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## FOREWORD BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

### Professor Anthony Forster

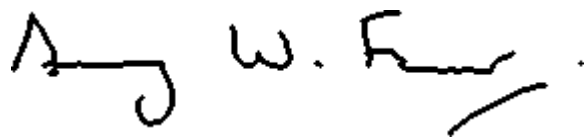


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I am delighted to introduce the tenth anniversary edition of the Essex Student Research Online (ESTRO) journal and it could not have come at a better time. In formulating our next University Strategy to cover the period from 2019 to 2025, we have over the last year been reflecting on who we are and what we stand for as a University. The distinctive mission and purpose of the University is clear - we are equally committed to excellence in education and research for the benefit of individuals and communities and society. We are proud to offer a transformational research-led education, welcoming students to the University on the basis of their potential and equipping them with the knowledge, skills and experiences that they will need to succeed and thrive in their future lives, future careers and future learning. We are proud that our research tackles challenging questions, negotiating the spaces between boundaries to shapes thinking, drive innovation and apply knowledge for the benefit of individuals and society. The distinctive character of the University of Essex is clear. We are “*freer, more daring, more experimental*” and impatient for change. Our Essex Spirit is nurtured by our global community and outlook, enabled through our culture of belonging and membership and powered by our research mind-set.

ESTRO is the perfect example of how our students put these words into action. As an online multi-disciplinary academic journal, it is run by and for University of Essex students, with staff advisors providing invaluable training and guidance. ESTRO nurtures and celebrates the abilities and aspirations of

our students encouraging them to develop their research mind-set in a very practical way. For ten years it has provided our undergraduate and postgraduate students with the opportunity to gain valuable early experience of academic writing and publishing, of peer review, and of the editorial process. Through the wide range of contributions in each and every edition, we are offered a fascinating insight into the breadth of student research and thought within our university. This edition alone includes a diverse range of fascinating articles by students from our departments of Psychology, Philosophy, Law, Human Rights and Literature, Film and Theatre Studies. This tenth anniversary edition marks the move into a new phase for ESTRO being the first edition to be published solely on-line with all the advantages that come with this. It also marks the moment when ESTRO will move from its current home within the Talent Development Centre to the University's Albert Sloman Library, itself having recently celebrated its 50th anniversary year. So as the University embarks on its next strategic plan period and we look to the future with confidence, optimism and conviction, I am delighted and proud to recognise examples of our wonderful students leading the way and ESTRO certainly counts as one of these.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anthony W. Forster". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Professor Anthony Forster**

## EDITORIAL

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Writing an academic assignment is difficult; getting an academic article published can be brutally tough. Few students ever have the opportunity to dip their toe into these troubled waters until at least the second year of their PhD. Ten years ago, the University of Essex, as ever a pioneer, set up ESTRO (Essex Student Research Online), an academic journal, published online and in a short print edition, open to all students, at all stages of their university journey, from first year undergraduates to final year PhD students, from all departments. What's more, it is edited, run and peer-reviewed by students, although overseen and backed up by staff. It runs with full academic rigour. Students submitting their work must expect to go through several rounds of editorial and peer review. Although warned about this in the submission guidelines, many drop by the wayside – it is a lengthy process and life gets in the way. Yet others persist, editors learn how to edit and how to run a journal; PhD peer reviewers learn the mechanics of an academic journal from the other side, invaluable experience for their own future publishing. In the end, what started, usually, as a distinction-winning essay or capstone project has been honed, polished and sharpened into something far more glittering – a publishable article. For most, it is their first, and there is nothing so satisfying as seeing your name in print for the very first time.

I have been fortunate to be the editor of ESTRO during its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, a time when we are looking at how to carry the journal forward into the future. After several years under the auspices of the excellent Talent Development Centre and, in particular our mentor, Mr Maurice Abbott, this year, ESTRO is moving across to a new home within the Library. The tenth edition is the first that will be online only, rather than print, partly to allow us greater flexibility in the use of photography. Small design changes have been instituted but greater plans for a friendlier web-based platform that will allow the journal to become fully searchable and citeable are in the offing. This year has also seen the first publication of a department-based special edition. Vol 10 No 2 *The Ever Present Past* contains the proceedings of the 2017 Dept of

History PhD Conference, with – another first – contributions from both Essex and other universities. ESTRO is stretching its wings. Conversations have already taken place about further collaborations with other departments and other universities. If students are willing to volunteer their time and energy to build the journal's activities, all these will be possible.

Throughout the last ten years, ESTRO's articles have represented a tiny cross-section of the extraordinary range of research strength and rigour across the disciplines at the University of Essex, an intellectual space which prides itself not only on its diversity but its encouragement of critical, creative and original thought. This issue is no different with six articles from across the spectrum of departments and topics.

Kristina Raulo Enger, who completed an LLB Law and Politics at Essex before moving on to do an MA in International Affairs at the Graduate Institute in Geneva, takes a timely look at one of the key issues of climate change in her essay on "Overcoming the Environmental Collective Action Problem". Necessary schemes such as recycling waste only work if society is willing to participate but they often require additional effort on the part of individuals for no discernible reward – so how do you get people to agree?

Recent MA Wild Writing graduate Rosemary Ganley takes a virtual stroll through our digital meanderings, theorising on the changing role of the flâneur, the literary and artistic wanderer who first took inspiration from strolling urban streets. She looks at the changing role of the female street walker and at how the cyberflâneur(se) has swapped reality for digital pathways as we increasingly live our lives online.

Was there any such thing as a 'stereotypical' witch? Joe Chaplin goes back to the 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries in his fascinating and often moving study of the women (and some men) who were most likely to be condemned as a witch during the period that defined the hag-faced caricature we think of today.

Nicola Warren, studying for an MA in Human Rights, examines the issue of poverty in the United Kingdom, using a psychosocial approach to show how exclusion from the labour market, services and social relations may affect both individuals and society at large. Demonstrating that poverty and social exclusion are human rights issues, she argues that the greatest issues are the

social structures, political and economic institutions which maintain the status quo.

Hei Tung Chan, now studying for a PhD in Philosophy, discusses Frank Rosenzweig's theories on 'healthy philosophy'. Believing that 'traditional' philosophers spend too much time and energy prioritising the 'essence' of things and allowing themselves to be paralysed by wonder, Rosenzweig argues for a new method of enquiry that allows life to dissolve the wonder.

Emilia Ilieva and her colleagues ran a fascinating series of tests under laboratory conditions, attempting to discover whether implicit bias towards White stereotypes is pro-White or anti-Black. Using 153 Psychology undergraduate students as participants in the randomised experiment, their discoveries are presented here.

And finally, Creative Writing student, Giulia Tramontana, takes us on two short journeys to the underworld in the footsteps of Odysseus and Dante with her modern reimaginings of the ancient epic themes.

*Melissa Shales*

ESTRO Editor



# Overcoming the Environmental Collective Action Problem

Kristina Raulo Enger

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## ABSTRACT

The collective action problem, by which individual rationality disrupts collective action, implies that individuals will not cooperate to overcome environmental problems. The theories of the collective action problem also set out suggestions for how to change individual rationality. Case studies of actions carried out in the United Kingdom and the Nordic countries show that these theories do work. By making individuals feel as if their actions have an impact, they will change their behaviour and act in compliance with the environmental schemes. What constitutes an impact will vary from person to person, but the idea is that we, as individuals, need to be assured that our effort to change is not in vain.

Have you ever thought about how individual rationality may lead to collective irrationality?

In essence, rationality, or rational choices, is about making sensible and justifiable decisions (Hardin, 2013). The choice of type of transport to work is a typical example. On one hand, it seems rational to drive to work, taking into account that it is arguably both more comfortable and, at least in theory, faster than taking public transport or cycling. However, when the majority chooses

to take a car we get traffic congestion. The car then arguably becomes both less comfortable and probably more time-consuming than taking the bus or a bike. What seemed to be the rational choice for individual, results in being irrational when looking at the bigger picture.

This article entails a discussion of the circumstances under which the logic of collective actions implies that individuals will not co-operate to overcome environmental problems and suggestions on how one could change such behaviour.

Collective actions should, by definition, mean the collaboration of individuals to take actions to *solve* problems. However, individual rationality is what disrupts the internal logic of (successful) collective action.

In a nutshell: individual rationality is the capacity by which individuals make sensible and justifiable decisions. When individuals' choices or actions by a majority of people lead to adverse results at a macro level, we call it "collective irrationality" (Welrich, 2010). Based on theories and examples of collective action problems, this article argues that current scholarly work such as that of Mancur Olson (1971), who argues for the need of a common interest, and Russell Hardin (2013), who stresses the importance of sufficient information, are accurate: there are ways to overcome the collective action problem.

The theories will be set out in light of real-life examples, such as the refundable deposit system for bottles and beverages in the Nordic countries, the 5p charge for plastic bags in England, and domestic waste sorting. The examination of the efficacy of these campaigns will demonstrate where the problems of collective action are to be found and suggests how one might overcome challenges to the feasibility of these schemes.

### **A problem of rationality**

While there are different challenges in different parts of the world, environmental challenges are global and need to be tackled through global collective actions. Collective actions are actions taken as groups, of all levels and sizes, in order to achieve a common goal. This article explains how society, in common, may come together to act in a more environmentally friendly way. Based on the presumption of a nation's sovereignty in policy-making (Dahl, 2000), the arguments are best shown by laying the focus upon nations.

Hence, the environmental collective actions to be examined will be actions encouraged by the nation's representatives, meaning the government/city councils.

The collective action *problem* is an issue that arises when the necessary action to benefit a group creates a conflict between the individual and the group interest, and the individuals have an opportunity to act in their own interest. On the basis of the rational choice theory, one assumes that individuals choose a course of action based on what is more in line with personal preferences; potentially leaving the other members of a group worse off than they could have been if that individual had acted in a different manner (Olson, 1971). In other words, there is a conflict of interest between individual actions and what is in the public's best interest when it comes to changing our behaviour to be more environmentally friendly and sustainable.

In *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, Olson (1971) argues that organisations, states and/or nations are only able to perform a function when the people have a common interest. In other words, larger groups will not act in accordance with the public good unless the individuals of that same group personally stand to gain something from the collective action.

While it falls outside the scope of the article and will not be commented on any further, it should be pointed out that the political opinions around environmental challenges are divided. This article is written under the assumption of an acknowledgment of humans' responsibility to protect the environment.

As mentioned earlier, there is a presumption of nations having sovereignty in policy-making, i.e. organising society. One may say that the elected representatives of a democratic state have the power implement policies and laws to control our behaviour and daily life. Today, the duty of protecting the environment within a sovereign state has been entrusted to those elected representatives of the county/borough/government, but a recurring issue is that they fail to fulfil their environmental responsibility.

Under the assumption that humanity ought to protect the environment, it should in theory be easy to solve the issue through the implementation of new policies and laws: in practice it has its obstacles. Olson argues that the reasons

for failing to implement a protective scheme are various and complex: “administrative proceedings and economic interest sometimes prevails over environmental imperatives” (Olson, 1971, p.143). Olson further notes that “the enforcement of environmental protection law is costly and cumbersome” (Olson, 1971, p.143). In other words, due to a lack of funding and political constraints, which are the major reasons why politicians often experience difficulties in enforcing new environmental-protective schemes, one needs to look at the challenge from other angles.

Before exploring the different tools one can use to overcome the collective action problem, the basis of why it arises in the first place shall be laid out. The collective action problem can arise in two ways: ignorance and/or individual rationality. Ignorance arises due to a lack of information, or willingness to seek such information, or because of misinterpretation of the information given (Hardin, 2013). Ignorance may be explained on the basis of a lack of certainty: how can one be certain that a new scheme, such as implementing a set price for plastic bags will reduce the number of plastic bags being used?

Due to the lack of complete certainty, one chooses to ignore it completely, acting in ignorance (Basili, Franzini, & Vercelli, 2005). Ignorance is closely connected to individual rationality. The contribution of individual rationality to the collective action problem may occur because individuals, regardless of their knowing that society in general would be harmed by individuals *not* performing the action, would prefer to act, and do act, selfishly, in a way that harms the environment. An example is the usage of cars. As an individual, you would probably choose to drive a car if you were going somewhere: it is easy, convenient and often viewed as the least time-consuming option. However, having everyone driving individual cars causes more air pollution than if other means of transport such as trains and busses were used instead (Environmental Protection UK, 2015). Additionally, private motorised transport creates traffic jams which could be avoided if people were to use public transport.

The choice of transit is a classic example of a collective action problem: even though everyone would be better off by using public transport, individuals keep choosing to travel by car. The government may indeed enforce policies restricting the use of cars by, for example, designating days on which all use is prohibited in certain areas, or at specified times of the day, etc. However, as already mentioned, governments’ capability to implement such actions seem to

be limited. There is clearly a need to tackle these challenges through other channels than simply using policies and laws. Hence, we need to examine different ways of how to change a group's behaviour.

### **The value of co-operation**

When it comes to collective action to solve environmental issues, all citizens have two options; to co-operate or *not* to co-operate. It is, as I have mentioned, when choosing the latter, that the collective action problem arises. The rationale behind choosing the latter is in fact quite logical and can be explained through the concept of the Prisoners' Dilemma: there is a risk your own effort might make little, if any, difference to the outcome, and therefore you fail to make the effort. If 'I' were to co-operate and 'everyone' were to defect, 'I' would not gain anything from co-operating, but rather lose. 'I' am dependent on 'everyone' to co-operate. Regardless of what 'I' do, 'everyone' must follow the collective action if a positive outcome is to be achieved, and if 'everyone' is to co-operate, what difference would 'my' defection make? Most likely little, if any.

Following this it can be argued that "unless the number of individuals in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, rational self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interest" (Olson, 1971, p.2). Even though the goal, which here is to protect the environment, is a common good to 'everyone', meaning "that no one in the group is excluded from the benefit or satisfaction brought about by its achievement," (Olson, 1971, p.15) people have a tendency to defect. While such individuals on one hand would like to obtain the collective benefit from the collective action, they have no interest in paying the cost of co-operating in order to achieve the collective good (Olson, 1971, p.21). These individuals are 'free riders', meaning that they are not co-operating, but are still able to enjoy the benefits. To make it even clearer, the theory will be applied to the actual collective action of the depositing and recycling of non-refillable bottles and beverages in the Nordic countries.

All the Nordic countries—Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden—have developed a nationwide deposit system whereby citizens receive a reward for all bottles being returned after use. By having the citizens recycle their bottles, the society is spared both from producing new ones and requiring the

destruction of the old ones: clearly beneficial from an environmental point of view (Geelmuyden Kiese; Infinitum, 2015). Going back to the Prisoners' Dilemma: society and the environment would clearly benefit from 'everyone' co-operating and recycling their bottles. In order for the scheme to have a proper effect, however, it is not enough if only 'I' co-operate. Finding a way to motivate 'everyone' to co-operate has its difficulties.

