

Gaze, Object, and Precious Stones in the *Book of John Mandeville*

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Abstract

Manifesting the desire for seeing, the fourteenth-century travelogue the *Book of John Mandeville* presents a world of spiritual, physical, and especially visual wonders by having its first-person protagonist travel to Jerusalem, the holy cities nearby, and amazing places far beyond. Though the narrative seemingly reveals the exotic world and recounts the abundant material objects through the perspective of a Christian knight, the “gaze” shown in the text is not a unidirectional viewing from the Latin West, but a bidirectional, or even multidirectional, gaze that splits between self and other. In addition, the gaze in the text is intriguingly intertwined with precious stones and jewels, the material objects typically associated with the exotic. Lacan’s conceptualization of gaze as a third locus surpassing the simplistic self-other relationship may potentially contribute to the interpretation of this connection. In this paper, I would like to appropriate Lacan’s idea of gaze as *objet petit a* to explore three specific parts in Mandeville’s description, namely the episode of the Castle of the Sparrowhawk, the description of the Sultan’s merchant-spies, and finally the almost omnipresent “gold, silver, and precious stones” in the lands of Prester John. This paper aims to scrutinize how the gaze-object in Mandeville’s narrative challenges the traditional subject-object relation and configures a new kind of subject that can never

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be settled and closed, which echoes Mandeville's portrayal of the Earthly Paradise as an alienated and eternally unreachable Christian center.

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Unfolding the multi-layered themes, scenes, and marvels of the East, the fourteenth-century travel narrative, the *Book of John Mandeville* (abbreviated as the *Book* in the following), presents a world of spiritual, material, and especially visual wonders by having its first-person narrator travel to Jerusalem, the holy cities nearby, and amazing places far beyond. The *Book* was composed after the Crusader states fell into Muslim hands and the major trading and pilgrimage routes were taken over by religious and cultural others.¹ While appearing in an era when “Europe both turned away from the East and turned inward” (Khan-mohamadi, *In Light* 113), the *Book* redirects its contemporaries towards the world outside of Europe, leading readers to not only the holy lands but to the Far East, ranging from the territories of Mesopotamia to the lands and isles of Cathay and India, where the legendary empire of Prester John is located.

The *Book* can be roughly divided into two parts: the first recounts the pilgrimage to the holy cities and sacred places related to biblical tales, whereas the second provides an encyclopedic catalogue of the monstrous races and a detailed introduction of the geographical environments, social customs, pagan religions, and material cultures of the Eastern countries and empires. Consulting dozens of historical, literary, and travel narratives, with William of Boldensele’s *Liber de quibusdam ultramarinis partibus* (*Book of Certain Overseas Regions*) and Friar Odoric of Pordenone’s *Relatio* (*Account*) as his two main sources, the Mandeville-author constructs a spectacular landscape of the foreign and indulges both his narrator and his audience in eager gazes upon the marvelous yet ambivalent world outside the domain of Latin Christendom (Higgins, *Writing East* 9).

Although the *Book*’s description of the exotic world is heavily indebted to its sources, its relatively uncritical and tolerant attitude towards the strange, and sometimes abominable, others indicates its divergence from precedent texts, especially those composed by devout Christian clergymen and missionaries. Far from reiterating the stereotypes against the Muslim enemies and other “evil” pagans, the *Book* indeed features the desire to see, to know, and to consciously transport Mandeville’s “personal experience” back to the Western world. Its way of underlining the visual spectacles testifies to its position as a travelogue distinguished from conventional records colored by religious values or political ideologies. Geraldine Heng identifies a certain kind of “narrative pleasure” exercised by travel narratives, which helps create a zone where “domination at a distance can seamlessly and seductively occur” (242). This “domination” does not simply refer to the geographical expansion achieved by military forces against the

¹ The Siege of Acre in 1291 resulted in losing the Crusader-controlled city to the Mamluks and marked the failure of the centuries-old Crusading project.

imagined others, but instead to a discourse which codifies the world into one's own knowledge system for intellectual consumption. In this sense, the distant East, namely the place from which dazzling objects are traded to fulfill the appetites of Western nobility and buyers, also becomes an object metaphorically enclosed and consumed by Western discourses.

The *Book* is thus a work about various "objects." It is itself a textual object circulated and read, and in the meanwhile it also provides readers with vivid objects—objects in terms of the gold, silver, and precious stones depicted by Mandeville the narrator and in terms of the East itself. Providing rich, multiple, and panoramic objects to be read, the *Book's* reception is anything but consistent. Modern scholars have carefully examined the *Book* by looking into how various details are unfolded and what they aim to unfold. Martin Camargo and Leo Carruthers center the *Book* religiously, with Camargo emphasizing more the textual, geographical, and spiritual parallels by exploring the association between route and Christian identity and Carruthers endeavoring to investigate the exotic nature of the Garden of Eden and to trace the religious geography in the second half of the *Book*. Andrew Fleck, Jean E. Jost, and Sebastian I. Sobecki, on the other hand, pay more attention to the *Book's* narrative strategies in the representation of the Eastern others' differences from and similarities to Western communities. Sobecki states that the narrator's way of exposing the shocking differences of the pagan others in a frank and uncritical tone paradoxically enables the readers to notice the similarities and thus generates "a moderately tolerant psychological response" (333). Corresponding to Sobecki's idea, Jost's study suggests that "Mandeville's open-minded, careful, but unemotional treatment of the cultures he invades elicits a stronger sense of acceptance and dependability in the reader" (579). In contrast to Sobecki's and Jost's interpretations, Fleck questions the seeming tolerance of the *Book* and comments that the Mandeville-author's representation of the alien races "fulfill[s] the [Western] expectation of marvels" while "fully marginaliz[ing] them" (385). Fleck's stance more or less resembles that of Heng, who suggests that Mandeville's rich descriptions of the East fulfill the pleasant gaze of readers and comply with the ambition of the Western perceptual system for acquiring integrated knowledge of the world (247). While Heng's reading emphasizes the controlling discourse reminiscent of the colonial perspectives after the age of discovery, critics like Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Karma Lochrie, and Paul Smethurst stress more the optic diversity of the universe Mandeville characterizes. Lochrie, for instance, points out the limitation of perception and regards the *Book* as a work that breaks the center-periphery epistemology and consequently offers a cosmopolitan utopia that embraces cultural plurality (597-98). Smethurst also refers to the "plurality"

of culture and argues that the “plural and dispersed identity” of the Mandeville text “removes it from the subject-centred or egocentric focus of much travel writing” (174). Cohen’s analysis of the earth’s global structure, the de-centered universe, the boundary-defying epistemology, and the limitation of seeing and understanding also corresponds to Lochrie’s and Smethurst’s studies.

