

Modernist Lionhunting: An Exploration of Patronage in the Cultural Imaginary

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Abstract: This article aims to discuss modernist literary patronage in order to comment on the myths of modernism in a twofold manner. Firstly, the form patrons take in the cultural imaginary of modernist writers directly influences the final versions of their works. Thinly veiled versions of patrons appear time and again in various modernist novels, contributing to the way patrons are perceived in real-life as well as in academic discourse. By being reduced to lionhunters or two-dimensional characters in romans à clef, patrons are mythologised, which allows writers to navigate the difficult power dynamics and expectations of literary patronage more easily. Secondly, studying the way patrons are written and talked about allows us to critically engage another, bigger myth of modernism: that of the author and their creative dominance. By looking at Lady Ottoline Morrell, a modernist patron, and her beneficiaries, D. H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley among others, this paper provides a novel perspective on modernist works and their conception.

Keywords: patronage, modernism, D. H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, roman à clef

With its zenith long gone by the early twentieth century, cultural patronage finds itself challenged, criticised and on the verge of becoming obsolete. Post-romantic patrons who operate by means of providing both material support (finances and gifts) and immaterial support (lodging, networking, advice, and work offers) to the artists they support, are forced to largely abandon their attempts to exercise power over the artwork directly. This exercise of power, common during the Renaissance, which resulted in (c)overt depictions of patrons or manipulation of the product, is being left behind in an effort to provide the artists with considerable creative freedom.¹ Despite all, patrons find themselves still depicted by their beneficiaries, though rarely out of gratitude. One such case is Lady Ottoline Morrell, a British modernist patron, known

1 Shift caused by the Romantic influence on the idea of artistic genius (van den Braber 2021, 31).

to many readers due to being bitterly immortalised as Hermione Roddice in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*. Drawing on the relationships she had with the writers she supported, both financially and otherwise, this article will briefly explore the popular image of a patron in the minds of cultural producers, its source, manifestations, as well as its consequences. It will specifically address the roman à clef as a genre contributing to the cultural imaginary in question and the use of lionhunting tropology (the largely derogatory term "lionhunter" used to denote patron) as a more specific example of a language shaped by and in turn shaping the general understanding of patrons and their work.

Cultural imaginaries are usually understood as a "contour of collective sensibilities and significations resulting from cultural production" (Lee 1999, 63)—strategies most commonly ascribed to large bodies of people which they use to rationalise their fears, justify certain actions and preserve or solidify their identity (Mathieu and Roy 2017, 1). Their manifestations can, therefore, be found in various national myths, urban legends, and stereotypical assumptions about other (groups of) people. Storytelling has always been used to explain and come to terms with difficult situations, and cultural imaginaries are merely narratives that have become lodged through perpetual repetition in the minds of people to such an extent that they seep into the real world as well.

In this case the group in question shares neither ethnicity, nationality, gender nor sexuality. What unites them is the same subfield of cultural production (as described by Bourdieu 1994) in which they were active. Over her thirty-year career, Lady Morrell was a patron of dozens of writers and artists,² and a friend to many more.³ Although the recipients of her support might comprise a relatively small community, the avant-garde groups they belonged to can be understood as worlds with their own rules and social dynamics and, therefore, capable of producing their own cultural imaginaries. According to Jaffe,

the production of modernist literary culture is less about the production of books (buying or selling literary goods on the open market) than it is about creating an alternative small world. (2010)

2 The non-exhaustive list comprises D. H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, Lytton Strachey, Siegfried Sassoon, T. S. Eliot, Augustus John, Henry Lamb, Dorothy Brett, and Dora Carrington (Seymour 1992).

3 Although their relationships are not exactly those of patronage, it is worth noting her many friends, for the strong mutual influence they had on each other: Bertrand Russell, Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry, and H. H. Asquith (Seymour 1992).

Therefore, instead of being seen merely as acts of writing literature, their works need to be understood as a more direct manifestation of their understanding of the concepts surrounding them.

