International Compilation of Research and Studies in

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EDITOR

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INTERNATIONAL COMPILATION OF RESEARCH AND STUDIES IN PHILOLOGY

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Chapter 1

Philanthropy as Academic Soft Power: The Rockefeller Foundation's Role in Developing American Studies Program at Ankara University in 1950s[1]

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[1] This study is an expanded and revised version of the paper titled **"American Soft Power in Turkey: The Case of Two American Studies Professors in the 1950s,"** presented at the 3rd International Congress of Multidisciplinary Social Sciences (ICMUSS 2021) held at the Faculty of Language and History-Geography, Ankara University, 2021.

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Introduction

The aftermath of the Second World War gave rise to a bipolar international system which is structured around two competing ideological and economic blocs: capitalism and liberal democracy on one side and communism on the other. This confrontation was not confined to military or diplomatic arenas; it was equally a struggle of economic systems and cultural influence. Türkiye's strategic location at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East and the Soviet sphere made it an indispensable partner in the United States' policy of containment during the Cold War. The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, Türkiye's participation in the Korean War and its accession to NATO in 1952 symbolized Ankara's integration into the Western alliance. Yet, America's interest in Türkiye was not limited to geopolitical or military concerns. U.S. policymakers viewed Türkiye as a potential model for modernization which was a secular, Western-oriented republic with a predominantly Muslim population that could demonstrate the compatibility of Islam with democratic and capitalist values. During this decade, the United States launched a series of initiatives designed to extend its influence not merely through military alliances and economic aid, but also through the subtle instruments of culture, education and intellectual exchange. These activities formed part of what would later be theorized as "soft power"—a concept popularized by political scientist Joseph S. Nye Jr., referring to the ability of a nation to achieve desired outcomes through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. Educational exchange programs, university collaborations, and philantrophic foundations became vehicles for promoting American ideals and for building enduring networks of influence abroad. Major American philanthropic foundations such as Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie extended their global reach in this period and became symbols of both U.S. cultural policy and penetration abroad. This notion of "penetration" rather than occupation captures the essence of American influence in which influence, culture and knowledge became new tools of power. The Rockefeller Foundation, in particular, played a critical intermediary role with the United States Information Service (USIS), by funding academic exchanges, visiting professorships, cultural programs and scholarly initiatives that aligned with both philanthropic and intentional objectives.

This study examines a case of educational exchange in the 1950s at Ankara University, focusing on two American visiting professors: Robert H. Ball, a scholar of American literature from Queens College, and Mark B.

Swearingen, a historian from Elmira College. Both were funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and supported by the USIS in their appointments to the Faculty of Letters, exemplifying the intersection of academic collaboration and transnational philanthropic influence. Their appoinment was not limited to temporary teaching duties. They were also tasked with introducing and institutionalizing the study of American literature and history within the university curriculum—disciplines that were virtually nonexistent in Türkiye at the time. The correspondence among the Rockefeller Foundation, USIS, universities and academics along with the John Marshall's visits and diaries concerning the establishment of American History and American Literature chairs at Ankara University provides invaluable insight into the intersection of cultural diplomacy, academic institutionalization and promoting American studies as an academic field.

Soft Power: Public Diplomacy and Cultural Diplomacy

The term "soft power" was formally coined by Joseph S. Nye Jr., a Harvard political scientist, in his influential 2004 work *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. According to Nye, soft power is a nation's capacity to influence others without coercion, deriving from the attractiveness of its culture, political ideals, and policies He distinguishes it from "hard power," which relies on the coercive tools of military and economic might. While both forms of power are essential, Nye observes that that cultivating attraction is far less costly than relying on coercion and must be actively maintained as a valuable resource. Although Nye introduced the concept decades after the early Cold War, the phenomenon it describes was already deeply embedded in U.S. foreign policy during the 1950s. The term, public diplomacy, coined by Professor Edmund Gullion, who worked for the U.S. Department of State as a more neutral alternative to propaganda, emerged in the post-war era and was initially referred to as public opinion diplomacy (Zamrano 168). On the other hand, cultural diplomacy emerged as a complementary yet distinct branch of public diplomacy. Unlike informational diplomacy, which often involves overt political messaging and short-term objectives, cultural diplomacy operates through indirect and long-term engagement. In this context, cultural diplomacy serves as a central mechanism of soft power by using educational exchange programs, philanthropic foundations, popular media, literature, art exhibitions, and music to influence perceptions and foster sympathetic understandings of American culture abroad.

In the post–World War II era, the United States invested in public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges and academic initiatives, such as the appointment of visiting scholars to foreign universities, which were facilitated by the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948, also known as the Smith-Mundt Act. These efforts were later institutionalized through the establishment of the United States Information Agency (USIA) in 1953, preceded by the United States Information Service (USIS), which operated internationally. The USIA functioned as an agency operating under the direct authority of the President and defined its mission as "to understand, inform and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest, and to broaden the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions, and their counterparts abroad" (Chodkowski, 1984, p.2).

Political theorist Samuel P. Huntington aptly characterized this dimension of American global engagement when he wrote that:

American expansion has been characterized not by the acquisition of new territories but by their penetration… Transnationalism is the American mode of expansion. It has meant "freedom to operate" rather than "power to control." U.S. expansion has been pluralistic expansion in which a variety of organizations, governmental and nongovernmental, have attempted to pursue the objectives important to them within the territory of other societies" (Huntington, 1973, p.344).

Huntington emphasizes that American expansion relied on penetration rather than territorial conquest, operating through a network of governmental and nongovernmental actors. This pluralistic, transnational approach aligns with the concept of cultural diplomacy as it is less policy-driven and more human-centered, emphasizing long-term relationships built on shared values and creativity rather than immediate political outcomes. Greg Barnhisel (2015) states that "American cultural diplomacy had been founded on the premise that private, nongovernmental groups were the ideal cultural ambassadors and that the government's role should be to foster their involvement as much as possible" (p. 69). In parallel, Nancy Snow also emphasizes that "it's the American people who can better initiate direct contact with people in other countries whose support and understanding we need on the state of world opinion. The American people are the best ad campaign going for the world" (Snow, as cited in Bellamy & Weinberg, 2008, p.59). Snow argues that the American people, through direct contact with individuals in other countries, play a crucial role in fostering support and

understanding, effectively serving as an "ad campaign" for the United States. Accordingly, facilitating cultural and educational exchanges allows (Americans to engage directly with foreign publics and to "tell the story of America" firsthand. In 1950s Türkiye, initiatives such as supporting the appointment of American professors and providing fellowships at Ankara University exemplify this approach, with both academic and philanthropic actors functioning as agents of U.S. transnational influence.

Philantrophic Foundations as The Agents of Cultural Diplomacy

The philanthropic institutions founded by Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie—commonly known as the "Big Three", are widely regarded as pioneering foundations in the history of American philanthropy. These foundations have assumed a crucial role in supporting education, scientific research, public health, and cultural programs, both within the United States and abroad. Inderjeet Parmar (2012) argues that the perceived independence of the Big Three U.S. foundations rests on four "fictions"—that they are non-state, non-political, non-business, and non-ideological—despite their deep ties to government, politics, and corporate interests, and their promotion of American liberal internationalist values (p.5). Although these characteristics are not uniformly evident across all their activities, Parmar's argument is persuasive in showing how the Big Three foundations acted as instruments of American soft power by projecting an image of independence while promoting U.S. values and liberal internationalist ideals. Tim B. Mueller, by contrast, views the Rockefeller Foundation as an autonomous yet aligned actor, whose goals of promoting Western liberal modernity coincided with U.S. strategic interests during the early Cold War.

RF and U.S. government presented distinct social systems committed to an identical overarching goal... The common overarching interest was the consolidation and promotion of Western liberal modernity (and, as a consequence, U.S. hegemony), which was competing with state socialist approaches to modernization. This view of modernization largely coincided with the strategic vision of government experts and policy makers during the early Cold War (Mueller, 2013, p.119).

It is evident, in either form, that the American foundations functioned as agents of international liberalism, whether operating under the indirect influence of governmental priorities or through supposedly independent charitable activities. As Örnek (2013a, p.148) notes, by establishing research

institutes and providing funding to universities, these foundations helped train a new generation of social scientists; according to Nugent (2010, as cited in Örnek, 2013a), this process also enabled the foundations and the government to create professional networks connecting previously autonomous academic and governmental domains.

The Rockefeller Foundation, established in 1913, initially focused modestly on medical and scientific research during its first decade, but by the 1920s it had begun to display a remarkable interest in cultural understanding and international relations.. During its first decade, the Foundation did not award grants for the humanities or the arts. Nevertheless, in the following years, the trustees grappled with a persistent sense that scientific accomplishments alone were insufficient to advance human welfare, and they increasingly recognized that the Foundation had a role to play in promoting and supporting American culture (Abrahamson, Hurst, & Shubinski, 2013, p.114). In 1933, the Rockefeller Foundation had "adopted 'the improvement of international understanding through cultural interchange' as one of its principal policy goals" (Ninkovich, 1981, p.15). By the 1950s, philanthropic internationalism had reached its zenith, operating in close coordination with the USIS abroad and functioning as de facto cultural ambassadors. These foundations engaged in a wide array of initiatives, influencing educational, cultural, and social spheres in target countries and thereby extending American soft power beyond formal diplomatic channels. Türkiye, in particular, became one of the most frequently visited and supported countries, reflecting both its strategic geopolitical importance and the willingness of American foundations to invest substantial resources. Among these, the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations emerged as especially prominent actors, implementing programs that ranged from academic exchanges and fellowships to broader cultural and intellectual projects which influenced the reception of American ideas and values in Turkish society. These efforts reflect how the foundations implemented their cultural diplomacy abroad, including American studies initiatives in other countries

By the mid-1950s the foundation was running a variety of programs grouped loosely around the central idea of interpreting one culture to another. This premise made it possible, if not necessary, to create the counterpart of the area studies center abroad; the foundation accordingly funded a number of American studies programs in Japan, Europe, and Turkey. (Richardson, 1984, p.31)

In this study, our analysis focuses on the Rockefeller Foundation's support and efforts for the establishment of American History and American Literature chairs at Faculty of Language and History-Geography**,** Ankara University. We draw on Rockefeller Foundation archival materials, including correspondence among the Foundation, USIS officials, university administrators, and visiting American professors, along with the diaries of John Marshall[3], Associate Director of the Division of the Humanities at the Rockefeller Foundation. Born in 1903 in Portland, Maine, Marshall received his B.A. and M.A. degrees in English from Harvard University, where he also briefly taught. He later served as Executive Secretary of the Medieval Academy of America and as an editor at the American Council of Learned Societies before joining the Rockefeller Foundation in 1933 as Assistant Director for the Humanities (Buxton, 2003, p.135). In 1940 he was promoted to Associate Director. Marshall undertook three visits to Europe in 1933, 1935, and 1937; these were interrupted by the war and subsequently resumed in 1944, 1945, and 1948, all within the context of Rockefeller Foundation philanthropic activities.

Rockefeller Foundation Interest and Efforts in Establishing American Studies Program at Ankara University, Türkiye[4]

By the 1950s, John Marshall had extended his visits to the Near East almost annually, traveling like a modern missionary to Egypt, Lebanon, Syria,

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[3] For further discussion of John Marshall and the humanities in Türkiye, See Ali Erken "The Rockefeller Foundation, John Marshall and the Development of the Humanities in Modern Turkey: 1950–1965" *Divan: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 38 (June 2015): 113-45

[4] From this point in the study onward, we will draw on the documents and archival materials obtained during research conducted at the Rockefeller Archive Center (15 Dayton Avenue, Sleepy Hollow, New York, USA), specifically those categorized under "Officer's Diaries Marshall, John" and "University of Ankara–American Studies." Accordingly, information and quotations in the text will be referenced on the basis of the dates recorded in the diaries and in the correspondence. For the John Marshall Diaries:

Rockefeller Foundation records; Rockefeller Foundation records, Officers' Diaries, RG 12; Rockefeller Foundation records, officers' diaries, RG 12, M-R; Marshall, John; (1950-1960)

Additionally, these diaries are available digitally on the Rockefeller Archive Center's website and are accessible to researchers at; https://dimes.rockarch.org/

References and citations for the letters used in this study correspond to the dates of the respective documents and are located at the Rockefeller Archive Center under the following entries:

Rockefeller Foundation records; Rockefeller Foundation records, Projects (Grants), RG 1; Rockefeller Foundation records, Projects, SG 1.2; Rockefeller Foundation records, Projects, SG 1.2, Series 300-833, Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Oceania; Turkey, Series 805; Turkey - Humanities and Arts, Subseries 805.R

"University of Ankara-American Studies, 1949-56", Box 11, Folders 102-107;

"University of Ankara-American Studies 1957-60", Box 11, Folders 108-111.

Iran, Iraq, and Türkiye, where he met with numerous intellectuals, academics, journalists, and embassy officials. In 1951, Türkiye was also on his itinerary; from March 29 to April 11, he visited Ankara and Istanbul, focusing on his interests in the humanities and engaging with Rockefeller Foundation charitable activities. One of his significant visits was to Ankara University on April 5, 1951, one of the only three universities in the Turkish Republic at the time. He met with the university president, Hikmet Birand, who outlined the university's needs, including fellowships, travel grants, books, equipment, and research funding. Birand candidly noted, the university had been established rather hastily, and a significant number of assistants and even assistant professors required additional training. Marshall expressed cordial interest but noted that his visit was limited to humanities programs. His discussions with the president were interpreted by Orhan Burian, a professor in the English Department and a former Rockefeller Foundation fellow. President Birand invited him to lunch the following day, which was attended by Burian and Frederick P. Latimer, Cultural Affairs Officer. During the meeting, two PhD candidates from the English Department, Ahmet Edip Uysal[5] and Leman Yolaç, were presented as potential fellowship recipients to pursue further studies in the United States. Marshall responded immediately and positively, and both candidates subsequently received Rockefeller Foundation grants in the following years. Additionally, Orhan Burian noted in earlier discussions with Marshall that he was interested in another Rockefeller Foundation fellowship to conduct research on American literature, with the aim of developing a unit of work to be included into English courses at the Faculty. This can be regarded as one of the earliest initiatives to place American literature on Marshall's agenda for further development.

John Marshall's visit to Türkiye in 1952 took place from March 19 to 31. On March 21, 1952, at one of his first stops in Ankara was the U.S. Embassy where he met with Ambassador McGhee and Cultural Affairs Officer Frederick P. Latimer in the context of Rockefeller Foundation initiatives and U.S. cultural outreach programs. During this meeting with Ambassador McGhee, when he inquired about the Rockefeller Foundation's position regarding the establishment of library resources on the United States at Ankara University, Marshall indicated that such support could be possible, provided that the university demonstrated genuine interest in developing faculty and

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[5] Ahmet Edip Uysal went to Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the fall of 1951, while Leman Yolaç went to Catholic University in Washington, D.C., in 1952, as Rockefeller Foundation fellows, to pursue research.

course offerings on American studies. This exchange reveals that Ambassador McGhee was highly invested in the presence of courses and resources related to American culture, literature, and history at the university, even requesting Latimer to assess the current status of these efforts. Importantly, this interaction highlights that the initiative depended not only on external support but also on the university's own interest and demand.

On March 24, 1952, during his visit to the Faculty Language and History-Geography at Ankara University, Marshall met with members of the English Department—Orhan Burian, İrfan Şahinbaş, Hamit Dereli, and Ahmet Edip Uysal—to discuss literature, academia, and, of course, Rockefeller Foundation support. In Marshall's diaries, it is noted that "The Department also feels the obligation of carrying on studies of English and American literature and history as they relate to Turkey…Under this heading it is now agreed that work on American literature and history must be developed." This can be interpreted as a preliminary roadmap for future Rockefeller Foundation initiatives in establishing American Literature Chair. Furthermore, a consensus was reached regarding support for İrfan Şahinbaş[6], who worked on English drama, enabling him to relate his research to American drama and literature through a Rockefeller Foundation grant.

John Marshall's visits to Türkiye in March and April 1953 clarified the need for two professors in American literature and history to support the planned American Studies program at Ankara University. On April 1, 1953, Marshall met at the university with Şinasi Altundağ, Dean of Language and History-Geography, Edward Vivien Gatenby, Head of the Department of English Language and Literature, Miss Gordon, Hamit Dereli, Ahmet Edip Uysal, and Leman Yolaç. The situation revealed that the department faced significant challenges due to İrfan Şahinbaş being in the United States, Uysal's military service (at least two years), and the absence of Orhan Burian, who was seriously ill and would later pass away. In addition, in his meeting with Cultural Affairs Officer Latimer, Marshall learned that because of the construction of U.S. Embassy residency and other additional expenses, Fulbright funds would not be available that year, highlighting the importance

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[6] İrfan Şahinbaş would immediately receive a grant to conduct research at Harvard University in the same year. Şahinbaş also worked closely with the Rockefeller Foundation in developing theater education programs at Ankara University. See Hasibe Kalkan (2020) "On the Role of the Rockefeller Foundation in Establishing Theatre Education Programmes and Transnational Theatrical Spaces in Türkiye during the Cold War" *The Journal of Global Theatre History*, Vol.4, No:2, pp.40-54

of Rockefeller Foundation support in this context. According to a letter dated 13 April 1953 from Dean Altundağ to John Marshall, the Faculty's Professors' Council formally requested Rockefeller Foundation support for the appointment of two professors to the Faculty. The Council further observed that, although a portion of the professors' salaries for the upcoming academic year would be provided by the university budget, this would be insufficient for the incoming faculty and consequently, the Council requested that the Rockefeller Foundation fund the remaining amount. The dean further indicated that a copy of the letter had been sent to Cultural Affairs Officer Latimer. Throughout this process, Latimer maintained communication both with the dean and the department as well as with Rockefeller Foundation director John Marshall via the U.S. Embassy.

In response to this request, the Rockefeller Foundation approved on May 14, 1953 (RF Decision 53072) a budget of $21,000 to support the appointment of two professors at Ankara University. In the comments section of the decision, it was noted that, following similar programs in Europe, the Far East, and Japan, this represented the Foundation's first initiative for establishing an interdependent American Studies program.

John Marshall's next visit to Türkiye took place in the spring of 1954. Upon his arrival in Ankara on March 24, 1955, he was received by Akdes Nimet Kurat[7], a former Rockefeller Foundation fellow who was by then serving as the new Dean of the Language and History-Geography, along with Cultural Affairs Officer Frederick Latimer. At this point, it is worth noting that during his visits to Türkiye, Marshall was routinely received by the relevant U.S. consulate or embassy, which at times provided a car and driver for his extensive meetings and site visits. In this respect, Huntington's characterization of "cultural ambassadors" is equally applicable to Marshall. Moreover, it is evident that nearly all of his visits, interactions, and correspondence were conducted in close and continuous coordination with the United States Information Service (USIS) and the U.S. Embassy. The following day, March 25, 1954, John Marshall visited the Faculty and met with Dean Kurat who expressed his disappointment that, due to the inadequacy of his predecessor, no appointments had been made in American literature or American history that year. At the same time, he emphasized his

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[7] Akdes Nimet Kurat published one of the first books examining Turkish–American relations as a result of the research he conducted and the work he carried out as a Rockefeller Fellow. Akdes Nimet Kurat (1959) *Türk-Amerikan Mümasebetlerine Kısa Bir Bakış*, Doğuş, Ankara

determination to finalize the appointments for the 1954–55 academic year by May 1, 1954. From Kurat's account, it can be inferred that the previous administration had approached this matter slowly or without much enthusiasm. Meanwhile, at that time, İrfan Şahinbaş, who was in the United States, continued his search for a suitable professor in American literature and history.

Until December 1954, no archival evidence concerning the appointment of American professors at Ankara University has been identified. It was only on June 24, 1954, that R. H. Fisher, an officer of the U.S. Department of State, contacted Marshall regarding the absence of suitable professorial candidates. Marshall responded that he was willing to provide informal assistance but could not take the initiative to propose or recruit candidates. Marshall's diaries indicate that on December 27, 1954, he held a four-hour meeting in the United States with two American professors—Mack Swearingen of Elmira College, selected for American history, and Robert H. Ball of Queen's College, selected for American literature—both of whom had been identified and coordinated through the Department of State. Marshall felt great satisfaction with both candidates and provided them with information about Türkiye during the meeting. Also present was Vahit Turhan, a professor from the Department of English Language and Literature at Istanbul University and a Rockefeller Foundation grantee in the United States, who offered insights into education and students in Türkiye. Turhan's participation was clearly arranged by Marshall rather than coincidental; he routinely met with Foundation fellows while they were in the United States. Consequently, both professors would be able to commence their appointments at Ankara University starting in March 1955.

American Professors in Türkiye

Following his visit to Beirut on March 8, 1955, John Marshall arrived in Ankara and, as in the previous year, was received at the airport by Dean Akdes Nimet Kurat and Cultural Affairs Officer Argus Tresider. The following day, March 9, his first visit was to meet the newly appointed American professors. At nine o'clock, Marshall visited Kurat and proceeded to the Faculty to attend Swearingen's inaugural lecture. Inspired by the German habilitation model, these public lectures were a new initiative introduced by Kurat. While Kurat and Swearingen presided over the ceremony in academic gowns, İnalcık translated the lecture into Turkish paragraph by paragraph. The topic, the

American Revolution[8], was presented at a highly advanced academic level, beyond the full comprehension of the students. Ball's lecture was scheduled for the following week; although time was limited, Marshall believed he should also attend that session.

On March 10, 1955, John Marshall once again visited Ankara University, where he first met with Dean Kurat to discuss the possible extension of the American professors' appointments, even though their tenure had just begun. At this stage, the university had appointed them for one year and planned salary payments accordingly. Whether their positions would continue beyond that year was to be decided by the University Council, based on considerations such as the effectiveness of the current year's teaching, which had not yet been assessed. From the Rockefeller Foundation's perspective, it was considered technically prudent to arrange funding for the subsequent year in advance. Marshall believed that having these American professors remain for at least two, if not three, years would be beneficial—not only for the settlement of courses but also to maximize the benefit to other faculty members.

One of the primary concerns, however, centered on American history professor Mack Swearingen, whom Dean Kurat indicated would commence his appointment in an independent capacity rather than within the History Department. In his diary of the same date, Marshall recorded that opposition had arisen among the History Department faculty, potentially led by Enver Ziya Karal. Later, when Marshall visited the office shared by Ball and Swearingen, he learned that both professors were frustrated by delays in their official appointment approvals, and that Swearingen had encountered resistance within the faculty regarding the teaching of American history. Despite these obstacles, Marshall advised them to focus on their courses, and both agreed that this was the most appropriate course of action. A more pressing issue, however, was the rapidly increasing cost of living in Ankara. Marshall requested that, two months later, the professors submit a written report of their expenses; if deemed necessary, the dollar allowance of their

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[8] In 1957, the inaugural issue of the *Tarih Araştırmaları* journal, published by the Faculty of Language and History-Geography, featured an article by Mack Swearingen on the American Revolution. The article was published in both Turkish and English. It is highly likely that this publication corresponds to the lecture he delivered; moreover, it can be considered one of the first publications on American history authored by an American in Turkish Republic.
Swearingen, M. (1957). *Amerikan ihtilâline bir bakış*. *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (1), 69–82. https://doi.org/10.1501/Tarar_0000000335

grant could be increased, and sufficient resources were available to accommodate this adjustment.

The following day, March 11, 1955, Marshall returned to Ankara University to attend Robert Ball's inaugural lecture. According to his diary, approximately 150 students were present. The lecture offered a concise yet thorough analysis of tradition and rebellion in American theater, delivered at a highly academic level, beyond the full comprehension of the students; one reason for this was that these inaugural lectures were to be translated into Turkish and published. The next day, March 12, a tea party was held in the Faculty Lounge in honor of Ball and Swearingen. As observed, the American professors were warmly received by the university and treated with respect. It should be noted that during his stay, John Marshall also met with numerous writers, intellectuals, journalists, USIS personnel, and American Embassy officials. Over these three consecutive days, he participated in all events related to the commencement of the Rockefeller Foundation supported professors' appointments, providing not only financial support but also assistance and attention in other matters as needed.

The Letters and Concerns of American Professors

On April 6, 1955, as he approached the completion of his first month, Mack Swearingen wrote to John Marshall to report a difficulty concerning his American history courses. The students in the History Department, where he was teaching, lacked sufficient proficiency in English. Consequently, the lectures were conducted through a translator, and with half of the class time devoted to translation, the teaching process was not very effective. To address this issue, Swearingen proposed consulting with Dean Kurat to prepare lecture notes in advance and distribute them via mimeograph, thereby allowing more time for discussion and questions during class. On April 9, 1955, Swearingen sent another letter, this time highlighting the challenges posed by prices in Türkiye and their equivalents in U.S. dollars. He remarked: "When, however, we take it into the realm of price levels, the data include some variables than constants and the problem suggests something in the field of astrophysics." The underlying issue was that while the official exchange rate set the dollar at 2.80 TL, the black market rate ranged from 6 to 8 TL. The university's payment of 1,500 TL in salary, as well as the cost of temporary accommodation, could not be easily reconciled with either rate, leaving Swearingen uncertain about how to calculate their dollar equivalents and highlighting the practical challenges of currency conversion. In his response

dated April 13, 1955, John Marshall endorsed the suggestion to distribute mimeographed lecture notes as an appropriate solution. He also requested further information regarding expenses and salaries while advising Swearingen and Ball to "take it easy" in the meantime.