Though previous scholars have offered comprehensive investigations into how the Christian knight Mandeville looks at the world beyond familiar territories and how his looking retrospectively affects his targeted readers, most of their studies neglect how the author presents the subject as being looked at or being under others’ gaze. Despite their recognition of the limitations of Western perspectives or cultural plurality, their way of regarding Mandeville as an active seer and the foreign others as objects being observed and examined—either in a critical or tolerant attitude—suggests a more unitary subject-object relationship. Shirin Azizeh Khanmohamadi’s study offers a rare exception. In “Worldly Unease in Late Medieval European Travel Reports,” Khanmohamadi takes several medieval travel writings, including the *Book*, as examples to show how the European travelers “imagine themselves as being like global others, namely by viewing themselves from the vantage point of these others and estranging themselves from their received communal assumptions” (109). Indeed, although the narrative consciously reveals how the exotic world looks or may be seen by Western readers, the “gaze” shown in the *Book* is in fact not a unidirectional viewing from the Latin West, but a bidirectional, or even multidirectional, gaze that splits between self and other. As the narrator sees the strange, unfamiliar world, he also reveals how he and the Christian world he belongs to are seen by the peeping eyes of others, ranging from the observing eyes of the Muslim spies who enter the Christian world unnoticed, to the hostile eyes of the devil most terrible to see in the Perilous Valley, the Medusa-like women’s killing eyes composed of precious stones, and even the judging eye of the elevated Christian ethics, according to whose standard the narrator closely examines both Christians and the people from exotic places, whose lifestyles and manners differ greatly from those of Western society.

Here I would first like to briefly define the term “self” in the discussion of this essay. Although the travelogue is narrated by a first-person narrator, who identifies himself as an English knight, the “I” should be understood as a member belonging to a certain religious context, namely the Christian world, rather than an independent, separated, and unique individual corresponding to modern individualism. In *Writing East: The “Travels” of Sir John Mandeville*, a comprehensive study on the Mandeville book and its variant texts, Iain Macleod Higgins states that “*The Book*’s guiding ‘I’ clearly places himself

among his addressees [sic], constituting them as a religious community: the community defined by the ‘new’ covenant with God” (42). This statement conveys two important messages: firstly, the “I” is within the community the narrator addresses, and his report should be recognized as a contribution to the community’s collective intellectual properties; secondly, this community is a religious one, rather than a national one, despite the varied details concerning the narrator’s origin, the language of the work, and to whom this work is dedicated in different manuscript versions. As Higgins further articulates, “*The Book* makes no significant use of Sir John’s ‘national identity,’ rather offering a Latin Christian’s view of the world” (*Writing East* 43). Following Higgins’s reading, this essay considers “self” basically as a member among the community of the Latin Christendom. But, this classification also gives rise to another question: If religion is what differentiates self from other, why are the Eastern Christians, particularly the Christian owner of the Castle of the Sparrowhawk and the people in Prester John’s realms, also referred to as “others”? The first reason is that the Eastern Christians are still too culturally, geographically, and ethnically distanced from the *Book’s* addressees to be included as “self.” They are parts of the marvels that the narrator aims to present to his intended readers. Yet, this essay does not mean to read the *Book* as a text playing a part in the long-standing religious or political ideologies, but to scrutinize how the distinction between self and other is gradually obscured and problematized as the narrator and the tale progress. Though using the convenient term “other,” this essay is also aware of the ambiguity revealed by the Eastern Christians in Mandeville’s narrative, which complicates the binary structure by characterizing them both as intermediaries between the Latin West and the exotic East and as mirroring images that provoke self-reflection and self-criticism. This idea explains the second reason why I refer to them as “others” in this essay. The Eastern Christians, especially Prester John, not only embody the moral ideal of Christianity, but live in the lands close to the Earthly Paradise, the desired but unattainable location. Their being others relative to the Western Christians thus implies the Western subject’s self-alienation, alienated from the ideal self/whole because of the lack/hole. Consequently, these others become what constitute the field of the Other, which is related to the formation of the subject. This idea will be further elaborated in the following discussion.²

The Mandeville-author complicates not just the East-West relationship

² The words “self” and “other” are usually written in lowercase letters in this essay. I use the capitalized Other only when referring to the Lacanian framework or when emphasizing an unrecognizable and irreconcilable alterity in contrast to the self.

but also the conspicuous objects, particularly jewels, which are often associated with the East due to their occupation of the object position. The exotic jewels, which the Western subjects desire to own, to possess, and to codify, are to some extent analogies of the objectified East in orientalist discourses. Mandeville's frequent reference to the jewels in various scenarios seems to strengthen the connection between objects and the East, but by recalling the "hybrid nature" of the objects he portrays, making them both the desired targets and the reminders of judging eyes/gaze, the author perplexes the supposed subject-object position and renders the East-West relationship unsettling. What should be noticed here is that the *Book's* representation of the intertwining connection between gaze and jewels does not simply overturn the binary subject-object relationship but breaks up the binary structure—if not the binary opposition. In the narrative, jewels intriguingly occupy the third locus correlating to both the subject and the object but belonging to neither. Their crucial position provides a suitable ground to explore the potential relevance of the Lacanian gaze to a medieval text about sight, encounter, and the contemplation of an "open" world.

