

“LIVING STONES”: GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE IN THE MAJOR PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS OF ERNST BLOCH AND THOMAS HARDY’S JUDE THE OBSCURE

[“Yaşayan Taşlar”: Thomas Hardy’nin “Adsız Sansız Bir Jude” Eseri ve Ernst Bloch’un Temel Felsefi Çalışmalarındaki Gotik Mimarı]

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to explore the significance of Gothic architecture and its associations in the major philosophical works of the 20th-century German philosopher Ernst Bloch and in the last novel of Victorian poet and novelist Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*. This article will compare Bloch’s notion of Gothic architecture to the representation of Gothic architecture in Hardy’s novel. It seeks to explore how Bloch and Hardy have evaluated modernity through Gothic architecture. The focus of this article will be on how both authors have used Gothic architecture in order to raise questions about the relationship between the past, the present and the future. Particular attention will be paid to the themes of Christianity, spirituality, medievalism and utopian desire. Finally, this article will analyze Bloch’s and Hardy’s treatment of Gothic architecture as a powerful utopian symbol.

Keywords: Ernst Bloch, Thomas Hardy, gothic architecture, christianity, utopia.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı gotik mimari ve etkilerinin önemini 20.yy Alman filozof Ernst Bloch'un çalışmaları ve Viktorya dönemi yazarı Thomas Hardy'nin son romanı "Jude the Obscure" çerçevesinde incelemektir. Çalışma Bloch'un gotik mimari algısı ile Hardy'nin romanındaki gotik mimari temsilini karşılaştıracak, aynı zamanda Bloch ve Hardy'nin gotik mimari üzerinden moderniteye bakışını inceleyecektir. Çalışmanın temel odağına iki yazarın gotik mimariyi kullanarak geçmiş, şimdi ve gelecek arasındaki ilişki hakkında ortaya koydukları soruları almaktadır. Çalışma aynı zamanda Hristiyanlık, spiritüelitate, ortaçağcılık ve ütopya arzusu konuları üzerinde özellikle duracaktır. Son olarak çalışma Bloch'un ve Hardy'nin gotik mimariye güçlü bir ütöpik sembol olarak yaklaşımlarını analiz edecektir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Ernst Bloch, Thomas Hardy, gotik mimari, hristiyanlık, ütopya.

Introduction

The Cambridge Dictionary defines a symbol as “a sign, shape, or object that is used to represent something else”. This “something else” is often “a quality or an idea”, i.e. something which is abstract and difficult to grasp. Carl Gustav Jung (1964, p. 90) has pointed out that “symbols point in different directions from those we apprehend with the conscious mind; and therefore they relate to something either unconscious or at least not entirely conscious”. Similarly, his disciple and close associate Aniela Jaffé (1964, p. 264) has referred to symbols as “object[s] of the known world which hint[...] at something unknown”. But it is exactly this air of mystery which has made symbols so appealing and pertinacious, as Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno (2002, p. 26) have pointed out by stating that symbols are characterized by their “[i]nexhaustibility, endless renewal and [...] permanence”.

According to Ernst Bloch (1996, p. 720), Gothic architecture is “a radical architectural symbol”. He has argued that buildings can be regarded as reflecting the dominant ideology of the time of their construction. In his major philosophical works *The Spirit of Utopia* (1923) and *The Principle of Hope* (1959), Bloch has compared three different architectural styles reflecting three different dominant ideologies: ancient Greek, ancient Egyptian and medieval Gothic. In his discussion of Greek, Egyptian and Gothic architecture, Bloch has dwelt on the question of whether or to what extent the dominant ideologies expressed through the aforementioned architectural styles either furthered or obstructed human utopian desire. In other words, Bloch has interpreted Greek, Egyptian and Gothic architecture as expressions of three different attitudes toward life. In his interpretation of these three different architectural styles, Bloch has been guided less by aesthetic concerns than by his conviction that all living creatures deserve to live in a society which considers human life as the highest value, i.e. in a world without oppression, exploitation and alienation. Thus, his interpretation of Greek, Egyptian and Gothic architecture has been influenced by his political views. As a Marxist, Bloch has called for adequate living conditions for *all* human beings. His regard for equality has led him to a favourable interpretation of Gothic architecture and to a critical assessment of Greek and Egyptian architecture, as the following paragraphs seek to illustrate.

Greek architecture

Bloch (2000, pp. 19, 21) has argued that Greek architecture is appealing but superficial: It is only a “façade”, beautiful but without “inward expressivity”. According to Bloch (2000, p. 18), Greek architecture is at the same time “living and subdued”, “sociable and restrained” and “painterly and architectonic”. He (2000, pp. 19, 20) has associated Greek architecture with “harmonious symmetry”, “measure” and “plasticity”, thus aligning it with the Apollinian. On the other hand, Bloch has claimed, Greek architecture does not acknowledge and confront the Dionysiac: The Greeks “fashioned a world for themselves where they could live, where at any moment they could evade the terror of chaos” (Bloch, 2000, p. 19). Similarly, as Bloch (ibid) has held, Greek architecture reveals the Greeks’ tendency to evade “the seriousness of decision”. According to Bloch (ibid), Greek architecture lacks profundity and spirituality: It is “impious, unserious and indecisive”; “an agreeable but unspiritual accompaniment to life” which cannot satisfy the soul’s need (Bloch, 2000, p. 16). Greek architecture does not take into consideration anything which is possibly beneath or beyond the visible surface of reality; it does not address the hidden and dark aspects of human life. Because it does not consider the human soul, Bloch (2000, p. 22) has associated Greek architecture with “homelessness”. Another reason why he has associated Greek architecture with homelessness is the fact that ancient Greek culture was based on slavery. He has argued that as long as human beings are oppressed, exploited and alienated from each other, their environment and themselves, they live in exile and are homeless. Bloch’s critique of Greek architecture has been considerably influenced by the fact that it was the product of a society in which a privileged idle minority oppressed and exploited a disenfranchised toiling majority.