American literature professor Robert H. Ball also wrote to John Marshall on April 18, 1955, sharing his impressions, experiences, and difficulties. He noted that he felt quite comfortable within the Department of English Language and Literature, where colleagues were attentive and helpful, and that Dean Kurat did everything possible to make them feel at home. Ball also emphasized that progress was being made toward establishing an American Literature Chair. He highlighted the significant support provided by USIS, particularly regarding extracurricular activities, mentioned that he had joined the cultural committee within the Turkish-American Association, and noted that his wife was teaching English there. In addition, he and Swearingen were taking five hours of Turkish language lessons per week to adapt as fully as possible to the local environment.

It appears that, unlike Swearingen, Ball's arrival with his spouse, his immediate integration and recognized position within the English Department, and securing an apartment facilitated quicker social and professional adjustment. Swearingen, on the other hand, had arrived alone (his spouse would join later in the summer), stayed at the Yüksel Palas Hotel, and, not being fully integrated into the History Department, faced challenges both due to the language barrier and the nature of the general American history courses he taught. Ball also reported the shared difficulties with Swearingen regarding exchange-related issues and observed that inflation and the economic situation in Türkiye had negatively affected them, noting that the salary set by the university had not yet been paid and, in any case, would be insufficient. In his brief response on April 22, 1955, John Marshall indicated that he would take measures to address the situation and provide a favorable resolution shortly. In the same date's Rockefeller Foundation interoffice correspondence, Marshall advocated for an increase in the dollar allowance to provide the professors with additional support, stating: "But the main point is that these two men who have taken these appointments as a matter of national service…" Clearly, while Marshall used this phrasing to persuade and motivate senior management, it also emphasized that these professors were performing a public service by teaching American history and literature.

Amid these developments, John Marshall, who was notably concerned on behalf of the Rockefeller Foundation, wrote a letter on May 2, 1955, to Argus J. Tresidder, serving as Cultural Affairs Officer at the USIS Ankara office. In the letter, he emphasized that the university had not yet made the salary payments and that, particularly due to the limited number of courses taught by Swearingen, the overall impact of the program remained insufficient. He also noted that Dean Kurat appeared to have diminished confidence in resolving these issues. Marshall expressed that he would appreciate Tresidder's observations and insights regarding these matters. As can be seen, although the Rockefeller Foundation did not have an organic presence at the university, Marshall maintained direct contact with USIS, exchanging detailed information and views, which in turn informed subsequent decisions and planning.

On May 17, 1955, Argus J. Tresidder wrote a detailed letter to John Marshall, sharing his observations regarding the American professors and his conclusions from meetings with Dean Kurat. He first noted that the university's salary payments had only recently been processed due to bureaucratic delays, and that he himself had visited the Ministry of Education in order to expedite the process. The main focus of the letter concerned Swearingen and the teaching of American history. Tresidder reported that in his meeting with Dean Kurat on the same day, he learned that faculty members in the History Department preferred a German history professor for the next year and were generally not enthusiastic about American history. Nevertheless, it was evident that Dean Kurat supported the extension of both professors' appointments, and that plans were underway for American history to be included in the History Department's curriculum in the following year. As Tresidder noted in the letter, "the real hitch is in intramural squabbling over foreign professors, and it is mainly limited to the history department". He also observed that George Ball was extremely popular and respected, performing very well in front of both students and the head of the English Department previously appointed by the British Council, which in turn appeared to direct students' interest toward American culture. Clearly, a form of competition between the British Council and USIS could be recognized. While the British Council had already established a presence in Türkiye, the Americans were relatively new, a situation Tresidder captured in his own words: "This is a chance we have been looking for – not to denigrate the British, but to show that America too produces scholars."

In his letter to John Marshall dated May 17, 1955, Dean Akdes Nimet Kurat provided explanations similar to those offered by Tresidder, though in a more formal tone. The subject again concerned American history and Professor Swearingen. Kurat emphasized that the two-hour weekly course load was standard in Türkiye and should not be perceived as trivial, even pointing out that some instructors had few or no students. He noted that, in the following term, improvements in teaching methods could make the course more effective, and that seminar sessions would be possible for students with sufficient English proficiency. The letter concluded by stating that, as Dean, he would submit a formal request for the extension of both professors' appointments.

On June 23, 1955, Mack Swearingen wrote to John Marshall regarding the American history courses again. He reported that, prior to his formal appointment, Dean Kurat had suggested the possibility of establishing a separate chair for him; however, it soon became clear that this was not feasible, whereas a chair was under consideration for Ball. Swearingen further noted that, in a conversation with the Head of the History Department, Enver Ziya Karal, he was asked whether he wished to have an independent American History Chair, and he declined, knowing it would not be possible. According to Swearingen, Karal was satisfied with this arrangement, and he received verbal confirmation that the American history course could be included in the History curriculum, with course materials printed and prepared in advance. Swearingen's letter also highlighted tensions between the Cultural Affairs Officer and the Dean, as Tresidder reportedly believed that Kurat was not providing sufficient support regarding Swearingen. While these perspectives are necessarily partial, from the American side—comprising the Rockefeller Foundation, USIS, and the professors themselves—it appears that the inclusion of American history as a chair or as regular courses in the curriculum was perceived as politically sensitive. In contrast, the establishment of a new chair for American literature, along with the long-term plan to have scholars trained in the U.S. eventually operate independently, did not encounter such opposition. In other words, history was approached more as a national academic paradigm, whereas literature was regarded within a more international framework. As a result of this perspective, in his letter dated November 4, 1955, Dean Kurat informed that the proposal to establish an American Literature Chair had been formally submitted to the University Senate. He expressed satisfaction with Ball's teaching and academic

contributions but made no mention of Swearingen or the American history program.

In a letter dated January 4, 1956, Cultural Affairs Officer Argus J. Tresidder updated John Marshall on recent developments, noting particularly positive progress in American literature. He reported that Ball had approximately seventy-five students and had made an excellent academic impression, prompting the Council of Professors to vote overwhelmingly in favor of extending his appointment. In contrast, Swearingen had only a few students and continued to encounter a more challenging path. It appears that Swearingen's extension was not formally discussed by the Council. A further development at the Faculty of Language and History-Geography was the change in deanship in January 1956, with Akdes Nimet Kurat's term coming to an end and Sedat Alp assuming the position. In his letter to John Marshall dated January 20, 1956, the new dean informed him of the transition and expressed his intention to continue the existing cooperation.

In the spring of 1956, John Marshall's Near East itinerary commenced in Egypt and subsequently extended to Türkiye. During this visit, he spent the greater part of his time in Istanbul, though he also traveled briefly to Ankara to review ongoing Rockefeller Foundation related initiatives, to assess prospective projects, and, as in his previous visits, to confer with university faculty, intellectuals, artists, government officials, and USIS. According to Marshall's diary, what was to become an exceptionally demanding day—4 April 1956—began with a morning meeting with Mack Swearingen. Their conversation opened with academic matters. Swearingen emphasized that, for the continued development of American Studies, instructional support in both American Literature and American History should be maintained for an additional two-year period. When he noted the scarcity of Turkish-language materials on American history, Marshall recorded this and contacted Kadri Yörükoğlu of the Ministry of Education—an official closely cooperating with the Rockefeller Foundation—to request assistance with translation efforts; the response was reportedly favorable. The second issue raised by Swearingen concerned financial matters, particularly travel expenditures. Marshall's diary indicates that Swearingen had transported his automobile from the United States, which had substantially increased his costs.

Later the same day, Marshall visited the Faculty of Language and History-Geography and met with Dean Sedat Alp to discuss the American Studies offerings. Alp reported that the proposal for an American Literature

Chair had already been approved by the Faculty Council and was awaiting authorization by the University Senate and the Ministry. He further stated that a proposal for a Chair in American History would soon be submitted. For the American Literature Chair, Alp identified Hamit Dereli as the proposed candidate, and for American History he cited Sıtkı Baykal, noting that Baykal was currently in the United States. At this juncture, Dean Alp also uttered the name of Halil İnalcık. Marshall expressed strong approval, as İnalcık was already known to him as an exceptionally capable scholar of considerable potential. Marshall indicated that, should the opportunity materialize, the Rockefeller Foundation would be prepared to provide the requisite fellowship support for him. Alp then telephoned İnalcık and arranged a meeting with Marshall for the afternoon. Upon arriving at the USIS office, Marshall briefed Tresidder on these developments. Tresidder responded with evident pleasure upon hearing İnalcık's name, as Marshall remarked: 'He is without doubt one of the ablest people on the Faculty. Marshall subsequently met with Halil İnalcık[9] on the same day. İnalcık stated that he could pursue American History studies at Harvard for two years, noting that he did not intend to depart from his established field of Ottoman and European History. Marshall, in any case, regarded the prospect of sending a scholar of İnalcık's caliber to the United States on an Rockefeller Foundation fellowship as highly desirable.

On the same day, Marshall also held a telephone conversation with George Ball. As in their previous exchanges, the discussion centered primarily on financial concerns—most notably Ball's request that APO and PX[10] privileges be extended to him, as well as to any American professors who might subsequently be appointed, and that his stipend be increased. Academic matters occupied only a minor part of the conversation, as Ball was working within a relatively well-established department. He nevertheless emphasized that his most capable student, Necla Bengül, had been awarded a Smith–Mundt scholarship to pursue graduate studies in the U.S.; he further suggested that, contingent on her performance, it would be advantageous for her to continue her studies in the United States with additional support from the

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[9] Halil İnalcık translated Allan Nevins and Henry Steele Commager's *The Pocket History of the United States* into Turkish, and the work became one of the first American history books to be published in Türkiye in 1961.
[10] **APO (Army Post Office)** U.S. military postal system that provides mail and package services for U.S. soldiers stationed abroad.
PX (Post Exchange) A retail store operated by the U.S. Army where military personnel (and sometimes their families) can buy goods, clothing, electronics etc. at reduced, tax-free prices.

Rockefeller Foundation. Marshall received this proposal positively, and the two agreed that he would meet with Bengül upon her arrival in New York.

Following the completion of his engagements in Ankara, Marshall proceeded to the train station to depart for Istanbul. As he recorded in his diary, he was given what he termed the "traditional Ankara send-off," accompanied by Argus Tresidder, Kadri Yörükoğlu, İhsan Doğramacı, Akdes Nimet Kurat, and other colleagues involved in the ongoing initiatives.

Conclusion of the American Professors' Tenure

At the close of the 1956 spring semester, Mack Swearingen began preparing for his return to the United States as his appointment in Ankara came to an end. In his detailed letter to John Marshall dated 28 June 1956, he offered an extensive assessment of the situation. The future of the American History program appeared uncertain—not only the question of establishing a formal chair but even the matter of securing a successor to continue the courses after his departure. For Swearingen, this ambiguity stemmed largely from the attitudes and administrative practices of the faculty and the university. His frustrations are captured in his characterization of the institutional environment: "The other feature is a prescribed machinery that moves like a senile tortoise. Where such machinery exists there will always, of course, be some people who believe its operation more important than its product. In a word THERE ARE NO SHORT CUTS IN TURKEY. The spirit of academic procedure here is the spirit of the old German bureaucracy." This bureaucratic rigidity, combined with the limited number of American historians willing to serve in Türkiye, posed a serious obstacle for the continuity of the courses. Burke M. Hermann from Pennsylvania State University had expressed willingness to come; however, his lack of a doctoral degree was regarded as a significant impediment from the Turkish perspective. In his letter of 3 July 1956—his final communication from Türkiye—Swearingen elaborated further on this issue. Although he considered Hermann an excellent lecturer whose primary contribution would be teaching rather than research, he acknowledged that the university found the absence of a doctorate unacceptable. As he put it, "What the Turks want in this position is one of America's top research scholars, but what the position needs in this stage is skillful teaching." The university ultimately declined Hermann's candidacy.

Swearingen also noted, with some bitterness, that the Department of State had not proposed any candidates and that he had been left largely to his own devices. He expressed particular frustration with USIS officer Argus J. Tresidder, remarking that he "had been less than useless to me." As earlier correspondence had shown, Tresidder's persistent involvement in faculty affairs had irritated both the former dean, Akdes Nimet Kurat, and the new dean, Sedat Alp. Swearingen's most candid reflections concern the internal politics of the Faculty. In his words, "The brutal truth is now clear to me: the people in this Faculty who want the American History program are not the historians. There is a story behind that, but I can learn only bits of it; when I press a little for more information, everybody clams up." Although these observations necessarily reflect his own perspective, they illuminate the tensions surrounding the program. Elsewhere in the letter, he acknowledged his own inability to overcome these obstacles, even if he insisted the causes predated his arrival: "My great failure here is in not winning the cordial acceptance of this program by my history colleagues. The trouble was not caused by me; it began in some Faculty politics before I got here. It was a clear obligation on me, however, to break down this massive indifference and win friends and influence people… a clean failure in this area of work."

Mack Swearingen completed his term and returned to the United States. According to Marshall's diaries, they met three times between August 11 and 13, 1956. Marshall personally welcomed Swearingen at the New York harbor and reserved much of the weekend for discussion. The diary entries focus primarily on the challenges that potential future candidates might face and offer advice on addressing them. Topics discussed included previously mentioned issues such as converting dollars, exchange rates, difficult living conditions, the lack of academic teaching materials, and, in particular, the urgent need to translate and publish an American history book in Turkish. Marshall also noted that publishing the American history book would serve as a valuable resource for secondary education.

Professor Robert Ball also returned to the United States at the beginning of September 1956 and met with Marshall on September 6, 1956. The diary briefly notes that American Literature was firmly established and records Ball's satisfaction at the prospect of Professor Ray B. West from the University of Iowa succeeding him.

During the Fall term of 1956, no professor was appointed at Ankara University for either American History or American Literature. Professor Ray

B. West agreed to teach in the Spring term of 1957, ensuring that at least the American Literature course and efforts to establish the proposed chair would continue. According to Marshall's diaries, during his visit to Ankara on March 7, 1957, he met with İrfan Şahinbaş, who had returned from the United States, and expressed satisfaction with West's upcoming appointment in American Literature. Şahinbaş also noted that he felt a greater sense of responsibility and indicated that it would be beneficial for him to return to the United States briefly to further enhance his expertise in American Literature; Marshall confirmed that he could apply to the Rockefeller Foundation for support at the appropriate time. Şahinbaş further added that Necla Bengül, currently pursuing her MA in Minnesota, could complete her studies, begin her doctorate, and, ideally, write her dissertation on American Literature in Ankara under the guidance of the newly arrived Professor West, before eventually pursuing postdoctoral research in the United States. Marshall viewed these proposals very positively and noted the potential fellowship opportunities.

In March 1957, USIS in Ankara inquired whether Swearingen could resume teaching in Türkiye, with Marshall further noting that the faculty expressed their support for his return. Swearingen received this proposal positively and expressed his readiness to participate. By mid-1957, however, no formal university invitation or appointment had been issued, so the Rockefeller Foundation provided a nine-month fellowship allowing him to conduct research and write a book on Türkiye without teaching obligations. Swearingen[11] went to Türkiye but remained unconnected to the faculty or the American History courses. As noted in West's letter below, no new position would be created for American History, nor would a chair be established.

In his letter to Marshall dated September 18, 1957, Ray West provides further insight into the American History appoinment situation. As a faculty member, he attended a Faculty Council meeting, where it was decided that Halil İnalcık, who was currently at Harvard University, would not be allowed an additional year to continue his research in the United States. İnalcık's return technically eliminated the rationale for Swearingen's reappointment for American History. West further wrote that "you can't teach American literature intelligently without the students having some historical

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[11] After his return to USA, On July 16, 1959, John Marshall met with Swearingen, who reported that due to family issues and other personal circumstances, he would not be able to complete his book on Türkiye.

background," emphasizing the necessity of an American historian and the inclusion of American History courses even within the Literature Department. Nevertheless, correspondence and diaries indicate that the Faculty Council did not approve Swearingen's reappointment. Simultaneously, an independent American Literature Chair was formally established within the faculty in 1957. West observed in his letter dated April 14, 1958, that "the Swearingen business has actually done the American cause good – if in an unfortunate manner. So far as the literature is concerned, all administrative aims have been achieved, because the American chairman is, in effect, his own boss, with full faculty rights." In other words, the setbacks and Swearingen's non-reappointment ultimately contributed positively to the establishment of the American Literature Chair.

During his visit to Türkiye in the Fall of 1958, on October 9, Marshall met with the new Dean, Ekrem Akurgal. When the discussion turned to the case of Swearingen and the American history courses, Marshall pragmatically remarked, 'The whole episode was best forgotten,' signaling a forward-looking approach. During this visit, he also met with İrfan Şahinbaş and the young Necla Bengül, who was considered a prospective Rockefeller Foundation fellow. Bengül had initially assisted Professor Robert Ball as translator and teaching assistant, completed her MA at the University of Minnesota, and was pursuing her doctoral studies in American Literature. Şahinbaş had indicated that once she reached an adequate level, she would succeed him in the chair. When Marshall inquired about her research interests, Bengül expressed a focus on contemporary novelists, noting that Faulkner and Hemingway were already known in Türkiye and that studying them would be more appropriate, preferably at Yale University. Necla Bengül completed her doctorate in Ankara in 1958 and, at the beginning of 1959, went to the United States as an Rockefeller Foundation fellow to study Faulkner at Yale University. She subsequently joined the American Literature Chair, becoming the first associate professor of American Literature in 1964. The chair began offering graduate-level education from 1966 onward (Köşker, 2023, p.166). Necla Aytür, who would later become the first president and one of the founders of the American Studies Association of Turkey, referred in a 1995 interview conducted by Ayşe Kırtunç to Robert Ball as "the one who initiated the foundation of an American Literature Chair at Ankara University" (Kırtunç, 1996, p.59).

Conclusion

The 1950s, shaped by the dynamics of the cultural Cold War, witnessed American cultural diplomacy increasingly seeking to project U.S. culture and values abroad through academic channels, notably by promoting American Studies programs in foreign universities. Institutions such as the Rockefeller Foundation played a central role in these initiatives, collaborating with the USIS and the Department of State while leveraging their unique position as influential, non-governmental, and non-profit actors. As Parmar (2012) notes, the promotion of American Studies "was an attempt to export the foundations' domestic values to the world and led to the construction of a global network of American studies scholars, institutes, and associations" (p. 117). The introduction of American Studies in Turkey exemplifies these efforts on a microcosmic scale, reflecting parallel initiatives in Europe and the Far East, where programs were established with greater scope and influence.

In our study, the Rockefeller Foundation's support for establishing chairs in American Literature and History represents an initiative within a network of correspondence and collaboration among the Rockefeller Foundation, Ankara University, USIS, the Department of State and American universities, providing a microcosmic example of soft power. Undoubtedly, John Marshall's prominent role and extensive social interactions made him influential and welcomed by Turkish society, including intellectuals, artists, academics, students, journalists, and government officials. His diaries offer a detailed and insightful, though American-centered, perspective on the issues and projects that engaged the Rockefeller Foundation. It should also be noted that the Foundation had a positive legacy in the early Turkish Republic through numerous philanthropic projects, particularly in the field of health development.

Professors Ball and Swearingen encountered the complexities of the highly bureaucratic structure of Turkish institutions. Their primary concerns initially revolved around delayed university payments, which, coupled with fluctuating exchange rates, created considerable uncertainty. According to the arrangements between the university and the Rockefeller Foundation, professors under one-year contracts received their salaries directly from the university; however, when this proved insufficient, the Rockefeller Foundation provided a dollar allowance, contingent on university approval. Unlike other programs such as Fulbright, these professors did not receive direct dollar salaries, making financial issues a central theme in their

correspondence. This situation was further exacerbated by inflation and economic instability.

Academically, the main concerns centered on Swearingen's difficulties in teaching American History. Students in the History Department often had limited English proficiency, the courses were restricted to two hours per week, and the classes were not formally integrated into the departmental curriculum. In addition, teaching materials were neither translated into Turkish nor made available in a usable form. Taken together, these constraints significantly impeded his teaching objectives. The university's decision not to extend Swearingen's appointment for an additional year constrained the development of American History courses; nonetheless, the establishment of an American Literature Chair and its continuation through the work of Robert Ball, followed by Ray West and Alexander Kern with Rockefeller Foundation support, was significant. During this period, many scholars teaching in literature were also Foundation fellows, enabling them to conduct research and further their academic training in American universities.

Correspondence and John Marshall's diaries clearly demonstrate that USIS and Cultural Affairs Officers maintained highly active communication and engagement with the university, at times provoking reactions from the Deans due to their close involvement. This cannot be said of Marshall, as the Foundation preferred to conduct all technical and bureaucratic decisions through university administrators (rector and deans) as a matter of policy. Marshall exemplified cultural diplomacy: rather than overtly promoting American values or Americanized initiatives, he sought to exert influence subtly, generally waiting for the first move to come from the host institution. As a representative of a global organization such as the Rockefeller Foundation, his interactions with individuals and institutions inevitably involved discussions of grants or project support. Nevertheless, in every context or project, he remained in contact with USIS or the Embassy, operating within the boundaries of America's international perspective. Marshall affirmed the principle that the Rockefeller Foundation and its representatives operate with inherent obligations to the U.S. government and national interests, and that the institution's reputation for impartiality in its international activities is maintained precisely by adhering to the boundaries set by those obligations.At the same time, in an interoffice memorandum dated April 1, 1955, he critically noted the limitations of Cultural Affairs Officers, particularly in intercultural communication:"I suppose in the last ten years, I

must have encountered abroad at least a hundred cultural officers, and probably considerably more. It is harsh to say, but certainly not more than ten seemed to me at all well qualified for the posts they held."

In conclusion, this initiative at Ankara University successfully established the American Studies Chair within the faculty, ensuring that American Literature, alongside English Language and Literature, became a recognized main field of study at the university.

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Chapter 2

TRAUMATIC HAUNTING AND THE LEGACY OF THE HOLOCAUST: HAROLD PINTER'S *ASHES TO ASHES*[1]

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No one / bears witness for the / witness.

Paul Celan, "Ashglory"

Introduction

In a 1993 interview with Mel Gussow, when asked whether he would ever write a play on the Holocaust, 2005 Nobel Prize winner for literature Pinter replied, "I don't know. There's something in me that wants to do something about it. It's so difficult." (Gussow, 1994, p. 137). Even though Pinter was aware of the almost impossible nature of writing on this gruesome event, he later, in 1996, embarked on this challenging subject and penned *Ashes to Ashes*, arguably one of the most stunning examples of English theatre about the Holocaust. Even though *Ashes to Ashes* is most abstruse in its representation of the Holocaust, it nevertheless remains Pinter's most direct investigation of the Nazi genocide. The subject of the Holocaust also resonates across some other plays by Pinter, but not as strongly as in *Ashes to Ashes*. Harold Bloom in the introduction to his book *Harold Pinter* remarks that "His art has some undefined but palpable relation to the holocaust". (Bloom, 1987, p. 1). In an interview with Mark Taylor-Batty, Pinter himself accepts that besides *Ashes to Ashes* where he deliberately addresses the Holocaust, his first full-length play, *The Birthday Party* (1958), is unintentionally informed by his post-holocaust consciousness (Batty, 2005, p. 87).

Written in one act, *Ashes to Ashes* had its world premiere production by Toneelgroep, a repertory company based in Amsterdam. The play was first presented in the UK by the Royal Court at the Ambassadors theatre in London on 12 September 1996, directed by Pinter himself. The impulse for this play, Michael Billington informs us in his biography of Pinter, came after Pinter's reading of Gitta Sereny's book *Albert Speer: His Battle with Truth* on the life of Albert Speer who was Hitler's Chief Architect and Minister for Armaments and War Productions. (Billington, 2007, p. 374). Starting ostensibly with a couple's private relationship and their memories of a former love affair, the play suddenly delves into memories of the Holocaust and links a collective memory of it with the private memories of a woman who has no experience of the Holocaust. Gradually the distinction between the relationship and the Holocaust, as well as between reality and fantasy are blurred, and the present becomes acutely intermingled with the legacy of a recent past that does not obviously include the characters.

Trauma of the Holocaust

Ashes to Ashes opens in a typically Pinteresque fashion—in medias res—while the only two characters of the play Rebecca and Devlin are engaged in a nebulous conversation. Rebecca, who does not seem well, is sitting on a chair; her partner or husband Devlin is standing, and he appears to be questioning her. Devlin, sometimes like a therapist, sometimes as an interlocutor is trying to obtain information from Rebecca about an obscure masochistic love affair with an enigmatic former lover. Even though his questions suggest the jealousy of a husband or a partner feverishly enquiring about his partner's sexual history, from the general attitude of Devlin in provoking the flow of information, we get the feeling that he, just like a therapist, is trying to heal a hysteric woman exposed to a—presumably sexual—trauma. In a way, through questioning, he attempts to bring her repressed traumatic experiences into consciousness by putting them into language. Based on the information Pinter provides, we can never be sure throughout the play whether Rebecca is speaking under the effect of hypnosis, or not. However, the way she narrates the events through constant shifts of the topic, the increasing tension of her memories, long silences and pauses all suggest a pattern of hypnosis which persists from the beginning till the very end of the play.