According to Jacques Lacan, gaze may function as an *objet petit a*, "on which depends the phantasy from which the subject is suspended in an essential vacillation" (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 83). It triggers the desire to discover and to see, but simultaneously represents an evil eye that causes discomfort. The uncanny gaze, manifested in various episodes in the *Book* as desiring eyes and eye-catching jewels, is like a hole which desire and anxiety surround. What the object/gaze helps form is a subject of lack, instability, and vacillation rather than a subject always appearing as an ideal whole and occupying the vantage point of viewing. By appropriating Lacan's concept of gaze as *objet petit a*, this article aims to explore the uncanny imbrication of gaze and object in the *Book* and to scrutinize how the Mandeville-author shatters the traditional subject-object position by complicating the presence of exotic jewels. Due to the limitation of scope, this article will mainly focus on the precious stones mentioned in three specific parts of the *Book*, namely the gold in the episode of the Castle of the Sparrowhawk, the jewels carried into the Western domain by the Sultan's merchant-spies, and finally the almost omnipresent "gold, silver, and precious stones" in the lands of Prester John's India.³

³ As one of the most often copied and most widely circulated texts in the late medieval period, the *Book of John Mandeville* is preserved in more than 250 copies up to this day (Krása 8). Conscious of the work's irreducible complexity in context and content, Higgins refers to the *Book* as "a multimodal network" which is "characterized both by its typically medieval intertextuality and by its own distinctive intratextual multiplicity" (*Writing East* 18-19). Since the complexity of manuscript versions is beyond the limited scope of this article, I base my study only on Higgins's edited and annotated version of the

Located at a unique position in the *Book*, the episode of the Castle of the Sparrowhawk reveals how gaze and (Eastern) materiality congregate, as well as how the subject-object position is subtly shattered. This episode appears in chapter 16, right after Mandeville leaves Jerusalem and heads for the places beyond the relatively familiar Near East (89). Mandeville's "stepping beyond" is manifested literally and metaphorically. In the physical sense, the narrator finishes his pilgrimage to the sacred places around Jerusalem and begins his adventurous exploration of the more remote areas. In the metaphorical sense, he represents the eager gaze of the Christian West ready to seize knowledge of the unfamiliar world and the multiple things beyond. The legend of the Castle of the Sparrowhawk cleverly visualizes the complicated feelings of desire, anticipation, and uneasiness towards the strange otherworld.

According to the narrative, in the Castle belonging to "a rich man and a good Christian" there are "a very handsome and very well-formed sparrowhawk on a perch, and a beautiful lady of Fairy who looks after it" (92). Anyone who keeps the sparrowhawk awake for seven days and seven nights will be granted "the first wish that he would wish of earthly things" (92). The term "earthly" sharply contrasts with the religious and spiritual focus of Mandeville's pilgrimage so far, yet it is not a clear-cut separation from the first half of the *Book* but rather a substantial continuity, for the narrator concludes the tale with the wish-making of a Knight Templar, whose wish for "a purse always full of gold" is granted, despite the fairy lady's warning that what he asks for is the destruction of order (93).

This short episode satisfies traditional expectations of the exotic world via its depiction of marvelous miracles, boundless wealth, and unearthly beauties. However, while this brief interlude reinforces the imagination of the East as desired object by associating it with the exotic and the wondrous, including both the unearthly lady and the wonderful bird, it simultaneously disturbs the traditional conception by assigning the Eastern characters, the lady in particular, to the position of seeing and judging. Although the lady belongs to the castle in a heathen world, the narrator also notes that the lord of the castle is a man with Christian belief, thereby endowing the place and the characters here with special properties. Unable to be simply classified as pure others while at the same time distanced from the West in terms of geography, culture, and even ethnicity, the characters in the castle appear as familiar outsiders occupying an ambiguous, intermediary space between the Christian West and the farther lands of strangers,

Book of John Mandeville. Higgins's version is a translation of the *Book* from its original French rather than from the Middle English versions (Introduction xxiii).

if not the lands estranged by Western literary conventions.⁴ The roles of Eastern Christians in the tale, which will be further developed in the narrator's extended elaboration of Prester John and his empire, already unsettle the binary structure, but even more subversive is the interaction between the lady and the Christian knight.⁵ In the lady's criticism of the Templar Knight's violation of order, the conventional order between the East and the West—that is, the Christian imagination of the Latin West as the rightful and virtuous and the East as the deviant, disordered, and corrupted—is also disturbed. Possessing the magical purse from which endless gold pours out, the Templar Knight now ironically becomes the earthly symbol of material richness being marveled at.

This reversal of subject-object position, as well as the undertone that the Christian subject is secretly observed, examined, and judged by others, echoes Mandeville's earlier experience in chapter 15, in which he describes his understanding about the customs and religious beliefs of the Saracens and exchanges his thought with the Sultan, who criticizes Christians for being "wicked" (86). The Sultan comments that the Christian priests are unconcerned with serving God and therefore set a bad example for the lay folk, who thus indulge in gluttony and "eat and drink like animals that do not know when they have had enough" (46). In addition to their misconduct, the Christians are also condemned for their pride and greed, willing to sell their families for "a little [bit of] silver" (86). The reference to greediness and excessiveness, phrased by the narrator as "not knowing when they have had enough," is a precise foreshadowing of the Templar Knight's desire for the magical purse. Camargo reads Mandeville's narrative as a criticism of the "off-centeredness of contemporary Christians, their alienation from their true identity" (73). Based on Camargo's reading, we may interpret the Saracen Sultan's comments and the *Book's* continuous comparison between Christian selves and Eastern others as clear expressions of Christian people's spiritual distance from the center of their identity. In this sense, the Templar Knight's wish for inexhaustible gold may be read as his guilty alliance with Eastern materiality and his self-distancing from Christian spirituality. The portrayal of the Sultan's criticism also reflects Khanmohamadi's observation that the narrator's stance is unstable and constantly shifting, as he would suddenly speak from the angle/voice of the other, which then troubles the self-other boundaries and results in a feeling of the uncanny (*In Light* 114-

⁴ The narrator does not refer to the lord of the castle as a Crusader settler, so it is probable that he might belong to an ethnic group in the Middle East, which marks his ethnic difference from the people of the West, and the lady is not even a human being.

⁵ The idea of transforming a binary framework into a triangular one will be argued later in this essay.

15). However, this paper aims to point out that the narrator's perceived shifting stance is rooted in his ambiguous viewing position vacillating between the position of proactive look and that of subordination to the gaze of other(s).