Egyptian architecture

Like ancient Greece, Egypt was a slave-owning society. It was further a monarchy ruled by quasi-divine kings. Its most impressive buildings, the pyramids, were erected as the burial sites and monuments of the Egyptian kings. As in the case of Greek architecture, Bloch has interpreted Egyptian architecture as a reflection of the worldview of its builders. Bloch (2000, p. 20) has primarily associated Egyptian architecture with “rigor” and “form”, characterizing it as “the absolute spirit of stone” and “an ultimately hostile geometry”. According to him,

Egyptian architecture can further be interpreted as an expression of the human desire to impose a “total dominance of inorganic nature over life” (ibid). Whereas Greek architecture simply eclipses human inwardness, Egyptian architecture “suppresses the inner life” (ibid). According to Bloch, Egyptian architecture prioritizes the functional and the inorganic over the aesthetic and the organic. The symbol of Egyptian architecture and the Egyptians’ attitude toward life is “the crystal of death” (Bloch, 1996, p. 719). Metaphorically speaking, Egypt is “the land of winter, of death” (Bloch, 2000, p. 22). Bloch has argued that modern architecture bears a strong similarity to Egyptian architecture. According to him, they both prioritize the functional and the inorganic over the aesthetic and the organic. The following quotation, which implies a basic similarity between Egyptian and modern architecture, sums up the trajectory of modernity: “Man also sees his future here [in Egyptian architecture and in the Egyptian attitude toward life], but sees himself dying, hides himself in the grave” (Bloch, 2000, p. 20). Like Egyptian architecture, modern architecture reflects its society’s devaluation of nature and of human life. They are expressions of the same deadly spirit.

Gothic architecture

Whereas Bloch has associated Egyptian architecture with death, he has identified Gothic architecture with life. According to him, the symbol of Egyptian architecture is “the crystal of death” (Bloch, 1996, p. 720); the symbol of Gothic architecture is “the tree of life” (ibid). Whereas Egyptian architecture expresses “the volition to become like stone” (Bloch, 2000, p. 20), Gothic architecture expresses “the volition to become like the resurrection” (Bloch, 2000, p. 22). Gothic architecture (especially the Gothic cathedral) further symbolizes “Corpus Christi” (Bloch, 1996, p. 720). Bloch (2000, p. 24) has argued that the Gothic is “comprehended life, is the spirit of the resurrection”. He has also considered the representation of Gothic architecture in painting, particularly the representation of the Heavenly Jerusalem in medieval and Renaissance religious paintings. Inspired by an early medieval hymn including the lines “*Urbs Jerusalem beata/ Dicta pacis visio/ Quae construitur in coelis/ Vivis ex lapidibus*”, which can be translated as “*Blessed city of Jerusalem/ Called the vision of peace/ Which is constructed in the sky/ From living stones*” (Bloch, 1996, p. 699), Bloch (1996, p. 713) has drawn attention to the fact that the Heavenly Jerusalem built from “*living stones*” “*was itself never painted though, as if it stood before*

one's very eyes", but was only hinted at through the representation of "remotest pinnacles [...] almost exclusively on glass windows" of Gothic churches and cathedrals, presumably so that the incoming light could contribute to the representation of the Heavenly Jerusalem as the city of *light* (my emphasis). Bloch (ibid) has further referred to the Gent altar by Hubert and Jan van Eyck which "shows a Heavenly Jerusalem only on the horizon". According to Bloch (ibid), the purpose of architectural painting and even more so of Gothic architecture was to "signify an 'urbs vivis ex lapidibus'" – a blessed city built from "living stones".

Bloch and religion

Especially Bloch's early works *The Spirit of Utopia* and *Thomas Münzer: Theologian of the Revolution* (1921) display a profound concern with the Christian religion. In many of his works, Bloch has used religious symbols and metaphors to express his notion of utopia. It must be pointed out that Bloch was never a member of any Christian church. His parents were so-called "assimilated" Jews. Moreover, Bloch was a professed Marxist from his early twenties to his death at the age of 92. The religious images and symbols which he used throughout his works are derived from the Old and the New Testament. He was particularly fascinated by "the Apocalypse, Joachim de Fiore, and the mystics and heretics of the Middle Ages" as well as by "the prophetic visions of Isaiah, the Kabbalah, Hasidism, and the writings of Buber" (Löwy, 1997, p. 290). His frequent use of religious images and symbols can also be explained by the fact that Bloch was influenced by early twentieth-century Messianism, "a modern form of Jewish thought [which was both] secular *and* theological" (Rabinbach, 1985, p. 81). Messianism was critical of Enlightenment thought and fascinated by the Apocalypse. It was anti-capitalist and revolutionary, completely repudiating the *status quo* and demanding its total destruction. Besides, Messianism was Romantic in so far as it nostalgically looked back to an ideal past which it wanted to restore to the present and future (Rabinbach, 1985, pp. 80-85). According to Bloch (2000, p. 171), the past is full of future: "More than one forgotten, unpaid debt burns within *Geistesgeschichte*, more than one deed that went unrewarded, more than one bold dream still awaiting fulfillment". In the first two decades of the 20th century, Messianism found expression in the works of many German expressionist writers, for example in the plays of Georg Kaiser, who described his artistic aim as "the construction of the cathedral whose foundations are deep within the earthly kingdom, but whose spire thrusts

into heaven” (Anderson, 2014, p. 18). Bloch’s first and, alongside *The Principle of Hope*, most important philosophical work *The Spirit of Utopia* is expressionistic in language and vision. The cathedral is an important symbol in Bloch’s thought. Among the works of art which have impressed and influenced his philosophy most profoundly is, alongside Goethe’s *Faust* and Beethoven’s symphonies, Strasbourg Cathedral.