As trauma theorist Cathy Caruth suggests, the trauma concept is not straightforwardly referential, and as its experience overwhelms the victim, it resists language and representation. Nevertheless, while denying a direct referentiality she does not completely rule it out, rather emphasises a belated reference. She contends that "understanding of trauma in terms of its indirect relation to reference, does not deny or eliminate the possibility of reference but insists, precisely, on the inescapability of its belated impact" (Caruth, 1996, p. 7). In line with Caruth, Inga Clendinnen eliminates the possibility of a direct reference and proposes that "The most effective imagined evocations of the Holocaust seem to proceed either by invocation […] or, perhaps more effectively, by indirection" (2004, p. 185). Pinter was somehow aware of this power of indirect reference to the Holocaust and, therefore, in *Ashes to Ashes*, utilises this method of indirection in representing it. In fact, labelled one of the prominent exponents of the Theatre of the Absurd, his earlier plays in particular have been rather enigmatic, lacking direct references. He mostly avoids specifying a place or time for his plays. *Ashes to Ashes*, contrary to his previous works, does have a referent, even though it is never overtly

expressed. First, the time of the play is 'the present' and, after a passage of time we can understand Rebecca's recounting the Nazi atrocities as Pinter refers to them allusively in the register of memory.

No matter how nonsensical Rebecca's talk sounds, as she keeps talking, all her references turn out to be relating the atrocities of the Holocaust and its after-effects. Although neither the Holocaust nor any atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis are ever directly mentioned throughout the play, when Devlin questions her about her former lover's job, Rebecca says that he was working as a guide in a kind of travel agency where he had quite a high status with lots of responsibilities. However, her answer proves evasive when she later asserts that he was working at a factory where people "were all wearing caps… the workpeople… soft caps… and they took them off when he came in" (Pinter, 1997, p. 23)[3] and those people "had such a great respect for him" (25). Those details increase our suspicion about the real job of the former lover. In fact, as Manuela M. Reiter informs us, the German term for guide, "führer", is also ascribed to high-ranking Nazis just like Albert Speer who was responsible for the railway system and travel, including deportations of the Jews (1997', p. 187). Besides the lover's obscure profession, the factory that he runs appears peculiar because Rebecca says it was "exceedingly damp" (25) and workpeople weren't dressed for the weather. The detail of the soft caps, people who doff their heads in great respect, dampness in the factory, inadequate working attire all suggest Nazi concentration camps. Pinter may have been inspired here by the biography of Albert Speer, who was responsible for the slave factories, as well as many other popular representations of the Holocaust in literature and television. Rebecca also claims those people would even sing for her lover if he asked them to. In Lanzmann's documentary *Shoah*, the survivor Srebnik says during his years in the camp he was tasked with singing to cheer up the German officers (Lanzman, 1985). Pinter was perhaps conscious of the fact from the film or various other resources addressing Jews' singing for the Nazis, and he thus chose to evoke this practice in *Ashes to Ashes* as well.

Moreover, the factory where Rebecca's lover worked in some capacity or other, did not have a bathroom, as she recounts: "there was one other thing. I wanted to go to the bathroom. But I simply couldn't find it. I looked everywhere. I'm sure they had one. But I never found out where it was" (27). This reference to absent bathrooms also has associations connected to Nazi

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[3] Further citations from the play will be given by page number only.

labour camps where the sanitary conditions of the workers were very poor. Besides, in the actual camps and factories, there were no bathrooms but only latrines in the form of holes in stones which inmates were supposed to use simultaneously in very large groups. Rebecca's reminiscing about the lack of bathrooms can also be read as a reference to Jews who were taken to the so-called bathrooms for a shower but were herded instead into gas chambers and murdered. This is one of the most common images used in referring to the Holocaust either in books or films and is heavily engraved on public memory. All those images Pinter alludes to are recognisable for the post-holocaust generation who have grown up in the shadow of the Holocaust through stories they have heard or watched: transportations in trains to the camps, babies torn away from their crying mothers, people in coats carrying their baggage with them in heavy winter, the factories and working Jews with caps and in striped pyjamas. These haunting images are clear signs of a collective trauma of the Holocaust in the post-holocaust generation including Pinter himself.

As Rebecca provides further description of the lover's job, it gets easier to recognise the images and events as Nazi atrocities. She says "He did work for a travel agency. He was a guide. He used to go to the local railway station and walk down the platform and tear all the babies from the arms of their screaming mothers" (27). Rebecca is severely traumatised by this image of babies being torn from their mothers' arms, since she obsessively repeats this painful image in the play. This is, indeed, one of the most unbearable images related to the cruel Nazi practices during the Holocaust. Pinter admits that he has also "been haunted by the image of the Nazis picking up the babies on bayonet-spikes and throwing them out of windows" (Billington, 2007, p. 375). Traumatised by this heart-breaking picture of babies being forcefully separated from their mothers, Pinter compulsively revisits the image and plagues Rebecca with it in the play. This compulsive repetition proves that the playwright as well as Rebecca, acts out this traumatic image by constantly remembering it, as both of them seem unable to get these images out of their minds.

When Mireia Aragay asks Pinter if the play is about Nazism, he replies that

[it is] about the images of Nazi Germany; I don't think anyone can ever get that out of their mind. The Holocaust is probably the worst thing that ever happened because it was so calculated, deliberate and precise and so fully documented by the people who actually did it. Their view of it is very

significant. They counted how many people they were murdering every day, and they looked upon it. (Aragay, 2005, p. 98)

From this statement, it is understood that just like Rebecca, who is haunted by the disturbing images that have also plagued the consciousness of millions who did not have a first-hand experience of the Holocaust, Pinter himself was a victim of those traumas by proxy. As he also points out in the interview with Aragay, he was brought up listening and being exposed to the images and horrors of the Second World War and the Holocaust. "They've been with me all my life, really," he says, "you can't avoid them, because they're around you simply all the time. That's the point about *Ashes to Ashes*. I think Rebecca inhabits that" (Aragay and Simo, 2005, p. 98). Rebecca, as the narrator of the memories, becomes the voice of a collective memory of the Holocaust. And in the chronotope of the play these memories of the past ceaselessly repeat themselves in the present time by creating "a scenic time of suffering" (Angel-Perez, 2009, p. 151). In this particular context, Pinter's repeated allusions account for an acting out of this vicarious traumatisation which haunted the playwright throughout his life and writing career. Although, in the interview with Gussow he states that it is hard to talk about the Holocaust and its devastating effects, because of the overwhelming impositions of the horrific legacies of the event that plagued him constantly, with *Ashes to Ashes* he dramatizes what has been haunting his consciousness for many years. The play, thus, can be evaluated as an attempt to work through the trauma that kept haunting him, to get rid of this incessant nightmare and make the silence of the Holocaust audible once again.

As traumatic events have no precedent most of the time, language with its signs and symbols falls short of articulating them. Trauma that hinders linguistic representation however also claims expression. For this reason, any narration formed by this immediate urge lacks chronological and logical sequence. In Rebecca's case, this intrinsic quality of trauma makes itself very clear as she attempts to put it into words. While the first impression of the conversation between the couple suggests the memories of a dead relationship with a former lover which probably left some scars on her mind, new images start to haunt Rebecca as the conversation progresses, evoking completely different memories. Her use of phrases such as "did I ever tell you…?", (21) "oh yes, there is something I've forgotten to tell you", (47) "by the way", (71) "don't you want to know why?" (29) or "there's something I've been dying to tell you", (33) as well as the way in which she constantly shifts topic, and her

desire to share them are all evocative of her being haunted by certain memories of a traumatising past that compulsively intrude into her consciousness. Bessel A. Van der Kolk proposes that people experiencing vehement emotions because of being exposed to trauma can have great difficulty in forming a coherent narrative that captures the essence of what has happened, because narrative memory is blocked at the time of the traumatic happening (2007, p. 287). Nevertheless, due to the traumatic nature of these memories, traditional narrative falls short of expression, and this renders a coherent verbalisation impossible. In this case, as Anne Whitehead argues "the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterised by repetition and indirection" (2004, p. 3). Rebecca, as an example, cannot give an orderly account of her memories; she falls into repetition, and throughout the tense dialogue between her and Devlin, jumps from one image to another without any comprehensible connection.

As the language is formed by the qualities of trauma, its use in the play, therefore, posits the ungraspable and fragmented nature of Rebecca's traumatic memories. For instance, as she talks about her lover's job, she suddenly switches to talking about a siren fading away:

Rebecca: […] He used to go to the local railway station and walk down the platform and tear all the babies from the arms of their screaming mothers.
Pause.
Devlin: Did he?
Silence.
Rebecca: By the way, I'm terribly upset.
Devlin: Are you? Why?
Rebecca: Well, it's about that police siren we heard a couple of minutes ago.
Devlin: What police siren? (29)

As the memories make her uncomfortable, she talks about them unwillingly as if she is forced by an invisible hand. That clearly attests to the unconscious intrusions of the evets that traumatised Rebecca. And as the traumatic memory resist articulation, she cannot give a complete, ordered narration.

Furthermore, Rebecca's claim of hearing the wail of a police siren and its slowly fading away leaves her "terribly upset", (29) "terribly unsecure", (31) possibly evokes familiar authoritarian police states, that are overtly dramatised

in Pinter's political plays, such as *One for the Road* (1984), *Mountain Language* (1988), *Party Time* (1991) and *The New World Order* (1991). In *Ashes to Ashes* the siren may be considered as a signification of the Nazi rule and repression. Gene Plunka also witnesses to the Holocaust survivors mentioning police sirens, (2009, p. 322) which may suggest Rebecca's association of the sirens with the traumatic events in camps. Rebecca says that the siren's fading away and echoing for somebody else makes her feel insecure.

Rebecca: I hate it fading away. I hate it echoing away. I hate it leaving me. I hate losing it. I hate somebody else possessing it. I want it to be mine, all the time. It's such a beautiful sound. Don't you think?

Devlin: Don't worry, there'll always be another one. There's one on its way to you now. Believe me. You'll hear it again soon. Any minute. (31)

Here the sirens seem to evoke the time when Rebecca was with her lover who was probably one of the Nazi perpetrators. She seems to associate the sound of a siren with her lover and the atrocities Nazis committed; therefore, the sound triggers her memories. Devlin, on the other hand, soothes her assuring her that she will never be without a police siren, again possibly, referring to an ever-present state repression, present atrocities or upcoming ones to be committed and suffered.

In a similar way, she unexpectedly starts talking about living in Dorset where perhaps she has not lived before.

Rebecca: Oh yes, there's something I've forgotten to tell you. It was funny. I looked out of the garden window, out of the window into the garden, in the middle of summer, in that house in Dorset, do you remember? Oh no, you weren't there. I don't think anyone else was there. No. I was all by myself. I was alone. I was looking out of the window and I saw a whole crowd of people walking through the woods, on their way to the sea, in the direction of the sea. They seemed to be very cold, they were wearing coats, although it was such a beautiful day. A beautiful, warm, Dorset day. They were carrying bags. There were… guides… ushering them, guiding them along. They walked through the woods and I could see them in the distance walking across the cliff and down to the sea. (47-48)

It is not difficult to recognise that the herds of people Rebecca talks about are the people deported to the Nazi concentration camps, literally to their death. Rebecca claims that she was the only person to see them denoting the

silence of the world when these atrocities were being committed. On the other hand, by the device of bringing these deportees to Dorset, Pinter universalises the visions of the Holocaust. He pinpoints the fact that, Holocaust is not limited to the 1940s and the countries it has been committed. In an interview, Pinter underlines the universal message of *Ashes to Ashes* and says that "it's not only Nazis I'm talking about in *Ashes to Ashes*, because it would be a dereliction on my part to simply concentrate on the Nazis and leave it at that […] I am talking about us and our conception of our past and our history, and what it does to us in the present" (Aragay and Simo, 2005, p. 99-100). As Pinter argues, not only the Nazis and the atrocities that they perpetrated but how they are being received in today's world is the subject of the play.

While Devlin further questions her about living in Dorset and what happened there, Rebecca starts talking about a condition she calls 'mental elephantiasis' rather than answering his questions: "This mental elephantiasis means that when you spill an ounce of gravy, for example, it immediately expands and becomes a vast sea of gravy. It becomes a sea of gravy which surrounds you on all sides and you suffocate in a voluminous sea of gravy." (50-51) 'Mental elephantiasis' that Rebecca mentions highlights again the individual responsibility before an atrocity such as the Holocaust. The sea of gravy denotes a traumatic image or a memory of the event that expands in the consciousness of the individual to a point of suffocation. As in Rebecca's case, the memory of the event becomes a vast sea of atrocities penetrating her life and not allowing her to ignore what has happened and what might happen in the future. Commenting on the way Rebecca depicts what has happened and her position as a non-victim, in his Nobel speech Pinter says that

Ashes to Ashes … seems to me to be taking place under water. A drowning woman, her hand reaching up through the waves, dropping down out of sight, reaching for others, but finding nobody there, either above or under the water, finding only shadows, reflections, floating; the woman unable to escape the doom that seemed to belong only to others. (Billington, 2007, p. 433)

Rebecca is flooded by the legacy of an unsettling past and desperately looking for someone to listen to her. Instead, what she finds are the shadows of the past that refuse to go away and unrelentingly haunt her.

As Pinter informs us in the stage directions, *Ashes to Ashes* takes place in the present, which could have several different meanings. If we consider

1996, when the play was written, as the present time, and the characters to be in their forties, it is impossible for Rebecca to have experienced the genocide as the Holocaust had taken place before she was born. Pinter in his Nobel Prize lecture states that he always starts writing plays naming his characters as A, B and C which are "people with will and an individual sensibility of their own, made out of component parts you are unable to change, manipulate or distort" (Pinter, 2005). That means his characters are as autonomous as they can be and their individual characteristics are clearly rounded, even for the playwright himself. He cannot manipulate their thoughts and feelings. If we take into account the characters' possible backgrounds and Pinter's habit of naming his characters with a purpose, he must have named Rebecca based on some criteria. Rebecca is a name commonly given to Jewish girls as, in the *Hebrew Bible*, Rebecca is, the second matriarch of the Jewish nation, the wife of Isaac and mother of Jacob and Esau. This suggests a high possibility that Pinter's Rebecca is a Jewish woman, and probably has ancestors who suffered in the Holocaust. She was born into a world tainted by new atrocities as well as by her ancestors' sufferings which return to haunt her. In this respect, in *Ashes to Ashes*, Pinter dramatises, not the real experience of the Holocaust—which indubitably requires a greater challenge—but the way the Holocaust with its imagery haunts the subsequent generations.

Dori Laub suggests that the Holocaust is so catastrophic that "the event produces no witness" (1995, p. 65) because it either exterminated its victims or rendered the survivors speechless due to its dreadfulness. However, there are many arguments suggesting that the trauma of one generation can be transmitted to following ones through their indirect recall. This transgenerational trauma is a still-debated phenomena. Among the first to theorise transgenerational trauma, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok observe that "the dead do not return, but their lives' unfinished business is unconsciously handed down to their descendants" (1994, p. 167). In this view, trauma that is too serious and large in extent does not stay confined to its real victims but can be transferred to the next generations. Marianne Hirsch calls this poignant instance of trauma's continuing effect across generations 'postmemory'. Postmemory occurs in a generation who did not experience a traumatic event directly as opposed to the generation before. When the perpetual trauma and its second-hand memories are very powerful, they also become traumatic for the next generation. Hirsch in her article argues that in case of postmemory, descendants of survivors (of victims as well as of perpetrators) of massive traumatic events connect so deeply to the previous

generation's remembrances of the past that they need to call that connection memory and thus that, in certain extreme circumstances, memory can be transmitted to those who were not actually there to live an event (2008, p. 105-6). In an era of 'posts' which continue to proliferate, akin to the "post" in postmodernism or post-colonialism; postmemory shares their belatedness, and looking backwards defines the present moment in relation to a troubled past. It alludes at the same time to a continuity and a rupture. Hirsch defines it as "a structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience" (Hirsch, 2008, p. 106). Rebecca's relationship to the Holocaust, as well as Pinter's and many others' whose lives have been informed by it, is also defined by this post-ness. Our knowledge of the Holocaust is mediated and, therefore, the experience is indirect. Rebecca's life is overshadowed and overwhelmed by traumatic experiences that she can only know by means of stories, images, memoirs and other mediated knowledge. It means she too is not a real victim but a victim of the postmemory of the Holocaust.

Emphasising the timelessness of trauma and its effect on people even after many years, literary and trauma theorist Michelle Balaev writes that

The theory indicates that a massive trauma experienced by a group in the historical past can be experienced by an individual living centuries later who shares a similar attribute of the historical group, such as sharing the same race, religion, nationality, or gender due to the timeless, repetitious, and infectious characteristics of traumatic experience and memory. […] [It] collapses boundaries between the individual and group, thereby suggesting that a person's contemporary identity can be "vicariously traumatized" by reading about a historical narrative or due to a shared genealogy that affords the ability to righteously claim the social label of "victim" as part of personal or public identity. (2008, p. 152-153)

This vicarious experience, in consequence, leads both real victims and following generations to be haunted by the same traumatic memories. The vicariously traumatised people exhibit similar responses to the real victims and thus Rebecca, in *Ashes to Ashes*, represents the voice of her ancestors whose memory has been transferred to her. As Primo Levi in *The Drowned and the Saved* asserts, the real witnesses of the Holocaust cannot bear witness; that is why their ghosts continue to haunt those who are living to speak on their behalf, and to tell their stories (Levi, 1988, p. 83). In view of this, it is possible to suggest that Rebecca voices the real victims' stories. Even though

she is not one of those who "saw the gorgon" (Levi, 1988, p. 83), she claims responsibility and shares their pain.

Although Dominick LaCapra with the notion of "empathic unsettlement" which entails "being responsive to the traumatic experiences of others," (LaCapra, 2001, p. 41) points out this empathetic understanding of the others, he warns against an excessive appropriation. Because excessive empathy with the victims may become identity (LaCapra, 2001, p. 47). Growing up with such overwhelming inherited memories that profoundly affect her that she seems to appropriate them as her own and becomes a surrogate victim. At the end of the play, whilst Rebecca refers again to the people who are taken to trains, she feels so strongly for them that she identifies herself with those suffering Nazi perpetrations. While she talks about the woman whose baby was taken away, she shifts from third-person to first-person point of view. Hence, abandoning her role as a witness, she assumes the subject position of the victim and all the atrocities become her immediate experience.

Caruth posits that trauma "is never one's own" and "we are implicated in each other's traumas" (1996, p. 25). Enabling us to embrace our ethical and political relationship to history, listening or reading about the atrocities may also cause indelible effects regardless of having a first-hand experience. This ethical sharing, in turn, burdens the listener with an ethical responsibility for the real victims. Rebecca claims this responsibility to bear witness to the history that she inherited if not directly experienced. Pinter, acknowledging this ethical responsibility and the necessary burden of testimony, challenges us, with Rebecca's testimony, to confront the existing trauma of the world which is implicated in our memory too. Although the Holocaust is long gone, its legacy continues to plague contemporary consciousness and Rebecca's situation attests to her close emotional association with the trauma of the Holocaust.

Emphasising the enormity of the experience of the trauma, Kali Tal asserts that "only the experience of trauma has the traumatizing effect" (1996, p. 121). Suggesting, therefore, that only victims can and should narrate the traumatic event, she repudiates the second-hand or witness accounts of trauma as being inauthentic. Aware of the impossibility of giving a complete account of what happened and how it felt, Pinter does not directly approach the experience of the Holocaust restricts himself to memories and the vicarious effects of it. Rebecca, in the same way, rejects any claim to participation or experience of any of the events.

Devlin: Now let me say this. A little while ago you made… shall we say… you made a somewhat oblique reference to your blokes… your lover? … and babies and mothers, et cetera. And platforms. I inferred from this that you were talking about some kind of atrocity. Now let me ask you this. What authority do you think you yourself possess which would give you the right to discuss such an atrocity?

Rebecca: I have no such authority. Nothing has ever happened to me. Nothing has ever happened to any of my friends. I have never suffered. Nor have my friends. (41)

Through this dialogue, Pinter underlines the challenge of moral engagement. Referring to the ethical considerations related to the Holocaust, Rebecca denies claiming the authority to comment on or define its experience. This conversation also evokes Adorno's predicament, questioning how one can express this suffering, and how life can still be possible for those that were spared extinction (Adorno, 1991, p. 87-88).

Conclusion

Even though Rebecca was one of those who were spared death, her life is incessantly perturbed. Pinter manifests the difficulty of going on to live after Auschwitz and the problem of representing it with existing means of art and language, but at the same time acknowledging the need to speak it out attempts to reflect this dilemma. Rebecca, as one of the thousands of people who are all haunted by the painful memory of the Holocaust, becomes an embodiment of collective unconscious memory. Through Rebecca, Pinter reminds us once again of the unexplainable event and its legacy for the following generations, and while doing this, he opens an old wound and calls the audience forth as witness to the atrocities haunting everybody's consciousness. The play forces its audiences to confront some of the most challenging moral and ethical issues of modernity, the notion of individual and collective responsibility. Pinter, by tasking Rebecca with the ethical responsibility to bear witness to history and vicarious trauma, rebukes his audience for becoming involved in this collective trauma, not feeling the guilt but by being agents for 'never again'. Rebecca, suffering from Holocaust memories by empathetically identifying herself with the others but, on the other hand not being touched by it in reality, becomes "innocent victim and guilty survivor" (Merrit, 2000, p. 258). She, aware of the fact that everyone's life is connected with everyone else's, claims the responsibility of bearing witness and commemorating the dead. By doing

so, she speaks on their behalf and becomes a mouthpiece for their unarticulated trauma.

Billington, striking the right note, regards Pinter's attempt as a hope for change: "[the play] implies that we all have within us the capacity for resistance and for imaginative identification with the suffering of others. Therein, implies Pinter, lies the only hope for change" (2007, p. 383) Ultimately, what I contend is that *Ashes to Ashes*, as a product of the postmemory of the Holocaust, attests to the legacy of this act of human rights violation with its gruesome realities. It also articulates the challenges and ethical stakes involved in the representation of the Holocaust. At the same time, by testifying our recent past and bringing it into the limelight, the play both commemorates the victims of the Holocaust and attempts a working-through from this grievous event for its playwright as well as for the generations haunted by its ghosts.

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Chapter 3

FROM TRAVEL TO TRANSFORMATION: JOURNEY AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL QUEST IN URSULA K. LE GUIN'S *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS*[1]

Ece SAATÇIOĞLU[2]

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Science Fiction, perhaps more than any other literary or cultural form, offers a particularly fertile terrain for the creation of original, unconventional, and destabilizing metaphors. These metaphors challenge socially normalized and often unexamined distinctions between human and alien, human and machine, reality and illusion, and the self and the other. The conventional inventory of science fiction, such as time travel, alternate worlds, entropy, relativism, and the search for a unified field theory, functions metaphorically as a powerful means of exploring the construction of subjectivity. Through the process of "estrangement," science fiction writers vividly dramatize the ways in which difference has been mobilized by dominant cultures to maintain hegemony and its associated practices. Science fiction "provides a rich source of generic metaphors for the depiction of otherness" and "enables difference to be constructed in terms of binary oppositions which reinforce relations of dominance and subordination" (Wolmark, 1994, p. 2). More broadly, science fiction narratives interrogate "how contemporary reality will be viewed against the larger backdrop of future history, or against the wider context that alien cultures can provide" (Cioffi, 1982, p. 133). By extrapolating and speculating on the human condition within fictional worlds, regardless of theme, setting (whether the 'actual' physical world or an alternative one), or temporal frame (past, present, or future), science fiction foregrounds the contingency of human experience. Consequently, science fiction worlds offer readers "a chance to stretch their minds by experiencing an alternate world and then a chance to return to consensus reality with a changed perspective" (Cummins, 1991, p. 7). In this way, science fiction enables readers to broaden their horizons and reassess both the self and the other from a renewed perspective.

Traveling involves movement from one place to another, either between geographical locations or across cultural experiences; within this framework, movement functions both physically and metaphorically. In this sense, "the relocation of self in a foreign environment involves the questioning of (old) values, and the inner journey relies on the faculty of memory to negotiate the boundaries between familiar and unfamiliar, safe and dangerous, past and present" (Egerer, 1996, p. 84). Traveling thus enables the self to broaden its horizons, to "see things differently from what they are, differently from how one has seen them, and differently from what one is" (Minh-ha, 1994, p. 23). Through travel, the self no longer maintains fixed boundaries; rather, these boundaries are continually revised as the traveler "crosses over, traverses territory, [and] abandons fixed positions" (Said, 1991, p. 18). The traveling

self is both the self that "moves physically from one place to another" and the self that embarks upon an indeterminate journeying practice, one that must constantly negotiate between home and abroad, native and adopted cultures, or, more creatively, "between a here, a there, and an elsewhere" (Minh-ha, 1994, p. 9). To survive and function meaningfully, the traveler must negotiate new languages, traditions, regulations, and cultural codes and practices. Through this process, the self becomes reflexively aware of itself and is realized as the hero of its own narrative of departure and return. As Walter Benjamin suggests, "identity and location [are] inseparable: knowing oneself [is] an exercise in mapping where one stands" (qtd. in Keith and Pile, 1993, p. 26). Identity, therefore, concerns how an individual understands and constructs their relationship with the world, rendering questions of identity inseparable from subjectivity, experience, and social relations, all of which are shaped by social, cultural, and spatial contexts.