Rather than merely reflecting the spiritual degradation of Christianity, the Sultan's words and the episode of the Castle of the Sparrowhawk reshape the presupposed subject-object position at several levels. The Sultan explains to Mandeville that he knows the state of the Christians "by means of the people whom he sends through all countries in the guise of merchants of precious stones and other things" (87). This description problematizes the subject-object "optic" relation, making the Christian world the observed object rather the observing subject. Meanwhile, it also implies the Westerners' association with material objects by making them the potential buyers longing for the transaction, acquisition, and possession of precious stones, similar to the Templar Knight who wishes for gold. Moreover, Eastern jewels brought into the Western world are to be traded, displayed, and marveled at. At a superficial level, they are the representations of the East, which is there to satisfy the gaze of both Mandeville the traveler and his European readers. However, it is exactly the existence of these precious stones that activates the trading activities, mobilizes their human possessors, and materializes the crossing of boundaries. They become the perfect excuse for the Easterners' entrance into the Western domain, through which the merchant-spies are able to bring back foreign information and reversely incorporate the Christian world into their knowledge system. The precious stones, along with the merchant-spies that carry them into the place of others, which means Christians in this context, are like the Eastern eyes that embody the others' gaze.⁶

⁶ In fact, jewels or precious stones are frequently drawn as an analogy of eyes in medieval literature due to their luminous bodies and their ability to reflect light. Guillaume de Lorris's part of *The Romance of the Rose* and the Gawain-poet's *Pearl* are two examples that offer similar scenarios in which precious stones are used to foreground an optic context for the uncanny encounter between the intertwined self and other. *The Romance of the Rose* opens with a dream vision in which the narrator enters an enclosed garden where he perceives two crystal stones under the fountain of Narcissus (Guillaume and Jean 50-52). The crystal stones are interpreted by the majority of scholars, including C. S. Lewis, as the eyes of the narrator's beloved lady or Amant's own eyes (Hillman 225). However, these crystals indeed represent an anchor of multiple possibilities, signifying the stimulants to the viewer's sensory desire, the concrete emblems of otherness, the representations of human eyes, and the mirrors that enable the beholder to examine his own image reflected in the other's eyes. Their existence unsettles the subject-object relation. As Marisa Galvez observes, "[t]he uncertain form of crystal or the subject's physical and sensory engagement with the heterogeneous effects of crystal consequentially question the nominal status of the unified stone," and in this shifting, unstable optic position, "[b]oth perceiver and crystal substance, as bodies in motion, trouble a static relation of unified subject and object" (19). Galvez's analysis of the crystals in *The Romance of the Rose* can also be applied to the gemstones in *Pearl*. *Pearl* is a poem describing a dream vision, in which the dreamer encounters the pearl-maiden he lost

Even though the gems are almost like the Eastern eyes, they are at the same time not the exact eyes. The real observing eyes are the corporeal eyes of the Saracen merchant-spies, through whom the East rivals the West for the subject position and optical superiority. However, more than facilitating the reversal of gaze, the presence of jewels also enables the split of gaze, which points to an embodied ambiguity. In the episode of the Castle of the Sparrowhawk as well as in Mandeville's conversation with the Sultan, there is a hidden gaze that should not be simply equated with the lady's tangible judging eyes or with the observing eyes of the Saracens. The gaze functions as the third party correlated to both the subject and the object but different from both. To clarify this idea, I would like to first distinguish Jean-Paul Sartre's idea of gaze from the Lacanian gaze.

In "Lacan on Gaze," Yuanlong Ma traces the concept of the Lacanian gaze as well as its similarities and differences from the gaze discussed by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. Sartre discusses the gaze at its ontological level and further differentiates it from the eye. According to Sartre's idea, the gaze displays and defines the self-other relationship, and "it is only due to the gaze of the Other that I get the reflective consciousness" (Ma 126). In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre explains:

[M]y apprehension of the Other in the world as *probably being* a man refers to my permanent possibility of *being-seen-by-him*; that is, to the permanent possibility that a subject who sees me may be substituted for the object seen by me. "Being-seen-by-the-Other" is the *truth* of "seeing-the-Other." (345)

In Sartre's understanding, the look from the other contributes to the self-awareness of the subject. However, this look is not necessarily related to the presence of eyes. As he further elaborates, "If I apprehend the look, I cease to perceive the eyes. . . . This is because to perceive is to *look at*, and to apprehend a look is not to apprehend a look-as-object in the world . . . ; it is to be conscious of *being looked at*" (346-47). Sartre seems to dismiss the connection between the look

in reality. Before actually seeing the maiden, the dreamer first looks down into a watery valley and beholds radiating rocks of "crystal" (II.2.2). He then reaches a river that contains lots of gleaming stones (II.5.5-12). It is in this optic context that the dreamer finally sees the pearl-maiden, whose gaze petrifies him. The most eye-catching stone in this poem is the pearl, which is rich in figurative meanings. It points to the material substance that "greet[s] the gaze" of the dreamer (II.5.2), the decorations on the maiden's clothes and crown, the appealing Orient in Western imagination, and the gaze from the other side. The gaze here refers not only to the Easterners or the lady on the other side of the river, but also to the gaze of God. Marie Borroff points out that the pearl "is like the heavenly kingdom; it is spotless, like the souls of the innocent; it is perfectly round and thus 'endless,' like eternity; it is 'blithe' and thus represents the bliss of the redeemed" (x). It is a reminder of the transcendental spirituality while it simultaneously arouses in the dreamer a feeling of lack and an awareness of his distance from the Christian center. The connection between precious stones, the gaze of God, and the unreachable center of Christianity will be explored later in my discussion on Prester John's empire and the Earthly Paradise.

and the physical existence of eyes, distributing them respectively to the fields of imagination and perception, and in doing so emphasizing the feeling of being looked at and how this feeling contributes to the consciousness of self. In other words, the look, referred to as the gaze in my discussion, functions at the ontological level by relating the subject to the other. The Christian-Saracen relationship demonstrated through Mandeville's conversation with the Sultan corresponds to Sartre's discussion to a certain extent. The *Book* manifests Mandeville's seeing of others, whereas the Sultan's words also indicate that the Christian subject who sees may be substituted for the object being seen. The physical "eye" of the other does not literally appear in their talk, but it triggers the awareness that the Christian world is under the Saracen gaze. However, while Sartre's conception of gaze explains the formation of self-consciousness, his presupposition of a binary model, that is, "either the other retains his rights as a subject by objectifying me with his look, or he is himself rendered an object under my look," restricts the self-other relationship to a framework of duality (Boothby 169). This either/or understanding corresponds to the discussions of Mandeville's travels in current scholarship, which suggest a binary relation—though not necessarily a hostile binary opposition—between Christendom and its others.