The “organicity” of Gothic architecture

As pointed out earlier, Bloch (2000, p. 20) has criticized Egyptian architecture for its emphasis on rigour, geometry and the inorganic – for being “the absolute spirit of stone”. Needless to say that, of course, Gothic architecture also had to take recourse to the inorganic material stone. Nevertheless, Bloch has argued that Gothic architecture is organic in spirit. According to him, the organicity of Gothic architecture has been achieved by its profusion of ornaments. Many of these ornaments depict “plants, animals, even monsters” (Bloch, 1986, p. 724). They are “not pressed, not stylized as reliefs” (ibid) but three-dimensional. Because of its profusion of three-dimensional ornaments representing plants and animals, Bloch has compared “the outside and inside of the Gothic cathedral” to “a forest” (ibid). The view of Gothic architecture as organic can be traced back to the work of the Victorian man of letters John Ruskin. In *The Stones of Venice* (1851), Ruskin contrasts Gothic architecture to Romanesque architecture, arguing that the representation of foliage in Romanesque architecture is rarer than in Gothic architecture. Besides, the Romanesque builders did not strive to represent leaves and buds in a naturalistic or lifelike manner but only as abstract ornaments – identical, regular but lifeless. By contrast, the Gothic builders aimed at a naturalistic or lifelike representation of leaves and buds, that is, they sought to recreate the “vitality” of their subject matter, for example foliage (Ruskin, 1851, p. 6).

In general, Ruskin (pp. 1, 2) has argued that Gothic architecture instinctively expresses “certain mental tendencies of the builders”, which make up “the soul of Gothic”. Ruskin has famously claimed that the medieval workmen who were engaged in the building of Gothic churches and cathedrals had a considerable amount of artistic freedom which enabled them to derive joy and satisfaction from their work. Ruskin has thus promoted the argument that medieval workmen, unlike modern workers, were not alienated from their work. It should be

pointed out that Ruskin's interpretation of the working conditions of medieval workmen was influenced by nineteenth-century Medievalism, i.e. a Romantic perception of the Middle Ages. Victorian Medievalism cast a nostalgic glance back to an idealized image of life in medieval society (agrarian and united in faith by an undivided church). Ruskin (as well as A.W.N. Pugin) has been called a "myth-maker" who reimagined the Middle Ages and its Gothic architecture as "an ideological, spiritual and temporal other to a debased modern present" (Reeve, 2012, p. 235). Thus, "Gothic" emerged as a distinct "discourse of modernity about its own prehistory" (Reeve, 2012, p. 244) in Victorian England. Moreover, it became a "repository of whatever is felt to have been lost in the advance of civilization and Enlightenment" (Fletcher, *ibid*). Ruskin's (and Pugin's) Romantic interpretation of Gothic architecture exerted a strong influence on nineteenth-century architecture and intellectual life. It is certain that Bloch was familiar with Ruskin's view of Gothic architecture as organic (see Bloch, 2000, p. 13).

Gothic architecture and music

Bloch has associated Gothic architecture with the organic and with music, as the following quotation shows: It "breathe[s] with its head in the wild, cloudy atmosphere of this organicity, so filled with flutterings, musical intimations, infinities" (Bloch, 2000, p. 23). Bloch has claimed that human beings are primarily motivated and shaped by utopian desire and by the hope for its fulfilment. Similarly, he has argued that every great work of art expresses utopian desire and provides a glimpse of its possible fulfilment. Bloch (2000, p. 25) has claimed that "Gothic art (and everything remotely connected with it) makes an exodus expressive within external material, as otherwise only music can". According to him, music is the most utopian among all the arts. Considering classical music, he has distinguished between, on the one hand, medieval and Baroque (spiritual) music and, on the other hand, modern (secular) music, for example by Beethoven and Bizet. As Bloch has pointed out, during the medieval period, music, mostly in the form of singing, was a part of the church service (with the exception of folk music). The primary purpose of singing in church was to praise God. At the same time, the act of singing together as a congregation created a strong spiritual bond and forged a sense of community. Since the medieval period, religion has gradually lost its importance. Parallel to the rise of science and positivism, belief in the invisible and the infinite has decreased.

According to Bloch (2000, p. 159), humankind has lost the ability to perceive the invisible and the infinite: “[T]hrough the sensory, rebellious, intrusive opening of our eyes, the extrasensory world increasingly receded and finally disappeared completely”. While “our sensory organs soon developed more acutely, the visible world grew densely, oppressively, conclusively real, and the now invisible extrasensory world declined into a belief, into a mere concept” (ibid). Thus, positivism has come to reign supreme in a world of objects. Modern man has become blind to anything but the visible. However, according to Bloch, modern man has been compensated for the loss of his ability to perceive the invisible with music – the music of Beethoven, for example.

[T]he new [modern] man has been granted, instead of the old realm of images, instead of the old, homeless exuberance, the consolation of music. This is why the great composers became significant in such measure as the rootedness as well as the other secure, spiritual ties of myth loosened (Bloch, 2000, p. 160).

The modern world is a disenchanted world devoid of spirituality (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 12). In the modern world, only art (especially music) brings spirituality to the fore. According to Bloch (2000, p. 192), music “has our spiritual existence as its goal, and wants to deliver to it the word (that word whispered into our ear every night; it always seems to be the same, and yet we can never understand it)”.