Keeping in mind that 'everyone' is also an 'I' at some stage, it is logical that 'I' will not benefit from co-operating if not 'everyone' chooses to co-operate. It is reasonable for 'I' to ask him/herself why they should make an effort in keeping the bottles stored and make the effort of taking them to the collection points if it will not make a difference. Also, if 'everyone' were to co-operate, the scheme would be successful regardless of what 'I' decide to do. Thus, it is easy for 'I' to defect and when every 'I' does so, 'everyone' does, and the collective action will fail.

Based on this, it is important that one must come up with a practice making it beneficial for 'I' to co-operate regardless of what 'everyone' does. There needs to be a system by which the population will apply a *dominant strategy*, offering the highest payoff, to each individual regardless of other players' actions. This in turn creates a *Nash equilibrium*, a situation which exists when there is no unilateral profitable deviation for any of the players involved and any and all actions become favourable for the environment (Bernheim 1984). In other words, regardless of what 'everyone' does, the strategy (i.e. the actions) must earn the player ('I') a larger payoff than any other strategy, for any other profile or other players' actions.

The Nordic countries may have reached a reasonably good solution<sup>1</sup>: the governments have introduced an extra cost for beverages with bottles suitable for the recycling-scheme mark. This extra cost is then returned to the consumer when recycling the product at given collection points. In this way 'I' benefit from being cooperative regardless of what 'everyone' does. 'I' will be *rewarded* by getting money for returning the items.

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<sup>1</sup> The author acknowledges that the Nordic countries are not the only countries in the world using this refundable system; but due to the scope of the essay and accessibility of data the example is limited to the Nordic countries' practice.

However, not all collective actions are open to the opportunity of giving money back to those who co-operate. The clue is still in creating a system where 'I' feel that 'I' will be rewarded regardless of what 'everybody' else chooses to do. The next section will take as an example the 5p charge for plastic bags scheme in England.

### **The other way around**

In October 2015, there was a change of policy in England: all shoppers are now to be charged 5p for every new plastic bag issued to the customer by the shop (Howell, 2015). The use of plastic products in general have a negative impact on the environment (World Wildlife Fund, 2019.), and trying to influence people to use less plastic is a way to lower the total usage. Previously, supermarkets such as Tesco held campaigns and offered good quality re-usable bags (Howell, 2015). However, people did not respond to campaigns given the cheap and easy access to reusable bags. According to numbers provided by BBC, the number of plastic bags handed out by English supermarkets rose by 200 million from 2013 to 2014, with 7.65 billion plastic bags given out in 2015 (Howell, 2015). Numbers collected on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) by the waste-reduction body *WRAP* also showed a steady increase in the years running up to the 5p charge (Howell, 2015).

The idea of introducing the 5p charge was to motivate people to choose *not* to take a plastic bag when out shopping. Instead of grabbing a new plastic bag, or even bags, every time they go shopping, the idea was that people would start bringing their own reusable bags. Five pence may not seem like a lot of money and some might even argue it is too little to have an influence upon people. However, previous schemes in the United Kingdom have shown that it is quite effective. England is the last part of the UK to introduce a 5p charge for plastic bags; Wales introduced the scheme back in 2011 and it resulted in a remarkable drop of 71% in the numbers of plastic bags used by consumers. Northern Ireland and Scotland followed in 2013 and 2014 and can also report at significant drop in the numbers (Howell, 2015). Newer data sets also reveal that it has in fact been successful in England. Since the scheme was introduced the number of bags used has dropped by more than 80% (Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2018).

The scheme is in essence the refundable system, just the other way around. While 5p itself is not a large amount of money, one can argue that 'I' get the feeling of being 'rewarded' by saving money when 'I' avoid paying for a plastic bag while shopping. While this might make it seem easy to motivate people to co-operate, not all collective actions are as easy to implement.

### **Waste sorting**

Domestic waste sorting is one of the less easy problems to solve. Motivating people to follow the instructions cannot always be solved by either giving money, or making people feel as if they are saving money. Waste sorting requires effort from each and every individual, to enable waste collection services to recycle efficiently and, in most cases, people cannot see the result of co-operating. One must solve the problem in a different way. Colchester Borough Council has decided to penalise those who do not co-operate. People are penalised in two different ways: either having the rubbish truck refusing to pick up the trash until it is sorted correctly; or being given a fine (Colchester Borough Council). According to this scheme, 'I' would either be forced to go through the trash again or pay a fine for not following the instruction given by the Borough. Thus, 'I' would most likely co-operate and follow the instructions for domestic waste sorting regardless of what 'everyone' else does. However, there are other factors besides rewarding or penalizing people in order to influence their behaviour. Interest groups, i.e. civil society, smaller communities, neighbours and friends may have influence on 'me (I)' in relation to defecting on cooperation.

### **Third parties**

Civil society (used in the sense of non-governmental organisations which manifest the will of citizens to improve society, for example environmental charities or lobby organisations such as Greenpeace) may reach people via mass marketing, which can be done in different ways. Civil society is an essential pillar in a democracy (Dahl, 2000) and one may argue that "[it]is laying the basis for broad institutional, social and political change" (Lipschutz & Mayer, 1996, p. 2). Hence, civil society is able reach out and communicate with the public on a different level than the government. Furthermore, it may use different tools to do so.



Civil society has arguably used and still is using the strength of public relations (PR) more efficiently than many governments. PR is about communication with the public. However, the government is expected to present a relatively unbiased view when cases or situations arise (Dahl, 2000). Organisations belonging to civil society, on the other hand, are not expected to present as objective a view of the whole situation as the public institutions. Hence, civil society may through efficient use of PR strategy present facts in a way that will benefit them the most (Taylor, 2000). The use of PR does indeed take place within political parties and governments as well as other places, but the difference is how it is looked upon when pointed out. Governments and officials who hold back or neglect to give all accessible information are often regarded as attempting to hide the truth or even lie, while it is more accepted and rarely even noted when done by civil society (Taylor, 2000). Hence, civil society may operate using media stunts, aggressive campaigning and other unorthodox initiatives.

A common approach, especially when fundraising, is creating a direct link between the donation and a particular outcome, e.g. showing a picture of polar bear with a heading saying, 'donate to save this polar bear'. Instead of emphasizing the threat to wildlife, however, an efficient angle can be to make the public feel related or connected to the environmental threat by concentrating on the danger to human life, making one think "*that could be me*". The next closest thing to *me* is *family*, and especially one's children. In 2017, Greenpeace used this as a tool in their campaign against plastic pollution and microbeads. As explained in detail below, the shift from simply stating why today's use of plastic is harmful to the environment to describing how it is harmful to our own, and especially children's, health, triggered emotions and engaged more people.

Civil society's 'war' against microplastic has been going on a long time, but it was not successful until recently. Greenpeace's campaign warning about the way the tiny plastic particles are making their way into waterways where they are eaten by wildlife, created a huge public outcry. The campaign made sure to emphasise that not only do plastic microbeads affect wildlife, but that they are also ingested by us *and* our children via the food chain (Greenpeace, 2017). This public engagement encouraged the UK Government to propose the strongest microbeads ban in the world to date (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, 2017). The power of civil society is strong, and it goes

beyond organised groups just pushing for a change in public policy: it also enables cultural change.

Going back to domestic sorting of waste: if an individual defect on acting according to the regulations, the dustcart will leave the trash in the street, leaving it to the person defecting to sort it out. The emotional distress one may experience by being the only household in the neighbourhood with trash bags still in the street when coming home from work may work as a motivation to sort the trash as the regulations stipulate. The cost of sorting the trash from the beginning compared to the distress of being ‘told off’ in front of everyone gives the incentives to act in accordance with the regulations.

The power of the pressure from non-governmental actors also has its effects on an individual level. Tom Tyler (2006) argues that we obey the law not because we fear the punishment, but firstly, because we respect the legitimate authority and, secondly, because people who go against the grain of conventional societal message are often accused of being troublemakers and the cause of the problem. Knowing that all your neighbours would most likely have seen that you did not take the time and effort to follow the common rules, how would that make you feel? The discomfort and distress you may feel, combined with the respect you have for your neighbours, if not for the authorities themselves, would most likely have an effect upon you. Regardless of your caring about the environment or not, it is reasonable to assume that you would start to follow the law and sort your waste (Tyler, 2006).

### **Seeking a purpose**

It has been shown that convincing people to act in an environmentally friendly way has its challenges. The logic of collective actions has been laid down, and the collective action problem is concluded to stem from *individual rationality*. However, as I have shown, the problem of motivating and/or convincing people to co-operate can be done through different tactics. Social actors/institutions such as the government, interest and pressure groups, private persons and smaller communities, such as religious groups, may be able to influence people to change their behaviour and co-operate. Economic motivation, feelings or ethics/morality are all factors or ‘tools’ that could, should, and are used to influence people’s behaviour. Individuals need reassurance that their efforts are not in vain, but actually can make a change.

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## The Cyberflâneur in the Age of Digital Technology

Roseanne Ganley

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### ABSTRACT

This essay discusses our relationship with the flâneur in a socio-historical context, considering new realms of possibility in the age of digital technology, with the help of critics such as Lauren Elkin, Rebecca Solnit, and Evgeny Morozov. It will, furthermore, pose questions about its future credibility, asking if it has the potential, to move with the times, and be redefined as the cyberflâneur from an ungendered perspective. In the age of hyper-surveillance, we are being watched all over the world. We are participating in the sharing and storing of information, creating a cyberspace that exists beyond reality.

In a post-modern world dominated by technology our attention has turned to the aesthetic experiences our digital screens can offer us. Our zombie-like presence in the realm of the digital era has, however, affected our ability to engage with the natural world, the city streets and other passers-by. Digital technology has influenced the emergence of the cyberflâneur, which is “the flâneur in cyberspace, a fast-forward flâneur, a net flâneur or a virtual flâneur” (L.B. Tauris, 2000, 93). The flâneur is already nostalgic of its role of understanding place and indulging itself in the cultural and sociological history of its existence. But, with the ever-increasing exposure of information online, we can now, instead, avoid the outside world. In *The Encyclopaedia of Trouble and Spaciousness*, urban wanderer Rebecca Solnit acknowledges the phenomenon that to understand a place and how it exists geographically is to engage with the “braided narratives” (Solnit, 2014, 1) of our time. Have we destroyed our own aesthetic experiences of the spaces we inhabit? Or has digital technology provided us with new ways of seeing? By discussing some

contemporary perspectives of the flâneur, to imagining its rebirth in a post-humanist setting, we can grasp a better understanding of its origins and importance in a literary context where digital technologies are blurring the distinctions between natural and urban spaces.

The term flâneur originated from the French verb *flâner*, meaning to stroll or loiter. The flâneur as a socio-cultural figure of modernity was first brought into being by Charles Baudelaire, and was described as “an anxious wanderer, lost and terrified, at constant risk of encountering the grotesque and Gothic dwellers at the heart of the maze [of London.]” (Ridenhour, 2013, 80). Inspired by Edgar Allan Poe’s story *The Man of the Crowd* (1840), Baudelaire concluded the invention of a “new urban type, an isolated and estranged figure who is both a man of the crowd and a detached observer of it and, as such, the avatar of the modern city” (Coverley, 2013, 80). To redefine the flâneur in the present day, according to Deborah Parsons, is firstly to “acknowledge its related but distinct uses as a conceptual term and as a socio-historical phenomenon, it is to clarify a term which is currently at once too vague and too exclusive” (Parsons, 2003, 9). Issues still arise as to the assumption of the flâneur (Wrigley, 2014, 327). Women wanderers however were more often known to be prostitutes, widows or murder victims and were given the impression that they were never allowed to stroll alone in the city.

In the age of robotics, self-service machines and multi-functional phones, it has become apparent that digital technologies are blurring the distinctions between natural and urban spaces. As our landscape faces the disastrous consequences of an Anthropocentric world that is ever increasingly dominated by humans, to be a flâneur in the present day is, as Lash refers to it, to “stroll, or better stagger, among the ruins of dead landscapes, cityscapes, ‘culture-scapes’” (Lash, 1998, 311). In his article ‘Being after time: Towards a politics of melancholy’ Lash goes on to define our own human subjectivities existing only as “points or nodes in a network” (313) in the post-narrative age of information. We have discarded our own bodily connections to the outside world and are now in the age of “hyper surveillance, in which the past, digitised and stored, is available all of the time” (313). Our vision is perpetrated through the eye of the digital screen or lens. Digital technology has invaded our privacy and deferred the meaning of being and the self. Consequently, all that is left is a body that “roams the abstract spheres of cyberspace today” (Hartmann, 2004, 112) disengaged and cut off from its surroundings. It can be

argued however, that the cyberflâneur can adopt new ways of redefining itself with the “possibility to create content for/within the medium [of digital technology]” (Hartmann, 2004, 121). The cyberflâneur in its new state of existence can have a relationship with the crowd and is the modern-day voyeur of cyberspaces who “knows the net rather well, since he constantly speeds through” (127). If we are to imagine the future of the flâneur then we must transgress the boundaries and redefine the term from an ungendered perspective. A constructive way of achieving this is by referring to the flâneur as a cyborg entity and a non-body that is resistant to the politics of gender and allows us to “write counter-histories of the future in which hybrids and syncretism are not outside the norms.” (Shields, 2006, 219). This averts, also, any assumptions to be made that the flâneur is not able to adapt with the times or have a new reason for its existence. It is, instead, a multi-layered complex figure, that is not easily labelled and can adapt with the times.

The post-modernist vision of the female flâneur is one whose “gaze is more tolerant than authoritative, and more connective than detached” (Reus and Usandizaga, 2008, p.189). Urban spaces are no longer being “conceived as a male space, in which women are either repressed or disobedient marginal presences” (Parsons, 2003, p.2). By redefining it as the cyberflâneur, we can reimagine its purpose as an “open and migrational one, available to female as well as male walkers of the city street” (9). Inventor of the term flâneuse, Lauren Elkin also attempts to redefine the role of the woman in *Flaneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London*. Elkin explores how females “were once the objects of the gaze” (Elkin, 2016, 1). This all changes however, when “as street haunters we become observing entities, de-sexed, ungendered” (Elkin, 2016, 86). This is not too dissimilar to Virginia Woolf’s essay ‘Street Haunting’ which discusses the circumstances at which it is acceptable for a Woman to wander the streets alone in the early twentieth century. Woolf reveals that when we go outside in the evening “we are no longer quite ourselves” and that “we shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers, whose society is so agreeable after the solitude of one’s own room” (Woolf, 11). The flâneur is thus a stroller through the city, an artist, a cultural figure of modernity.