Especially during modernism, with the emergence of a “reading public” and large publishing houses, many cultural producers were striving to signal their own independence and united in closely-knit groups of like-minded individuals. As Bourdieu states:

Thus it is that the salons, which distinguish themselves more by whom they exclude than by whom they include, help to structure the literary field (as journals and publishers will do in other states of the field) around great fundamental oppositions. (1996, 53-54)

The oppositions, he goes on to explain, can be summarised as those between the avant-garde and the “mainstream” (1996, 48-54). It is not surprising that in their efforts to distance themselves, the groups of the former were governed by strong exclusivity when it came to their members and the works they appreciated. For instance, the members of the Bloomsbury Group, being the most appropriate example in terms of British art and literature of the period, exerted considerable effort to clearly distinguish themselves not only from the generation of their parents, but also from some Edwardians too conservative to unquestioningly adopt their ideas (Joyce 2004, 631-654). One’s relationships with the Group influenced one’s position in the avant-garde world and divided the already small alternative community into the “Bloomberries” and the others. More interestingly, however, a principle of inclusivity governed these relationships as well. Reading the right books, going to the right parties, knowing and even hating the right people might get one closer to their desired position of respect within their social circle – and that is precisely where patrons, mediators between various partially overlapping worlds, need to be considered.

The reasons why exploring a cultural imaginary is a valid perspective to take in studying patronage can be seen in some of the principles formulated by Helleke van den Braber:

[P]atronage is a game of give and take, and subject to its own rituals, norms, ideals, taboos, sensitivities, conventions, and transgressions

[...] studying patronage means researching the patron, the artist, the role of the artwork, and how they exist in relation to one another [...] we should research how the giver and the recipient manage to make their anxieties productive. (2021, 42)

While the first point relates to the previously mentioned argument, which explains applying cultural imaginary to a small community, the second and third justify this approach in terms of patronage as well as literary studies (or art history).

When it comes to the manifestations of cultural imaginary in question, “[i]maginaries can be visualized but they can also be formulated in written and spoken texts, as well as performatively embodied in actions and social relationships” (Kølvraa and Forchtner 2019). Since the support of a patron is often not admitted openly by the recipient and is only known within the small avant-garde circles the way this practice is depicted in literature is often the only source of information available to the general public – if adopted uncritically, it quickly infests this public with the same sort of disdain that the authors may hold for their benefactors as well. There are, therefore, two phenomena which will be analysed: romans à clef, as a means of creating a cultural imaginary, and the notion of lionhunting as a specific manifestation of adopted stereotypes. While the former are direct products of writers associated with a patron, in this case Aldous Huxley’s and D. H. Lawrence’s works featuring Lady Morrell, the latter is more general, escaping creative works and pervading not only letters and journals of the period, but also critical discourse.

The roman à clef, or a novel with a key, is a much-contested⁴ genre which takes its main inspiration from reality and presents accounts of real people or real places set in an otherwise fictional world. The reason why this is not usually considered as a valid genre is that it is a common practice for authors to find inspiration in one’s surroundings. What should differentiate a roman à clef from other novels would be *the key* – the identification of the real-life figures and places written about in the work. This key is, however, rarely included or confirmed – authors can, therefore, claim and renounce the connection to the real world as they see fit (Latham 2009, 133; 144). Often bordering on satire in their goal to ridicule the people presented, romans à clef are not a modernist

4 See Latham (2009), pages 3-20.

novelty. Real people were being mocked and criticised since time immemorial and the roman à clef has emerged as a genre in seventeenth-century France (Rainey 1998, 156) and even after that has, obviously, not entirely died out. The reason why its employment during modernism is so intriguing is not only the frequency with which it appears, but also the irony which stems from the “ground-breakingly original” avant-garde writers employing a form which so heavily relies on real-life inspiration.