Utopia is “unsayable”: Symbols, myths and fairytales

As the passage quoted above indicates, utopia is inexpressible. Neither music (although it comes closest) nor language can adequately express the content of utopia. Language is limited and deceptive. No single word can designate utopia. In a formulation reminiscent of his friend Walter Benjamin, Bloch (2000, p. 193) has stated: “The simplest word is already much too much for it, the most sublime word too little again”. Similarly, symbols cannot adequately convey the content of utopia. They only “more or less circle [...] the one primordial word” (Bloch, 2000, p. 194). Myths and fairytales can also serve to circumscribe the meaning of utopia. For example, Bloch has taken recourse to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice to approximately describe utopian longing and fulfilment. According to him, humankind resembles Orpheus who has lost Eurydice and cannot get her back: “[W]hat the darkness of

night chases before itself like Orpheus chased the shades is born purely of the soul and has nothing but this inmost Eurydice as its goal” (Bloch, 2000, p. 160). Similarly, Bloch (2000, p. 193) has employed a particular kind of fairytale to convey a glimpse of the nature of utopia:

“[I]n this direction lies the unsayable, what the boy left lying there as he came out of the mountain, ‘Don’t forget the best thing of all!’ the old man had told him, but no one could ever have come across something so inconspicuous, deeply hidden”.

This kind of admonition can be found in several of the Brothers Grimm’s tales, such as “The White Bride and the Black Bride”. As Nietzsche (2005, p. 205) has remarked in *Twilight of the Idols*, “[t]he things we have words for are also the things we have already left behind”. Bloch (1986, p. 745) has claimed that Gothic architecture is a symbol of utopia which represents an “anticipation of a space adequate to man”. But, as has been pointed out above, because symbols cannot adequately convey the content of utopia, Bloch (2000, p. 26) has had to concede that the Gothic cathedral falls short of anticipating this space: “Certainly much is disproportionate about these cathedrals, these domed structures in human form, but it is the disproportion between our heart and our world”.

The modern world and Gothic architecture as its “organic-spiritual transcendence”

Bloch has argued that the realization of utopia is difficult because we do not exactly know what we utopianly desire and because the world in which we live is made up of utopian *and* anti-utopian forces. Human history has been driven by the interplay of these two antagonistic forces, which Bloch (2000, p. 171) has termed “the Yes” and “the No”. He has also referred to the interplay of utopian and anti-utopian forces as “the pitiless old conflict of Prometheus, of Christ, with the upholder of this world” (Bloch, 2000, p. 225). The phrase “the upholder of this world” can be interpreted as a reference to the combination of forces which work against the realization of utopia and instead seek to protect and perpetuate the *status quo*. In the modern world, these forces are capitalism, positivism and nihilism. Bloch (2000, p. 171) has referred to modern nihilism as “the devil of the cold [...], who desires precisely that one not believe in him, nor see his cloven hoof, and who can best rule undisturbed as pure nothingness, as complete demystification, barring the mystery from us”. In general, Bloch (2000, p. 169) has criticized modern society as “evil, hard, narrow [and] frigidly faithless”.

Whereas he has equated the modern world with faithlessness and coldness, he has identified Gothic architecture with warmth and faith (through the metaphor of light): “Here dominates that beautiful *warmth* where the living soul does not suffocate and the light radiates from the flower” (Bloch, 2000, pp. 25, 26). The “flower” possibly alludes to the rose windows of the cathedrals. The rose symbolizes love and sensual pleasure but also, because it has thorns, pain and suffering. As has been mentioned earlier, Bloch has argued that Gothic architecture, unlike Greek architecture, acknowledges the dark aspects of human life (pain and suffering). This is aptly symbolized by the rose (and thorn). The “flower” mentioned in the passage quoted above could also be a white lily, i.e. an allusion to the Virgin Mary. Bloch has emphasized the importance of spirituality for humankind in the modern world, which is dominated by materialism. The reason why he has emphasized spirituality is his insight into the plight of modern man, that is, his loss of spirituality, which at the same time denotes his lack of equilibrium and wholeness. However, it must be pointed out that Bloch, by emphasizing the importance of spirituality for modern man, did not mean to devalue the earthly and the bodily. It must be noted that Bloch has also emphasized the importance of sensuality and of the erotic, which have become increasingly overshadowed and suppressed in the advance of civilization. Thus, Bloch has argued that the Faustian (the human desire for knowledge) should not be considered superior to the erotic. On the contrary, he has claimed that “the Faustian, which as something purely masculine one has always tried to set above eros, is after all [...] surely allocated and subordinated to the erotic” (Bloch, 2000, p. 210). According to Bloch (2000, p. 25), spirituality encompasses not only the human soul but also the human body. His view of spirituality is aptly illustrated by his description of Gothic architecture (or, to be more precise, the Gothic line) as “organic-spiritual transcendence” (25). The combination of the adjectives “organic” and “spiritual” implies that they do not exclude each other but constitute a harmonious entity. The noun “transcendence” points to the utopian horizon, that is, to the possible fulfilment of utopia. The term implies that human beings can change the world. This possibility is also implied by Bloch’s claim that Gothic architecture symbolizes a “transcendently overarching reality” (Bloch, 2000, p. 169).

Like Marx, Bloch believed that human beings can change the world. He adopted the Marxist term “the realm of freedom” to denote an important aspect of utopia: freedom achieved through the abolition of oppression, exploitation and alienation. He also frequently used the

term “home” as a near-synonym for utopia. As mentioned earlier, because ancient Greece and Egypt were slave-owning societies, Bloch has regarded them as inadequate for humankind; he has associated Egyptian architecture with death, Greek architecture with homelessness. By contrast, Bloch has considered Gothic architecture as attempting to create an adequate environment for humankind, a world in which one could say: “nowhere are we disavowed” (Bloch, 2000, p. 26). Bloch (2000, p. 197) has also used the term “dark, deep Gothic *sanctum*” to approximately designate the content of utopia. This term can be interpreted as implying that utopia is potentially in us. According to Bloch, utopia has an external and an internal dimension. In order to realize utopia, we must change the world and ourselves. Bloch has claimed that what mainly stands in the way of our grasping the content of utopia and its fulfilment is the fact that we cannot experience the present. Bloch (2000, p. 199) has called this predicament “the darkness of the lived moment”. The present moment, that is, the just lived moment, always eludes us. Likewise, the meaning of utopia and its realization always elude us. But this does not mean that we should refrain from striving toward it. According to Bloch, utopia is neither a place which is somewhere else nor a condition which is eternally postponed to the future; on the contrary, utopia is a matter of the here and now and, most importantly, a matter of human consciousness:

[T]he final, true, unknown, superdivine God, the disclosure of us all, already ‘lives’ now, too, although he has not been ‘crowned’ or ‘objectivated’; he ‘weeps’, as certain rabbis said of the Messiah, at the question, what is he doing, since he cannot ‘appear’ and redeem us; he ‘acts’ in the deepest part of all of us as the ‘I am that I shall be’” (Bloch, 2000, p. 21).

