

## Leon Uris's *Mila 18*: A New Historicist Reading

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### Abstract:

*Mila 18* by Leon Uris is a historical fiction set at the backdrop of German occupied Warsaw, Poland during Second World War. This novel is carefully embedded with narration of methodically and carefully planned social discrimination of Jews from economic, cultural, social and political life and this was not the end but the beginning of end as Hitler's plan was to wipe Germany of the Jews whom he called sub-humans. The title of the novel is derived from headquarter of bunker of Jewish resistance fighters who hid inside a building at Mila Street. This street still exists in Warsaw though the building does not. This paper is an attempt to understand the historical context of the outstanding resistance of Jewish fighters depicted in *Mila 18* within the framework of New Historicism. The novel is appealing because of its authenticity as historical fiction and its breathtaking presentation of resistance of fighters. It is an effort to voice thousand of voices who died fighting till their last breath in face of inhuman German army on one hand and starvation, disease and lack of medical help on the other hand. Furthermore, this paper would scrutinize the efforts of the Andrei Androfski and his people to stand for their culture, society, religion, convention and ideologies to their last breath, which Hitler and his army thought insignificant and destroyed. This novel is a tale of distorted identity of Jews in Hitler's regime. It is a picture carefully painted with tainted images of moaning survival and struggling identity of Jews whose unconquerable courage and spirit has been brought to life in this sparkling picture of Warsaw of war time.

**Key Words:** Historicism, New Historicism, Social Discrimination, Holocaust etc.

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### A Theory- New Historicism

Historicism is defined in Merriam Webster dictionary as a theory in which history is considered a standard of value or a determinant of events. In post-war era history has been a prominent aspect to interpret literary texts and since reader's interest in history and historical fiction has expanded so has the essence of history as determinant document to understand past. New Historicism has steamed out from Historicism which emphasis on understanding literary and non-literary text in light of one another. There is no text which has not been inherently influenced by history of an era in which it belongs and likewise history is also influenced by fictiveness as in post-truth era truth is what one perceives it to be. Hence, it is indispensable to evaluate a work of art in the context of the history of its time to find the truth of what is rooted in the past. Therefore, New Historicist does a parallel study of literary and non-literary text to excavate political, religious, cultural and ideological history of particular time period.

A parallel study of *Mila 18* and a historical overview of Warsaw ghetto uprising would give a wider meaning to the text. Leon Uris being authentic to the history of the period creates breathtaking characters that have lived in the period. The novel is crammed with historical characters that had been significant part of history. Along with historical aspects of the past, the novel is a narration enclosed with inner conflicts and dilemma confronted by

Jews and their will to survive in the war. It takes reader to the battleground of Warsaw and also gives kaleidoscopic view of inner circle of Jews and their dark lives during war. This novel is not only statistic about Jews murdered during Warsaw's capture- period rather it is recounting of thousands of people's personal history who were devastated by Nazi guards. Uris brings voice to the silenced cries of people who had insatiable desire to be remembered and who wanted to be identified as one among the world. This is the reason it is important to study literary and non-literary text with equal importance privileged to both the text because literary text though based on fictive world serves incomparable truths about past which a Historical fact does not present and along with this it provides wider context to understand the past due to its multiple discourses.

New Historicism was initially propounded by the American critic Stephen Greenblatt in his book named *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980). He rightly defines New Historicism as a practice and cultural poetics rather than a theory because of its wider cultural, political and ideological context. It's since 1950s that New Historicism has been used as approach to study literary text in the frame of non-literary text however it was in strong opposition to formalism because it advocated form and style over content and disregarded social and cultural context of the period whereas for New Historicist historical and cultural situation of the time in which text was produced was of monumental concern. The first critic who set forth a study that focused on social and cultural context of the period was Tain who had framed literary work in time, place and moment of the past in which the text is produced.

Furthermore, Louise Montrose explains New Historicism as "a reciprocal concern with the historicity of text and textuality of history." (Barry 172) which means historical document itself is a text like literary text and it too requires a critical evaluation. For him history is not an ultimate fact or final truth and hence to study history as vast text co-operation of literary text is of paramount importance.