Arguably the most famous work which is commonly agreed to feature a depiction inspired by Morrell is D. H. Lawrence’s *Women in Love*. The first major description of a character in the book is devoted precisely to Hermione Roddice, Morrell’s fictional counterpart: “She was impressive, in her lovely pale-yellow and brownish-rose, yet macabre, something repulsive. People were silent when she passed, impressed, roused, wanting to jeer, yet for some reason silenced” (2007, 12). Lawrence’s description is on this occasion quite faithful to the usual mixture of feelings that the presence of Lady Morrell provoked. Having been described as anything, from “baroque” to “gothic” (Darroch 2017, 6), or “haggard old wreck” to “extremely beautiful” (Seymour 1992, 40; 292), the only thing that seems constant is the attention she attracted. More notably, however, Lawrence describes her inner qualities:

And all the while the pensive, tortured woman piled up her own defenses of aesthetic knowledge, and culture, and world-visions, and disinterestedness. Yet she could never stop up the terrible gap of insufficiency. (2007, 14)

The gradually built-up atmosphere of mistrust climaxes when Roddice, a patron preying on Rupert Birkin, the main character and Lawrence persona, reaches the unbearable point in her demands and shows of unhealthy affections – such as touching him against his wishes (2007, 20) or bringing him away from another woman “if only in hate” (2007, 46)⁵ – when she bashes Birkin in the head with a lapis-lazuli paperweight – similar to the opal that Lawrence himself received from Morrell as a gift in real life (Darroch 2017, 261).

5 This happens immediately after a fight in which he revealingly accuses her of being “the real devil which won’t let life exist” (2007, 45) and of having “only [her] will and [her] conceit of consciousness, and [her] lust for power, to know” (2007, 44).

The paperweight episode shows that rather than merely taking inspiration from reality and his prolonged stay with Morrell at her manor, Lawrence uses the work as a way of examining or coming to terms with the position he finds himself in in the world. Quite interestingly, although the paperweight was a gift from Morrell, Louis Menand claims that the episode is based on Lawrence's wife Frieda hitting him over the head with a plate (2007, xii). Considering the difficult relationships he had with both and their aristocratic origins which, despite his background or perhaps precisely because of it, fascinated him to say the least,⁶ it is no wonder that Frieda's and Morrell's images partially overlap in his mind. Unlike in case of strained relationship with Frieda, it is questionable whether Morrell's behaviour justified such treatment. In relation to her, John Maynard Keynes, another mutual acquaintance, even suspected Lawrence of being jealous of Morrell's connection to the Bloomsbury Group (Moore 1982, 279). Once again, the rules of exclusivity were playing their important role in modernist social groups.

Having fought against the burning of Lawrence's paintings (considered lewd at the time) (Moore 1982, 594-597; Seymour 1992, 363), convincing her husband, a member of parliament Philip Morrell, to support the publication of Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (lewd again) (Seymour 1992, 246), and offering indefinite lodging and material support provided in her manor, was apparently not enough to keep Morrell from being depicted in such an unfavourable light. There are several reasons for this, which require a close examination of Morrell's character and reputation, a comprehensive account of which is yet to be written.⁷ The animosity with which she is often described is usually attributed to her eccentric and domineering ways, although that fails to take into consideration the way certain attitudes towards patrons in general are already predetermined due to the existing cultural imaginary, as this article aims to show.

As for *Women in Love*, it is quite interesting that the work's canonical status among the greats of modernism keeps it from being perceived as a roman à

6 "It is rather splendid that you are a great lady. Don't abrogate one jot or tittle of your high birth: it is too valuable in this commercially mean world [...] I really do honour your birth. Let us do justice to its nobility: it is not mere accident. I would have given a great deal to have been an aristocrat" (Lawrence qtd. in Darroch 2017, 205).

7 The current monographs on the subjects mentioned either mostly do not take the patron's contribution into consideration or they do not examine it within a relevant theoretical scope.

clef, a practice which is often viewed as a lesser form of writing (Latham 2009, 127). It seems that just like many other elements of modernism, even belonging to a genre is a matter of reputation. However, it needs to be kept in mind that this might be, to a certain extent, a matter of perspective and subsequent revision of values. Nonetheless, as Menand writes in the introduction to the book: “*Women is Love* is a satire and jeremiad, but it is also gossip, a diary ‘inadvertently’ left open for its subjects to read” (2007, xiii).