Those who are forced to travel and leave their homes for an uncertain destiny must confront and ultimately move beyond the sorrow of homelessness and estrangement in order to adapt to isolation, uprootedness, and the unfamiliar land in which they resettle. Home, while often idealized as a place of belonging, may also function as a space of confinement; consequently, the traveling self is compelled to construct or adopt a new sense of home. As a concept, home provides a sense of "place" or belonging, offering stability, shelter, security, and emotional comfort. It is therefore deeply associated with intimacy and safety and is commonly linked to "pleasant memories, intimate situations, a place of warmth and protective security amongst parents, brothers and sisters, [and] loved people" (Sarup, 1994, p. 94). Exile, by contrast, signifies the individual's estrangement from the original community, transforming travel into a diasporic journey fundamentally concerned with settlement and the reestablishment of roots elsewhere. In this context, foreignness appears to diminish when the displaced subject no longer draws rigid boundaries between self and others and begins to adopt the new environment as home. Nevertheless, home remains a deeply troubling and unstable concept for the exile, since the "original" home cannot be fully recovered, nor can its presence or absence be entirely erased from the "remade" home (Minh-ha, 1994, p. 15). Home, thus, persists as a site of intimacy even within alienation. The exilic subject consequently inhabits at least two cultural and spatial realities, resulting in what Edward Said terms a *contrapuntal awareness*, which entails "the questioning of binary divisions between 'us' and 'them' by according neither the privilege of 'objectivity' to

'our side' nor the encumbrance of 'subjectivity' to theirs" (1993, p. 312). Such a condition inevitably generates recurring questions: What is home? When does a place of residence become home? What makes a place home—one's place of origin, the location of family, or the site of present dwelling? These questions are inseparable from the problem of identity, for within a spatialized discourse of both real and imagined geographies, the inquiry "Who am I?" becomes inseparable from "Where am I?" Questions such as "Is this where I want to be?", "Where do I want to be?", and "How do I get there?" become especially critical for subjects who are marginalized, exiled, displaced, dislocated, and fragmented (Yağcıoğlu, 2012, p. 114).

When individuals significantly change their geographical locations, they often encounter profound discrepancies in social reality, as abrupt shifts in living conditions are reflected in patterns of social conduct, and consequently, in interpersonal relationships. If relocation is forced and involves an environment that is both geographically and culturally distant, the individual may enter a process of alienation and self-adjustment; by contrast, voluntary relocation generally allows this process to unfold more smoothly. Cultural adaptation is shaped by a range of personal and contextual factors, including an individual's expectations, age, prior travel experiences, autonomy and adaptability, physical appearance, linguistic competence, and tolerance for ambiguity or conflict. One of the most effective ways to negotiate and coexist within an unfamiliar environment is to explore and learn the host culture and its language(s). Nevertheless, the mere acquisition of cultural knowledge is often insufficient, as cultural differences may become overwhelming following the initial encounter commonly termed as *culture shock*. As a result, newcomers may experience worry, anger, isolation, loneliness, frustration, and feelings of inadequacy. Accordingly, "anxiety, disorientation, and social difficulty are directly proportional to the degree of control the migrant exercised in initiating the cultural change and the 'cultural distance' between the new and the old culture" (Barnes, 1997, p. 287).

When one's native cultural framework proves inadequate for resisting or interpreting an alien culture, the newcomer's sense of identity begins to erode. The individual may feel fragmented, foreign, alienated, and functionless, a condition that can culminate in an identity crisis in which fundamental questions, such as who one is, what one is, and what one is to do, can no longer be satisfactorily answered. At this stage, the newcomer is compelled to reassess both self and circumstance in order to determine whether to return to the native culture or attempt adaptation to the alien one. While successful

adaptation may alleviate feelings of foreignness, failure to adapt often results in the individual's behavior being perceived as irrational or even "insane," leading to social exclusion or elimination within the host culture. Under such conditions, healthy and sustained communication between the newcomer and the native population becomes essential for psychological and social survival. A crucial factor facilitating this communicative process is memory, which serves as evidence of the self's cultural, historical, and personal foundations. The past reasserts the grounding of identity and restores a sense of agency, enabling the newcomer to construct a bridge between past and present, an essential mechanism for orientation. Through this process, the newcomer learns "to live commensally with the natural order and each other, forging into [a] functional whole the surviving elements of their native culture and the newly learned interpretations of reality" (Barnes, 1997, p. 293). Consequently, the effects of culture shock diminish as the individual regains the ability to situate themselves meaningfully within the new environment. Ultimately, adaptation allows the newcomer to redefine their identity, recover a sense of self-control and authority, and experience a renewed sense of authenticity.

In literature, travel functions as a primary means of depicting change. The travel narrative[3] is always a narrative of setting and difference; it "provokes new concepts, new ways of seeing and being, or at the very least, when the old ways of seeing and being have been stubbornly imported into foreign territory, subjects them to strain and fatigue" (Robertson, 1994, p. 2). Writers contextualize questions of home and exile by linking them to the specific needs of individual characters, whose attempts to come to terms with differing understandings of what constitutes home and exile reveal the conceptual split inherent in both terms (Egerer, 1996, p. 18). The "leaving home" plot reflects an individual's desire to discover and construct a personal identity. In order to claim a place within society, the subject must locate a new home in which a fully realized identity, closely associated with place, can emerge. Both science fiction and travel narratives address encounters with different worlds and cultures. Science fiction narratives frequently involve the movement of protagonists from one space to another. In such narratives, an outside observer leaves his or her homeland, most often in the context of an assigned mission,

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[3] Discussing the theoretical issues which revolve around the gendered reading of travel narratives is beyond the scope of this study; however, Ursula K. Le Guin's science fiction novels, which are also travel narratives, can be read accordingly.

and encounters an alien culture in an unfamiliar environment. Within this encounter, "misunderstandings arise from the ensuing clash of value systems, and both sides learn something, if only a little, from the encounter" (Lefanu, 1988, p. 38). In this regard, Ursula K. Le Guin's novels offer particularly stimulating depictions of the relationship between the familiar and the strange, or between identity and space, through which identity is continuously constructed and reconstructed.

Ursula K. Le Guin[4] characteristically explores issues central to the human condition, such as relationships, the necessity of communication, the acceptance of death, the uses of power, the need for balance, and the search for identity. Movement in her fiction functions as both a physical and a psychological journey. Her typical narrative traces a protagonist's quest for maturity and psychological integration, with balance and wholeness emerging as dominant thematic concerns. Le Guin's protagonists are often professional or amateur anthropologists who experience a conflict between their public duty to their own culture and their private ethical responsibility toward individuals in the culture(s) they encounter. They are ultimately compelled to privilege public action, a decision that exacts a high personal cost and results in anger, pain, isolation, and fragmentation. These concerns converge most powerfully in *The Left Hand of Darkness* which is widely regarded as one of Le Guin's most accomplished works. Set in the distant future on the planet Gethen, the novel presents a richly detailed depiction of an alternative society, complete with its myths and legends, religious practices, and androgynous inhabitants. Through this setting, Le Guin explores themes such as sexual identity, incest, fidelity, betrayal, and xenophobia, all of which foreground encounters with the "other" self. Le Guin[5] further interrogates what human society might resemble in the absence of gender distinctions, a speculative premise closely linked to experiences of displacement, dislocation, and fragmentation. This study examines oppositional constructions such as home

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[4] Ursula K. Le Guin (1929-2018) is one of the most significant authors of science fiction and fantasy to have emerged in the twentieth century. Especially in the 1960s and 1970s, she published a notable body of science fiction and fantasy, and, not surprisingly, received several awards (four Hugo Awards of the World Science Fiction Convention, three Nebula Awards from the Science Fiction Writers of America, the Jupiter Award, the 1969 Boston *Globe-Horn Book* Award, a Newbery Honor Book citation, and the National Book Award).

[5] Despite its success, the novel or Le Guin has been criticized for her usage of generic male pronouns for characters that are androgynous and thus presenting a male-centered view of androgyny.

versus exile, inclusion versus exclusion, and emplacement versus displacement to demonstrate how *The Left Hand of Darkness* represents the progressive integration of the self through the process of journeying.

To understand Le Guin's fiction, the reader must first apprehend the nature of the alternate worlds she constructs. In her nonfiction work *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*, Le Guin emphasizes the centrality of "worlds," suggesting that "[a] person is seen, seen at a certain distance, usually in the landscape. The place is there, the person is there" (1989, p. 94). For her, the act of writing a novel begins with an image of place, followed by the human or nonhuman characters who inhabit it. "Le Guin's writings tell that much is in a place: family, memories, regeneration, wilderness, stories, spirituality, community, past, future, among others" (Wayne, 1996, p. 69). Commitment to place, therefore, reflects a broader commitment to the routes and relationships of life. Accordingly, place and person are mutually constitutive, and the imagined world functions to challenge or disrupt common assumptions about reality.

Le Guin defines the "other" as "the being who is different from yourself," noting that such difference may lie in sex, income, language, dress, behavior, skin color, or even in "the number of its legs and heads" (1989, p. 83). On this basis, she conceptualizes the alien in several distinct forms, including the sexual alien, the social alien, the cultural alien, and the racial alien. Within her imagined worlds, Le Guin "brings into conflict beings that by appearances and behavior could be human, though there is some factor present that creates doubt or, conversely, misguided certainty" (Hull, 1986, p. 8). Although the "other" is often defined through embodied difference, similarity and familiarity are equally significant in Le Guin's fiction, as her work consistently seeks to reveal the possibility of harmony between opposites.

The Left Hand of Darkness is one of Le Guin's Hainish novels, which focus on both the physical and emotional journeys undertaken by protagonists as they enter cultures and communities strikingly different from their own. The Hainish novels are set in the distant future, primarily on alien worlds, and unfold long after an interstellar dark age following ancient wars, covering a narrative span of approximately twenty-five years. During this period, contact among the colony worlds is gradually reestablished. However, many of these worlds have, over time, forgotten their shared origins as a result of prolonged isolation and independent evolutionary experiments. Consequently, the humanoid inhabitants of these planets differ widely from the "standard"

Hainish population, both biologically and culturally. Through processes of adaptation, chance, and the influence of planetary environments, the Hainish develop into distinct and diverse societies. The protagonists of the Hainish novels, often portrayed as anthropologists, travel from planet to planet and from society to society, exposing each culture's underlying worldview assumptions and habitual modes of thought. They rely on advanced means of communication and transportation, such as faster-than-light spacecraft and the ansible, a device that enables instantaneous communication across light-years. Mindspeech, a form of telepathic communication employed by some inhabitants, functions as an alternative mode of interaction and reflects what Cummins describes as "Le Guin's wish for an improved mode for human relations" (1991, p. 70).

The Hainish novels emphasize the importance of diplomacy and the delicate balance between the individual and the community (Cummins, 1991, p. 12). Tensions between freedom and social constraint, loyalty and betrayal, and alienation and integration are articulated through narratives of discovery in which the exploration of the "other" simultaneously becomes a process of self-discovery. As representatives of their home planets, the protagonists encounter unfamiliar cultures and are themselves categorized as "alien" when they enter foreign worlds. This experience of alienation compels them to reassess their own sense of identity and to situate themselves within contexts where each party becomes the "other" to the other's culture. Their ability to communicate effectively with unfamiliar beings facilitates the establishment of enduring interplanetary relationships. Le Guin's protagonists are round characters in that they undergo significant transformation through encounters with alterity. Moreover, they can be considered heroic insofar as "they bring a perspective that changes the nature of the alien culture and the world with which they interact" (Cummins, 1991, p. 16). Through such figures, Le Guin presents heroism not as domination or conquest but as ethical engagement, understanding, and relational change.

Hain—derived from a German word often glossed as "grove" or "small wooded area"—is the prime world of the Ekumen in Le Guin's fictional universe[6]. The radical diversity of the Hainish world is underscored by the fact

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[6] Le Guin imagines a universe in which Earth and other planets are originally colonies of Hain which is the starting point for the exploration of the universe conducted by the people of the Ekumen. Hain is "an ancient world which later bears a burden of

that "there are eighty-four different planets that have been settled or 'seeded' by the ancient Hainish or by their ancestors" (Cummins, 1991, p. 11). It is widely accepted that "although all the planets are distinct environments with different cultures, their inhabitants share a common ancestor: the Hainish" (Cummins, 1991, p. 11). In this sense, the Hainish race functions as the origin of all humankind within the Hainish Cycle. The inhabitants of Hain are typically described as tall and slender, with pale complexions, and as possessing a highly developed and peaceful civilization. Notably, no war is said to have occurred on Hain since the interstellar dark age. Despite this internal stability, the Hainish ultimately fail to sustain a unified interplanetary civilization. As a result, smaller groups establish independent civilizations, such as the Terrans, who settle on the planet Werel, already inhabited by their long-lost and no longer recognizable relatives. In later centuries, the invention of the ansible renders interplanetary civilization once again feasible. Consequently, the League of All Worlds seeks to rediscover the scattered planets and reunite them, motivated by the looming threats of revolt and renewed warfare. This League, which is an alliance comprising eighty-three planets, dispatches envoys to recruit new planetary members and to initiate the seeding of new colonies.

In *The Left Hand of Darkness*[7], there are two central protagonists: Genly Ai, a young male envoy from Earth sent to Gethen (Winter) to persuade its inhabitants to join the Ekumen, and Estraven, a Gethenian, described as "one of the most powerful men in the country" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 5), who becomes Genly Ai's sole political supporter. Estraven accepts Genly Ai as "one of them" rather than as an outsider and seeks reciprocal recognition, urging Genly Ai to regard the Gethenians as allies in order to ensure mutual survival. As Estraven observes, "I keep forgetting that you come from another planet. But of course that's not a matter you ever forget. Though no doubt life would be much sounder and simpler and safer for you here … if you could forget it, eh?" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 9). The narrative centers on the protagonists' attempts to establish a relationship capable of revitalizing Genly Ai's mission of securing Gethen's membership in the Ekumen. Structurally, the novel takes the form of Genly Ai's report to the Ekumen, in which he recounts experiences that remain deeply painful. Interwoven with his personal observations are field

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guilt for using those colonies for callous experiments in genetic engineering" (Pierce, 1987, p. 222).

[7] All citations from the novel refer to: Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Left Hand of Darkness*. New York: Ace Books, 1969, unless otherwise stated.

reports by earlier Ekumenical observers, transcribed myths and legends from Gethenian archives, and excerpts from Estraven's diary. These narrative devices play a crucial role in shaping Genly Ai's search for identity, as well as in his processes of acculturation, adaptation, and coming to terms with life in an alien world.

Genly Ai is portrayed as a young, enthusiastic, intelligent, and experienced man, although he is frequently constrained by his own prejudices. He serves as a solitary investigator and envoy of the Ekumen, a post–League of All Worlds organization. As Genly Ai explains, the Ekumen "doesn't rule, it coordinates. Its power is precisely the power of its member states and worlds" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 18). Rather than functioning as a centralized authority or empire, the Ekumen operates as a coordinating body. It represents not a rigid political institution but an idealistic vision of free communication and exchange among planets, one that recognizes, educates, and celebrates the diversity of humankind. Genly Ai's mission to Gethen is to convey to its inhabitants that they are not alone in the universe and that a broader union of worlds exists, one to which they are invited to belong. This task places him in the dual position of messenger and mediator, responsible not only for political negotiation but also for cross-cultural understanding.

Genly Ai's name resonates with both "I" and "eye," a resonance that aptly encapsulates his position in the narrative by foregrounding the relationship between subjectivity and perception[8]. As Spivack highlights, Genly Ai "is thus both the observing 'eye' and the participating 'I'" (1984, p. 58). Situated in an alien environment, Genly Ai continually interrogates his own identity as he observes selves radically different from his own. Reflecting on his visibility among the Gethenians, he notes: "I'm not much taller than the Gethenian norm, but the difference is most noticeable in a crowd. That's him, look, there's the Envoy. Of course that was part of my job, but it was a part that got harder not easier as time went on; more and more often I longed for anonymity, for sameness. I craved to be like everybody else" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 8). Although he is physically alone, Genly Ai represents a vast interplanetary organization; yet this institutional backing does not shield him from the profound isolation he experiences in an unfamiliar world. He repeatedly confronts his solitude, recognizing himself as "alone, with a stranger, inside the walls of a dark place, in a strange snow-changed city, in the heart of the Ice Age of an alien world" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 18). Through

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[8] Spiwack and Fayad are among the various critics who point out this resemblance.

Genly Ai's heightened self-consciousness, Le Guin underscores the psychological cost of being both observer and observed in a space of radical difference.

The culture Genly Ai encounters constitutes a central aspect of the novel, as it vividly illustrates the experience of cultural shock in an alien environment. The narrative opens with a ceremonial parade accompanying the king to the inauguration of a new bridge, an elaborate and seemingly exotic ritual rooted in Gethen's distant past. The splendor of the ceremony and the ordered procession function as visible markers of social hierarchy, reflecting Gethen's monarchical system, in which social relations are governed by *shifgrethor*, defined as "the untranslatable and all-important principle of social authority" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 14). Significantly, the procession includes no soldiers, "not even imitation soldiers" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 2), nor any overt military presence; instead, it is composed of lords, merchants, and entertainers, underscoring the distinctive nature of Gethenian power structures. Following the parade, Genly Ai gains further insight into Gethenian society during a dinner at Estraven's home. There, he becomes acutely aware of what he perceives as the culture's most striking characteristic: the absence of fixed gender distinctions. As Genly Ai observes, "cultural shock was nothing much compared to the biological shock I suffered as a human male among human beings who were, five-sixths of the time, hermaphroditic neuters" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 48). Through these encounters, Le Guin foregrounds the layered dimensions of alienation, such as social, cultural, and biological, that shape Genly Ai's experience and challenge his ingrained assumptions.

The Gethenians are androgynous beings, sexless for most of their lives except during *kemmer*—a period of sexual potency in which an individual temporarily assumes the physiological characteristics of a specific sex. Only during this cyclical phase do Gethenians adopt a gendered role; outside of *kemmer*, they exist in a neutral state and do not conform to traditional gender expectations. This fluidity is illustrated in a Karhidish tale about two brothers, one of whom gives birth to the other's child. Similarly, the statement "[t]he King was pregnant" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 100) exemplifies a social reality that profoundly challenges readers' habitual frameworks of understanding. Androgyny in the novel "functions as a third term that neutralizes the gendered way in which the subject is constructed" (Fayad, 1997, p. 59). For the Gethenians, this condition is entirely unremarkable, as natural as having two eyes or two ears. For the outsider Genly Ai, however, it remains deeply

unsettling. He acknowledges his inability to perceive the Gethenians on their own terms, admitting: "Though I had been nearly two years on Winter I was still far from being able to see the people of the planet through their own eyes. I tried to, but my efforts took the form of self-consciously seeing a Gethenian first as a man, then as a woman, forcing him into those categories so irrelevant to his nature and so essential to my own" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 12). Through Genly Ai's struggle, Le Guin exposes the limits of gendered perception and underscores the difficulty of genuine cross-cultural understanding.

Although Gethenian sexuality is not the novel's central theme, it functions as a highly effective device for exploring the implications of sexual and cultural difference as well as the experience of culture shock. As Genly Ai observes, androgyny disrupts stereotypical gender roles; through this motif, Le Guin interrogates gender identity and its role both in society and in interpersonal relationships. As Genly Ai notes, in "most societies it determines one's expectations, activities, outlook, ethics, manners—almost everything. Vocabulary. Semiotic usages. Clothing. Even food" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 234). Despite his awareness of his own biases, Genly Ai persistently categorizes and classifies sexual identities, constructing rigid "masculine" and "feminine" roles. As long as he continues to interpret Gethenian society through these culturally ingrained frameworks, he fails to remain a neutral observer.

Genly Ai's reluctance to accept the Gethenians as androgynous beings, combined with his implicit reliance on the norms of a patriarchal social order, reinforces a hegemonic worldview grounded in assumed superiority. At the same time, Le Guin uses androgyny to demonstrate how the self can become alienated from its own "other" during the period of *kemmer*, when individuals temporarily occupy a different sexual role. Androgyny represents "a balance between the feminine 'anarchic' and 'decentralizing' principles and the male 'centralizing' and 'linear' principles" (Fayad, 1997, p. 63). This balance reflects Le Guin's engagement with Taoist philosophy, visually symbolized by the yin–yang emblem of interlocking dark and light semicircles, which promotes the coexistence of opposites within a single whole. Duality thus emerges as a defining characteristic of human existence. As Estraven observes, "Duality is an essential, isn't it? So long as there is myself and the other" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 234). Even the title of the novel, derived from Tormer's Lay, a Handdara prayer, is grounded in this logic of duality:

> Light is the left hand of darkness
>
> and darkness the right hand of light.

Two are one, life and death, lying

together like lovers in kemmer,

like hands joined together,

like the end and the way. (Le Guin, 1969, p. 234)

In the novel, climate functions as a central marker of culture shock and plays a decisive role in shaping both the narrative events and the novel's climax, which presents nothing but two figures, their sledge, an ice field, and extreme cold. Gethen is a frozen planet, dominated by ice fields and volcanic landscapes. Winter, described as being "so near the limit of tolerability" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 96), is the planet's harshest and most relentless season, forcing its inhabitants to exist constantly on the edge of survival. The severe climate renders mobility painfully slow and demands careful planning and endurance. Consequently, individuals must organize their lifestyles in strict accordance with environmental conditions: they wear fur garments, eat frequent but small meals, favor large communal dwellings over isolated houses, and attempt to conserve and accumulate every available resource. Under such extreme circumstances, it is unsurprising that the Gethenian language contains multiple terms for ice, fog, and snow, reflecting the intimate relationship between environment and cultural expression. The pervasive cold thus extends beyond a mere backdrop and becomes a formative force that shapes social organization, daily practices, and even modes of perception. In this way, climate emerges as both a physical and symbolic element, intensifying the protagonists' experience of alienation while simultaneously foregrounding themes of endurance, interdependence, and adaptation. The extremely cold weather "is what brings home to the characters (and the reader) their physical detachment, their free-standing isolation as separate individuals, goose-flesh transforming the skin itself into some outer envelope, the sub-zero temperatures of the planet forcing the organism back on its own inner resources and making of each a kind of self-sufficient blast-furnace" (Jameson, 1987, p. 26).

The dominant force shaping the lives of Le Guin's protagonists is the environment, specifically the cold world they inhabit, where coldness emerges as a relentless adversary, often crueler than the self itself. As Jameson argues, the frigid climate of these planets "must be understood, first and foremost, not

so much as a rude environment, inhospitable to human life, as rather a symbolic affirmation of the autonomy of the organism, and a fantasy realization of some virtually total disengagement of the body from its environment or ecosystem" (1987, p. 26). Cold thus functions as a profoundly isolating element: the self, stripped of cultural and social markers such as gender, ethnicity, religion, or race, is compelled to confront the fundamental necessity of survival under extreme conditions. In this context, environmental hostility becomes a leveling force, foregrounding the shared vulnerability of all beings and emphasizing endurance as a core aspect of existence.

Two major themes permeate the novel. The first is winter as a commanding force in the lives of Gethen's inhabitants; the second is the fragile possibility of companionship that can emerge between strangers, a form of love born in mistrust and continually hindered by Genly Ai's preconceptions. The relationship between Genly Ai and Estraven is marked by maturity and subtlety rather than overt sentimentality. It is Estraven's ethical recognition of the other that ultimately enables the development of this bond. For Genly Ai, Estraven comes to embody both the virtues and the flaws of Karhide and occupies a position of considerable prestige and authority within Karhidish society. He perceives Estraven as proud and powerful; yet the possibility that Estraven can also become a woman unsettles him and undermines his trust. As Genly Ai admits, "[i]t was plain that no tolerable relationship could exist between Estraven and myself … and I could not trust the fellow" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 130). Moreover, Genly Ai persistently insists on interpreting the Gethenians as men like himself, a stance that reveals the depth of his gendered assumptions and prepares the ground for his later confession:

> . . . I thought that at table Estraven's performance had been womanly, all charm and tact and lack of substance, specious and adroit. Was it in fact perhaps this soft supple femininity that I disliked and distrusted in him? For it was impossible to think of him as a woman, that dark, ironic, powerful presence near me in the firelit darkness, and yet whenever I thought of him as a man I felt a sense of falseness, of imposture: in him, or in my own attitude towards him? His voice was soft and rather resonant but not deep, scarcely a man's voice, but scarcely a woman's voice either … but what was it saying? (Le Guin, 1969, p. 12)

Only when Genly Ai and Estraven are isolated together on the vast ice field do they achieve reconciliation. Nevertheless, despite the possibility of sexual intimacy during Estraven's *kemmer*, both characters consciously avoid physical relations, even when Estraven responds to Genly Ai's masculinity.

Instead, their deepest connection is realized through mindspeech. As Genly Ai explains, "[m]indspeech was the only thing I had to give Estraven, out of all my civilization, my alien reality in which he was so profoundly interested" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 247). In this context, mindspeech functions as a metaphorical foreign language, one that Genly Ai must learn to communicate across radical difference. Mastery of this mode of communication becomes the most crucial means of overcoming cultural shock, as it enables Genly Ai to articulate his thoughts and emotions without the distortions imposed by his inherited cultural frameworks. Through mindspeech, understanding replaces mistrust, and genuine intimacy emerges not through the body but through shared consciousness.