Thomas Hardy: Poet, novelist and architect

As is well known, Thomas Hardy was a Victorian poet and novelist. What is less well known is the fact that the young Hardy was an apprentice to an architect and engaged in construction work and the restoration of churches until he decided to earn his living as a writer at the age of 32 (Harvey, 2003, p. 21). In many of his literary works, architecture plays a significant role. In his last novel *Jude the Obscure* (1895), Hardy predominantly focuses on Gothic architecture. Its male protagonist Jude Fawley is a Gothic stone mason. The novel also contains literary Gothic elements in the vein of 18th-century Gothic authors such as Horace

Walpole, Mary Shelley and Anne Radcliffe: For example, “Sue is suspected of being ‘a sort of fay, or sprite’” and Jude is depicted as “the victim of a family curse” (Hervoche-Bertho, 2001, p. 261). However, this article does not focus on this kind of literary Gothic but on the representation of Gothic architecture. Throughout the novel, Gothic architecture is predominantly (although not exclusively) represented through the eyes of Jude. It soon becomes evident that Jude’s view of Gothic architecture and its associations with the Christian religion and church is ambivalent. Hardy’s attitude toward Gothic architecture and its associations with the Christian religion and church was also ambivalent: Critics such as Rimondo and Chapman pointed out that “[a]rchitecture [in Hardy’s work] is [...] the filter through which moral issues are explored and questioned, but Hardy’s attitude towards moral values embodied in human artefacts was by no means fixed” (Rimondo, 2017, p. 40) and that “Hardy’s attitude to the Christian faith, and to the Church of England as a valuable national institution which principally represented it in the England of his time, was ambivalent” (Chapman, 1987, p. 275). It is important to note that Gothic architecture in *Jude* is not only associated with the Christian religion and church, but also with higher learning, an unjust social order, spirituality, beauty and love. The ambivalence of Hardy’s representation of architecture in *Jude* has been interpreted as a response to late nineteenth-century debates about architecture. These debates were by no means limited to architecture but were part of an ideological discourse concerning the significance of the past for the present and the future.

Christminster as a major symbol of Jude’s utopian desire

Gothic architecture in Hardy’s last novel is primarily discussed through its protagonist, the stone mason Jude Fawley. It is to a lesser extent also discussed through the character of Sue Bridehead, who detests Gothic architecture and everything associated with it. Significantly, she does not identify with modernity either. Instead, she sympathizes with paganism, i.e. ancient classical culture. By contrast, Jude feels attracted by Gothic architecture and its associations: He likes his work as a Gothic stone mason restoring country churches and cathedrals. He even likes to sit in a church or cathedral in his free time and sings in a church choir for recreation. He likes spiritual music and the artistic aspect of his work. Nevertheless, he considers his work as a Gothic stone mason as only a temporary means to earn a living while he is preparing himself for the entrance exam to the university. To be a student at one of

the colleges of Christminster has been his major goal in life from childhood. As a boy, Jude lives in a small village with his elderly spinster aunt. He is an orphan and belongs to the lower classes. When the teacher of the village school leaves for Christminster to enter the university, Jude's imagination becomes kindled by the idea to emulate the village teacher one day.

Jude has never been to Christminster, and the city is not visible from the village in which he lives. However, one day he ascends a hill to catch a sight of Christminster. Significantly, Jude does not really "see" Christminster. It is more like a vision: "No individual light was visible, only a halo or glow-fog over-arching the place against the black heavens behind it" (Hardy, 2002, p. 17). Similarly, the city seen from a distance is referred to as "the light in the sky – hardly perceptible to their older eyes" [elderly working-class people whom Jude meets just outside his village] (18) and as "distant halo" (19). This first "view" of the city leaves a powerful impression on Jude: Christminster is idealized by him as "a city of light" where "the tree of knowledge grows" (20). From now on, Christminster is the guiding star in his life. It should be noted that before Jude meets Sue in Christminster for the first time, he sees a photograph of her, on which her face looks as if it is surrounded by "the rays of a halo" (72). In addition to having a vision of the city under a halo, the boy Jude receives a "message" from the wind blowing from Christminster toward him: "Suddenly there came along this wind something towards him; a message from the place – from some soul residing there, it seemed" (17). Moreover, the wind carries with it "the sound of bells, the voice of the city; faint and musical, calling to him, 'We are happy here.'" (17). After Jude has "seen" Christminster and received the "message" of the wind coming from it, his thoughts and actions mainly revolve around his plan of becoming a student in "the city of light", where "the tree of knowledge grows". The narrator emphasizes the disproportion between Jude's social status and his aspiration: "[H]is dreams were as gigantic as his surroundings were small" (16). But the narrator also draws attention to the boy's painful need of "something to anchor on, to cling to; for some place which he could call admirable" (19). In an earlier version of the novel, Hardy had used the word "home" (implying Sue) instead of "admirable". Because his aunt does not show any love toward the boy and because he does not feel at home at her place, Jude's heart had been "yearning" (19) for such a place as Christminster. When Jude eventually moves to Christminster after having dreamed about it for several years, he first sees his "city of light" from a close distance at sunset:

He now paused at the top of a crooked and gentle declivity, and obtained his first near view of the city. Grey stoned and dun-roofed [...] The buildings now lay quiet in the sunset, a vane here and there on their many spires and domes giving sparkle to a picture of sober secondary and tertiary hues (72).