That their belonging to roman à clef is just as easily disputed cannot be said about Huxley’s earlier works – *Crome Yellow* (1921), *Those Barren Leaves* (1925), *Point Counter Point* (1928) – which fall into this category more readily and can be identified as such paradoxically because of a similar portrayal of Morrell. Although her role as Mrs Birdlake in *Point Counter Point* is sometimes not recognised as reflecting her, it is very clear in the other two works. *Crome Yellow* depicts a group of young artists staying at Crome, a country house of Priscilla Wimbush – a fictionalised version of Garsington, Morrell’s manor where conscientious objectors and people unfit for service, such as Huxley, spent the Great War (Seymour 1992, 235). Morrell is depicted here in the usual harsh light:

Her voice, her laughter, were deep and masculine. Everything about her was manly. She had a large, square, middle-aged face, with a massive projecting nose and little greenish eyes, the whole surmounted by a lofty and elaborate coiffure of a curiously improbable shade of orange. (2004, 5)

This description is eerily similar to some of the most famous paintings of Morrell – a portrait by Simon Bussy (circa 1920, in Tate) and Augustus John (1919, in National Portrait Gallery). Both accounts seem to reflect the shape she took in the imagination of others, caricatures depicting her as a “grotesque travesty of aristocratic, almost imbecile hauteur” (qtd. in Latham 2009, 131).

Those Barren Leaves works along similar lines with a patron surrounded by a group of artists, except the story takes place in an Italian villa. Again, the Morrell character, Lillian Aldwinkle, is depicted as a slightly decrepit aristocrat seeking to squeeze creative expression out of her artistic guests (1947, 17-18; 172). The extensive description of her at the beginning of the book

again ensures that she can be easily identifiable, be it by her looks⁸ or by her distinct voice.⁹ More revealing, however, is the description of her character:

She understood it all, of course; *she* was entirely qualified to appreciate it in every detail. For the view was now her property. It was therefore the finest in the world; but at the same time, she alone had the right to let you know the fact. (1947, 20)

The aforementioned example is one of many showing the biggest complaint raised against Aldwinkle—that she used her money to establish her desired position among intellectuals and thus gain at least a speck of consecration. As is going to be mentioned further on, such exchanges are a completely natural part of patronage. What it also reveals, however, is the author’s attempt at regulating who gets to profit from the environment—just as Calamy, the writer of the book, exploits the villa and Aldwinkle to write about them, so is Huxley capable of using Morrell and the settings created by her for his own extensive inspiration.

Unlike D. H. Lawrence, who, due to his writing and complicated relationship with his wife Frieda had eventually exhausted the friendship with Morrell (Seymour 1992, 281), Huxley is an example of a writer who had a relatively good relationship with his patron. Besides finding refuge and inspiration at Garsington, he even met his first wife there (Seymour 1992, 204) and rarely took part in the Ottoline-bashing that was often a source of entertainment of many modernists in her social circle.¹⁰ Their only point of friction—the publication of *Crome Yellow*—was largely forgiven by Morrell, since she chose to preserve the friendship and attribute Huxley’s moral downfall to the influence of his wife (Seymour 1992, 204). It is intriguing then that Huxley is willing

8 “Within the cylinder of greenish shadow the pink and flame-coloured lady, whom I afterwards learnt to be Mrs Aldwinkle herself, looked like a Chinese lantern lighted in a conservatory; and when an accidental movement of the young girl’s umbrella allowed the sunlight for a moment to touch her face, one could imagine that the miracle of the raising of Lazarus was being performed before one’s eyes - for the green and corpse-like hue suddenly left the features, the colours of health, a little inflamed by the reflexions from the bathing dress, seemed to rush back. The dead lived” (1947, 84).

9 “‘Calamy,’ it called. ‘Calamy!’ mounting through the syllables of the name from a low to a much higher note, not, however, through any intervals known to music, but in a succession of uncertain and quite unrelated tones. ‘Calamy!’ It was as vague and tuneless as the call of an articulate wind” (1947, 16).