But in addition to the subject(s) of the West and the subject(s) of the East, with both of them trying to objectify the other with their eyes, there is another existence in Mandeville's description, namely the material object from the East that cannot be equated with the characters from the Eastern lands. The glittering jewels are not the observing eyes themselves, but they mobilize the human characters and invite their gaze. And even though they are intimately intertwined with their carriers and can thus be regarded as anxiety-triggering semi-eyes to a certain extent, their beautiful, alluring appearances retain their characteristics as desire-triggering objects under the gaze. The hybrid nature of these objects confuses the already complicated subject-object position. Related to but at the same time independent from the Eastern human characters, these glittering objects from the East introduce a third position by functioning as agencies that exert an arresting power and bring on an effect of suspension without pointing to any specific others behind.⁷ Lacan's theory of gaze as *objet petit a* surpasses

⁷ In fact, Sartre's theory is not very much different from Lacan's when it comes to the inability to recognize the beholder behind the look/gaze. As Sartre describes, "Every look directed toward me is manifested in connection with the appearance of a sensible form in our perceptive field, but contrary to what might be expected, it is not connected with any determined form" (346). However, I choose to appropriate Lacan's theory rather than that of Sartre here because Lacan elaborates on the function of the unconscious and suggests a triangular, rather than binary, framework which would help explore the intertwining relationship between the Christian subject(s), the Eastern others, and the material objects

the binary structure of Sartre's theory and offers a possibility for understanding this intriguing position.

Lacan shares many similarities with Sartre, including the differentiation between the eye and the gaze, but his concept of gaze departs from Sartre's framework by reserving a space for the work of the unconscious. Lacan introduces a ternary relationship which includes "the subject (the one who sees), the visual object (the Other who is seen), and the gaze (a third locus)" (Ma 127). According to his theory, the gaze is definitely separated from the eye of the visual other and belongs to the field of the unconscious: "[t]he eye and the gaze—this is for us the split in which the drive is manifested at the level of the scopic field" (Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts* 73). The gaze preexists the subject and appears as an *objet petit a*, which enables the subject "to sustain himself in a function of desire" (Ma 127); it is a hole, an empty signifier, or in other words an absent center, around which the subject's desire and anxiety revolve. Under this gaze, the subject feels "I see only from one point, but in my existence I am looked at from all sides" (Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts* 72). It triggers the subject's desire and anxiety to know, yet its substance can never be attained or confirmed. As soon as it is identified and captured by representation, the gaze ceases to exist as gaze and becomes an eye at the conscious level.

Lacan's gaze escapes the either/or choice, for it is the third locus with liminal character, an "extimité" that problematizes the opposition between the inside and the outside (Lacan, *Ethics* 139). The gaze as an *objet petit a* is the cause of the subject's desire to know and therefore the reminder of the subject's lack, but the subject's desire/lack is essentially related to the desire/lack of the Other. As Richard Boothby elaborates, "the *objet a* is strangely suspended between the subject and the other, belonging to both and neither. It simultaneously designates what is most other in the Other, yet is intimately bound up with subject itself" (160). Boothby uses the example of the cover-girl faces to vividly explain the gaze's liminal position. He states that while they are the captivating objects, their "glittering, jewel-like eyes stand out with such unmistakable brilliance that they exert an arresting effect all their own" (170). The cover-girl's "glittering, jewel-like eyes" here should be understood as the gaze in Lacan's discussion, for the cover-girl is not qualified as a conscious viewing subject. Interestingly, the Mandeville-author presents very similar images in the *Book*. The "glittering precious stones" exhibit the "glittering, jewel-like eyes" which simultaneously appear as the cause of the Christian subjects' desire and represent the gaze from

in Mandeville's narrative.

all sides which reduces the Christian subjects to objects. Unlike the observing look of the Saracen spies disguised as merchants, the gaze revealed through the precious stones brilliantly works as a third locus which does not belong to either the one who sees or the other who is seen but relate to both.

The medieval optical theories in fact provide interesting parallels to the Lacanian framework. The visual theories in the Middle Ages were highly indebted to the intellectual heritage of the Greco-Roman philosophers, including Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, and many others. One of the crucial concepts held by ancient theorists is the need of mediation for the formation of sight. As A. Mark Smith writes, ancient theorists were convinced that “vision occurs neither by direct contact between eye and object nor by action at a distance”; instead, “something has to intervene in order to link the two and thus initiate the visual act” (29). This concept is accepted in both the extramission theory and the intromission theory, the two prevalent models of vision constituted by Greek philosophers and later appropriated, revised, and expanded by medieval scholars. The extramission theory proposes that visual perception is accomplished through the rays sent by eyes to objects and reflected back, and the intromission theory suggests that visual perception is formed by way of the transmission of lights (*lux/lumen*) or particles (*species*) sent from objects into eyes. The medium, be it ray, light, or sensible *species*, links together the beholding subject and the beheld object, relevant to but independent from both. Its intermediary position not only gives prominence to a triangular configuration of the optic relationship, but presupposes an object capable of being a viewing subject. The *species* of objects, which referred to the radiating visual likenesses of objects in medieval theories, sustain this idea. Smith states that during the time, the perceptual and cognitive process was “described in terms of successive species, starting with the species in the transparent medium, continuing with the species in the sense, and culminating with a set of species generated in the psychological faculties” (248). By highlighting the movement of these *species*, medieval people in a way attributed to objects an ability to take initiative and allowed them some sort of agency, at which the Lacanian theories on gaze may anchor.

Like the precious jewels carried by the Saracen merchant-spies, the gold in the episode of the Castle of the Sparrowhawk also testifies to how the third locus intervenes and complicates the self-other relationship. In this scenario, the Templar Knight is consciously under the eyes/judgment of the fairy lady, who comments that his request signifies the destruction of order (93). However, the criticism, along with the “order” the lady specifies, hints at the subject’s being seen not only from the (Eastern) other’s eyes but from the perspective of Christian morality, which values spiritual wealth over earthly treasures. The existence

of the gold, also a kind of precious stone, thus becomes a paradoxical juncture of material desire and overarching religious order. The order is articulated by the lady of the East, but it also relates to the Latin West, namely the self, by virtue of the religious background of the owner of the Castle. This linkage demonstrates how the Christian eyes are grouped with the eyes of others and reveals the ability of objects to work as carriers of splitting gazes. The gold consequently visualizes the split between the Knight's yearning desire for wealth at the conscious level and his anxiety over his subjection to the gaze of the Other, a transcending alterity that may include the East and the Christian order but indiscernible in effect, at the unconscious level. On this account, what the *Book* constructs is not a stable subject standing firmly as a seer or observer but a subject of lack/hole, or, in other words, a subject failing to be an idealized, flawless Christian whole.