Jude sees the silhouette of the city against a sky coloured by the setting sun. This scene is reminiscent of medieval and Renaissance paintings of the Heavenly Jerusalem represented by “remotest pinnacles” (Bloch, 1986, p. 713) on the horizon. On his first day (evening) in Christminster, Jude strolls through its streets for several hours in an elated mood. Then he finds lodgings and goes to bed. Reading a book about the famous sons of the city before he falls asleep, he “hears” one of their voices apostrophizing Christminster as follows: “Beautiful city! So venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century, so serene! ... Her ineffable charm keeps ever calling us to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection.” (75) This passage aptly encapsulates what Christminster means to Jude and, at the same time, how vague Jude’s dream is. However, according to Bloch (2000, p. 191), utopian desire is necessarily vague: It is an aspiration, an intuition and a hoping - a “waking dream’ of some demystification, some nameless, uniquely right fulfilment”. The narrator never points out what exactly Christminster represents to Jude. Therefore, questions such as the following abound in the reader’s mind: What exactly is Jude’s “waking dream”? Is it a desire for learning or for social mobility and financial security? Is it a desire for spirituality or for love? Besides, the narrator never points out whether Jude’s aspiration is to be viewed as positive or negative: Does his utopian desire turn him into the person he was always meant to be? Or, by contrast, does his dream ultimately destroy him? One thing is certain: Jude cannot realize his dream of being a university student. Likewise, his dream of love never comes to fruition: It is not clear whether Sue really loves him; what is more, toward the end of the novel, she leaves him. This ambivalence surrounding Jude’s aspiration as embodied by Christminster is aptly reflected in Jude’s perception of the city, that is, of its Gothic architecture.

As has been mentioned earlier, on his first evening in Christminster, Jude strolls through its dark streets. While he walks through the city, Jude consciously absorbs everything which is in accordance with his preconceived idea of Christminster, the “ecclesiastical romance in stone”

(28). However, unconsciously he also absorbs the aspects of the city and its Gothic architecture which appear disturbing and sinister to him. Sauntering through “obscure alleys”, Jude notices a college with “porticoes, oriels, doorways of enriched and florid middle-age design” (73). It is important to note that the beauty of the Gothic ornaments which Jude perceives is called into question by the second part of the above-quoted sentence: “their extinct air being accentuated by the rottenness of the stones” (73). The college building is further referred to as “decrepit” and “superseded” (73). Jude’s ambivalent perception of Gothic architecture reflects the ambivalence surrounding his aspiration. This ambivalence regarding Gothic architecture surfaces repeatedly in the text. On the next morning, the colleges Jude has seen the night before look even less unambiguously beautiful to him: they “had put on the look of family vaults; something barbaric loomed in the masonries” (78). According to Bloch (2000, p. 193), the content of utopia is not only “unsayable” but also “uncanny”: One can suddenly feel frightened by something unfamiliar, but also by something familiar, for example an aspiration which has been the guiding star in one’s life for a long time. The ambivalence which surrounds utopia and Jude’s perception of Christminster’s Gothic architecture point toward the difficulty of interpreting one’s feelings and desires: Is Jude’s dream a benevolent guiding star in his life or a malicious mirage? Is Christminster a “city of light”, where “the tree of knowledge grows” or is it a city of darkness, where dreams are destroyed and life is stifled?

Modernity vs. Medievalism

D. H. Lawrence (1914, Chapter IX) has criticized Jude’s aspiration as “academic mechanism”. According to Lawrence (ibid), Jude becomes obsessed by this “academic mechanism” because he craves “to have nothing to do with his own life” and because he “want[s] to deny, or escape the responsibility and trouble of living as a complete person, a full individual”. The attitude of the narrator in the novel toward Jude’s aspiration is ambivalent: It is not clear whether the narrator is supportive or critical of it. For example, the following comment by the narrator displays a critical attitude toward Jude’s perception of Christminster:

He did not at the time see that medievalism was as dead as a fern-leaf in a lump of coal; that other developments were shaping the world around him in which Gothic

architecture and its associations had no place. The deadly animosity of contemporary logic and vision towards so much of what he held in reverence was not yet revealed to him. (79)

The passage quoted above implies that Jude is enthralled by something that is irrelevant for the present and the future. It implies that Jude is not aware of the dominant historical forces which are shaping the future. He has not come to realize that the tide of time has turned against him. Ironically, it does not matter whether he works as a Gothic stone mason for the rest of his life or whether he will succeed at becoming a university graduate. It can be argued that the narrator's comment quoted above constitutes a critique of Jude's idealistic, Romantic perception of the world. In this quotation, the narrator voices his conviction that Gothic architecture and its associations (i.e. medievalism) have become obsolete and driven to the verge of extinction. However, it can be argued that the "fern-leaf in a lump of coal" is not extinct, i.e. dead, but in fact preserved like a fossil. Thus, the fern-leaf (Gothic architecture and its associations) can be rediscovered by future generations. Although the narrator seeks to create the impression that he is simply stating a historical fact, there is nevertheless a sense of sadness and regret detectable, as O'Malley (2000, p. 655) has pointed out: "There is a wistfulness to the narrative voice here, a sense that medievalism offered a sort of beauty, of vitality that is absent from a coldly calculating modernity". Thus, the "fern-leaf" passage quoted above is suffused with nostalgia for a lost past (the Middle Ages) and contains a critique of the present (industrialized late-nineteenth-century England). It can further be argued that the fern-leaf serves as a foil to the present. In order to evaluate the present we must have knowledge about the past. Hardy's comparison between Gothic architecture (the fern-leaf) and industrialized 19th-century England (the lump of coal) shows an affinity with Bloch's (and Ruskin's) concept of Gothic architecture as organic and life-affirming. It is furthermore in accord with Bloch's claim that the past is full of future.