In the first half of the novel, Genly Ai travels across Karhide and Orgoreyn, two regions of Gethen's Great Continent. His discoveries during this period are primarily cultural, offering a composite portrait of the Gethenian world. In Karhide, Genly Ai observes slow, silent electric vehicles crawling over mountain ranges; ritual practices that appear to foretell the future yet simultaneously suggest the futility of knowing it; a landlady who, for a small fee, guides strangers to the Envoy's room; tragic Gethenian tales and myths centered on ice; a monastery-like structure perched on a cliff; an ancient city whose streets are built as tunnels to withstand perpetual snowfall; and the Handdara religion, described as "a religion without institution, without priests, without hierarchy, without vows, without creed" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 55). By contrast, Orgoreyn presents a markedly different cultural landscape. There, Genly Ai encounters luxuries unknown in Karhide, such as showers, electric heaters, fireplaces, fish markets, and liquor. Alongside these comforts, however, he also becomes aware of a secret police apparatus, pervasive bureaucratic paperwork, and prison camps hidden within the country's vast forests. Although these political structures remain largely invisible to him at first, Genly Ai enjoys the material comforts provided for his convenience and remarks, "I feel perfectly at home" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 117). Genly Ai locates a sense of home "when [he] resist[s] silence and stasis as [he] move[s] purposefully with other characters across the spaces between sites" (Cadden, 2000, p. 338). His sense of belonging thus emerges not from ethical alignment but from mobility, comfort, and the illusion of familiarity. Gethen is governed by two major powers, Karhide and Orgoreyn. When the two are contrasted, Karhide appears more appealing, as

it is more closely attuned to nature and characterized by hospitality, social grace, and a sense of inner tranquility, as well as a sustained engagement with its past. Genly Ai, however, naïvely misinterprets the political dynamics between the two states and attempts to position himself as a mediator. As a result of this miscalculation, and because of his association with Estraven who has fallen out of favor with the king for supporting Genly Ai's mission, Genly Ai is forced to leave Karhide. He is ultimately detained and sent to a prison camp in the totalitarian state of Orgoreyn, while Estraven is separately exiled and later undertakes the journey that leads to Genly Ai's rescue.

The second half of the novel recounts Genly Ai's rescue by Estraven from the Orgota prison camp and their arduous journey back to Karhide across the ice. Throughout this journey, Genly Ai reassesses his experiences on Gethen, filtering his observations through a newly reflective lens and forging meaningful connections between his own perspective and those of the Gethenians. Estraven, as a representative of Gethen, and Genly Ai, as an envoy of the Ekumen, together embody what it means to be human. Their evolving relationship dramatizes the encounter between two radically different individuals, two strangers, and foregrounds the ethical labor required for mutual recognition. Through his bond with Estraven, whom he initially perceives as the "other," Genly Ai comes to understand Gethenian life more fully and confronts the limitations and consequences of his own gendered assumptions. He also learns to grasp the close and often ambiguous relationship between the concepts of "patriot" and "traitor." Although Genly Ai's loyalty appears to shift from the Ekumen to Gethen, this apparent realignment is, in fact, a necessary condition for the success of his mission. Similarly, Estraven's friendship with Genly Ai, often interpreted as an act of betrayal, ultimately proves to be an ethical commitment undertaken for the good of his country rather than against it. Therefore, this journey across the ice constitutes a transformative passage through which Genly Ai's epistemological assumptions about gender, loyalty, and humanity are radically unsettled.

At the novel's conclusion, Genly Ai achieves both a political alliance and a renewed sense of identification with the "other." His transformation unfolds through two interrelated journeys: his initial voyage to the alien planet and his subsequent journey across it with Estraven. These experiences

profoundly reshape Genly Ai's understanding of differences and selfhood. During the ice journey "Ai evolves from his initial position of seeking his mirror-image, the image of sameness, into one that accepts the other as other, able finally to see his relationship with Estraven as the meeting of two aliens" (Fayad, 1997, p. 71). Indeed, even after this transformation, Genly Ai finds himself uneasy among his own bisexual colleagues, a discomfort that underscores the depth of his altered perception. When confined within his own alien viewpoint and the limitations of his internalized estrangement, Genly Ai is unable to comprehend the realities of the unfamiliar world he inhabits. Only through his companionship with Estraven, by accepting Estraven's friendship and learning to perceive him simultaneously as man and woman, does Genly Ai come to appreciate Gethenian life on its own terms. This shift in perception is clearly articulated in Genly Ai's own reflections:

> We were both silent for a little, and then he looked at me with a direct, gentle gaze. His face in the reddish light was as soft, as vulnerable, as remote as the face of a woman who looks at you out of her thoughts and does not speak.
>
> And I saw then again, and for good, what I had always been afraid to see, and had pretended not to see in him: that he was a woman as well as a man. Any need to explain the sources of that fear vanished with the fear; what I was left with was, at last, acceptance of him as he was. Until then I had rejected him, refused him his own reality. He had been quite right to say that he, the only person on Gethen who trusted me, was the only Gethenian I distrusted. For he was the only one who had entirely accepted me as a human being: who had liked me personally and given me entire personal loyalty: and who therefore had demanded of me an equal degree of recognition, of acceptance. I had not been willing to give it. I had been afraid to give it. I had not wanted to give my trust, my friendship to a man who was a woman, a woman who was a man. (Le Guin, 1969, p. 248)

Ultimately, Genly Ai's political mission evolves into a deep personal quest, and the novel charts the expansion of his consciousness alongside a transformation in his perception of dualisms and sexual polarization. Gender functions as a crucial narrative strategy through which Genly Ai negotiates his identity within an alien society. The relationship between Genly Ai and Estraven emerges not from "affinities and likenesses, but from the difference" (Le Guin, 1969, p. 249), underscoring Le Guin's insistence that genuine connection is forged through engagement with alterity rather than sameness. Unity, therefore, becomes possible only through the dynamic interaction of opposites: native and alien, sameness and difference, likeness

and unlikeness, male and female, and, most fundamentally, the self and the other.

In conclusion, *The Left Hand of Darkness* employs the alien as an embodiment of alienation, confronting the protagonist with the challenge of transcending fear by embracing the unknown within an unfamiliar landscape. The arrival of an outside observer on an alien planet foregrounds "the difficulty of translating the lifestyle of an alien species into a language and cultural experience that is comprehensible" (Fayad, 1997, p. 61). Communication, whether through the telepathic medium of mindspeech or the technological device of the ansible, thus becomes central to the narrative. In particular, the telepathic union between two characters who are mutually alien to one another constitutes the emotional climax of the novel. The journeys of discovery undertaken by the protagonists lead not only to an understanding of the other but also to a deeper knowledge of the self. While Genly Ai's travel across Gethen is framed by the Ekumen's political imperatives, his journey with Estraven across the Ice operates as an ethical and relational transformation that resists instrumental rationality. Le Guin's characters come to define themselves both in relation to and in opposition to one another, as well as to the diverse spaces through which they travel. As Cummins observes, in Le Guin's fiction "journeying is an analogy for living; it is the process of going and returning, of fragmenting and unifying, [and] is regenerating and unending" (1991, p. 154). These journeys ultimately reveal that finding a home is not a matter of fixing boundaries or assembling fragments into a static whole. Rather, home, and its associated feelings of belonging, stability, security, happiness, and comfort, is achieved through continuous, reciprocal dialogue with others. Through such dialogue, the self transcends experiences of displacement, dislocation, and fragmentation, arriving instead at an ethically grounded and relational sense of wholeness.

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Chapter 4

The Impact of Automated Written Corrective Feedback on EFL Students' Writing Development

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Introduction

A number of cross-sectional studies have demonstrated that automated writing evaluation systems play a crucial role in writing development and instruction. In this regard, Dikli and Bleyle (2014) Automated Essay Scoring (AES) systems have been used for assessing writing since 1999. In addition, previous studies remark AWE systems are commonly used in EFL writing classes (e.g., Ariyanto et al., 2021; Guo et al., 2022). Therefore, many AWE programs such as Grammarly, Criterion, My Access and Jukuu were designed in accordance with their features and purposes.

A variety of labels and terms have been suggested for AWE systems and these labels are used in the literature based on the aim and scope of the studies. To illustrate, Computer-Based Text Analysis (CBTA) or an Automated Essay Evaluation (AEE) are some of the labels mentioned in Ariyanto et al.'s (2021) study. Additionally, some studies (e.g., Barrot, 2021; Guo et al., 2021) focus on Automated Written Corrective Feedback (AWCF) provided by AWE systems. According to Barrot (2021), AWCF is beneficial for revising language related problems in L2 writing and it provides immediate and comprehensive feedback on different linguistic features.

There is a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance and benefits of automated writing evaluation systems and programs for writing development. For example, Ranalli (2018) acknowledges that automated written corrective feedback systems promote learners' revision engagement and reduce their cognitive load. Moreover, Dikli and Bleyle (2014) note automated essay scoring systems are beneficial for reducing teacher workload and providing an alternative feedback for traditional and teacher-based systems.

Despite the benefits of AWE systems to writing skills, some studies have also noted the challenges and limitations of automated writing evaluation systems and programs. First, Barrot's (2021) study referred to challenges of AWCF such as cognitive overload, insufficient explanations, and overcorrection. Second, generic feedback, surface level accuracy, and feedback inaccuracies were some of the limitations of AWCF systems addressed by Ranalli (2018). Third, AWE programs have some limitations regarding the content evaluation (Ariyanto et al., 2021). Finally, Koh (2017) remark the feedback provided by automated writing systems is limited in terms of organization, style, and content. Based on all these limitations and challenges, writing instruction is suggested to combine teacher feedback with

AWE programs (e.g., Ariyanto et al., 2021; Koh, 2017; Ranalli, 2018; Yildiz & Kuru-Gonen, 2024).

Further, several factors have affected the efficiency and outcomes of automated writing evaluation programs. In this sense, Fu et al.'s (2022) review study addressed various factors from learner-related to context-related factors. To begin with learner-related features, motivation, proficiency, and attitudes are some of the factors affecting the learners' engagement with the automated writing evaluation programs. Further, the quality, scope, type, and accuracy of the feedback are some influential factors affecting student writing engagement. Finally, the genre of the writing task, the classroom context, or technological factors can affect the effectiveness of automated writing evaluation systems. In addition to all these factors, Gao and Ma (2020) indicate that students' familiarity with the specific program is crucial on the efficiency of AWE systems.

Literature Review

Extensive research has shown that automated writing evaluation and scoring programs contribute to students' writing skills in different regards. For instance, Barrot (2021) investigated the impacts of automated written corrective feedback on L2 learners' writing accuracy with the help of Grammarly. The findings showed that this program contributed to students' overall writing accuracy and promoted their autonomy. Similarly, Guo et al. (2021) focused on how automated written corrective feedback provided by Grammarly affects EFL students' academic research writing skills. Accordingly, the study indicated that Grammarly helped students to reduce their linguistic errors while writing research papers. Further, Ranalli's (2018) study explored the effects of AWCF provided by Criterion on ESL learners' writing skills. Based on the findings, it was found that specific feedback provided by the program supported revision engagement and error correction in ESL writing context. Another study making use of Criterion program focused on the short and long-term impacts of AWE in terms of university students' grammatical accuracy in ESL writing (Li et al., 2017). In this regard, student drafts were analyzed and the findings revealed the AWE feedback helped ESL students to reduce their grammatical errors in various regards such as run-on sentences, fragments, word choice, subject-verb agreement, and sentence structures regarding long-terms effects. As for long-term effects of AWE feedback, the positive impacts were limited and it was found AWE

feedback were only beneficial for reducing grammatical errors in relation to run-on sentences.

Previous studies have also compared the effectiveness of teacher and automated system feedback. To illustrate, the study by Dikli and Bleyle (2014) evaluated the effectiveness of an automated scoring system, Criterion, and teacher feedback in EAP context with the participation of college students. The findings revealed that instructor feedback was regarded as more comprehensive and trustworthy by the students. In addition, some discrepancies between teacher and automated feedback were observed; therefore, it was concluded that automated system feedback could not replace teacher feedback. In addition, Gao and Ma (2020) compared teacher and automated writing feedback on EFL undergraduate students' free writing tasks and found that instructor feedback was more beneficial than automated feedback for the sustained writing development. The study also showed that teacher feedback enhanced writing engagement and knowledge transfer even though automated feedback provided immediate feedback and revision support more efficiently. Likewise, Han and Wang (2021) explored how teacher and automated writing feedback affect EFL students' essay revision quality by comparing the strengths and weaknesses of two feedback types. According to the findings, the study indicated that teacher feedback was more effective than the automated feedback regarding the revision quality and scores. EFL learners also stated that teacher feedback was easier to understand and more motivating compared to automated feedback provided by the Piagi program. Lastly, Link et al. (2020) investigated the effects of teacher feedback and AWE feedback combined with teacher feedback. According to the findings, it was concluded that AWE feedback reduced punctuation, grammar-related, and surface-level errors. Indirect AWE feedback was either ignored or misunderstood by EFL students. Further, the study showed that teacher feedback was more useful in enhancing writing regarding complexity, fluency, and discourse-level issues. Hence, Link et al. (2020) deduced that AWE feedback combined with teacher feedback could improve long-term writing development and revision quality.

Concerning the literature focusing on AWE feedback in Turkish EFL context, the studies have revealed that AWE feedback was beneficial when it is used in combination with teacher feedback (Han & Sari, 2024). EFL learners stated that even though Criterion provided immediate and detailed feedback, the content-related issues were limited in AWE feedback. In addition, Yıldız and Gönen's (2024) study conducted in EFL context revealed

that both teacher and Criterion feedback was effective in terms of reducing form-focused errors in student essays. On the other hand, students had more positive attitudes towards teacher feedback and it was more useful for organization and content-related issues. Finally, Saricaoglu and Bilki (2021) found that active engagement the AWE tool, Criterion, helped EFL university students to reduce their errors regrading grammar, usage, and mechanics.

It is now well-established that AWE feedback is beneficial for writing development and engagement. However, there are limited experimental studies exploring the effects of AWE feedback on learners' writing performance in EFL setting (e.g., Han & Sari, 2024; Yıldız & Gönen, 2024). Further, majority of the existing literature have focused on different AWE tools such as Criterion, Grammarly, and Piagi, but there is a scarcity of studies engaging with Scribo. Accordingly, this present study aimed to investigate the effects of AWCF in relation to overall writing achievement sentence-level accuracy. Therefore, the following research questions are addressed in this study:

1) Is there a significant difference between pre- and post-writing performance of students after AWCF intervention in terms of final grade?

2) Is there a significant difference between pre- and post-writing performance of students after AWCF intervention in terms of sentence level (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, cohesives, sentence types)?

Method

Research design

The present study was designed as a one-group pretest–posttest experimental design. The study employed an intervention design by using an AWE program, *Scribo* to assess EFL university students' overall writing performance in terms of final grades and sentence-level accuracy. Pre-test and post-test scores of EFL freshman students were compared to reveal the effect of implementation in EFL writing class.

Context and participants

The study was conducted in English Language Teaching Department of Süleyman Demirel University and the participants were 49 freshman students enrolled in *Writing Skills I* course. Out of 49 participants, 30 of them were female students while 19 of them were male students.

AWCF program

This study utilized an automated written corrective feedback program, namely, Scribo to provide immediate and personalized feedback on EFL learners' writing skills. In accordance with this, each participant were provided with a username and password to receive feedback from this program about their argumentative essays. This program provided detailed feedback to learners in different writing mechanisms such as grammar, cohesives, writing clarity, spelling, vocabulary, and sentence types as exemplified in Figure 1 below.

PARAGRAPH 4

GENERAL 4

① so as to => Suggestion: **to**

② to => Suggestion: **to,**

③ detect => Suggestion: **detecting**

⑤ for that => Suggestion: **because**

WORD CHOICE 1

④ afar => Suggestion: **far**

Standardized tests are the backbone of the modern education ecosystem, which can be alternatively called the methods of assessment. They are designed purposefully ① so as to evaluate students' abilities and certain skills. The primary aim of these tests' are to break down the knowledge into separate parts in addition ② to to ③ detect whether a student can absorb the sole bits of the information given. Nevertheless, it's ④ afar from being an objective examination, ⑤ for that it predominantly contains complex materials. Standardized testing tends to narrow down the intellects of students with outdated practices, along with putting students into a tense state of mind.

Passive voice

Passive verbs hide the subject of your sentence. Try to rewrite this sentence using an active verb with the most suitable subject.

○ they are designed purposefully

Writing clarity

Readability may be enhanced by removing this

○ so as

Figure 1. Sample Automated Corrective Feedback Generated by Scribo

Data collection tool and procedure

The participants were asked to write argumentative essays in academic writing course and pre-tests were collected. The intervention lasted six weeks in total. In line with this, they were first trained on the automated written corrective feedback program, *Scribo*. Then, they wrote their first argumentative essays. Following this, they received feedback from this AWE

program before revising their essays and submitting their second drafts. This process was repeated three times, since the participants were wrote three argumentative essays in total. After this process, post-tests were implemented. Therefore, the data was collected through students' pre- and post-test argumentative essay scores. Accordingly, the intervention process is illustrated in Figure 2 below.
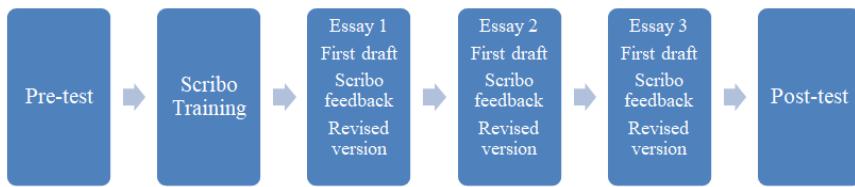

Figure 2. Pre-test–post-test research design with Scribo-based AWE intervention

Data analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed with the help of SPSS program version 28. First of all, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test was run, and then skewness and kurtosis coefficients were examined to identify if the data met the assumption of normality. Since the findings revealed that the data was normally distributed, the pre-and post-test argumentative essay scores were compared with the help of paired samples t-tests.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of paired samples t-test were presented in regard to each research question.

The effect of AWCF on EFL students' final writing grades

Regarding the first research question, EFL freshman students' argumentative essay pre- and post-test scores were compared. Accordingly, the findings are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Paired samples t-test results for pre- and post-writing grades

Comparison	Mean Difference	SD	SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	t	df	p
Pre-test Post-test	-4.12	8.31	1.19	-6.51	-1.74	-3.47	48	.001

The findings revealed that there was a mean difference of –4.12, which shows a significant improvement in scores obtained after the intervention compared to before the intervention. Accordingly, paired samples t-test indicated a statistically significant difference (t(48) = -3.472, p < .05) between the grades obtained by students prior to and after the AWCF intervention on writing. In addition, the difference between the post-test and pre-test average scores was calculated as -4.122 and the effect size was moderate to large (Cohen's d = -0.496). Thus, EFL learners showed a significant improvement in writing ability among students after the intervention. This finding was in accord with recent studies (e.g., Barrot, 2021; Guo et al., 2021; Li et al., 2017; Ranalli, 2018) indicating that AWE feedback enabled learners to enhance their overall writing accuracy and performance.

The effect of AWCF on EFL students' sentence-level writing performance

The second research question dealt with any statistically significant differences resulting from the AWCF intervention on EFL students' writing skills regarding sentence level including grammar, vocabulary usage, cohesion, and variety of sentence types. In line with this aim, the findings are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 . Paired-samples t-test results for sentence-level writing variables

		Paired Samples Test							
		Paired Differences						t	df
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre_Grammar_ Passive_Voice Post_Grammar_ Passive_Voice	-1.714	4.929	.704	-3.130	-.299	-2.435	48	.019

Pair	Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig.
Pair 2	Pre_Grammar Post_Grammar	4.612	18.717	2.674	-.764	9.988	1.725	48	.091
Pair 3	Pre_Grammar_ Clarity Post_Grammar_ Clarity	-1.041	4.178	.597	-2.241	.159	-1.744	48	.088
Pair 4	Pre_Grammar_ Spelling Post_Grammar_ Spelling	1.143	2.291	.327	.485	1.801	3.491	48	.001
Pair 5	Pre_Vocabulary _Beginner Post_Vocabular y_Beginner	-17.082	28.065	4.009	-25.143	-9.021	-4.261	48	.000
Pair 6	Pre_Vocabulary _Intermadiate Post_Vocabular y_Intermediate	-57.959	59.458	8.494	-75.037	-40.881	-6.824	48	.000
Pair 7	Pre_Vocabulary _Proficient Post_Vocabular y_Proficient	-21.612	35.999	5.143	-31.952	-11.272	-4.202	48	.000
Pair 8	Pre_Cohesives_ Advanced Post_Cohesives _Advanced	-1.857	3.035	.434	-2.729	-.986	-4.284	48	.000
Pair 9	Pre_ST_Simple _Sentences Post_ST_Simpl e_Sentences	-1.918	7.863	1.123	-4.177	.340	-1.708	48	.094
Pair 10	Pre_ST_Compl ex_Sentences Post_ST_Compl ex_Sentences	8.755	8.536	1.219	6.303	11.207	7.180	48	.000
Pair 11	Pre_ST_Compo und_Sentences Post_ST_Comp ound_Sentences	-6.102	9.406	1.344	-8.804	-3.400	-4.541	48	.000
Pair 12	Pre_ST_CCompl ex_Sentences Post_ST_CCom plex_Sentences	-3.837	5.479	.783	-5.410	-2.263	-4.902	48	.000
Pair 13	Pre_ST_HTR_S entences Post_ST_HTR_ Sentences	-1.653	4.141	.592	-2.842	-.464	-2.794	48	.007
Pair 14	Pre_ST_S_Frag ments Post_ST_S_Fra gments	.041	2.466	.352	-.668	.749	.116	48	.908
Pair	Pre_ST_Long_ Sentences	2.327	5.746	.821	-3.977	-.676	-2.834	48	.007

15	Post_ST_Long_Sentences								
Pair 16	Pre_ST_Combine_Simple_Sentences Post_ST_Combine_Simple_Sentences	-.408	2.776	.397	-1.205	.389	-1.029	48	.308
Pair 17	Pre_ST_too_many_noun_groups - Post_ST_too_many_noun_groups	.327	3.466	.495	-.669	1.322	.659	48	.513
Pair 18	Pre_ST_Type_Variety Post_ST_Type_Variety	.184	.782	.112	-.041	.408	1.644	48	.107
Pair 19	Pre_ST_Long_quotes Post_ST_Long_quotes	-.061	.475	.068	-.198	.075	-.903	48	.371

The findings revealed that there were statistically significant differences in some areas of writing skills at the sentence level. First of all, the findings showed that EFL students improved their grammatical accuracy in terms of passive voice use and spelling. However, no significant results were found regarding overall grammar accuracy and grammatical clarity. This finding is contrary to that of Li et al. (2017) who found that ESL students enhanced their grammatical accuracy with the help of AWE feedback. Secondly, statistically significant changes were observed at the beginner, intermediate, and proficient levels, indicating that AWCF had a positive effect on vocabulary development at all levels. In accordance with the present result, Ariyanto et al. (2021) have reported that AWE feedback provided by ProWritingAid program enhanced university students' vocabulary development in ESP context. Thirdly, the intervention revealed a significant difference in relation to advanced cohesive devices. Finally, significant changes were seen regarding the complex sentences, compound sentences, complex–compound sentences, and higher-level rhetorical sentence types. On the other hand, there were no significant differences in simple sentences and sentence fragments. This outcome supports evidence from a previous study (Li et al., 2017) which showed that Criterion feedback contributed to reducing errors in terms of run-on sentences and fragments.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore the effects of AWCF provided by *Scribo* on EFL freshman learners' overall writing performance and sentence-level accuracy. The findings revealed that EFL students improved their overall argumentative writing essay scores after the intervention. Concerning the sentence-level aspects, it was found that AWCF enhanced EFL students' grammar accuracy, vocabulary development, cohesion, and syntactic development. Therefore, it was concluded that AWCF was beneficial for students in terms of limited sentence-level features. Accordingly, further studies could investigate the long term effects of AWE feedback by exploring EFL learners' acceptance level and engagement with AWCF. Further studies could also integrate qualitative data collection tools such as student reflections and interviews to identify learners' attitudes and use of AWE feedback. In addition, this study was limited in some regards. To illustrate, the study adopted a one-group pretest-posttest design, but the control group was not included into the intervention process. Second, the data was collected through only quantitative data regarding students argumentative essay scores. Third, the study focused on short-term impacts of AWCF regarding overall scores and sentence-level measures. In line with all these limitations, future studies are suggested to conduct mixed-methods research designs with larger populations and by combining teacher feedback with AWE. In conclusion, previous studies (Fu et al., 2022; Link et al., 2020) also stressed that AWE feedback would not be enough by itself to improve students' writing skills; that is why, AWE feedback should be used as a complementary feature to teacher feedback.

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Chapter 5

WITNESS TO EMPIRE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND BEYOND: GEORGE S. CARRUTHERS'S WARTIME NOTES AND PHOTOGRAPHS, 1914–1922[1]

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Introduction

This chapter centers on George S. "Doc" Carruthers (1895–1974), an English World War I veteran and later Bloomington resident, and examines his wartime experiences as recorded in his personal notes and photographic albums. This chapter draws on my archival study of the George Seatree Carruthers Collection at Illinois State University's Milner Library, conducted between 2024 and 2025 with the support of a TÜBİTAK research scholarship, which examines Carruthers's personal notes and photographic albums produced during his service in World War I and its aftermath in the Middle East, Myanmar (Burma), and India. This study represents the first sustained scholarly investigation of the Carruthers Collection, offering the earliest critical commentary on his personal notes and photographic albums as historical and visual sources. Carruthers's notes and photographs provide rare personal insights and visual documentation of a pivotal moment in early twentieth-century East–West relations, capturing everyday life, local landscapes, and cultural practices amid profound geopolitical transformation. His images of Baghdad and Burma—depicting Arab women baking or carrying water, children at play, mosques, street scenes, citadels, Muharram processions, circular riverboats, and the archaeological remains of Babylon— preserve cultural details that might otherwise have been lost, attesting to the resilience and traditions of local societies under colonial rule.