10 Dorothy Brett’s account of one such evening: “We sit drinking tea, tearing O[ttoline] to pieces. We pull her feathers out in handfuls until I stop, aghast, and try to be merciful, saying, ‘we shall leave her just one draggled feather in her tail, the poor plucked hen!’” (Seymour 1992, 210).

to employ the element of a “dark patron” – “the benefactor who does not know his place, who corrupts and threatens the very art he seeks to support” (van den Braber 2021, 40) – just as freely. It also points to how undiscerningly many have adopted the popular stereotype.

The aforementioned novels are merely a few prominent examples of a practice that counts more works depicting Morrell¹¹ and one that is also employed more generally.¹² As was already mentioned, certain personal animosity can and does play a role in the conception of these works – after all, Morrell’s carefully crafted personal image, together with her overbearing personality, contributed to the way others perceived her along extreme lines (Melišová 2020). However, since friends like Huxley are involved as well, one should search for a deeper reason that goes beyond the individual and personal. Although Morrell provides an intriguing inspiration for these characters, they, in fact, embody female patrons in general and, by a connection, patronage in itself. If viewed through the lens of cultural imaginary, the authors’ creative choices can be understood as attempts to deal with the conditions of modernist cultural production. They reduce the complex networks of capitals at one’s disposal, intricate power dynamics, and lack of creative independence (Bourdieu 1994) into one negative agent causing it all: the lionhunter.

Lionhunter (or, less commonly, lionhuntress) is a term used to describe patrons and the mechanism through which they distribute much of their non-material support – the salon. Patrons are thus seen as masters capturing and taming proud lions – various artists and celebrities – who can be paraded and forced to perform whenever it suits the patron to enhance the reputation of their benefactors. Lionhunters can alternatively be described as “a wealthy society hostess[es] who gathered great figures around [them] in a naked bid to display [their] own social power” (Latham 2009, 131). This image is founded on more traditional patrons, such as Mme. Arman de Caillavet, who was famously forcing Anatole France to perform for her guests (Wickes 1977, 105). In reality, however, the pressure on the cultural producers is either more subliminal (caused by feelings of guilt and obligation) or the motivations

11 Identified by Seymour as Gilbert Cannan’s *Pugs and Peacocks* (1921) and *Mendel* (1916), John Cramb’s *Cuthbert Learmont* (1910), Graham Greene’s *It’s a Battlefield* (1934), Constance Malleson’s *The Coming Back* (1933), Osbert Sitwell’s *Triple Fugue* (1924) and Walter Turner’s *Aesthetes* (1927) (1992, 431–432).

12 For example, Smythe Hichens’ *The Green Carnation* (1894), Jean Rhys’ *Quartet* (1928), a number of Evelyn Waugh’s works, James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), as identified by Latham (2009).

of patrons go beyond the matter of reputation, as will be explained later (see also van den Braber 2017). Nonetheless, this image is conveniently adopted by those observing or commenting upon the relationships of post-romantic patronage – the authors, the public, as well as modern scholars.

The lionhunting tropology is so pervasive that it finds its way even into the accounts of those who might be viewed as well-meaning and, unlike Huxley, standing outside of the relations of patronage. For example, David Cecil, back then an Oxford student visiting Garsington, later an author, described Morrell's beneficiaries in the following manner:

The lions were there all right [...] but they were not on show, not caged. Rather I saw them in their natural haunts, relaxed, unobserved, at play; or if they wanted to work, free to go and do so. As for Lady Ottoline, she seemed to be one of them [...] far from being a lion-huntress, she was a lion herself, a creative artist of the private life. In the company of her distinguished friends, she seemed of their spiritual kin, and in force and originality of personality wholly their equal. One looked at her and listened to her and remembered her as much as them. (Cecil 1976, 10)

Quite similarly, Claire Tomalin's sympathetic account of Morrell in Katherine Mansfield's biography fails to understand the baggage this term carries (1987, 51-52).¹³

What remains to be discussed is why this term is so often used by both the patronage beneficiaries and commentators for describing this practice and what exactly it is that makes people denoted by this so problematic in the eyes of creative producers. Latham, one of the few to describe this issue more closely, understands Morrell's depiction in fictional works thus:

Lodged at the interface of art and commerce, the lionhunter has become an abject figure for the social and economic utility of aesthetics – an identification further heightened by a distinctly gendered discourse linking these women [...] either to an archaic

¹³ It should be noted that in his *Augustus John: A Biography* (1976) and *Lytton Strachey: The New Biography* (1994), other rare sympathetic accounts, Michael Holroyd manages to steer clear of this vocabulary.