The cyberflâneur, geared towards social reality, seeks to transgress gender boundaries by “naming herself in a female category and thereby referring to a

whole array of behavioural possibilities that have arisen from the flâneuse’s history” (L.B. Tauris, 2000, 102). This justification of the female flâneur has presented women with the ability to identify with subjects and objects through the initiation of the gaze, showing a willingness to join in with the crowd. The purpose for the existence of the cyberflâneur according to Tauris is to “engage with city strollers who take in a lot of information and find their specific ways of dealing with it” (102). This is in comparison to the virtual city which is “partly a dreamscape and as such it offers itself to the cyberflâneur” (102). This can be seen in relation to the relationship formed between humans and digital technology or the cyborg of the city, which is best known as the informatics of domination by Donna Haraway (1991) with its purpose to “iteratively enact the human subject as the monocular centre of any and all space” (Shaw, 2015, 238). The borders between other living entities however, “between living and non-living, sentient and nonsentient, human and animal and object and subject becomes increasingly unstable” (238). The cyberflâneur has consequently, been reduced to “a rootless, displaced subject” as discussed by Bull in his essay ‘The end of the flânerie’ (Bull, 2013, 152). This poses a threat to the future credibility of the cyberflâneur and its role in contemporary literature. The continual presence of mobile devices allowing the spectator to surf the web restricts our experiences of real spaces and questions our role as unidentified subjects existing in a virtual world. The emergence of technology has caused us to be distracted and to prevent our heightened sensual awareness of the spaces we inhabit. In the age of the post-urban “cities are hyper-realised as experiences in themselves” (Shaw, 2015, 232). The post-urban being a space that presents itself in terms of information regulation rather than “the living and working bodies of its inhabitants” (232), the city streets are now monitored with security cameras and projection screens affecting the flâneur’s involvement with digital and physical spaces.

The flâneur in the present day therefore has more of a virtual presence than an actual one. In his article for *The New York Times*, Morozov discusses that the very stance of popular technology, including the suggestion that the existence of the frictionless sharing of news on Facebook is “killing cyberflânerie: the whole point of the Flâneur’s wanderings is that he does not know what he cares about” (Morozov, 2012, 6). Increasing access to social media and other external sites of information means that we often experience the lives of others through a camera lens, or screen and thus, reality for us becomes second nature. Morozov, further to this, argues how Google servers are destroying the



possibility of cyberflânerie and all that defines it; “solitude and individuality, anonymity and opacity, mystery and ambivalence, curiosity and risk-taking – is under assault” (4). The act of being watched or surveyed in the City can activate fear in the individual, having a detrimental effect on their own visual perceptions and sensory experiences. The flâneur then acts as the fieldworker for the capitalist state by “posting images of exotic destinations on social media sites” (Shaw, 2015, 236) as a kind of knowledge-making with the rest of the world. Rather than just basing the flâneur on a cultural figure that roams the streets, it is also one that fuses itself with the world of the virtual in the mechanical age of reproduction. This suggests that the future of the flâneur will be better accommodated online, in a virtual world rather than existing beyond the screen. This also poses the question of what the significance will be “if we replace the windscreen with the television or computer screen, so that the viewer is not in a vehicle moving through a landscape but sits in front of the screen which is used to transport images and information to the recipient?” as discussed in Featherstone’s book on virtual public life. (Featherstone, 1998, 911). Technology will have an overarching effect on how we mentally record impressions or store information leading to “the retreat from sensation characteristic” (916) associated with “a more general decline of public space” (917). The post-modern era therefore poses unknown questions about the future credibility of the flâneur.

To conclude, technology has been at the forefront of our being for the last decade or so. It has colonised and inhabited us, walking us into a new way of existence. If critics such as Michael Bull and Maren Hartmann are already discussing what happens after the end of technology, then, it is important to be well equipped in redefining the cyberflâneur as an androgynous, ungendered entity, that exists beyond an online network and that may not necessarily be human but crosses all boundaries and exceeds all limitations. As Hartmann says, the cyberflâneur is “a transitional figure, which serves to reveal that moment when a new technology passes from its initial restricted application to widespread social uptake and social normalisation” (Hartmann, 2004, 276). The flâneur has already undergone a dramatic transformation since the beginning of the twentieth century, but still has its place in society, and has potential to move forward with the times. It represents the first of the next generation of users of the internet that “roams the abstract spheres of cyberspace” (103) and is, in my opinion, a central figure for the present day.

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## 'A Wrinkled Face, a Furr'd Brow, a Hairy Lip [and] a Gobber Tooth': Searching for the Victims of the Early Modern European Witch-Hunt, c.1450-1750

J. W. E. Chaplin

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### ABSTRACT

This article explores the European witch-hunts of the early modern period (c.1450-1750) and asks the simple question: who were its victims? The prevailing image of the archetypal witch has its roots in research first published as far back as the early 1970s. Examining the five key aspects of the long-established witch stereotype in turn, this paper draws on some of the best modern scholarship and a wide range of contemporary sources in order to assess its merits as well as its flaws. In doing so this essay cautiously presents a modified profile of the early modern European witch. However, it also questions the wisdom of relying on such stereotypes, which by their nature do not encourage truly nuanced analysis, to provide us with accurate history. This article argues for a more sensitive approach to analysis that accounts for the enormous complexities of contemporaries' lived experience.

Scholarly interest in the early modern European witch-hunts has grown enormously in recent decades, with particular focus on building an accurate profile of the protagonists. It was in the 1970s that Keith Thomas and Alan Macfarlane first developed what has since become the prevailing witch stereotype, as they 'argued convincingly' that witches were usually female,

elderly, often widowed, and therefore socially and economically marginalised (Gaskill, 1996, p. 258). Supported by strong evidence, the Thomas-Macfarlane hypothesis has since often been accepted uncritically and treated as somehow definitive by many academics.<sup>2</sup> By deconstructing the concept, however, I will demonstrate that the Thomas-Macfarlane archetype is, while reasonably correct in a number of ways, severely flawed in others. Certainly, in imagining their subjects as sharing a particular set of characteristics, both undervalued the significance of geographical variations, as well as the vast complexity and diversity of early modern European people's lives. A key point I will stress is the importance of listening to contemporary voices themselves, many of which warn that *anyone* could be a witch.

In the Thomas-Macfarlane model the archetypal witch was female. Thomas explained that James I estimated the ratio of female to male witches at twenty-to-one, while the Macfarlane pointed to the fact that women accounted for 92% of those accused in Essex (Thomas, 1971; Macfarlane, 1970). Writing in 1974, Andrea Dworkin seized on these claims and took them to their maximum. Citing extensively from Heinrich Kramer's 1487 book, *Malleus Maleficarum*, Dworkin argued that the witch-craze was a calculated patriarchal assault on women (Dworkin, 1974). Even in its own time, some of Kramer's comrades considered his treatise radical for the strength of its convictions and, in fairness, it certainly reveals evidence of fierce misogyny and gender bias by 1970s standards too (Kramer, 2015).<sup>3</sup> Over thirty years later Christopher Mackay consequently echoed Dworkin, calling the *Malleus* 'a self-conscious attack on the female gender' (Mackay, 2009, p. 25). Nevertheless, Dworkin's characterisation of the witch-hunts as 'gynocide' and reference to the 'slaughter' of nine million women is incredibly extreme. Most scholars broadly agree with Brian Levack's estimate which puts the total death toll – both men and women – at 45,000 and researchers such as Elspeth Whitney and Clive Holmes found accusations against women were actually often made by members of their own

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas and Macfarlane were actually only referring to witchcraft in England, and the latter based his research overwhelmingly on cases just from Essex. Nonetheless, their witch stereotype has made a lasting impression on researchers.

<sup>3</sup> For example, in one chapter, which claims to outline how 'devils through witches' seduced the innocent, Kramer pointed to evidence that exclusively depicted women as the perpetrators of dark magic.

sex (Dworkin, 1974, pp. 118-50; Thomas, 1971; Macfarlane, 1970; Levack, 2006; Whitney, 2001; Holmes, 2001).<sup>4</sup>

Dworkin's controversial remarks aside, Thomas and Macfarlane's original claim has some validity. Recent studies have found that women constituted over 70% of all the accused in large parts of Europe, including central regions such as the Holy Roman Empire, Poland, and Hungary, as well as most of Scandinavia, and much of the British Isles. Using collated data from numerous smaller studies, Brian Levack estimated that women made up around 75% of all those accused in Europe during the period (Levack, 2001; Levack, 2006; Roper, 2004; Gaskill, 1996; Rowlands, 2013).<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, more women than men were accused of witchcraft. However, this must not obscure the fact that a significant 25% of the accused were men. The existence of male witches has only really begun to be explored by academics in recent years, for example in Laura Apps and Andrew Gow's 2003 monograph, *Male Witches in Early Modern Europe*, and Rowlands's 2009 volume, *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe* (Apps & Gow, 2003; Rowlands, 2009). Evidence of contemporary theological support for the notion of male witches is abundant, as Malcom Gaskill points out: in the minds of early modern Europeans 'witches and women were never equated' (Gaskill, 2001, p. 107). One tract warned, for instance, that 'neither be they all women' and another proclaimed that 'men, as well as women, may be subject to this trade' (Roberts, 1616, p. 5; Cooper, 1617, pp. 180-81). Similarly, one of the earliest descriptions of the illicit Witches Sabbath<sup>6</sup> reported the presence of sorcerers 'of both sexes' (Nider, 2015, p. 55).

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<sup>4</sup> Whitney claimed the reason for this is that patriarchy divided women and encouraged them to accuse one another. Holmes took issue with some of the specifics of this interpretation, though he argued that women were generally better placed to make accusations than men.

<sup>5</sup> For the entire Holy Roman Empire, the figure was 76%, whilst in what is modern day Germany specifically, it was approximately 80%. Women comprised 96% of the total in Poland, 90% in Hungary, 86% in Scotland, 76% in Geneva, around 75% in Norway, 75% in Sweden, 75% in Denmark, 75% in Hungary, 75% in Croatia, 75% in Siena, 71% in Castile, and 69% in Venice.

<sup>6</sup> In popular culture the Witches Sabbath was imagined as an assembly – attended by the devil himself – of those who practiced maleficium. Often depicted as the antithesis of the Godly church service, it also saw witches flying, feasting and, most alarmingly, fornicating with Satan. Contemporary artists such as Hans Baldung,

In fact, when broken down by region, surviving records show that in some areas male witches accounted for a substantial proportion of the accused. Around 40% were men in Aragon, 50% in Finland, 58% in Friaul, 60% in Estonia, 70% in Russia, 75% in Normandy (though the figure was around 50% in France more generally), and an enormous 92% in Iceland (Levack, 2001; Levack, 2006; Kivelson, 2001; Roper, 2004; Schulte, 2009). The idea that witches were almost always women would therefore not at all have matched with the lived experiences of the people residing in these areas. Even in places where women predominated among the accused though, suspicion could still easily fall on men. For instance, in the city of Salzburg and the region of Carinthia, both part of the Holy Roman Empire, men made up a sizeable 59% and 68% of the accused respectively (Schulte, 2009).

In addition to being female, the idea that witches were aged is, according to Rowlands, practically an axiom of early modern witchcraft research (Rowlands, 2001). Macfarlane estimated that as many as 80% of the accused in Essex were over forty and Jonathan Durrant claimed the same was most likely true of Germany too (Durrant, 2007; Macfarlane, 1970) Levack concluded that, across Europe, 'a solid majority' of the accused were probably over fifty (Levack, 2006, p. 149). Surviving records rarely noted the age of the accused, making it difficult to be definitive, but their research is underscored by the prevalence of the elderly in popular contemporary portrayals of witches. In England a 1655 fable described one as 'long nos'd, blear ey'd, crooked-neckt, wry-mouth'd, crump-shoulder'd, beetle-browed' (L.P., 1655, p. 7). A Kentish gentleman's description of a defendant on trial is remarkably similar: '[she was] lame, bleare-eied, pale, fowle, and full of wrinkles' (Scot, 1584, p. 7).<sup>7</sup> In 1646 a minister even complained that people were seeing witches in everyone 'with a wrinkled face, a furr'd brow, a hairy lip, [and] a gobber tooth' (Gaule, 1656, pp. 4-5).

Some historians have argued that older women were more likely to be accused because of the contemporary belief that their age gave them the propensity to exhibit erratic or unpleasant behaviours (Rowlands, 2001). Early modern Europeans typically subscribed to the view that the menopause fundamentally

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Francesco Maria Guazzo, and Frans Francken all produced vivid portrayals of this phenomenon. phenomenon.

<sup>7</sup> The author of this account, MP Reginald Scot (c.1538-1599), was an important and vocal critic of witch-trials.

altered the balance of the bodies' four regulatory humours.<sup>8</sup> They held that women's habitually 'cold' and 'moist' bodies became increasingly 'dry' as they stopped menstruating, which adversely affected their moods and made them susceptible to the devil's deception. It also allegedly gave them a desire for moisture that made them jealous of younger fertile women, causing friction within communities (Roper, 2004). Robin Briggs tried to verify this, claiming that accused women tended to first arouse suspicion once they reached menopausal age (Briggs, 1996). In 1949 Sona Burstein offered an alternative view, arguing that these erratic behaviours were actually a result of oncoming senile psychosis. Indeed, the sixteenth-century physician Johann Weyer remarked, for example, that the elderly were 'by their age not sufficiently settled in their minds', leaving them 'more subject to the devil's deceits' (Rowlands, 2001, p. 52).

Again, while there is evidence to support the notion of the witch as stereotypically elderly, some recent scholarship presents a more complex picture. Levack's *Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* shows that the majority of witches in Scotland were under the age of fifty, for instance. Lyndal Roper's article in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology* similarly demonstrates that older women in Augsburg appeared less often in trials after 1700, when children became the primary target of suspicion. In fact, close to half of all accused witches in Württemberg, Saarland, and Würzburg, as well as a majority of those in Rothenburg, were under fifty years old (Levack, 2006; Roper, 2001).<sup>9</sup>

A number of popular contemporary sources appear to counter the traditional age narrative too. Hans Baldung's artworks, *Three Witches* and *Witches Sabbath*, both include a mix of younger and older women, for example (Roper, 2004). Kramer's *Malleus* was also eager to stress that individuals of any age could be ensnared by evil. He gives one example where the devil had sought to

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<sup>8</sup> It was widely believed by early modern Europeans that the body was a producer and receptacle of four basic fluids, or humors: blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm. Each, it was believed, remained in perpetual flux throughout one's life and had different properties relating to heat or moisture. The balance of the humours and the heat and moisture they provided was supposedly a major determinant of general health, but also of certain personality traits, behaviors, and even of biological sex.