At the same time, these materials stand as stark reminders of the British Empire's political and military presence across the Middle and Far East between 1914 and 1922, documenting Britain's role in warfare, territorial reconfiguration, and the establishment of colonial administrations. Photographs of British troops stationed along riverbanks, telegraph infrastructure, military camps, and aviation units—such as Royal Air Force Baghdad, 1920, British Camp, Suez Canal, and images tracing the movement of soldiers from Burma to Mesopotamia—visually register the interconnected reach of imperial power. Together, Carruthers's notes and albums constitute a bittersweet archival record that reveals both the human texture of daily life and the enduring imperial entanglements that shaped the Middle East and South Asia in the aftermath of World War I. To date, the Carruthers Collection has not been the subject of scholarly analysis; this study offers the first critical engagement with its textual and photographic materials.

My work on this collection analyzes its textual and visual contents within the context of the First World War, with particular attention to imperial

encounters and cross-cultural relations during the conflict. This archival study aims to foreground previously unexamined documents and visuals from the war, while tracing the life trajectory of an English war veteran who later became a prominent local figure in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois. I hope this research will introduce previously unseen documents and visuals to the field of area studies, offering a deeper understanding of East–West encounters during the Great War, with particular attention to Anglo–Turkish/Ottoman relations and interactions.

I have also compiled a biography of George Carruthers, drawing from materials in the collection as well as additional online research. This chapter includes a critical commentary on Carruthers' presence, activities, and experiences in the Middle East and wider Asia, examined through a Post-colonial theoretical lens. While Carruthers served within the machinery of British imperial warfare—most notably in the Battle of Kut against the Ottoman Turks—his later writings, actions, and silences suggest a deep disillusionment with war and empire. Through both analysis and biography, this study traces his evolution from a soldier of empire to a quiet advocate of peace, highlighting the moral complexities and human consequences of imperial conflict.

The Carruthers Collection And Its Contents

The Carruthers Collection, housed in the Special Collections Unit of Milner Library at Illinois State University, was donated to the library in 2005 by Bloomington-born resident Betty M. Carruthers (1924–2020), the late daughter of George Carruthers. The collection includes three albums containing black-and-white photographs taken by Carruthers during his life, both as a soldier in the British Territorial Army and as a civilian telegraph and communications specialist in Mesopotamia, India, and the Far East between 1914 and 1922. It also features a portfolio of colored reproductions of eight watercolor landscape paintings depicting idyllic and architectural scenes in Baghdad and its environs, titled *Scenes in Mesopotamia* by Major T.F. Brook. Additionally, the collection contains Carruthers' personal notes, later transcribed and recorded in a five-page Word document, detailing significant events from the eight years of his life between 1914, when he was deployed to the East with the British Army during World War I, and 1922, marking his return home to England (Carruthers, 1914–1922). After immigrating to Bloomington, Illinois in 1923, Carruthers dedicated himself to community

service in McLean County, working for the railroad while becoming a cornerstone of local youth development through the Boy Scouts and Red Cross. His postwar life was marked by tireless volunteerism, leadership, and civic involvement, earning him numerous honors and leaving a lasting impact on the region.

The photographs in the three albums predominantly cover the period between 1914- 1922 with some occasional later additions from his life after relocation to Bloomington Illinois. Two of his three photo albums were sent to his fiancée and later wife, Carrie, with special notes of love while he worked as a civilian telegraph specialist in Iraq and Iran, dated 1920 and 1921. The third album, which includes a collage of various photographs covering a more extended period, includes images from his life in Burma, the ME and also with few depicting his years after immigrating to Illinois, America, with his wife in 1923—most likely to escape war-weary England and start a new life. Some family-related photos appear to be missing, probably taken by his daughter before she donated her father's albums and notes to the Milner Library.

The contents of the three albums sometimes overlap, however; the albums sent to Carrie are notably sanitized, deliberately avoiding images of war's hardships and destruction. Therefore, the albums come off as an Englishman's records of his leisurely travels with occasional reminders of his work as part of the British army. Carruthers' decision to exclude any explicit links to war from these albums may have stemmed from a desire to reassure his fiancée about his well-being in the war-torn Middle East, as well as an unconscious attempt to erase the memories of war, death, and devastation—perhaps reflecting an unspoken anti-war sentiment. This subtle anti-war sentiment becomes evident in his later reflections on his experiences as a soldier fighting against the Turks in Baghdad. His notes document the hardships of war, the immense loss of life, and his own near-death experiences after being wounded twice. His eventual regret over his initial decision to enlist may also explain his later dedication to preserving life—serving as a first aid "doc" and becoming a member of the Shriners Children's Hospital, where he contributed to the care and well-being of others.

These two albums visually document post-war Baghdad after it became a British mandate in 1920 following the partition of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. They contain a collage of photographs showcasing the region's unique landscapes, traditional architecture—including mosques and citadels—the ancient heritage of Babylon, and the culture of the local

Arab population. They also depict his leisurely activities, such as playing tennis with fellow Englishmen stationed in the area as colonial officers.

The third album, documents his life in Burma, a British colony since 1824, both as a soldier and later as telegraph specialist. While similar in content, the third one also features images of the war conditions in 1915, the hardships of transportation, his telegraph offices and stations, as well as barracks. Though these photo albums reflect the imperialist and colonial legacy of the British Empire's presence in the Middle East and Far East, they also offer a rare and valuable visual record of daily life, architecture, and landscapes in both war-ravaged Mesopotamia and colonial Burma in the early twentieth century.

The Carruthers Collection also includes a portfolio of eight watercolor reproductions titled *Scenes in Mesopotamia* by Thomas F. Brook. While the portfolio lacks specific details regarding its time and place of publication, recent online auctions of rare copies—one of which is housed at the Imperial War Museum in England—suggest that the artist himself produced and printed these reproductions in the Middle East around 1918.

Major Thomas Fleetwood Brook (1881–1965), a contemporary of Carruthers, served in the British Army from 1902 to 1919 and was deployed to the Middle East as a soldier in the Indian Army during the Siege of Kut-al-Amara. Although Carruthers' notes do not mention Brook, it is possible that the two men crossed paths while stationed in Kut. Another possibility is that Carruthers acquired a copy of Brook's artistic renderings of Baghdad and its surroundings after being discharged and relocating to Burma in 1918. Brook had also published a similar portfolio featuring scenes from Bombay.

The watercolor sketches depict both the landscape and architectural monuments in and around Baghdad, offering a picturesque representation of early twentieth-century Iraq. *The Port of Basra – 1918* and *Ashar Creek – Basra* illustrate the vital waterway and bustling port of Basra, while *Arab Girl with Watering Pot* portrays a veiled Arab woman carrying a water pitcher over her shoulders along a quintessential Baghdad street lined with palm trees. *Khalil Pasha Street – Baghdad* depicts the street built by Ottoman General Khalil Pasha to commemorate the 1916 Ottoman victory over the British in Kut-al-Amara. In Carruthers' photographs, the same location appears under the name *New Street*, reflecting the change in its name following British colonial rule in 1920; today, it is known as *Al-Rashid Street*. The collection also features *Mosque near the Citadel – Baghdad*, which showcases the twelfth-century Abbasid Sunni Haydar-Khana Mosque, and *A Bedouin Arab*

Camp, capturing a traditional tribal encampment in the desert. Additionally, *A Stormy Evening – Fallujah* and *Hit Town on the Euphrates River* present scenic views of Fallujah and Heet, towns situated along the Euphrates. Overall, these images artistically highlight the natural and architectural beauty of Iraq while omitting the destruction and horrors of war. Carruthers may have purchased these artistic renderings before his departure, viewing them as nostalgic mementos that preserved the region's beauty rather than as reminders of conflict, death, and devastation. The following images on the next page are from Major Thomas Fleetwood Brook's *Scenes in Mesopotamia* in watercolor:
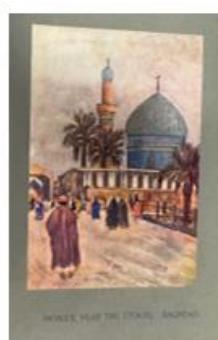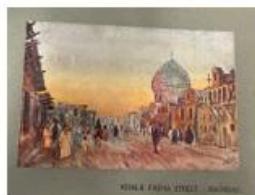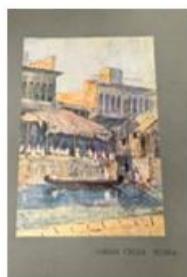
Image 1 Both photographs depict Carruthers in Baghdad, with backgrounds featuring palm trees and traditional tapestries used as décor.

Biography of George S. Carruthers Accompanied with Excerpts from His Personal Notes Early Life and Military Service in WWI

George S. "Doc" Carruthers was born on March 14, 1895, in Carlisle, England, to Richard and Mary Elizabeth Birkett Carruthers. He was the eldest of their children and grew up in a household that instilled values of duty, service, and community. In 1914, at the age of 19, Carruthers joined the Territorial Army of Britain, intending only to serve in home defense. However, like many young men of his time, driven by youthful enthusiasm and perhaps concerns for economic security, he volunteered for active overseas duty as World War I began. Later commenting sadly on his enrollment as a soldier to fight in war he said: "*This everyone did, because we were around 19 years of age and did not know any better"* (Carruthers, 1914–1922). His regiment was deployed to Burma, [Myanmar was a British colony between 1824-1948] replacing regular troops headed to the Dardanelles-Gallipoli campaign which took place from February 1915 to January 1916 in modern-day Turkey. [British army consisting of English, Indian and Anzac soldiers and Entente forces attacked Turkish territories to gain control of the Gallipoli peninsula and the Dardanelles straits, aiming to weaken the Ottoman Empire and secure access to the Black Sea and Istanbul. However, after eight

months of heavy fighting and around 250,000 casualties on both sides, the campaign ended in failure for the Entente powers, marking a significant victory for the Ottomans.] Reflecting on the journey, a five-week voyage, marked by crowded conditions and the intense heat of the Red Sea, aboard a P&O liner packed with 3,500 troops, Carruthers wrote: *"We left England on a P&O liner designed to hold 500 passengers, with 3,500 troops on board. Packed in like sardines, hammocks strung everywhere. Did you ever try to get into a navy hammock strung about 6 ft high? It's an adventure in itself!"* (Carruthers, 1914–1922).

Image 3 This photo from his album shows the deployment of British troops to Baghdad, the Eastern Front.

In Burma, he observed the culture and education of the Burmese people, admiring their hospitality and contrasting it with the caste system in India. Despite the evident positive outcomes for society, Carruthers' notes on the education of the local people in colonial Burma—conducted in schools established by British missionaries—serve as a testament to the cultural imperialist policies of the British Empire during that period. His observations highlight how education was not only a tool for literacy and development but also a means of extending British influence and shaping local identities in alignment with imperialist ideals: *"Burma is the finest country in the Far East. The people have a higher degree of education, because of the caste system being only among the Hindus. The Burmese are Buddist and most hospitable people in the world. They are fun loving, and actually poor business men. The women manager most businesses. They are educated because of the good*

schools and the Mission schools sponsored by the Baptists. In Mandalay they had a regular Normal College teaching men and women to teach in the regular schools. The children all attend these schools because there was no caste. Whereas in India, there were schools in every community, but only Brahmins attended and Brahmins became educated. This being the highest caste, with all the privileges. So that no other caste being able to mix with the Brahmins could not sit in school and get the education available to all supposedly" (Carruthers, 1914–1922). Despite the beauty and relative security of his surroundings, Carruthers' time there was short-lived, as war in the Middle East called once again. Although his decision to return to active combat would have been devastating news to his mother, he volunteered for service in Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) to fight in the British Army's campaign against the Ottoman Empire on the Eastern Front.

Image 2 Carruthers as British Soldier in India

Upon arriving in Basra, he marched as a heavily equipped soldier toward Kut, an Ottoman town 100 miles south of Baghdad, to take part in the British offensive under General George Townshend's command against the Turkish forces attempting to break the British siege of the area. Carruthers recalled the grueling march under the scorching desert sun as troops advanced to join the Siege of Kut al-Amara—a pivotal battle in Mesopotamia where British and Indian forces fought against Ottoman troops, composed of Arabs and Turks, led by Turkish generals Halil and Nureddin Pashas, alongside German military advisor C.F. von der Goltz: *"We would start out about 3 AM and march with a 40 pound pack, 150 rounds of ammo, a rifle haversack full of*

personal stuff, a quart size water bottle and march until 1 and 2 in the afternoon. 2 steps forward and one slid back in the sand. This we would do day after day as this was the only means available for a force of 10,000 me. We had to always finish the day near the river, because the water problem is rather bad and we learned to conserve and make that quart of water do us all day, although the sun was kinda hot. Beating down on our helmets and back." (Carruthers, 1914–1922).

In Carruthers' albums, the photograph of the tomb of German General C. F. von der Goltz (1846–1916), also known as Goltz Pasha for his 12 years of service in reforming the Turkish army, stands out as one of the rare references to World War I. Goltz died in April 1916, just two weeks before witnessing the British forces surrender to the Ottoman troops. The albums also include a photograph of British General Stanley Maude's tomb, who died almost two years after Goltz in the same house that British forces had claimed following the fall of Baghdad to Maude's troops in 1917. Through these images, Carruthers conveys a silent yet powerful message about the futility of war— two opposing military leaders, once enemies, ultimately met the same fate on the very soil they fought over, underscoring the inescapable reality of death in war. (See. Images 3,4).

Image4 This photograph is the tomb of German General C. F. von der Goltz, Goltz Pasha

Image 5 The album also includes a photograph of British General Stanley Maude's tomb and Carruthers

The Siege of Kut al-Amara, which took place between December 3, 1915, and April 29, 1916, was a pivotal event in the war between the Ottoman Empire and Great Britain. After 147 days of siege, approximately 13,000 British-Indian soldiers surrendered, marking one of the most humiliating defeats in British military history and a major victory for the Ottoman Turks. Carruthers, though ambiguous in his notes regarding who ultimately triumphed, recounts his participation in the events following the initial British defeat in December 1915. Over the next 100 days, according to his estimation, the British forces, unable to break free, eventually surrendered to the Ottomans. The tide turned in February–March 1917 when British military under Lieutenant General Stanley Maude (1864–1917) recaptured Kut and Baghdad, bringing an end to Ottoman rule in the region and starting the British colonial era: "*The Turks in the meantime had surrounded the outfit and it was over 100 days before they surrendered. We were called General Townsend's force. When they gave up there was only 3000 out of the 10,000. The rest had died of starvation, diseases, wounds etc.*" (Carruthers, 1914–1922).

During a grueling march to Kut-Amarah, defended by the Turkish troops, Carruthers and his regiment engaged in fierce combat. He vividly recalled the chaos: *"We marched from Basra to Amarah about 200 miles and then started having small skirmishes with the opposing troops, which were Turks, Arabs and some Germans. At Kut El Amarah further up the river we got into a full scale battle and fought all day with many casualties and late afternoon found the Turks between us and the river. This of course meant we had to start*

fighting again for the river and that's when I got hit. We had just received orders to fix bayonets and I was walking along about 100 yards from the enemy with my rifle at the trail and the bullets whizzed past like a swarm of bees. I looked down, and my rifle was gone. I spun around and sat down, only to find my face inches away from a snake. Talk about being frightened—that's when I really needed toilet paper!" (Carruthers, 1914–1922).

Carruthers was wounded and captured as prisoner along with their general Townsend by the Turks in December 1915 during the initial phase of this intense conflict. The fighting resulted in heavy casualties, with George recalling that of the 10,000 British soldiers involved, only 3,000 survived due to combat, disease, and starvation. In fact, according to official figures, almost 30,000 British and allied soldiers lost their lives while the death toll on the Turkish side was heavy as well, approaching to 10,000. During the battle, Carruthers was wounded by a gunshot and sustained severe injuries to his arm and elbow amidst the chaos. The following vivid account provides a harrowing firsthand look at the brutal conditions and personal hardships faced by soldiers during the Kut-ul Amarah Campaign, highlighting the intense combat, injury, and medical challenges that defined the experience: *"We had electric machines like the whole 10,000 Turks were shooting at me. All I could hear was that sound like a bunch of bees, as the bullets went by and as it is the bullets you do not hear that do the damage, I proceeded to lie down as flat as I could. The rest of the outfit proceeded to take the trenches and the river. I had been lying there about half an hour before the stretcher bearer came. In the meantime a knowledge of First Aid saved my life because I knew how to stop the severe bleeding from my arm. The homemade 45 lead went right thru my right elbow and took 2" of the internal condolie. The stretcher bearers proceeded to bandage my arm and when a stray bullet took his little finger off, he let loose of my arm and when he dropped the arm the pain was so severe I could have cried. The other stretcher bearer bandaged his buddy's finger and then finished bandaging my arm. It was not until 3 days after when my turn came to get medical attention that we found that the bullet that took his finger, lodged in my right forearm and they had to take it out. There was only doctor for 1000 men and the hospital was a small tent with a wooden table to lay on. No anesthetic, you just lay there while he probes for the bullet and mercifully pass out from the pain. That was just the beginning of my troubles."* (Carruthers, 1914–1922).

After being captured by Turkish forces, he endured the hardships of being a prisoner of war, suffering from typhus and dysentery. Weighing only 75

pounds at his lowest point, Carruthers' life was saved by a prisoner exchange, allowing him to recover in hospitals across India and return to Burma: *"The Turks in the meantime had surrounded the outfit and it was over 100 days before they surrendered. We were called General Townsend's force. When they gave up there was only 3000 out of the 10,000. The rest had died of starvation, diseases, wounds etc. After I have been captured a few weeks, and my arm was not doing so good I developed dysentery and typhus fever. I went from 135 lbs to 75 lbs. About this time my luck changed and the Turks started to bargain with the powers that be, for every Turkish prisoner released they would let one wounded British soldier thru to the Base Hospital at Basra. I was exchanged and owe my life to this."* (Carruthers, 1914–1922).

After spending six months in the hospital, the soldier was moved to Poona General Hospital near Bombay, India, where a chance encounter with his brother, whom he believed was still in England, led to a heartfelt reunion. Following further recovery and treatment, he was sent back to his regiment in Burma, where he trained as a wireless and telegraph operator, handling various technical duties: *"I was in the Hospital about 6 months and was then moved to Poona General Hospital just outside of Bombay India. After we got off the train and put in an ambulance at Poona, we were traveling by the military barracks when looking out of the window of the ambulance I thought I saw my brother and said so to my companion. But I had left my brother back in England under age and it couldn't be. The first man to come see me was my brother, and he did not know it was me, but he had heard that some wounded from my regiment were coming in and he wanted news about me. It was quite a reunion. After another siege in the hospital I was sent back to my old regiment in Burma. There I went to school and become a wireless and telegraph operator. This involved sending and receiving 20 words per min setting up tel equipment, line work, all the poles zinc."* (Carruthers, 1914–1922).

George S. Carruthers had a close bond with his brother, William B. Carruthers, despite the distance that separated them later in life. Like George, William also served in the British Army during World War I, and the two were stationed in India at the Khyber Pass. However, they parted ways in 1922 when George emigrated to the United States. William returned to England and settled in Blackburn, Lancashire. The brothers remained in touch through letters, and though they never saw each other again, their connection endured. William passed away suddenly in Blackburn, as George received the news via cable. Their shared experiences of war and their enduring familial bond were

defining aspects of George's reflections on his family. George S. Carruthers' brother, William B. Carruthers, played an active role during World War II, though his involvement was marked by a deep personal dislike for the conflict. Living in Blackburn, Lancashire, William worked in war-related efforts, likely tied to the industrial mobilization of Britain during the war. George recounted how William's letters described the grim realities of war on the home front, including blackouts, rationing, and the constant fear of air raids. William expressed frustration with the immense suffering and destruction caused by the war, lamenting its impact on everyday life and its toll on the civilian population.

Post-War Career and Family Life

On November 14, 1918, Carruthers transitioned to civilian life by signing a contract as a Telegraph Superintendent with the Iraq government helping to establish and manage telegraph and postal services in the region. Iraq came under the British mandate in 1920 following the seize of Baghdad in 1917 from the Ottoman Empire and remained subject to British imperial rule until its independence in 1958. George S. Carruthers stayed in Iraq during the initial phases of British colonial rule, for a total of three years. His duties took him to various locations, including Baghdad in Iraq and Karind in Iran, where he set up telegraph stations and trained local personnel. He traveled extensively, often under challenging conditions:*"I was sent to Karind in Persia, 4,000 feet up the Piatiac Pass. Leaving the 125-degree plains, we arrived in snow. Dressed only in shorts and a shirt, I wasn't thrilled to see snow after six years."* (Carruthers, 1914–1922).

Carruthers' technical expertise in wireless communication and Morse code played a critical role in modernizing communication systems in the region even though it facilitated the British Empire's imperialist projects in the area. George S. Carruthers' time in Iraq as a Telegraph Superintendent from 1918 to 1922 coincided with the early years of British administration. He played a role in building the country's communication infrastructure, a key part of the British effort to modernize Iraq under its mandate. His work involved teaching telegraph operations, setting up stations, and maintaining communication lines, which were critical to the administration and control of the region. Carruthers' firsthand experiences in Iraq likely gave him a unique perspective on the challenges of operating in a country undergoing political transformation under British imperial rule.

He completed his work in 1922, resigning from his position to return to England and begin the next chapter of his life. Carruthers returned to England in 1922, where he married Caroline Coulthard on September 12 of that year. After an extended leave, the couple emigrated to Bloomington, Illinois, in April 1923. In Bloomington, Carruthers began working for the Chicago and Alton Railroad and the H.T. & E. during the night shift, roles he held for 25 years.

Image 6 This photograph from his album captures his return voyage from India to Britain in 1922.

Carruthers' contributions to the Bloomington community were profound. He became a Boy Scout leader, serving as Scoutmaster for 26 years and holding various leadership roles in the Southeastern Council for a total of 45 years. He achieved the rank of Eagle Scout, was a Commissioner for 12 years, and received prestigious awards like the Key and Silver Beaver. His commitment to youth development included teaching First Aid, Safety Engineering, and Rifle Training.

During World War II, Carruthers dedicated over 5,000 volunteer hours teaching first aid and safety to various groups, including industries in McLean County. He was awarded the Red Cross Gold Medal for his extraordinary efforts. In 1947, he became the Executive Secretary of the McLean County Chapter of the American Red Cross, a role he held for a decade while earning the symbolic title of a "Dollar-a-Year Man." He retired from this position in 1962.

Carruthers was an active member of several organizations, including St. John's Lutheran Church, the Bloomington Consistory, the Exchange Club, and

the Moose Lodge. He was a Past Master of Wade Barney Lodge No. 512 in Bloomington, where he also served as treasurer. George and Caroline had a daughter, Betty Swartz, three granddaughters, and two grandsons. Known for his humor and resilience, Carruthers never lost his adventurous spirit. One diary entry captures his indomitable will:

"I've traveled all over the Far East, from China to the Russian oil fields, and never needed to use force to get by. Respect others, and they will respect you. (Carruthers, 1914–1922).

George Carruthers and his wife, Caroline, had a daughter, Betty Swartz, three granddaughters, and two grandsons. He was known for his humor, resilience, and dedication to service. His legacy lives on through his descendants and the countless lives he touched through his work in Scouting, community service, and the Red Cross.

George S. Carruthers passed away in1974, leaving behind a legacy of service, community involvement, and unwavering perseverance. His funeral was held at St. John's Lutheran Church, and he was laid to rest in Park Hill Cemetery.

Commentary on Imperial and Colonial Contexts of the Photograph Albums

Carruthers' notes and photographs provide personal insights and visual documentation of a pivotal chapter in East-West relations during the tumultuous early twentieth century. On the positive side, his photographs of Baghdad and Burma capture everyday life, local landscapes, and cultural traditions, offering a glimpse into the lives of the people. Images of Arab women baking or carrying water, children at play, mosques, street scenes, citadels, and archaeological structures of Babylon, as well as Muharram festivities and the unique circular-shaped boats used for transportation, serve as valuable historical records of these societies. These photographs preserve cultural details at the time that might otherwise have been lost, showcasing the resilience and traditions of the local populations amid the backdrop of colonial rule and geopolitical shifts.

Examples of photographs that visually document early twentieth-century life and landscapes in Baghdad and Burma are numerous. Those with captions such as *"Native Boat Used in Baghdad, Kufa"* depict local people transporting goods and caged animals across the river in a circular-shaped boat, while *"Kazimian Golden Mosque"* [Al-Kadhimiyya Mosque] shows veiled women

visiting the Shia shrine complex in Baghdad, along with another image capturing the mosque's magnificently decorated gate. The *"Ctesiphon Arch"* photograph presents the remains of the Sasanian-era monument from around 240 AD in Iraq, and *"Babylon"* features a horse relief, while *"Ruins of Babylon 1921"* shows Carruthers and a companion leaning against the *Lion of Babylon* monument.

Image 7 "Native Boat Used in Baghdad, Kufa"

Some images carry an ironic undertone introduced by Carruthers himself, most notably in his sarcastic caption *"Three Beauties, Baghdad?"*, which accompanies a photograph of veiled Arab women as another captionless one featuring two fully veiled women walking along the streets. Others depict scenes of everyday life and domestic labor among Arab women in traditional attire, such as *"Arab Women Making Bread,"* which shows local villagers baking in a street tandoor (clay oven). Similarly, *"Arab Children, Baghdad"* captures young children in traditional Arab clothing playing outside. Other unnamed photographs depict a man and possibly his children engaged in woodworking, children grinding flour on a stone mill, and the 12th-century Abbasid-era Haydar Khana Mosque in Baghdad.

Image 8 This is a river view from Basra.

Images 9-10 These two photographs are of Kazimian Golden Mosque" [Al-Kadhimiyya Mosque]

Images 11-12-13 "Ctesiphon Arch" and other antique ruins from Iraq region, as referred to Babylon by Carruthers

In Burma, the *"Sulay Pagoda, Rangoon, Burma"* image captures a Buddhist temple, while *"High-Class Burmese Family"* portrays a local family

in Myanmar, providing further insight into the social and cultural fabric of these regions during the early 20th century.