The association between gaze and gemstones is introduced in the middle of the *Book* and more explicitly displayed in the latter half of Mandeville's narrative about Prester John's India. The "gold, silver, and precious stones" as collocated phrases are repeatedly mentioned. They appear as the marvelous diamonds growing from the crystal rocks in northern India in chapter 17, as the decorations of the church of idols in chapter 19, as abundant natural resources on the Island of Java and nearby isles in chapter 21, as the luxurious artifacts demonstrating the nobility and richness of the Great Chan's Cathay from chapters 23 to 25, and most importantly, as the visually inalienable part of Prester John's royal estate in chapter 30 and afterwards. The gold, silver, and precious stones are the dazzling objects that satisfy the visual appetite of Mandeville's readers, but their conspicuous presence also reminds readers of the gaze which disturbs the viewing position of the Western subjects.

Prester John's chief palace in Suse is the most vivid exhibition of the omnipresence of precious jewels. Not only do these jewels enrich the visual quality of this space, but they also perform the role of watching eyes, guarding Prester John's faith and his chastity. According to Mandeville's detailed description:

Above the master tower of the palace are two round pommels of gold, and in each there are two large and wide carbuncles that shine very brightly at night. And the main gates of this palace are [made] of a precious stone that is called sardonyx, the edges and the bars of ivory, and the windows of the halls and the rooms are of crystal. The tables where they eat, some are [made] of emeralds, others of amethyst, others of gold with precious stones; and the legs that hold up the tables are of the same stones.
(163)

This paragraph constitutes only a small part of Mandeville's colorful portrayal of Prester John's sumptuous dwelling. The depiction of Prester John's chief palace,

where various kinds of precious jewels and metals are used as building materials and furniture, corresponds to the imagination of the East as a place where abundant richness emerges as an uninterrupted flow. This earthly paradise echoes the Templar Knight's wish for a purse always full of gold.

The luxurious jewels and precious stones in Prester John's estate, however, are not only there to exhibit the power of visual glamour or to ignite Western viewers' material desire. The palace is at the same time an object of gaze and a viewing subject with its "two round pommels of gold . . . that shine very brightly" like eyes seeing. These glittering eye-like images suggest the possibility of linking the jewels with the gemstones mentioned in earlier sections, the precious stones which embody a look of observation, inspection, and assessment. What is more is that "the windows of the halls and the rooms are of crystal," a material substance with the quality of transparency and thereby related to the idea of revelation and vision.⁸ The transparency of the windows enables the people inside the room to look beyond the enclosed space, but it may also invite the gaze from the outside. The crystal becomes a juncture of bidirectional gaze, and demonstrates in itself an ambiguity of vision.

In addition, like the gold from the Templar Knight's purse, the precious stones in Prester John's empire manifest rich materiality on the one hand and paradoxically recall the Christian order on the other. The precious stones are also the objects that help Prester John stay calm and restrain his lust. As the narrator describes:

Although the carbuncle gives enough light, nevertheless a crystal vessel full of balm is always burning to provide a good scent and drive away the bad air. The frame of his bed is of fine sapphires trimmed with gold to make him sleep better and to restrain his lust, for he will sleep with his wives only four times a year according to the four seasons, and that is only to beget children. (163)

This depiction answers to the Christian ideal of elevated spirituality, contrasting sharply with the highly material bodies of these stones. This intrinsic paradox

⁸ Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez explain that "[c]rystal may be a stone, but it retains the transparency of water: it has not taken on completely the nature of the element earth, but retains a transparency that can only derive from the purest water, derived in its turn from the purity of the air from which the water was formed" (142-43). Crystal was colored by ancient philosophers and scholars with the properties of cleanness, sacredness, and divinity because of its transparency and pureness. In the medieval period, crystal was commonly described as a kind of transparent gemstone with a smooth surface and was often carefully polished before being made into religious accessories or beset on ornaments. Stefania Gerevini emphasizes the religious symbolism of crystal and remarks that since crystal stone is "perfectly transparent and much harder than glass," it is able to "gran[t] visibility and protection to the relics or images placed inside them" and even to "increase visually the size of relics" when made into religious artifacts or reliquaries (93).

corresponds to the elaboration of Prester John's estate at different levels. First, Prester John and a large number of his people are devout Christians. The narrator offers an idealized description of the virtues of Prester John and his followers: "They indeed believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and are very devout and truly loyal to one another, but they do not care for disputes, or tricks, or fraud" (161). The narrative makes Prester John's empire both an exhibition of earthly wealth and a mirror of sinless paradise.

Not only is Prester John himself a demonstration of religious values, but the precious stones in his land are also literally connected to the original center of Christianity, namely the Earthly Paradise at the end of the Eastern lands. Mandeville describes that the large rivers coming from Paradise have divided Prester John's domain into many regions (160), and in one of the four main rivers from the Earthly Paradise—a river named Physon or Ganges—"there are many precious stones and much *lignum aloes* and much gold gravel" (180). Flowing uninterruptedly from the Earthly Paradise and then occupying Prester John's empire, these sparkling gemstones make the remote Eastern land a place of magnificence, but they simultaneously "exert an arresting effect all their own" (Boothby 170). Their presence constantly reminds the Christian viewing subject—ironically also an object being viewed—of his eternal lack and the impossibility of the fulfilment of his desire, for these precious stones are from a place where the fallen parents of Christians have been expelled, a Christian center now emptied. The alienation of the Earthly Paradise from the current Christian world echoes the alienation of the *objet petit a* from the subject. Just like the gaze from all sides that could never be attained, the precious stones from the Earthly Paradise participate in the Christian character's subject-formation not by representing a competing other but by embodying the absent center. Higgins notices that the *Book* appropriates Odoric's itineraries to the East but pauses to offer a clearer insight into Prester John's lands, his power, chastity, and piety, rather than following Odoric in heading quickly for Byboth (*Writing East* 157-58). This deliberate choice conveys the author's attempt "not only to celebrate the marvelous diversity of distant 'choses estranges,' but also to contain it within a familiar (religious) order while urging his audience to moral reform and offering them a vicarious compensation for Christendom's diminished state" (Higgins, *Writing East* 159). In other words, Prester John's realm is itself a desired yet estranged center. It satisfies firstly the fantasy of making others just like us by means of religious conversion and secondly the frustrated project of Christian expansion, both of which are dedicated to the enlargement of self. Yet, the perfect ruler and his virtuous empire are located in the moral and geographical otherland. Distant and different from the criticized Latin West, the imagined

Eastern Christendom in return provokes reflective thinking and creates a clearer contour of Christian identity. The subjectivity is acquired through the Christian subject's alienation from both the idealized empire of Prester John and from Earthly Paradise, echoing Ma's statement that "the subject can only come into its being in way of alienation" (129). Prester John in Mandeville's narrative may thus be read as an alienated Christian self seeing the Christian subject from afar.