<sup>9</sup> To be precise, Levack showed that 45% of those in Württemberg, 44% of those in Saarland, and 41% of those in Würzburg were under fifty, while under 50s constitute 60% of those accused in Rothenburg.



corrupt a young virgin girl, while another passage described twelve-year-old girls copulating with incubi (Kramer, 2015).<sup>10</sup> Similarly, French Judge Pierre de Lancre recorded instances of thirteen-year-olds participating in sexual orgies at the Witches Sabbath and a Scottish minister described children accepting the devil's mark (Lancre, 2015; Hutchinson, 2015).<sup>11</sup>

Contemporaries across Europe clearly did not think of the witch as archetypally elderly. Referring to records of witchcraft trials in Rothenburg, Rowlands points out that they say very little about the haggard appearance of the suspects; it is their actions they focus on. If their bodies are mentioned, it is often simply in reference to the witches' marks that had helped prove their guilt and, for Rowlands, it was the very physical inconspicuousness of many suspects that led accusers to search them for marks in the first place. Furthermore, the notion that the menopause somehow makes older women targets of suspicion contradicts the fact that contemporaries identified menstrual blood as corrupting. On that basis, post-menopausal women would have been considered less dangerous than pre-menopausal women and girls. It is also highly unlikely that of the estimated 90,000 people accused of witchcraft, anything like a majority were suffering with senile psychosis as Bernstein claimed (Rowlands, 2001; Levack, 2006). James Sharpe rightly warned against these kinds of arguments, calling them 'simplistic reductionism' (Sharpe, 1996, p. 10).

Most importantly, as the *Malleus* suggested earlier, a number of the elderly women prosecuted as witches might actually have been far younger when they first aroused suspicion. For instance, in some German territories an individual could only be prosecuted for practicing magic after receiving numerous denunciations, meaning suspects might live for years before we get any legal record of their existence. Complainants therefore needed to cultivate support for their accusations from their communities, not least because the defendant could also lodge a slander suit against their detractors as a counterattack (Levack, 2006; Rowlands, 2001; Rowlands, 2003; Kallestrup, 2015).<sup>12</sup> But contemporaries

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<sup>10</sup> Contemporaries believed that incubi, supernatural demons employed in service of the devil, tempted women into performing illicit sexual acts with them.

<sup>11</sup> The so-called devil's mark was usually a blemish left on an individual's body – perhaps a mole or birthmark – that denoted the formal consummation of their relationship with Satan. Crucially, the relationship itself was one of servitude, whereby the bearer had agreed to do the devil's bidding on earth.

<sup>12</sup> Rowlands insisted (particularly in relation to the Imperial city of Rothenburg ob der Tauber) that many elderly witches must have first aroused suspicion long before they were

also saw the ability to cast spells as a transferrable skill passed down through the generations. Macfarlane himself acknowledges this, highlighting one case where a sorcerer named Joan Cunny claimed to have first learned witchcraft some twenty years before she was finally caught and prosecuted (Macfarlane, 1970).

This idea that witches were mostly of at least middle-age is likely responsible, at least in part, for the belief that they were also characteristically widowed. Thomas insisted that ‘many of them’ were widows and Macfarlane supported this claim by pointing out that they accounted for 40% of all the accused women in England (Macfarlane, 1970). Modern research has built on this, demonstrating that similar trends prevailed in other parts of the continent. For instance, around half of those accused in Lorraine, Toul, and the Inquisitorial Tribunal held at Siena between 1580-1721 were widowed. They represented a clear majority in Saarland, accounting for 64% of the total (Rowlands, 2001; Rowlands, 2009; Levack, 2006).

This research also shows that geographical variations are, again, profound. To give a few examples, the combined efforts of Levack and Rowlands show that widowed women made up just 7% of the accused in Mainz, 19% in Sweden, 21% in Scotland, 23% in Rothenburg, 26% in Venice, 30% in Horn, 33% in Basel, 34% in Geneva, 36% in the Jura region, 38% in Montbéliard, and 38% in Kent. Levack and Rowlands’s research found that it was married women who generally made up the majority of the accused in these regions, followed by widows, and then single women (Levack, 2006; Rowlands, 2001; Rowlands, 2003).

It is partly because of precarious status of widows in early modern society that historians have seen them as a natural target of accusations. Certainly, the loss of a husband, whose earning potential would almost certainly have exceeded their own, could easily see a woman plunge toward the bottom of the social ladder. (Wrightson, 2004; Gowing, 2012).<sup>13</sup> The Thomas-Macfarlane ‘charity refused’

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charged, though she admitted that we cannot truly know how many fall into this since only patchy records remain. Similarly, Kallestrup found that many of those parts of Italy and Denmark were only tried after they had developed a reputation for practicing magic over a number of years. She points to one example of a suspected witch whose reputation had stood for forty years before she came to court.

<sup>13</sup> While marriage in early modern Europe was, according to Wrightson, principally an economic partnership, men typically earned far more than women. As

hypothesis posited that widowed women were often dependant on community aid in order to survive in the harsh economic climate of the period. However, if a neighbour refused to provide such help and then experienced some misfortune in their life, they might suspect the alms-seeker had used magic to exact revenge. The example of Margery Stanton was, according to Thomas, 'typical'. One neighbour turned Stanton away from his house, whereupon his child became ill; another denied her milk and also became unwell. After a long list of offences, Stanton was eventually tried at Chelmsford in 1579. (Thomas, 1971, p. 662; Macfarlane, 1970).

There are problems with the 'charity refused' model devised by Thomas and Macfarlane. Firstly, it fails to acknowledge that the poor probably appear disproportionately vulnerable to suspicion simply because they were by far the largest social group. Moreover, it is also true that those accused of witchcraft were not necessarily economically or socially inferior to their accusers. Malcolm Gaskill highlights the 1586 trial of Joan Cason in Kent, who he notes was probably wealthier than her accuser,<sup>14</sup> whilst records from Scotland list the status of some victims as nobility (Gaskill, 1996; Larner et al., 1977). Likewise, Lyndal Roper discovered that some of those tried in Nördlingen were members of the interrogator's own social circle (Roper, 2004). In fact, in some cases status, power, and wealth could make an individual the target of persecution. In 1629 a Rothenburg maidservant was banished from the city for spreading rumours that her master's wife was a witch, in addition to telling tales of a nocturnal dance that had been attended by some of the city's most distinguished residents and politicians (Rowlands, 2001; Rowlands, 2003). A year earlier another extraordinary case came to light in Bamberg, the centre of one of Europe's most concentrated witch-hunts. The city Mayor himself was accused, tried, tortured, and executed for practicing magic (Junius, 2015).

Indeed, in many cases the victims of accusations were not especially antagonistic, nor were they socially isolated (Rowlands, 2001; Gaskill, 1996). Many of those tried in Kent during the mid-seventeenth century, for instance, were well-known faces in the community and they could attest to their innocence by drawing on the support of friends. (Gaskill, 1996). Other scholars

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Gowing explained, there was never any expectation that a woman would be able to support a household on her own earnings.

<sup>14</sup> Gaskill noted that Cason had inherited a large sum of money shortly before she was accused.

have found similar examples from places like Scotland, Eichstätt, and Venice (Larner et al., 1977; Durrant, 2007; Seitz, 2011).<sup>15</sup> It may even be the case that the high acquittal rate for accused witches in Europe – estimated at 50% – was precisely a result of the support many managed to muster from their communities (Gaskill, 1996; Levack, 2006).

The fate of the Mayor of Bamberg is indicative not only of the often chaotic nature of the witch-hunts, but of the more diverse social, economic, and political environment that helped shape them. It also suggests that disputes between factions within a particular social group could lead to someone making a formal denunciation against a perceived enemy. In 1610 Joan Cariden verbally assaulted Robert Greenstreet, the Mayor of Faversham in Kent, after becoming increasingly unhappy with his administration. A new Mayor was soon elected in his place, but decades later, when the witch hunts in England were at their height, Greenstreet took up office once more. Within twelve days he had Cariden thrown in gaol and, shortly afterwards, executed as a witch. (Gaskill, 1996). More common were cases like the one Louise Kallestrup records from the town of Skagen in Denmark. Here, Anne Lundtz was convicted of witchcraft by the town court, after numerous witnesses testified to her use of dark magic. In keeping with its legal system, the trial then moved to one of Denmark's provincial courts, but as no one turned up to accuse Lundtz formally, the case was thrown out. (Kallestrup, 2015).

This paper has set out to challenge the stereotype of the early modern witch, presented by scholars such as Thomas and Macfarlane. The image of the witch as an elderly female widow, of limited social and economic means has some merit as I have demonstrated using a range of sources. The evidence in favour of the Thomas-Macfarlane stereotype is most compelling when examined from a distance, as Levack showed when he claimed that in Europe as a whole 75% of the accused were women. However, while there seems to be, as Rowlands put it, 'an element of truth' in the stereotype, in drawing on modern monographs and in-depth regional studies this paper has also exposed some of its more serious

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<sup>15</sup> Larner highlights a petition submitted in support of accused Scottish witch Mary Morrison. It claimed that she had been 'of undoubted good fame and reputatione all her life' and was not 'tainted with any guilt of malifice to her neighbours'. Similarly, Durrant found few who fit the 'charity refused' model in Eichstätt. Most, he claimed, were 'highly integrated into the political and social fabric of the principality and its capital'.

flaws (Rowlands, 2001, p. 88). For instance, recent scholarship on male and child witches, as well as on the social and legal dynamics behind accusations, which demonstrate they could be driven by factionalism and potentially take decades to reach court, where they may never even be examined.

How, then, in light of these findings, might we re-define the early modern European witch? Broadly speaking, the accused was usually a married woman. However, her particular situation would inevitably vary enormously according to time and geography. Differences in age, social status, and financial power create a more nuanced picture, making it hard to determine how these characteristics fit as part of an overarching archetype, though we can say that the lower-classes are well-represented among the accused. What becomes clear in this paper is the folly of relying on such stereotypes in the first place. In order to represent the past with real accuracy and sensitivity, it is imperative the historian is attentive to the enormous dynamism of everyday life in early modern Europe. Among the accused were young unmarried women, prominent men, children, the wealthy, the poor, and many others, in addition to those that align more closely with the stereotype. Thomas and Macfarlane were pioneers, writing in the 1970s when scholarly interest in the early modern European witch-hunts was minimal; that the subject inspires so much passion and debate amongst academics today is testament to their achievements. The stereotype they inspired is, however, something of a blunt instrument. Blunt instruments have their uses of course, but they do not encourage precision or accuracy. By bringing together the best modern research, with close reference to a wide range of contemporary sources, this article has promoted a more complex, and I might cautiously argue more fascinating, view of the early modern European witch-hunts and its victims.

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# A Psychosocial and Human Rights Investigation into Poverty and Social Exclusion in the United Kingdom

Nicola Warren

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## ABSTRACT

This essay will examine the issue of poverty in the United Kingdom (UK), drawing on its definition as a lack of adequate resources to provide the necessities of life. It will also address the issue of social exclusion, examining the experience as one that is made up of multiple deprivations, including poverty, exclusion from the labour market, services and social relations (Gordon, et al., 2000). It will use a psychosocial approach to investigate poverty and social exclusion in the UK, showing how they affect individuals on multiple levels, as well as negatively impacting society at large. It will demonstrate how poverty and social exclusion are human rights issues. Moreover, it will refute the prevalent discourse levelled at social security benefit recipients, that is to say, the claim that they are lazy or inherently lacking in some trait or quality (Froggett, 2002; Baillie, 2011; Van der Bom *et al.*, 2017). My key argument is that it is social structures and political and economic institutions which create and maintain socio-economic inequalities, perpetuating the status quo.

My interdisciplinary approach brings together epistemologies and methodologies used in human rights and psychosocial discourses. Although the two disciplines can be regarded as possessing very different perspectives, I will show how they can be used to complement each other. The first half of the essay will examine how some politicians and some strands of the UK's media have led to misconceptions about those claiming social security benefits

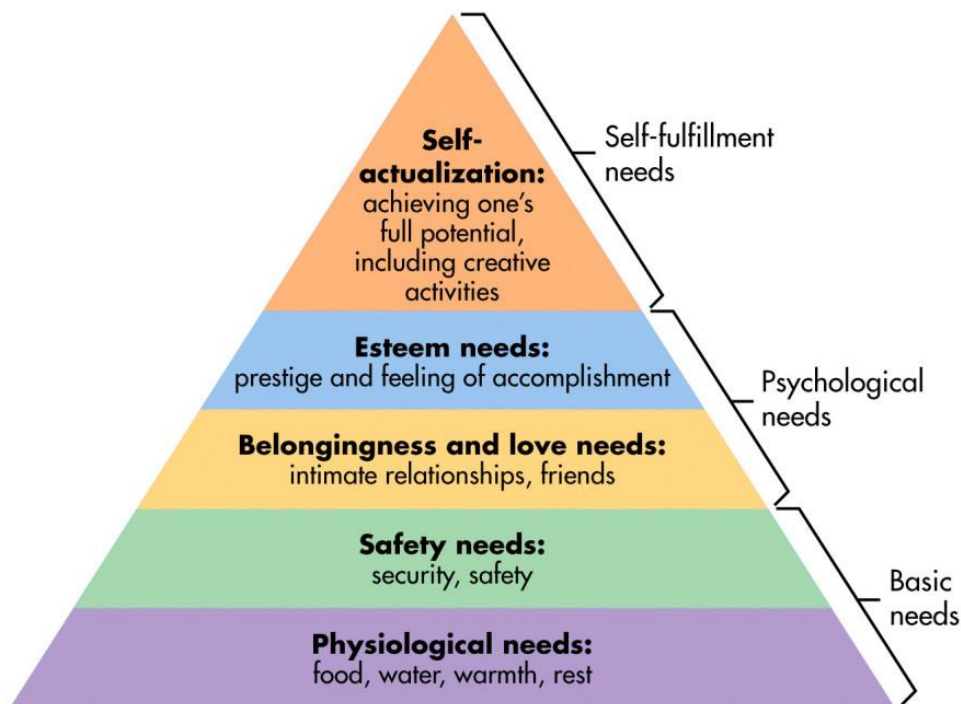
contributing to the negative stereotypes of people living in poverty, particularly in relation to ill health, mental health, and the forging of the identity of the benefit claimant as a victim of their own choices or defective character (Baillie, 2011). My argument centres on the idea that poverty is a result of political and economic choices such as ‘austerity’ a decision to cut public spending across the board, including reductions to social services budgets, the National Health Service (NHS) and social security benefits, which plunged the most disadvantaged and marginalised members of society further into poverty and destitution, a conclusion drawn by Professor Philip Alston, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, when he visited the UK last year (Alston, 2018). Moreover, reducing poverty is in the interests of the whole country, in addition to a human rights obligation. The second half of my essay will examine the issue of social exclusion by looking at homelessness as a direct violation of human rights. I will demonstrate that far from making bad choices, people who are homeless are often victims of a series of unfortunate circumstances (MacDonald *et al.*, 2005).

The psychosocial approach bridges the disciplines of psychology and sociology. It takes a holistic approach to understanding the individual, made up of three levels. The first is the intrapsychic level, which includes unconscious and conscious internal states, hopes, feelings, and fears. The second is the interpersonal level, which recognises the significance of a person’s relationships and interactions with others. The third is the socio-political level, spanning the wider context, such as social organisation, economic and political systems, discourses and ideologies. The psychosocial approach highlights the complex interaction between all three levels rather than using a reductionist approach (Froggett, 2002).