Victorianism or to a profit-driven modernity. Such abjection, however, makes it difficult to explain why modernist writers themselves so insistently returned to these women, inserting often only lightly veiled images of them in their works. (Latham 2009, 132)

The first thing that he correctly identifies is that it is an issue exclusively tied to women. There is a quite prosaic explanation for this: patrons whose work included hosting were most often women. Whether it was viewed as a means of supplementing one's husband's political career, such as in case of Lady Londonderry (Masters 1989, 36) or the one employment suitable, in the eyes of the public, it has, over the years, been viewed as a predominantly female domain of those of higher societal standing. However, they were rarely called "patrons", as their male counterparts were, not even the gendered form "patroness". Perhaps out of fear that such a designation might acknowledge the power these women held in their hands by linking them directly to great men of the past, Mecenaes or the Medicis, these women had to do with salonnières, society hostesses, muses, and lionhunters.

As labels usually are, even this one is double-edged. On one hand it refers to people such as Lady Sibyl Colefax,¹⁴ in the eyes of many famous in society only for shamelessly collecting celebrities to bring to her table, despite her success as a patron and a businesswoman. After all, linked to her is another term that belongs to the cultural imaginary explained here – colefaxismus.¹⁵ Denoting the practice of name-dropping, it merely points to the inherent element of the field of cultural production and life in general – establishing one's reputation through acquaintance (Masters 1989, 154). On the other hand, "lionhunting" throws an incredibly positive light on the people who originally perpetuated the tropology. After all, it is themselves who are the lions, who are desirable, have to be courted, and are fought over. It might fit well into the fantasies modernist cultural producers had of themselves¹⁶ but is, in fact, in stark contrast to mod-

14 Despite being, together with Lady Morrell, one of the most remembered artistic patrons of the period and a founder of a business whose brand is recognised to this day, the opening sentence of a chapter about Lady Colefax in Brian Masters' *Great Hostesses* describes her thus: "All are agreed she was a hunter of lions, indeed the most eminent and successful lion-hunter that London has ever known" (1989, 153).

15 Coined by Virginia Woolf (Evans 2016).

16 Remember D. H. Lawrence reliving his aristocratic fantasy through Lady Morrell and his wife.

ernism as a “strategy whereby the work of art resists commodification, holds out by the skin of its teeth against the loss of aesthetic autonomy” (Rainey 1998, 3) and thus the independence they are seeking.

Both the use of “lionhunting” and roman à clef betrays something much deeper than the people who used it would like to show. It is symptomatic of the problem at the heart of patronage, which needs to be examined and understood in order to fully comprehend the thinking and writing of modernist authors. Since the nature of patronage had evolved since the Romantic period into the complex affair which it was during the early decades of the twentieth century, the rules and expectation of both parties involved—the patrons and the cultural producers—were, to a great extent, unclear. Straightforwardly voicing them would mean having to admit that it is not an organic process, in which a patron with a pure interest in art would support a conduit of divine imagination or a genius of unparalleled qualities. It would link the relationship to business and thus bring it closer to the practical sphere modernist producers were trying to escape. “Patronage,” Rainey claims, “as an essentially premodern form of social exchange, had to be disguised as something else if it were not to seem at odds with the modern world” (1998, 74). As a result, both parties are often disappointed and, more often than not, the relationship turns into resentment.