Related to the sense of lack and the awareness of the self's alienation from the ideal self, the precious stones as gaze trigger not only desire but anxiety, which is also vividly presented in Mandeville's depiction of Prester John's India. The portrayal in chapter 31, a chapter right after the account of Prester John's royal estate, highlights the anxiety generated by the gaze. The narrator mentions that besides the island belonging to Prester John, there are also other scattered islands in Prester John's lordship. In this large area, there is a place called "Devil's Valley" or "Perilous Valley" where devils live. Mandeville describes that "[i]n the middle of this valley under a rock are the head and the face of a devil most terrible to see, and only the head is visible, down to shoulders" (166). The appearance of the devil's "head," a head existing without (showing its) body, forms a shocking scene that is horrible to see, and this visual horror is later intensified by the narrative's emphasis on the fear of being seen:

But there is no one in the world so bold, Christian or other, who is not afraid when he sees it; and it seems to the onlooker that he must die, so hideous is it to see and so piercingly does it look at everyone; and it has such shifting and such flashing eyes, and it changes and shifts its expression and appearance so often that no one dare approach it. (166)

This passage reveals two crucial points: firstly the affecting agency of the evil eyes and secondly the relation between gaze and precious stones. Although what the narrative refers to here are seemingly the hostile, killing eyes of the devil, the existence of the unidentifiable Christian gaze is also implied in this episode. The narrator explains that though the devil in the valley is hideous to see and his look is piercing, good Christians with stable faith in their mind can enter this valley without danger. This means that the inner selves of the Christian entrants from the West, or their true identities, are under rigorous evaluation, and what makes the gaze so piercing is not only the threatening other, but also the overarching yet insensible gaze of Christianity which carefully scrutinizes the entrants. In addition, the Christians in the quote are grouped with the others into an undifferentiated entity, "Christian or other," when it comes to being looked at. This grouping generates a feeling of disquiet either by triggering the Christian subject's anxiety over being disqualified as a good Christian, thereby being just like others, or by implying the others' potential of being just like Christians,

as exemplified by the presence of Prester John. The Christian gaze alienates self from self by suggesting at once the self's desire for the Christian ideal and its eternal anxiety over not living up to this ideal. Paradoxically, this self-alienation also helps forge an identity for the self through distance and awareness of difference.

The unease highlighted in this episode is intertwined with the conspicuous presence of precious stones. Mandeville notes that the richness in gold and silver and other valuable things in the valley attracts many pagans and Christians to seek treasures (166); when Mandeville and his companions pass the valley, they indeed see "gold and silver and precious stones and jewels in abundance on every side" (167). This description is reminiscent of the material richness in Prester John's palace, but unlike those harmless objects, the jewels in this dangerous and even fatal site are there to deceive passersby.⁹ The threatening characteristics of these jewels are further underscored in Mandeville's description of the island southwards in the Ocean Sea, which appears in the same chapter as the Devil's Valley. Mandeville mentions that there are many wicked and cruel women on that island, and "they have precious stones in their eyes, and their nature is such that if they look at someone in anger, they kill him just by looking, as the basilisk does" (170). The fatal, killing eyes portrayed in this episode can be read together with Hanjo Berressem's discussion of the relation between the "evil eye" and the Lacanian gaze:

The phenomenon of the evil eye embodies the fact that the "eye carries with it the fatal function of being in itself endowed [. . .] with a power to separate." On first sight, this is surprising, because in the earlier discussion, the eye had stood for an objective "inclusiveness," whereas the gaze was related to lack and separation. If before, then, the eye was *juxtaposed* to the gaze, now, the separating function of the eye *relates* it directly to the gaze. (175)

Though Lacan clearly differentiates the eye from the gaze in his theory, situating the eye at the conscious level and the gaze at the unconscious, the evil eyes in this chapter relate to the gaze in terms of their ability to remind the subject of his lack, which consequently becomes the cause of separation.¹⁰ With

⁹ The Perilous Valley here is another example that shows potential literary resonance between Mandeville's narrative and that of *The Romance of the Rose*. Not only does *The Romance of the Rose* begin with the scene of a circulated garden full of dazzling material objects from the East, but it also shows how the first-person narrator looks into the surface of the fountain of Narcissus, which is also intriguingly referred to as the "perilous mirror" (Guillaume and Jean 52), and perceives the sparkling crystals as eyes, as mirrors, and as deceptive images that may potentially trap the beholders into self-infatuation and death.

¹⁰ Lacan's differentiation between the eye and the gaze is also elucidated by Berressem, who writes that "[w]hereas the eye represents the *cogito*—the conscious, self-reflexive subject and the subject of

this idea in mind, I interpret the adjectives “hideous,” “piercing,” or “wicked” mentioned in this chapter more as parallels to the term “evil” in Lacan’s discussion than as literal denotation of the others’ moral degradation. Contrasting to the basilisk’s eyes capable of physically freezing the body of the beheld, the evil eyes suspend the action of the subject by unconsciously arresting him with the lack, or his separation from the ideal—in this context, the subject’s anxiety derives more from the potential failure in being an ideal Christian than from the menace of others. In addition, the eyes here reiterate the connection between precious stones and the opaque, unrecognizable look. The gemstones as something attractive but anxiety-arousing retrospectively force the readers to reexamine the precious stones appearing in previous chapters.

The precious stones in the exotic lands occupy the position of gaze and function as *objet petit a* in terms of their abilities to trigger both desire and anxiety. As Antonio Quinet has noted, “[f]eeling oneself subjected to the gaze can not only produce desire but anxiety, which is another manifestation of object *a*” (144).¹¹ While the evil eyes of the Devil and the wicked women’s fatal eyes may be easily categorized as signifiers of traditional binary opposition, they are indeed no less the sites of ambiguity than the incarnations of the others’ hostility. This is because the precious stones trigger anxieties that stem from both the sight of others and that of self. The precious stones used as decorations in Prester John’s palace and even the jewels brought into the Christian world by the Saracen merchant-spies manifest not the hostile staring eyes from the religious and cultural others, but the gaze from all sides as well as the gaze from the exotic empire of a Christian emperor. The ironic fact that this gaze of the other(s) is in its essence as much Christian as the Christian West, if not more so, reveals the uncanny intimacy between the self and the other in their mutual staring.¹² Looking at Prester John, the Christian West is constantly being looked at by a likeness of itself. Its longing gaze at Prester John’s lands and the Earthly Paradise connected to Prester John’s domain by the river of jewels turns out to be a gaze at the Christian subject’s own want and lack.