Literary text is the product of a wide culture that is in continuous process of change. Therefore it is encrusted with larger context to which it is related hence the function of New Historicist is to decipher complex relationship of the text with its broader text e.g. metatext.

New Historicism for this reason means a 'parallel' comprehension of literary and non-literary texts of usually the same period in order to exhume their influence on the particular text. Both should be given equal significance so as to derive varied meaning of literary text. And it is for this reason New Historicist identifies it as a 'practice' rather than a theory because culture and history are ever changing part of civilization and hence ideologies, codes and socio-political circumstances of the particular time are always under constant alteration.

According to Peter Barry in his book *Beginning Theory* New Historicism is not a historical movement rather it is a 'Historicist' or 'Historian'. From vast nexus of History all the texts have been evolved. To elucidate it in broader sense, there is nothing outside the text- here the 'text' is history, a wide cultural context in which individual literary texts are rooted. By giving equal importance to literary and non-literary texts New Historicism has opened new sphere to understand a literary text which has complex structure and different set of correlation with non-literary text. New Historicism is therefore prominent practice implemented by critics to understand complex nature of literary text because it does not depict mere mimesis of historical events but examines history in the form of narrative and narrative sequence. It goes one step further to disclose vivid and sporadic ideologies, codes, socio-political situation and ideas that have sprouted from the civilization that has gone by.

In Britain New Historicism is known as Cultural Materialism. It came into existence in 1985 by Jonathan Dollimore. Cultural Materialism is considered to be ‘a politicized form of historiography’ to illuminate the statement, in New Historicism literary text is situated within the context of the period in which it is produced whereas in Cultural Materialism it is situated within context of the present time.

In conclusion one can implicate that New Historicism is new method to study literary and non-literary text. It brings out History from the dusty corners of library to evaluate it within the light of individual texts. Prime aim of this intellectual process is to derive knowledge of past and to put history as significant meta-text out of which literary texts have been birthed. Hence it is immensely important to examine history as a ‘Text’ to understand past and its complex construction of cultural and political situations.

### **Overview of Warsaw Ghetto Uprising:**

Warsaw was one of the largest ghettos during Second World War therefore Poland is considered to be blood curdling battleground of Second World War and especially in 1942. As Lawrence Reese mentioned in his book *The Holocaust: A New History* (2017)

“ Poland was the prime battleground of the war not because all of the major death camps were built on Polish soil, and Poland was the destination for the vast majority of the transports from across Europe, but because more Polish Jews died in the Holocaust than Jews from any other nations- around 3 million. Half of the Jews murdered in the course of the entire final solution.” (*The Holocaust* 295)

19<sup>th</sup> July 1942 dawned as the darkest night for Warsaw’s Jewish community because Himmler on his visit to Poland issued an order for ‘resettlement of the entire Jewish Population of the General Government’ (*The Holocaust* 295) and it had to be accomplished by 31<sup>st</sup> December 1942.

Hence between 22<sup>nd</sup> July and September 12 1942, 300,000 Jews were murdered in Warsaw ghetto. Hitler’s SS troops worked efficiently to lead 265,000 Jews to Treblinka Killing centre and other 11,580 were forcefully deported to Labour camps. Only 35,000 Jews were permitted to live in the ghetto whereas more than 20,000 Jews hid in the ghetto.

This horrendous deportation of Jews to murder camps boiled blood of remaining Jews in ghetto which further led to formation of various self-defence units known as Jewish Combat Organization. There were 200 members in ZOB on the other hand there was right wing Zionist movement, these two groups had conflicts and tension between them in the beginning but soon they decided to fight together to defend ghetto. Spirit of Jewish fighter burned like a flame however they lacked weapons. It was Molotov bombs and homemade grenades used in resistance. However Home Army came to rescue these two organizations and provided them with weapons, pistols and explosives.