I will now discuss human rights to show how they can be used to compliment the psychosocial approach and vice versa, strengthening both approaches and showing how they can be used to reduce the harm caused by poverty. Human rights are basic normative standards, codified in the United Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), known collectively as the Human Rights Bill. The UDHR sets out the ‘*minimum conditions for a dignified life, a life worth of a human being*’ (Donnelly, 2013, p. 16) The UDHR also sets an ethical standard by which Governments must treat their citizens (Freeman, 2011, p. 156), with

dignity, liberty and equality (Donnelly, 2013, p. 100) and suggests how citizens should treat each other *‘in a spirit of brotherhood’* as stated in Article 1 of the UDHR (1948).

Human rights are not only a tool to relieve the suffering of individuals, they are also a benchmark to prevent suffering, a standard assessed by the extent to which an individual has everything they need to attain the minimally good life (Buchanan, 2010, pp. 706-7). Psychologist, Abraham Maslow’s (1943, 1954) “hierarchy of needs” illustrates the basic requirements a person needs to flourish. It is a hierarchy formed of five-levels, outlining the fundamental basic needs that must be met for a person to reach their full potential (McLeod, 2018) By mapping human rights onto the “hierarchy of needs,” it is possible to determine the means of meeting the basic needs of the individual, at least to a minimal standard. Human rights codify human needs as inherent rights that belong to everyone without distinction; the State is the duty bearer with the requirement to do everything within its power to ensure every individual’s basic needs are met (Freeman, 2011).



*Fig 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2018)*

The first level of the hierarchy of needs consists of basic “physiological needs”, such as food, water, warmth and rest. The second level consists of “safety needs”, including personal security, achieved through employment, and the

provision of adequate resources and health care (McLeod, 2018). Several of the articles of the UDHR refer to these fundamental needs, for example, Article 25 of the UDHR (1948) states:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Many of the Articles in the ICSECR also refer to these basic needs.

The third level of the hierarchy of needs is “love and belongingness,” which includes intimate relationships and family (McLeod, 2018), codified in Article 16 of UDHR (1948) as “the right to marry and to found a family” and Article 10 of the ICESCR (1966) which recognises the family as “the natural and fundamental group unit of society...entitled to protection by society and State”. The fourth level of the hierarchy of needs refers to “esteem needs,” such as respect, prestige, and feelings of accomplishment (McLeod, 2018). Similarly, human rights are premised on the idea that all humans are equal in dignity, and rights protect the individual from “attacks on his honour and reputation,” as stated in Article 12 of UDHR (1948). The final level is “self-actualisation”, the idea that each person should be able to reach their full potential, something they can only achieve when all other needs are sufficiently met (McLeod, 2018). Human rights also value the person’s right to self-actualisation, guaranteeing autonomy to become author of one’s own life, and the liberty to become who one wishes to be. It is a concept enshrined in Article 29 of UDHR (1948)

‘Everyone has the duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible’

The UDHR (1948) claims that human rights are universal, interdependent and inalienable, but with global political tensions arising out of conflicts such as the Cold War (mid-20<sup>th</sup> century) and the advancement of Western capitalism. Priority was placed on advancing the civil and political rights contained in the ICCPR (1966) associated with freedom and democracy, rather than the economic, social and cultural rights of the ICESCR (1966) which were championed by the Eastern bloc (Jankowski, 2015, pp. 10-11). Thus, human

rights are strongly influenced by the concept of liberal individualism. This encourages the view that an individual's behaviour is cause of problems such as poverty, social exclusion and homelessness, rather than recognising that the way society and its systems are structured also creates and perpetuates the problems (Howard-Hassmann, 2018).

In the UK, this is also true of the State-provided NHS that uses a medical model which treats illness and disorder as manifesting from the patient, ignoring social and economic factors that cause or at least contribute to mental and physical illnesses as well as creating stigma, as demonstrated in studies in America (Goldberg, 2012, pp. 111-2). Similarly, the British justice system views the individual as the problem, rather than looking at other factors which might motivate criminal activity, such as poverty. Social services and government officials also identify 'troubled families' and blame the parents for social problems (Crossley, 2016, pp. 1-2). Thus, the conditions of poverty and social exclusion are seen by the State as resulting from people being either mad, bad or defective, and people living in poverty, including those who are homeless, are treated accordingly (Sadd, 2014). In other words, for those living in poverty in the UK, the experience is deeply stigmatising, particularly if they are also claiming social security benefits (Baumberg, 2016, p. 1). As Robert Pinker (Pinker, 1971, p. 175) famously said .. 'The imposition of stigma is the commonest form of violence used in democratic societies ... [It] can best be compared to those forms of psychological torture in which the victim is broken psychically and physically but left to all outward appearances unmarked.'

The benefits system as we recognise it today was introduced in the UK in 1945 in response to the Beveridge report, as a safety net for those who were unable to do paid work for reasons of ill-health, retirement, death in the family, or disability (Diamond, 2017, pp. 25-6). However, the recipients of benefits have since been cast as scroungers and deviants, as opposed to wage earning, tax payers. They have become targets for both material aid (via social security benefits) and public hostility (Fraser, 2003, p. 9) The perception that benefits claimants are unintelligent, lazy and drug-addled (Cozzarelli *et al.*, 2001; Van der Bom *et al.*, 2017), dishonest, dodgy and workshy (Garthwaite, 2011, pp. 369-370) finds expression in media outlets, including the tabloid press and on mainstream television channels which imply that dependency on benefits is a

lifestyle choice for many who choose not to work, and instead live a life of leisure on tax payers' money.

Contra to the stereotype of the typical benefits recipient highlighted above, the statistics show that the majority of those in receipt of benefits are pensioners, with only a small percentage of claimants living in households where nobody is employed. The latest figures from the Department of Work and Pensions show that of the twenty million people claiming benefits in the UK, two-thirds are pensioners, who make up the biggest number of claimants (Stirling, 2018). Only 1.45 million adults of working-age, who are considered fit for work, are not in employment ('Quarterly benefits summary,' 2018) which is just over two percent of the UK's entire population. In addition, many working families have to claim benefits to cover the high cost of private rent. Other claimants have disabilities, or mental health problems preventing them from working; or are doing reproductive work such as caring for young children ('Quarterly benefits summary,' 2018). The statistics would appear to speak for themselves, but it is also the case that social security is identified as a human right, encompassed in Article 25 of the UHDR (1948):

Everyone has... the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or any other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

The government actively discourages people from becoming dependent on benefits in order to keep costs down. To achieve this, people are paid just enough to survive but not to participate in their culture, leading to social exclusion (D Gordon *et al.*, 2000). This is a fact underlined by evidence that the four key activities in the UK are consumption, production, politics and socialising (Burchardt *et al.*, 2002). The stigmatising of those on benefits by the media and politicians succeeds in disseminating the image of the welfare "scrounger," a ploy that enables some politicians to forward their own political agendas (Romano, 2015, p. 67). In the media, the rise of "poverty porn" programmes, such as *The Jeremy Kyle Show* (now cancelled) and *Benefits Street*, feed into the stereotype, parading benefits claimants and their lifestyles before the camera for entertainment (David Gordon, 2018), not dissimilar to the Victorian practice of slumming in which the rich members of society would visit the slums to mock and jeer the poor people living in them, for entertainment. These programmes enable some people to justify the view that

those in poverty are poor, either because of the bad choices they make, or because of a defective character (Raz, 2013, p. 9), blaming them for their own misfortune, rather than recognising such misfortune might be attributable to wider social and political forces. It is also evident in popular sayings, such as “people get their just desserts” and “what goes around comes around”, which reinforce the attitude that the individual is to blame, and the idea that we live in a “just world” where people deserve their lot (Furnham and Gunter, 1984).

If a particular social group is persistently demeaned over time, it can lead to the creation of damaging stereotypes, a denial of recognition for that group and for its contribution to wider society. Additionally, it has been demonstrated in eye-tracking experiments that people of low social status are given less eye-contact and thus less validation by other people than those of a higher social status (Foulsham *et al.*, 2010, p. 330). This further undermines their sense of self-esteem. In other words, it brings about a denial of the satisfaction of the fourth level of the “hierarchy of needs”, the need for “esteem.” When stereotyping becomes habitual, it results in wide-scale discrimination, a violation of a basic tenet of human rights, the right to equality. Furthermore, people belonging to low-status groups tend to internalise negative stereotypes that justify their own low status (Jost *et al.*, 2004). In turn, this means they behave in ways that reinforce the stereotypes imposed on them (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999) and the cycle of discrimination continues.

Returning to the psychosocial model discussed earlier, it is evident that poverty does affect people on an intrapsychic level, that is to say, it severely affects the way they perceive themselves as well as their subjective well-being (McBride, 2001). Poverty adversely affects both mental and physical health; for example, it can lead to poor diet and malnutrition, as well as to stress, which, in turn affects the immune system (Ziol-Guest *et al.*, 2012). The demonisation and dehumanisation of the poor has an even more profound effect on psyche and psychological health; it leads to feelings of worthlessness, shame, and guilt, feelings which are manifested in conditions such as depression, anxiety and addiction, sometimes leading to suicide (Mills, 2017). Some scholars argue the risk of mental disorders is significantly higher among people who are poor, unemployed, homeless or poorly educated (Kuruvillea and Jacob, 2007).



Poverty is not a random phenomenon; those who experience it once, especially those raised in poverty, are far more likely to experience it again, a cycle which can make them feel further alienated from society (Burgess and Propper, 2002, p. 119) and mired in the “poverty trap” (Bowles *et al.*, 2011). The system does not help dispel such attitudes. In order to apply for social security benefits, people are expected to take on the role of victim by proving that their circumstances are dire enough for the government to assist them. The system requires yearly reviews of all who make a claim, a process which causes further stress because of fears that there might be a withdrawal of benefits. If benefits are withdrawn, claimants will be unable to pay their rent or buy food, arguably violations of the right to an adequate standard of living codified in the UDHR (1948). Being refused benefits will prevent the individual from attaining the higher levels of Maslow's “hierarchy of needs” discussed earlier or maintain the lower levels, basic needs. Further, this exclusion will leave the individual less secure, at further risk of losing their self-esteem, and with little chance of realising their life’s ambitions or, to use Maslow’s term, achieving “self-actualisation” (McLeod, 2018).

In being forced into playing the role of victim, there is the very real risk that people living in poverty will give up their autonomy and get stuck in a cycle of dependency on the State. It is not a situation that will help alleviate poverty, particularly with a government that advances policies which reinforce economic inequality through privileging the wealthier members of society. Such policies allow claimants to survive, but not fully participate in their culture. It is also important to consider the cost of such policies on, for example, the NHS, with increased demand for appointments, prescriptions, therapies and hospital stays, on top of the cost of benefits paid to those medically unfit for work. If large numbers of people are unable to work due to ill health, the cost to society is high.

My belief is that poverty in the UK can be only addressed by the State fully adhering to the Human Rights Bill, specifically the ICECSR (1966) which has been neglected relative to the ICCPR (1966) and is paramount in the fight to eradicate poverty. Such an approach would contribute to forming a society where people are able to achieve a decent standard of living so they are able to escape the poverty trap through developing a sense of autonomy, as well as achieving social mobility through education, a key tenet of human rights and a widely evidenced route out of poverty (Janjua and Kamal, 2011, p. 164).

This section of the essay will look at homelessness as the ultimate form of social exclusion. It will suggest that homelessness is a result of wider structural problems such as lack affordable housing rather than stemming from problems simply located within the individual such as alcoholism and drug addiction, as often suggested by some media outlets and politicians as well as circulating in common discourse (Van der Bom *et al.*, 2017). People in the UK with the lowest social status are those without a home, whether living on the street, in temporary accommodation, or ‘sofa surfing’. Homelessness is a direct human rights violation by the State, as the provision of a home is the minimal requirement for an adequate standard of living as stated in Article 11 of ICESCR (1966, p. 4)

‘The State Parties to the present Covenant recognise the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions’

In addition, a home is a basic need for survival according to Maslow’s “hierarchy of needs.” However, over 4,000 people sleep on the streets of England on any given night. In addition, over 100,000 families per year are assessed as being homeless across the UK (‘Ending Homelessness,’ 2018). Many are placed in temporary accommodation, such as a hostel or bed-sit, some of which lack the facilities to cook or store food, and fail to provide private bathroom facilities (‘Statutory homelessness,’ 2016-2017). Defined by their lack of property rather than any other factor, people who find themselves homeless are often also lacking a family or a support network which makes them more likely to experience social exclusion. For example, a study carried in in Wales found that one third of care leavers become homeless within two years of leaving care and twenty-five percent of homeless people have at some point in their lives been in the care of social services (Stirling, 2018, p. 12). Crisis, the national charity for homeless people, describes homelessness as “devastating, dangerous and isolating” (‘Ending Homelessness,’ 2018).

The human right to housing covered by Article 11 of the ICESCR (1966) applies to all equally, however homelessness affects some groups more adversely than others. For example, local councils prioritise families with children, and occasionally single women, when allocating emergency accommodation. This leaves many men with no other alternative than to sleep

rough. The average life expectancy of somebody who sleeps rough is 47 for men and 43 for women (Fuller, 2016). Rough sleepers are nearly ten times more likely to take their own life and seventeen times more likely to be the victims of unprovoked physical violence ('Ending Homelessness,' 2018).

Human beings are fundamentally social creatures, who depend on other people for their survival. That is why the third level of the “hierarchy of needs” discussed earlier recognises the importance of relationships for humans to thrive. Social exclusion has been shown not only to cause psychological stress but also physical pain. In addition, rough sleepers often struggle to claim benefits or access adequate health care because they do not have a fixed address. This lack of access to benefits and basic services are violations of Article 25 of UDHR (1948). Moreover, homeless people cannot participate politically which is a violation of Article 2 of the ICCPR (1966). The State also deploys formal measures to criminalise homeless people for loitering, begging and sleeping rough (Sanders and Albanese, 2017).

Social housing is an option for only a limited number of people and is dependent on what properties might be available in a given area. In addition, the circumstances of the individual are taken into consideration and they must be deemed suitably deserving when assessed against the situation of the many other applicants on the housing list (Forrest and Murie, 2014). Living in social housing is also considered the best measure of social exclusion, because it correlates with other adverse factors, such as a lack of education, family breakdown, and unemployment (Hobcraft, 2002, pp. 65-8). For those renting in the private sector, the situation is also problematic. Private rents are often unaffordable, even for working families, while high rents can keep families trapped in poverty. They are also unable to afford to enter the housing market. Housing benefit is claimed by 3.9 million people of working-age, the highest number of claimants of any benefit offered by the State, whilst the private rental market has doubled in the past fifteen years (Ronald and Kadi, 2017).

For those claiming benefits, homelessness is often just one step away, as there is little money available to cover the cost of a serious illness or accident, or even a bereavement that results in the loss of earnings. The insecurity generated by these factors has been further exacerbated by the introduction of Universal Credit in 2013. Universal Credit caps benefits at a weekly amount and pays a lower amount for rental costs than the previous system. It is also

paid in arrears, causing problems for those who must pay their rent in advance. When the new system was introduced, many were left with no money for six weeks, leading to further financial hardship (Brewer *et al.*, 2017, p. 20) and, inevitably, a rise in homelessness for those who fall into rent arrears and were evicted (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2018, pp. 42-3).