With its prominent use of optic objects such as the precious stones carried

knowledge—the gaze represents the *desidero*: the subject of the unconscious and of desire” (175).

¹¹ I did not change Quinet’s spelling of “object *a*” in the quotation despite its inconsistency with the term “*objet a*” used in my article.

¹² Lacan’s idea of extimacy (*extimité*) helps explain this uncanny intimacy between self and other. Extimacy is a term Lacan uses to problematize the distinction between interior and exterior. It indicates an outside that is paradoxically at the heart of the inside. Jacques-Alain Miller explains that “this is what Lacan is commenting on when he speaks of the unconscious as discourse of the Other, of this Other who, more intimate than my intimacy, stirs me. And this intimate that is radically Other, Lacan expressed with a single word: ‘extimacy’” (77).

by the merchant-spies, the gold desired by the Christian knight, and the omnipresent gemstones in Prester John's realms, Mandeville's narrative presents a possible third angle between the Latin West and the exotic East. As a result, a new subject more aware of his distance and difference from the ideal self, rather than from others, can thus be discerned. Instead of featuring the attraction of Eastern objects and paralleling the East with the exotic things looked at, examined, and incorporated into Western possession, the *Book* masterly depicts a Christian subject simultaneously in subjection to the others' gaze when subjectively capturing the others through sight. The text thus unfolds a visual experience oscillating between pleasure and anxiety. Readers perceive the world through Mandeville's own eyes, and through the omnipresent eyes of the unknown or known strangers, monsters, and inanimate objects Mandeville encounters during his journey. These different sights are superimposed and merged into an abstract, anxiety-arousing gaze that, according to Lacan, can destabilize a two-way subject-object relation and turn it into a *ménage-à-trois* by obscuring the boundary between the two. The anxiety does not simply arise from the existence of others, but also from the subject's desire to look, which always denotes an awareness of lack in the self, and thus an alienation from the ideal self. Constantly changing and being redefined in the ever-repeated cycle of seeing and being seen, the subject will never stop having anxieties as a result of the perpetuated desire and awareness of lack. Hence, the subject can never be closed.

This openness is interestingly reflected in the text's depiction of the travel route and its placement of Jerusalem at the center. Camargo suggests that "[t]he multiple, uncompleted journeys toward Jerusalem and the studied circumscribing of the Holy Land mimic the spiritual distance separating sinful Christians from their true home at the world's center" (75). While Camargo interprets the distance from Jerusalem, the spiritual center of Christianity, as a correspondence to the text's criticism of the degradation of contemporary Christians, I would say that the "center" is an empty hole eternally desired but always remaining unreachable. This never-could-be-achieved center should not be understood negatively, nor does it imply the damnation of Christianity or an unredeemable sin. Instead, the center functions as an *objet petit a* around which the subject's desire and anxiety revolve. Its existence forces the subject to constantly reconsider his position and to reexamine and renegotiate his relation to others. As Cohen mentions:

An energetic meditation upon the exotic, upon the genre of travel narrative, upon the nature of the world we inhabit, the *Book of John Mandeville* (in all of its multifarious manifestations) is constitutionally incapable of offering anything but a cosmos where change and movement are constants, and geographies where bodies are caught

in perpetual motion, where even the inanimate stirs with a kind of desire-soaked life.
(618)

The journey will always remain uncompleted, and this also explains why the author presents Mandeville's journey as a round-trip that almost circumnavigates the earth but does not.

From this perspective, the *Book* in fact suggests a new way of understanding the world. It incorporates the remote East into the comprehensive optic field, but this inclusion does not mean that the East, along with its material magnificence, is unilaterally codified by the Western discourse and gaze. Instead, Mandeville as a Western viewer is situated in a world where he is a subject that sees and also an object under the pre-existing gaze from all sides, and this "all sides" includes the East situated in the opposite position of the globe. Cohen therefore inspires us:

The best to which a globe can aspire would be a conceptual middle. . . . If Jerusalem is the world's centre, then that fixed point exists only on maps and timelines that cannot capture the fullness of the world, cannot capture the perpetual curve that gives to lands and waters their unattainable horizons. (617-18)

The subject in the *Book* differs from traditional Christian identity in terms of its entrance into the world of others not as a stable viewer exerting intellectual and geographical expansions, but as a subject undergoing restless negotiation over his own identity and his relation with others. The *Book* presents an open world and an open subject not through the Christian narrator's open-mindedness or his tolerant attitude towards others, but through introducing a subject that can never be settled. By foregrounding the hybrid nature of objects and their complicated intertwinement with human characters, as well as their metaphorical capacity to look back with a liminal gaze, the *Book* unsettles the conventional subject-object position and suggests a subject of lack yet of better potentiality and malleability.

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《曼德維爾遊記》中的 凝視、物 / 對體與寶石

摘要

問世於十四世紀的《曼德維爾遊記》，透過敘事者對於觀看的渴望，及其前往耶路薩冷和遠方之地的精彩旅程，鋪展出一個充滿精神、物質、以及視覺奇觀的森羅萬象。然而，雖然這個作品看似以基督教騎士的視角呈現出異域之地和豐饒的物質世界，文中所展現的「凝視」，卻非來自西方單一角度，而是顯現雙向、甚至多元觀看的可能，凸顯游離於自我及他者的凝視。此外，在這部作品中，視線與珍貴寶石等帶有異域色彩的物件巧妙疊合。拉岡將凝視放在我他之外第三位置的解讀，正與《曼德維爾遊記》的刻劃相互呼應。本文借助拉岡理論中凝視作為小對體的概念，來檢視並分析《曼德維爾遊記》中，雀鷹堡橋段提及的黃金、蘇丹手下的間諜貿易商攜帶的寶石、以及祭司王約翰的國度中幾乎無所不在的「金銀珠寶」。本文旨在闡釋曼德維爾敘事中所呈現的凝視和物 / 對體，如何挑戰傳統的主客體位置，並藉此形構一個與人間樂園這個永遠無法再度回歸的基督教中心相互呼應的開放性主體。

關鍵字：《曼德維爾遊記》、物 / 對體、寶石、凝視、拉岡