On 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1943, on the eve of Passover, Germans decided to liquidate Warsaw ghetto but as soon as German troops entered ghetto they were attacked by Jewish fighters under the command of Anielewicz. Compared to German weapon efficiency Jewish weapons were completely inefficient, they used pistols, grenades, and automatic weapons and rifles and yet Germans were outnumbered by young Jewish resistance group. After losing 12 men and many killed and wounded during resistance Germans were inflamed by rotting rage which led to liquidation of ghetto by bits and shreds. It was burned down building by building which further forced Jews in hiding to surrender themselves. Anielewicz and his members were killed by Germans and their bunker on Mila 18 Street was captured on May 8<sup>th</sup>.

Though most fighters were burned and turned into ashes those who still hid in ruins of Warsaw continued attacking Germans and their auxiliaries. It is for this undying valour of fighters that Warsaw ghetto uprising has been considered most significant in Hitler's era, though Jews suffered from gnawing hunger and stabbing thirst at the throat they refused to meekly walk to deportation point. Benjamin Meed describes ruins of ghettos by stating, "The entire sky of Warsaw was red. Completely red."

### Assessment of *Mila 18* through New Historicism:

This paper is an attempt to interpret *Mila 18* by Leon Uris which was published in 1961. New Historicism is a process that analyses work of art by framing it in the larger historical context. And thus researcher would analyse this novel with parallel study of non-literary and literary text. *Mila 18* is a manifestation of large canvas of Jewish predicament in the wake of Second World War when Hitler's Army extensively destroyed Jewish culture, property and honour and also barred them from social, political and cultural gatherings. It was a systematic cleaning of Germany from sub-humans as Jews were addressed. It has been divided in four parts which symbolically depicts progression of narration.

Leon Uris portrays novel with two histories i.e. a diary which is written by Alexander Brandel and his Zionist friends whereas second is ubiquitous narrator who observes narration of the novel from third person's point of view. Christopher De Monti, an Italian American Journalist is a third person because he articulates his opinions about Jews and their life. Chris is a key character in novel that mingles with Nazis and Jews however he supports Jews in resistance. He is one of the characters who survive in the novel. Along with Historical tension that looms in Warsaw, Poland, three love stories has been weaved out by Uris. Deborah Bronski who is wife of Pual Bronski, a member of Jewish Council and a former dean of medicine at University of Warsaw. Deborah is passionately in love with Christopher de Monti besides this, there is Andrei Androfski, polish-Jew soldier who is in love with Gabriela Rak, a Christian girl who works at American embassy and third one is Wolf Brandel, son of Alexander Brandel, a Zionist and Rachel Bronski, daughter of Deborah Bronski. These tales of love of supreme passions, craving and strength to love in midst of utter torment and hatred has been outlined by Uris, is breathtaking. This was not to provide reprieve from apprehension in narrative unfolding of the work but to disclose their ability to sacrifice their love for fellow survivors. Furthermore, Leon Uris manipulates dialogues and conversation to manifests his character's personality and opinions.

Novel is set in 1939 when Hitler's army has wrecked Austria and Czechoslovakia and marches towards Warsaw, Poland. Novel begins with theme of love of Deborah and Chris however these characters are carriers of vast historical contexts hence they are shifted from their personal space and has been situated to participate in narration which deftly unravels historical events of past. Chris being a Journalist is able to receive news of the front and also sends news outside Warsaw. He is a key person in the novel since beginning to the end because he is the one who would return to Warsaw after war and unearth Brandel's buried diary, which is a day to day account of war and Ghetto life. It was not only Brandel who worked on diary but Ervin Rosenblum, Chris's assistant also worked on the diary. It was a carefully painted picture of ghetto life which would otherwise remains neglected.

