiar and popular with her community members.

In *Beloved*, preaching becomes a cultural act, and the Clearing a cultural center. Hence, Dawn Coleman holds that preaching is “a cultural practice” (266). The reader can logically assume that Morrison throws light on both the Word and performance, for in the Clearing, call-and-response includes singing, shouting, clapping, and energetic dancing; it involves physical expression and community interaction. Thus, preaching, according to the novel, gains a new function in the African-American sermonic tradition by providing an emotional safety valve in ecstatic worship and reinforcing communal unity. Worship and socialization take place in the Clearing, a religious site and social centre. Warnke argues that “in order to survive and flourish Africans create new institutions, religions, and forms of solidarity that emphasize their identities as blacks and reinforce their distinction from whites” (84). So, the Clearing is given a deeper meaning, i.e., the making of spaces; it opens up as a space offering new possibilities. It gives blacks a sense of pride in place and intimately connects them to group identity. Hence, Linden Peach draws attention to “Morrison’s interest in how identities are constructed in historically and socially specific contexts” (18). For African-Americans, the ecstatic worship can only be performed in a group, and this means (re)creating social contacts between them and reconnecting them in a potentially creative collaboration.

The Clearing as an Identity-Maker for African-Americans in *Beloved*

The community residents bear in mind Baby Suggs’s spiritual teaching and the depths of her soul and mind in communal gatherings in the Clearing, a spiritual center and a safe retreat away from the gaze of white people and from their control of space. The distinguished personal presence she shows in her sermons is never forgotten by the community, and it seems that her communicative and effective preaching still rings in their ears since it is addressed simply and directly. Religion

does not keep underprivileged blacks satisfied with their miserable conditions, but rather helps them heal themselves and their wounds over time. Baby Suggs's healing power goes beyond black theology; it is like a therapy for her people. Indeed, the only positive memory for her community is about her occasional speeches in the Clearing every Saturday afternoon, her distinctive pulpit situated in the woods, a clearing space—entirely different from a church bound by walls and entered by specific people (Christians) in specific times (generally on Sunday morning):

When warm weather came, Baby Suggs, holy, followed by every black man, woman and child who could make it through, took her great heart to the Clearing—a wide-open place cut deep in the woods nobody knew for what at the end of a path known only to deer and whoever cleared the land in the first place. In the heat of every Saturday afternoon, she sat in the clearing while the people waited among the trees. (87)

In the woods, the natural and the supernatural merge to refresh blacks spiritually and to create an African-American religious discourse quite specific in terms of concepts and practices. The Clearing emerges as a space of freedom where no building is needed and no rules are followed, and as a site of choice and possible empowerment. As it becomes essential to the functioning of the neighbourhood, it acquires a new dimension, that of a spatial dynamic, becoming one of the rare positive memories the community members keep.

As mentioned previously, Baby Suggs is not allowed to the traditional pulpit, so she creates one because her desire to inspire her people is too strong to let opposition quench her ardent passion. Perhaps she is denied a place in traditional pulpits, or maybe simply she does not think of a conventional pulpit and instead preaches in the Clearing, a wonderful and peaceful place, an alternative space that shows more openness and that serves at least symbolically as a sacred site for resistance. Hence, the Clearing enables Baby Suggs not only to claim a space for resistance but also to fulfil her demand for space.

Preaching, it seems in Morrison's view, becomes fundamentally and profoundly an act of resistance, integral to blacks' difficult struggle prior to the end of the Civil War. Accordingly, spirituality is transmitted from Baby Suggs to her people through the channel of defiance, and the link between identity and historical consciousness is highlighted. Here the importance of location is signalled because the Clearing is a natural dais and a local milieu of religious practice where Baby Suggs is a great preacher whose thrilling speeches could capture the emotions of her congregation; in what becomes a sacred ground, she exerts an irresistible and unparalleled influence on the people of Cincinnati and takes them beyond the confines of a racist society. Offering a place for everyone and endowing Baby Suggs's audience with a rare feeling of unlimited freedom—a problematic but powerful freedom—indicates that the woods give rise to lively religious practices. The Clearing's very name (although literally describing a place that is cleared of its trees in the middle of the woods) emphasizes the importance of clarifying spiritual matters for blacks, the significance of thought and the intensity of the awareness of one's reality. This, indeed, explains what Morrison's narrator calls "the enchantment of the Clearing" (98). More significant are the religious alternatives that black people may have. The Clearing, an alternative worship space, a shrine for all community members, becomes a sacred place for black people.

The notion of "breaking confinement" or "giving a feeling of freedom" may be read as an asserting pattern that highlights the contours of black religious identity. The Clearing offers the black community members a sense of rare new-found liberty and secures for Baby Suggs a kind of grand stature assuring her permanence beyond the reach of the religious experience. The Clearing can be considered then as an identity-maker. John N. Duvall writes that "the question of identity is not a given for Morrison" (20). "Offering a place for everyone" is a pretty good strategy; it is about claiming space in one's society. The notion of space is no longer emotionally or actually closed before them. With her good bearing, Baby Suggs proposes a set of norms and values not concerning religious tenets

or practice but rather concerning life in the community. Her people are united by mutual love and interest in sociability, and this generates a context of successful sociability that strengthens the individual and the community all at once. “No Clearing, no company. Just laundry and shoes” (184) are left for Sethe, Baby Suggs’s daughter-in-law. Owing to Sethe’s infanticide, twelve years before the death of Baby Suggs, Sethe and her daughter Denver suffer from a severe lack of sociability. They have no contact with their surroundings whatsoever. Now they miss Baby Suggs, the Clearing and their fellow blacks all at once. By the end of the novel, and in the rescue scene, the sick Sethe imagines “as though the Clearing had come to her with all its heat and simmering leaves” (261). At the very edge of the community’s disillusionment, Baby Suggs comes to reunite her people, to engender further connections even after her death. The renewal of their social life can now generate movement into a creative future. Thus, continuity is re-established between past, present, and future.