In conclusion, this essay has sought to dispell the individualistic view that benefits claimants and homeless people are responsible for their own predicament by highlighting the socio-economic structures and political choices that exacerbate and perpetuate poverty and social exclusion, by creating and maintaining class inequalities. I have used the social security system in the UK to show how inequalities are entrenched through stigmatising benefits claimants - and the homeless - as lazy, or lacking in some necessary trait or quality, that they are either mad, bad or defective. I have illustrated instead that political choices such as 'austerity' exacerbate poverty and social exclusion by creating and maintaining class inequalities while media outlets and politicians reinforce the stereotype of people in poverty as work-shy scroungers. It is an argument strengthened by adopting an interdisciplinary methodology which foregrounds the transactional relationship between psychosocial theory and human rights.

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## Franz Rosenzweig's Critique of Traditional Philosophy as 'Sick' and Rosenzweig's Proposal for a 'Healthier' Philosophy

Hei Tung Chan

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### ABSTRACT

In this essay, I will argue why Rosenzweig believes that traditional philosophy's way of thinking or method will lead to an unsuccessful or 'sick' human life. By traditional philosophy, Rosenzweig is basically referring to the old method of enquiry, whereby philosophers prioritise the 'essence' of things as meaningful. First, I will discuss Rosenzweig's idea of what a healthy philosophy is. Rosenzweig's image of a healthy philosophy is one where we do not let our wonder hold us back; this is what past philosophers mistake for Rosenzweig. To wonder in itself is not wrong, but it is wrong or 'sick' to be paralysed in wonder - instead we need to allow life itself to dissolve the wonder for us otherwise one becomes 'paralysed' in wonder. Secondly, I will discuss Rosenzweig's critique on traditional philosophy's misguided approach to life. It is misguided because they reject 'death' as a part of life. Here, I will argue that although thinkers such as Montaigne do accept death, Montaigne does so in such a way as to fight it, which for Rosenzweig is still rejecting death. Lastly, I argue that Rosenzweig's task is not to abolish philosophy but rather, to open up a new way of philosophising that does not take an objective and disinterested stance to the problems in life.

To understand what Rosenzweig held to be a successful and healthy philosophy, it is important to know what he would call an 'unsuccessful' or 'sick' philosophy. According to Putnam (2008, p. 17), Rosenzweig's aim in *Understanding the Sick and the Healthy* (1999) is to show the absurdity of

traditional philosophy – more specifically, the “illusion that philosophy can deliver knowledge of ‘essences’”. So for Rosenzweig, traditional philosophy is unsuccessful because it rejects reality as mere appearance and instead, searches for what lies beyond or what actually is, rather than just living life as it is experienced in our everyday lives. In this essay, I shall explain and assess Rosenzweig’s diagnosis of “*apoplexia philosophica*” in more detail (1999, p. 59), as it will be crucial to understanding successful philosophy – i.e. philosophy that is not paralysed by wonder. In my view, one crucial point about understanding Rosenzweig’s approach is that he does not aim to satisfy his readers by argumentatively proving or convincing us that his image of the successful philosophy is the right one. Rather, he invites us to experience his image of a successful philosophy whilst using irony to show the absurdity of the past traditional philosophical method. To show this, I will mention Rosenzweig’s view on death as a part of life. He also makes mention of language and its role in revealing to us the proper understanding of reality, which I find convincing and in the following I will show why. Lastly, despite the overt theological import in his work, I will show that his philosophy can be made accessible to secular scholars.

First of all, why is traditional philosophy unsuccessful? What is it failing to capture? For Rosenzweig (1999, p. 40), the answer is that traditional philosophers detach or distance themselves from the “continuous stream of life” and this is caused by their stubborn desire to remain in wonder – i.e. to remain in a state of contemplation. In short, traditional philosophy makes one numb to life. Now Rosenzweig (1999) argues that wonder can happen to anyone. For example, a child may wonder about adulthood but once he becomes an adult, the wonder is extinguished. So it is evident that Rosenzweig does not think of wonder as being unsuccessful, but rather that life itself will cure us of our wonder. However, the philosopher is too impatient to let life dissolve the wonder for him – he wants to dissolve the wonder in his own way (Rosenzweig, 1999). As a result, the philosopher desperately searches for the essence of things, specifically of reality. But why is that so wrong or so ‘unsuccessful’ for Rosenzweig? It could be argued that since we have a capacity for self-reflection, we ought to use it to understand our experience and our relationship with our experiences so that we may achieve a better understanding of our role in life, thus making it successful.

The problem for Rosenzweig is that philosophers such as Hegel or even Kant put too much emphasis on using the faculty of thought to understand reality as a whole (Mack, 2003). According to Rosenzweig, the idea of understanding our experiences as pure thought is really the philosopher's attempt to escape death. In other words, what is unknowable cannot be in existence and since death is unknowable, death therefore does not exist. So, the search for essence and immersion in wonder ultimately stems from a fear of death (Gibbs, 1992). However, why does the search for essence out of a fear of death make philosophy unhealthy and unsuccessful? For Rosenzweig such an attempt is unsuccessful and even absurd because it is circular. By asking for the essence, the answer will always be "whatever it is, it is not what it appears to be" (Rosenzweig, 1999, p. 66). Of course, what it appears to be is "the world" but then we are directed back to the original question: what is the *essence* of our world? (Rosenzweig, 1999, p. 66). Indeed, it would seem that the philosophical movement is redundant because it does not further our understanding of the world and our place in it as the method results in a tautology. To put it in Rosenzweig's words, the philosopher who searches for the essence becomes stuck in a state of "paralysis" (Rosenzweig, 1999, p. 40).

Secondly, on the subject of death Rosenzweig (1999, p. 103) contends that death "is the ultimate verification of life, that to live means to die". In Cohen's reading of Rosenzweig, we see that traditional philosophy fails because it does not accept the fact of our death. Traditional philosophy does not want "[to] face the fearful and bleak realities of mortality" (Cohen, 1994, p. 70). Should we accept Cohen's reading for Rosenzweig, if we rid death from reality then we would not be able to recognise the value of life. Indeed, I argue in favour of Rosenzweig, the fact that the past philosophers even pursue essence in hope of escaping death already presupposes a value in life. It is exactly the fact of our death that the philosophers are so eager to reject, which actually makes the experience of living valuable. So, not only is traditional philosophy fearful of death but it also strives for a 'death-free' life.

An alternative position however can be observed in Montaigne, who contends that philosophy should help us to prepare for death. Montaigne (1877) argues that the ancient Greek philosophers were wrong for trying to solve the problem of death by annulling it. Rather, we should "learn bravely to stand our ground, and fight [death]...disarm [death] of his novelty and

strangeness...converse and be familiar with [death]”. Although it seems that Montaigne avoids past traditional philosophy’s mistake of escaping death, it is arguable that he is still subject to Rosenzweig’s criticisms. This is because Rosenzweig wants to *acknowledge* death as a part of life, as opposed to fighting it off like Montaigne. However, it is also arguable to say that if one has fought off death, one has already acknowledged death. So although it seems that the argument at this point is equivocal, what I want to draw from this is that philosophy can actually help embrace both death and life. In agreement with Putnam (2008, p. 30), Rosenzweig is not “anti-philosophical” but rather he is trying to set philosophy back on the correct path – that is, to embrace death as a part of life.

Thirdly, it is necessary to discuss Rosenzweig’s account on the understanding of the self and its relations. Nietzsche’s account on the self, according to Rosenzweig, manages to escape Hegel’s mistake of trying to “comprehend all of being through thought”. That is, Nietzsche does not start from the assumption of an objective truth, but rather from the subjective individual (Cohen, 1994, p. 70). However, Rosenzweig argues that Nietzsche’s attempt is insufficient and that his paganism is “inferior to the revealed religious alternative offered by Christianity and Judaism” (Cohen, 1994, p. 70). What Rosenzweig means is that although Nietzsche’s subjectivity of the ‘I’ can overcome Hegel’s abstracted ‘self’, it is however too self-obsessed since it pays no attention or more specifically “love”, to the ‘thou’ or ‘you’ (the neighbour) (Cohen, 1994, p. 77). Furthermore, Rosenzweig argues that Nietzsche’s ‘I’ deceives itself into thinking that the ‘self’ can ‘create’ its own life when really life is already created for them and is there for them to experience (Cohen, 1994). Of course, it would seem that Rosenzweig’s account at this point is largely based on the Abrahamic religions, thus making it non-accessible for everyone.

Having said that, I think that what everyone can take from his account is his consideration of *relations*. Life’s disposition seems to already compel us to live in a community – for example, the fact that we are able to speak our opinions or have a voice already implies that we are not supposed to live in isolation. In fact, Rosenzweig goes further by examining the peculiarity of ‘language’. Rosenzweig argues that life becomes unsuccessful when we are viewing reality with “inappropriate conceptual pictures” (Putnam, 2008, pp. 10-11). He argues that the patient (i.e. the traditional philosophers)

“stubbornly [stares] at whichever peak happens to be visible at the moment” or that they do not see the “peaks” clearly enough due to “clouds” (Rosenzweig, 1999, p. 60). Rosenzweig’s use of metaphorical image is by no means used to confuse us – the three peaks simply refer to the “irreducibly fractured reality”: ‘God, Man and the World’ (Cohen, 1994, p. 46). To further explain this, Rosenzweig simply means that we should never separate these three ‘peaks’, only seeing one of them as our reality. Rather, for him all three are fundamental elements of our reality.

So, Rosenzweig (1999) argues in order for philosophy to be ‘healthy’, one should not endeavour to reduce reality to either of the three ‘peaks’ or try to know reality as either of these elements in isolation but rather, just to simply acknowledge and experience reality as having these three separate elements. For Rosenzweig, not only are these three elements irreducible and separate but they are also interrelated. The three elements are related in this way: The ‘world’ is related to God because God created the ‘world’. ‘Man’ on the other hand, stands in a relation of ‘revelation’ with God, for He reveals His love for us (Cohen, 1994). Lastly, “man’s relation to the world and to his fellow man is redemption” (Cohen, 1994, p. 46). So what Rosenzweig wants to say is that we need to have a proper understanding of ourselves and of our relation to those around us; for Rosenzweig, we need to acknowledge life as having an inherent demand that we communicate God’s revelation of love with one another.

From what we have said thus far, it could be claimed that Rosenzweig is anti-philosophical and he also does not seem to provide sufficient evidence on why his paradoxical view on life is not absurd like that of the philosophical. First of all, I think that even to demand evidence for Rosenzweig’s account of the successful philosophy already shows that one has completely misunderstood him. Secondly, following Putnam (2008), Rosenzweig is not necessarily anti-philosophical, but rather contends for a new direction for philosophy. One would be mistaken in desiring such evidence of Rosenzweig’s work, precisely because such evidence would be to support the kind of philosophical schema that Rosenzweig made so central to his critique of Idealism/traditional philosophy. So what is this ‘new direction’ for Rosenzweig? From my reading of Rosenzweig’s text, I firmly argue that he is seeking to put forward a philosophy that acknowledges life *and death*, or of reality as it is, without the complications of finding ‘essences’. In other words, he demands that we merely live life, as it is. As Rosenzweig (1999, p.

105) himself states in the epilogue to the “expert” (philosopher), that “nothing new [will be added to his] knowledge...that [he] would depart unrewarded”. It is clear then, that Rosenzweig is putting forward a movement that involves a phenomenological observation of human experience, as opposed to knowledge (Putnam, 2008). More specifically, Rosenzweig wants to focus on our use of language, as for him, that is where the image of the successful philosophy is most ‘revealed’.

Language for Rosenzweig (1999, pp. 70-71) is very peculiar in the sense that it is external to us, yet we use it every day to communicate; not only that but it also draws the “world” into the “stream” of life. What Rosenzweig means is that language is innate in the flow of life – he argues that the successful life is one in which the subject realises that he is created and put in the world by God, and that language enables man to communicate with God and with others. Rosenzweig (1999, p. 73) contends that the word of God cannot be spoken (or recorded) for nobody – there must be a listener. Just as God’s word is meant for us, similarly whenever we speak “it implies the presence of the speaker and someone to whom his speech is addressed”. The problem with the unsuccessful life is that it stops in the flow of life and begins to question everything, even the language. Rosenzweig (1999) mockingly writes that the previous philosophers cannot even buy a piece of butter without worrying over the certainty of those names (Rosenzweig, 1999, p. 39). What Rosenzweig (1999) wants us to take from this is that we should put our trust in God, that He will sustain the names we have assigned to the world. Of course, the immediate objection seems to be: ‘how can we just suddenly put trust in God?’ or ‘is there even a God in whom to put our trust?’ It would seem that either one would have already to be a religious person in order to experience life or if not religious, then one can never experience life.

To such objections, I would argue that regardless of faith, communication is a part of everyone’s life and therefore, no one can ever be excluded. Even the traditional philosopher, who equates thought with being cannot deny that their thinking is confined to the realm of language, for one thinks with language. Language would seem redundant if it were not used as a means of communication. The important thing to take away from Rosenzweig’s account is to trust in the experiences of life and that someday, one’s wonder would be dissolved by life. Of course, there is no guarantee that our trust is

the absolutely right thing to do, but such uncertainty is just part of what it means to live. Perhaps life is just paradoxical and that if we are truly to live, then we must embrace this aspect of it, with which our reasoning is of course unhappy. It is also important to see that there is a progress of our trust in names and language as Rosenzweig (1999, p. 74) writes that every time we speak about the world, we speak of a world that belongs both to the creator (God) and the created (Man), and that the world is “realised” when it becomes the world of God and Man - “every word spoken within its confines furthers this end”. Although this reply seems very unsatisfying, we must understand that Rosenzweig is not trying to prove anything. As Amir (Amir et al. 2012, p. 48) points out, Rosenzweig is trying to remind its readers of their “basic experience and cognition”, as opposed to giving knowledge on how to live. Rosenzweig simply demands that we live.

To conclude, I find Rosenzweig's conception of a successful philosophy convincing. That such an argument is convincing can be found in Rosenzweig's claim that the philosophical movement does take us away from life, by attempting to get rid of death. It is important to see that life is not as a puzzle to be solved but to be lived and experienced. As mentioned earlier, death is simply a part of life – if one wants to live, then one cannot be separated from death. Death as I see it also makes the notion of living valuable. However, Rosenzweig's account of ‘relation’, as a part of the successful life, could be unconvincing in the respect that he turns to religion. Nor does he seem to give concrete evidence to support why the religious life is not absurd like that of the philosophical. However, as I have shown above, it is not necessary for us to rely on theism for the basis of his claims, as Rosenzweig's elucidation of the phenomenon of language testifies. His idea of revelation in language or trust is indeed one that is worthy of consideration. This is because language, as Rosenzweig argues, serves as a bridge between the three fundamental elements of life: World, Man and God. Language itself already presupposes a speaker and a listener, that is, a relation. If we cannot even trust this basic and fundamental capacity, as previous traditional philosophy seems to contend, then we simply cannot live. However, if that is the case, then it does not make sense as to why we speak and the whole point of having a language becomes meaningless. Having said that, I argue that Rosenzweig's task is not abolishing philosophy but rather, he attempts to revise its method of enquiry, in the sense of



paving a new way of philosophising that does not become paralysed in wonder and is able to trust that life will dissolve the wonder.