The first part of the novel i.e. 'Twilight' depicts Poland's war against Germany. Paul Bronski's resign from post of dean of medicine from Warsaw University in order to serve in war gives glimpse of War that is at Warsaw's doorstep. On the other hand Andrei also depart for front with his soldiers to fight against Germans but as Brandel mentions in his diary entry,

“Meanwhile, why do we keep a deaf ear to England’s and France’s pleadings that we negotiate for help from Russia? Does our general staff really think we can beat the Germans?” (*Mila 18- 24*)

This statement indicates that Polish army is too fragile to fight with efficient German army who are provided best of weapons. As predicated by Brandel, Andrei and his army failed at battle. Paul returns home with amputated hand and will soon be selected as member of Jewish council. Paul Bronski is loosely based on Adam Czerniakow, who was appointed as member of Jewish council in Warsaw ghetto.

‘Dusk’ second part of the novel opens with diary entry of Brandel. It is ‘September 27, 1939, Warsaw surrendered’ (*Mila 18- 119*) which is also the real date when Warsaw had surrendered to Hitler’s unrelenting army.

A Jewish council was formed under the instruction of Dr. Franz Koenig, a Nazi officer and dean of medicine after Paul Bronski. Paul himself was converted to Christianity but when he mentioned about this to Koenig his reaction in form of dialogue throws light on German’s plan:

“The directives from Berlin clearly state that all new laws regarding Jews refer to converts to Catholicism and people having one Jewish parent, grandparent, or great grandparent. Active or inactive practice of Judaism is not a matter of consideration.” (*Mila 18 – 122*)

In order to accomplish their directives and conclude ‘final solution of Jewish question’ Germans had appointed Jewish council to attain their brutal aims with maximum pace and competence. As Schreiker mentions in one of his conversations with Jewish councils,

“For reasons of racial inferiority, we deem it necessary for the Jews to govern themselves separately from the other citizens, under our directives.” (*Mila 18- 126*)

The third part of novel is ‘Night’ which is a manifestation of preparation for resistance. This section of the novel traces deportation of innocent Jewish children and Andrei Andorfski’s report on Majdenak death camp which he had secretly visited with the help of some locals. This report is a true account of brutality, atrocious treatment and extermination of innocent people and this report commenced uprising. As it is mentioned in *Mila 18*,

“Fellow Jews! Fellow Jews! Do not report to the Umschlagplatz (deportation point) for deportation! The destination is a death camp located near the Treblinka village! hide your children! resist! this is a signal for an Uprising! Resist!” (*Mila 18 – 356*)

Fourth section of the novel ‘Dawn’ draws final stages of uprising. Germans had cleaned entire ghetto except few thousands hidden inside and their spirits rose each day when they saw Germans patrolling inside ghetto. Although hunger pierced their stomach and thirst clawed at throat Jewish fighters prepared to fight back Germans with immense strength and honour to fight until last breath. Below given description from Alexander Brandel outlines a saddened picture of ghetto life:

“The ghetto is like a morgue. It is impossible to believe that the face of the moon can be more quite and deserted than the Ghetto streets.” (*Mila 18- 393*)

It further mentions about willpower of Jewish fighters:

“Joint forces have about seven hundred fighters in training, learning street fighting tactics, the handling of various weapons, the routes over the roofs. We have twenty so-called battle companies, about one third armed. There are seven labour Zionist companies, two bund, four communist, two Bathyran, and religious and mixed groups.” (*Mila 18- 394*)



Although they fought until last ounce of ammunition was over and their hands had strength to hold but Germans were at their throat and Mila 18 the headquarters of Jewish resistance was located by Germans at last. They were burnt to death under smoking bunker however few fighters had continued to fight and Andrei was the one who fought until his last breath. His character is full of determination, persistence and unfaltering mind to stand for what he believes.

*Mila 18* is wrapped up with political, cultural, socio-political and religious circumstances of the time in which it is framed. The novel is a depiction of truth untold and stories buried under political turbulence of Hitler's army. Through various characters portrayed in novel Leon Uris manifests picture of Warsaw ghettos uprising which is most prominent events of Second World War besides this novel is authentic and is encrusted with dynamic characters who brings alive history of the time.