However, his albums and notes also stand as stark reminders of the British Empire's political and military presence in the Middle and Far East between 1914 and 1922. They document Britain's role in initiating wars, leading invasions, redrawing the map of Mesopotamia, influencing the fate of local populations, and establishing colonial administrations. The deployment of British troops along riverbanks, the construction of telegraph stations, and the celebration of King Faisal's dethronement (with British backing) in post-war Iraq underscore the lasting colonial and imperial legacy of Britain in the region.

Imagesl 14-15-16 From left to right: "Three Beauties, Baghdad?", "Arab Women Making Bread", and Abbasid-era Haydar Khana Mosque in Baghdad

Photographs capturing the crowning of Faisal I (1885–1933) as king of the newly established Iraq in 1920—formed from the former Ottoman vilayets of Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra—serve as historical evidence of British imperial influence in the region. The captions, "Procession when King Faisal was crowned," or "new st decorations for hm king feisul" highlights Britain's role in shaping Iraq's political future, particularly through the influence of British political officer and archaeologist Gertrude Bell.

Images 17-18; From left to right "New St Decorations For HM King Feisul" And
"Procession When King Feisul Was Crowned"

Faisal, a member of the Hashemite dynasty, was backed and rewarded by the British government for his role in the 1918 Arab Revolt against the Ottomans, coordinated by British intelligence officer T.E. Lawrence, famously known as "Lawrence of Arabia." However, his rule faced resistance, particularly from Shiite Arabs and Kurds, due to ethnic and sectarian divisions. This British-engineered political arrangement deepened existing ethnic and religious tensions, sowing the seeds of civil wars and regional conflicts that would erupt later in the twentieth century.

Selections from Carruthers' notes and photographs from his albums, documenting his time in Baghdad first as a British soldier and later as a telegraph officer under the British colonial administration, serve as bittersweet reminders of the imperial legacies of the era. These images capture the reach of British military and colonial influence across the Middle East and South Asia, illustrating the interconnected nature of empire. Examples from his albums include **"*Royal Air Force Baghdad 1920,*"** depicting aviation soldiers stationed in British-mandate Iraq, symbolizing imperial military presence; **"*Returning from Mesopotamia to Burma,*"** showing British infantry in their uniforms, reflecting the broader colonial crisscrossing of the empire in the East; **"*En Route to Babylon, Iraq,*"** portraying British troops relocated from colonial Burma to the warzone in the Ottoman vilayet of Baghdad; and **"*British Camp, Suez Canal,*"** capturing a military encampment on the banks of the canal, a strategic site for Britain's war effort in Kut al-Amara. These photographs offer visual testimony to the movements, conflicts, and entanglements of British imperial expansion during and after World War I.

Image 19 "Returning from Mesopotamia to Burma"


Image 20 "Royal Air Force Baghdad 1920"

Image 21 British Camp, Suez Canal

Additionally, *"Maymyo Barracks 1915"* provides a glimpse into the living quarters of British troops stationed in Burma, while numerous photographs document the telegraph offices established by the British in both Burma and Baghdad, facilitating communication between colonies. These include *"Telegraph Camp Scene, Baghdad," "Telegraph Class, Mandalay," "Back Oriental Telegraph Office," and "A Sect Interior Central Telegraph Office."* These images collectively highlight the infrastructure of British colonial administration, showcasing both military presence and the extensive communication networks that underpinned imperial rule.

Images 22,23,24; from left to right: "A Sect Interior Central Telegraph Office", "Telegraph Class, Mandalay," "Back Oriental Telegraph Office,"

Overall, despite his involvement in the colonial machinery of the British Empire—fighting and serving in foreign territories to advance imperialist policies—I argue that Carruthers later developed an anti-war and pro-life stance. His sudden departure from his job as a telegraph officer in 1922, followed by his immigration to America with his wife, suggests a deliberate attempt to distance himself from the war-torn Old World and its haunting memories. His later dedication to preserving human life, his involvement in humanitarian efforts such as the Shriners Children's Hospital, and his apparent disengagement from military or colonial endeavors serve as poignant reminders that military aggression, territorial invasions for profit, and the loss of innocent lives in the name of empire-building are not pathways to a meaningful or happy existence.

A further commentary on Carruthers fighting as a soldier in Kut-ul Amarah against the Ottoman Turks: In his notes, Carruthers remains noticeably silent about his time as a prisoner of war under the Ottoman Turks. Other than mentioning illness and the harsh living conditions caused by war, he does not provide any detailed accounts of his treatment as a prisoner. Typically, it would have been customary—especially during that period—to write scathingly about the horrors inflicted by the enemy, much like the often exaggerated and unfounded portrayals of the Ottoman Turks found in the accounts of T.E. Lawrence, also known as *Lawrence of Arabia*.

One possible reason for this omission could be that Carruthers experienced an uncharacteristically humane treatment as a prisoner of war. If he had been treated well, he might have felt ashamed of his role in fighting against people who showed him and other prisoners compassion, even under wartime conditions. Alternatively, his silence may reflect an intentional choice to forget. If he had suffered mistreatment, he might have chosen to omit such details due to a later realization of the futility and senselessness of his involvement in a war that claimed thousands of lives, including his own near-death experiences. Deep down, he may have recognized that the justification for attacking foreign lands was weak, as the British forces were the aggressors, while the Ottomans were merely defending their territory.

Carruthers' participation in the Battle of Kut al-Amara as a British soldier fighting against the Ottoman Turks places him at the heart of one of the most humiliating defeats in British military history. The siege, lasting from December 1915 to April 1916, saw thousands of British and Indian troops trapped in the town under grueling conditions before ultimately surrendering to the Ottoman forces. As a soldier on the ground, Carruthers would have

witnessed firsthand the brutal realities of war—disease, starvation, and the relentless siege tactics employed by both sides. However, his later silence on the experience, especially regarding his time as a prisoner of war, is particularly striking.

Unlike the common narratives of the period, which often depicted the Ottomans as barbaric and cruel—exemplified by the writings of figures like T.E. Lawrence—Carruthers does not seem to indulge in such portrayals. His omission could suggest that he was treated with an unexpected level of decency by his captors, challenging the imperialist rhetoric that sought to demonize the enemy. If he experienced humane treatment, he may have felt conflicted about his role in the war, fighting against people who, despite being labeled as foes, showed him compassion. Alternatively, his silence might stem from a desire to forget—a subconscious erasure of a traumatic chapter in his life, a chapter that made him question the very justification of British imperial aggression in the region.

The Battle of Kut itself stands as a symbol of imperial overreach. The British campaign in Mesopotamia, aimed at securing oil and strategic dominance, was not a war of necessity but one of empire-building, where the local population had little say in the fate of their own lands. The Ottomans, in contrast, were defending their territory against a foreign invasion. In this context, Carruthers, like many of his fellow soldiers, may have later recognized that he had been a pawn in a larger imperial game—one that cost thousands of lives for a cause that was neither just nor noble. His later disillusionment with war, as evidenced by his shift toward humanitarian work and his retreat from colonial service, suggests that his experiences in Kut and beyond played a role in reshaping his worldview, transforming him from an agent of empire into a quiet critic of war and its devastating consequences.

The following excerpt from his notes underscores this humane perspective which values peace and his belief in the power of mutual respect and understanding in navigating different cultures and environments. He emphasizes that by treating others with respect, he was able to travel extensively and peacefully, even in regions that could be dangerous. At the same time, he warns that hostility can be easily provoked if one fails to approach others with dignity, highlighting the crucial role of attitude in fostering harmony:

"Actually I have traveled all over the Far East from China to the Russian Oil Fields on the Caspian Sea, and at no time did I ever have to use force or guns to get by. I have visited most of the temples and pagodas, all the native

sections of every city, including Peshawar on the North West Frontier, and found that if you respect them and treat them with respect, they will do the same for you. If you want trouble out there, you can get it very quickly.'' (Carruthers, 1914–1922).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has shown how the personal notes and photographic albums of George S. "Doc" Carruthers constitute a complex and bittersweet archival record of World War I and its imperial aftermath in the Middle East and South Asia. Through the first sustained scholarly examination of the Carruthers Collection, the study has illuminated both the intimate textures of everyday life under colonial rule and the expansive reach of British military and administrative power. Read through a postcolonial lens, Carruthers's materials reveal not only the mechanisms of empire but also the gradual disillusionment of a soldier whose experiences—particularly in Mesopotamia—reshaped his understanding of war, empire, and cross-cultural encounter. Together, these documents invite a reconsideration of East–West relations during the Great War, foregrounding the human costs and moral ambiguities that continued to reverberate long after the conflict's end.

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Chapter 6

Orientalism in Lukas Bärfuss's *One Hundred Days*

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Introduction

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said explains that Orientalism as a way of thinking based on a fundamental distinction between the Orient and the Occident. This separation became the basis for extensive cultural, literary, and political representations to produce knowledge about the Orient, its people, culture, and destiny (Said 2-3). Orientalism functions as a Western control system through which the East is governed, reshaped under Western authority (Said, 1979, p.3). Consequently, the interaction between the Occident and the Orient is therefore based on power and hegemonic forces (Said, 1979, 6). Orientalism is not merely a European fantasy, but a system of knowledge developed body of theory and practice. Through this framework, the widespread circulation of Orientalist ideas within Western culture (Said, 1979, p.6). One clear example of the colonial practice of marginalization is the deliberate marginalization of indigenous languages and literature from educational curricula. These exclusion was driven by political, economic, cultural, and ideological considerations. In particular, the suppression of local knowledge stems from European cultural arrogance and racial prejudice. By portraying local languages and cultures as incapable contributing to civilization, colonial powers reinforced their own myths of superiority. As a consequence, the intellectual wealth of colonized societies was disregarded. (Dhobi, 2024, p.110). Such systemic devaluation also manifested in the exploitation of natural resources and the suppression of indigenous practices as in the case of African countries. Although African countries possess abundant resources that could foster local development, authorities prioritized their own interests by exploiting these resources. As a result, indigenous cultures and knowledge were marginalized under imperial dominance (Dhobi, 2024, p.111). This systematic marginalization was also reflected in literary representations, where the Orient was frequently depicted as weak and empty. In early English literature, including the works of Milton and Shakespeare, the Orient is described as weak and empty, justifying Western intervention. In this discourse, the Orient is deprived of agency to shape their own fate. The West, by contrast, holds the authority to control the Orient, turning perceived dangers into a system of discipline. (Al-Shamiri, 2016, p.270). Beyond the realm of literary and theoretical discourse, this hierarchy took institutional form through colonial and geopolitical practices. Orientalist ideas were embedded in policies that reshaped societies and justified Western intervention as civilization and order. From 1830 to 1962, France's colonization of Algeria exemplified such Orientalist policies through the

systematic imposition of Western values. Despite the post-World War II and Cold War shifts, Orientalism persisted. Western powers influenced newly independent nations, and stereotypes remained embedded in cultural discourse. (Alamu & Ololade, 2025, p. 592).

The stereotypes rooted in Orientalist thought also profoundly affected the experiences of women who faced pressures of gender, race, and colonial legacy. Western discourse often portrays Third World women as a passive, impoverished, and constrained by family and religious expectations. In contrast, Western women are depicted as educated, liberated, and modern. Consequently, subaltern women are positioned between the pressures of patriarchial system and colonial powers (Strazzeri, 2002, p.3). These Western portrayals were especially noticeable in the 18th and 19th centuries, a time marked by increased travel and global mobility. Karataş (2025) argues that 19th-century travel writings and missionary reports played a an important role in shaping Western perceptions of non-Western societies. These narratives were heavily influenced by the authors' cultural and ideological perspectives. In these texts, Muslim women were represented as passive and lacking agency, legitimizing Western involvement. Yet, some accounts offered more balanced and empathetic portrayals. (Karataş, 2025, p.1057).

In Lukas Bärfuss's 2008 novel *Hundert Tage* (*One Hundred Days*), David, as Swiss representative of Western development, arrives in Kigali. Through his perspective, the novel depicts his relationship with a Hutu girlfriend called Agatha and other events taking place in the country. As both an active participant and a witness, David gives readers insight into the country's social and political turmoil.

This study aims to explore how Orientalism functions in the novel through its characters, which are fictional representations of real historical events. The observations of David and Paul, as representatives of Western powers, reveal the gap between the West's claimed "civilizing" missions and the actual situation. This study will seek answers to the following questions:

-How does the novel portray the Western characters, David and Paul, and their representation of "civilizing missions"?

- How are the local Rwandan people's marginalization represented within a postcolonial framework in the novel?

2. Orientalism and Representation in *One Hundred Years*

In the novel, the author criticizes Western civilizing claims through the characters' language, behavior, and physical traits. The depiction of Agathe, a Rwandan woman, by the narrator David provides a striking example of key features of Orientalism. In this sense, the novel vividly exemplifies how the Western gaze frames the Eastern subject. "She had worked hard to speak pure French, free of any accent, but she could not manage the soft articulation, and that was the only thing that gave away her origins" (Bärfuss, 2012, p.46). In this context, her effort to speak French flawlessly highlights her desire to be accepted as Western. No matter how closely the Eastern subject approaches Western norms, she can never become entirely Western. Even a small detail, such as her accent, discloses her position as the 'Other'. Similarly, the Western narrator's portrayal of his Rwandan lover at the beginning of the novel illustrates how orientalist gazes operate. places her in a foreign cultural framework and hints at her mimicry of Western ideals. This reflects Edward Said's idea that the Eastern subject can imitate Western norms, but true assimilation is never possible. In this context, the woman is both modernized and still positioned as the 'Other.' The portrayal highlights her aspiration to meet Western aesthetic and it simultaneously positions her body as an object of exotic fascination. In later scenes of the novel, the Rwandan woman's body is eroticized not merely through her dress but also through her skin color. Her brown skin is highlighted in ways that make the Western male gaze see her as an exotic and desirable. Expressions like "bromine-coloured hollows of her knees" and "the transition from the lighter shade of her palms to the darker backs of her hands" (Bärfuss, 2012, p.75) highlight the exoticization of her skin.

Beyond the physical and aesthetic exoticization of the woman, the novel presents the Eastern subject as devoid of intellectual and cultural depth. By claiming that "their language held any secrets", the narrative directly undermines their way of thinking. For the Western subject, their language and culture offer no key to anything, and they are described as 'uneducated,' 'simple,' and 'suspicious. In these narratives, the East is depicted as a blank surface lacking its own meaning and defined solely by the Western gaze. David's account of the protest scene serves as a clear illustration of this stereotype. By portraying the crowd with details like "Some carried spears" and describing them as "a seething cauldron of fear, rage and alcohol"(87), David evokes an image of a fearful, and potentially violent mass. Moreover,

by stating, "one wrong word and I would be a dead man,"(87) the narrator conveys a continual sense of threat, implicitly portraying Eastern figures as prone to sudden reactions.

Collective memory and shared experiences made Eastern societies susceptible to external interference. This created a favorable environment for the West to intervene through so-called aid and development projects. The narrator, David, admits that Western interventions under the guise of development aid can be misleading. He argues that so-called well-intentioned projects in planning, development, impose an imposed order rather than addressing local realities. In the novel David openly recognizes the moral blindness and contradictions of Western interventions in the name of development: "we installed telephones for them, telephones they used to order murders..We were blinded by our sense of virtue which commanded us to help" (Barfuss, 2012, p.92). Here, David summarizes the moral contradictions of Western interventions, showing that well-meaning aid can unintentionally cause harm.

Alongside David, Paul also begins to realize the realities of communities untouched by Western development projects. In the novel, Paul, a colleague who works at the embassy in Kigali, initially believes that his duty is necessary and that Western intervention is legitimate. Over time, however, he begins to question the Western diplomatic system he represents. As the genocide in Rwanda comes to light and the West does nothing, Paul sees that his organization is built to hide the truth. Paul realizes that Western efforts to shape the individual are blind to local realities and inherently exclusionary. By saying, "Their interest in development was just camouflage…"(Bärfuss, 2012, p.104) he stresses that Western rhetoric is mainly a way to assert dominance. As he also observes, "they never had the slightest intention of changing"(p.104) ,which illustrates that the local people never really embraced the outside interference. This shows that all the West's development efforts were actually superficial and that change was forced, not shared. In this way, Paul expresses both his disappointment and the sense of failure in Western development work. It is also illustrated in the novel that Paul, physically and emotionally connects for the first time with people untouched by Western development projects. In this scene, he experiences reality for the first time by eating the lean, fibrous meat eaten by the poor. This gives Paul a chance to reconsider who he is and his role in society. The novel further presents the figure of the Western character as "the foreign body" ,providing

readers with a striking metaphor and emphasizing intrusive presence of Western figures. Like a foreign object causing hydrogen sulfide to crystallize, Western intervention sparks social change and can often cause chaos (Bärfuss, 2012, p.107). At the end of the story, David ironically challenges the Western belief in its own superiority and moral righteousness.

After return to my Switzerland , I travelled throughout this country and found only just men who know right from wrong, who know that should do and what they sholud avoid. Things are good here and now.Snow is good. I only hope they won't remove it, immediately with their plows or melt it with salt, which is even worse. Maybe they will leave it alone for once. Maybe they will have the heart to hole up in their homes for a time and just watch the snow fall from the sky. I bet they won't (Bärfuss, 2012, p.136).

He admires the sense of order and virtue he sees in Switzerland. Snow serves as a symbol of calm and innocence, yet he is concerned that humans will inevitably disturb it. This reflects humanity's tendency to interfere and critiques Western interventions in other societies.

Conclusion

Lukas Bärfuss' *One Hundred Days* exemplifies Edward Said's notion of Orientalism by illustrating systematic oppression of Rwandan communities by Western powers. The anger and frustration of the local people, along with their physical and social realities, are conveyed to the reader through the lens of the narrator, David. Bärfuss uses David's ironic inner voice to reveal the deep contradictions between Western rhetoric and actions on the international stage. Moreover, the West's silence during the Rwandan genocide highlight systemic hypocrisy. Thus, this novel challenges readers to reconsider notions of moral and political responsibility.

This study represents one of the rare analyses of Bärfuss's novel through the lens of Orientalism, providing guidance for future research. It is particularly important for sheding light on how Western power and superiority are represented in literary texts. Examining Bärfuss's work in this way not only fills a gap in the literature but also offers new insights for scholars studying these representations.

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Chapter 7

Patriarchal Tension and Filial Resistance in *Shahnameh*, *Hildebrandslied*, and Kafka

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Introduction:

The conflict between father and son is an old and persistent theme in world literature, reflected in epic tales and modern narratives due to society's interpretation of authority, love, and rebellion. Each retelling adapts the same core tension to its own cultural, historical, and psychological setting.

Aim:

This research explores the enduring presence of that theme through three works that, though distant in time, share a single concern: Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, the Old High German *Hildebrandslied*, and Franz Kafka's *Letters to His Father*. It examines how the father–son conflict changes meaning as it moves from the heroic to the psychological, from fate and duty to conscience and identity.

Method:

The study uses a comparative literary approach grounded in close textual reading. Attention is given to how each text places the conflict within its historical and philosophical framework, tracing the transformation of the motif from epic action to modern introspection.

Findings:

In the *Shahnameh*, the struggle between Rostam and Sohrab reveals the tragic price of divine and social duty. *Hildebrandslied* presents a similar confrontation, defined by the codes of loyalty and honor that govern early Germanic life. Kafka, writing in a modern world, moves the battle inward: the father's authority becomes moral and psychological, his weapons replaced by words. Together, these works show how the same human struggle survives across time—altered in form, but constant in feeling.

Conclusion:

The father–son conflict remains a living archetype. It shifts from the fatalism of ancient epics to the self-questioning of modern thought, keeping alive the tension between freedom, obedience, and inherited power.

Originality and Value:

By placing epic and modern texts side by side, this study highlights how a timeless literary pattern renews itself across cultures. The study highlights a recurring theme of father–son conflict in the context of shifting identity, authority, and family bonds.

Keywords: Father–son conflict, *Shahnameh*, *Hildebrandslied*, Kafka, comparative literature

Introduction

The battle between father and son is a common theme in the literary works of Greeks, Germans, Slavs, and Persians, as the father's status is central to the themes of paternal compassion and obedience—a son's mutiny against his father or the murder of father/son. In ancient literature, the battle for succession and the defense of dignity by fathers and sons are attributed to social morality, including adherence to family norms.

In the eighth-century German epic *Hildebrandslied*, military honor prevails over family ties, and Hildebrand deliberately extinguishes his descent by killing his son, who questions his father's dignity. Rostam and Sohrab's bloody battle in *Shahnameh* (*The Epic of the Persian Kings*) by Ferdowsi is surprisingly similar in detail to *Hildebrandslied* and the Persian epic *Avesta*, which dates to 5000 B.C. *Shahnameh* is the greatest of Persian epics, with 990 chapters and over fifty thousand couplets, covering themes of war, heroism, patriotism, peace, friendship, wisdom, justice, love, and art. (Yarshater, 1988) *Shahnameh* not only explores the history of Iran's kings and heroes from the distant past, but it also provides a rich tapestry of historical events. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer, *Aeneid* of Virgil, the German *Nibelungenlied*, and *Hildebrandslied* are likewise related to the historical and artistic realm (Naqi Pour, 2008, p.99).

The same archetype of father–son conflict later re-emerges in the modern age through psychological and existential manuscripts. *Letters to His Father* by Franz Kafka transmute into an internalized battle of identity; instead of swords and shields, language becomes the battleground in Kafka's story of the father's authority. Kafka's letter reflects a struggle revealed in sentences instead of swords: the same tension that moves *Shahnameh* and *Hildebrandslied*—the pull between respect and rebellion—returns here in emotional form. For Kafka, the father's power stands for the structure of judgment and control. The son's hesitant and self-questioning tone recalls the despair of Sohrab and Hadubrand, but the battle has moved inward, taking place in the mind rather than on the battlefield. Here, what was once a heroic encounter in epic form turns, in Kafka's writing, into an experience of estrangement and silence shaped by the anxieties of modern life (Corngold, 2011, pp.60–63; Robertson, 1985, p.94; Sokel, 2002, pp.145–147).

In an ancient Greek tale known as the *Telegony*, Odysseus's son Telegonus embarks on a journey to find his long-lost father. When he reaches Ithaca, neither recognizes the other: the father, unaware of his son's identity, drives him away, and the son unknowingly strikes the fatal blow that ends

Odysseus's life. After the war breaks out, Telegonus wounds his father with a poisoned spear, leading to a tragic ending (Kolk, 1967, p. 79; West, 2007, p.312). This story centers on the deadly conflict between father and son, and the father dies at the hands of his son (Kolk, 1967, p.79).

In *Letters to His Father*, Kafka turns the old myth of Telegonus into a story of inner struggle. His wish for his father's approval leads not to peace, but to remorse. The letter, as a symbolic weapon, replaces the poisoned spear: it wounds through confession and self-blame, suggesting that the modern son, unlike Telegonus, kills not the father's body but his image within the self.

One of the best-known Russian heroic epics is *The Song of Ilya Muromets and His Son Sokolnik*, preserved within the *Bylina* tradition of Kievan Rus, and includes about 300-400 stories. In this tale, Ilya—Russia's legendary warrior—meets a young knight at the border who unknowingly challenges him to combat. The youth, strong and fearless yet inexperienced, fights the seasoned hero in a vivid, tragic encounter, unaware they are father and son. After a fierce struggle, Ilya fatally wounds the young man and discovers his son, Nikita (or Sokol) (Propp, 1958, pp.47–49; Kolk, 1967, p.80; Afanasyev, 1916), who desires to prove his valor. The father, compelled by duty and pride, fights on blindly until the tragic revelation overwhelms him with remorse. The darkest version ends when Ilya kills his sleeping son by sealing the story in irreversible grief (Kolk, 1967, p.80).

Kafka's stories share the same sense of destiny and futility that runs through the Russian tales. His conflict with his father repeats Ilya Muromets's tragedy in another form; resistance is tied to dependence, and the son's rebellion deepens the bond to the father. Ilya's fatal blow to his son ends in unbearable regret, and Kafka's letter repeats the same pattern in a psychological form: his attempt to speak freely becomes another way of submitting to his father's power. The silence following Ilya's fatal strike parallels that which surrounds Kafka's acknowledgment of irreversible alienation.

The Irish legend of Cú Chulainn and his son Connla, recorded around the twelfth century, tells of their fateful and tragic encounter. As a young boy, Connla receives a ring from his father, along with a warning that he must never reveal his name or give in to anyone if he ever wears it. By the age of seven, Connla becomes a formidable warrior and, without revealing his identity, returns to Ireland, defeating all who challenge him. When Cú Chulainn meets the young warrior in *The Aided Óenfir Aífe* (The Tragic Death of Aífe's Only Son), neither knows opponent. They fight until Cú Chulainn kills him, only to

recognize the ring on the youth's hand and realize he has slain his own son. The story ends with his grief and mourning, repeating the same tragic pattern seen in other Indo-European father–son tales (Cross & Slover, 1936; Rees & Rees, 1961; Kolk, 1967, p.81). Along with Greek and Russian stories, this Irish tale illustrates a common cross-cultural archetype of father–son conflict, beginning with honor or fate, and leading to a tragic revelation.