The Clearing as a Site of Empowerment

The Clearing is then a location where Baby Suggs looks closely at spiritual and worldly concerns. It is that relegated sphere where the survivors of slavery meet and discuss social, economic, racial, and political issues. This is comparable to history since many blacks used to practice religion away from the racism and discrimination in churches in the South and also in the North where segregation reached the pews. Roger Valade (1996) believes that it is for this very reason that African-American religious leaders took their followers out of the white church: “To protest such discrimination, some black leaders led their followers out of white churches and set up independent African American congregations” (90). Valade adds:

As African American churches flourished, their ministers assumed great importance, not only as religious figures, but as social and political leaders as well. Many preachers achieved renown for their poetic and emotional speaking style, and some incorporated elaborate imagery into their sermons. (90)

So Baby Suggs, like real black preachers, articulates a political and spiritual view of the world at the same time, as her ceremonial preaching is embedded with racial issues and political ramifications. Therefore, the Clearing is not only a positive and fertile social space, but also a strategic location used by the writer to define the relationship between the individual, space, and culture and a strategic means to show an emergent black subjectivity in a white-dominated society.

The Clearing becomes the center of the black community's spiritual and social life.¹ The Clearing is, first of all, a sacred space where the self meets the divine. It is dedicated for group worship. As Morrison creates a religious environment in the novel, she implicitly points out that there is no possibility of breaking free from the social milieu even in worship. Black men, women, and children attend Baby Suggs's informal services through which she generously passes her spiritual knowledge and her worldly know-how on her listeners. Her revelatory preaching triggers a cathartic effect in the Clearing and gives her and her listeners a kind of mystical empowerment that will make life go on for all of them. Besides, engaging in preaching helps Baby Suggs maintain the community. It is in the Clearing that freed people share their troubles and pains, worries and rare happy moments. In a narrow sense, it necessitates choices not possible under slavery. Baby Suggs's preaching there encompasses diverse messages: that the black community is strong because its members are living, worshipping, and hence surviving together, and that their religious practices celebrate and strengthen the community. Spirituality is quintessential for a culture of survival, and religious concerns are some of the more complex strategies of survival. "In Morrison's works," Aoi Mori elucidates, "the community is presented as the source of racial empowerment," albeit in the framework of a historically marginalized group given that black solidarity leads to individual and communal empowerment (103). For their survival as African-Americans, the community's role in forging their authentic identities is indispensable. Identity is then conceived in a way that celebrates communal life and shared values. Renowned critical theorist Stephen

Greenblatt even talks about “[t]he social fabrication of identity” (193). It is in the heart of New Historicism to study identity politics, to investigate the circulation of social power, and to explore mechanisms of repression and subjugation. Greenblatt elucidates that the concern of marginalized people, living away from respectable society and its strict regulations, is rather “the fashioning of social and personal identity, identity dependent not only on shared norms, but on differences as well” (80). This brings one to the basic truth that, for identity-making, society is a necessary component. In all that, women play a great role in the spiritual existence and continuance of the black community. Reed asserts that the end of the nineteenth century “marked a shift in black consciousness from a preoccupation with the afterlife to immediate problems of survival” (8). Morrison makes it clear that religion is part of the daily lives of African-Americans, and that in *Beloved* the Clearing is part of black community life (87).

The Clearing experience gives Baby Suggs a central place in her community. In people’s minds, the Clearing becomes identical with religious practice and most notably with the person of Baby Suggs even years after her death. As Dawn Coleman explains:

In a postromantic era newly focused on individual personalities, the centerpiece of preaching was now the preacher himself. He became the cynosure of the communal gaze, with exemplary sermonic performance imagined less as the correct explication of biblical text or doctrine as the preacher’s communion with his audience. (269)

Baby Suggs’s too inspires her people’s reverence. The Clearing experience endows her as well with a unique rapport with them. The faith she feels and shows and the tone of conviction in her voice strengthen her inner spiritual experience and enhance the audience’s religious devotion. Through her stirring sermons, she informs, enlightens, and exhorts her fellow blacks with remarkable vehemence. Ultimately, the Clearing is both sacred and secular; it is a site dedicated for religious practice and for entertainment as well. It is a kind of outreach to the Cincinnati

black community in Baby Suggs's days beyond the reach of white authority, or so they think--for Stamp Paid and his black fellows could not bury Baby Suggs in the site she liked most. This means that the Clearing is also part of white power.

Conclusion

The Clearing is the space needed for transmitting Baby Suggs's messages and for developing a strong religious, social, and political identity all at once. It reveals the function of a particular setting in the perception of the self and the symbolism of space not only in Morrison's *Beloved*, but in almost all her body of fiction. The Clearing is a symbol for the black community's religious gatherings and endows the group with a strong sense of both social and religious identity. It is also a space of freedom with which Cincinnati blacks identify most. Within a collective experience of identity-making, Morrison asserts that identity is, at least in part, religiously and socially formed. Furthermore, she acknowledges a great role to the community that nurtures a positive, self-affirming identity and aims at overcoming identity problems and at developing a "free" black identity in a multiracial society.

Notes

¹ During slavery times, formal religious gatherings were forbidden for slaves. For them, the religious experience is not totally absent but rather limited.

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