This magnifying novel is situated in 1939 Warsaw, Poland and has evolved as a essential version of Warsaw ghetto uprising due to its in depth research and writer's indispensable skills of craftsmanship. It is a huge panorama of world buried in ruins of crumbling buildings and smoke of Hatred that had swept through Europe during Second World War. There are few characters and places in novel that existed in reality. One of the characters that Leon Uris has manifested is Adam Czerniakow presented by Paul Bronski. Adam was chairman of Jewish council in ghetto and he also had diary however Paul does not write diary in *Mila 18*. One of the excerpts from his diary is mentioned by Laurence Rees's *The Holocaust: A New History* which is as below:

18<sup>th</sup> July

"There were rumours about deportation. The next day he recorded that he had done his best to reassure those Jews who were anxious. 'I try to hearten the delegations which came to see me,' he wrote. 'What it costs me they do not see. Today I took 2 headaches powders, another pain reliever, and a sedative, but my head is still splitting. I am trying to not let the smile leave my face.' The following day he was told to tell the group that all talk of deportation was 'utter nonsense.' But it was a lie. Two days later, on 22 July, Adam wrote: 'we were told that all the Jews irrespective of sex and age, with certain exception, will be deported to the east. By 4 p.m. today a contingent of 6,000 people must be provided. And this will be the daily quota.' Adam's despair was focused, in particular, on what he called the 'tragic dilemma' of the children in orphanages. Did he have to hand them over as well? the answer of course, was bound to be yes. The SS saw children as particular target- to them they were the most 'useless' of 'useless eaters'. (*The Holocaust* 300)

This can be clearly referred to children's deportation in *Mila 18*. In order to accomplish final solution of Jewish question Hitler's bureaucrats had created Jewish Council and through this they were able to accomplish most of cruel, illegal activities in ghetto and in order to compel Jewish Council to follow German directives, 'the SS offered to exclude the members of the Jewish Council and their family from deportation'. It also meant that in case of slackening in obedience Jewish Council's families would be in danger. Adam was threatened by SS on 22 July; 'if the deportation was impeded in any way' his wife would 'be the first one to be shot as a hostage.' (*The Holocaust*- 300)

Hannah Arendt in her report on *Banality of Evil* has commented on cowardice of Jewish Council to cooperate for murders of the thousands of Jews, she comments that if the Jewish Council were not too obedient to carry out orders of German personnel many Jews would have survived. In novel it is Paul Bronski whose character is bubbling with cowardice,

meekness, obedience and lack of ability to confront truth and it this cowardice that his wife and children abandoned him and he committed suicide. Arendt also criticises German officers who practiced absolute obedience, in novel it is reflected as below:

“The Nazis took the bullies and bums and made them heroes. In exchange, the bums gave absolute obedience. There was no qualm or remorse or inner conflicts of conscience when Schreiker was asked to destroy synagogue or murder an enemy of party.” (*Mila 18*- 124)

Adam Czerniakow had also committed suicide on 31 July. He was one of those characters who could not fight back or talk back and hence he chose to die.

Alexander Brandel is one of the characters who represent Emmanuel Ringelblum who was well informed about the death camps. In his diary in June 1942:

“Germans were following this plan: the “non-productive elements”, children up to age of ten and old, people over sixty, are locked in sealed railroad cars, which are guarded by a German detail and transported to an unknown destination.. where every trace of a resettled Jews disappears.” (*The Holocaust*-3001)

An apparatus of New Historicism is vividly noticeable as plot of *Mila 18* progresses. It is through development of the socio-political events of the novel that characters are presented with their opinions. Through socio-political events of the novel themes of novel emerge, which advocates personal histories of an individual, as plot is furthered. *Mila 18* is a novel set at backdrop of Warsaw ghetto uprising, a history which speaks of persistent strength of Jews to fight back even in midst of terror and therefore the work is covered with multiple discourses. New Historicism being a practice includes multiple theories in its network. It refers to feminism, gender studies, racism etc, which is also observable in *Mila 18*.