Not clear to the authors themselves, it is difficult even in hindsight to identify the motivation which lies behind the patron’s willingness to give and the producer’s willingness to accept. Lady Morrell’s own comments on her work paint quite a utopic image:

Come then, gather here—all who have passion and who desire to create new conditions of life—new visions of art and literature and new magic worlds of poetry and music. If I could but feel that days at Garsington had strengthened your efforts to live the noble life: to life freely, recklessly, with clear Reason released from convention—no longer absorbed in a small personal events but valuing personal affairs as part of a great whole (qtd. in Sassoon 1920, 23)

On a different occasion, the rather religious patron also viewed her efforts as a lifelong “mission.” Thinking about assisting Augustus John, she wrote: “If God will work in me may I be able to help him!” (Seymour 1992, 98). Clearly, these quotes constitute a part of her effort to be seen by others as a muse

or a benevolent goddess allowing the art to come into the world. Just as it was difficult for the contemporary writers to accept these sentiments at face value, even now, despite the knowledge of Lady Morrell being wronged and misunderstood many times, one has to look for a more plausible explanation. Helpful in this inquiry are Bourdieu's descriptions of various capitals at one's disposal. In pre-romantic patronage, financial capital at the patron's disposal was exchanged for the objectified cultural capital represented by the finished work (1986, 19-20). Commodification, with its threat of limiting their artistic autonomy, was rejected by modernist cultural producers. However, in their attempts to escape any limitations and the pressures of the marketplace, they got tangled in the nets of post-romantic patronage, where the support for art is recognised as a way for patrons to attain the more elusive embodied cultural capital – the means of legitimisation or advancing one's own social and cultural position (1986, 17-18). As van den Braber explains, the patrons should theoretically gain exclusive knowledge, proximity to the work and the artist, the possibility of having an impact, and, most importantly to this analysis, narrative capital – an opportunity to construct or influence the narrative surrounding both the patron and the producer (2021, 23). Unfortunately, as was mentioned before, rarely do these exchanges work out the way they are expected to.

Just as scholars undiscerningly employing the term “lionhunting”, even the modernist cultural producers might have been drawn to the “conflict” involuntarily. It is not necessarily from personal hatred that their vicious accounts originated but from an unconscious awareness of the predicament they found themselves in. However, with the hindsight available to him, Rainey understands that “[m]odernism marks neither a straightforward resistance nor an outright capitulation to commodification but a momentary equivocation that incorporates elements of both in a brief, necessarily unstable synthesis” (1998, 3). Had the modernist cultural producers been aware of this, they might have accepted the condition of patronage and modernism more readily. Unfortunately, they did not and, to appropriate their terminology, the pride of the lions was hurt when they had realised they depended on somebody showing their tricks to others.

The great irony of romans à clef, after all, lies in their inner contradiction. Employed as a means for criticising Lady Morrell as a creativity-stifling element vampirically feeding on the energy of her artistic guests, as described, for example, in *Those Barren Leaves*, the writers created the work in her home, in the time she had provided by alleviating the financial strain, while eating the food her

money brought to the table, largely capitalising on the environment she painstakingly created. According to an apt analysis by Latham:

Morrell herself hurt writers like Huxley [...] into a critical knowledge of modernism's contradictions and limits. More than a mere lionhunter, she instead became the catalyst for crucial narrative innovations that have been suppressed or misrecognized in our own insistence on the novel's aesthetic supremacy. (2009, 155)

Time and again, not just in their fiction, but in reality as well, modernist cultural producers found themselves enchanted, intrigued, and too deep in the net of society they sought so hard to escape to break away from Morrell and patrons similar to her completely. As Virginia Woolf has written: "You will be delighted to hear that Ottoline and Philip [Morrell] are behaving scandalously [...] it is said that Garsington presents a scene of unparalleled horror. Needless to say, I am going to stay there" (Seymour 2009, 350).

The notion of "lionhunting", together with Morrell's depictions in various works, are an example of how an image, employed indirectly by a relatively small community, such as British modernist writers, can be a reflection of the issues underlying cultural production—the matters of authorship, creative autonomy, value of art, and its commodification. Naturally, the term was not coined by the modernists and the issues that plagued them were not new either, although they might have been more explicitly felt then. Still, it shows how a certain cultural imaginary can be perpetuated in fictional works and used in wider, non-involved communities without critical consideration for the deeper implications they carry. The myths of modernism are varied and many. Understanding the relationship of modernist creative producers and their patrons is one such step towards fully comprehending the works that inspire so many.

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