Kafka's father–son relationship likewise revolves around concealment and recognition. The ring that serves as a token of recognition between Cú Chulainn and Connla finds its parallel in Kafka's letter to his father. Both are meant to close a distance but reveal the separation. Connla's silence in battle recalls Kafka's faltering voice—his words caught between rebellion and the wish to be understood. In both narratives, the son's gesture toward truth—whether revealing a ring or writing a letter—becomes the moment of destruction, showing that recognition is tragic when love cannot coexist with authority.

1. Historical and Cultural Context

For Georg Baesecke, *Hildebrandslied* is the only surviving Old High German heroic poem and a unique early monument of Germanic literature[i] (Baesecke, 1945, p.1). The final part of the manuscript in the library of the Fulda Monastery dates to the 8th century, when the library expanded significantly with the financial support of Charlemagne (Heusler, 1913, p.15). However, all the valuable books in this library were either completely lost or moved to unknown locations in the 17th century (Heusler, 1913, p.15). In 1729, the famous German antiquarian von Eckhart discovered this manuscript in the Kassel Library (von Eckhart, 1729). Intellectuals in the 18th century were more inclined toward the French and English classics, so *Hildebrandslied* did not garner significant attention until the 19th century (Grimm & Grimm, 1812). Lost among the Fulda library's collections in the seventeenth century, Hildebrandslied came to light again only in 1945, when it was discovered in Bad Wildungen, a town that had sheltered many cultural artifacts during the war. Although its final page was missing, the text eventually reached the United States and, by 1950, was kept in a private collection in California (Selmer, 1955, p.122). Then, after four years of negotiations with the German embassy's cultural department, it was sent back to Germany (Selmer, 1955, p. 122).

The earliest part of *Hildebrandslied* shows three phases of development and contains moral lines influenced by Irish and Anglo-Saxon *Insular* writing (Loft, 1986, p. 20). The second part is written in Carolingian script, and the

last part includes the Hildebrandslied. Some scholars also attribute the poem's origin to Northern Italy, where it was written in the second half of the 8th century by the Langobards and later transferred to the Fulda Monastery in the Frankish kingdom (Loft, 1986, p. 20). Like many medieval knightly battles, it reflects the influence of medieval chivalric combat traditions.

The fourth stanza of the ballad depicts the son's tragic death; the father defeats the son, and the final moments highlight compassion amid the unavoidable tragedy. The intense tension in *Hildebrandslied* arises from his fear of dishonor and his concern that surrendering to his son would damage his heroic reputation, ultimately leading to a tragic ending. Nevertheless, the poem ends abruptly because its last page is missing. Still, the dramatic and emotional tone in the climax reveals the son's bitter death at the father's hands: the son's sharp reproaches ignite the father's anger, and the father's pride and sense of honor ultimately lead the conflict to its tragic conclusion.

Several later manuscripts, especially those from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, altered the tragic end with mutual recognition and reconciliation, where father and son practice peace—a tendency also echoed in Nordic adaptations. However, the tragic act of the son killing the father follows the dark logic of honor-driven Germanic heroism and the archetype of father–son conflict leading to both physical and symbolic destruction.

The earliest critical study of *Hildebrandslied* dissected the poem; however, ambiguities within the poem remain unresolved (Grimm & Grimm, 1812). Later, Heusler (1915) states that *Hildebrandslied* embodies genuine aspects of life intertwined with imaginative creativity, conveys the values of a heroic era—such as leadership, loyalty, love, and faith within the realm of anthropocentric tragedy (p.162).

Much like *Hildebrandslied*, Franz Kafka's *Letters to His Father* explores the inescapable tension between paternal authority and filial fear. Though centuries apart, *Hildebrandslied* and Kafka's *Letters to His Father* both portray the father not simply as a person but as the embodiment of authority. In the Germanic poem, power is tangible—expressed through the sword and the warrior's code. In Kafka's world, it takes a quieter but more corrosive form: silence, reproach, and moral pressure. The unfinished ending of *Hildebrandslied* recalls the same absence that closes Kafka's letter, where reconciliation never arrives and the son's voice hangs between guilt and resistance. For Hildebrand, exile is physical, and for Kafka, it becomes inward from the field of combat to the mind. This feeling of not belonging turns the heroic tragedy of the past into a portrait of inner pain. Kafka shows that the

struggle between father and son did not disappear—it simply moved from the field of battle into the private world of thought and memory.

The story of Rostam and Sohrab is among the most moving parts of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, the great Persian epic that tells Iran's legendary history from its mythical origins to the Arab conquest (Ferdowsi, 2006; Davis, 2016; Kolk, 1967) begins with the famed Iranian hero, Rostam, who loses his horse Rakhsh. During his search, he meets Princess Tahmineh, the daughter of the local king, and they share a brief yet fateful union. Rostam departs unaware that Tahmineh is carrying his son, Sohrab, who grows into an extraordinary warrior who, by age ten, surpasses all others in strength and bravery. As a young man, he amasses a large army and threatens to conquer Iran, unaware that his destined opponent will be his father. When Rostam is sent to confront the rebellious youth, neither knows the other's identity. Their first day of fighting ends with Sohrab's victory; he overpowers but spares his opponent, and on the second day, Rostam relies on cunning and prayer, delivering a fatal blow in a desperate counterattack. As Sohrab lies dying, he learns his enemy is his father. The revelation devastates both; Rostam's grief is limitless, but fate prevents any chance of redemption. Sohrab dies in his father's arms, and Rostam is left to mourn a tragedy born of ignorance, pride, and cruel destiny (Ferdowsi, 2006; Davis, 2016; Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011, pp.101–104; Mohammadi *et al.*, 2018, p.723).

The Persian epic, *Shahnameh*, completes the cross-cultural cycle of father–son legends, aligning with Greek, Russian, Irish, and German (*Hildebrandslied*) traditions. Across these tales, certain patterns repeat: a father meets an extraordinary woman in a distant land, a son of great promise is born, and a token of recognition is exchanged. Many of these stories revolve around a fatal warning: the son must never reveal his name, for doing so brings his downfall (Ferdowsi, 2006; Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011; Mohammadi *et al.*, 2018; Rasmi & Rasooli, 2016; Kolk, 1967). Later, they face each other in battle, neither knowing the other's identity: the son relies on the power of being youth, and the father on experience. When the final blow is struck, they at last know each other only when it no longer saves them. (Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011, p.105; Mohammadi *et al.*, 2018, pp.724–725; Davis, 2016).

Kafka reflects the same psychological tragedy found in the story of Rostam and Sohrab, where father and son meet without recognizing one another. Here, the confrontation with the father takes place not through open battle but through silence, distance, and continual misunderstanding. The father's power in *Shahnameh* is shown through physical strength and moral

command, while in Kafka's world it takes the form of judgment and words that wound more deeply than action (Corngold, 2011). Both fathers destroy their sons unintentionally: Rostam through ignorance and Kafka's father through humiliation (Robertson, 1985, pp.74–75). Kafka's letter reimagines Sohrab's last embrace with his father as a different kind of death of the self. The fight turns into a confession, and what should bring peace ends in quiet despair. (Sokel, 2002, p.119). For Kafka, the battlefield turns inward by becoming the space of the mind; the struggle between the father's power and the son's search for identity continues in the pauses, the silences, and the hesitant words of the letter (Pawel, 1984, p.202).

2. Ethical and Psychological Dimensions of Authority

The 17th and 18th lines of *Hildebrandslied* introduce the conflict's historical background: "My father's name was Hildebrand; my name is Hadubrand. Long ago he fled east, escaping the wrath of Odoacer"[ii] (*Hildebrandslied*, as cited in Baesecke, 1945, p.17; Heusler, 1913, p.15). Here, Hadubrand introduces himself and speaks of his father's exile, set in the time of Odoacer, remembered as the last emperor of the Western Roman Empire (Baesecke, 1945; Heusler, 1913). Placed in the world of Germanic wanderings and exile, the poem reveals a society where allegiance to lord and kin eclipses the bond between father and son. Out of that conflict grows the moral tension that turns loyalty into loss (Akkaya, 1948, pp.594–595; Baesecke, 1945).

The poem reflects the values of early Germanic life, where honor often stood above kinship (Heusler, 1913; Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011, p.100; Rasmi & Rasooli, 2016, pp.176–177). When Hildebrand meets his son, he pays the tragic price of choosing duty over love. Exile turns him from a father into a warrior ruled by honor. In Germanic culture, a warrior's life follows strict laws of loyalty, where love and recognition appear only at the moment of death (Mohammadi et al., 2018, pp.721–723; Rasmi & Rasooli, 2016). The poem ends abruptly, its last lines lost over time, yet the surviving verses imply that the father strikes the final blow, consistent with the ideals of early Germanic heroism. (Loft, 1986, p. 20; Selmer, 1955, p.122). The oldest layer of the manuscript also contains "insular" moral stanzas shaped by Irish and Anglo-Saxon influence, revealing that literary ideas and forms circulated widely across northern Europe during the early medieval period (Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011, p.103). In choosing duty over love, Hildebrand repeats the ancient Indo-European pattern of fathers and sons bound by fate (Mohammadi *et al.*, 2018, pp.721–723).

Hildebrandslied and *Shahnameh* can be compared for their shared tragic structure: the father's late recognition and the sense of fate that prevents reconciliation. (Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011, pp.101–102; Mohammadi *et al.*, 2018, p.728; Naqi Pour, 2008). Ferdowsi's story of *Rostam and Sohrab* (Naqi Pour, 2008) follows a familiar tragic course—from ignorance to battle, then to recognition and death. *Hildebrandslied* remains brief and realistic, while the *Shahnameh* approaches poetic depth and moral reflection. In both narratives, obligations and pride outweigh compassion, and the connection between father and son gives way to sorrow: moral duty defines the father's relationship to his son. In *Hildebrandslied*, grief stems from alienation and the harsh demands of honor; in *Shahnameh*, the same conflict unfolds through the forces of destiny and the painful moral insight that follows an irrevocable loss. In the end, both works return to the same Indo-European pattern—a father who kills his son without knowing him, gains only sorrow after victory (Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011, pp.104–105; Mohammadi *et al.*, 2018, pp.725–726; Ohlert, 1902, p.33).

Kafka shifts the ancient archetype from the external battlefield to the internal realm of psychological exile (Sokel, 2002, p.145). Hildebrand and Rostam fight their sons in battle, but Kafka's conflict with his father unfolds in language; it is a fight of guilt and remembrance, not of swords and shields (Corngold, 2011, pp.57–59). The rigid moral and social rules that guide Hildebrand's actions find their parallel in Kafka's inner battle with paternal authority (Pawel, 1984; Robertson, 1985). Both fathers embody a form of power that shapes the son through apprehension and self-control rather than warmth or compassion (Pawel, 1984, pp.167–169). In *Hildebrandslied*, the father's allegiance to honor suppresses emotional intimacy, while in Kafka's universe, the son's obedience arises not from external coercion but from an inward sense of guilt and moral subjugation. (Robertson, 1985, p.92). The missing end of *Hildebrandslied* recalls the silence that ends Kafka's letter—a quiet that carries the same feeling of pain and incompleteness. In *Shahnameh*, Rostam recognizes Sohrab only when it is too late, and in Kafka's confession, the same delayed awareness brings no comfort (Kafka, 1954, p.62). Both the epic and the letter stop short of resolution: the father cannot be reached, and the son's words fall into the same unhearing distance (Sokel, 2002, pp.148–150). Through this parallel, Kafka emerges as the modern inheritor of the ancient tragic motif. The battlefield becomes the psyche; exile turns inward; and the fatal wound is no longer physical but emotional—the wound of a son

who cannot escape the shadow of his father's moral supremacy (Corngold, 2011, p.64).

3. Shared Archetypes in Indo-European Tradition

In *Hildebrandslied*, the father–son conflict occurs within a significantly different cultural and moral framework compared to that of Rostam and Sohrab. In Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, Rostam's marriage to Tahmineh is lawful and supported by Persian royal customs. Hildebrand's union stands on uncertain moral ground within the rigid ethics of Germanic life, ruled by honor and service to one's lord (Heusler, 1913; Baesecke, 1945). Persian tales treat legitimacy as divinely ordained, but in the Germanic world allegiance to rank and reputation eclipses kinship. (Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011, pp.100–101).

Rostam remains a revered hero who symbolizes Iranian ideals of wisdom, justice, and divine destiny, but Hildebrand lives in exile—a loyal warrior serving foreign kings while being estranged from his homeland (Akkaya, 1948, p.595). According to Heusler (1913) and Rasmi and Rasooli (2016), the theme of exile in *Hildebrandslied* shows how family ties give way to loyalty and duty. Unlike *Shahnameh*, which relies on fate, prophetic dreams, and tokens of recognition, the Germanic poem avoids such symbolism and stays within the realm of human conflict (Baesecke, 1945, p.22). Its realism comes from a worldview devoid of the supernatural, grounded in the inevitability of human pride and social law.

In many Indo-European stories, sons seek their fathers out of love, but in *Hildebrandslied* the reverse occurs—Hadubrand meets his father with suspicion and anger, seeing him as an enemy (Heusler, 1915, p.162). This shows the Germanic belief that honor is above emotion. Unlike *Shahnameh*, where divine mercy softens the tragedy, *Hildebrandslied* remains stark and human. The son recognizes his father too late, dying without redemption, and the father's victory turns into moral defeat (Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011, pp.104–105; Mohammadi *et al.*, 2018, p.728). Examining Rostam and Sohrab alongside Hildebrandslied reveals how both stories depict the same tragic pattern of father and son in conflict, yet each reflects its moral world. While Ferdowsi's Persian epic raises the story to a metaphysical level, exploring divine justice and human destiny, *Hildebrandslied* presents the same theme through the lens of moral realism involving exile, loyalty, and fatal pride (Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011, pp.99–102; Mohammadi *et al.*, 2018, p.725).

Ludwig Ohlert (1902) was among the first to suggest that the recurring theme of an unconscious battle between father and son, ending in delayed

recognition, is not due to literary borrowing but rather a universal human pattern reflecting Indo-European psychological archetypes (Ohlert, 1902, p.33). Scholars who followed later argued that the motif grows out of shared worries found across cultures: the loss of kinship, the pain of exile, and the blindness of destiny (Kolk, 1967, pp.79–81; Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011, pp.105–106). The origins of the motif can thus be understood in two complementary ways: either as a result of independent development under similar social and emotional pressures or as evidence of a common Indo-European mythological heritage that influenced the moral and narrative structure of both *Hildebrandslied* and *Shahnameh*.

The recurrence of the father–son conflict appears to stem not from textual borrowing but from shared human experience shaped by similar moral and social realities. (Ohlert, 1902, pp.32–34; Kolk, 1967, p.79). In societies influenced by warfare, exile, and strict codes of honor, the tragic encounter between father and son becomes almost inevitable, representing a moral conflict between duty and kinship. Here, obedience to the tribe or the divine matters more than blood, and what begins as a family tragedy becomes the story of a society built on duty rather than affection (Heusler, 1913; Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011, pp.104–105).

In many epics, a father-and-son meeting in fatal combat coincides with a period when life is governed by war, exile, and rigid moral law. The father–son narrative appears to have developed independently across civilizations, not through imitation but as a response to shared moral and emotional realities. In ancient societies, allegiance to tribe, ruler, or sacred order outweighed family ties, and the ensuing tension between paternal duty and filial loyalty mirrored the broader values and hierarchies of those cultures. Anthropological studies indicate that cultures without direct contact can still produce comparable myths when confronted with parallel struggles over inheritance, survival, and succession (Mohammadi *et al.*, 2018, pp.723–725). Such narratives reflect a lasting tension between the weight of collective tradition and the individual's effort to define a distinct sense of self. Here, the father fights for legacy, the son for identity, and both become victims of an unrelenting destiny.

Scholars often associate the father–son motif with an Indo-European inheritance carried through oral epics across continents (Ohlert, 1902; Kolk, 1967, pp.79–81). It endures as a reflection of lineage and destiny, showing how every generation relives the similar tension between inherited duty and personal will. The recurrence of this theme across distant cultures points not

to imitation, but to a shared cultural memory—a lingering echo of ancient imagination on bloodline and fate intertwine. It identifies a pattern of shared motifs—heroic exile, the ring or token of recognition, tragic ignorance, and fatal recognition—that appear in the Hildebrandslied, Rostam and Sohrab, Ilya Muromets, and Cú Chulainn and Connla cycles (Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011, pp.106–107; Rasmi & Rasooli, 2016, p.176). This motif is most clearly expressed in societies with strong warrior traditions, codes of family honor, and stories of exile or separation—where a father leaves his homeland or family, the son grows up in isolation, and they later face each other as enemies on the battlefield, unaware of their blood relationship (Mohammadi *et al.*, 2018, pp.725–726). In both Hildebrandslied and Shahnameh, this deadly encounter acts as a moral test and a symbolic reflection of cultural ideals: honor versus compassion, duty versus kinship, and fate versus free will.

Although the father–son legends arise in different lands and eras, they follow the same emotional path and narrative rhythm, shaped by what seems to be a shared memory of human experience (Kolk, 1967; Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011). Each story turns around the same conflict—how love, duty, and destiny pull in opposite directions within every generation. In *Letters to His Father*, Kafka recasts the ancient father–son struggle as an inward psychological conflict, turning the battlefield of epic heroism into the terrain of the mind (Sokel, 2002, p. 145; Corngold, 2011; Politzer, 1966). Kafka's father, echoing figures such as Hildebrand and Rostam, personifies the full force of authority—a moral presence so pervasive that it shapes and confines the son's inner world. (Kafka, 1954; Corngold, 2011, pp. 60–63; Sokel, 2002, pp. 144–147). The codes of honor and exile that define the Germanic and Persian traditions thus reappear in Kafka's emotional world; here, obedience, guilt, and yearning become weapons in an inner war that never ends (Pawel, 1984, pp.173–174; Robertson, 1985, pp.93–95).

In *Hildebrandslied*, exile is geographical, and in Kafka's world, it is existential (Binder, 1996, p.74; Corngold, 2011; Sokel, 2002). Kafka's portrayal of the son reflects an exile not of homeland but of love—an emotional banishment from the father's affection that shapes his entire identity (Corngold, 2011, pp.61–62; Sokel, 2002, pp.148–149). Both Hadubrand and Kafka confront paternal figures whose authority carries an almost sacred inevitability. However, their defiance brings no freedom, but a deeper entrapment within the father's power (Kafka, 1954; Pawel, 1984, p.175; Corngold, 2011, p.64). In *Letters to His Father*, confession replaces combat: Kafka's words form a moral duel that mirrors the ancient Indo-European

struggle between father and son, but his weapons are different—language instead of steel, and guilt instead of blood (Robertson, 1985, pp.94–95; Sokel, 2002, pp.145–146).

In *the Shahnameh, the fatal recognition between Rostam and Sohrab occurs through physical suffering, whereas in Kafka's letter it occurs through psychological revelation (Kafka, 1954, pp.* 54–56). Both acts of recognition arrive too late, when reconciliation is impossible. (Corngold, 2011, p.65; Davis, 2016; Ferdowsi, 2006) However, in the tragedy, the son can reach his father only through words born of pain (Sokel, 2002, pp.147–149). By carrying this ancient theme into the modern world, Kafka shows that the struggle between father and son endures on how humanity seeks to understand love, freedom, and the self. (Sokel, 2002, pp.150–151; Robertson, 1985, p.97).

4. Cross-Cultural Reading of the Father–Son Archetype

Through its echoes of the Persian, Russian, and Irish epics, *Hildebrandslied* exposes the father–son struggle as one of the most enduring patterns in the mythic imagination. (Kolk, 1967; Ohlert, 1902; Eliade, 1963, p.112). While differing in tone, geography, and cultural emphasis, all traditions revolve around the same tragic narrative cycle: ignorance, confrontation, recognition, and loss (Eliade, 1963, pp.112–113; West, 2007, p.313). Across these epics, the same tragic rhythm appears: harmony returns only after kinship itself is torn apart.

The Russian and Persian epics—*Ilya Muromets* from the *Bylina* cycle and *Rostam and Sohrab* in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* have also common themes of devotion, divine will, and the inescapable force of fate (Propp, 1958, pp.47–49; Ferdowsi, 2006; Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011, p.104; Mohammadi et al., 2018, p.723). In both, human conflict becomes more than a contest of strength: fate transforms it into a meditation on the limits of will and understanding. As Propp points out, *Bylina* legends usually bring the son back to his father in a fatal clash, echoing the ancient Indo-European story of recognition that comes too late. The geographical closeness of Iran and Russia may also have fostered exchanges between their oral traditions; over centuries, stories at their shared frontiers could have evolved in parallel while keeping their distinctive mythic tone (West, 2007, pp.312–315; Rasmi & Rasooli, 2016, pp.176–177; Mohammadi *et al.*, 2018, p.727).

Unlike the Persian and Russian tales, the European versions—*Hildebrandslied* and its later adaptations—rely on human ethics instead of divine decree: their heroes act out of loyalty and duty, not prophecy or fate. (Heusler, 1913; Akkaya, 1948, p.595; Watkins, 1995, p.256). In these stories,

the father is often a warrior who has spent years away from home, meeting his son again only to face him as an enemy. Their confrontation ends in death, shaped by misunderstanding and the strict demands of warrior honor (Watkins, 1995, pp.257–258; Rasmi & Rasooli, 2016, p.178). Watkins (1995) describes this struggle between exile and belonging as a hallmark of the Indo-European heroic imagination, where loyalty to one's oath outweighs the ties of blood, either.

Scholars have proposed that *Hildebrandslied* may have originated within the Lombardic (Langobard) cultural sphere of Northern Italy before being adapted and recorded in Germany, possibly preserved within the monastic intellectual tradition of Fulda (Baesecke, 1945; von Eckhart, 1729; West, 2007, p.314). The poem's earliest layer combines elements of Old High German and Langobardic speech, implying that its formation was shaped by contact among different cultural groups rather than by the evolution of a single local tradition (Watkins, 1995, p.256; West, 2007, pp.312–313).

Over time, this story pattern seems to have moved across borders, changing its form with each new culture yet keeping the same emotional and moral weight (Mohammadi et al., 2018, p.727; Salami & Panjeshahi, 2011, pp.105–106; Ohlert, 1902, p.33). As Mohammadi *et al.* (2018, p.727) note, the repeated presence of the father–son conflict in Iranian, Germanic, and Slavic traditions shows how deeply it is rooted in shared human experience. It becomes a lasting image of the tension between authority and innocence, duty and affection, and human choice and divine will. These parallels suggest that, regardless of geography or language, the tragic meeting between father and son continues to express the same universal struggle—how love and destiny are bound together in the human story (Eliade, 1963, p.113; Watkins, 1995, p.258; West, 2007, p.315).

Kafka reimagines the old father–son conflict within the human mind. What had once been a struggle of strength and honor in *Hildebrandslied* and *Shahnameh* turns in Kafka's letter into a silent battle of guilt and surrender. His father's authority no longer depends on force but on the heavy silence that subdues the son (Sokel, 2002, pp.144–147). The notion of healing through inner conflict emerges again, this time as Kafka's struggle to find balance through confession. In this modern iteration, exile is no longer spatial but emotional: Kafka's alienation from his father mirrors the moral distance between ancient heroes and their sons (Corngold, 2011, pp.60–63). The Indo-European motif of delayed recognition is transformed into Kafka's realization of permanent incomprehension—there is no revelation, only the awareness of

irreversible separation. His letter thus becomes a modern *Bylina*: a tragic monologue in which the son, unable to fight or reconcile, immortalizes the conflict through language.

Through this psychological adaptation, Kafka's work unites the epic and the modern: divine fate becomes psychological determinism, and the fatal duel transforms into a dialogue of guilt and longing. Across centuries and civilizations, the battlefield of the father–son archetype evolves the tragic impossibility of reconciliation between power and vulnerability, law and love, the father and the son remain unchanged (Pawel, 1984, pp.173–174; Robertson, 1985, pp.93–95).

Conclusion

The story of conflict between father and son is not a fossil from myth but a drama that still speaks to the way love and authority shape identity. In both *Hildebrandslied* and *Shahnameh*, the pattern repeats itself—ignorance leading to confrontation, confrontation to recognition, and recognition to loss. However, each version reflects the spirit of its culture. In the Germanic epics, the struggle becomes a test of loyalty and exile: the father's duty to his lord outweighs his feeling for his child. In the Persian masterpiece, the struggle turns inward and becomes a meditation on fate and moral awakening, and arrives only through tragedy. Kafka's *Letters to His Father* carries this archetype into the interior world of the modern psyche. The battlefield becomes the mind, the sword becomes language, and the wound becomes guilt. The same moral forces that drive Rostam and Hildebrand—the weight of honor, obedience, and pride—manifest in Kafka as emotional paralysis and self-alienation. What was once an external act of heroism is becoming an inner duel of conscience.

Taken together, these works trace the evolution of the father–son myth from epic combat to psychological confession. Each portrays a son seeking recognition and a father whose authority remains absolute until it destroys what it seeks to preserve. Whether on the field of battle or in the quiet agony of a letter, the outcome is the same: reconciliation arrives too late, and understanding is achieved only through suffering.

Thus, the mythic, historical, and psychological dimensions of the father–son conflict form a continuum that stretches from ancient epic to modern literature. It embodies humanity's deepest struggle—to reconcile duty with love, freedom with obedience, and individuality with the inescapable legacy of the father. The tragedy of this confrontation lies not merely in death or

estrangement but in the realization that the desire for the father's approval and the will to transcend him will always remain in eternal conflict.

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[i] "Das Hildebrandslied ist das einzige erhaltene althochdeutsche Heldenlied und ein einzigartiges frühes Denkmal germanischer Dichtung."

[ii] "Dat Hiltibrant hætti min fater: ih heittu Hadubrant. Forn her ostar giweit, floh her Otachres nid."