Love and passions are two essential forces that drive this novel to its intense fame. As per directives given by Hitler no Aryan is to be married or in relation with Jew but in Andrei and Gabriela and Chris and Deborah’s characters love and passion is painted in divine colours. Gabriela’s passion to be by her lover and Chris’s love for Deborah pulls them in ghetto, Chris risks his life to support his friends and Gabriela although living in Aryan side helps Jews to save their children. Not only Gabriela but Father Kornoli, a priest also helps to save children and shelter them in his church. On the other hand Wold Brandel and Rachel Bronski’s love is incomparable in the midst of chaos and horror. They defy all regulation and directives to achieve smallest pleasures before they die. Michele Foucault has mentioned in *History of Sexuality*, ‘where there is power there is resistance.’ And therefore although Jews and non-Jews were restricted any contacts they continued meeting and trading however trade between Jews and Non-Jews was punishable by death.

In the midst of brutal destruction kindness, love and religion has been trampled over and hence characters like Rabbi Solomon and Alexander Brandel who preferred non-violence than fighting dropped their philosophy and encouraged Andrei to fight back against Germans. Their ideals had been drained in sewers of ghetto and the only way to survive was to fight back. As it is mentioned in final entry of diary:

“Strange after all the philosophy had been argued, the final decision to fight was religious decision. Those who fought, no matter what their individual reasons, when massed together obeyed god’s convent to oppose tyranny.” (*Mila18*-563)

Divide and rule was a tactic manipulated by Germans on Jews. In order to accomplish their aims Germans bribed Jews to hand over their fellow Jews to the deportation point. Jewish council and Jewish Militia was constructed to make the work of liquidation effortless.

Corruption is lurks in whole system of ghettos life, Be it Nazi guard or Jew or German officers everyone defied directives of Hitler for some amount of money which shows that the there was lack of obedience on the part of both groups and as Hannah Arendt mentions in her report *Banality of Evil* that if there was lack of obedience on the part of Jewish Militia and Jewish council, millions of people could have survived but conscience of man was long dead when food was scarce and one's own survival was at stake.

The will to survive and be remembered is a desperate wish of survivors hence the diary of Alexander Brandel is of utmost importance in the novel. This diary is not only an experience of ghetto life but a living proof of the world that has been brutally and systematically destroyed. This diary contains Jewish customs, culture and opinions of Jews on War. It was this diary that provided link to the world which is buried by hatred. One of the dialogues of Andrei with Stephen his nephew illustrates their efforts to let their identity be known to the world. He says,

“Stephen one of us must get through this to show who we were and what we stood for. It is a big job, son! Only the best soldier can do it. You must live for ten thousand children killed in Treblinka and the thousand destroyed writers and rabbis and doctors. It is a hell of a big mission!” (*Mila 18* – 482)

This dialogue is full of determination, it shows their desire to be heard and remembered and more than that it is the justice they demand by being listened to and remembered. It is the journey for freedom and craving to be one with a society that drives this novel with gripping force. And it is this passion to survive and record firsthand experience of ghetto life and all brutality they have witnessed, will crush Germany under guilt for years to come as one of the Nazi officers who has already anticipated their destruction mentions:

“I have crawling suspicions that inside ghetto wall are ten thousand diaries buried beneath the ground. And that is what is going to crush us. Not the allied armies, not a few token of retribution, but the voices of the dead, unearthed. From this stigma we can never...” (*Mila18* – 388)

This can be evidently related to the fact that Hitler's army had attempted to destroy all the data of extermination camps and magnitude of persons killed at all gas chambers across Europe. And in novel also in one of the dialogues between Horst Van Epp and Alfred Funk it is mentioned:

“We cannot proceed with the final liquidation of the ghetto until these records have been found. Hitler himself gave me specific instructions to see that these Jews lies are found. We cannot permit their distortions to be published.” (*Mila 18*- 398)

This asserts that subconsciously Hitler himself anticipated his doom and that failure of Germany was inevitable.