Hardy's novel contains another passage which calls attention to the alleged fact that Gothic architecture and its associations have become obsolete and extinct in the modern world. When Jude suggests to Sue to enter the cathedral to talk, she replies as follows: "'Cathedral? Yes. Though I think I'd rather sit in the railway station... That's the centre of the town life now, the Cathedral has had its day!'" (128). According to Sue, cathedrals belong to the past; the

modern world is not symbolized by the cathedral but by the railway station. Railway stations can be associated with ugliness and restlessness, with constantly being on the move instead of being at one's home. Bloch has also used the railway station as a symbol of modernity. According to him, modern life is characterized by its "railway-station nature' [*Bahnhofshaftigkeit*]" (Löwy, 1997, p. 287). Bloch (ibid) has associated this "railway station nature of our modern life" with "the ugly, naked, and uncaring face of late capitalism" which he experienced at first hand during his childhood in the industrial city of Ludwigshafen. By contrast, Bloch (ibid) loved to visit the neighbouring city of Mannheim - "the old city on the other side of the Rhine" which was, according to him, full of "shining medieval history". Similarly, Jude is enchanted by Melchester (Hardy's equivalent of Salisbury, city of the famous Salisbury Cathedral), which he perceives as "quiet and soothing place, almost entirely ecclesiastical in its tone" (124). Jude wilfully associates Melchester with "the altruistic feeling that he did possess" (ibid) and hopes that this "would perhaps be more highly estimated than a brilliancy which he did not [possess]" (ibid). Jude yearns for a quiet and soothing place, where he will be accepted on account of what he can give his fellow human beings and not on account of his intellectual capacities or other worldly achievements. As has been pointed out above, Bloch and Hardy have used the symbol of the railway station to characterize modernity as inducing restlessness. The following quotation from *Jude* also touches upon this aspect of modernity:

For a moment there fell on Jude a true illumination; that here in the stone yard was a centre of effort as worthy as that dignified by the name of scholarly study within the noblest of the colleges. But he lost it... This was his form of the modern vice of unrest.
(79)

The quotation above evokes a reflection upon the contrast between the past and the present, that is, the medieval period (as seen through the lens of Victorian Medievalism) and modernity. It invokes nostalgia for the stable social structure of the medieval period, which (according to Victorian Medievalism) assigned everybody a fixed and at the same time dignified place and identity in the social order. The sentiment described in the quotation above is medieval in the sense that Jude genuinely feels that he is where he belongs and that his work as a Gothic stone mason is as meaningful and dignified as scholarly study. But his epiphany is ephemeral, as it must be because nobody can escape the pressure and influence of

the dominant ideology of their society. It is worth noting that Bloch has considered the work of the medieval artisan as valuable and dignified as the work of the artist. He has called attention to the extinction of the hand-made artefact in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution. According to him, what makes the hand-made artefact valuable is the fact that it is not being alienated and alienating. He has claimed that the hand-made artefact gives satisfaction and pleasure to both the artisan and to the people who use it. According to Bloch (2000, p. 9), both the creation and the use of hand-made artefacts are not “mimetic” but “empathetic”: By creating and using a hand-made artefact human beings become “richer, more present, cultivated further toward themselves by the artefact that participates in [them]” (ibid). As pointed out earlier, Bloch has argued that the artisan’s hand-crafted artefact is akin to the artist’s work: Both true works of art and hand-crafted artefacts provide us with a glimpse into “a long, sunlit corridor with a door at the far end” (ibid). According to Bloch (2000, p. 5, p. 218), the work of both artists and artisans contributes to our potential “self-encounter” and “self-invention”.

Hopes carved in stone: Jude as modern, primitive and Gothic man

Apart from Christminster, another powerful symbol of Jude’s aspiration is the arrow which he has carved into a stone on the road from his native village to Christminster: “the milestone... whereon he had carved his hopes” (117). On the arrow, Jude has carved the word “thither”. Jude aspires to higher education and expresses this aspiration by taking recourse to what is perhaps the oldest of all art forms: carving. It could thus be argued that Jude represents both “uprooted modern man, ill at ease in his native environment, and stubbornly resistant to it” (Davidow, 1974, p. 28) and primitive man, instinctual, sensual and superstitious. Stone has been considered as “a sacred symbol” (Jaffé, 1964, p. 232). Bloch (2000, p. 17) has associated (wood) carving with primitive man and Gothic man. According to Bloch, both wood carving and Gothic architecture have an outward and an inward dimension: They are “outward ornament” and “metapsychological ornament” (ibid). Bloch has further associated wood carving (like Gothic architecture) with the spirit of life. According to Bloch (2000, p. 23), wood contains “this vital trace [which] already bends upward towards us from that place where no one yet is [utopia]”. The utopian force is expressed “in the veining of wood” (ibid). Bloch (ibid) has furthermore referred to the practice of primitive man to carve wooden masks,

which is, according to him, an expression of “[t]heir magical volition, their need to transform themselves”. Bloch (ibid) has drawn another parallel between primitive man and Gothic man by claiming that the primitive mask “bears the likeness of our remote countenance [in the same way in which Christ bears the likeness of our remote countenance]”. What primitive man and Gothic man have in common is the striving for self-revelation. In modern man, this striving has been suppressed and superseded by a dominant ideology which primarily values material possessions, scientific knowledge and worldly power.