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# Anti-Black stereotypes demonstrated relative to both White faces and neutral stimuli – a Function Acquisition Speed Test investigation

Emilia Ilieva

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## ABSTRACT

Studies have provided evidence of implicit preferences towards White over Black individuals, but have not shown whether this effect is due to pro-White or anti-Black bias. The goal of this study was to examine this question. In this mixed-factorial experiment 153 psychology undergraduate students, randomly allocated to one of two groups, took part in a Function Acquisition Speed Test. The Non-Relative condition included Black faces, negative words, neutral objects and neutral words. The Relative condition included Black faces, negative words, White faces and positive words. Both groups were presented with a Consistent and an Inconsistent block. In the Consistent block, the correct responses were consistent with the expected stereotypes towards Black faces whereas in the Inconsistent block, the correct responses were inconsistent with the expected stereotypes. The results showed that participants learned faster in the Consistent than in the Inconsistent block but there was no significant difference in learning rates between the Non-Relative and Relative groups. This indicated that anti-Black bias was present with similar magnitude relative to both White faces and neutral stimuli, which suggested that pro-White bias did not affect anti-Black bias.

## Introduction

Recent research has shown a significant decrease of expressed anti-Black attitudes (Martin, Carlson & Buskist, 2013). However, this may not be because prejudice and stereotypes have decreased but because they have changed their

form and manifestation (Martin et al., 2013). In 2005, a high school student named Kiri Davis replicated Clark and Clark's (1939) study, which had shown that most Black children preferred White-skinned dolls over Black ones, and found similar results (Davis, 2005). This evidenced that stereotypes and prejudice had not been overcome and could be harmful to modern society. However both Davis (2005) and Clark and Clark (1939) measured explicit attitudes, which are attitudes of which we are aware and that we express freely. The problem with explicit attitude measurements is that participants may not want to express their true attitudes or may be unaware of some of their attitudes. Thus, methods for assessing implicit attitudes - attitudes that we are not aware of, are developed to address these issues.

Furthermore, there has been growing interest in developing implicit tests due to the limitations of existing methods for implicit attitude exploration (O'Reilly, Roche, Ruiz, Tyndall & Gavin, 2012). For example, the procedure of Watt, Keenan, Barnes, and Cairns (1991), which involved the learning of a series of stimulus relations, was thought to be capable of identifying implicit relations between stimuli in relation to social history. This procedure was problematic because it required considerable amount of time as well as focused attention and motivation (O'Reilly et al., 2012). Another example is the widely used Implicit Association Test (IAT), which was developed by Greenwald, McGhee and Schwartz (1998) and was said to measure implicit attitudes. The IAT's procedure paired pictures on the screen with either stereotype consistent or stereotype inconsistent responses and then compared the reaction times of participants (Nosek et al., 2007). However, the test has been widely criticised. Amongst these criticisms were the suggestions that the IAT was influenced by information from the stimuli (Govan, & Williams, 2004) and that the statistical inferences from the IAT were used inaccurately (Blanton & Jaccard, 2006).

A recently developed alternative to the IAT is the Function Acquisition Speed Test (FAST), designed by O'Reilly et al. (2012). It was based on the findings of Watt et al. (1991) that past cultural learning could impair new learning. In contrast to the IAT, the FAST uses combined accuracy and speed as a measure of implicit attitudes and gives limited time for responding. This has resolved the IAT's problem which with calculation of response times (O'Reilly et al., 2012). Moreover, feedback in the FAST is given both after correct and incorrect responses whereas in the IAT it is given only after incorrect responses that can function as punishment (O'Reilly et al., 2012). Another

difference is that the FAST measures learning rate whereas the IAT measures standardised reaction time.

Irrespective of these methodological issues, studies on stereotypes and prejudice have shown implicit and explicit preferences for White/light-skin individuals. For example, Nosek, Banaji and Greenwald (2002) gathered data from over 600,000 IATs via an Internet website with the aim to measure attitudes towards different social groups. Their investigation showed a general implicit preference for White over Black individuals. In relation to this, the study of Nosek et al. (2007) supported these findings. This study used a website to gather over 2.5 million datasets from IATs in order to examine preferences and stereotypes on 17 topics. The results revealed that the majority of the participants demonstrated both implicit and explicit preferences for White/light-skin over Black/dark-skin individuals. However, it is unclear whether these findings are due to pro-White or anti-Black bias.

The goal of this experiment is to investigate anti-Black bias relative to both White faces and neutral stimuli in order to understand whether participants' learning is due to pro-White bias or anti-Black bias. The study will use the recently developed FAST to measure participants' implicit attitudes in two blocks – Consistent and Inconsistent. In the Consistent block the “correct” answers will refer to answers which are consistent with the expected stereotypes whereas in the Inconsistent block the “correct” answers will refer to those inconsistent with the expected stereotypes. Furthermore, the stimuli will be presented in two conditions – Non-Relative and Relative. The Non-Relative condition will measure the association between Black faces and negative words in relation to neutral stimuli whereas the Relative condition will measure the associations between Black faces - negative words and White faces - positive words in relation to one another. Based on the literature, our first hypothesis is that participants will learn faster in the Consistent block than in the Inconsistent block. We base this hypothesis also on the fact that the answers in the Consistent block are referred to as “correct” if they are consistent with the expected stereotypes and the answers in the Inconsistent block are referred to as “correct” if they are inconsistent with the expected stereotypes. Our second hypothesis is that the difference in the rates of learning between blocks will be higher in the Relative group than in the Non-Relative group. We base this claim on the assumption that the Non-Relative condition measures the association between Black faces and negative words in relation to neutral stimuli whereas the Relative condition measures two associations (anti-Black and pro-White) in relation to one another.

## **Methods**

### Participants

Participants were 153 Psychology undergraduate students. There were 87 participants in the Non-Relative group and 66 participants in the Relative group. They all participated in the study as part of a module requirement. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two groups.

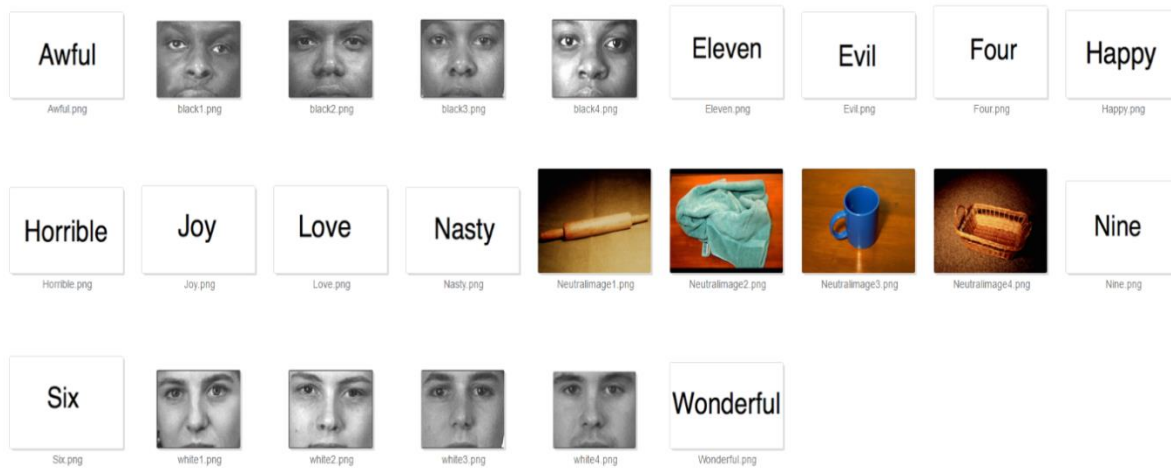
### Apparatus

The stimuli were presented on an iMac computer, with screen size 21.5” and resolution 1920 x 1080 pixels. The FAST was designed and delivered using Livecode Software. The data were collated via Google Forms.

### Materials

The FAST consisted of two blocks – Consistent and Inconsistent. In the Consistent block the answers were referred to as “correct” if they were consistent with the expected stereotypes or prejudice – for example sorting Black faces with negative words. In the Inconsistent block the answers were referred to as “correct” if they were inconsistent with the expected stereotypes or prejudice – for example sorting Black faces with positive or neutral words. Each block consisted of 50 trials.

In this FAST experiment, different stimuli were presented in two conditions – the Non-Relative and the Relative condition. The Non-Relative condition included images of Black faces, negative words, neutral objects and neutral words. It measured the association between Black faces and negative words in relation to neutral stimuli and aimed to investigate anti-Black stereotypes in isolation. The Relative condition included images of Black faces, negative words, images of White faces and positive words. It measured two associations in relation to one another and aimed to investigate anti-Black stereotypes in relation to positive White stereotypes. The images of Black and White faces were taken from Cunningham, Preacher and Banaji (2001). All of the stimuli presented in the FAST can be viewed in Figure 1.



*Figure 1 – Stimuli presented in the experimental trials.*

### Design

The experiment had a mixed-factorial design. The independent within-subjects variable was: block (Consistent or Inconsistent). The between-subject variable was group (Non-Relative or Relative). The dependent variable was the FAST slope – the rate of learning.

### Procedure

Participants signed a consent form and started the experiment. No practice trials were provided. The experimental trials began and the FAST instructions were displayed with black letters in the centre of a white screen. They stated that the participants' task was to learn which button to press when an image appeared on the screen. Participants had to press either the Z or the M key and were asked to locate them on the keyboard. It was pointed out that this part of the experiment would continue until the participants had learned the task and could respond without error. They would learn via feedback, which would inform them if they were correct or not. Participants were given the opportunity to ask the researcher any questions they may have had. They had to press any key to continue.

Stimuli started appearing one by one in the centre of the white screen and participants had to sort them by pressing either Z or M. Participants in each group completed two blocks – Consistent and Inconsistent. The order of the blocks was randomised. Participants received feedback – “Correct” or “Wrong” in red colour, after every sorting. In the Consistent block, the answers were referred to as “correct” when participants sorted together Black faces and negative words and either White faces and positive words or neutral objects and neutral words depending on the condition. In the Inconsistent block, the answers were referred to as “correct” when participants sorted together Black

faces with either positive or neutral words as well as negative words and either neutral objects or White faces depending on the condition. If participants took more than 3000 milliseconds to respond to a trial their response was recorded as wrong. They could not correct their responses at any time.

## Results

Scores for rates of learning (Slope) in the Consistent and the Inconsistent block were calculated separately for each participant by dividing the change in the number of correct responses by the change in the elapsed time. Faster learning of correct responses was indicated by a higher slope. A score representing the difference between the Consistent and the Inconsistent Slope was also calculated for each participant. Faster learning in the Consistent block was indicated by a positive difference whereas faster learning in the Inconsistent block was indicated by a negative difference. A positive Slope Difference was referred to as a FAST effect.

Mean scores were obtained for the Consistent Slope, the Inconsistent Slope and the Slope Difference for the Non-Relative and the Relative condition. The means and standard deviations in the Non-Relative and Relative conditions are presented in Table 1. The effect size for the mean difference between the Consistent and the Inconsistent Slope in the Non-Relative condition was medium ( $d=0.48$ ). The effect size for the mean difference between the Consistent and the Inconsistent Slope in the Relative condition was small ( $d=0.27$ ).

	Consistent Slope	Inconsistent Slope	Slope Difference
Non-Relative	0.70 (0.14)	0.63 (0.15)	0.06 (0.15)
Relative	0.68 (0.17)	0.64 (0.13)	0.04 (0.15)

*Table 1: The means and standard deviations (in parentheses) in the Non-Relative and in the Relative condition.*

For both conditions, the paired samples t-tests showed that there was a statistically significant mean difference between the Consistent and the

Inconsistent Slope,  $t(86)=3.90$ ,  $p<.001$ , 2-tailed (for the Non-Relative condition) and  $t(65)=2.26$ ,  $p=.027$ , 2-tailed (for the Relative condition). Participants learned faster in the Consistent than in the Inconsistent block in both conditions. An independent samples t-test showed that there was no statistically significant mean Slope Difference between the Non-Relative and the Relative condition,  $t(151)=0.84$ ,  $p=.401$ , 2-tailed. There was no difference in the learning rate between the Relative and Non-Relative groups.

## Discussion

The study aimed to examine how much of the participants' performance in the experiment was due to pro-White bias. The results showed that participants learned faster when the "correct" responses were consistent with the expected stereotypes compared to when they were inconsistent. This supported our first hypothesis that participants would learn faster in the Consistent than in the Inconsistent block. However, the results showed that the difference in learning rate between blocks did not differ significantly across groups, which did not support our second hypothesis that the learning rate difference would be higher in the Relative group than in the Non-Relative. These findings indicated that anti-Black attitudes were demonstrated, with no significant difference in strength, relative to both White faces and neutral stimuli which suggested that learning performance was not influenced by pro-White bias.

The results of this study supported the findings of Nosek, Banaji et al. (2002) and Nosek et al. (2007) that there is a general preference for White over Black individuals. However, the findings indicated that these attitudes were not due to pro-White bias. The results further suggested that positive-White associations do not contribute to negative-Black associations as the negative-Black associations also occurred relative to neutral images with no significant change in strength. The present study also supported the results of Watt et al. (1991) that past verbal or cultural learning could interfere with new learning. The present study showed that participants took longer to learn a pairing of a stimulus and response when the pairing was inconsistent with the widely-held anti-Black stereotypes. This showed that the previously learned information that dark-skin people are associated with negative stimuli interfered with the new learning of associating dark-skin people with positive responses.

However, one limitation of this study which could account for the lack of support for the second hypothesis is the difficulty of finding strictly neutral stimuli. Thus, there is a possibility that the neutral stimuli used in the Non-Relative condition may not have been "neutral" for the participants. In some



cultures, numbers have symbolic meanings. For example, 6 is thought to be the number of the devil and 7 is thought to be a sacred number in some societies. Furthermore, the presented “neutral” objects may have been associated with a particular event or sensation experienced by the participants. A new study should be conducted in order to address this problem by presenting the participants with the same experimental design and conditions but with one difference – asking them to rate separately each stimulus presented in the study on a scale ranging from “Very pleasant” to “Very unpleasant”. This would reveal whether the neutral stimuli were truly “neutral”.