Transgression takes form of revenge at the end of *Mila18* when Jewish Fighters wage battle against SS armies and destroy their high tech weaponries. The last diary entry by Christopher de Monti provides true picture of what Jewish fighters stood for. It outlines their hardcore will to die with dignity.

“What of Warsaw ghetto uprising? how does one determine the results of such a battle? Jewish casualties were thousands while Germans lost hundreds.... I look through history and try to find two parallel forces combat. I believe that decades and centuries may pass, but nothing can stop the legends which will grow from the ashes of the ghettos to show that this is the epic in man's struggle for freedom and human dignity.” (*Mila18*- 562)

He further comments,



“This rabble army without a decent weapon held at bay the mightiest military power that world has ever known for forty-two days and forty-two nights! It does not seem possible because many nations fell beneath the German onslaught in hours. All of Poland was able to hold for less than a month.” (*Mila18*- 562)

This advocates Foucault’ argument, ‘where there is power there is resistance.’ Jews were meek and were trudging over by Germans but as power circulates in society and its ever shifting nature can turn the table and so the table turned and Jews fought. The oppressor can be oppressed and oppressed can rise from ashes to smack back his enemy if given right time and choice. If Paul Bronski and his fellow members of the council had chosen to talk back history would have been different but they chose to obey whereas Andrei and his fighters fought until their last weapon was destroyed then they fought with fists but these group of fighters stripped of their honour and identity refused to be oppressed. Further Chris mentions Brandel’s word in final entry of diary:

“If the Warsaw ghetto marked the lowest point in history of the Jewish people, it also marked the point where they rose to their heights. Strange after all the philosophy had been argued, the final decision to fight was religious decision. Those who fought, no matter what their individual reasons, when massed together obeyed god’s convent to oppose tyranny..... isn’t it odd that epitome of man’s inhumanity to man also produced man’s nobility?” (*Mila18*- 563)

### Conclusion:

This paper is an attempt to scrutinize Leon Uris’s *Mila 18* through the prospective of New Historicism which is an endeavour to perceive a literary text by recognizing it as contributing in historicizing process. It is the primary function of New Historicism to refashion historical document by other documents other than conventionally historical. It is the aim of New Historicism to evaluate ideologies, culture, social norms, power structure, historical records and personal archives. It is through these discourses multiple meaning of the text emerges from progressing historical events. A literary text needs to be framed within larger text i.e. is history and furthermore it also needs to be viewed within the context of socio-political discourse of the time in order to derive meaning of the text. Hence it is evidently necessary to provide historical document of the past to frame literary text within its constructs. The documented history of Warsaw ghetto uprising is one side of viewing history but *Mila 18* comes up with multiple facet of history, culture, society, ideologies, racial discrimination, political structure, power relation and personal histories that forms meaning based on individual’s experiences.

New Historicism does not promote biographical details of author to analyse work of art rather it promotes historical context of the time in which the work is produced because there is no literary work that is not affected by its history. History is innately indispensable part of any society and with time it needs to be remoulded and rethought to understand the present. *Mila18* is a work soaked in ideologies, political constructs, social codes and culture of Jews and with systematic analysis of the text evolves meanings that are essential to understand the present and past. This novel serves a horrible yet gripping picture of Jewish society and its ability to fight in the face of world’s most powerful army. It provides broader view of Jewish life and culture and above all their opinions towards historical events that swept them off their feet.

The narration of this novel is linear yet runs into different streams. It gives manifold prospective on history through dialogues and diary; it provides individual's opinions on socio-political events that significantly affected them.

Power relation is most interesting part of this novel. It defies the definition of powerful because power is inherently present in society and if given chance it can be manipulated by even the most fragile human being. Power is not divided by class system or by social status. Power exists in society like an inevitable force that drives every human being. It is a supreme force that can switch roles and alter history. It is this working of power that author has manifested in *Mila18* by being authentic to the conventional history. This novel is an epic example of courage and determination to fight the worst situation with nothing but sheer honour and dignity.

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