At the end of Hardy’s novel, the arrow which Jude had carved onto the milestone on the road from his native village to Christminster has almost entirely been grown over with moss, perhaps a reminder of the fact that despite modern man’s alleged dominance over nature, he is nevertheless a part of nature and dependent on her. The fact that the arrow has become covered by moss also symbolizes Jude’s failure to realize his dream. However, it is not really *his* failure. It is the result of overpowering historical and economic forces and of contradictory forces in human nature: the mind and the body or the intellectual and the sensual. Jude is associated with both: He is characterized as having intellectual and sensual inclinations. He feels both attracted to intellectual Sue and to sensual Arabella. Sue is described as an unearthly being – as an angel and a wraith. She feels repelled by the sexual relations between men and women. By contrast, Arabella is described as earthly woman. Throughout the novel, she is associated with pigs. Animals symbolize the instinctual nature of humankind. According to Jung, modern man cannot reconcile his rationality (the Conscious) and his instincts (the Unconscious). He has argued that modern man must learn to reconcile his rationality and his instincts in order to live a full life. As is well known, Nietzsche has attacked the Christian religion for having taught its disciples to despise sensuality and the body. Besides, he was critical of the Christian religion because its morality is mainly based on the concepts of sin, guilt and punishment. Hardy’s novel draws attention to how modern man has not been able to free himself from the influence of these Christian notions: When Jude spends one night with Arabella, although he already lives with Sue, he later feels “ashamed of his earthliness” (180).

Throughout the novel, Jude is frequently associated with the Christian religion and even with Jesus Christ. Jaffé (1964, p. 238) has called attention to the fact that, although the Christian

church has promoted the devaluation of the animal nature of humankind (of the body and its instincts), there is a strong symbolic link between Christianity, Jesus Christ and animals:

Even in Christianity, animal symbolism plays a surprisingly great part. Three of the Evangelists have animal emblems: St. Luke has the ox, St. Mark the Lion, and St. John the eagle. Only one, St. Matthew, is represented as a man or as an angel. Christ himself symbolically appears as the Lamb of God or the Fish, but he is also the serpent exalted on the cross, the lion, and in rarer cases the unicorn. These animal attributes of Christ indicate that even the Son of God (the supreme personification of man) can no more dispense with his animal nature than with his higher, spiritual nature. The subhuman as well as the superhuman is felt to belong to the realm of the divine; the relationship of these two aspects of man is beautifully symbolized in the Christmas picture of the birth of Christ, in a stable among animals.

Toward the end of *Jude*, there is a scene which is reminiscent of the circumstances preceding the birth of Jesus Christ: When Jude, the pregnant Sue and their children move to Christminster, they cannot find any lodgings. Nobody in Christminster is willing to receive these poor strangers. Eventually, Jude finds a temporary refuge for Sue and the children. When Sue looks out of the window, she sees “the outer walls of Sarcophagus College – silent, black and windowless – [which] threw their four centuries of gloom, bigotry, and decay into the little room she occupied, shutting out the moonlight by night and the sun by day.” (322) The college which is described in the passage quoted above resembles a gigantic coffin which shuts out the light from the houses of ordinary poor people like Sue and Jude. “[A]s a Christian allegory, *Jude* is a terrible indictment of Christianity and, particularly, Christianity as manifested in Victorian society.” (Holland, 1954, p. 57). Similar to Hardy, Bloch has condemned modern Western capitalist society as “increasingly unpitying and ungenue, so that Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost seem like one long Good Friday, like merely the insubstantial knowledge that the Redeemer has died, but as if he had been murdered in the crib” (Bloch, 2000, p. 168).

Conclusion

This article has sought to demonstrate that Gothic architecture and its associations are highly significant in the major philosophical works of Ernst Bloch and in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. Both Bloch and Hardy have used Gothic architecture as a powerful utopian symbol. Bloch's notion of Gothic architecture is more positive than Hardy's. Bloch has associated Gothic architecture with life, with light, with the body and resurrection of Jesus Christ and with the Heavenly Jerusalem built from living stones. Hardy's representation of Gothic literature in *Jude* is more ambivalent than Bloch's: In Hardy's novel, Gothic architecture is associated with life (symbolized by the fern-leaf in the lump of coal), with Jesus Christ (in the figure of Jude), with the Heavenly Jerusalem and with light (symbolized by Christminster and the halo above it). However, Gothic architecture in Hardy's novel is also associated with death and decay. Bloch's and Hardy's interest in Gothic architecture links them to Medievalism, i.e. nostalgia for the medieval period and its allegedly fixed, clear-cut and harmonious social class hierarchy and its undoubted, undivided Christian faith. Again, Hardy's attitude towards Medievalism (and, more generally, the relationship between the past, the present and the future) is more ambivalent than Bloch's. In *Jude* the medieval period as represented by Gothic architecture is repeatedly depicted as obsolete and dead. By contrast, Bloch has claimed that the past is never dead. However, there is a striking correspondence between Bloch's claim that the past can never die and the symbol of the fern-leaf in the lump of coal in Hardy's novel, because the lump of coal can be interpreted as preserving the fern-leaf. This can be seen as corresponding to Bloch's claim that the past is full of future. A similar correspondence between Bloch's and Hardy's thought can be detected in their evaluation of modernity. Both writers have used the railway station as a symbol of modernity, thus drawing attention to the negative consequences of modern progress for human life, namely restlessness and homelessness. Both writers have used Gothic architecture to contrast and counterbalance the negative characteristics of modernity, such as restlessness and homelessness and, in addition to these, lack of spirituality and repression of sensuality. Gothic architecture in the major philosophical works of Bloch and in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* is associated with spirituality and utopian desire. According to both Bloch and Hardy, spirituality does not preclude sensuality and erotic fulfilment: Jude is associated with sensuality and spirituality. Similarly, Bloch has drawn attention to the human need for

spiritual and sensual fulfilment. Although Bloch's treatment of Gothic architecture as a utopian symbol is less equivocal than Hardy's, it is not completely unequivocal either: According to Bloch, the Gothic cathedral is a powerful utopian symbol, but it nevertheless falls short of adequately representing utopia because of "the disproportion between our heart and the world" (Bloch 2000, p. 26). *Jude* can be considered as an apt illustration of Bloch's remark: Jude dies at the end of the novel because of "the disproportion between [his] heart and the world".

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