Raising awareness about implicit anti-Black biases is the first step towards reducing them. For example, our findings can be directly applied in the educational setting as anecdotal evidence suggest that anti-Black attitudes are pervasive in schools but are not always explicit. School staff can use the provided knowledge to raise awareness amongst both teachers and students about implicit anti-Black biases. This may reduce the implicit anti-Black biases in schools due to the awareness of their existence. The findings can also be applied to the police and legal systems where implicit anti-Black attitudes can have terrible consequences. This may lead to creating special programs for police officers and judges which will aim to reduce implicit anti-Black bias. Another application would be in the field of the media. Although there are a lot of explicit negative attitudes towards dark-skin people in the media, some of the negative attitudes may be implicit. Raising awareness about this problem amongst both the people who work in the field and amongst the viewers will aid reducing implicit anti-Black stereotypes.

In conclusion, the study showed that participants took longer to learn pairings that were inconsistent with previously learnt racial stereotypes. This suggests that pre-learnt stereotypes could interfere with present learning. In addition, the findings showed that anti-Black bias occurred relative to neutral images as well as relative to images of White-skin individuals. This suggests that anti-Black bias was not enhanced by pro-White bias. These findings are important because they provide knowledge that might aid raising awareness about implicit anti-Black biases. This could help reduce the anti-Black biases in society.

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## Creative Writing - A New Beginning/The Modern Underworld

Giulia Tramontana

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### ABSTRACT

Starting from the idea of the myth of creation to the Apocalypse, continuing from Dante's *Inferno* and leading to the modern Underworld, my two pieces see two clueless protagonists who find themselves in a new situation they know nothing about, because they have not experienced anything similar before. The aim of setting such stories in 'familiar' environments is for us to get lost in our own thoughts, and wonder, what if 'old' literary and historical works like the *Bible* and the *Divine Comedy* were written today, by someone with a modern perspective? Would they be easier for us to understand, more relatable? Or would we be too distracted by technology, unable to pay attention to details?

### A new beginning

I do not know who I am, I do not know where I come from; it does not feel as if I should have any consciousness, but I do.

My skin is smooth. Everything is dark around me, but I am enlightened. I take a step and suddenly I see more natural light. A flower is blooming by my bare feet.

I take another step and I see more light; it feels as if I am a victim of some kind of accident and I have lost my memory. I feel like I used to exist before, but someone reset me.

Is this the Apocalypse everyone has always been so scared of?

Is this... Limbo? Dante's Purgatory?

Why am I conscious, aware, awake? Alone?

I walk. I run. I do not want to be alone in here. Everything is bright and colourful now, but it still feels dark inside.

I take a step back. I see a shadow and... I am not alone.

His skin is smooth. He looks like he is wondering what has happened, just like me.

This is the end of the end. A new beginning, I guess.

“What is happening?” I ask.

He turns around and his face brightens up.

“So, I am not alone.” He says.

“Welcome.” A scary, metallic, dark voice says. I swear, that voice sounds everything but welcoming. “This is Eden 2.0.”

I look at that someone still standing right in front of me: he is touching all over his body, as if he is looking for something. That is when I remember that I may have forgotten something of my own too.

Where is my damn phone?!

“If you are wondering what this place is,” the metallic voice continues, “for now, you do not have to know much. It is a new galaxy that the people of your old life have never discovered. It is a safe place.”

I run, to look for my phone; and I wonder, how is it possible that I do not remember who I am, but I feel the necessity of holding my phone in my hand? I feel insecure. Maybe because I am naked. Or because my phone is nowhere to be seen.

“What are we doing here? Where is the rest of humanity?” I admire the courage of the young guy standing next to me. Maybe I am the only one who thinks that, if I dare to say a word, the metallic voice could make something happen, I don’t know, maybe the floor turns into lava or there is a huge hurricane that just sucks my soul away and I die, without even receiving any useful information.

But, wait a minute. Eden 2.0?

“You are the chosen two.” The metallic voice gives me a heart attack. “You have been transported from Planet Earth to Eden 2.0 before the Apocalypse happened.”

So, I was right. The Apocalypse. Everything is starting to become clearer now...

“Eden 2.0 is actually trying to evolve into the twin planet of the Earth, just better. One universal language, one universal human race... But the best part is, money here does not exist.”

The guy next to me laughs. “Humans are going to find endless ways of hating each other. Not having money does not solve anything.”

“Tell me, young man.” My blood freezes in my veins, I am terrified at the thought of being alone again, or that the voice could do something to harm us.

“What if we do not let them? You two are the first two humans here. You have to be the example; avoid everything that has always been wrong on Planet Earth... And teach your brothers and sisters how to love each other.”

He laughs again. The audacity. “Okay then, God 2.0.” He says.

That actually makes me giggle, I cannot hide it. Maybe God 2.0 does not find it funny, but I certainly do. And I need to laugh right now, just as a distraction, for a split second.

“We have stolen all the data of Planet Earth and copied it onto here. It is now up to you two to start building a new world.”

At this point, I do not want to laugh anymore. I want to scream. Everything I was always taught was a lie. I cannot believe all those conspiracy theories about life being a simulation just turned out to be true.

“What are we, are we in the Sims? This is unreal.” The guy says. We both know it is too real to be a dream, or a nightmare.

I want to go away. Nobody has ever told me that I was one of ‘the chosen two’. What am I supposed to do now? Why are so many thoughts confusing my head, yet, I do not even remember my name?

Why is this monster robot talking about ‘data’? Is this real?

Did Apocalypse really happen? Was it only a glitch?

There is no going back. I am trapped. I am a prisoner. And I can see my reflection in his lost eyes; he is a prisoner, too. And there is no running away.

“Now, Adam and Eve,” the metallic voice says, before all the light goes out again, “I expect you to give life to our new humans.”

## **The modern underworld**

Dear diary,

I cannot believe what I just got myself into, but I am sure it will be so worth it! I’m a little scared, but I keep praying and praying every day and I know in my heart that the gods want to help me. I mean, Odysseus has done it, and came out alive, so has Dante, so why can’t I?

It would mean the world to see my father again. I'm going to pack the rest of my things and mentally prepare myself for what's coming! I imagine the Underworld as a big red dimension, like a movie set, but everything is real. Dante's description of it was quite accurate, but a long time has passed and maybe it has changed throughout the years.

Whatever it is, I'm ready. I will do whatever it takes to see my dad again.

Xoxo, Claire

Dear diary,

Today has been Hell. Literally! It's not a fairy tale here, it is not a joke! This is awful. I cannot believe my poor dad lives here now. I'll just tell you about my day... I don't even remember how I got there, they must have given me some kind of magic stuff to make me forget. You won't even believe, there is no phone service here. Unbelievable! I wanted to post an Instagram story, but they took my phone and said I can only have it back when I get out. Needless to say, I freaked out. They cannot take my phone away from me.

Anyway... Charon, like, the real Charon, the ferryman, picked me up with his broken boat and took me to the other side of the river. I kept asking him questions, but he was so grumpy, he wouldn't talk to me. At one point, he turned to me and said 'listen, blondie, my job is only to take you to the other side'. I was so scared... His eyes were so red, and he looked like he hasn't slept in years... The only other time he talked was when I was about to get out of his boat, he said "the river is dangerous, if you fall in it, your soul will disappear for ever". I thought that was quite scary, so I paid extra attention as I climbed out.

Then, I had to face Persephone and Hades. They were sitting there, holding hands, and well, it was the first time I'd seen a god, so I kneeled down and prayed. Persephone is beautiful, I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw her. I really wanted to take a picture, but I didn't have my phone... Yikes.

They asked me why I was there and blah blah... I told them how much I would like my dad to attend my wedding, just for a day, and how much I have been praying for it to happen. They were not very sure at first, but then they said they knew how devoted I was, and they were surprised by the love I felt for my father. So, they'd let me have him for a day, but first, I needed to be challenged to show them I was worthy.

The first challenge consisted of feeding Cerberus, the three-headed monster of Hell. I thought it would be easy. In my mind, I just had to throw it a piece of meat and go. I was wrong. Hades handed me a body... It looked lifeless, so I

assumed it came from the river. I had to throw that to the monster. Hades opened the door and this enormous creature, or should I say creatures, were towering over me, and I thought that the quicker I was, the quicker I would get out of there, so I threw the body, which was quite heavy, and ran away, as Hades closed the door.

‘Congratulations,’ Persephone said, ‘you have won the first challenge. Now, the second one consists of spending a day here, in Hell, and then you will get to see your father.’ I thought it would be okay, but now I get why, when it is warm, people say ‘it’s hot as Hell’!!! I have been sweating for the whole day!! I had to carry some incandescent rocks, help people climb out of Charon’s boat, and be Persephone’s servant for the whole day. Finally, I’m getting some rest, but the souls out there won’t stop complaining and moaning and crying, and it is so hot, I doubt I will get any sleep. More updates tomorrow.

Xoxo, Claire

Dear diary,

I thought doing this would be good for me. I thought having my dad back would make me the happiest girl in the world. I came to the Underworld, something forbidden to humans, to get him back for a day, and I have ruined everything.

I had completed my challenges, I could finally see my dad again. And I did. I hugged him, and it felt weird, as he was dead, but he was finally in my arms, and I was happy. Incredibly happy.

The third challenge, though, consisted of looking back at my dad’s life and all the bad things he had done, while we were on Charon’s boat on our way to the other side. We were almost through.

What I found out made my blood boil. I saw all those bad things. I saw him fighting with my grandparents, and I let it go. I saw him scamming his clients, and I let it go. I saw him slapping me, and I let it go. Then, I saw something I never knew I had to witness. My mum. The mum I grew up thinking had just run away when I was two.

I saw my dad killing her and my heart stopped. I could not believe I had done so much for him, and I had spent a normal life with him, without even knowing he had destroyed one of the most important parts of me. It is his fault I am on my own now, and my soon-to-be husband is the only one I could hold onto.

I did not hesitate. I pushed him in the river. I don't regret it. Charon did not even look at me. He just kept doing what he had to. I looked at the river. I knew his soul was slowly vanishing, and I could not believe I had done that, and maybe I will go to Hell for that, but it was what he deserved. He was the only person I wanted with me before that, but, surprisingly, he isn't anymore. It is funny how you feel like you can trust someone with your whole heart and then they betray you like that. At least all this taught me a lesson. I've got to go get married now, and think about my priorities and the people I really trust.  
Xoxo, Claire

### Commentary

Taking an old text and transforming it into something new has always fascinated me, so this assignment has been an inspiration, and a new challenge that I thoroughly enjoyed.

I had a lot to say on the two topics I chose, so it was a bit difficult to stick to the word count [Ed: 3000 words to include both creative and critical commentary], it would have been better to have the possibility to write more. But the word count was an additional challenge that made the finishing of the assignment more enjoyable.

When I thought about the topic of creation, all my mind could match it to was 'a new beginning', like the name of the piece; I wondered how bizarre it would be for me to end something and start something new at the same time, but as soon as I started writing, I realised that the future was in my hands. After discussing the myth of Creation from 'Genesis' in class, I liked the idea of creating a new planet just as God did. What inspired me most and gave me the idea of creating Eden 2.0, God 2.0, and the new Adam and Eve was the popular conspiracy theory that life is a simulation, which I have heard in a Youtube video by Shane Dawson<sup>16</sup>. It is interesting to imagine that we are just part of a database that will eventually be used by someone else.

Eve finds herself in something unknown, a new place that feels like both life and death and reminds her of Dante's Purgatory<sup>17</sup>. She is bothered by not finding her phone, she feels trapped and empty; she is part of a generation that

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<sup>16</sup> S. Dawson, *Are we a simulation? Conspiracy theory* (2017)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksXwtOCYrfU>

<sup>17</sup> D. Alighieri, *Purgatory, The Divine Comedy*, Penguin Classics



makes humans prisoners, dependent on technology and smart phones. The 'metallic voice' is also a sign of advanced technology that makes the story more modern and makes the reader understand what kind of generation has been destroyed by the Apocalypse.

*The modern underworld*, on the other hand, does not involve either beginnings or ends, but is mainly inspired by a mixture of two different descriptions of the Underworld: the one in Homer's *Odyssey*<sup>18</sup> and the one in Dante's *Inferno*<sup>19</sup>. One of the most important characters in the story is Charon, the ferryman, who I have tried to describe both according to Dante's *Inferno* and my own imagination.

Once again, I tried to make it sound as if the story is happening in the present day, with technology, Instagram stories and the addiction everyone has for the Internet. Claire is just a young woman who likes to share her life online and is shocked by the fact there is not any service where she ends up, and that she cannot even take pictures as mementos of her journey. The vocabulary is quite informal as Claire is writing on her diary, so it is as if she is talking to herself; that is why there are expressions such as 'yikes', 'I freaked out' or 'blah blah blah'.

The idea of bringing Claire's father back to life came to my mind as I thought of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice<sup>20</sup>, in which Orpheus goes to the Underworld, protected by his father Apollo, to get back his wife Eurydice, with the only condition that he could not look back at her on the way out. He fails the challenge as he walks out, thinking his wife is already out too, but she is just behind the doorstep, so she vanishes for ever and there is no other way Orpheus can get her back.

I thought a re-adaptation of the original Greek myth would be interesting if set in the present day. The themes of trust, faith and courage are involved, and, apart from being a failure for Claire, her trip to the Underworld is also a journey of self-realisation that opens her eyes and makes her realise that her father was actually a bad person, but it is her choice either to get rid of him or ignore the truth and proceed with her original plan.

At first, I wanted this piece to be a poem, but I realised I was not capable of talking about such journey in the form of a poem, and I could not even write it

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<sup>18</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fagles (Penguin Group, 1996),

<sup>19</sup> D. Alighieri, *Inferno*, *The Divine Comedy*, Penguin Classics

<sup>20</sup> *Orpheus and Eurydice*, Greek Myths and Greek Mythology, available at <https://www.greekmyths-greekmythology.com/orpheus-and-eurydice/>

in the form of a full story as I did not have enough words within the limits allowed. In the end, I thought it would be better to write it as a short story in a diary format.

The two pieces have some common points. First of all, they are both set in the present day: the characters are strongly influenced by their habits that, in this case, have to do with technology. Secondly, they are quite familiar with their surroundings as this is not something new for them. For instance, Adam and Eve know that Creation has happened before, and they have an idea of what will happen next. In Claire's case, the Underworld has existed for a long time and has been described in texts she references, so she has an idea what it would be like, even though she ends up being surprised - and a bit disappointed.

I think that creating something new through the technique of remaking old texts is very revolutionary and helpful for anyone with writer's block or who cannot find ideas to write. I have enjoyed the challenge and am quite satisfied with what I managed to create. It is definitely a technique I will use in the future if I cannot come up with new ideas to fulfil my desire to write.

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## Aims

The journal is dedicated to the publication of high-quality undergraduate and postgraduate writing and is committed to creating accessible and engaging content for a non-specialist student readership. ESTRO encourages and celebrates student research by providing students with valuable early experience of academic publishing and the peer review process. The journal is a multi-disciplinary journal, run by and for students of the University of Essex.

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